

## MARY INVITES US TO LIVE OUR VOCATION IN PRAYER



Mary accompanies us with a mother's love, so that we can all respond to our call, through a constant and intense prayer journey. Prayer expresses a life open to God and his will. Every day the compass of the heart needs to be reset to focus on God and on carrying out his plan of love. Without God and without prayer the human heart is inhabited by sadness and restlessness. Then Satan works with his deadly breath of doubt and of hatred. Unfortunately, we see a rising tide of hatred and violence in the world. So many countries, so many families, so many people are touched by the mystery of evil and iniquity.

Mary exhorts us to resume the path of prayer and not to grow tired. This is the way to holiness, responding with fidelity and generosity to our vocation and mission. Her motherly presence and help enable us to hope and to become sowers of new life, especially for the many who are tired of life and see no prospects for the future.

Our journey towards the Seventh International Congress of Mary Help of Christians, which is becoming more and more part of our lives, is a good opportunity to grow under the mantle of Mary and to become her apostles. We renew our invitation to all groups to share the formative programme proposed monthly through ADMAonline and to do everything possible to

participate in this significant event of the Salesian Family in the year of the bicentenary of the birth of our father and founder Don Bosco. Enrolment is now open and the dedicated website contains all the necessary information.

(see: <http://www.congressomariaausiliatrice2015.org>). For further assistance and clarification write to: [congresso@admadonbosco.org](mailto:congresso@admadonbosco.org)

We want to share the experience of the Council of the Primary ADMA in Turin. In doing the work of organization of the Congress, it is going through a journey of growth in mutual knowledge, in collaboration and sharing, involving many people in this adventure. It is an invitation to develop the commitment of local councils that have a role in the life of the Association. When the Council is well animated, it becomes a close-knit group that is both dynamic and vibrant.

In communion of prayer and action under the gaze of the Help of Christians.

*Mr Lucca Tullio, President  
Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, SDB, Spiritual Animator*



## Seventh International Congress of Mary Help of Christians

**Turin-Valdocco / Colle Don Bosco**

**6-9 August 2015**

**"Hic domus mea, inde glory mea"**

**From the house of Mary to our homes his mercy is from generation to generation**

### **6. A sacrifice pleasing to God**

**Don Roberto Carelli**

We return once again to the episode of the Presentation in the Temple. In our first meditation we reflected on it as a **meeting of vocations and missions**, taking note of the differences but always with a view to communion. In the second meditation we saw it as a meeting of generations and an invitation to learn to live in the family in a continuous exercise of praise and blessing. Now we want to consider it as a sacred event in which a sacrifice is offered. It will help us to rescue the idea of sacrifice from the ambiguity accumulated in the history of religions and the oblivion to which secular society condemns it. We want to understand sacrifice as that dimension of love in which human affections are drawn into the holiness of God.

This reflection is of the utmost importance, because it is true that families are still being formed and they set up home, **but the present-day mentality is inspired by the ideal of the individual and his or her benefit**. The responsibility of family ties is diminishing, and so also the willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of love. **The imperative now is enjoyment, and sacrifice has lost its meaning**. Today people are not repressed because of the law that limits their desire, but they are lost because the absence of the law makes the experience of limitation, or self-denial or waiting pointless. The result is that men and women do not know how to love because they do not know how to suffer. They have lost the awareness that love is always "passion", contentment as well as suffering, fullness as well as absence! The fallout in education is well-known - a pedagogy has emerged that is overprotective, dominated by imperatives, regularly frustrated, teaching the young to "be themselves" and to "avoid conflicts." The naive idea that growth is something linear, where the law and the heritage of the fathers is no longer relevant, leads to the loss of the sense of limits and sense of responsibility. The young people are vulnerable, anxious and at the same time apathetic, no longer rebellious and creative as their parents were but conformist and resentful. They have no laws but little freedom, and are less able to face reality and decide for themselves.

