

MARY URGES US TO BE PROUD OF BEING BAPTIZED



Our Lady wants to help us to be the light and tenderness of God, as the presence of Our Lady in our midst is tenderness. Our time is "a time of grace", but it is also a time of personal, spiritual struggle against darkness and against all that is evil. Our Lady calls us to be in grace, in prayer. She invites us to conversion, to a **new life**. During the Easter Vigil we renewed our baptismal promises: this commits us to live our faith with joy, to be "proud of being baptized", to be Christians, people who have chosen holiness. "Let us not be ashamed of being Christians, rather let us be proud!" We often feel oppressed, but Our Lady reminds us that the cross is

a sign of victory and hope for us. Let us take the cross of Jesus in our hands, pray and look at how he suffered and died for us. But he has conquered death, he has risen! He is our victory. He is our hope and our guide. Our Lady is the star that guides us and protects us, we are not alone.

Experience "shows us very clearly that Mary has continued from heaven, and with great success, the mission as **Mother of the Church and Help of Christians which she began on earth**" (Article 1 of the Regulations). Mary is a living presence among us. In the history of the Church and of humanity she continues her maternal mission as mediator of grace for her children. She continues her struggle against the ancient serpent, deceiver and murderer, and against all the forces of evil, as she did at the beginning of history. The title of Help of Christians is associated with that of Queen of Victories. With her Son, Mary overcomes the power of evil. The history of the Church has always experienced Mary's powerful help especially during the time of trial and the assault of enemies, as at Lepanto in 1571, in Vienna in 1683, and with Pius VII in 1814.

The title Help of Christians is intimately associated with that of Mother of the Church: Don Bosco had already pointed this out prophetically, anticipating the solemn pronouncement of Paul VI at the end of Vatican II and the liturgical memorial established by Pope Francis. The picture in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin expresses this vision eloquently. Mary Help of Christians is illuminated by the Holy Spirit, crowned by the apostles and evangelists (in Don Bosco's original idea the whole Church was to be represented in all its vocations and missions).

Dear friends, on 18 April we mark the anniversary of the foundation of ADMA in 1869. We invite all our ADMA groups to make the novena in preparation for the feast of Mary Help of Christians (May 15-23) with special devotion, entrusting to Mary the journey of renewal of our Association and of the whole Salesian Family.

Renato Valera, President
Fr Pierluigi Cameroni SDB, Spiritual Animator

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

7. BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

Fr Gianni Ghiglione

With great courage, Francis speaks about the virtue of chastity to lay people and to all who live in the world. He says that "*Blessed are the pure in heart*", is a beatitude that Jesus gives to those who want to be or to become his disciples. It is easy to see the relevance today of this topic, at a time when it has become taboo for everyone: parents, educators, teachers and priests. As Vittorio Messori wrote in his day, among educated people there is no mention of God, of death and of sex. However, on closer reflection, we are dealing with the truest and most important realities of our life: our origin, the conclusion of our existence and the most beautiful reality we have - our capacity to love and our need to be loved.

Let's start with the Introduction (III, 12-13).

Chastity is for everyone. "It is the beautiful and splendid virtue of the soul and of the body". To say that it is a virtue of the soul means that it is a virtue that cannot be reduced to just the prudent control of one's bodily or sexual instincts. In other words, it does not primarily concern the body. Current opinion links chastity and purity with the body, with genitality, and the correct use of one's urges. This way of thinking isolates chastity from its roots and from the purpose towards which it ought to tend.

Let's read again the words of Jesus in the Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament, and see how the Good News aims to realize the prophecy of Ezekiel: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." (36,26).

Jesus admonishes us not to attach too much importance to external things, but to pay attention to the heart: "*It is the things that come out of someone that make that person unclean... For it is from within, from the heart that evil intentions emerge*" (Mark 7, 15b.21). **Chastity is the virtue that has as its objective the formation of a "new" heart, capable of true love.** To educate a person to chastity is to make them grow in their capacity to love.

"*Do not admit any kind of sexual pleasure which is forbidden and prohibited,*" (III, 12). Francis is not naïve. He knows well that evil exists and that often it is brash and has many followers. In this area, we need the kind of attention we have when we are walking along a mountain road: don't trip, look out for dangerous passages, slippery stones, or sudden precipices. He has no sense of terror, but he is aware of the dangers. We are all aware of the presence of pornography in the press, on TV, computer, and in films ... How many eyes are "drugged" by this rotten material and, worse still, how many hearts hardened by this trade, promoted as freedom of expression or, worse still, as love.

