

MARY INVITES US TO PRAY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT TO TRANSFORM US



The Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians this year coincides with that of Pentecost, as if to emphasize that Mary Help of Christians was the Mother of the Church and Help of Christians from the very beginning, when she stayed in the Upper Room with the Apostles in intense ardent prayer awaiting the Holy Spirit. Even today Mary is alive and wants to lead us to salvation, in a world where people are restless in soul, weak in spirit and tired from all earthly things. **Mary invites us to pray to the Holy Spirit to transform us and fill us with strength of faith and hope**, so that we can be steadfast in the fight against evil.

Mary Help of Christians is with us and intercedes for us with her Son Jesus, and in a world marked by hatred and violence and increasing persecution against Christians, **she forms us to become courageous apostles of the Gospel**. Don Bosco wanted her depicted in the great altarpiece of Valdocco as Help of the Church and of the Apostles who, significantly, are pictured each holding the instrument of his martyrdom. Mary chooses us and asks us to help her to bring the power of her Son's Paschal mystery into our time. She invites us to recognize the good that is in every person, and to tell of our experience of God's love, which finds in the Eucharist the source of the love of Jesus who gives his life for us, and the power to love as He loves us.

"From the house of Mary to our homes": the theme of the Seventh International Congress of Mary Help of Christians, to be held in Turin and Colle Don Bosco 6 to 9 August 2015, is in particular harmony with the journey of the Church which is dedicating two synods to the family. Pope Francis has been devoting his Wednesday catechesis to the same topic for several months.

With this event as part of the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, the Salesian Family feels called and involved in this anthropological, pastoral and educational challenge to which the universal Church is devoting special attention. In the choice of the family, with its new challenges and great resources, the Church breathes in deeply, for herself and for all mankind. In it the Salesian Family acknowledges the urgent need for dialogue between youth and family ministry.

The Gospel on the family is the good news of God's love that is proclaimed to those who live this fundamental human personal experience, as a couple in communion open to the gift of children, which is the family. The Church's teaching on marriage must be presented and explained in an effective manner for it to reach people's hearts and transform them according to the will of God manifested in Christ Jesus.

In the Seventh International Congress of Mary Help of Christians the Salesian Family now wants to express its resolve to welcome and promote the plan of God for the family, entrusting this cause to the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and Help of the family. For information and registration, refer to the website www.mariaausiliatrice2015.org or write to congresso@admadonbosco.org.

Happy Feast of Mary Help of Christians to all groups and members of ADMA!



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

9. Mary God's house

Don Roberto Carelli

We are in the month of May: we cannot but speak of Mary, our tender Mother, as Don Bosco used to call her. We do so with affection and without fear, knowing that by contemplating Mary we do not take anything away from Jesus. A saint of our time like Chiara Lubich has observed with great subtlety that we go not only **Ad Jesum per Mariam** but also **Per Jesum ad Mariam!** Because Mary is God's masterpiece, the first and best fruit of Grace, Jesus himself has shown us and given us his Mother as our Mother! Contemplating her face is one way of honouring his work!

It is also true, however, that in speaking about Mary we need to be doubly careful to **avoid both exaggeration and understatement**, to avoid saying too much or too little. On the one hand we must remember that in God's plan Mary is a creature who is truly unique. She is the Mother of God and of the Church. She precedes us in every way, because she is first in the temporal order and in the order of holiness. On the other hand we need to look at Mary with eyes open to the whole reality of the Church, the gifts and charisms that enrich it as the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ.

Now, in the Salesian Family, we keep some things in mind. First, that **Mary was the motherly guide of Don Bosco**. She played a deciding role in his growth, his vocation, and his mission. Don Bosco cultivated a deep filial affection for her and placed unlimited confidence in her. Mary was always **the inspiration and support of Salesian work**. We cannot but have recourse to her in our prayer lives, in our way of relating, in the orientation of our initiatives. Don Bosco has also taught us to see in her **the Immaculate Virgin**, who protects the young from evil and guards them in purity, without which they cannot see God or enjoy his presence. He promoted devotion to her as the Mother and Help of Christians, who helps the Church in the battles of history and does wonderful things in all who have recourse to her with the heart of a child. Finally, we, the members of ADMA contemplate the splendour of Mary as "the first Believer and first Collaborator in the Redemption, Mother of the Church and Star of Evangelization," as Fr Viganò wrote in a letter to Fr Sangalli, Rector of the Temple of Mary Help of Christians. We admire her as the holiest of creatures. We are full of gratitude. She is the great Mother of God. We nourish deep affection for her. She is our heavenly Mother. These feelings lead us to a filial entrustment, imitating her virtues, to an apostolic and educative passion.

