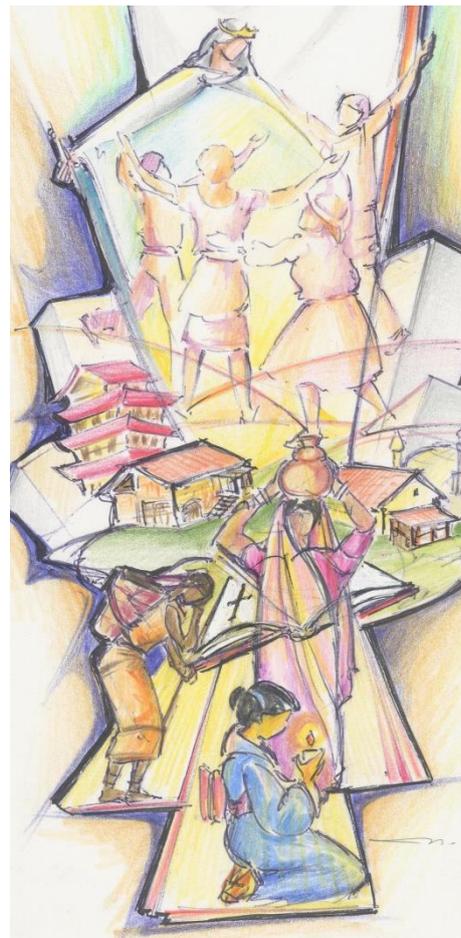


NOVENA IN PREPARATION FOR THE FEAST OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS 2018

*The young people speak
to us of Mary*



The choral Circular n. 976 of February this year reminds us of the great event of the 150th anniversary of the consecration of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. Mary herself told Don Bosco *"Hic domus mea inde gloria mea"* (This is my home, hence my glory!).

A very living and present element of our spirituality is the love for Mary whom we invoke as Immaculate and Help of Christians, two adjectives that have a very deep charismatic meaning. As helper of humanity, Mary continues to take care of everyone. And as Immaculate, Mary is for us a beautiful image of the transforming work of grace in those who open themselves with docility and faith to the action of God (cf *LOME* No. 96).

Mary is the One who guides us, and we are called to cultivate for her a grateful and filial love and to commit ourselves to transmitting this love to the young (cf. Const. 44).

Mary is the One who leads us to Jesus: "Mary of Nazareth, the human creature most conformed to Christ, teaches us to contemplate the face of the Son, to be His disciples on the pilgrimage of faith" (*LOME* No. 96).

Love for Mary has been present, from generation to generation, in all Salesian houses and in any cultural and religious context. One of the strongest experiences that we often live with young people and which we try to keep in mind in the educational mission is that of the presence of Mary as Mother. Domenico Savio, Michele Magone, Francesco Besucco, Laura Vicuña, and many others constitute the group of children, adolescents, and young people who have found and find

in Mary of Nazareth the true Mother and Teacher. This filial love for Mary is truly moving and palpable.

In this year dedicated to youth,
through the Synod on "**Youth, faith and vocational discernment**",
we would like to let the young '**speak of Mary**' to us.

For this reason, in the novena to Mary Help of Christians in May, a Marian passage will be offered with a reflection of a young person or group of young people on the same passage and a prayer intention.

Let us be guided by their words and their gaze to discover the living presence of Mary.

Pope Francis, referring to St. Benedict, exhorts us to listen to young people because "often it is precisely to the youngest that the Lord reveals the best solution". The pearls of reflections that young people offer us, are for us a source of joy and hope, of novelty and freshness, to recognize that, despite the sometimes negative social consideration of the youth world, our time is "kairos", the Lord's time, and young people "are the generations who seek the face of the Lord" (cf. Psalm 24,6).

"The atmosphere of joy, of gratuitousness, of solidarity towards all, that the educating community commits itself to live in the example of Mary, stimulates the young to foster hope, not to be complicit in the injustices of the world, and orients them to stand on the side of the God of the poor " (LOME No. 96).

May 15

Marian text: Lk 1:26-38

Reflection:

"Nothing is impossible to God"

I happen to read some Gospel passage on which I reflect, but without drawing a message for my daily life. Instead, reading this passage about Mary, hope has returned to my life again.

