

# MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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## MERCY IS THE IDENTITY CARD OF OUR GOD

The great stream of mercy springs and flows unceasingly from the most profound depths of the mystery of God. This source can never be exhausted because the mercy of God is infinite. We have to be powerful and convincing “missionaries” of this mercy.

My dear Salesian Family, friends of Don Bosco and of his charism, and dear readers of the Salesian Bulletin, my greeting for this month comes to you from my heart and from the Red Island, Madagascar.

We are in Eastertide, a time which invites us once again to deepen our Faith and our Hope as the foundation of our life.

But as I write you, I have in my heart and before my eyes the tragedies of these past days. We began Holy Week with images of death in Europe: recall the attacks in Brussels on the airport and the subway; the Christians on the playground in Lahore and; the vivid suffering of our Family, with its heart immersed in anxiety and fear because of the fate of our confrere Fr. Thomas, who heroically wanted to share the sacrifice of the four Missionaries of Charity from Aden and about whom we know absolutely nothing right to this very day.

I have repeatedly invited you to pray for all those who are innocent victims of violence, of every kind of violence, of starvation, of forced emigration, and natural disasters.

Let us continue to pray for the many martyrs who lose their lives because of their faith in Jesus Christ, still now. Let us feel we are of one heart and soul with them, in the communion of the Church Universal.

At the same time, I remind you of the words of Pope Francis who invites us to live remembering constantly that Mercy is the **identity card** of God. To me, this simple and everyday phrase, attributed to the Pope, is very beautiful and touching.

We have to admit that often our heart is cynical and insensitive and with time hardens more and more.

We believe we are searching for universal Peace, but, at this very moment, violence rages in every corner of our planet. We close borders and build walls in front of people who are living an authentic Exodus. We easily forget that our people, our ancestors, maybe even our grandparents were emigrants, too... In this way, our heart – marvelous and capable of great love but at times petty and fragile – shuts and barricades itself in.

In the face of this reality, we can only raise our hands towards God Our Father, look to the Risen One and ask the Holy Spirit to **grant us the gift of Mercy**, the same one which is part of God's essence.

As Pope Francis writes:

With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity. The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness. 'God is love' (1 Jn. 4:8 and 16), John affirms for the first and only time in all of Holy Scripture. This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus' entire life. His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially in favour of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. (*Misericordiae Vultus*, paragraph 8)

Let us beseech the grace to grow in that Mercy which makes us, without a doubt, more human. Growing in Mercy generates peace in the heart and is a prerequisite and the basis of happiness. Let us ask God that, in the words of the prophet Ezekiel, our heart may not be one of stone, but one of flesh.

I refer again to the words of Pope Francis who invites us to let us to be moved in the face of the reality of the God's identity card: Mercy – one which is directed to every one of us and whose first condition is that we also bring it to life with and among our brothers and sisters.

*Mercy, compassion, tenderness, kindness, tolerance, forgiveness...* these are but diverse aspects of the same rich reality. Which one of these do we need most in the moment we are living? It is up to each and every one of us to listen to the beat of his or her own heart and to the concrete realities of daily life.

I wish you to live intensively the Easter time in this month of May, dedicated to Mother and Help. The tenderness of her look may accompany us, so that all of us may re-discover the joy of the God's tenderness and may feel ourselves every day to be more swept back to her Mother's love.

**The mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. (Pope Francis' *Misericordiae Vultus*, paragraph 6).**