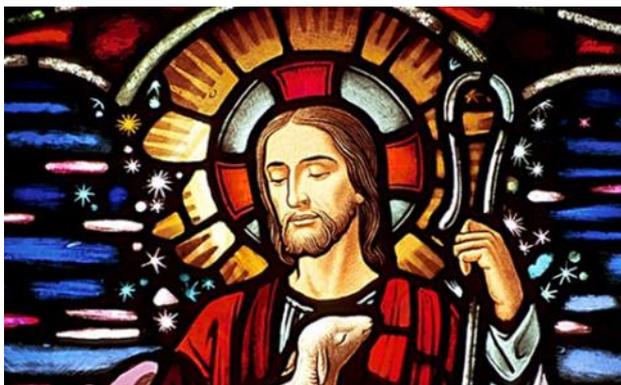


## MARY INVITES US TO OPEN OUR HEARTS TO GOD'S MERCY

The Easter season is an invitation to **accept the merciful love of God**, which was revealed in the Passover of his Son. Each of us is called to receive the Lord's grace, to convert to his love, to decide for a new life, as St. Paul exhorts us: "Brothers, once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light" (Eph 5: 8-9). There are shining Christians, full of light, seeking to serve the Lord. There are also gloomy Christians who live a life of sin far removed from the Lord. There are also the "grey Christians", who live in compromise and opportunism, sowing confusion and creating fragility and counter-witness.



Easter calls on us to **live the new life of the Gospel**, to walk in the newness of the Lord Jesus, as Pope Francis urges: "A renewed proclamation gives believers, even those who are lukewarm or non-practising, a new joy in the faith and evangelizing fruitfulness. In truth, the centre and essence of the proclamation is always the same: God who has revealed his immense love in Christ who died and is risen. He makes his faithful ever new. However old they may be, "the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40,31). Christ is the "eternal gospel" (Rev. 14,6), and is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13,8), but his richness and beauty are inexhaustible. He is forever young and a constant source of newness. The Church does not cease to wonder at "the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom 11:33). St John of the Cross says: "The breadth of wisdom and knowledge of God is so deep and vast, that even the soul that knows it can still enter more deeply." Or, as St Irenaeus says: "[Christ], in his coming has brought with him everything new." **With his newness, he can always renew our lives and our communities**, and even if we are passing through a dark period and a time of weakness in the Church, **the Christian message never gets old**. Jesus Christ can break the boring patterns which imprison us and he can surprise us with his constant divine creativity. Every time we try to return to the source and recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new roads open up, creative methods, other forms of expression, the most eloquent signs, words charged with renewed meaning for the modern world. In fact, all authentic evangelization is always "new". (*Evangelii Gaudium* n. 11).



Mary Help of Christians is with us, to help us to say a determined YES to God, to his will and his commandments. We are not alone. She is with us and intercedes for us. In all our groups, **we will celebrate the novena and the feast of Mary Help of Christians with great faith**, asking for special blessings for our families and for the whole Association which is experiencing a new springtime. **With Pope Francis, we celebrate the centenary of the apparitions at Fatima**. The Pope's pontificate was dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima: we ask for him the gift of discernment in identifying the ways of renewal for the Church, and we pray that he be protected in the difficult hours of suffering, in order to overcome, in love, the trials that the renewal of the Church presents.

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

## Formation Programme: *Amoris Laetitia*

### 8. *Where are our children?* (AL 260)

Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB

#### Education is inevitable

The seventh chapter of *Amoris Laetitia* is devoted to the family as the primary place for the education of children. That's where inevitably a person's life takes shape. So it was for each of us. "Parents always influence the moral development of their children, for better or for worse. It follows that they should take up this essential role and carry it out consciously, enthusiastically, reasonably and appropriately." (AL 259).

As the first subtitle, Pope Francis puts a question that calls to mind the question addressed to Adam: 'Where are you?' (Gen 3.9).

"Do we seek to understand 'where' our children really are in their journey? Where is their soul, do we really know? And above all, do we want to know?" (AL 261)

This shifts the educational commitment from a 'quantitative' approach, controlling their whereabouts which can become obsessive - 'We cannot control every situation that a child may experience' - to a 'qualitative commitment'.

Taking up one of the fundamental principles of *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis repeats forcefully: " 'Time is greater than space' (EG 222). it is more important to start processes than to dominate spaces." (AL 261).

