

MARY INVITES US TO PRAY FOR PEACE

Our Lady invites us to pray for peace and invites us to be at peace. The world is so much in need of peace. The presence and the intercession of Mary, and her messages are a constant invitation to change our lives, to no longer live selfish, worldly lives, but to live according to the Gospel. If we live a life of prayer we will have peace. **If we live in peace we will feel the need to witness**, because if we are in peace, we are with God, because God is our peace. If we become instruments of peace, we will have peace. At the present time there is great need to pray for peace in the world, in our hearts, in our families, in the Church, everywhere ... The danger is that we pray only with our lips ... We often talk about God without having a real relationship with Him. But **prayer consists in an intimate relationship with God**, living in him, letting ourselves be guided by Him.

At this time of year we celebrate the saints and remember the deceased. The Saints are given as examples to be imitated, friends we can rely on, intercessors to be invoked. We need to know them and read their lives and choose a few in particular as friends on the journey and in the struggles of life.

To be men and women of peace we must renounce sin, practise fasting, and be faithful to the practice of sacramental confession in order to be inwardly purified and renewed. In this way we can be men and women who fast and pray and confess our sins and so become strong and righteous persons, firm in faith. One who knows how to say no to food, also knows how to say no to sin. From little things great things are born. Thinking about others is also a form of fasting. Today we have too many things, but there is so much poverty of spirit. We are poor in prayer, poor in faith ... Our Lady calls us to be missionaries of joy in this world, missionaries of hope, missionaries with a great heart. But this requires daily prayer that allows God to live in us. The fact that Mary comes among us is proof that Heaven exists. It is not an illusion, but a reality.

We feel this presence of Mary Help of Christians in our Association where groups are growing, new ways of journeying in faith are emerging, congresses are celebrated, and there are meetings that renew the sense of belonging and urge us to bear witness to the gospel.



Lucca Tullio, President
Fr Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, Spiritual Animator

3. Eyes fixed on Jesus: the vocation of the family

Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB

The first proclamation

In and among families, the Gospel message should always resound; the core of that message, the kerygma, is what is "most beautiful, most excellent, most appealing and at the same time most necessary". (LA 58). This is how Pope Francis begins the third chapter of *Amoris Laetitia*. The truth that is "the most beautiful, most excellent, most appealing and at the same time most necessary" (EG 35) in proclaiming the Gospel is what is at the heart of our faith, what started it all after the resurrection. It is firmly anchored on one of the main points of *Evangelii Gaudium*, from which the quotation shown here is taken. At the beginning, there were still no great treatises, no Catholic universities or theological libraries. There was a small group of disciples together with Mary and the twelve apostles, and they by their proclamation, which was both essential and irreplaceable, transformed the world more than any other movement of thought, ideology or philosophy. So what then is this concentration of beauty and grandeur so attractive and necessary for the family that Francis wants to propose in the third chapter of *Amoris Laetitia*, after hitting us in the previous chapter with the 'sorrowful mysteries' that afflict many families today? **The kerygma is the gaze of Jesus on the family.**

When Jesus was presented with the question on marriage, asking his opinion on what is sufficient as a motive for 'writing a certificate of divorce' and putting away one's wife, 'as Moses commanded us' (note the hypocrisy in the way the question is put) he asks everyone to start again from the beginning, from what God wanted of us, the 'kerygma' of our genesis. "Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Mt 19, 8). (LA 62)

It can be enlightening to go back to the text of Matthew (19, 1-15) and to the text of Genesis (1,26 / 2,18-25) to which the Gospel refers.

If we look at the great mystery of love between man and woman through the eyes of Jesus, everything becomes a gift. **"Marriage is a gift of the Lord"** (AL 61) in everything that characterizes it. The 'gift' is 'free, total, faithful, and fruitful'. This is the heart, which is the principle of conjugal love and family life. It is also the 'kerygma' of the love of God in Jesus, he became 'Son of Man' through the action of the Spirit in the womb of Mary: free, total, faithful and fruitful for the whole of her life for all of us. Between God's love for humanity, made flesh in the love of Christ for his Church of which the cross is the fulfilment, and the love between man and woman, there is a similarity, a closeness, so great that it is difficult to express except by using the same word that is used for the Eucharist. It is **a sacrament**.