I stood before the Lord as I am right now, full of disappointment and bitterness, with so many worries and fears in my heart. It is a long time, indeed, that situations are accumulating in my mind that I cannot solve, even if, apparently, I do not show it and I always have a smile on my lips.

But that night I could not do it any more ... The heavy study, some relationships with friends, an unpleasant situation in my family ... it seemed that everything was going wrong in my life. And I was losing myself in negative feelings, I fell ever lower, and I felt lonely and sad.

In prayer I asked God: "... *but when will I see more peaceful horizons? ... When will more peaceful and beautiful times come also for me? And how to solve certain problems when I do not see, and I cannot find solutions ...? And where is all this taking me? I do not see any sense.*"

Before falling asleep, I opened the Gospel to the passage Sr. ... had suggested we read and reflect on. I immediately noticed that it was a known passage, but then, reading it, tears ran down my face. God was sending me an answer to my questions while I was reading the answer He had given to Mary: "Do not be afraid, Mary! ... Nothing is impossible to God! "I understood at that moment that Mary had also been afraid, not knowing how to go ahead after the angel's announcement.

She herself could not foresee what would have happened to her, but she had chosen to give full trust to God, she had believed, abandoning herself fully into the hands of God and He - in the words of the angel - was telling her that He would suggest the best solutions.

Moreover, I noticed that God gave Mary the example of her cousin Elizabeth with all that He had done for her, things that seemed impossible to everyone, becoming a mother in old age, overcoming infertility as an old woman, giving birth to a child. At that moment I understood that God loves me immensely and that He speaks to me through the people I meet in my life, through His Word and with the example of Mary who supports and accompanies me.

Prepared by Antonia Glavaš (Croatia)

Each one of us is called by God to do a special mission just as Mary was. She did not understand what it meant for her when she received the call from the angel. But she humbly responds with "let your will be done", trusting totally in God. Mary is like any young person today who lives an ordinary life in her village.

As a young adult, I challenge myself to look at Mary's example of openness to God each day in my ordinary life and to say with Mary "let your will be done", letting God's will unfold each day. I also need to spend time in silence in order to listen to God's voice. With this world of technology, it is challenging to do so. We are full of other things and have no time to listen to God and to oneself.

Since I am still growing in my faith, I realize that my faith is fragile. Sometimes, when faced with the challenges of life, it is too easy to be carried away by my own comfortable way of life. Therefore, I need to be assured by those around me, as Mary was assured by the angel, "do not be afraid, you have found favor with God", to have that courage to respond to and fulfill God's purpose for me.

"How will this be?" is a similar question that sometimes I ask myself, "How can I know that God calls me to this way of life or that way of life?". Or "How can I go about this? From whom do I seek help, so I do not get lost?"

I guess every young person asks the same questions. In fact, looking at Mary's life should help me or any young person to imitate her. She did not always understand what was happening in her life, but she always opened her heart to the will of God to let it unfold in its time according to his will. Trusting that nothing is impossible with God, I only need to accept it with faith like Mary.

Mary pondered upon all the things that happened in her life. She is a person of true humility and love for God and His people, therefore she accepts this call to be the mother of Christ, to make God's love known to the world. By this, she was the first apostle to follow God's Son Jesus, to spread this love throughout the world to all humankind.

Prepared by Salome Faloamae (Solomon Islands)

Prayer intention:

Oh Mary Help of Christians, pray for all the young people who are discouraged and for those who struggle to fulfill their life's dreams. Do not allow them to give up, assist them with your motherly help and lead them to Jesus: for to Him, nothing is impossible.

May 16

Marian text: Lk 1:39-45

Reflection:

"The energy that breaks out in a contact ..."

Reading this page of the Gospel I would like to share the amazement and wonder that a few words aroused in me. Specifically: SHE ROSE, SHE HURRIEDLY REACHED, AS SOON AS SHE HEARD, WAS FULL OF, A LOUD VOICE. They are all expressions that suggest dynamism, fullness, energy, contact, and above all that involve me in the first person.

"She got up" ... Mary gets up. In the vocabulary, in the etymology of the verb to get up, one reads "to raise from below and to put on High". And here is the first thing that amazes me: Mary has just received the Announcement of the Mystery of the Incarnation of God descending to the 'ground floor' and this Announcement urges her to get up, lifts her from the bottom and places her on High. And I think this is one of the first important aspects in a Life of Faith: in the reception of the human Jesus and of our human self, with its ugliness and imperfections, feeling part of Heaven, feeling at the Height of Heaven.