Relying on time means accepting that growth is always a gradual process that requires patience. It requires the art of knowing how to wait, and at the same time to be present, stimulate, and also correct, in good time and in an appropriate manner. The 'how to' spend the time of education together is structured in a variety of forms, linked to the unique history of each family. But there is how NOT to do it, which applies to all: "One of the things children need to learn from their parents is not to get carried away by anger. A child who does something wrong must be corrected, but never treated as an enemy or an object on which to take out one's own frustrations." (AL 269)

The vital dynamism that makes family time a continuous season of growth is called TRUST.

"A person's affective and ethical development is ultimately grounded in a particular experience, namely, that his or her parents can be trusted. This means that parents, as educators, are responsible, by their affection and example, for instilling in their children trust and loving respect. When children no longer feel that, for all their faults, they are important to their parents, or that their parents are sincerely concerned about them, this causes deep hurt and many difficulties along their path to maturity. (AL 263).

#### Freedom is something great (AL 267)

Precisely because it is our greatest treasure - what makes us the image of God - educating to freedom is a very noble task. It is very challenging and by its nature the



outcome cannot be predetermined. The logic of cause and effect does not work in the way it applies to many other human activities. Anyone who educates a child realizes that they are engaging with a mystery: the mystery of human life in all its grandeur, which is centred precisely in freedom.

"Freedom is something magnificent, yet it can also be dissipated and lost. Moral education has to do with cultivating freedom through ideas, incentives, practical applications, stimuli, rewards, examples, models, symbols, reflections, encouragement, dialogue and a constant rethinking of our way of doing things; all these can help develop those stable interior principles that lead us spontaneously to do good. Virtue is a conviction that has become a steadfast inner principle of operation. The virtuous life thus builds, strengthens and shapes freedom, lest we become slaves of dehumanizing and antisocial inclinations." (AL 267).

Pope Francis encourages us to do everything possible so that children perceive what is good for them and do it. (AL 265). We do not convince others, nor are we convinced ourselves, by force and coercion. that persuades and convinces. This is in line with *Evangelii Gaudium* where it says that attraction is the most effective way to evangelize: "All [...] have a right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but "by attraction". (EG 14).

This does not mean that we should let things go and not be firm when necessary. "It is also essential to help children and adolescents to realize that misbehaviour has consequences. They need to be encouraged to put themselves in other people's shoes and to acknowledge the hurt they have caused. Some punishments - those for aggressive, antisocial conduct - can partially serve this purpose. It is important to train children firmly to ask forgiveness and to repair the harm done to others." (AL 268).

Knowing with wisdom how to balance encouragement and firmness, ensuring that discipline encourages inner dynamism without killing desire, is a true art. (AL 270) Education is a work of art as the Pope said in previous chapters (AL 16).

Personal freedom, however, always remains a mystery. Even when the parents are holy, humanly mature and blessed with great teaching skills, what the child chooses to become is never a programmable product. The attention Pope Francis pays to the St Monicas of today is very beautiful. He bows down respectfully before so many mothers who suffer from the abandonment of the faith (at least apparent) by their children: "I would like to express my particular gratitude to all those mothers who continue to pray, like Saint Monica, for their children who have strayed from Christ." (AL 288).

### Living beyond the boundaries of one's own home

"The family is the primary setting for socialization, since it is where we first learn to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one. The task of education is to make us sense that the world and society are also our home; it trains us how to live together in this greater home. In the family, we learn closeness, care and respect for others. We break out of our fatal self-absorption and come to realize that we are living with and alongside others who are worthy of our concern, our kindness and our affection." (AL 276).

This is a splendid passage. Social life is rooted in the domestic life of each family as a branch is rooted in the vine. There is nothing more important to any civilization and nation than the family. The value of a parliament or any other political or administrative structure is not comparable to the value of the family, always decisively greater and more fundamental. Governments that are unable to recognize this truth of human life and do not act accordingly, end up compromising and even ruining everything.

The 'social' face of the family refers to many other realities and issues of great educational importance. There are three in particular:

## COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

"The educational process that occurs between parents and children can be helped or hindered by the increasing sophistication of the communications and entertainment media. When well used, these media can be helpful for connecting family members who live apart from one another. Frequent contacts help to overcome difficulties. Still, it is clear that these media cannot replace the need for more personal and direct dialogue, which requires physical presence or at least hearing the voice of the other person. We know that sometimes they can keep people apart rather than together, as when at dinnertime everyone is surfing on a mobile phone, or when one spouse falls asleep waiting for the other who spends hours playing with an electronic device. This is also something that families have to discuss and resolve in ways which encourage interaction without imposing unrealistic prohibitions." (AL 278)



## ALLIANCE BETWEEN FAMILIES AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

We know the African proverb: 'It takes a whole village to raise a child'. Pope Francis has quoted it on more than one occasion. Here he reminds us that it is essential for a good socialization of children that families and Christian communities to which they belong create a good synergy, a true alliance - with the biblical richness of this word. He refers in particular to the Christian initiation and the 'importance of Catholic schools' (AL 279).