Married love is a sacrament of the love of the Trinity. In the human family gathered as one by Christ, the "image and likeness" of the Holy Trinity (cf. Gen 1:26) - the mystery from which all true love flows - has been restored. (AL 71). The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment. The sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses, since "their mutual belonging is a real representation, through the sacramental sign, of the same relationship between Christ and the Church. The married couple are therefore a permanent reminder for the Church of what took place on the cross" (AL 72, the quote is from John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 13).

Under this divine gaze everything becomes a gift, with a fertility and beauty that goes far beyond what we could imagine by ourselves. **First among the gifts is the 'one flesh', becoming one flesh.** Sexual union, lovingly experienced and sanctified by the sacrament, is in turn a path of growth in the life of grace for the couple. It is the "nuptial mystery". The meaning and value of their physical union is expressed in the words of consent, in which they accepted and offered themselves each to the other, in order to share their lives completely. (AL 74). Every moment of their living together becomes gift, including the most normal and hidden events of domestic life. On this point Pope Francis makes a beautiful reference to what Paul VI, now Blessed, said in Nazareth in 1964. 'Nazareth teaches us the meaning of family life, its loving communion, its simple and austere beauty, its sacred and inviolable character. May it teach how sweet and irreplaceable is its training, how fundamental and incomparable its role in the social order' (Paul VI, *Address in Nazareth*, 5 January 1964) (AL 66).

Inseparable from this embrace of divine human love is the gift of children. The child who is born "does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfilment". [CCC 2366] He or she does not appear at the end of a process, but is present from the beginning of love as an essential feature, one that cannot be denied without disfiguring that love itself. (AL 80). It follows that education is an integral part of the gift that the parents are called to make of themselves to their children. And here Francis uses strong words: "I feel it important to reiterate that the overall education of children is a "most serious duty" and at the same time a "primary right" of parents. This is not just a task or a burden, but an essential and inalienable right that parents are called to defend and of which no one may claim to deprive them. The State offers educational programmes in a subsidiary way, supporting the parents in their inalienable role; parents themselves enjoy the right to choose freely the kind of education - accessible and of good quality - which they wish to give their children in accordance with their convictions." (AL 84)

Conceived full of grace

One day when I was a child I went to catechism class in early December during the novena in honour of the Immaculate Conception, and the parish priest came out with a word that I just did not understand. The word was 'Protoevangelium'. It sounded more like a pharmaceutical product than something belonging to the church. In Lourdes on 25 March 1858 Mary said to Bernadette (speaking in her local dialect) '*Que soy era Immaculada Counceptiou*'. Bernadette went running to the priest's house repeating those words she did not understand, so as not to forget them.

The 'kerygma' of the Gospel on the family and of the Gospel which is itself the family of the world, is already contained here in this 'protos', in this first good news that is not made of any word. It was something that nobody noticed at the time, but it has changed the whole of history - the conception of Mary, nine months before her birth. Every time we say the Hail Mary we cast our anchor on this beginning of everything, Kerygma and *kairos* of our lives from here to eternity.

Let us meditate quietly on these verses of Luke 1, 26-38. There we see clearly how God conceives us, how he wants us to be, how he dreams that our life will become. He wants us full of grace (which is the Gospel translation of the word 'immaculate'). This is not a utopia, because our mother is immaculate, from beginning to end, and she was given to us at the foot of the cross that we might also be able to become like her. But that Hail Mary is the sacrament, the visible sign of another conception that took place at that moment in Nazareth. It is there that 'the Word was made flesh'. In fact, we celebrate the Annunciation on 25 March, exactly nine months before Christmas. In fact, it was the same day of the year that was chosen for the dialogue with Bernadette, with that name she did not know the meaning of. This is a detail, a small 'Kerygma' that cannot go unnoticed by those who love the Blessed Virgin, our Mother.

