

## MARY INVITES US TO OPEN THE DOOR OF OUR HEART

It is with a deep sense of gratitude to Jesus and Mary that we start a new year in the life of the Association. We begin in the light of Pope Francis's Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* and the 2017 Strenna dedicated to the family, and we will be accompanied by monthly catechesis of Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB, to whom our heartfelt thanks.

We give thanks for the vitality of our Association which in recent months has experienced significant moments, as we read in the chronicle in this issue of ADMAonline, in the formation of spiritual animators, in the accompaniment of families, and in the ever more vibrant and dynamic witness of our youth. There have been meetings and experiences characterized by intense prayer and deep joy, as we experienced the maternal presence of Mary Help of Christians, our hope and consolation. It has been a time when we have sought God in the silence of the heart, praying personally and together in order to experience the joy of the Gospel and the beauty of being a family.

In a world more and more attached to material and earthly things, Mary reminds us of the ultimate goal of heaven, inviting us in this year of mercy to open the holy door of our hearts to know that God exists, that God sees us and loves us, enlightens us, and warms our hearts despite all that is happening, often though our own fault as, for example, in war. This year we see a rapid increase in our fragility as a result of war, terrorism, earthquakes ... So often we are like the peacock, acting as if we were to live forever. Everything is "we, we, we". But we see, through sickness and many misfortunes, that we are weak today and tomorrow we will be gone. This life is passing.

**Our Lady is our hope.** She is our guiding star that leads us to the right destination. Like the sailors who navigated by the stars, so we too must follow Our Lady and the One she points out to us, her Son. We have to follow him. She calls us and is with us. By her example and by her presence she invites us to begin a new life, to leave sin behind and start a life with God, honouring him, loving him and praying to him.

In a restless and insecure world, like sailors on a stormy sea, we are invited, as in the prophetic dream of Don Bosco, to anchor our lives to the columns of the Eucharist and Mary, renewing our prayer of the heart through Eucharistic adoration, and our entrustment to Mary Help of Christians with the prayer of the Holy Rosary. May she obtain for us with her love, **heavenly joy and peace of heart!**



Formation programme; *Amoris Laetitia*  
The joy of love in the light of the Word

Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB

**Pope Francis is a prophet of joy.** His smile is contagious. He is never forgetful of the tragedies that afflict the world. He is always close to those who are rejected and forgotten, and he always reaches out to those on the margins. Francis knows that love conquers and the hope that springs from faith is greater than all our weakness and misery.

With this look of mercy, hope and joy, Pope Francis has led the Church and the world to look to the primary source of human love, which is the family. We want to be guided by his eyes to help us to discover step by step throughout these months **the joy of love:** in our families, in the family of the Church, in the Salesian Family and in the whole human family of which we are all part, and which today needs more than ever new eyes to rediscover the path of love and joy.

There are two other looks which are precious to us, so much so that we are unable to depart from them, like the child who feels secure only when he knows he is under the gaze of his father and mother. They are the eyes of Mary Help of Christians and the eyes of Don Bosco. As we make our way through *Amoris Laetitia* chapter by chapter, month by month, the Help of Christians and Don Bosco will help us to see how we can take concrete steps to grow as children in love and joy with our hearts in tune with the Pope's heart. We are encouraged in this journey by the Strenna for 2017 given by the Rector Major to the entire Salesian Family: **"WE ARE FAMILY! Every home is a school of Life and Love."**

### Start from the beginning

The starting point of *Amoris Laetitia* is the 'principle' with which the Bible begins, and which is cited by John as the first word of his gospel. Francis invites us to direct our gaze there because this was the direction in which Jesus invited his disciples to look in order to comprehend the beauty of marriage, going beyond even the Law of Moses.

*They embody the primordial divine plan clearly spoken of by Christ himself: "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female?" (Mt 19:4). We hear an echo of the command found in the Book of Genesis: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Gen 2:24)". (AL 9)*

The family is really the beginning of everything because it is the closest thing there is on earth to the life of God, from which everything originates and where everything will find its fulfilment.

*The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection. Saint John Paul II shed light on this when he said, "Our God in his deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family, for he has within himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love. That love, in the divine family, is the Holy Spirit." The family is thus not unrelated to God's very being. (AL 11)*

We have already seen that Pope Francis is an expert on family life from what he has written and the way he was able to guide the family of the Church, especially on the occasion of the two synods dedicated to the family. He never fails to point out that the Church is by its nature the Virgin, Bride and Mother, who responds without reserve to Christ, corresponding fully to his perfect sacrifice, and becoming fruitful for the salvation of all. The Church is in this sense like a 'holy door' through which we enter the mystery of God, just as in the plan of creation we enter life through a bride and mother made fruitful by the love of a father. In fact, we are all children of a mother and spouse, even when the beginning of life is not under the light of the sun but under the shadow of heavy clouds.