## SEXUAL EDUCATION

Pope Francis stressed the importance of 'positive and prudent sex education' (AL 280), all the more necessary in social settings which do not facilitate healthy growth in this area so fundamental to life. "It is not helpful to overwhelm them with data without also helping them to develop a critical sense in dealing with the onslaught of new ideas and suggestions, the flood of pornography and the overload of stimuli that can deform sexuality." (AT 281).

Young people need to realize that they are bombarded by messages that are not beneficial for their growth towards maturity. They should be helped to recognize and to seek out positive influences, while shunning the things that cripple their capacity for love. We also have to realize that "a new and more appropriate language" is needed "in introducing children and adolescents to the topic of sexuality."

Francis also warns against "sex education [that] deals primarily with "protection" through the practice of "safe sex". Such expressions convey a negative attitude towards the natural procreative finality of sexuality, as if an eventual child were an enemy to be protected against. This way of thinking promotes narcissism and aggressivity in place of acceptance." "The important thing is to teach them sensitivity to dif-

ferent expressions of love, mutual concern and care, loving respect and deeply meaningful communication. All of these prepare them for an integral and generous gift of self that will be expressed, following a public commitment, in the gift of their bodies. Sexual union in marriage will thus appear as a sign of an all-inclusive commitment, enriched by everything that has preceded it." (AL 283)

### Handing on the Faith

If the family is the 'inevitable' place for education, "the home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the MEANING and BEAUTY of the faith, to PRAY and to SERVE our neighbour." (AL 287). These four words, which I have written in capital letters, are the synthesis of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, made up of four parts: 1. What we believe - MEANING - 2. What WE are celebrating - BEAUTY - 3. How we live as disciples of Jesus - SERVE - 4. ... in dialogue with the Lord - PRAY. Family life embodies the best catechesis there can be.

"Faith is God's gift, received in baptism, and not our own work, yet parents are the means that God uses for it to grow and develop." Hence "it is beautiful when mothers teach their little children to blow a kiss to Jesus or to Our Lady. How much love there is in that! At that moment the child's heart becomes a place of prayer." Handing on the faith presumes that parents themselves genuinely trust God, seek him and sense their need for him, for only in this way does "one generation laud your works to another, and declare your mighty acts" (Ps 144:4) and "fathers make known to children your faithfulness" (Ps 144 4) (AL 287).

### Seeds to be opened

#### Where are the children?

I will take seriously the questions of Pope Francis, directed personally to me and to my family: "We try to understand 'where' the children really are on their way? Do we know where their soul really is? And above all, do we want to know?" (AL 261) "Who is capable of taking young people seriously? Who helps them to prepare seriously for a great and generous love?" (AL284)

#### Transmitting the faith

The evangelizing scope of the family is immense, in and "even outside of the family circle." (AL 289). The hardships and difficulties faced nowadays are countless. But this will not stop the missionary potential of our families. How do we revive the fire of Pentecost fire that is inside the home, right where I live?

#### Romans 12

Chapter 12 of the Letter to the Romans is a Lectio Divina (ie 'as God reads') of family and community relationships, when they aim to raise and educate each other. It has twenty-one verses in all. It can be used as a mirror to review the progress made so far, and as a window on the future, to see the path that we intend to go from here on.