"I feel it urgent to state that, if the family is the sanctuary of life, the place where life is conceived and cared for, it is a horrendous contradiction when it becomes a place where life is rejected and destroyed. So great is the value of a human life, and so inalienable the right to life of an innocent child growing in the mother's womb, that no alleged right to one's own body can justify a decision to terminate that life, which is an end in itself and which can never be considered the "property" of another human being." (AL 83).

The conception of the Salesian Family

At noon on 8 December the Hail Mary is recited throughout the whole Salesian Family. It is the anniversary of our conception which took place, according to Don Bosco, on 8 December 1841 in the sacristy of the church of St Francis of Assisi, a few hundred metres from the city hall of Turin. Before he said Mass that day he saw a young migrant who was curled up in the church to shelter from the cold. Don Bosco saved him from being maltreated by the sacristan. After Mass he began a conversation dialogue with him that is recorded in his memoirs and is recognized as the 'protos'. The first step of his mission was a simple Hail Mary said with all his heart. Looking back at the end of his life he could say that everything started with that Hail Mary.

Another fact, where the history of the Church and Salesian history are in unison, serves as further proof that that day marks the conception of our family. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed on 8 December 1854 (3 years and 3 months before those words that Bernadette did not understand, even though they were spoken in her dialect).

The event was celebrated at Valdocco. Dominic Savio was one of the boys at the Oratory. In the months that followed he founded a sodality dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, completely of his own initiative. Its purpose was to make friends with the newcomers to the Oratory and in that way to help Don Bosco in his mission. On 9 December 1859 Don Bosco told some of his older boys that he wanted to start the Salesian Congregation. Of the nineteen who said 'yes', seventeen were from the sodality founded by Dominic Savio a few years earlier.

Seeds to be opened

How do I see the 'great mystery' of my life, and especially that of my family? Am I able to see signs of the greatness and beauty of love, from which everything is born and to which everything is directed?

What value has the HAIL MARY in my prayer? Do I succeed in joining my life to that of Jesus by looking to his mother and my mother, entrusting every step to her? When I think of Don Bosco's faith, does my own filial trust in Mary Help of Christians grow?

The love between Christ and the Church, of which marriage is called to be a sacrament/visible sign, has its fullness on the cross. When I contemplate the Cross and Mary at the foot of it, do my sufferings and the difficulties I encounter appear in a different light: instead of being obstacles do they become opportunities for an even greater love?

Immaculate Conception: with Mary do I sing the Magnificat for all the beginnings to which I owe my life: my conception, birth and baptism ... up to what started me on my way to membership of the Salesian Family?

FAMILY CHRONICLE



León (Spain) - Zonal Meetings

Assemblies of the local Councils of ADMA of the León area took place on 10 September in Santiago de Compostela and on 24 September in León. The President of the area, Marta Celada Domínguez, presided at both meetings and they were coordinated by the zonal animator, Fr Eleuterio Lobato.

After the greeting we had a few moments of prayer to our Mother Mary Help of Christians. Then we worked according to the agenda sent by the President. We reviewed the past year and we prepared the programme for the year 2016-2017, according to the guidelines and commitments set by the Primary and the programming activities of the Province of St James the Greater. We considered the Strenna of the Rec-

tor Major, Fr Angel Fernandez Artime, for 2017: "We are a family! Every home a school of life and love" and the interventions by Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, Sister Maria Luisa Miranda FMA and Mr Tullio Lucca to the school of Delegates held in El Escorial (Madrid) last July.

After the working session, we celebrated the Eucharist in honour of Mary Help of Christians, at which the Delegate Fr Eleuterio presided. He encouraged us to be instruments of Mary Help of Christians in these difficult times for the Church and for young people. We ended each of the meetings with a fraternal gathering, sharing the table with the gifts of the Lord (Fr Arcadio Cuadrado).

Cordoba (Argentina) - Second National Congress of Mary Help of Christians

The Second National Congress of Mary Help of Christians took place from 8 to 10 October 2016 in the Pius X College in Cordoba. The theme was "Mary our Help, Show us Jesus." It was attended by 230 people from the various groups of the Salesian Family.