Francis knew admirably how to guide his sons and daughters, putting himself as one of the flock, some-

times behind, sometimes in front, carrying the torch that allows us all to make the journey together. **Synod, sun-odos**: on the road together. Even before he says it in the chapters of the apostolic exhortation, he made us see that in practice it is possible to be guided by love and ensure that differences do not become division, but opportunities to grow and come together in even greater communion.



### In the light of the Word

If the Word of God is the starting principle it does not mean that we can forget it as we proceed on our journey. We look to Mary. For her too, in the beginning was the Word: Ave. In the original Greek it is very close to 'joy of love'. It is an imperative (Kaire): 'Hail, full of grace'. From then on, the Word will be the whole of her life. It will be part of her flesh, until she, who is a creature like us, is transfigured and resurrected like her Son.

This journey of the Word from the first joyful mystery to the fifth glorious mystery has become for millions of families in history their domestic Bible, as they contemplate the history of our salvation around the kitchen table of, with the eyes of Mary, taking her into our own home just as John did from Good Friday onwards.

It is touching to see that Mary is the mother of the family well beyond the confines of churches and even beyond Catholic homes. In Africa and Asia there are millions of non-Christian believers who honour Mary - also through the rosary! - with great respect and reverence, beginning with Muslims. Mary occupies a prominent place in the Qur'an (34 times she is referred to). It even speaks of her assumption into heaven.

The rosary helps us to make the mysteries of salvation our own. They show how the mercy of God has come close to every person. Mary's presence ensures that the mysteries of every man and every woman, of every home, are brought close to God's mercy. While we pass the rosary beads through our fingers she guides 'our feet into the way of peace' as Zechariah said when Mary visited his family. This is what happens when we pray the rosary together, especially in the evening after a wearying day.

Pope Francis wanted the three days of 'Marian Jubilee' during the Year of Mercy, to begin on the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. The rosary has been prayed for about 800 years. It is like a great river of mercy in the history of the church in which all, saints and sinners alike, feel at home, always welcomed, always loved by 'her eyes of mercy'.

## The mysteries of the rosary in the Salesian Family of Don Bosco

The rosary was the first word of God that Margaret taught John and his brothers. It was a small hidden seed which would nurture many other mysteries of salvation. It is enough to zoom in on two or three details of the history of the Salesian Family to realize this.

On 8 October 1848, just two years after the beginning of the Oratory at Valdocco, in his brother Joseph's house at the Becchi, Don Bosco dedicated a small room on the ground floor which he had converted into a chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary. For over twenty years it was to be the goal of the memorable autumn walks with the boys and the band of the oratory. There in 1852 Michael Rua received the clerical habit. And it was there, on 2 October 1854, that Dominic Savio met Don Bosco for the first time.

These were quiet beginnings but what grace, what abundance of life and holiness has grown from those 'Salesian joyful mysteries', held together by the prayer of the rosary and limitless trust in Mary. Don Bosco inherited from Mamma Margaret, as Dominic Savio and Michael Rua inherited from Don Bosco: a family school of evangelization and faith.

That was a long time ago. Thank God today we are able to access the Word of God in a way that is immediate and yet so profound which was never possible before in human history: everything is just a click away. The scriptural text is available in all languages, with the best commentaries and the exegesis most appropriate to our level of understanding. The Word illuminates the journey of faith of many families and each family has its own way of receiving it.

The form may change, but the essence is the same: **the principle and the foundation of family life is the Lord**, through dialogue with him in prayer, contemplation of the mysteries of our salvation in the text of the scriptures and through the recitation of the rosary. This is what we mean by building on the rock.

There is a popular saying in the English-speaking world: **'The family that prays together stays together'**. This is the anchor of the family unit that goes straight to the centre in the mystery of the Trinity, as Pope Francis says in the early paragraphs of *Amoris Laetitia*. This is the first and ultimate source of communion, of which the union of man and woman in conjugal love is the closest image.

Mary is our teacher - the one who teach us to pray, to know and live the mystery of the 'Word made flesh' in a form accessible to all. Don Bosco is a very credible witness, along with all the other saints, each in their own unique way, that if we go to Jesus through Mary we can never go wrong, and it bears fruit beyond all expectation.

### Seeds ... to be opened

I will become familiar with the letter that the Pope wrote to me. I will not let myself be frightened by the number of pages. It is neither difficult nor too long (just read a bit at a time, as he suggests ...). Having a free heart makes a difference immediately, just as the good soil of the Gospel parable is different from the stony path.