"... reached quickly ..." Mary runs. Like the Apostles at the Sepulcher, like the crowds that followed Jesus, like each of us when something explodes inside us. And here the second aspect in my opinion important for a Life of Faith: Jesus makes us run. What the encounter with Him reveals to us cannot be restrained because it is of such power as to give us the energy necessary for the first step of every journey. This does not mean living running, nor does it mean not to value the moments in which we fall, and we feel the need to remain "fallen" for a while, but it means having the certainty of always having the chance to start again.

"As soon as she heard ..." Jesus is a man of flesh and blood, and the encounter with Him passes through the senses. What is important for me in my path of Faith is to hear Him rejoice inside, to meet His Gaze. Turn off the brain, turn off rationality that catalogs and puts everything in a row and let me be disrupted by direct contact in that space inhabited by Jesus. Meet Him with my positive or negative emotions, look for His gaze, listen to His silent voice, breathe His scent of Heaven and feel at home.

"... she was full ..." To welcome Jesus into our life gives fullness. Phrase perhaps a little 'obvious and heard a thousand times, but how is it really lived by each of us? With Jesus, I have learned to see my emptinesses. I have learned to entrust them to Him without that anxious need to try to fill them all. Perhaps, this is truly the fullness of Jesus: the certainty that He takes care of all my emptinesses, protecting them with His Infinite Love.

"... with great Voice..." The person who has experienced God can no longer be silent. The one who has heard, seen, and breathed in God can no longer live in anonymity and homologation. Who welcomes God in their womb cannot but exclaim *"You have changed my lament into dance, you have taken off my sackcloth, you have clothed me with joy, because my heart sings to You without keeping silent; Lord, my God, I will give you thanks forever"* (Psalm 30).

Prepared by Elena Scala (Italy)

Prayer intention:

For all young victims of vices and contradictions. May they hear the voice of God who, through His mediations, calls them to live their lives in dignity and in fullness. May they one day exclaim with joy: *"You have changed my lament into dance, you have taken off my sackcloth, you have clothed me with joy, because my heart sings to You without keeping silent; Lord, my God, I will give you thanks forever"* (Psalm 30).

May 17

Marian text: Lk 1:39-56

Reflection:

The Annunciation is the stage during which the Angel visited Mary making her know the presence of the Child she would carry in her womb. Let us contemplate Mary's predisposition. She was conceived without sin and is a virgin forever. The sign given by the Angel of her cousin Elizabeth expecting a child in old age, encourages her to visit her, not to verify the truth of the sign, but to serve her cousin, in need of help at a crucial moment in life. Carrying out a pregnancy at that age, and also taking care of the housework was not easy.

Today, many people are worried about their own affairs: we hardly listen to the voice of the Lord and it is not easy to let ourselves be led by the Holy Spirit through whom God whispers His will.

We young people can learn from Mary to take care of our parents and the elderly, respect them, protect them, help them. Sometimes we reject them, we do not have time for them, and we even believe that they have nothing to say or give us because our times, new technologies, are too different from their experience. And this is sad..., but Mary teaches us to honor and love our parents, to value older people with their desire to communicate to us their wealth of experience. Pope Francis invited us to prepare for the 2019 World Youth Day by improving intergenerational communication, avoiding marginalization and exclusion, overcoming all selfishness and petty interest, allowing ourselves to be challenged by Mary's solicitude, going, like Her, to meet others, especially the neediest. Here is the challenge for us young people, to be faced with Mary: to spread the joy, and above all the joy of the presence of Jesus in us.

*Prepared by Gamado Pierre, Houndjo Kely, Foley Faddy, Nador Nadine,
Dissou Anim, Adjnon Aline (Togo)*

Prayer intention:

Lord, invite us to "go out" of ourselves, our comforts, our selfishness. Give us Lord the light of the Holy Spirit to understand the way to follow; free us from individualism to engage in the concrete service of others, especially the most marginalized, the poor, and the elderly. With your strength, we want to become disciples - missionaries of the Gospel in the concreteness of every day and, like Mary, bring to others, the joy of feeling loved gratuitously, the joy of Jesus. Amen.

