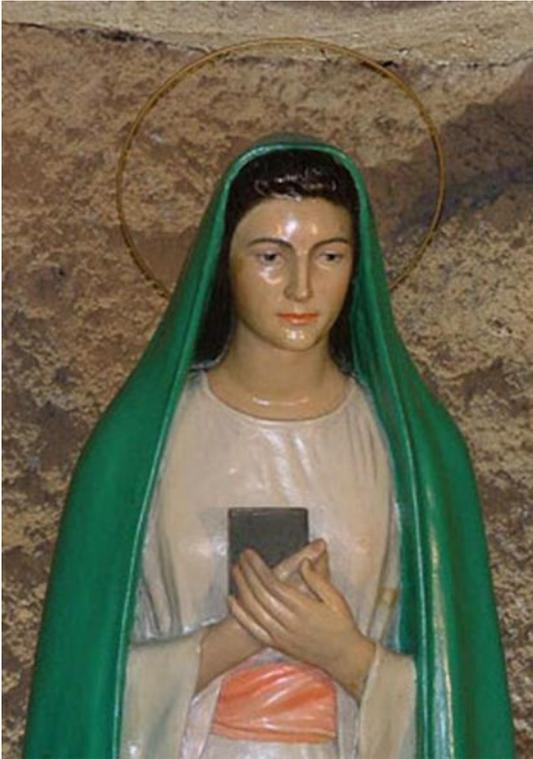


MARY EXHORTS US TO RETURN TO GOD AND TO HIS COMMANDMENTS



We live in a situation of atheism, relativism, and paganism. Mary awakens us and reminds us that without prayer we have no future, we cannot live, because **prayer is the link between heaven and earth**. The man of today is wrong because he puts himself in place of God. For this reason Our Lady calls us to humility of heart, asking us to return to God, confessing that without God we are nothing and that God is our future, our present and our past. We cannot choose for or against God and often we want to put ourselves in God's place. In our society we see many extreme situations, anti-life and anti-family. People use wrongly the freedom that God has given them to trample upon God's commandments.

The Lenten journey is a journey that invites us to conversion and to listen to the Word, as we practise merciful love. Conversion is a process that requires humility of heart, recognizing that we are sinners, and not remaining hardened in pride. Today Satan attacks in particular the family, young people and consecrated persons. Today we are missing the joy of living and the joy of transmitting life. **We ask for the gift of conversion:** that we can be new men and women, and that the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary may take place in our hearts and in

our lives. We look to the future with confidence because Our Lady is with us, because she does not abandon us. She urges us to pray that what is done in heaven may be done also on earth. We want to be hope and joy to those around us who so often are depressed, and see no future. As ADMA members we are called to be sowers and builders of hope.

Conversion means welcoming the words of Jesus and his love, because the words of Jesus and his love are the only light and hope in the darkness of the present time. With a pure and humble heart we restore life to the words of Jesus. We live his word, we spread it, and we make sure that everyone can hear it. The words of Jesus restore life to those who listen. The words of Jesus bring love and hope. Above all, we live the new commandment of love: I

love one another as I have loved you. Let us love each other in his name and in his memory. The Church progresses and grows thanks to those who hear the words of Jesus, thanks to those who love, thanks to those who suffer in silence and in the hope of ultimate redemption. So let the words of Jesus and his love be the first and last thought of our day: let us do a little meditation each morning and a brief examination of conscience every evening.

Let us go forward together, guided by the Holy Spirit and under the protection of the Help of Christians, in our journey towards Easter!

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



With Mary and like Mary Rigenerated in his Mercy

6. In His Mercy God tests our heart

Sister Linda Pocher FMA

My God, why have you forsaken me?

"The mercy of God" - says Pope Francis - "is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful." (MV 9) The pages of the Bible are filled with this fundamental truth of our faith, which the Pope never tires of proclaiming. To the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who felt abandoned by God as they suffered in exile, He responds through the prophet: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even if these forget, yet I will never forget you. (Is 49.15)

Yet, despite the continued reassurance that the Word of God offers us of the faithfulness of the Father, and the closeness of Jesus in moments of pain, and the power of the Spirit that can even restore the dead to life (Ez 37.1-14), when our lives are touched by suffering, abandonment and incomprehension, we too ask ourselves: if God is really good and merciful, why does he allow all this? This question resounds, filled with anguish, from one chapter to the next in Scripture. It is found on the lips of the prophets and in the wisdom writings, and recurs frequently in the book of Psalms (Ps 21.2; 41.4; 87.6). We find it even on the lips of Jesus on the cross, when before dying he cries out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk 15, 34). How is it possible, therefore, to hold together these two realities: the continued promise of fidelity on the part of God and man's continued experience of being abandoned?