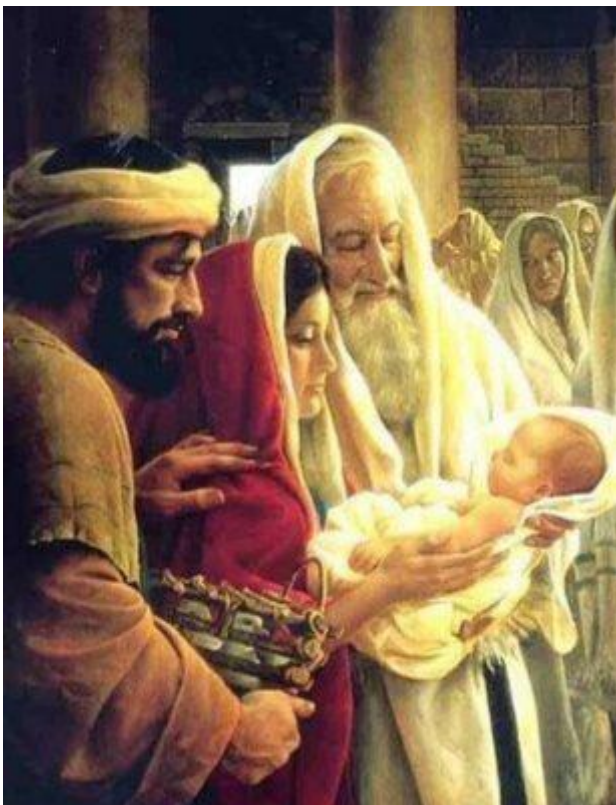
The bishops, summing up the reflections of the Synod on the current condition of the family, denounce individualism as the first evil today, even though they recognize that there is greater freedom of expression and a better recognition of the rights of women and children, "We must also consider the growing danger posed by an exaggerated individualism that distorts family ties and ends up considering each family member as an island, giving precedence to the idea of a subject that is built according to their own wishes which are taken as an absolute."

Aware of this state of things, let us return to the school of the Gospel, to the Temple of Jerusalem, where Mary and Joseph presented Jesus and where Simeon and Anna recognized him as the light and salvation of Israel and of the nations. There, we will understand that **in the gift of self, love and sacrifice are one**, and that **this is the truth that is realized and learnt in our homes, in the house of God and the homes of men**: for in them love is not reduced to mere feeling, and human sacrifice is not seen as unhuman. Rather, in them the love becomes sacrifice and sacrifice is usually a sacrifice of love.

The Church, with the help of the Letter to the Hebrews, goes to the heart of the Christian mystery: **the Son is the Servant, the Beloved is the Crucified, and the Sacred is sacrificed**. It is a conviction rooted in the deepest chords of the Church: there is no love without sacrifice, and without love there is no genuine sacrifice. In fact, the One whom the Father recognizes as the Son, is made the principle and heir of all things,

and "is introduced as the firstborn into the world" (Heb 1.1- 6). "We see him crowned with glory and honour because of the death he suffered"(2.9). The Beloved is sacrificed, and we are justified by His sacrifice. Indeed such a sacrifice, because it is the love of God in human form, made the Son "perfect". It was fitting that God, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings "(2:10), and so Jesus," although he was a Son, learned obedience through what he suffered"(5.8)!

Returning to the text of the presentation, we see that the immediately preceding verse already introduces the prospect of an offering and a sacrifice as a sign of belonging to God and of salvation in God. The Son is subjected to the rite of circumcision, which makes him "God's property", and he is given the name of Jesus, designating him as Saviour. This sheds light on the meaning of every true sacrifice - **a wound that establishes an alliance**, a drink that is consumed to bring about communion, a human gesture as a sign of our relationship with God. In it, the believer acknowledges that **everything comes from God and everything returns to God. All that is given by God, and only what is given by God, is saved. In the end what is held back is lost.** A sacrifice, as well as being a gesture of love, is also a sign of courage and victory over fear. It is an act of faith in the power and goodness of God. It is a refusal to rely on one's own strength or to despair on account of one's weaknesses.



Now let us reflect that **Jesus is brought to the Temple**, the place where people offer sacrifice to God and enter into communion with him. He is brought there as an infant. He will be found there as a child. As an adult he will preach there assiduously. His words about the Temple will be the reason for his death sentence, but through his death, in his Body given up and Blood poured out, the new and eternal covenant will be sealed. **The system of the old Temple was based on separation. Jesus, as the new Temple, will bring about reconciliation.** This was necessary because the Temple was full of barriers. The Holy of Holies was the space reserved exclusively for God. The sanctuary was accessible only to the priests. Then there was another area where male Jews could enter, but not women. Finally there was an area reserved for women and another for the Gentiles. With Jesus this will not be the case! The entrance of the Child Jesus into the Temple prefigures his becoming the High Priest, the one who finally brings God to men and men to God. Mary's offering of the Child is a sign that he is a human person who was to be like his brothers and sisters in every respect so that he could represent them before God (Heb 2:17). Simeon's recognition of the child as the "salvation of Israel and of the nations" reveals his divine

origin and his messianic mission. At his death, when the heart of Jesus will be pierced and the veil of the Temple torn apart, everything will be made new. The old regime of Law will collapse and the regime of Grace will begin. All will have access to the inaccessible God. Barriers between people will collapse: there will be "no longer Jew nor Greek, no longer slave or free, no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28)

