



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Salesiane di Don Bosco
Ambito Famiglia Salesiana

*To the Provincials
To the Preprovince Animators
Cc. To the Provincial Secretaries*

Dearest Sisters,

I come to you on the threshold of the celebration of the Paschal Mystery. Christ Crucified and Risen is and will be for us the one reason for our faith and our hope. And beside Him, there is always ‘the Mother’ whom He left to us as the model of a true disciple and companion on our journey.

In preparation for GC XXIV, which will involve all of us, we read in Circular 985: *“We let ourselves be guided by Mary for a regeneration in the Holy Spirit, which makes our educating communities generative of new life. Who more than Mary can help us, as an Institute, to discern in the light of the Holy Spirit, the paths of the revitalization of our communities so that they may be prophetic and fruitful at the vocational level?”*

The communities, clothed in the spirit of Mornese, are invited to revitalize the Marian face of the Institute and to re-create the educational originality of Mother Mazzarello, giving life to an environment that develops a vocational culture in the commitment to transform a world that needs the new wine: Jesus”.

As a response to this appeal, comes our proposal for a Novena of Mary Help of Christians that will help us to take up each day points of Circular 985, letting ourselves be accompanied by some words of Mother Mazzarello as well, on how to live our relationship with Mary as her daughters.

Naturally, it is up to each Province and community to choose the most appropriate ways to make this Novena meaningful in the life of the educating communities.

May She, the Help of Christians and the Inspirer of our Institute, guide us during this time of grace that God grants to us with the next General Chapter.

United in these sentiments and desires,

I greet you with affection,

Rome, 15 April 2019

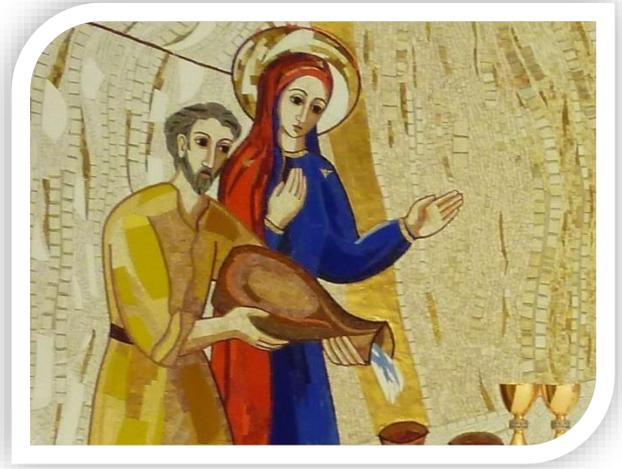
Sr. Maria Luisa Miranda L.
Councilor for the Salesian Family

NOVENA TO MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS 2019¹

Day 1: LIVING PRESENCE AMONG US

The words spoken by Jesus to Johnny Bosco resound in us: "I will give you the teacher" and the trust received by Mary Domenica Mazzarello: "I entrust them to you".

The freshness experienced at the origins is today re-proposed as fascination for the Mornese environment, in the simplicity of life and in relationships, in the ardent love for Christ, and in missionary daring, characteristics of the first community (Circular 985).



It is at the school of Mary that Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello grew in their passion and love for the young. They felt this a vibrant part of their life and they transmitted it with filial trust and simple familiarity to the point that Don Bosco said at Nizza, "Our Lady is here! She is walking in the corridors" (BM XVII). In her letters, Mother Mazzarello often exhorts the sisters to have great confidence in Our Lady; she will help you in everything (Cf. Letter 23).

PROPOSAL: Let us thank the Lord for the continual presence of Mary in our Institute during these 150 years and ask her to continue to walk in our Educating Communities.

Day 2: WOMAN DOCILE TO THE WORD OF GOD

"It is a very diverse community that walks towards Capernaum, made up of more or less believers, men who begin a journey of discipleship, and there is Mary, the first disciple, who in turn grows in faith and knowledge of her own Son. She has no message of her own; she cannot say other words: she is the first disciple among the disciples, who invites everyone to look at Jesus, to do what he asks (cf. Jn 2: 5)" (Circular 985).

"If you keep these things in mind, we will have the spirit that pleases the Lord and He will bless us, will always enlighten us and will see to it that we will understand His will" (Letter 64).

PROPOSAL: We are invited today to go down to our Capernaum, to live immersed in reality, with an attentive gaze at Jesus to fulfill His will and collaborate in the building of the Kingdom.

¹REUNGOAT Yvonnee, *Letter 985, In preparation for General Chapter XXIV*, Roma, Institute FMA 2019; POSADA María Esther – COSTA Anna – CAVAGLIÀ Piera, *La Sapienza della vita. Lettere di Maria Domenica Mazzarello*, Torino, SEI 1994

Day 3: **Woman of the fruitful womb**

Like Mary we too are bearers of the 'mystery' of love. We are called to continually form ourselves to be vocationally fruitful and to make our communities an updated expression of Mornese 'house of God's love', a fruitful womb of vocations and missionary vitality (cf. Circular 985).

“You are really fortunate since you can do so much good and win so many souls for our dear Jesus. Work, work, much in the field the Lord has given you. Never tire, always work with the sole intention of doing everything for the Lord and He will give you a beautiful treasure of merits for Heaven” (Letter 59).