May 18

Marian text: Lk 1:46-56

Reflection:

The Virgin Mary, an ever joyful and humble example of faith, reveals the Lord's merciful goodness through her song of praise. She has experienced the powerful works of God in the first person and is a perfect witness of His blessings. She, so close to the love of God, adores and contemplates the riches of the heart of God so generous to those who lack everything on earth. We know that material wealth and earthly power do not bring happiness in front of our God and we have the ability to choose that our actions are inspired by the love of God and imitate Him, as Mary did.

Mary mentions the word “generation” multiple times, perhaps referring to God’s timelessness. He exists outside of human constraints, and His blessings—including those of Mary, whom He “set apart” to give a ‘home’ to and love His only Son—will never fade from human tradition. Almost two thousand years after Mary’s song, young people are living in a world much different from Mary’s time. Our world has been afflicted by wars and natural disasters yet countless acts of mercy have been made in Jesus’ name. Saints have shown us how to be a modern warrior for Christ and the Gospel. In this epoch of changes, God will aid His servants as He aided Israel long ago. God’s mercy was promised to those who came before us and is promised to us and to our descendants. We dwell in His eternal mercy, which knows neither beginning nor end. He surrounds the humble with blessings, mercy, and joy. If we live a life of discipleship imitating Jesus, Mary, and the Saints, we can be assured to someday see the Kingdom He has created for His children.

*Prepared by Maressa Park, Gabriella Almanzar, Esther Paulino and Jocelyne Guzmán –
Members of the “Marian Light Club” (United States of America)*

Prayer intention:

For those who are exposed to peer pressure or pressure from themselves. May they be guided by the Lord’s light to the path of healing and righteousness.

For the homeless and underprivileged, that their necessities are provided for and that they are supported by the Lord’s people.

May 19

Marian text: Mt 1:16-25

Reflection:

This Gospel passage talks about Joseph and Mary, the two great role models for the youth in Cambodia: being responsible in a loving relationship, trusting each other, and saying "No" to violence.

It is so touching to see how Joseph chose to face the problem peacefully without violence. Though he didn't break the law of married life, he found Mary with child. What happened? Did she cheat on me? Even though it seemed clear that Mary was not faithful to him, Joseph didn't want to expose Mary to shame, but to divorce her quietly. And when he knew the reason why Mary got pregnant, he trustingly accepted Mary to be his wife.

Regarding Mary, she might have suffered greatly at not being able to tell the truth to the one she loved, her fiancé, and was in great fear of being misunderstood, but she was determined to do God's Will, and totally trusted in God, patiently waiting for the truth to be revealed.

It is just the opposite for the youth in Cambodia, when they are involved in a loving relationship as boyfriend and girlfriend, the girls easily give in to the demand of the boys to have sexual relationship, instead of being firm in saying “no”, and living up to the beautiful Khmer family traditions and to the faith. And once they give in to their sexual desires, they are not able to bear the consequences: the boys easily deny their responsibilities and force the girls to have an abortion. The girls usually suffer deeply from the pressure of Khmer culture, traditions, and family which may lead them to a serious mental crisis and to thoughts of committing suicide.

Also, in the family, there is always violence against each other. When faced with problems, they do not seek a reasonable solution for them but turn to the use of alcohol to relieve such pressure.

Domestic violence makes the poor families more and more miserable. Many escape from these problems by immigrating to neighboring countries, leaving their children deprived of family warmth, of parental guidance, and of education.

Prepared by Pen Seiha (Cambodia)

Prayer intention:

May St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary help the people of Cambodia, especially the young, to avoid violence and to be firm in holding on to their cultural values and to the Catholic Faith.

May 20

Marian text: Mk 3:20-21;31-35

Reflection:

Although many followed Jesus everywhere and never abandoned him, not everyone admired him, even among His own relatives. We think that maybe this was a disappointment for Jesus, because when we have a little success in school, at work, with friends, we expect our first admirers to be our family members.

The family of Jesus is not limited to blood relatives: He offers us a new notion of "family", a family extended to all believers, to all those who listen to the message of Jesus and put it into practice in their daily lives. In reality, when we live truly united to the Father, fraternity grows, and our family grows bigger and bigger.

Jesus teaches us to love in order to be His followers, to help our brothers and sisters, especially those who are more discriminated against and abused, as He loves them, as part of the same family, to make it grow as a family of believers, through the proclamation of the Word of the Father.