Francis adds some wonderful advice, the result of his great experience: "*As far as you can, cut out useless and unnecessary pleasures*". A holy priest used to say: "We must learn to say no to legitimate things, to be able to say no to illicit things!" Train the will in little things, so that it will be ready in the face of the evil which in this field always presents itself with a great deal of attraction. Do not be like the little moth that "*seeing the flame, curiously flutters around it to find out if it is as sweet as it seems to be beautiful;*



urged by this fantasy, it does not stop till it is lost in the first attempt."

It would be good to read the short chapter on "Counsels for preserving chastity" (III, 13): *sensuality is an evil that acts in an imperceptible manner. It advances from small beginnings and leads you to great misfortune.* " Previously he had said "It is easier to completely abstain than to be moderate"; now he adds "it is easier to run away from it than to heal it."

Francis briefly mentions friendships: avoid bad ones ("evil smelling souls and infected hearts!"); be friends with chaste and virtuous people, think and read holy things ...

Finally, *always stay close to Jesus Christ crucified!* Only from there can come the strength to overcome evil and to live the gospel beatitude "Blessed are the pure of heart".

In my opinion, the great icon in which the "chaste" person is outlined, is the page of the Gospel of Luke in which **the parable of the Good Samaritan** is narrated. Take the time to read it for yourself: you will find it in Luke 10, 25-37.

Three phrases in the parable (he **saw**, he was **moved with compassion**, and **he went up to him**) describe, in ascending order, a heart that is not content to avoid evil. (This is a fundamental step. Without it, the goal cannot be reached.)

1. **He saw:** even though he was on a journey he saw the poor man at the side of the road. The two previous travellers also saw him, but they passed by. What is there to see?

a. The **evil** around us to be avoided.

b. The **good** within and around us to be thankful for, to enable us to grow in hope and optimism. A falling tree makes more noise than a growing forest, but the forest (the good) is there, even if sometimes it is too quiet, while the evil makes itself heard, and how!

2. **He was moved with compassion:** the need of the other does not leave him indifferent. He takes the poor man's problems to heart and allows himself to be moved by them.

What is seen with the eyes is felt in the heart and then translated into generous and supportive action.

Here is the second step towards chastity: it is not enough to see, we must become companions and neighbours, close to the person in need.

To have a welcoming heart we need to be people who are:

- *Open:* feeling the desire to meet the other, to be available to the needs of the other.

- *Free:* possessing that freedom of heart that does not hold anything back, is not preoccupied with self, but directs attention to the one who enters "our tent".

- *Filled* with goodness, patience, joy, trust, mercy, sincerity ...

- *Optimistic:* look at the positive, the good aspects of the other.

- *Balanced:* rich in common sense, able to establish authentic relationships and at the same time to maintain proper respect for others.

- *Patient:* the other is not always to my liking, does not always behave in line with my values. To love the other even when he is wrong or when he offends me is a typically gospel quality. The samaritan of the parable saw that poor man and "was moved with compassion". Suffering finds a space in his heart. It is here that goodness grows and the need of the other become an imperative: "**Look after him!**".

3. **He went up to him**

The compassion felt in the heart is translated into action: the gesture: "he went up to". He had already become a neighbour by opening his heart to him, welcoming him and embracing him with merciful affection. Now he became a neighbour also in deeds: he got down from his mount and knelt close to him to examine his condition. He cleansed the poor man's sores and wounds, disinfected and soothed them with wine and oil, and bandaged them. He was in a hurry - he probably had business waiting for him in

Jericho - and he was a stranger to the wounded man, both religiously and politically, and at least potentially an enemy.

But his open and welcoming heart led him to concrete gestures in a crescendo of generosity: he lifted him onto his own mount, took him to an inn and paid the innkeeper in advance.

Paying money for someone is an easy way to silence one's conscience and make one feel good: "I have already given something!" The Samaritan first offered his heart, his generosity. The two denarii that he gave the innkeeper were the crowning achievement of all he had already done.

"In the evening of our lives we will be judged on love" says St John of the Cross, referring to Chapter 25 of Matthew's Gospel where he speaks of the universal judgment: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink ...".

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God; blessed those who have a heart and eyes capable of seeing the need of the poor: the hungry, the naked, the unloved, the sick, the marginalized, migrants, those who are wounded within, ruled by hatred or remorse, blinded by vice, helpless, abandoned, humiliated, ...

Purity is freshness and is a condition of love.

Purity is the guarantee of an unselfish gift.

Purity is the ability to see God, to recognize his face, even where he is hidden behind images disfigured by negative experiences, by vice, by violence, by hatred ...

Purity is the ability to accept the appeal of Jesus in the Eucharistic bread: "*Whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me*".

