



MARY INVITES US TO BE OPEN AND TO LIVE GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

First of all, we feel we must express our profound gratitude to Jesus and to Mary for the vitality of our Association and for the signs of grace that accompany it. Every month that passes we gather many fruits of the growth and consolidation of ADMA and of its pastoral and apostolic fruitfulness.

In this climate of grace, **Mary invites us to be open and to live by the commandments God has given us.** They are words of life that lead to salvation. If we read the Rules of ADMA written by Don Bosco we note that he founded the Association primarily to defend and spread the commandments of God, which are the "rights of God", aware that only when they are observed will human rights be respected. It is about loving *"the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment."* This means overcoming with his grace the seductions and temptations of the world, as he invites us to celebrate the baptismal liturgy of the Easter vigil, looking at mankind and all God's creatures with respect and love.

To live in obedience to God and to his will **it is essential that we walk together.** Article 1 of our Regulations says: "We Christians must unite in these difficult times. Being among the many people who are doing good motivates us without our realizing it." It reminds us **to be united in doing good:** to be united in countering evil; to be united to strengthen each other; to join spiritually and to cooperate apostolically. In particular it exhorts us to remain steadfast in the faith, not to be deceived and seduced by a way of thinking that leads to indifference and abandonment of the faith. It encourages us in our commitment to evangelization, life, family and education. To be united in prayer and action is to be a sign of the love of God and of Mary for those who do not know this love, and to be capable of spreading peace and love among men.

We wish you a blessed Easter, a mystery in which God has expressed all his love for humanity and has intimately united himself with it. We invite you to promote prayer in our groups and families as a privileged means of expressing and strengthening our Easter faith. This year Easter is celebrated on April 1st, the anniversary of the canonization of our Father and Founder Don Bosco in 1934. *Happy and Holy Easter in the Risen Lord and in the joy of Mary Help of Christians!*



Renato Valera, President
Fr Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, Spiritual Animator

Formation Programme 2017-2018: Introduction to Devout Life by St. Francis of Sales

6. HOW TO LIVE EVANGELICAL POVERTY?

Fr Gianni Ghiglione

Quite often I meet people of a certain cultural level who smile when they hear "Blessed are the Poor" and make comments that have the sole result of highlighting their ignorance in the religious field.

Jesus is not one who praises poverty understood as destitution or lack of the fundamental means for decent living. He is not an idealist who makes poverty a flag to unite the desperate people of the earth in a single party. The Gospel presents Jesus as a concrete person, who knows and understands human problems including those related to the lack of food, health or money in order to bring healing and relief and to restore.



Let us listen to what Francis wrote on this subject (III, 14-16).

He begins by saying **who the real poor in spirit are**, according to the Gospel beatitude: The poor in spirit are those who neither have riches in their heart nor set their heart on riches. The rich in spirit, on the other hand, are unhappy because they have riches in their heart and a heart set on riches!

As we can see once again the Saint puts his finger on the true root of good and evil - the heart! *If you possess riches, do not put your heart on them. The heart is a gift from heaven - do not drown it in the goods of the earth.* (14)

Then with a deep sense of balance he adds: *You can possess riches without being poisoned if you keep them in the house or in your wallet, but not in your heart!*

There are two dangers to be avoided and they require great vigilance:

Greed: no one will ever admit to being greedy. Everyone disowns this meanness and pettiness of heart. The greedy never have too much. They always find the need to have more. Greed is a raging fever which becomes all the more imperceptible, the more violent and burning it is.

Wanting the things that belong to others: from desire we can in fact move very soon to actions that are not always honest, as Ahab did with Naboth's vineyard. *I wish that you have the care to increase your resources and wealth, provided that it is done not only with justice but also with gentleness and charity.*

Do not desire with a full and earnest longing the wealth you do not have. Do not fix your heart deeply on what you have. Do not be distressed at the losses sustained. I would like to put into your heart both riches and poverty together, a great care and a great indifference for temporal things. (15)

We should not forget that Francis was a nobleman who came from a "rich" family: on this topic it seems that he is speaking from his personal experience and he offers some advice on how to balance poverty

and wealth.

We must take care to make our assets useful and fruitful. This is because they are not ours. It is God who entrusted them to us and therefore we must work with a commitment that is serene, gentle and peaceful. *We must very often practice real and effective poverty, while living surrounded by all the riches that God has given us. A sign of this detachment of the heart is almsgiving: begin to get rid of some of your assets by giving them with all your heart to the poor. Nothing makes business as prosperous as alms. Love the poor and poverty; it is this love that will sincerely make you poor.*

Do you want to do more? Do not be content to be poor with the poor, but be poorer than poor. And how? Be a servant of the poor. The examples of St. Louis of France and of Elizabeth of Hungary illustrate this.

