

## MARY INVITES US TO BE PEACE

When we look at Mary Help of Christians we see her as a Mother who carries her son Jesus with his arms outstretched, and gives him to us. Jesus gives us his peace, and shows us the way to peace, the way to holiness, and the way to heaven. The Holy Year of Mercy is a strong invitation to us to consider and recognize the immense love that God has for each of us. The Child with open arms that Mary gives us, is a sign of the many graces that God has given us and continues to give us. But often our hearts are closed. We live in fear and do not let the love and peace of Jesus Christ take possession of our hearts and reign in our lives. Living without God is living in darkness, not knowing the love the Father has for us and his care for each one of us.



*Opera di Naviglio Claudio*

The Strenna given to us by the Rector Major is a call to live this year by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the style of Don Bosco: **"With Jesus we journey together in an adventure of the Spirit."** It is an invitation to live 2016 as a year of journeying together, travelling together the path we have been shown as we listen to the Holy Spirit so that our life becomes light and salt to those we meet. Only the love that is given to us by the Holy Spirit has a meaning that raises our smallest actions towards the infinite and makes us witnesses of God's presence in the world, for all those who live in darkness.



Fr Ángel Fernández Artime highlights some aspects: first, the power of the Spirit who acts in freedom and knocks on the door of every human being; then the experience of the journey that all must undertake as they go through life; then the sense of adventure, because often in life's journey - especially the inner spiritual journey - "there are no certainties". Rather, we go forward moved by the awareness that the Spirit will surprise us and lead us beyond our expectations. The full text of his commentary on the Strenna is available on [sdb.org](http://sdb.org). This year's video can be seen on YouTube on [ANSCchannel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...). The text of the presentation is available in Italian, Spanish and French at the

following [link](#).

We entrust to Mary Help of Christiana the journey of the whole Salesian Family and we ask you to be bearers of peace and builders of communion.

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



**With Mary and like Mary**

**Rigenerated in his Mercy**

## **5. Not with blows but with mercy**

*Sister Linda Pocher FMA*

### **Justice and Mercy**

Every human heart is inhabited by two irrepressible desires, which at first sight seem irreconcilable. There is, on the one hand, a deep thirst for justice, or the desire that our rights be recognized and respected and that everyone be given impartially what he deserves. On the other hand, there is also a deep yearning for mercy, which is the desire to be loved, forgiven and protected in our weakness. Tension can easily arise between these two desires and the person, in order not to be torn within themselves, is forced to make a choice and opt either for justice or mercy. The problem however, as St Thomas notes, is that "mercy without justice is the mother of dissolution" while "justice without mercy is cruelty," with harmful consequences on the family and social relationships. On the one hand it leads to permissiveness, which usually goes hand in hand with various forms of emotional blackmail and does not allow the person to mature in autonomy and to take responsibility. On the other hand, extreme and uncompromising legalism demeans and humiliates the person preventing them from being themselves, learning from their mistakes and developing their own uniqueness.

In the Bull of Indiction of the Holy Year, Pope Francis does not fail to address the issue. He links it closely with the heartfelt call to conversion made to "those whose behaviour distances them from the grace of God". "For their own good, I beg them to change their lives. I ask them this in the name of the Son of God who, though rejecting sin, never rejected the sinner." (MV19). In the Pope's words we hear re-echoed the words of Jesus: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17). Pope Francis says clearly: "this does not mean that justice should be devalued or rendered superfluous. On the contrary: anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God. God does not deny justice. He rather envelopes it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice." (MV21).



In his infinite pedagogical wisdom, in fact, God knows well that the law is not enough to make his creatures mature in love and self-giving. A commandment is not enough for us to learn to love and forgive - we need to have received the gift of love and forgiveness freely given. It is no mere coincidence that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, the experts on what is "right", were the fiercest opponents of Jesus. It was to them, the people who objected to his familiarity with sinners, that he told the parables of mercy (Luke 15). The first step, then, is for us to reconcile justice and mercy within ourselves, and the way to do this is in prayer. Humbly and with an open heart we ask the Holy Spirit to en-

lighten the places in our lives where there is tension between justice and mercy. In family or community life, at work or in the Christian community, where do I tend to be legalistic? Where am I too permissive?

### Not with blows

Every Christian educator must be able to harmonize justice and mercy as they are harmonized in God. Even Don Bosco had to learn this. He tells us about his spontaneous reaction in his dream at the age of nine to the young people who were swearing: "On hearing these bad words, I jumped immediately among them, using words and fists and to stop them." Jesus told him to intervene "not with blows but with gentleness and love" and to teach his companions the ugliness of sin and the beauty of virtue." The words of Jesus did not produce immediately the desired effect. John was confused and frightened to the point of tears by that request which appeared "impossible".