Purity is the power to love as God has loved us.

Purity is learning to hold many hands and embrace many faces without keeping back anything for ourselves.

Like all the Beatitudes, purity is primarily a gift of the Spirit, which:

- opens our eyes and makes us see God's goodness to us;
- gives us a new heart of flesh, instead of the heart of stone;
- teaches us to understand that prayer gives us the power of God to "do great things".

Blessed are the pure in heart; that is, blessed those who know how to love, who, little by little (even through mistakes) have learned to love, to give a little of their life to others, to give themselves to those in need: they see God.

For reflection:

- Is purity a virtue for you? In other words, is it part of being a disciple of Jesus?
- Do you protect your heart and your senses from the evil you encounter?
- Do you pray in moments of temptation?
- Opening the heart in charity to those in need is the best recipe for living in purity.
- Do you have a heart of stone or a heart of flesh?
- Do you go to confession when you know you have done wrong and do you seek advice?



POPE FRANCIS ESTABLISHES THE MEMORIAL OF MARY "MOTHER OF THE CHURCH"

To implement the decision of Pope Francis, by decree of 11 February 2018, 160th anniversary of the first apparition of the Virgin in Lourdes, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, has ordered the inclusion of the memorial of the "Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of the Church" in the General Roman Calendar. Considering the importance of the Mystery of the spiritual motherhood of Mary, who from the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, has never ceased to take maternal care of the pilgrim Church on earth, Pope Francis has therefore established that, on the Monday after Pentecost, the memorial of Mary Mother of the Church is obligatory for the whole Church of the Roman Rite. With this memorial Pope Francis hopes for "a growth of the motherly sense of the Church in Pastors, in religious and in the faithful, as well as a growth in genuine Marian piety".



Paul VI declared Mary "Mother of the Church"

The Decree emphasizes that Mary "is at the same time the mother of Christ, the Son of God, and mother of the members of his mystical body, that is, of the Church". It also recalls that this title was already present in the "*sensus ecclesiae*" starting from Saint Augustine and that, over the centuries, the Church honoured Mary with titles that are more or less equivalent, as can be seen in the writings of spiritual authors and also in the Magisterium of Benedict XV and Leo XIII.

Precisely on this basis, Blessed Paul VI - at the conclusion of the third session of the Second Vatican Council - declared the Blessed Virgin Mary, "Mother of the Church, that is, of the whole Christian people". Subsequently the Apostolic See proposed, in 1975, a votive Mass in honour of the Mother of the Church, later inserted in the Roman Missal. Over the years, the inclusion of the celebration of the "Mother of the Church" in the Calendar of some countries, such as Poland and Argentina, was also approved.

For his part, Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, hopes that "this celebration, extended to the whole Church, will remind all the disciples of Christ that, if we want to grow and fill ourselves with the love of God, we must root our lives on three realities: the Cross, the Eucharist and the Virgin ". These are three mysteries, he emphasizes, "that God has given to the world to structure, fertilize, sanctify our interior life and to lead us to Jesus Christ".

For the Salesian Family this is a cause of great joy because Don Bosco understood devotion to Mary Help of Christians as devotion to Mary the Mother of the Church, a community of apostles and martyrs struggling for the faith of God's people and for the salvation of youth.

FAMILY CHRONICLE

ARGENTINA - MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY TEAM FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS 2019

On 23 February 2018, there was a meeting of the preparatory team for the International Congress of Mary Help of Christians. This is an event of the Salesian Family promoted by ADMA. It will take place from 7 to 10 November 2019 in the Almagro district in Buenos Aires. At the meeting, several proposals relating to the Congress were analysed and the central animation team and the various sub-commissions started working according to an agreed agenda. Members of the Salesian Family from the five continents will attend the 2019 International Congress of Mary Help of Christians. The Rector Major, his Delegate for the Salesian Family and the President and Council of ADMA at the world level will also be present.



VENEZUELA - ADMA RETREAT IN SARRIA

The Sarria group of the Association of Mary Help of Christians held a Lenten retreat on the theme of the 2018 Strenna of the Rector Major. The retreat was led by two Salesians, Fr Carlos Da Franca and Fr Orlando Gramcko. They spoke of the importance of faith in Christ, of hope and of forgiveness and mercy at this difficult time for Venezuela.



VISIT OF ARESE ADMA TO TURIN

On Sunday 11 March 2018 the ADMA group of Arese (Milan) went on pilgrimage to Valdocco in Turin, together with their president Francesco Stasi and spiritual animator Fr Gianni Fanti.