Like Mary, we also seek to strengthen our family ties with Jesus. We seek Him, listen to Him, and do His will. Only in this way will we help the great family of God to grow, as the "voice of Jesus" that calls everyone his brothers and sisters.

Prepared by Sara Silva (Portugal)

Prayer intention:

For young people who do not find in their families the necessary support for the future, so that they can find in Our Lady the help they need. Guided by Her hand, may they listen to the voice of Jesus who calls them his brothers and sisters, discover in him the strength to go forward, in the certainty that in Him alone they will find the happiness of the Gospel to realize their dreams.

May 21

Marian text: Jn 19:25-30

Reflection:

Mary's sister, Mary of Cleophas, Mary Magdalene, and the beloved disciple John stood under the cross of Jesus, who was slowly dying. Mary is there, helpless before the pain of her Son, she who

conceived him when she was still young. Let us try to imagine all the sufferings she had to face when she had waited for him, given birth, brought Him up, grown before His mother's eyes: the pain of the birth of a child and the even more serious the pain of seeing that same child die. Even if it would not have been possible to do more to save Jesus from the cross, a mother, Mary, would have gone to the extreme of the sacrifice ... and there is no doubt about it. If I had been in Mary's place, I do not know how I would have collaborated ... Being a 'normal' girl, I would not have been able to accept such sudden and drastic changes in my life! Although Mary was an 'ordinary' woman, she possessed an extraordinary love for the Almighty. She agreed to give birth, but I would hesitate to say yes. Imagine if suddenly a dear friend came to my house and asked me to attend a party with her ... I would have no doubt or hesitation and I would not need to think twice, but the news of the birth of a child should be well thought out. Mary, however, does not question anything: she trusts God, she knows that everything will go well with Him.

Even at the moment of Jesus' agony, we can only remotely imagine the suffering of Mary, there at the foot of the cross, while He dies crucified. I do not think she asked as many questions as I would have done in her place ... She lives sacrifice, chooses to make a big sacrifice, while her only son was taken away so tragically ...

Even in our hearts, sometimes, we would like to save some our dear ones, our friends: let us look at our Mother Mary and her strength before the agonizing Jesus. We can only draw inspiration from her and be amazed. She is indeed the Mother of all because of her eternal love for her son.

In today's world, many girls have to face a pregnancy outside marriage: a mistake, the option of abortion, because having a child is a shame, unacceptable by society. So much gossip, criticism, bad looks, and judgments that make life even more difficult. Mary faced an enormous amount of criticism from her neighbors. Yet she had succeeded in bringing Jesus into the world, made herself a womb for Him and remained with her Son through the whole process of birth, growth, death, and resurrection, without ever abandoning Him.

Mary followed the cross that Jesus carried up to Mount Calvary, on that blood-stained street ... she saw everything and endured everything. Only a few women have such power within them to go through so much suffering in their lives. Mary is at the highest level of love, resistance, and sacrifice. Yes, Jesus sacrificed His life for our salvation, but also the sacrifice of Mary was great, because her soul died while Jesus died, her heart was also nailed to the cross with Jesus.

I cannot simply put myself in the place of Mother Mary, not only because I cannot, but also because I do not deserve it. When Jesus died, He made Mary the mother of all the living, an event that had to mean a lot to her.

To reduce the pain of Mary, we can try to be better even if we will never be as good as Jesus ... but there is nothing wrong with trying. Mary is the Queen of Heaven, mother of all. But at that time, she was only a mother and led a simple life. She never even wanted to be admired and become Queen of Heaven. She never asked for a reward from God for the service of maternity she had with Jesus. Many women lose their sons and daughters and Mary acts as a source of inspiration and guidance for all of them in the hour of need.

I'm just a teenager with a winding road ahead of me in the path of life. The example of Mary will act in me, she will give me strength in times of need. When I grow up and it will be time for me to form a family, I would like to have one like that of Mary. I would like to aspire to be a mother like her. Perhaps I will not be able to succeed completely in this, but I will do my best to serve God in this way. It may seem like a question of words, but I will not be frustrated because the events of the Bible will be my guide and faith will be my salvation. If Mother Mary could do it I can too, with her help.