And we should not think naively that when morning came, the words heard in the dream and the symbolism of the wild animals turned into lambs were suddenly clearly understood. Almost ten years later, in fact, in 1832 we see John, the enterprising founder of the *Società dell'allegria* (the Joy Club), now thinking about entering the seminary, reacting the way he did as a nine-year old in the dream, when he witnessed the injustice committed by some arrogant companions against his friend Luigi Comollo. "At this sight I felt the blood boil in my veins," he says. The rest of the story is well known: John lost his head. He grabbed a boy by the shoulders and used him as a human club to knock the others to the ground. Comollo later remarked: "My friend, your strength frightens me, but believe me, God did not give you that strength to kill your companions. He wants us to love, to forgive one another and to do good to those who harm us." John admired Comollo's gentleness in correcting him and his ability to forgive his companions, and he allowed himself to be helped by him to grow in obedience, meekness and gentleness of manner.

Conforming our hearts to the heart of Jesus is a long journey. It requires faith and patience on our part as creatures, and on the part of the Creator. Led by the Holy Spirit and by Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco succeeded in becoming so gentle and so tenacious that those who met him felt the love of God the Father radiating from his whole person.

In his "Letter on punishments", written to the Salesians in 1883, we find the famous phrase that sums up admirably his experience as an educator: "Remember that education is a matter of the heart, and that God alone is the master. We will not succeed in anything, unless God teaches us the art, and gives us the keys into our hands. We must learn to make ourselves loved, to instil in the young a sense of duty and the holy fear of God, and then we will see with what admirable ease we will open the doors of many hearts. They will join us in singing the praises and blessings of the one who is our model, our way, our example in everything, but especially in the education of youth."

And for Don Bosco, the sacrament of Confession was a privileged place for education of the heart. In Confession he was able to help the boys gradually to return to their true selves, to recognize their responsibility and, at the same time, to experience the fatherly goodness of God and his forgiveness, and to receive directly from God the strength to improve. This was how wolves were turned into lambs!

We ask ourselves: in our educational activity, as parents or as consecrated parents, do we help children and young people to approach Confession fruitfully?



### I will give you a teacher

However, in the same letter, Don Bosco asks the question: "Does this mean we should never use punishments?" In fact, God himself "chose to compare himself to a vigilant rod: *virga vigilans*, to keep us from sin, also though fear of punishment. We too can imitate sparingly and prudently the way that God deals us with us in this effective image. So we too can use the rod of punishment, but we do so with intelligence and love, so that our punishment will be such as to make the young person better." In fact, the entire Bible is full of the lightning of "righteous anger", from that of Moses and the prophets who, in the name of God, railed against the infidelity of the people, to that of Jesus towards the dealers in the Temple. Some of the Fathers of the Church, including St John Chrysostom, even argue that "one who does not get angry when there is reason to do so, commits a sin." Lactantius also writes that "grace cannot exist without anger" because "anger itself is evidence of grace." The wrath of God, however, is different from ours, since it is not an irrational passion: "God is not dominated by anger, but controls it as he pleases." In the Old Testament the wrath of God is one with his zeal for the alliance and with his jealous love for the people of Israel, to whom he is attached "as a young man marries a virgin" (Is 62.5) and by whom he is constantly betrayed.

As far as we are concerned, we must first recognize that anger is a feeling and, as Pascal Ide writes, every feeling "is morally neutral, or indeed, is psychologically good. Anger provides psychological energy that reason alone cannot arouse. Anger occurs when there is injustice." It becomes "a morally legitimate force when it is used in the service of justice," in compliance with three conditions: 1) right intention; 2) right target; 3) proportionate response. In a word: at the centre of our attention there must always be the true good of the other. This is the compass that should guide us in speaking and in silence, in intervening or suffering patiently. To give a few examples: the eldest son in the parable (Luke 15.25 to 32) got angry because he felt unfairly treated. However, he did not care about the salvation of his brother, but sought only his own interests. He showed no love for either his father or his brother, and so his anger was not at the service of justice. In the parable of the merciless servant (Mt 18.23 to 35), we have a disproportionate reaction: the servant threatened to throw his fellow-servant into prison for the sake of a hundred denarii. Even though he had experienced mercy, he was not able to act justly.

It is also important to know ourselves well. As the dictionary of spirituality wisely says: "Those of a fiery temperament"- and this was the case of Don Bosco! "are too ready to think that their anger is justified. In general they would do well to draw inspiration from the teaching of St. Francis de Sales, to be wary of their own judgment and be more inclined to gentleness. There are others who are weak and lack strength of character because they are fearful of responsibility. They err on the side of human caution and are over-inclined to the soft solution. It would be appropriate for them to choose to act strongly. Both types should try to find the "golden mean" and to observe it. This would avoid many unjustified outbursts of anger and many forms of weakness that are too easily accepted."