But let's get to the topic of the month. Mary realizes the mystery of the Temple in the most sublime manner. The Litany celebrates her with many titles. She is the Seat of Wisdom, Temple of the Spirit, Vessel of Honour, Singular Vessel of Devotion, Tower of David, Tower of ivory, House of Gold and Ark of the Covenant. Mary, the humble handmaid, was the house of God on earth, and now, as Queen of Heaven, she is at home with God. **God is Mary's paradise and Mary is God's paradise**. She is the earthly paradise before the fall, and thanks to her, the Son of God has pitched his tent in our midst. Now, after having lived in her on earth, the Son could not but make her live with Him. And all this concerns us! The theologian P. Coda says: "As Mary was necessary for the Son of God to take flesh, so Mary is still necessary for her Risen Son to be born, grow and reach maturity in each one of us."

With her way of hosting Jesus and her way of dwelling with Him, **Mary teaches us "not to live with-**

out mystery" (E. Ronchi), to grasp God's presence in things, to see things in the light of God. It is with Mary that we grow as Christians and mature as a Church. Pope Benedict said that in Nazareth, "In that house and in that atmosphere, lie the hidden roots of the Church." And what do we learn there? We learn the "law of the home," the law of the Temple, the logic of the Alliance, and the manner of God's love. **God does great things by becoming small**, and every love becomes great when it agrees to become small. It is clear: to allow others to live in us, we must be humble, and to live in others we must be small. And it is a mystery: God is present, God lives and God works in Mary, in the Church, and in every Christian.



It is indeed a great mystery. Let us stop for a moment. In the womb and in the home of Mary God took on human dimensions, and in the same way the human person is opened to the dimensions of God. This is a mystery of greatness and smallness. Coda says: "God is great in himself, infinitely great - but in order to be great even beyond himself, in creation and in our midst, he needs Mary to reveal his greatness. That is how God is! Mary makes great God, because God makes Mary great." He goes on to say: **"Mary carries life within her. And that's why she magnifies the Lord."** The Jesus who takes human form in her is the Lord, and the Lord deigns to be born of his Servant. The son of Mary, is the Son of God, but the Son of God wants to be the Son of Man. God maintains the distinction, but cancels the distance, because this is the work of love. Coda further adds: "You will become me so that I may be you! Nothing, now, is the same as before - for Mary, but also for Israel, and for all peoples and all men and women, past, present and future. God has come in the flesh of humanity and made it his. This is why Mary sings forever the greatness of God - because God first made himself small before her."

Mary brings us to life in faith because no creature has ever had an experience of God as intimate as hers. No one can give life in faith better than she, who with her first "Yes" became the Mother of Jesus, and then, with all the other "Yeses" of her life with Jesus - think of the Temple, in Cana, during his public life, and at the cross - she became the perfect disciple, the model of our faith. In fact, thanks to Mary, God the Father revealed his face in Jesus, but then, thanks to Jesus, Mary knows the face of God the Father. Listen again to what Coda has to say: "Jesus had learned from Mary to speak, to pray and to love. Now Mary had to learn from Jesus. Between Jesus and Mary there is the Father. Mary's gaze which first was directed only to God, must now be fixed on the face of Jesus: 'He who sees me sees the Father'. Her gaze was directed to Jesus not to stay with him but to look, together with him, to the Father. 'No one comes to the Father except through me'. In this (to paraphrase Dante) Mary, who is Mother of God becomes really the daughter of his Son. She receives from Jesus the gift of sharing in his relationship to the Father." Finally we come to Golgotha, where the Father in heaven and the Mother on earth both lost their Son, but thanks precisely to his sacrifice, we all find the fatherhood of God and Mary is assigned a new maternity as great as the Church and as great as the world.