Let us look closely at the experience of Jesus. Certainly his agony on the cross was the most terrible moment of his earthly life: a mystery of love and pain so great that we will never fully understand it, not even in Heaven! However, if in all humility we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit and the Scriptures, we can get a sense of the fundamental principles by which Jesus accepted his suffering and death, so that these principles can become the key principles of our lives. The first principle is given to us by John: the moment when Jesus was abandoned and dying on the cross was - according to John's gospel - the highpoint of the "manifestation of the glory" of the Trinity, that is, of the merciful love capable of saving, healing and setting free. St Paul adds that, of course, we need eyes of faith to see this "glory": the cross, in fact, is "a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles", but for those who believe it is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1,22-25). The fact is that, without the abandonment on the cross, there could be no resurrection nor outpouring of the Spirit. If the heart of the Son had not been ripped open by the spear (Jn 19:34), his riches could not have been poured out upon us.

But that's not all: the second principle we find in Matthew, Mark and Luke, when they tell us that the ministry of Jesus opens with a terrible test: forty days of solitude and hunger in the desert, during which the Son of God submits his heart to temptation (Lk 4,1-13). Faced with the misleading proposals of the devil, he demonstrates his full confidence in the Father and his determination to be faithful to him unto death. Importantly, it is the Holy Spirit who "leads" Jesus to the trial in the desert. Again later, still guided by the Spirit, Jesus will live all his public life as an unstoppable journey to Jerusalem, the place of suffering and of the total gift of himself. On this journey to the cross, his disciples will also be involved, whether they like it or not. At the foot of the cross they will be put to the test and will be shown up as a bunch of opportunists and cowards, the ones first in need of forgiveness and redemption. Only when they had reached the very depths of their poverty, could they be born again, by the Spirit, and become authentic imitators of the Master.

Suffering, loneliness and abandonment, do not seem to be "mishaps" for Jesus, and they are an important part of the Christian experience. **When I think back to the times of suffering and trial in my life: how have I dealt with them? Have they left me angry, or doubting God's fidelity and mercy?**

Searching for you anxiously

The trial of suffering is so necessary that even Mary - the Immaculate one who does not need to be purified! - was led by Jesus along this path. In fact, she was the first to learn to treasure the experience of suffering and abandonment by God. We can see her pondering deeply on the episode of the finding in the Temple.

The family of Nazareth went every year to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. When they were going back home, Jesus remained in the Temple, "but his parents did not know it" (Lk 2:43). We can imagine that up until then he had been a meek and obedient child, not a daredevil! For this reason, probably, his parents did not feel the need to keep a close eye on him. And for this very reason, they must have been scared to death when they realized they had "lost" him.

Rene Laurentin stresses the fact that the evangelist Luke "expresses the anguish of Mary with a very strong word, one that he uses elsewhere to designate the sufferings of hell (Lk 16.24 to 25)." For what is hell, if not the experience of having "lost" communion with God, in the full knowledge that this has happened through one's own fault? Certainly, during those three long days of searching, his parents must have feared the worst for the boy, who had been entrusted to them directly from God, and they must have felt crushed by the weight of such a responsibility. The fact is that here, for the first time, the prophecy of Simeon (Lk 2:35) was fulfilled. The surprise is that the first time the "sword" pierced the soul of Mary, it was brandished by her Son. "Why have you done this to us?" This was the troubled question that burst forth from the heart of the Mother, before she discovered that her son was not lost, but had deliberately decided not to follow his parents. In his reply, Jesus uses for the first time, one of the more disconcerting strategies of his teaching. He picks up a word used in the question, and repeats it in his reply with a completely different meaning, a spiritual meaning. "*Your father*," Mary said, talking about Joseph, his adoptive father. "*My Father*," replies Jesus, without any explanation, but referring to his Heavenly Father. Moreover, Jesus seems to contradict himself because he says *he must be in his Father's house*, in other words, he must obey God, but then returns to Nazareth, where he remains subject to his earthly mother and adoptive father. In fact, we must understand here that the youthful Jesus was making a prophetic gesture: the anticipation of his death in obedience to the Father that will be accomplished thirty years later in the same city and at the same feast. Even then his mother will have to go through three days of anguish and death, before she can get back her risen Son.