Trusting the wise eyes of Pope Francis, I will make an effort to look at the principle: the love to which I am called as a son or daughter and as a member of my family, whatever my condition and situation, has its deepest roots in the fact that we are made in the image of God, which is the family, which is the COMMUNION from which everything is born and to which all life is directed.

Praying with the word, contemplating the mysteries of God and the mystery of my life through the recitation of the Rosary is the way to build our house on the rock. I entrust to Mary the beginning of the new working year, or academic or pastoral year ... letting myself be guided by her on a daily basis to ensure the proper time to give my heart the life-breath of prayer. I ask her to help me to be a Christian with this kind of fidelity.

**'The family that prays together stays together.'** What does it mean for me to take this call seriously ... **to pray together?** Perhaps others in the home are better prepared to believe it and more willing to pray together than I might have imagined.

## FAMILY CHRONICLE

### PHILIPPINES NORTH - NEW SPIRITUAL ANIMATORS

On 26 June 2016 during their regular meeting, the members of the National Council of ADMA from the Northern Philippines met Fr Remo Bati, SDB, and Sr Christine Maguyon, FMA, newly appointed spiritual animators. Fr Bati is currently the Rector of the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Paranaque City. Sr Christine Maguyon is currently director of the Mary Help of Christians communities of the Technical Institute in Pampanga. As stated in the ADMA Rules in Article 13, the spiritual animators are appointed by the Provincial of the Salesians or of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. They have the task of promoting formation in Salesian spirituality in communion with the local Church and with the Association worldwide.

ADMA in the Philippines is very grateful and thankful to have had Fr Nestor Impelido, SDB, and Sr Ma. Asela Chavez, FMA, as their animators for several years. Their spiritual guidance has supported and directed every member in the ADMA mission to spread the devotion to Mary Help of Christians and love for the Eucharist. We pray that the Lord and Mary Help of Christians may continue to guide them and assist them in their new roles and commitments. (Maria Junifer Maliglig, National President).

### VOMERO, NAPLES

We would like to share a few moments of grace, of spirituality and of fraternal communion that we had in our parish during the months of May and June. On 31 May, at the end of the Marian month, the ADMA members renewed their commitment during a Mass celebrated by the parish priest and Spiritual Animator Fr Italo Sammarro, while five new members were enrolled in the Association (Consiglia Polito).



### Turin - ADMA youth at WYD 2016

WYD in Krakow this year was an experience of church, a sharing of faith, and a journey undertaken together. A group of 20 young people, members of ADMA in Turin-Valdocco, along with 450 of our peers in the Salesian Youth Movement of Piedmont, undertook together a stage of our spiritual journey, to be really, as Pope Francis said, young people with their boots on, not "couch potatoes", so as to become sowers of hope through the joyful witness of a faith that is expressed in self-giving and is at the service of others, without being afraid to dream big but being able to **trust and share and smile**.



## SPAIN - COURSE FOR DELEGATES



The 11<sup>th</sup> course for SDB and FMA Delegates in Spain and Portugal took place from 27 to 30 July 2016 at El Escorial (Madrid). The goal was to "grow together as evangelizers". More than 160 people took part under the guidance of Fr Luis Fernandez, the National Delegate for the Cooperators and Past Pupils. There were over 50 participants from ADMA led by the National Delegate **Fr Joan Faner**. The new National Coordinator **Signa Laura Barneto** was among those present. The days were very intense and rich in content and moments of fraternity. They highlighted the charismatic strength of the Salesian Family in its various expressions. The initial intervention by Fr José Nuñez recalled some priorities and strategies for the animation of the groups of the Salesian Family in the light of the exhortation of Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium*. Work was then divided according to the different groups. Sr Maria Luisa Miranda, FMA Councillor for the Salesian Family, pointed out some priorities for ADMA in order to respond to our tired society that is searching. She mentioned care of the interior life as the main resource and mercy as a way of life. She also said that popular religiosity can be a privileged instrument of mission. It has a priority place in the family and in the mission of ADMA.

The President, Signor Lucca Tullio, and Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, animator of ADMA Primary attended and shared experiences, good practices and above all the desire to grow more in communion and collaboration, enhancing the responsibility of the laity in the animation of the Association. Fr Pierluigi presented the Salesian Family as a charismatic reality and called for the regulations to be valued. He presented the letters written in 1988 by Fr Egidio Viganò which constitute a great theological and spiritual heritage for ADMA. Signor Tullio shared practices and reflections from ADMA Primary. He referred to the identity and role of the Local Council, and to the privileged attention to be given to the family.

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/)

For every communication you can contact  
the following email adress: [pcameroni@sdb.org](mailto:pcameroni@sdb.org)

PRIMARY ADMA - RETREAT FOR ADMA FAMILIES - PRACHARBON 2016



From 31 July to 20 August, in three turns of one week each, 400 people attended a retreat organized in the Alpine House of Pracharbon (Valle d'Aosta).

