

October 24
The FMA: A life guided and inspired by Mary (Const. 1 and 4)



1. *With Mary: We contemplate Mary's presence and action in our lives*

At the beginning of our Institute there was a marvelous weaving of Providential interventions, as Article 1 of our *Constitutions* say, involving three protagonists, in particular: the Holy Spirit, St. John Bosco, and Mary Help of Christians. This gift from God for the sake of the young; i.e., the founding of a new Religious Institute totally dedicated to responding to their deepest expectations of salvation, reaches Mornese through the double mediation of a father and of a Mother: through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are, in fact, Daughters of Don Bosco and of Mary Help of Christians. Mother Mazzarello was well aware of this and, therefore, invited her Sisters to observe the *Constitutions*, insisting on the fact that "The *Constitutions* were given us by Don Bosco and Don Bosco knows what Mary Help of Christians wants of us." (Maccono II 133)

Article 4 takes up again and explains this theme, the "*direct intervention of Mary*", naming her our *inspirer, Mother, and Teacher*. The entire Marian spirituality of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello can be seen as summed up in these three titles attributed to the Virgin Mary. Both of them, in fact, from their youngest years experienced in a very particular way Mary's presence and guidance. Both were aware that they owed their best intuitions in the educational field to Her inspiration and the success of their unique pastoral initiatives, which constrained them to pass through innumerable obstacles and difficulties, to Her maternal solicitude. This powerful experience with Mary touched our Founders so profoundly that it, in a singular way, gave the distinguishing mark to their educational system, which is based on the experience and the practice of foreseeing love. Don Bosco himself was aware of this, as Sr. Piera Ruffinato states: "Only with Mary's help can one who has consecrated his life to the young be able to live the Preventive Method fully, overcoming all the relational difficulties that can arise." (*Filialità* 358)

2. *Like Mary: We learn to act like Her*

In giving a concrete response to Mary's request that he hurry to take care "of the girls also," Don Bosco knew how to seize this chance to express his own gratitude to his great Benefactress in an irrevocable way. His plan was a magnificent one, coming from someone who was truly in love with Mary: indeed, the FMA must not just "do for the girls what the SDB do for the boys," but they must also be the "*Living Monument*" of his gratitude to the Help of Christians and... his "thanks" extended throughout time." This desire of the Founder places us in a particular spot between Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians. In fact, Don Bosco awaits from each of us that Our Lady be able to see demonstrated in our deeds the gratitude and the affection that he has for Her - through our very person and in our little, everyday actions!

Concretely-speaking, according to Don Bosco's plan, we are to render the maternal solicitude of Mary alive and visible in the world, giving Her our hands, feet, and words, for She certainly embraces all God's sons and daughters, but, in a special way, the young. For this reason, we are invited to place ourselves with true availability of mind and heart at the school of Mary, seeking to make our own "*Her attitudes of faith, of hope, of love, and of perfect union with Christ, opening ourselves to the joyous humility of the 'Magnificat' so as to become like Her, 'helpers,' above all among the young.*"

Spiritual Exercises:

1. *I will take a little time to have a heart-to-heart talk with Mary, asking Her for the grace to recognize in my own story and in my present moment Her action and Her presence as inspirer, Mother, and Teacher. I explicitly entrust to Her the persons whom I encounter, and all initiatives, joys, and difficulties...*
2. *In which of the suggested attitudes from Article 4 do I recognize my greatest weakness (faith, hope, charity, perfect union with Christ, joyous humility)? I ask the Holy Spirit and Mary for the grace to recognize what blocks me (wounds, fears, bad habits, convictions running counter to the Gospel) and to identify the most efficacious and concrete way to overcome them and strengthen me in this area!*