But why does sacrifice always involves a wound, physical or ritual, psychological or spiritual? The reason is the reality of sin and estrangement. Sin is breaking the bonds of love, so reconciliation is the price of love. That's why in all religions **sacrifice always has an aspect of expiation of sin.** Thus, the **sacrifice is essentially love, but in practice it is suffering**, because in it love is totally for the other, for his or her good, and his or her harm. In fact, the gesture of the Presentation in the Temple consisted of a ritual of purification. It involved the sacrifice of "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons" (Lk 2.22 to 24). As for Jesus, Anna sees in him the long awaited Redeemer (2.38), and Simeon declares that "that this child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed (2,34-35). The purifying and atoning character of this Gospel episode is given great emphasis in the Liturgy. In the Mass for the Feast of the Presentation, for example, we read the passage from the proph-

et Malachi that presents the Messiah as the one who will purify Israel and will enable him to offer sacrifices pleasing to God. "He is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord." (Mal 3, 2-3). It then uses the passage from the Letter to the Hebrews in which Jesus as high priest becomes like his brothers in all things "to make expiation for the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17). The prayer over the offerings is even more explicit. "May the offering made with exultation by your Church be pleasing to you, O Lord, we pray, for you willed that your Only Begotten Son be offered to you for the life of the world as the Lamb without blemish."

Everything invites us to rediscover the salvific value of suffering, the importance of facing trials to make satisfaction for our sins, to accept our crosses not as an accident but as an opportunity, to embrace them rather than reject them, to live them as an offering for the salvation of souls. In the Christian life, words and deeds do not take first place. Nothing is more effective than the prayer of faith, united with the offering of sacrifice!

The essential aspect of sacrifice is its **character of thanksgiving and offering**. The gesture of Mary and Joseph in bringing Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem "to present him to the Lord" and to consecrate him to the Lord (Lk 2,22 to 23) **prefigures the offering of the Eucharist in the life of Christ and of Christians**. It becomes understandable and liveable for us only after his death and as a result of it. The infancy gospels are written and can be understood only in the light of the Paschal event. In this sense, the prophecy of Simeon anticipates the identity and mission of the Child, which then finds fulfilment in the fullness of his death and resurrection. The meaning and value of his birth is given by the meaning and value of his death, not vice versa. The salvation of God became flesh in this child, and can be seen and touched in him. Anna and Simeon know this very well. His smallness and fragility, his being wounded, offered, and already exposed to death are like a prologue on earth to his death and resurrection, just as his eternal generation from the Father is the Prologue to Heaven. Everything is rooted in the mystery of his being the Son - the one who receives and gives himself totally to the Father, and is fully received and delivered by the Father. **Therein lies the first and ultimate meaning of sacrifice: the giving of himself for the salvation from evil and the fullness of life of others**. Here sacrifice is understood as an unconditional offering of self. It is not only the remedy for our troubles, but also the revelation of God's heart! In fact, the Eucharist is a sacrifice and communion, sacrificial banquet and wedding banquet. It exists for the forgiveness of sins but especially as the bread of life. Jesus was offered first by the Father and now by Mary, and then offers himself in perfect filial obedience. **In him we see that God does not want our things but ourselves: this is the only acceptable sacrifice to God**. This is the whole meaning of the mission of Jesus: "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me ... Then I said, 'See, I have come to do your will, O God (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)' (Heb 10,5 to 7). **And then, as in the Eucharist the offering of oneself and being consumed for the other is the ultimate expression of love**, so also in the family sacrifice is not something to be afraid of because it is motivated by love. It is in the natural home which is the family, and our supernatural home which is the Church, that we first experienced Love and we prepare to live in the Father's house, to dwell in the heart of the Trinity!

Finally, the Eucharist is not only the sacrifice of Christ, but also the sacrifice of the Church. Corresponding to the prophecy of the Son as a "sign of contradiction" is the prophecy given to Mother: "a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Lk 2, 34-35). The Passion of Jesus does not exist without the compassion of Mary. The Mother enters the temple in joy and comes out in sorrow, because every offering implies renunciation and every communion implies being consumed. Mary will be at the foot of the Cross, the first to be involved with Jesus in his offering of himself until the end! It is not sufficient for her to offer the Son! She joins the total offering of herself to her Son's offering of himself. But it was for this very reason that, after becoming the Mother of God, she become our Mother. So thanks to Jesus and Mary, we too learn to accept the measure of death that true love always brings.

It is all summed up in a wonderful way in the Preface of the Mass for the Presentation: "one love associates the Son and the Mother, one sorrow unites them, one will drives them - to honour you, one and supreme good." O Father, teach us to "offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship"! (Rom 12,1)!

## FAMILY CHRONICLE

### 33<sup>rd</sup> SALESIAN FAMILY SPIRITUALITY DAYS



From 15 to 18 January 2015, about 350 people - men and women, religious and lay people from around the world, gathered at the Salesianum in Rome to take part in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Salesian Family Spirituality Days. In an atmosphere of family spirit the participants studied the Rector Major's Strenna - "Like Don Bosco, with young people and for young people".