Mary and Joseph, we are told, "did not understand" the sign. Of course they didn't, since it is only in the light of the resurrection that the meaning of suffering freely embraced for love is revealed. But in this sign they began to have a first taste and a very dark foreshadowing of abandonment and misunderstanding. In the face of future trials, which will be ever bigger and greater, Mary demonstrated through her docility and her demeanour that she had learned the lesson: everything that the Son does or that happens to him is part of the loving plan of the Father, who is not a capricious God. The Father knows what is good for us, the Son trusts and so did Mary. There is no fear, nor loss of hope, even in the face of appearances to the contrary, because really "all things work together for good for those who love God" (Rom 8:28).

Let us take the time to meditate on the passage of Luke 2.41-50, asking Mary for permission to enter into the secret of her heart, to learn from her how to live with faith in time of trial.



Prepared for temptation

Mary learns quickly, because in her there are no obstacles to grace, even when it comes in the form of trial. This does not mean less suffering. On the contrary: the more the heart is free, the more sensitive the person becomes. The difference lies in the fact that she does not hold back, as we often do, but she allows herself to be carried by the Spirit and the Son, which can make her suffering more painful and very fruitful right from the beginning. In our case, if we learn to be docile, the first fruit of the trial is that it allows us to measure ourselves, to become aware of our poverty and to deliver our lives completely into God's hands. In the trial, in fact, we experience the remoteness of God and, in that solitude we realize that we can do nothing without Him. This painful discovery cleanses us from pride and relieves us from conceit and finally allows God to remove from our hearts whatever prevents us from enjoying his love for us to the full. The trial of suffering and abandonment becomes an experience of God's mercy. Even in this way, he takes care of us, nourishing our growth in faith, hope and love.

"Son," we read in the Book of Sirach, "if you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation" (Sir 2,1). Because the trial of suffering and abandonment is so important in our growth, the enemy of our salvation lies in wait, to take advantage of our weakness and prevent us from reaping the benefits that God prepares for us through it. The weapon used by the enemy is temptation: that is, an alternative proposal that looks easier or more attractive than what we know is God's will for us. With his proposals the enemy intends to weaken our faith, hope and charity, and lead us to break our communion with God voluntarily.

The first temptation we must be on guard against is to think that God has really forgotten about us, or that pain is a proof of his absence or indifference or ill-will. On the contrary, we can be sure that when we experience being forsaken by God, it means that He is asking us to take a step towards Him, that he is preparing a greater good for us, but we have to "conquer" it by collaborating with his grace. The second temptation is to think that the situation in which we find ourselves is impossible to overcome and totally beyond our forces. Against this kind of thinking it is important to remember that, despite appearances to the contrary, God never leaves us without the necessary and sufficient grace to stand firm in the time of trial. The Holy Spirit that we have received in Baptism does not abandon us! The third temptation is to seek compensation neglecting one's duty (in the family, at work or in prayer) to look for easy pleasures to deaden the pain. For example: food, shopping, success at all costs, inappropriate emotional or sexual relationships, etc. In the face of these temptations it is necessary on the one hand to be patient with oneself, and on the other hand to try to anchor oneself firmly to the rock of prayer and the exact fulfilment of duty. At the time, it can be heart-breaking, but it brings great serenity and joy. Obviously, relying on an experienced guide with humility and openness is essential, if you do not want to "waste" the occasion of the trial.

Let us ask ourselves in prayer: what are the temptations to which I feel more exposed? In what kind of compensatory escape do I tend to fall in times of difficulty?