"I will give you a teacher" Jesus said to John in the dream at the age of nine. "Under her guidance you will become wise and without her all wisdom is foolishness." In fact, justice and mercy are beautifully harmonized in Mary. Although untouched by sin, she - more than any other - is the refuge of sinners. In Psalm 84, all the themes of our reflection are woven together in a beautiful prayer, in which the psalmist asks God to give to the people mercy and faithfulness, justice and salvation. A good spiritual exercise to unify these two inescapable desires of our heart is to **pray every day with the words of this Psalm, knowing that they have already been fully realized in Mary, and humbly asking God to realize that harmony in each of us.**

## FAMILY CHRONICLE

### TURIN - COUNCIL PRIMARY ADMA (PART TWO)

On Sunday 1 November 2015, the Solemnity of All Saints, members of the Primary Council gathered with their families for a full day of sharing. In the light and grace of the Congress of Mary Help of Christians, celebrated last August in Turin, and reflecting on the experience shared in these years, each one tried to answer these questions:

- What does it mean for me and for my family to be part of ADMA?
- What aspect do I think it is important to pay more attention to in the life of the Association?



**Marianna:** for me it is important to find mothers with whom I can share the difficulties we have with our children, and to meet other families with children that share a journey of faith.

**Fr Pierluigi:** the support young families give to children is also a very important affective formation. In Youth Ministry it is a useful educational process oriented towards different vocations.

**Sergio:** I believe that ADMA is a great help in the education of children, and as a support in fidelity to our vocation as spouses, encouraging not only feeling and emotion but also ongoing formation in obedience to one another and to the Lord. Formation to emotion and relationships with others is important.

**Cecilia:** In ADMA I have found true and sincere friends of the soul. I have discovered Mary as a mother who helps us to grow in our availability. I have received the grace of getting to know people who have gone before us in holiness.

**David:** for us ADMA is the second great gift we have received from the Salesian Family. Previously we had been animators for many years, then we were able to enter as adults in this great family. We have become part of a network that allows everyone to be involved according to their means.

**Clare:** we found confirmation of our Salesian vocation, through a public commitment in the Salesian Family. It's something that we did not choose but it happened to us, with the seal of Don Bosco and the creativity of Mary. Typical of the things of God: not the way we thought, but much better! It seems important to us as a group for the Salesian Family to hold on to something that may be a bit lost, that is **real and true relationships**, a sharing of hearts, a network of cordial relations, a home that welcomes. In relations with the SDB and FMA maybe there's a need to interact with mature adults, not only young people, or people suffering from problems or individualism. We need to create occasions when we support each other, trying sometimes to help not only in work but also spiritually. **We can give the consecrated persons our experience and acceptance of ordinary everyday family life.**

**Fr Pierluigi:** we need to pay more attention to rethinking the role and the formation of the spiritual animators of ADMA groups. Don Bosco had dreamed of a prophetic community of consecrated and lay people together, sharing life and sharing responsibilities. ADMA was founded in Turin and has been renewed from Turin - this is a good omen for everyone.

**Sr. Marilena:** I have been spiritual animator for 4 years and I have found it a very beautiful reality that has enriched me a lot. It is a pity if we cannot share this reality deeply with another consecrated person.



**Walter:** for us the key words of our way of life are: Our Lady, Eucharist, the Rosary, Young people and Medjugorje. Every retreat is a kind of refocussing and purifying of our objective in life. We have received the great gift of profound human friendships in Christ. For the future, I think as we go on it will be harder to maintain the warmth of relationships between us. The higher our numbers the lower our level of friendship will be. We must pay attention to this risk and **seek the truth in depth**. And without fear! In the Bible the people of God were always fighting, and it is the same with us because of the sin of each one of us.

**Simonetta:** in this we are helped a lot by the testimony of the saints of the Salesian Family. We should learn from their example to take small steps, with great humility.

**Rosanna:** Mary has taught me to stop thinking "it's not up to me" and replace it with "Yes, it **is** up to me" and at the same time to offer to Mary my inability to do everything, not even one tenth of what is to be done. I believe that the main task of ADMA in the Salesian Family is precisely to teach us to pray, and the fundamental importance of Eucharistic adoration, and also to see how difficult it is to accept suffering, even for consecrated persons.

Seeing our children grow, and seeing the dreams of collaboration between the various groups bear fruit gradually fills us with joy and emotion: Mary sees our efforts and uses them to accomplish her plans and the Glory of God, at times that are not up to us to decide.

## BOURNEMOUTH (UNITED KINGDOM) - SECOND ADMA GROUP FOUNDED

The second group of ADMA in England was officially launched on 8 December 2015, Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the opening of the Year of Mercy, with a solemn Mass concelebrated by Fr Darryl Jordan, Parish Priest of the Parish of St. Thomas More; our national animator, **Fr Francis Preston, SDB**; and Msgr. Ronald Hishom. More than fifty people were present, including a Delegation from ADMA in London, represented by Mary and her family.

