

January 24: Reflection of Mary's Motherly Goodness (Art. 7, 14, 17, and 44)

The most beautiful ability of a human being, which distinguishes the being as such, besides intelligence, is the ability to love. Man lives because he is loved by God and is created in His Image and Likeness; he was created by love and created to love. Man is fully realized in receiving and in giving love.

Through the vow of chastity, the FMA offers God all that which He Himself has given to her: "all her forces of love". The gift of chastity for the Kingdom of Heaven gives strength to her very capacity to love and, therefore, the FMA knows that there is always more room for love: she can always love more, and love more people. She knows that love increases when it is given, when it is shared: the more one gives love, the more love will abound. The Love of an FMA is exclusively for Jesus, encompassing all her brothers and sisters, and, in a special way, the young. It is a Love which is expressed in Salesian loving-kindness, thus allowing the light of the foreseeing love of God to shine through and is also the reflection of Mary's motherly goodness. (see Art. 1 and 14) It is a type of love can be called "goodness", meekness ("*buono come il pane*"), and "good as your Heavenly Father is good".

Today, unfortunately, goodness seems to be lost, as if one should be ashamed for being considered a good person. It often happens that goodness is confused with weakness, with a lack of courage in defending one's rights, or that those who are naïve are the ones who are considered good, those who are unable to realize that someone else is taking advantage of their goodness or is behaving in an arrogant and opportunistic way. Due to this, we run the risk of emptying goodness of its strength and beauty. It's in fashion today to be "strong", even in solidarity with the weak, rather than "good". The paradox here is that today more than ever before the world needs goodness and tenderness. Pope Francis has said many times "do not be afraid of tenderness". We need to be educated in goodness and to goodness if we are to build a world of fraternity and a culture of peace. "Not by blows," said Our Lady to little John Bosco in his Dream of Nine Years Old, "but with goodness you will need to win over these friends of yours." Goodness is the key that Mary gave so that he might succeed in educating the young. Don Bosco insisted on this with his Salesians. This goodness, therefore, *does not impose* itself on others but *is proposed* through the attractive force of its beauty. Goodness means wanting the true good of the other, of those whom we meet in our daily life. It is a goodness which is actively intelligent because it acts respectfully, discreetly, and opportunely. Good is done respecting other's freedom, without using them, but leaving them free to make their own decisions and choices. Goodness is always tied to the selfless giving of the gift. Goodness is free because it does not expect "repayment" in any way. Goodness wants only the good of the other even when the other seems not to be in need. This means being good in and of oneself, independent of another's "neediness", not being elicited due to another's poverty, for goodness demands freedom and intuition. One is good whether confronted with someone who has succeeded in having his success and qualities show before others, speaking and thinking well in every circumstance, with no "ifs," "ands," or "buts" or with someone who has a particular need which renders him weak and vulnerable. Thus, one is good in a discreet way, without making the other person feel his poverty. We are speaking, therefore, of a goodness that is intelligent, free, and humble. In this regard, the very life of Mother Mazzarello, who became a model of goodness, and whose motherly goodness was recognized by all - by students and Sisters alike who were always encouraged to "do with liberty whatever charity demands" - thus managed to build the "House of the Love of God." It had an atmosphere in which everyone was able to feel at ease because her particular nature was respected while she was encouraged to grow ever more in charity by living in Mary's presence. Mary, always a Mother, in all her words, as She is presented in the Gospel, and in all her apparitions along the centuries, appears as a Mother who helps, who counsels, who heals, who prays, and who accompanies the Church along its journey of faith in every circumstance. We are Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. "Auxilium" means "inclined to" welcome others in their need and "aid" them by educating them so that they might "catch" this goodness. Goodness is a charismatic gift of the FMA. It is one of our characteristics which is so needed in today's world, so wounded and lacerated by deep divisions and violence, and where there are so many crises: in families, in communities, and even in the Church. Goodness restores health and heals the wounds of our times and it can make a significant contribution to building a society which seeks the Common Good and Peace.

Suggestion:

- ✚ In a silent moment:
 - Become aware of the manifestations of God's Goodness and of Mary's Goodness along your day.

- Become aware of the goodness of the people whom you met today, avoiding falling into the trap that “this is my right” because this kind of thinking will not help us see the goodness of those who live alongside us.
- ✦ They who are wrapped in the goodness of those with whom they live feel encouraged and motivated to be good in their turn: “the continuous invitation is to make of our Communities, ‘the House of the Love of God.’”