The paper can be read at the following site:

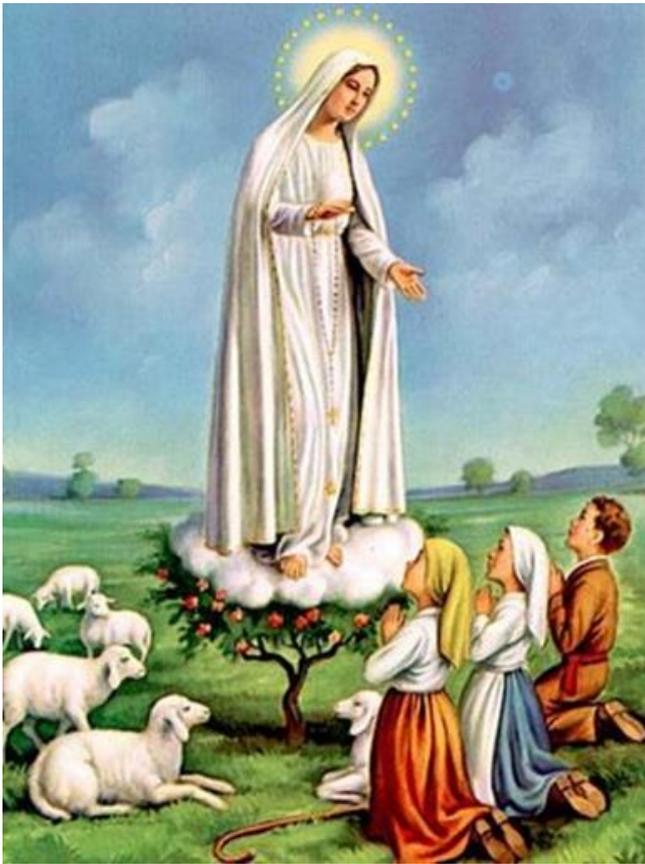
[www.admadonbosco.org](http://www.admadonbosco.org)

and here: [www.donbosco-torino.it/](http://www.donbosco-torino.it/)

For every communication you can contact

the following email address: [pcameroni@sdb.org](mailto:pcameroni@sdb.org)

## 13 May: Centenary of the Apparitions of Our Lady in Fatima



To mark the centenary of the apparitions to three young shepherds, Pope Francis will travel to Fatima where probably he will canonize the two younger seers, Jacinta and Francesco Marto. Why does Our Lady of Fatima seem so important to him, as indeed it was for his two predecessors? The surprising events that took place in Fatima in May 1917 took place while the world was immersed in the twentieth century - a century that was to see two world wars and genocide on a large scale, the invention of the atomic bomb and the rapid emergence of technology that would transform the world and the human race.

The Pope's devotion to Our Lady of Fatima is a sign of the historic ties of the papacy with the prophecies of Fatima. **St John Paul II** visited Fatima three times. In 2000, he beatified Jacinta and Francisco. He was also responsible for entrusting the Third Millennium to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at the statue of Our Lady on Sunday 8 October 2000, when more than 1,400 bishops were present for the Mass of the Jubilee. **Pope Benedict XVI** also strongly supported Fatima and visited the shrine in May 2010, when among other things he said: "We would be mistaken to think that Fatima's prophetic mission is complete. Here there takes on new life the plan of God which asks humanity from the beginning: "Where is your brother Abel [...]. Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the

ground!" (*Gen 4:9*). Mankind has succeeded in unleashing a cycle of death and terror, but failed in bringing it to an end... In sacred Scripture we often find that God seeks righteous men and women in order to save the city of man and he does the same here, in Fatima, when Our Lady asks: "Do you want to offer yourselves to God, to endure all the sufferings which he will send you, in an act of reparation for the sins by which he is offended and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?" (*Memoirs of Sister Lúcia*, I, 162).

At a time when the human family was ready to sacrifice all that was most sacred on the altar of the petty and selfish interests of nations, races, ideologies, groups and individuals, our Blessed Mother came from heaven, offering to implant in the hearts of all those who trust in her the Love of God that burns in her own heart. At that time it was only to three children, yet the example of their lives spread and multiplied, especially as a result of the travels of the Pilgrim Virgin, in countless groups throughout the world dedicated to the cause of fraternal solidarity. May the seven years which separate us from the centenary of the apparitions hasten the fulfilment of the prophecy of the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity."

In the famous vision of Pope Leo XIII, Satan said that if he had a hundred years he would destroy the Church. It is noteworthy that the date was 13 October 1884. Two dates were significant in the story of Fatima. The attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II took place on 13 May 1981. Pope Francis entrusted the world to Our Lady of Fatima on 13 October 2013. The apparitions began on 13 May 1917 and ended with the miracle of the sun on 13 October of that same year. When he celebrated the entrustment to Our Lady of Fatima in October 2013, Pope Francis said: "Her statue has come from Fatima. It helps us to feel her presence in our midst. This is a reality: Mary always leads us to Jesus ... In the mercy of God, we know, nothing is impossible! Even the most intricate knots melt with his grace. And Mary, who with her 'yes' opened the door to God to untie the knot of the ancient disobedience, is the mother who patiently and tenderly leads us to God so that he may untie the knots of our soul with his fatherly mercy."