Prepared by Lina D'Rozario (India)

Prayer intention:

Lord, help us understand that you call us to share your table and also your cross. We pray for all those who suffer, are abused, oppressed, and in situations that deprive them of their human dignity.

We know that you have a project of full happiness for our life. Help us to walk in faith like Mary. Grant us the graces we need to live our Christian call as She did. Amen.

May 22**Marian text:** Jn 19:25-30**Reflection:**

Jesus, after having gone through all the suffering of the cross, gives us his Mother and asks us to trust her: "Ask me, and I will protect you".

The gospel phrase "None of his bones were broken" illustrates the situation of the time, when many did not believe in the revelation of Jesus until the Scriptures were fulfilled. For this they humiliated him and despised him. Even today, through social networks, unfortunately we can see the suffering of those who are persecuted because of their faith, stoned, crucified.

Let us look at Mary's position before the Crucifix: as the song "Encounter with the Crucifix" says, Mary, before the cross, becomes aware of her numerous encounters with God, of the extraordinary birth of her son up to the foot of the Cross.

Looking at Mary's faithful attitude as a model, we ask ourselves: how often do we meet Jesus and do not see Him? How many times do we expect a glorious God, and often He does not manifest himself this way? How many times do we realize that we too have to carry the cross? And what about the younger disciple, how many times have we passed absently next to him?

"Never judge a book by its cover!" In this regard, I narrate an episode that happened during the Mission Week. We were judging the attitude of an unruly boy in the oratory, forgetting to look at his reality, at the presence of God in him, a God alive there, present with him, in his life. Our change of gaze caused a change: the boy participated in the *Via Crucis* with the community and even helped to carry the cross. He continued to attend the oratory during the mission and also after the mission. His family also approached and, a year later, he acknowledged us in another meeting.

This episode made us understand how we should think with God's thoughts before judging the actions of others. If we are always focused on God, just like Mary, we will know how to see Jesus in the other.

It is our responsibility, as Don Bosco did, to meet today's crucified ... Jesus took upon Himself the martyrdom of the cross and thus changed everyone's life for the better! ... and we young people, how do we choose - if we really choose - to be at the foot of the cross?

*Prepared by the Members of the Provincial Council of the Salesian Youth Movement
Ana Clara Caetano, Ana Clara Mota de Oliveira, Agatha, Ana Luiza, Bruno Henrique Ultramari,
Danielle Santos Cruz, Gabriel Brito Guirãõ, Henrique Leck Venâncio, Júlia Figueiredo,
Kelvim, Marcela, Pedro Francisco Lopes Giovani, Isadora Prudente (Brazil)*

Prayer intention:

Lord, we want to pray for so many young people around us who have lost the meaning of life. May we, young people of the Salesian Youth Movement, know how to be missionaries with our

attitudes and gestures, so that many friends can meet you who are the Absolute, through the intercession of your and our mother, Mary Help of Christians.

May 23

Marian text: Jn 19:25-37

Reflection:

In this passage from the Gospel of St. John we contemplate Mary, close to Jesus until the end. She knew that the price of Love is very high. Everything that God was entrusting to her would not be easy to face, but she followed Jesus in every moment of her life; she never regretted having said to that Angel: "Let it be done to me ...".

Here she is, near the Cross, She, the Mother, facing with strength and courage, the pain of seeing her only Son die before her eyes. Faithful as always, at the foot of the cross, Mary lets a sword pierce her heart, pure and simple. It is here that we must remember Mary: despite the pain that the death of the Son causes her, she accepts it as part of her life.

Mary always believed in God and did his will, knowing what would happen. Instead of disapproving, she kept her faith firm. She teaches us that we can bear the pain, that is not a child of sin, will not always torment us: it is the price of love for others. As she looks at her Son on the cross, she offers his pain for us.

Our journey is linked to Her. From the moment Jesus says to John: "Behold your mother", the Mother of God has become our mother, her wounded heart welcomes us and loves us as she loved Jesus. Today we see suffering mothers because they lose their children and believe they cannot get out of that horrible moment. Although we experience difficulties, we must accept them by following the example of Mary. Everything has a reason or a meaning, God will help us to overcome difficulties. Remembering Mary, we feel called to have her strength and to ask her to help us overcome any difficulty. Let us entrust ourselves to that pure and strong woman, we give to her everything that does not let us live.