PROPOSAL: Each community is invited to celebrate the Eucharist by asking for the gift of holy vocations for the Church and for the whole Salesian Family.

Day 4: **WOMAN OF THE NEW WINE BECAUSE SHE IS OPEN TO THE NEWNESS OF THE SPIRIT**

“It is she who awakens the dawn of God's newness, enters into dialogue with Him, welcomes the Word and bends to the lordship of the Spirit. Here we find the theological density of her motherhood, which expresses her thinking and her existence in the free sharing of what is and reverses the way of reading the experience of faith: "It is not Mary who makes Christ her Son, but Christ who makes Mary His Mother” (Circular 985).

“To tell you the truth, I am amazed and embarrassed when I see all these daughters always so cheerful and serene. It is clear that despite my great unworthiness, our dear Mother Mary Most Holy, Help of Christians really gives us great graces” (Letter 7).

PROPOSAL: What is the ‘novelty’ that the Spirit wants to give to me in this historical moment?

Day 5: **WOMAN WITH THE HEART OF A MOTHER**

“Let us look at Mary, woman and mother, who invites us to understand what it means to enter with a motherly heart into the scenarios of profound social and cultural changes in which new languages and new grammars of relationships develop. With her, ‘we strive to make her dispositions of faith, hope, and charity our own’ (C 4) which has made her so contemporary to the feminine situation, anticipating the hour of Jesus” (Circular 985).

“My heart...continually prays for blessings on all of you, that you may really clothe yourselves in the Spirit of our good Jesus, and so do great good to yourselves and to your dear neighbor who is so much in need of help” (Letter 26).

PROPOSAL: I present to Jesus through the hands of Mary, every person who is beside me with their concerns and joys, and I ask for the grace to broaden my heart to concretely love the people whom the Lord entrusts to me.

Day 6: **WOMAN CAPABLE OF INVOLVING EVERYONE**

"We are convinced that everyone has something to learn in the intergenerational, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. We are called to convert ourselves, to change our style, to walk together by taking better care of those fundamental traits, typical of the Preventive System, which characterize the synodal style: the sacred sense of the human person, the joyful and familiar welcome, trust, proximity, hospitality, solidarity, gratuitousness, integration, recognition of who the other is" (Circular 985).

"We have many postulants and they perform great comedies on stage! One, who is a teacher, plays the clown and makes us all laugh" (Letter 9). "At present, the boarders are all busy studying poems, etc. for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians" (Letter 13). "I won't stop to tell you about the beautiful celebrations we had for the feast of Mary Help of Christians. I will only say in brief that we celebrated it with the greatest solemnity...It was really like one of the old feasts we used to have when we were in Mornese" (Letter 40).

PROPOSAL: I contemplate the biblical text of the wedding at Cana to learn from Mary how to involve everyone in the educational mission and not fall into self-referencing or individualism.

Day 7: **WOMAN PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL OF JOY**

"I am a mission on this earth, and for this I find myself in this world" (EG n.273). The community of Mornese has been experiencing from the beginning the missionary joy that guides it to witness to Jesus not only in His own land, but in the world. The 'mysticism' of living together flourishes in the momentum towards broad horizons, and becomes a climate, a fire that burns and radiates light and heat. Here we see the evangelical dynamic, but also the human one of the mission: "Life grows and matures to the extent that we give it for the life of others" (EG n.10). From this flows the joy, the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing" (Circular 985).

"Cheerfulness is the sign of a heart that really loves the Lord very much" (Letter 60).

PROPOSAL: Does my way radiate and contagion with the joy of responding to a mission received? What do others read on my face? What can I improve to communicate Gospel joy?

Day 8: **WOMAN SERVING OTHERS**

"Mary, at Cana, suggests a style of animation in which Salesian spirituality is easily reflected. [...] The 'true Superior' is Our Lady and the FMA called to a service of authority, lives in an attitude of inner poverty and openness to the Spirit and expresses with a mother's heart the strong and sweet love of Mary, making herself all to all" (Circular 985).

"My dear daughters, love one another with true charity, love your superior. Look upon her as though she were Our Lady and treat her with all respect. I know that she really loves you very much in the Lord. Tell her all you would tell me if I were there. This is the greatest consolation you could give me" (Letter 49).

PROPOSAL: In our prayer we especially remember Mother Yvonne, the General Councilors, and all the sisters who provide a service of animation and government in the Institute, that they may be a reflection of Mary's maternal love and live this service of animation with coherence and joy.

Day 9: **WOMAN OF EVERYDAY HOLINESS**

"Fidelity to the Word of God and the Constitutions is a guarantee of the future because it generates fidelity. A joyful community, rooted in Jesus, coherent, despite its fragility, contagions those who live nearby, just as in Valdocco and Mornese. "Do whatever he tells you" projects the communities into a dynamism of vocational fruitfulness that knows the labors but is woven with joy and holiness in everyday life" (Circular 985).

“We must make our practices of piety with enthusiasm and fervor, especially Holy Communion, and try to be exact in the observance of our Holy Rule, by practicing our Holy Vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience better. Our Lady will be pleased with us and will obtain for us from the Lord all the graces we need to become holy” (Letter 16).

PROPOSAL: In preparation for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, I will find a time for a filial dialogue with Mary and I will let myself be challenged by her in the silence of my heart.