Since that time, starting with the gift that Jesus makes of his Mother to the Apostle John and the gift of John to his Mother, **our homes become the home of Mary, and the house of Mary becomes our home.** How many Rosaries we have said, and many shrines we have visited! And above all what grace and how many graces we receive through the maternal care of Mary! So let us entrust ourselves to her with confidence and filial affection! Don Bosco's experience of Mary was so intense that it is always compelling for all his followers. Listen to some of the refrains he used to repeat often and with the utmost conviction and devotion: "I put all my trust in Mary. Our Lady never does things by half ... Our trust is in the help of Mary Help of Christians ... Anyone who trusts in Mary will never be disappointed ... Anyone who prays a novena to Our Lady has the right to expect a miracle ... I recommend you to invoke always the name of Mary, especially with this short prayer: Mary Help of Christians, pray for us. It is not a very long prayer but experience proves how effective it is ... The Lord and his divine Mother will not let us repeat in vain: Mary Help of Christians, pray for us!"

Prayer of Pope Francis to the Holy Family

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendour of true love,
to you we turn with trust.*

*Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic Churches.*

*Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again
experience violence, rejection and division:
may all who have been hurt or scandalized
find ready comfort and healing.*

*Holy Family of Nazareth,
may the approaching Synod of Bishops
make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,
and its beauty in God's plan.*

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
graciously hear our prayer.*



Bicentenary of the liturgical feast of Mary Help of Christians

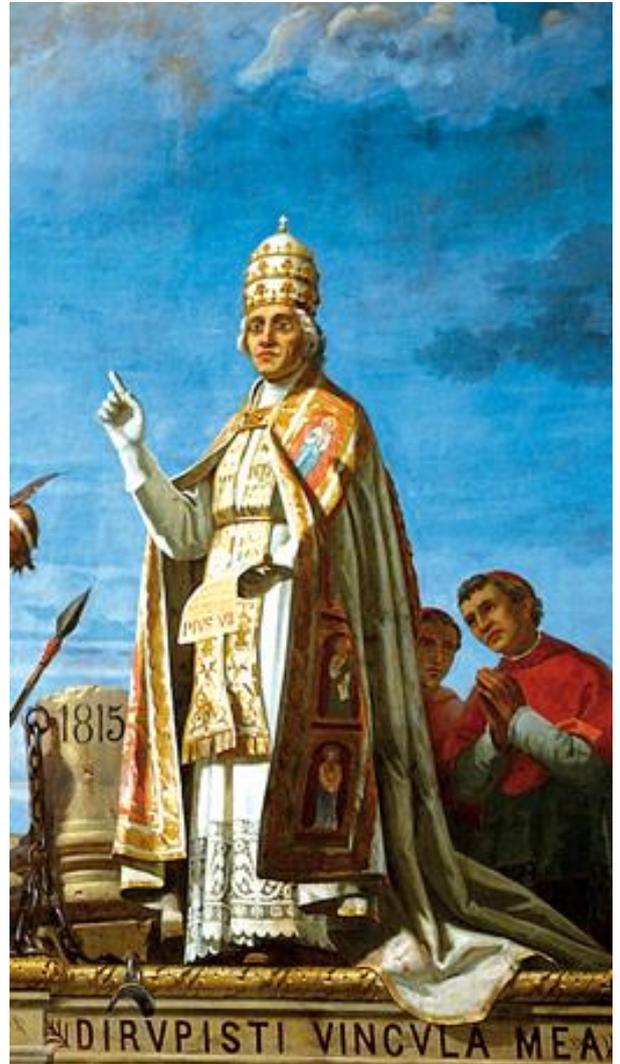
On 15 September 2015 it will be exactly 200 years since the troubled and saintly Pope Pius VII, the Benedictine monk Barnabas Chiaramonti, issued the decree of institution of the feast in honour of Mary Most Holy under the title Help of Christians.