We started our day with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, confessions, Rosary, litanies and prayers to Mary Help of Christians. Mass followed with the blessing of the statue of Mary Help of Christians and the conferral of the Diploma of Erection and of Aggregation of the second group of ADMA in the UK. It was in the Church of St Thomas More in London that the first group of ADMA in England was started by Mother Eugenia Pantalleresco more than 30 years ago. Our new group consists of 10 members from different countries: England, Ireland, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Mauritius. During the Mass, Fr Francis preached on Mary Help of Christians, recalling the beginning of Don Bosco's work on 8 December 1841 and the beginning of the Year of Mercy. He encouraged all present to **make known the love that Mary our Mother and Help has for us**. There was a time of celebration after Mass.



I want to thank the priests Fr Darryl, Fr Francis, Fr Ron, as well as Tim and Barry of the liturgy team. They have given us this opportunity to celebrate and expand the Salesian Family in England. I thank especially our Spiritual Animator Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, who brought the statue of Mary Help of Christians from the Basilica of Turin through France to England. He told us that Our Lady was happy to make the trip to our family and that Our Lady loves us very much. We will bear in mind what Mother Eugenia and Fr Pierluigi told us, that Mary Help of Christians wanted a new home where she could bless England, and found this home in a church dedicated to St. Thomas More, a martyr who defended the family and the sacrament of marriage.



We hope and pray that St Dominic Savio, who saw the conversion of England in a vision, will help us promote and increase the number of devotees and especially love for the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to Mary Help of Christians in this part of the world.

Our sincere thanks to our president Mr Tullio Lucca and all the organizers and groups of ADMA that helped and inspired us during the Congress to strengthen our faith and love for Mary Help of Christians. Blessings to each and every one of the members of ADMA in the world and to the whole Salesian Family (Romy Rosario Powles, with his family).

## TURIN - ADMA PRIMARY

As is the tradition, on 8 December, Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Salesian Family in Turin gathered at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi to commemorate the beginning of the oratory, recalling the meeting of Don Bosco and Bartholomew Garelli. The Eucharist was presided over by Fr Stefano Mondin, ICP Delegate for Youth Ministry, while ADMA animated the celebration. With that Hail Mary recited with the first boy, Don Bosco entrusted to Mary all the young people of all his works



PORTO ALEGRE (BRAZIL) - SIXTH PROVINCIAL MEETING OF ADMA



The Salesian Province of Saint Pius X (Brazil - Porto Alegre) held its Sixth Provincial Meeting of ADMA on 27 September 2015, at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Porto Alegre. The event had as its theme "Mary Immaculate Help of Christians in the mission of Don Bosco." It was attended by 75 members, coming from the centres of Bage, Santa Rosa and Viamão (RS); Itajai, Joinville and Massaranduba (SC); and Curitiba (PR). Among the participants were the spiritual animators of Bagé, - Fr Juarez Testoni; Rio Grande - Fr Tiago Rodrigues Lopes; and Joinville - Fr Severino Piccinini; Itajai - Fr Márcio Lacoski; and also the provincial animator, Fr Tarcizio Paulo Odelli.

The participants were helped through prayer to reflect on some attitudes of Mary. Then there was the introduction of the participants and the recitation of the Rosary, led by the members of the centre of Curitiba. A rosary was formed on the ground with flowers while the **Hail Mary** was being recited. **Sister Claudete** and **Sister Marcia Koffermann** presented in a dynamic way the role of Mary, the Immaculate Help of Christians, in the life of Don Bosco.

In the afternoon the Centres presented their activities and the work carried out during 2015. This was followed by the celebration of the Eucharist at which the Provincial Fr Asídio Deretti presided. He encouraged all the participants to continue to work with courage in the mission of the Salesian Family. He recalled the motto of the last International Congress, "**From the house of Mary to our homes.**"

The meeting ended with a friendly celebration. Thanks for the welcome given by the Salesian Sisters of the provincial house of Santa Teresa, and in particular, by the Provincial, **Sister Maria Floriani**.



MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTION - JANUARY 2016

That the Lord may inspire and sustain our communities in welcoming and caring for Christian refugees from the Middle East, who form part of the large crowd of refugees in the region.

SAINT OF THE MONTH - JANUARY 2016

The **Servant of God Fr Constantine Vendrame** (1893-1957), was a zealous missionary in the North East of India and great devotee of the Sacred Heart. In his missionary notes he wrote: "*Being able to trust means walking along a closed road between two places: the absolute distrust of oneself and unlimited confidence in God, without any conditions or reservations. Being able to trust in the merciful love of God ... No one is more needy and naked, no one more sick or hungry and thirsty, than those who lack the knowledge and grace of God*".