And when you lack something, be happy in these situations. *Accept calmly the loss of goods. Adapt patiently to having less. When our heart is attached to goods, if hail, or thieves or crooks take away a part of them, what shouting, what agitation, what torment we have!*

Finally, if you are poor in fact, Philothea, try to be so also in spirit. And how? (16)

A very simple piece of advice: do not complain about your poverty; we only complain about what we are sorry for. *Wanting to be poor and not wanting to suffer inconvenience is an absurd pretence. It is claiming the honour of poverty and the comforts of riches.*

Our Lady is also a model in this: *Often recall to mind the journey our Lady made to Egypt, to carry there her dear child. How much contempt, poverty and misery she had to endure! If you live like this you will be very rich in your poverty.*

I would like to offer you a rereading of poverty, keeping in mind the circumstances of today. You will judge whether the operation was successful or not. I propose, in a very synthetic form, a three-step path, three simple and concrete steps, accessible to everyone.

If you want to live as a poor person:

1. Focus on a simple lifestyle

In many families, bread is wasted bread, many foods are left to go bad, clothes are thrown away at times because they are no longer in fashion. How much money is wasted on things of no use: just for the sake of spending!

The first step in adopting the beatitude-virtue of poverty is *gradually getting used to a simple life, doing without many useless things.*

This first step towards poverty aims at:

- acquiring a sober lifestyle, doing without many useless things;
- using things without becoming enslaved by them;
- unmasking the mentality of the world which regards luxury and wealth as synonymous with happiness.

2. Become a welcoming and helpful person

Now we direct our attention to people, in their deepest reality, in their heart. By heart I mean the inner life, that area of the soul where important decisions are made and where the most evil and dangerous feelings are often hidden.

This is the level that Jesus points to when he speaks on the topic of wealth and poverty. Read the parable of the rich fool: Luke 12: 15-21. This is the situation of those who accumulate wealth only for themselves and do not bother becoming rich in the eyes of God. *Here lies the difference between folly and wisdom: to become rich only for oneself and to become rich before God.*

Think of Don Bosco: in his life he managed astronomical sums of money but he used money to enrich

himself before God. He asked for alms for "our poor young people". He built houses and churches. He founded works in Europe and America to save young people at risk. Not even a penny remained in his hands and this is why we call him Father and Teacher of the young. Not only did he build houses for them, but he opened his heart to welcome them. He was open to true friendship, to peaceful dialogue to help them become honest citizens and good Christians.

Wealth and money are not negative or sinful realities in themselves. They are instruments or means which are good or evil according to the purpose for which they are used. *"Provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* (Luke 12, 33-34)

Open your heart to welcome the other, sharing with him who you are and what you have. Here is the point: let others share what you own, be it material things, or other goods. Nowadays it is difficult to share the gift of time, of listening, of serenity and comfort. Being poor of heart means being open at the depths of our being. It is easier to give money for the Missions than to take an interest in the problems of poor neighbours, who are seen as a nuisance.

3. Acknowledge with humility that you are a person with limits and in need of God.

In the biblical vision every human person is marked by a profound fragility. "As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field."



The poor person is therefore the one who has matured the awareness of his own radical state as a creature and his total dependence on God. This dependence, however, is not lived in a master-slave relationship, but in that of a son towards his father.

Humility and joy are the criteria of the authenticity and depth with which a person lives or tries to live poverty as an evangelical virtue. We find humility and joy together in the Magnificat, the song of the poor handmaid of the Lord; *"He looks on his servant in her lowliness" and therefore "my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour"*.

Like humility, poverty is not only the awareness of one's radical dependence on God, in whose hands is the life of every living being, but also the clear and felt recognition of one's own sin.

Joy: if on the one hand the gifts received free of charge from God prevent us from claiming them as

our own and boasting about them, on the other hand they fill our hearts with joyful gratitude. *"I exult with joy at the work of your hands!"*

The paper can be read at the following site:

www.admadonbosco.org

and here: www.donbosco-torino.it/

For every communication you can contact

the following email address: pcameroni@sdb.org

FAMILY CHRONICLE

TORONTO (CANADA)

Our Toronto ADMA group had another year filled with grace and blessings under the guidance and protection of Mary, Help of Christians. On January 23rd we renewed our commitment to our Blessed Mother and her Association by reciting our solemn promise during the celebration of mass in honour of St. Francis de Sales. We celebrated afterwards with a reception and socializing. We continue to meet on a monthly basis and hold three retreats each year under the guidance of our new spiritual director, Fr.