There were three key ideas: Eucharist, Mercy and Family. These in turn will be translated

into corresponding actions: giving, mission and proclamation. This choice is based on the Jubilee of Mercy and on the Ninth National Eucharistic Congress, and was inspired also by the Synods on the family and the International Congress of Mary celebrated last year in Turin.

During the congress four topics were presented:

"The Virgin in the history of Argentina", in homage to the country on the occasion of the celebration of the bicentenary of its independence. The theme was presented by Fr Gabriel Romero SDB, Provincial of Northern Argentina (ARN) and Myriam Giuliano.

2. "Salesian spirituality is a Eucharistic spirituality of giving", by Fr Vicente Roberto Ricchetti, SDB.

3. "Mary, Mother and Teacher of our mission" by Sister Dora Maria de la Paz Aguirre and Sister Silvia Adriana Gomez, FMA.

4. "The family called to show Jesus", by Maria Ines Escribana Ursino.

Archbishop Carlos José Nájuez of Cordoba, presided at the Eucharist on Sunday 9 October.



Fifth ADMA Congress of Central America



The Fifth Congress of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians in Central America took place from 28 September to 1 October in Nicaragua. The motto was "Mary, Mother and Teacher of the family". The meeting, which was attended by 120 members, took place at the Calasanz School in Managua. It opened with a ceremony presided over by Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Managua. Among those present were Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, World Spiritual Animator of ADMA, Fr Alejandro Hernandez, Mrs Margarita Ramirez, Na-

tional President of ADMA of Nicaragua, and representatives of the Salesian Family.

The main objective was to present the renewal of the Association of Mary Help of Christians with a privileged attention to the family, in the light of the journey of ADMA in recent years and in harmony with the journey of the Church and the Salesian Family.

The working groups shared experiences and reflections starting from the contributions given by Fr Pierluigi Cameroni and related to the reading of the Identity Card of the Salesian Family from the perspective of a member of ADMA, the identity and the role of the local council and the renewal of ADMA through the family, with the presentation of the experience gained in recent years in the ADMA Primary Centre in Turin.

On Saturday 1 October, the participants shared a special day in the city of Granada celebrating the Eucharist in the Church of Mary Help of Christians and visiting the birthplace of Blessed Maria Romero Menenses. "ADMA's commitment to evangelization must be renewed through the family, by becoming signs of the joy of being children of God," Fr Pierluigi said during his homily, reminding members of the task of evangelization in the Salesian spirit of Don Bosco.



At the conclusion of the Congress, the Provincial Fr Hernandez emphasized the role of ADMA in the Salesian Family, inviting all members to take care of their Salesian and Marian formation. He emphasized the commitment and responsibility of the laity in animating and promoting the Association. From this perspective, the presence of some young people from Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala was a great sign of hope.

Turin - ADMA Primary - Marian Jubilee Year of Mercy

On Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 October 2016 about 150 members of ADMA Families from Turin came to Rome to attend the Marian Jubilee Year of Holy Mercy. In an atmosphere of great faith and joy of belonging to the Church it was nice to renew our faith at the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul and venerate the tombs of the martyrs in the Catacombs of St. Callistus. The highlight was the participation in the Holy Mass presided over by the Pope in St Peter's Square with thousands of pilgrims. In his homily Pope Francis drew on the Word of God for that Sunday and pointed to an aspect characteristic of the Association of Mary Help of Christians, that of thanksgiving: "On this Jubilee Day we are given a model, in fact, the model, to look to: Mary, our Mother. After the message of the Angel she let flow from her heart a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God: "My soul magnifies the Lord ..." We ask Our Lady to help us understand that everything is a gift of God, and to know how to give thanks: then, I assure you, our joy will be full. Only those who know how to give thanks, experience the fullness of joy."



At the Angelus, greeting the pilgrims who had come for the Marian Jubilee, the Pope said: "With you I would like to repeat the words that St John Paul II spoke on 8 October 2000, the Jubilee Act of Entrustment to Mary: "O Mother we want to entrust to you the future that awaits us. Humanity can make this world a garden, or reduce it to a pile of rubble." At this crossroads, may Our Lady help us to choose life, accepting and practising the gospel of Christ the Saviour.