We know the situation we live in our country: young people who die fighting for a better Venezuela; others who, without having planned it, are forced to leave their land, a decision that is not easy and, sometimes, the only way out from what torments them.

Behind all this there are mothers who suffer because they lose their children: dead, fallen into despair in vice, in drugs, in alcohol, in delinquency, in situations that take them away from what Jesus wants for us, 'Life in abundance'.

Young people at this time need to feel listened to with confidence, as Jesus does ... They want to cry, let off steam, bring out the fatigue, the weight they have inside ... They want to share the feeling of having a better Venezuela, their wounds, what it is overwhelming ... and also their dreams of the future, their will of the future, their fears ... in a word: to be accompanied.

And also, to demand. Only those trusted by someone can be given responsibility. There are many, or rather, all young people are wonderful works of God and are full of great qualities. Let us open the doors of the heart to all of them as Don Bosco did, so that, by bringing out the best and accompanying them to meet Jesus, we can multiply our hands to help bring abundant life throughout the world.

The challenge is to give space to young people to be young: not schools that seem to be prisons, not parks that serve only to offer intimacy to couples, not churches with few proposals for young people and no place to share with friends, that are different from bars, clubs, liquor stores ...

Of course, it seems to ask too much, but we only look for places, environments, and proposals so that young people can be themselves ... and then everything would be different! There would not be young people already old and bitter, who burn the stages of life because they are surrounded by false ideas of maturity ... but only young, serene, who face life, even when difficult.

Prepared by Patricia Paredes, Angi Zabala e Víctor Alvarado (Venezuela)

Prayer intention:

So that we can face these situations with the pain that Mary suffered while they crucified her Son: we pray for our people, especially the Venezuelan mothers, because like Mary, we will be able to welcome the will of God, which is nothing but receiving her strength to overcome all the difficulties that arise in life.

**MAY 24
FEAST OF MARY HELP
OF CHRISTIANS**



“They have no more wine” (Jn 2:3)

In the task of accompanying the younger generation, the Church accepts her call to collaborate in the joy of young people rather than be tempted to take control of their faith (cf. 2 Cor 1:24). Such service is ultimately founded in prayer and in asking for the gift of the Spirit, who guides and enlightens each and everyone. (Preparatory Document of the Synod 2018)

Marian text: Jn 2:1-11

Reflection:

Mary knows the needs, even the material ones, because she has experienced the narrowness and poverty of Nazareth and Bethlehem; she knows what it means to not have what is necessary and responds with concern to this reality. She does not criticize the couple "for wrong calculations" but, as she did with her cousin Elizabeth, she decides to act, to take the initiative, and go out of herself to satisfy the needs of the other person. And she does it in the best way: she resorts to her Son, to God, whom she has always known and from whom she has experienced firsthand the powerful action in the face of need.

Mary resorts decisively to the Son, without turning around, without thinking that He told her no. In the story, Mary is not named by name, she is twice called "the mother of Jesus"; therefore,

Jesus calls her "woman" and is finally mentioned as "His mother". It is not a coincidence, since the whole Gospel is good news, it is the confirmation that Mary is par excellence "the Mother" and as such she responds promptly to the needs of her children, intervening with her help, even in the face of the "material need".

The Mother of Jesus, like her Son, understands us completely. We are not only a spirit that requires love and prayer, we are also a body, with material needs to care for a dignified existence, capable of contemplating God's intervention in our life. What better way to look at the Mother, so that we too can satisfy the needs of our brothers and sisters, having the certainty that Jesus, if it is a question of alleviating the need and suffering of the other, will not hesitate to give us "the best wine".

Prepared by Lucía Arenas (Uruguay)

Prayer intention:

Mary, you know the needs, the desires, the hopes of the youth, and not only that: you love us with the tenderness of a mother, always attentive and interested in the good of all who call on you as the Immaculate, and as the Help of all peoples. We entrust to you our life project. Help us to discover what your Son desires for us. We want to be available to His will so that we, too, may offer to all the "new wine" of Jesus's friendship, and collaborate with Him in building peace in the world.

"Have faith in Mary and you will see what miracles are." (Don Bosco)

"Let us pray and let us act in everything as if we had Our Lady present; and She is, even if we do not see her." (Mother Mazzarello)

Prepared by the Youth Ministry Sector