Frank Kelly, SDB, who joined our group in September 2017. Our previous spiritual director, Fr. John Puntino, SDB was reassigned last August. As well, we are very grateful for the time we had with Fr. John and all his loving support. **We pray that our Blessed Mother will grant him many graces to continue his work elsewhere.** Truly our group has been blessed with wonderful spiritual directors who share their maturity and insight with us and guide us in our faith formation. This year we continued our journey of greater self-awareness and understanding of God's love and mercy by studying Scott Hahn's book, Understanding "Our Father". It enriched our understanding of our Father's unlimited love for us and provided us with a greater understanding of His relationship with each of us through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. As we grow in deeper understanding, and acceptance of God's love for us, we will be able to more readily share His love and mercy with others. And, of course, we do all this through the intercession and guidance of our Blessed Mother, under her title of Mary, Help of Christians. May we continue to grow in love for God and one another and may Our Blessed Mother direct and sanctify us as we continue on our journey here on earth.

We remain united in Christ (Margaret Pupulin **President - Toronto**).

CROATIA - COMMITMENT OF THE FIRST MEMBERS OF ADMA

Zagreb, Croatia - January 2018 - On the occasion of the feast of St. Francis de Sales, ten women made their commitment as members of the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA). They had been prepared by Sr. Jelena Kolar, FMA. The Mass was presided over by Fr Pejo Orkić, Superior of the Salesian Province of Croatia, in the presence of numerous members of the Salesian Family. ADMA is the fifth group of the Salesian Family present in Croatia after Salesians, FMA, Salesian Cooperators and Past Pupils.



VALDOCCO, TURIN *Primi passi in Famiglia*



On Saturday, 27th January 2018, at the Don Bosco International Institute of Crocetta, Turin, the second stage of *Primi Passi in Famiglia* (First steps in Family) began. This is a cycle of four meetings promoted by the Primary ADMA in Turin. They are intended for married couples in the first years of marriage and engaged couples close to marriage. This first meeting was attended by 21 young couples, accompanied by married people who are already following the ADMA Families programme. Fr Andrea Bozzolo, SDB, gave a catechesis entitled "A Covenant in the Light of God" starting from the text of Genesis 2:18-25. This helped us to rediscover the greatness of the vocation to

marriage, seen as an alliance based on the most profound identity of man and woman, and as a relationship marked by the presence of God. Fr Andrea's words encouraged us to rediscover that each spouse with his or her irreplaceable singularity is a gift to the other, and to remember that God is not added to the marriage as a reality that enriches it, but constitutes its founding mystery! After a time of silence for reflection alone and as a couple, we had a nice moment of sharing and exchanging in small groups, followed by Mass. We want to say thank you to Mary Help of Christians for this precious opportunity and we entrust the next steps of the journey to her! (Gianluca and Mariangela Spesso).

SEVILLE - FIRST FORUM ON ADMA IDENTITY

The Salesian House of *Santissima Trinità* in Seville, hosted the first Identity Forum of the Association of Mary Help of Christians, as a response to the needs that emerged in local councils. About 60 representatives from the ADMA groups of the Seville area met on 27 January to discuss the most popular topics in the various zonal meetings: formation, Youth ADMA, and funding.

The meeting began with prayer, led by Carmen and Salvador who represented ADMA at the Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family held this year in Turin. They shared their experience with all the participants and encouraged them to visit the Salesian holy places and to participate in the next Spirituality Days.

Subsequently, Fr Alejandro Guevara SDB, Provincial Delegate of the Salesian Family, offered some guidelines on how to run the Forum.

This was an enriching forum, in which the associations had time to talk, listen, share and make known the different situations they experience in their environments.



BOLIVIA

In recent months, several departmental meetings have been held in the cities of Santa Cruz and Portachuelo with the groups from Yapacaní, La Floresta, El Carmen and Okynawa. Later the groups of the Sucre area also came. The same programme was adhered to in the various meetings: a moment of prayer and presentation, revision and evaluation of the commitments made in the National Congress (2017) and the election of local councils. It was noted that we are on a journey and we need to continue. A few things were emphasized: human, spiritual and missionary formation need to be improved; experience shows that Youth ADMA is born and grows where there is acceptance and collaboration in Pastoral Ministry; the way to promote the ADMA Family is by involving the families of ADMA members, so that the whole family can share their experiences of life (Fr Severino Laredo, Spiritual Animator).