The paper can be read at the following site:

www.admadonbosco.org

and here: www.donbosco-torino.it/

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Bilbao (Spain) - Start of the new year for the Association

Everything has its end and its beginning. There is a time to finish a course and there is a time to start a new one. The official inauguration of the year for ADMA in Northern Spain was in Deusto on 22 October 2016. The Provincial Fr Juan Carlos Pérez Godoy had promised a few months earlier to be present, and he was with us throughout the morning, sharing our family lunch and our time of celebration together.

The day began with the Eucharist, at which the Provincial presided. He left us three words to remember: knowledge, devotion and imitation. As a response by the participants sixteen lighted lamps were presented at the Mass (one per association) as a sign of our vigilance in the presence of the Lord and Our Lady in our lives.



The animator of the Northern Zone, Fr Arcadio Cuadrado, completed the morning with a report on the activities of the past year and a reflection on the sense of belonging to the Association. Dialogue on this point continued both in groups and in the community sharing.

About 120 people from all the associations of the Northern Zone were in attendance and they will bring back to their centres the concerns and desires of this day which was lived with fervour and commitment (Arcadio Cuadrado).

Sicily - Meeting of Local Councils

On 22 and 23 October, the ADMA groups of Sicily witnessed significant moments in their history with the visit of the President, Tullio Lucca, and the Spiritual Animator, Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, from ADMA Primary. The meetings were intended especially for members of local Councils but were open to all members. They took place in S. Gregorio (Catania) and Alcamo (Trapani). There were about 200 participants representing nearly thirty groups on the island.

Mr Tullio Lucca shared some of the lines of animation of the Association, emphasizing the role of local councils and presenting the programme for ADMA Families. There was an interesting sharing of the life of the various groups followed by a message from the Provincial Fr Giuseppe Ruta. The presence of a large number of ADMA youth from the Parish of SS. Peter and Paul in Messina, was a sign of hope for the future.

These meetings awakened in all the participants the joy of belonging to ADMA and the desire to renew their

commitment as members. The Regional President, Joseph Auteri, wrote: "We are so many stars scattered over Sicily; with our devotion to Mary Help of Christians we form a constellation to Mary. Thanks to all the ADMA centres. Thanks to Fr Cameroni and Tullio Lucca."



Missionary Intention

That in the Southern Cone region we may recognize in the popular piety of the parishes where we are working the evangelizing force that comes from the Holy Spirit, that we may be closer to the ordinary people and the poor .

Belo Horizonte (Brazil) - First ADMA Group

On 22 October 2016, thanks to the determination of Fr Didimo Pereira do Amaral and Fr Jurandyr Azevedo Araujo, after more than a year of preparation through monthly meetings, with hours of formation, times of prayer and Eucharist, and fraternal meetings, the first ADMA group was started in the Parish of Cristo Luz dos Povos, in Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil. After a spiritual retreat, six candidates expressed their commitment and adherence to ADMA during a celebration in the *Comunidade Imaculada Conceição*.



The Provincial, Fr Orestes Carlinhos Fistarol, presided at the Mass, concelebrated by Fr Jurandyr Azevedo Araujo. He gave each new member a badge and a copy of the Regulations. These are the names of the first members of this new group: Neusa dos Reis da Silva; Noscia Maria Gomes de Oliveira; Antônio de Oliveira Filho; Maria Aparecida Mota; Maria Madalena da Silva Amaral and Otto Ribeiro da Silva.

Honduras



The ADMA group from the parish of Mary Help of Christians at Comayagüela in Tegucigalpa (Honduras), during a celebration with Fr Giuseppe Leo, their Spiritual Animator. It is a group of young people and adults united in love for Mary Help of Christians.

Witness of holiness

Shortly before his death Blessed Louis Variara (1875-1923), apostle of the lepers and founder of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, wrote to his spiritual daughters: "Let us sanctify the moments of life that still remain to us, because the harvest will last forever. Ah, how much I enjoy thinking about heaven! Then we will all be eternally happy. For now we live united in spirit: obedient, humble, pure, mortified, but only in order to love ... I do not leave you orphans, because my prayers for you are unceasing in the desire to see all of you holy."