This is a theme in tune with the current needs of the entire Church. In today's context, the invitation to be with young people cannot forget the marginalized, as Pope Francis constantly reminds us. It follows from our Salesian charism - it is part of our DNA. The Rector Major's Strenna invites the whole Salesian family to make it a priority to "think together, plan together, work together and pray together," always for the young. Unity and cooperation are required also because of the new challenges that society places before the Church and the Salesian mission. They also call for creativity, experimentation, being willing to take risks and even to make mistakes.



In his closing talk, Fr Ángel Fernandez Artime gave us six things to consider, study and put into practice:

1. Our DNA must remain that of DON BOSCO CENTRED IN JESUS.
2. Our charismatic predilection for young people, especially the poorest.
3. Fidelity to the charism: ALWAYS EVANGELIZERS of YOUTH.
4. Sharing the spirit and mission of Don Bosco in the Salesian family and with the laity.
5. The missionary dimension of our family as a guarantee of Authenticity and Fidelity to the charism of Don Bosco.
6. Seek not power and strength, but humble service.

Our loyalty to Don Bosco as Salesian family in this 21st century and in the years following his Bicentenary, means being at the service of the Church, the people of God, and young people and families, especially the poorest. Our service must be distinguished and characterized by simplicity, familiarity and humility. It means living for others, giving of ourselves for young people. This is the way of life that we have chosen to live.

Our loyalty is at serious risk if we seek power and strength ... and if this power is linked to money, then the risk becomes greater. Dear brothers and sisters, religious and laity of our Salesian family, be careful of this real and very dangerous temptation. Our strength is to live a real life of communion and fraternity, a more Gospel way of life that is more challenging, and more attractive in itself. Our communion of service, within each of our institutions or groups and in our Salesians Family, will speak for itself.

More than twenty members of ADMA were present, including the President, Tullio Lucca, and the spiritual animator, Fr Pierluigi Camerani. Some of our participants shared their experience:



*"What touched our hearts most? The fatherliness of the Rector Major and his humble authority. He is a true father. We were struck a lot also by the presence of the novices, SDB and FMA, and their spontaneous joy. We believe more than ever that young people need holy priests and holy consecrated persons. It was confirmed for us that today more than ever there is need for holy families, in the Salesian family and in the world. So, we say, "Keep going, ADMA!" (Paolo and Monica).*

*"The aspect that touched us most was the sense that we are a family. This is a theme that has been recurring a lot lately, one that is often highlighted in meetings with people that are living the Salesian charism. We were also impressed by the fact that here we were able to breathe an atmosphere entirely different from that which surrounds us. It is good to see that there is a whole world that works in spite of all the misinformation that says the opposite." (Stefano and Valeria).*

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## TURIN - YOUTH ADMA



From 6 to 8 December 2014, the young people of the ADMA Youth Group in Turin, spent three days of retreat at the convent of the Visitation Sisters in Pinerolo. The retreat was given by Fr Roberto Carelli, who addressed the theme of love through three basic steps: love God, love your neighbour as yourself and "love each other as I have loved you". Thanks to these insights there was an atmosphere of sharing among the young people. There was a spirit of constant prayer all the time up to the mass on Monday, the feast of Mary Immaculate She is the one who guides and protects us on our journey.

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Three new Asian Provincials have been appointed by the Rector Major, all of whom had been Provincial spiritual animators of ADMA. They are: **Fr. Godofredo Atienza**, new Provincial of the Southern Philippines; **Fr Mario Yamanouchi**, new Provincial of Japan and Fr Virgilio Da Silva, new Provincial of Indonesia-East Timor. Let us pray that Mary Help of Christians accompany them in their new mission and responsibilities.

## CHAPAS (MEXICO) - DEVOTION TO MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS



Love for Mary Help of Christians is to be found not only in the members of ADMA, but in many other people. In this region there are 8 groups: Copainalá, La Nueva, Coapilla, Chiapa de Corzo, Ocosocoautla, Villaflores, El Parral, San Juan Apóstol Tuxtla, and Santa María del Camino, Tuxtla. The first group was formed in 1961 in Copainalá, thanks to the initiative of Father Joel Enrique Alfaro and the Provincial, Sister Maria Crugnola, a great devotee of Mary Help of Christians, who sent the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to this land. From this centre the devotion to Mary Help of Christians spread and the number of new groups has been growing over the years, due to the presence and the animation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Currently the animator is sister Yolanda Jimenez.

The paper can be read at the following site:

[www.admadonbosco.org/index.php?lang=en](http://www.admadonbosco.org/index.php?lang=en)

and here: [www.donbosco-torino.it/](http://www.donbosco-torino.it/)

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