The morning was spent sharing experiences with the members of the Primary ADMA from Valdocco. After Morning Prayer and the screening of the video "Affida, Confida e Sorridi" (Entrust, Trust and Smile) some couples from the Primary ADMA gave their testimonies.

Renato and Barbara Valera highlighted the salient features of belonging to Adma, focusing in particular on the three pillars of Salesian spirituality, reason, religion and love, and how we can live them in our state of life.

Starting from the message of the International Congress of 2015 "*from the house of Mary to our homes*", An-

dra and Maria Adele Damiani, outlined what it means to "walk together as ADMA Families": an experience of trust and active listening in the awareness that we are called to be "holy" in everyday life.

Massimo and Maria Pia Bonzanino recounted their experience of life. They told how, through the intercession of the Venerable Joseph Quadrio, Jesus and Mary gave them a tangible sign of their presence in a moment of great suffering. They also highlighted the strength of the bond that was created among the members in a moment of intense prayer.

Chiara and Alberto Scavino described Youth ADMA. They spoke of the efforts they had to make, starting from the first attempts to create a group to the reality of today with the subdivision of activities for different age groups. In their talk they emphasized the need for listening and involving young people, with a view to linking youth ministry and family ministry.

This was a day of listening, sharing and prayer under the gaze of Jesus and the mantle of Mary Help of Christians.

TURIN - 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE BASILICA OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

On 9 March 2018 Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, Archbishop of Perugia and President of the Italian Bishops' Conference, presided at the Eucharist in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the consecration of the Basilica (9 June 1868).

"A great tree was born in the courtyard of Valdocco and from this Basilica. The sons and daughters of Don Bosco are close to the young people of all five continents, in 130 countries of the world. Even today, as in Turin of the nineteenth century, there are multitudes of young people poor or abandoned to themselves in their cyber world, out of touch with reality. This is why the Pope has called a Synod on young people: the whole Church is called to come closer to this world." ADMA in Turin collaborated in the liturgical-musical animation of this event.



MANILA (PHILIPPINES) - MEETING WITH FR PIER LUIGI CAMERONI

On 11 March 2018, members of ADMA of the Northern Province of the Philippines (FIN) met with Fr Pier Luigi Cameroni, SDB, World Spiritual Animator of ADMA. The attendance included ADMA members from various groups in Manila and Pampanga. Also present were the newly elected national councillors together with Sr. Christine Maguyon, FMA, Animator of ADMA.

The programme began with the celebration of Holy Mass presided over by Fr Elmer Sicat, SDB, Provincial Animator of ADMA (FIN). Fr Nestor Impelido, SDB, and Fr Cameroni celebrated.

Fr Cameroni was in the Philippines in his role as Postulator General for a Diocesan Inquiry into an alleged miracle attributed to the intercession of **Blessed Artemide Zatti**, Salesian Brother. This was the fifth visit by Fr Cameroni to the Philippines. In the meeting with the members of ADMA, he presented the **Strenna of the Rec-**



for Major for 2018, "Lord, give me this water" - We cultivate the art of listening and accompaniment." Some points and examples were given showing how we can meet people personally, help them to grow and mature in faith, and to know that they are listened to and accompanied during the meeting. With adults and young people, we must learn to listen, discern and accompany, looking to Jesus as our model and guide.

As Postulator General Fr Cameroni presented the list of candidates for holiness in the Salesian Family as of 31 December 2017: 9 Saints, 118 Blessed, 16 Venerable and 26 Servants of God. He reminded ADMA members to spread the knowledge of these men and women, especially among the young, to imitate their virtuous life and to promote prayer through their intercession.

The young people of the parishes of San Ildefonso in Makati City and of Mary Help of Christians in Paranque gave a brief musical recital on the *bandurria* with Filipino folk songs and hymns to Don Bosco.

LAURA VICUÑA ADMA, COACALCO - MÉXICO MME

On Wednesday 14 March 2018, the ADMA members and aspirants of the Laura Vicuña centre in Coacalco, Mexico, shared a day of reflection before Holy Week in the Salesian Youth Centre.

The meeting began with a talk from Fr Efrén Sánchez, SDB. He recalled the importance of the acts of daily and family life, emphasizing that God speaks to us constantly, and we must remain silent to listen to his voice in our hearts.

In keeping with the 2018 Strenna, reflection continued on Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, underlining the importance of daily encounters and the commitment taken as members of the Association to be actors and agents of social transformation. We need Jesus to "give us to drink". In the assembly, those present shared their reflections. The meeting ended with the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.



The paper can be read at the following site:

www.admadonbosco.org

and here: www.donbosco-torino.it/

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