In his address, the Holy Father stressed that the Virgin Mary leads Christians to the mercy of God, who can untie "all knotted hearts" caused by sin. "These knots take away our peace and serenity," he said, and he urged the faithful not to give up hope that God can untie these knots. Mary, he said, "takes us with the hand of a mother to the embrace of the Father, to the Father of mercy."

## FAMILY CHRONICLE

### MOZAMBIQUE - ADMA ASSEMBLY

Maputo, Mozambique - February 2017 - On 5 February an Assembly of the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) took place in Mozambique. It was led by Fr Donatien Mambela, Spiritual Assistant of ADMA in Mozambique, accompanied by the Superior of the Vice-Province of Mozambique, Fr Marco Biaggi, and his Vicar Fr Francisco Pescador. ADMA is expanding in the country, with 12 centres and 530 members.



### MESSINA (ITALY) - The Dominic Savio ADMA group starts again.

On 21 March 2017, the ADMA group restarted in the Dominic Savio Community in Messina. We have a diploma signed by Don Ricaldone (24 May 1933), two years after the establishment of the new community. Then, about 40 years ago, ADMA ceased activities. Today was a great feast of Mary Help of Christians. There was a big number of people (including young people) with many families and a beautiful atmosphere of prayer. The altar of Mary Help of Christians in our Co-Cathedral is very beautiful and was restored two years ago. I hope it will always continue *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam!* (Fr Gianni Russo).



**ADMA**  
Associazione di Maria Ausiliatrice

**Un cammino di fede  
e di preghiera  
con Maria**



**CONCATEDRALE DEL SS. SALVATORE**  
**Salesiani Domenico Savio – Messina**  
**Martedì 21 marzo, ore 17:00**

*don Gianni Russo*  
Cell. 333.966.9775

*Chi confida in Maria Ausiliatrice non sarà mai deluso.  
In Lei ho riposto tutta la mia fiducia.  
Il Signore e la sua divina Madre non permetteranno che  
si ripeta invano: Maria aiuto dei Cristiani, prega per noi!  
Maria Ausiliatrice ha ottenuto e offrirà sempre grazie  
particolari, anche straordinarie e miracolose.*

**San Giovanni Bosco**

## HIALEAH (FLORIDA - UNITED STATES)

This is a group that is very much alive and well animated. It has 17 aspirants. It is accompanied with zeal by the parish priest Fr Manuel Alvarez and Mrs. Maria Acosta. The picture shows the meeting held on the occasion of the feast of Don Bosco this year with the presence of Fr Tom Dunne, SDB and Sr Denise Sickinger, FMA.



## *An answer from Heaven*



In May 2016, after two months of medical examinations and analysis I received the diagnosis: stage 4 uterine carcinoma with metastases in the lymph nodes, liver and bones, inoperable and treatable only with chemotherapy. It was like running into a wall, I was terrified, seized by a thousand fears. Fear of not making it, afraid for my family, for my husband, for our five children. I could not even pray. But someone did it for me: I was immediately surrounded by the prayers and affection of all the families of ADMA (Association of Mary Help of Christians) and, without exaggeration, of all the great Salesian Family, a true power of God. They started a novena to Venerable Fr Giuseppe Quadrio, this great priest who took me under his wing. I even dreamed one night that he covered me with a golden blanket ... But back to the novena; it was a huge thrill for me to see so many families (and many children and young people!) there praying for me. I felt almost unworthy. And the graces came quickly.

I tolerated the treatment well, despite all the numerous side effects expected. Meanwhile, I continued to trust with my whole self, offering my illness for the faith of my children. I repeated frequently: "Lord, if you want you can heal me." Then after all these months of therapy and the examinations of a few weeks ago: the cancer lesions had all disappeared, I was healed! For the doctors, it was almost a miracle. For me and my husband, at least a great grace received through the intercession of Fr Quadrio and the faith of many friends but also many strangers who prayed for me. My heart is full of joy and gratitude, I really feel part of a great family of families walking together under the guidance of Jesus and Mary Help of Christians. Yes, dear friends, I can testify that faith works wonders and I want to thank you all for the love you have given me, confident that God will return a hundredfold both here on earth and in Heaven! (Maria Pia Gallo - ADMA - Turin).