FAMILY CHRONICLE

ROME - SPIRITUALITY DAYS OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY 2016



The Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family were held from 14 to 17 January at the Salesianum in Rome. These days are a traditional event that provide a time of communion, reflection, sharing and family for about 380 participants. They represented about 20 of the 30 groups of the Salesian Family. For ADMA, in addition to the President Tullio Lucca and Fr Pierluigi, there were about thirty members from different countries (Italy, Spain, Brazil, Portugal ...) who came in answer to the call to reflect on the theme of the Strenna of the Rector Major: **With Jesus, we journey together in an adventure of the Spirit!**

On the first day there was a reflection on the meaning of being pilgrims on their way and the charm of adventure, given by Fr Francesco Di Natale, SDB, Professor of Pastoral Theology. He presented the question from the anthropological, biblical, theological and ecclesiological point of view. On the second day, **the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime**, shared with us the message of the Strenna for 2016. "With Jesus" recalls how the pilgrimage of every Christian always starts from an initiative of the Lord; "We journey together" highlights the community and ecclesial dimensions of the journey; "The adventure of the Spirit" makes it clear that the inner journey and spirituality, far from being an escape from the world, become for the Salesian Family an urge to respond to the profound aspirations of the young: the need for life, openness, joy, freedom, a future, a more just and fraternal world, development for all peoples and the protection of nature.

Sister Maria Ko, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, and a teacher of Scripture, gave an analysis of Mary as an icon of the pilgrim Church, guided by the Spirit. She began with the question, "How can all this happen?", and ended with the response "let it be done to me according to your word." **Fr Bruno Ferrero**, SDB, presented the figure of Don Bosco as a modern life coach.

Next was a panel discussion on three figures of Salesian holiness. Professor Elizabeth Casadei, postulator of the cause of beatification of Blessed Alberto Marvelli, recounted the splendid testimony of this young man, who died at the age of only 28. He was a passionate educator and a competent engineer, deeply in love with God and neighbour, to the point of risking his life several times. "My life is nothing but an act of love," he wrote in his diary.

Professor Maria Ludovica Zanet, collaborator of the Postulator General, spoke about the life of the Venerable Servant of God, Fr Giuseppe Quadrio SDB. A highly intelligent young priest, he wrote: "Either a Saint or nothing. A saint cannot live an ordinary easy-going life giving a bit to God and keeping something for himself. Now I have to and I definitely want to become a saint. I do not want to fail in God's plan for me be holy.



Fr Pier Luigi Cameroni, Postulator of the Salesian Congregation, spoke about the wonderful adventure of Mamma Margaret. The Spirit found in her a soul full of faith and a maternal heart that knew no limits. "God had first place in all her thoughts." She felt that she was living in God's presence and she expressed this conviction with her frequent statement "God sees you." Don Bosco always remembered her teaching and all he had learned at her school, and this tradition left its mark on his educational system and his spirit-

uality.

On the Saturday there was a time for sharing testimonies of inner life and spiritual life. Then Fr Rossano Sala, SDB, led the Community reflection on the experience of faith which is expressed in the journey.

All the inputs can be downloaded from

<http://www.sdb.org/famiglia-salesiana-it/339-giornate-spiritualita-della-famiglia-salesiana-it/3192-gfs-giornate-fs-2016>

We report the final message prepared by the participants:

IN ORDER TO GROW IN THE INTERIOR LIFE OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY

I pledge myself

- * to live my vocation with joy and gratitude witnessing to young people the beauty of following Jesus and being a Christian in today's world
- * to assume with responsibility my membership of the Church and the Salesian Family in my daily life
- ⇒ to internalize as a way of life the spiritual heritage and the pedagogy of Don Bosco
- ⇒

We are committed

- to work with the diocese to meet young people on the margins of society, bearing witness to the love of Christ that fascinated Don Bosco
- to network with other social and political bodies to respond to new forms of poverty, in particular among young people and families
- to propose strong experiences that fully involve young people's lives in self-giving to God at the service of others in a journey of holiness
- to share strong moments of spirituality and apostolic commitment in order to grow in the sense of belonging to the Salesian Family

Through

- Shared formation and shared projects
- Mutual Accompaniment
- The Council of the Salesian Family
- The Charter of charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family



TURIN - RETERAT FOR ADMA YOUTH

Mercy. A word, a theme. It was the theme for the three-day retreat for ADMA Youth earlier this year. Thirty young people, from first year high school to University, including three young couples, were accompanied by Fr Roberto Carelli, for a time of sharing at the Monastery of the Visitation in Pinerolo from 2 to 4 January 2016.