This might not seem newsworthy since there are many who choose the summer to spend time in contact with nature recharging their spiritual batteries. What makes this retreat unique and modern in this period after the two synods on the family,

is the fact that the participants were about ninety couples with their children, from those just a few months old to those who are already of age.

The formula is simple: the older children take care of the little ones with a very well organized school-camp programme, 'giving back' to their parents a little of the time that has been dedicated to them. In this way parents can spend these days in prayer and intimacy with God, recharge their faith, hope and love as spouses and parents, and resume family life with renewed 'joy of love'.

It is hard to communicate in words the beauty and warmth of the family atmosphere that prevailed. Everybody cared for everybody else. The same tenderness and affection that were shown to the children is what was shown to the Lord and to Mary in prayer and in friendship that united all. *Amoris Laetitia* is like the GPS that guided the week. There were plenty of times of silence - Thursday was a full desert-day. Silence alternates with intense moments of discussion and sharing where the Word shed light on life and life gives practical and unique intensity to the Word of God, of a kind that can be experienced or created only in a family.

These are ordinary families, not an elite. Through the good work of primary ADMA in Turin Valdocco, the Association of Mary Help of Christians has been bringing together a large group of young families for the past ten years. Of those who were married during this period, none have been separated. Most of the couples have three or four children, some of them even six.

What are the pillars that give such rich consistency to the faith journey and to conjugal love? They are those that Don Bosco dreamt: the Eucharist through which we remain firmly anchored to the presence of the Lord as the one rock on which the house is built; and Mary on whom every family relies confidently at every moment of life, joyful or painful. Nothing could be more fundamental to Christian life and nothing more splendidly fruitful.

For me this has been an experience of God in others. The example of those fathers and mothers so in love with God and Mary, with their spouse and children, giving of themselves wholeheartedly and with passion, is itself a PROPHECY (also in the sense of reproach) for me a Salesian religious and priest. It destroys all my excuses and postponements! (Fr Silvio Roggia SDB).



## CAPACI (PALERMO) - IT ALL STARTED WITH A DREAM!



In 1991, a lady from Capaci called **Agnese Puccio** had a dream ... just like the one John Bosco had at the age of nine. She saw a huge field ... with young people ... and Mary Help of Christians who invited her to teach catechism to those young people. Agnese began to read to find out something about Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians. From Turin she received a beautiful large poster of the Help of Christians which she got framed and she got a place of honour for it in the parish Church. Then she heard about ADMA. The Parish Priest Father Philip encouraged her to start with a small group to pray the Rosary, to do good works with the elderly, and to study in order to become a catechist ... the dream began to become a reality in the local church and neighbourhood.

A few years later, when the group was already established, the Parish Priest asked a Salesian Sister from the FMA house in Palermo to come for the monthly meetings. The Sister who began this mission was **Sister Francesca Vicari** who carried out the formation and other initiatives. Later **Sister Maria Ausilia Consiglio** gave a generous contribution both for the education of the faith and for the co-ordination of catechesis, placing herself at the service of the children and young people of the town. At the end of 2012, Sister Ausilia proposed something different: catechesis in preparation for the sacraments is not enough, something else is needed in the summer to occupy the young people in their free time. Don Bosco used to say: "summer is the devil's harvest!"

In 2013 ADMA agreed to run a Course for Leaders with two months of preparation, hard work and considerable sacrifice, with meetings and workshops ... Two hundred children took part that year with more than fifty leaders. The presence of Mary was tangible. The final gathering took place in the square with an exhibition of works in the presence of civil and religious authorities, parents and friends. They were asked to repeat the experience every year, because it was considered very significant, and beneficial for the growth of the young people!

For four years now we have been working to give the town a testimony of generous service. In fact, the number enrolled this year came to nearly 400 young people with 80 leaders. The dream has borne fruit!  
(Sister Maria Ausilia Consiglio).

### Missionary intention

That the 147th Salesian missionary expedition may promote the missionary spirit and enthusiasm for vocations throughout the Salesian Society

### Testimony of Salesian sanctity

The Servant of God Fr Carlo Braga (1889-1971) was a missionary in China and the Philippines. In 1964 he wrote to a lady friend: "I should I have the holiness necessary to represent the long-suffering mercy and goodness of the Divine Saviour. I should sacrifice myself unto death for the people God has sent me. I understand why blood and the complete sacrifice of ourselves is needed to save, redeem, build and renew. I would like to ask you to help me in this ministry with special acts to make our redemption fruitful and apply the holy Blood of Jesus! Alone I am not enough. I am but a drop in an ocean that is lost and abandoned. I need to feel supported by heroic and generous people."