Pius VII was at the helm of the Church in one of the most difficult periods of its history, from 1800 to 1823. Through the intervention of Mary, he was freed from Napoleonic imprisonment, returning to Rome on 24 May 1814. To the joy of the whole of Christianity, he resumed the free exercise of his pastoral ministry. As a sign of gratitude to the Mother of God, in 1815 Pius VII established the feast in honour of Mary Help of Christians to be celebrated in Rome and in the Papal States. It was the firm belief of the Pope that the persecution of the Church and its leader were ended due to a miraculous intervention of the Mother of God, as the Pope himself said to the cardinals on 26 September 1814: "To you, the Virgin Mother of God, to whose powerful intercession we attribute our salvation ... we pray." That pontificate, which had begun in prayer before the statue of Mary in the abbey church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, now acknowledged that it owed its defence to the prodigious patronage of the Help of Christians.

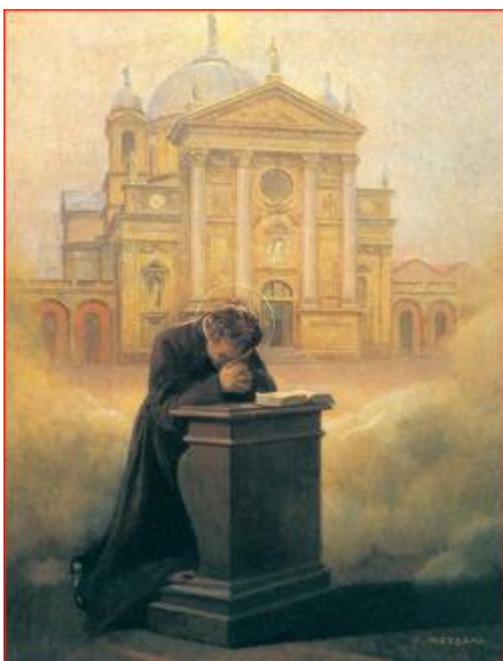
Moreover, two hundred years ago the same Pope Pius VII visited the city of Turin. He had already crowned the statue of Our Lady of Mercy in the shrine of the same name in Savona, in fulfilment of a vow made during his imprisonment in that city. On the evening of 19 May he came to the Piedmontese city and on 21 May he exposed with his own hands the precious relic of the Holy Shroud from the loggias of the Senate. He remained in Turin until the evening of 22 May as guest of King Victor Emmanuel I, to the joy of the entire city and the whole of Piedmont.

As St. Pius V had added the invocation *Mary Help of Christians, pray for us* to the Litany in 1571, to remind the faithful of the miraculous victory of Lepanto obtained through the intercession of Mary, so Pius VII confirmed that invocation with a feast in memory of all the graces and victories obtained through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. He urged people to have constant recourse to her and to seek her help in any public or private need, for the Church and for humanity.

The title of Mary Help of Christians and the liturgy associated with it highlight the role of Mary in the pilgrim Church as the "perpetual help for the defence of the Christian people ..." Mary Help of Christians is the Queen of Victories who defends the Church especially in times of trial and persecution, freeing it from all harm and danger and protecting it in its mission of evangelization. However, if Mary is the Help of the Church and the Christian people led by the pope, she is also the Help of Christians taken individually. Mary obtains for them the strength to withstand the onslaught of the enemy that is renewed daily, making the Church capable of victory in life and in death by her valiant defence.



The Apostle of Mary Help of Christians



The liturgical feast of Mary Help of Christians was celebrated solemnly for the first time in Rome on 24 May 1816, and later was extended outside the Papal States. Eventually it became worldwide. Nowadays Mary Help of Christians is the patron saint of several countries, dioceses, and congregations.

When the feast of Mary Help of Christians was instituted, it needed an apostle to spread the devotion throughout the world. And Mary herself provided one! In the same year 1815 John Bosco was born, sent by God to spread everywhere the name, the invocation and devotion to Mary Help of Christians, and to call on the help of Mary for the Church and its visible head, the Pope, in the difficult times which often mark the life of the Church. Mary Help of Christians has continued to this day in a wonderful way to manifest her strong intervention in favour of the Church and of the Christian people. It is moving to see that the Bicentenary of the liturgical feast of Mary Help of Christians coincides with the bicentenary of the birth of the man who would be her apostle and that, through his sons and daughters, he would spread the

love of Mary Help of Christians all over the world. In fact, from the shrine in Turin the devotion has spread to every corner of the earth with precious spiritual fruits: joy, gratitude, fervour, the Sacraments, loyalty to the Pope and the Church, and zeal for apostolic and educative works.