Mercy. A word so common in this holy year desired by the Holy Father. At the school of the Gospel and of Mary our Help we young people of ADMA are trying to understand more and more deeply the extraordinary and wonderful concept of what it really means to



have a poor heart full of love, and to be compassionate, even in the face of our daily mistakes. Mercy is the presence, providence and superabundance of the love of God in good times and bad, which produces in us laughter and the confident ability to entrust to God's mercy all the problems and sufferings that afflict us. Mercy is the tenderness, compassion and forgiveness of God, starting with our humble awareness of being small and absolutely sinful. It is the forgiveness which takes us by the hand and reassures us and restores in us the dignity of a child, a beloved child even in adversity, consoled and valued at every moment of our daily lives. Mercy that is, finally, an active life involved against old and new forms of poverty of our day. "The measure of love is to love without measure," said St. Augustine, and especially when we are more aware of being recipients of such a gift, this phrase takes on all the greatness of the human desire to want to be and to pray to be more and more merciful every day. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy" (Elena Scavino).

LUBUMBASHI (CONGO)

The first formation day for the ADMA Committee of Central Africa was held on Sunday 10 January 2016 at the Cité des Jeunes in Lubumbashi, With the intention of spreading devotion to Mary Help of Christians and to the Blessed Sacrament, the members of the Association of Mary Help of Christians had two formation sessions focused on these two themes. The first talk was on the Mystery of the Church: Mary, Mother and Queen. The second session enabled the participants to get in touch with the ADMA Rules. These two moments of ongoing formation were led by Fr Trphon Kalimira, Sister Euphrasia of Kasafya and Fr Albert Kabuge.

Thanks to the organizers, and may the Lord bless all those who are involved in this project. May the Marian devotion bear fruits of courage and perseverance in our province and in the families of members of the Salesian Family of the Congo.

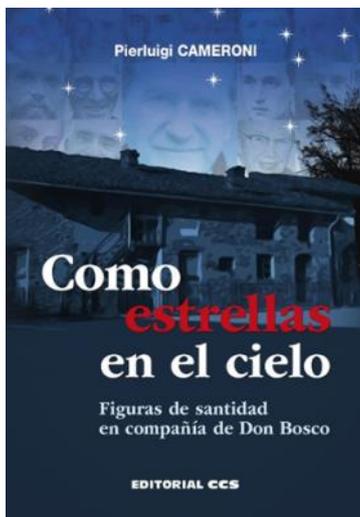


ROME - MEETING with new FMA Provincials

On Thursday 20 January, at the Generalate of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, on the invitation of Sr Maria Luisa Miranda, Councillor for the sector of the Salesian Family, Fr Pierluigi Cameroni had the opportunity to present ADMA to 19 new provincials. Representatives of the Confederation of Past Pupils of the FMA and of the Salesian Cooperators were present. The meeting was held in an atmosphere of fraternity and Salesian joy. The participants got to know each other personally and were able to share the identity and mission of ADMA in the light of the indications given by the Rector Major at the last Congress of Mary Help of Christians and along the lines being followed in recent years. The meeting was also a concrete response to the wishes of the last General Chapter of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and to the desire expressed on many occasions by **Mother Yvonne,**



Superior General: "I have observed how this presence in our lives brings to light potential and resources that are capable of transforming the world, starting from families, and to give a new impetus for vocations for the Salesian Family, especially among the young people. As FMA we feel in great harmony with the Association of Mary Help of Christians."



COME STELLE NEL CIELO (Like stars in the sky) - SPANISH TRANSLATION

(ANS - Madrid) - A year after the original publication in Italian, Editorial CCS has published the book "COMO ESTRELLAS EN EL CIELO" a Spanish translation of the book on the figures of holiness in the Salesian Family by Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, Postulator General for the Causes of Saints of the Salesian Family.

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTION - February 2016

For an end to the divisions between the various Christian denominations in South Asia in order to show to the people the one face of Christ.

SAINT OF THE MONTH - February 2016

St Louis Versiglia (1873-1930), founder of the Salesian work in China and first Salesian martyr. In his last letter to the Mother Superior of the Carmelites of Florence, a few weeks before his death, he wrote: "... let us lift up our hearts, let us forget ourselves more and speak more of God, of how to serve him better, to console him more, of the need and the way to gain souls for him. You, Sisters, can more easily speak to us of the subtleties of the love of Jesus, perhaps we can speak to you of the misery of so many souls, who live far from God and the need to bring them to Him. May we feel elevated to love God more and may you feel driven with greater zeal."

