

## THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTORY MAJOR

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### « *The Greatest of All is Love* »

(St. Paul)

*"In moments of difficult trials such as these, it is love that gives us life."*

Dear Friends and Readers of the *Salesian Bulletin*:

Receive my cordial greeting at a time when all our minds are overwhelmed. I am writing these words on April 1<sup>st</sup>, thinking about the month of May, the month of our Mother. We have entrusted ourselves to her throughout the Salesian world during this very painful period of the Covid-19, or "coronavirus", pandemic. From all parts of the world, we have raised up prayers – and continue to do so – to ask the Lord through the intercession of our Mother for help and comfort in these terrible hours for us all, with the loss of so many lives, even while knowing that later, also, there will be other difficulties that we will have to face.

But it happens that in the face of so much pain, so many tears, and death, even amid the most painful losses, we find people who are "the word of God" and its mediation for us through the witness of their faith and of their strength. Today I feel unworthy to use my own words when I have heard others' words - ones which bear a great weight of authenticity and tried and proven faith - and when I have seen true witnesses of '*abandonment to God*'.

Therefore, today I wish to offer you the following testimony that will remain anonymous as to the names of those involved and the place where it happened. Reading this testimony, we will see what we human beings are capable of - FOR THE GOOD!

She has just lost her husband. They had been married more than 23 years before and together they have had five children and formed a beautiful family. Today, at 50 years of age, the coronavirus has taken her husband away. The circumstances of life have separated them physically but they are more united now than ever.

It all started with a feeling of discomfort, on the day of the birthday of one of his daughters. He woke up with a fairly high fever. He had flu symptoms, congestion, and a cough that they thought would be but temporary. However, as the hours passed, the situation became more complicated.

He had no respiratory distress but was suffering from dizziness. His family doctor had to make a house call to listen to his breathing. It was then that they called the ambulance and he was admitted to the hospital.

At first, they had him under observation. They did not suspect at all that it was the coronavirus. At that time, they did not have the necessary material to do the COVID-19 test. Nonetheless, that same night they put him into isolation in the hospital as a preventive measure.

The following day he was taken to the intensive care unit where he was tested. The doctors told his wife that she could no longer stay with him - that she had to go home. A short time later, they called her to return to the hospital to say goodbye to her husband because he was in critical condition.

She came to the hospital with a priest so that her husband could receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and said goodbye to him. That same afternoon they found out that the coronavirus test was positive. From that moment on, she and their children were under quarantine at home while her husband spent his final hours in the hospital.

She recounts that during all that time the hardest thing was being unable to go see him, to be with him and talk to him. He was in isolation and they didn't let them in to see him. The entire hospital was filled with coronavirus patients and no visitors were allowed.

## «I trust in God»

Meanwhile, at home, this woman, wife and mother, lived that suffering and pain with a huge heart. "It is very hard, but **Christ is supporting me**. Knowing that He is with me on the Cross, that I am there with Him, that we are together, and knowing that my husband is in His hands is what gives me strength."

This mother and her children **turned to prayer and found comfort**: "We pray the **rosary** every day and we are making a novena to **Saint Joseph** that we already finished once and then started all over again. **We add petitions for all those who are facing a similar situation.**"

With admirable faith, she shares that "There were days when I was taking it very badly, but **now I am living this situation with greater peace and with acceptance**. Accepting reality helps you live everything **with less despair** - still with the suffering of not seeing him but with the peace that comes from knowing that no matter what happens, in the end, **it is God's Will.**"

A few days before her husband's death, **she felt that she wanted to share with others how they were living this time as a family. She wanted to share this with people going through the same thing** that she and her children were or who would have to go through it in the future. **She wanted them to feel supported.**

Her testimony teaches us that although we may not be prepared for difficult trials such as these, staying close to God gives us life and helps us live these moments of suffering "with less despair", as does this believing woman who knows that love knows no limits and that it is important to hold onto the Cross, especially at times like these.

Two days before her husband's death, she sent this message:

*"I am grateful for the very many messages of support and prayer. This gives me life, as does knowing that there are many people praying for him. If, in the end, he is not cured, it is because there is a greater good that will come of it. It is something very hard, very difficult, but also, at the same time, God grants you the ability to see the love of others and of how He loves us. And that is a very huge thing.*

**"The love made tangible in the union that exists in the family, in the messages of support from other people, in the friends who pray for each other, in the dedication of the doctors who accompany our patients is what allows us to look at reality with different eyes. It transforms us into witnesses of something superior and greater than ourselves so we may go out to meet others.**

This wife and her family received the news that her husband passed away and they became closer than ever. They continue to breathe in that love with the confidence that they are not alone. Only from a heart that loves deeply can she say: **"He has gone to Heaven, with Jesus. I trust God, who gives me strength and peace."**

Thus ends this testimony. Perhaps other people will experience despair at similar losses. There will also be those who will not understand that you can react as did this wife and mother. We have to accept that each person is unique and unrepeatable. In this case, faith has transcended and overcome the loss of a loved one (no matter how great are the pain and the emptiness of loss).

Don Bosco always reminded us that if we have confidence in Mary Help of Christians we will see what miracles are. Our natural, quick, and immediate tendency is to think that it is a miracle only when there is a cure from cancer or a similar disease, but what this wife and mother and their five children experienced in their hearts *is also a true miracle – a miracle of living faith.*

LET US NOT lose this faith or the hope *that characterizes us*. May the Help of Christians, our Mother, continue to lead us by the hand for what was said to one and to all still remains true today: "Woman, there is your son; son, there is your Mother." (Jn. 19:26-27)

With great affection,

Don Angel