CALCUTTA (INDIA) - FIRST ADMA GROUP IN THE FMA PROVINCE OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

30 January 2018 was a glorious day in the annals of the FMA province of Calcutta, as 17 candidates made their commitment as members of ADMA during the Eucharistic celebration at Auxilium, Dum Dum, Provincial House. Mass was presided over by Fr. John Puthiyedathuchalil SDB, Provincial Spiritual Animator of Calcutta. **Mother Yvonne Reungoat**, Superior General of the FMA, presented the Regulations, the badge and the card.

After the Mass, Mother Yvonne addressed the new members of the Association, exhorting them as follows: "To Jesus through Mary, this is what happened at the wedding at Cana. Don Bosco took every decision under the guidance of Mary. Bring people to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Mary, our Mother, is there to hear all our needs. Be devoted to Mary Help of Christians, be close to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, have deep faith because Mary is there close to you".



EAST TIMOR: MEETING OF THE RECTOR MAJOR WITH ADMA

On 2 February 2018, at the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Fatumaca, the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, met about 500 members of the ADMA groups of East Timor.

"I am deeply impressed by the faith and affection of all of you. We are meeting in the Holy Spirit. Yes, ADMA is not an association of women. It is a group of the Salesian Family, made up of committed men and women. I am very happy to see that the great things of God are growing from simple and humble roots. If something is not of God, it will soon perish, if it comes from God, He will sustain it, make it grow and bear fruit. We live in communion with other lay groups existing in the local Church, to offer our best gift - to share our devotion to Mary, Help of Christians.

Some of us know the great Basilica of Mary Help of Christians of Valdocco. It's really beautiful, but for Don Bosco it meant suffering, having to build it without much money. But Our Lady was clear with Don Bosco: this is my home, from here my glory will spread throughout the world. And today, when we are in 135 countries around the world, we see the fruits. Even Don Bosco would not have dreamed of so many devotees of



Mary Help of Christians as there are here in East Timor. And he was convinced that Mary was touching the hearts of many good people. And we have many places, where Mary Help of Christians is calling her sons and daughters.

I would like to say that the great Salesian Family needs you! Yes, we SDBs need you and the Salesian Family needs you. All of you are called to help the entire Salesian Family to have a very profound devotion to Mary Help of Christians. With your initiative, witness and devotion we are growing together. At the same time, it is not enough to say: we must pray to Our Lady. It is very Salesian to cultivate a great sensitivity to help those who have great needs. Even if you are poor here, you have an open heart. Yes, Pope Francis is inviting all of us to build a Church with open doors, not with doors

closed. And we also need a Salesian Family with a heart open to action: I would like to help those in need! These are the things that we cannot neglect as a Salesian Family. As ADMA:

We must continue our devotion to Mary Help of Christians, who will always bring us to her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we are called to grow in faith. When we entrust ourselves to her, she always leads us to her Son.

How can we help others in need? You can object: we are poor! I'm just asking you to live with an open heart to help those in need around you! All of us as a Salesian Family and as ADMA should be known not as people of power, but people of service to the needy. People should say: God is with ADMA, with the Salesian Family - they will listen to you, they will help you!

Mary Help of Christians also calls our young people to become members of ADMA and of the Salesian Family. The first group of ADMA is in Turin and has Don Bosco himself as its founder. He founded the first four groups of the Salesian Family: his first sons, the SDB; his first daughters, the FMA; the Salesian Cooperators and ADMA. It is very important that all those who bring the devotion to Mary Help of Christians all over the world were born from the heart of Don Bosco. Now we have 31 groups of the Salesian Family with about a million members. We give thanks to God and we take responsibility for this gift in order to serve the whole Church, families and society. And we have good news - Youth ADMA was started recently at the Primary ADMA in Valdocco. The members have a very deep devotion and a generous heart - most of them are of university age, young people preparing to form their families according to the call of God. And this is very important: the first mission of ADMA in fact begins in their families. A mother with a loving and devoted heart brings her family to God; a father with the same heart also becomes a luminous model for his children.

Thanks for the chance to meet you! I am very happy to see the Salesian Family here in East Timor growing in number and in Christian and Salesian identity! "