In April 1884, in Rome, Don Bosco was asked about the future of the Church, and he gave this answer: "Only God knows the future. However, humanly speaking, it would appear that the future will be severe. A Latin poet says that efforts to climb are in vain, when the slope is precipitous, and you are bound to fall to the bottom. My predictions are very sad, but I fear nothing. God will always save his Church, and Our Lady, who visibly protects the world at the present time, will raise up saviours."

Pilgrims visiting the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians can see, between the side columns of the façade, two large bas-reliefs. The one on the right shows Pius VII crowning Mary Most Holy in the shrine in Savona. Among the frescoes that decorate the cupola, the last group that close the ring depicts Pius VII with the Decree of Institution of the feast of Mary Help of Christians.

The paper can be read at the following site:

www.admadonbosco.org/index.php?lang=en

and here: www.donbosco-torino.it/

For every communication you can contact

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FAMILY CHRONICLE

MONREALE (PALERMO) - ADMA REGIONAL PILGRIMAGE in SICILY

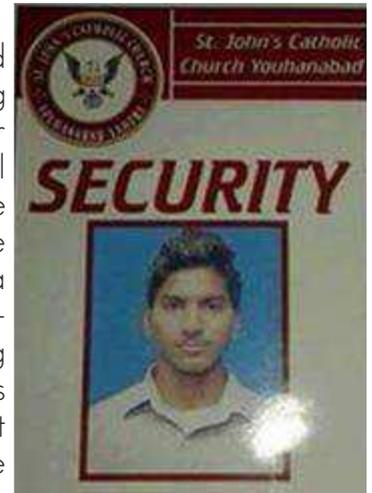


On Sunday 19 April about 400 ADMA members from Marsala, Alcamo, Capaci, Palermo, Lercara Friddi, Canicatti, Messina, Taormina, Calatabiano, Catania, Gela, Floridia, Modica and Syracuse took part in the regional pilgrimage. In the morning they met at the S. Paolo Palace Hotel Palermo for a moment of reflection on the theme "Mary has done everything," presented by Sister Gina Sanfilippo, FMA Vice-Provincial. This was followed by a time of sharing and a meal. In the afternoon they went to Monreale for a guided tour of the wonderful cathedral dedicated to Mary "Odigitria", with its beautiful Byzantine mosaics. Fr Angelo Grasso presided at the Eucharist with Fr Giuseppe di Leonforte and Fr Calogero Ferrera concelebrating. We thank Sister Carmelina and Sister Ausilia for their tireless animation of the groups of Capaci and Palermo and for the welcome extended. Finally, we thank Mary for her maternal love and Don Bosco our father and teacher.



PAKISTAN - PAST PUPIL DIES SAVING THE LIVES OF SEVERAL PEOPLE

On Sunday 15 March 2015 in Lahore, Pakistan, a heroic guard prevented a kamikaze attacker belonging to the *Jamaat ul Ahrar* group from entering the Catholic Church of St. John which was crowded with worshippers for Mass. He was Akash Bashir, a young past pupil of the Salesian technical school, located in the predominantly Christian district of Yuhannabad. He grabbed hold of the assailant, making a shield with his body. He lost his life but saved that of many other people. As a security guard Akash was with a colleague at the door of the church to check those entering. When the suicide bomber approached the entrance, he tried to get past the two young guards, but they stopped him. He then set off the explosives hidden under his jacket. When Akesh grabbed hold of him, his lower body was blown to bits. It is thanks to him that the death toll did not reach the level intended by the attacker. "As a Christian minority there are times when our only hope is in God and His Mother, Mary," say the Salesians in Lahore.



Happy feast of Mary Help of Christians to all ADMA members and groups around the world.

