

MARY ACCOMPANIES US IN LIVING A TIME OF GRACE

With joy we present this issue of ADMAonline which officially opens the formation programme of **this special year of grace** which will see two major events for our Association of Mary Help of Christians: **the 150th year since its foundation** (18 April 2019) and the celebration of the **8th International Congress of Mary Help of Christians** (Buenos Aires - Argentina 7-10 November 2019).

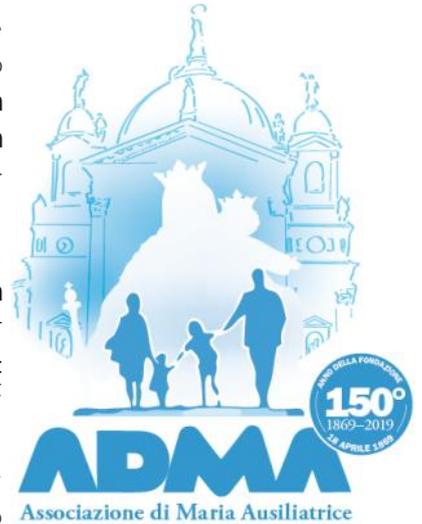
The coincidence of the two events gives a deep ecclesial and Salesian aspect to our journey. The theme of the year is "**With Mary, the woman who believes**". It prepares us for the International Congress and it includes the contents that define our identity and mission as ADMA: looking to Mary and letting ourselves be guided by her on our journey of faith as a people of God.

We will revisit the themes dear to us that led Don Bosco to found our Association as the second group of his charismatic Family: thanksgiving to Mary Help of Christians for the graces obtained through her, the defence and growth of faith in the people of God, the columns of the Eucharist and Mary, the proposal of a simple and popular itinerary of sanctification and apostolate. All this will take place with the power of **devotion** expressed in ardent love for the Eucharist, filial entrustment to Mary, passionate zeal for souls, and shared programmes of faith and holiness.



We will be in harmony with the Church as it celebrates the **Synod of Bishops** (October 2018) with the theme: **Youth, faith and vocational discernment**. The fact that the recent Synods were dedicated to the family and to young people confirms the path of renewal undertaken by our Association to promote faith in the coming together of generations. During the Synod there will be the **canonization of Pope Paul VI**, (Sunday, October 14, 2018) the great pontiff of the Second Vatican Council and a true son of Mary. He officially declared her *Mother of the Church* and spoke and wrote about her in a sublime manner. With the Salesian Family we will cherish the **Strenna of the Rector Major** dedicated to holiness: "**So that my joy be in you**" (Jn 15:11) **HOLINESS ALSO FOR YOU**, inspired by the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis *Gaudete et Exsultate*, on the call to holiness in the contemporary world.

The path we have before us is indeed fascinating and demanding, a time of grace and conversion; for this we pray to Mary Help of Christians, trusting in her presence and in her motherly love: *Mary, accompany us on our journey towards Jesus along the path you have travelled!*



Formation Programme 2018-2019: With Mary, the woman who believes

150th foundation of ADMA (18 April 2019)
8th International Congress of Mary Help of Christians
(Argentina 7-10 November 2019)

Fr Pierluigi Cameroni
World spiritual animator

1. September: Mary the Virgin who listens



Del 7 al 10 de noviembre de 2019. Buenos Aires, Argentina

The journey of preparation for the 8th International Congress of Mary Help of Christians to be held in Buenos Aires (Argentina) from 7 to 10 November 2019 and titled *With Mary who Believes*, is inspired by the apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus* of Pope Paul VI (1897 -1978). He will be proclaimed saint on 14 October 2018. He will help us to understand the experience of faith as a gift to be received and transmitted from generation to generation with the guidance and help of Mary Help of Christians and Mother of the Church.

Mary is the attentive Virgin, who receives the word of God with faith, that faith which in her case was the gateway and path to divine motherhood, for, as Saint Augustine realized, "Blessed Mary by believing conceived Him (Jesus) whom believing she brought forth." In fact, when she received from the angel the answer to her doubt (cf. Lk. 1:34-37), "full of faith, and conceiving Christ in her mind before conceiving Him in her womb, she said, 'I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me' (Lk. 1:38)." It was faith that was for her the cause of blessedness and certainty in the fulfilment of the promise: "Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk. 1:45). Similarly, it was faith with which she, who played a part in the Incarnation and was a unique witness to it, thinking back on the events of the infancy of Christ, meditated upon these events in her heart (cf. Lk. 2:19,51). The Church also acts in this way, especially in the liturgy, when with faith she listens, accepts, proclaims and venerates the word of God, distributes it to the faithful as the bread of life and in the light of that word examines the signs of the times and interprets and lives the events of history. (*Marialis Cultus* no.17).

1. Mary knows how to listen to God.

For Mary, listening is not a simple "hearing", a superficial hearing. It is a "listening" that includes attention, acceptance and availability to God. It is not the distracted way we sometimes listen to the Lord or to others: we hear words, but we do not really listen. Mary is attentive to God. She listens to God. She listens with fear. She perceives at one and the same time the immense greatness of the most high and her own profound smallness. Faced with this distance, however, she is not closed in her inadequacy, but open to receive the Word.

Mary also listens to what is happening. She reads the events of her life. She is attentive to the concrete reality. She does not stop at the surface, but goes deeper in order to grasp its meaning.

This is true also in our life. We listen to God who speaks to us, and we also listen to everyday reality, paying attention to people and to events because the Lord stands at the door of our life and knocks in many ways. He places signposts on our journey and he gives us the ability to see them. Mary is the mother of listening, attentive listening to God and listening equally attentively to the events of life.

As the Virgin who listens to the Word of God, Mary lived her consecration to God totally in faith. Faith is the answer to the Word of God and faith arises from listening, as part of the essential structure of our existence as believers.

Since the God we believe in:

is a personal God, and not merely an anonymous mystery or destiny;

is a God who has been revealed historically in events, and not primarily in ideas;

is a God with whom we are called to live in a relationship of communion (God wants human beings to be part of his life).

For all these reasons, **our relationship with God can have no basis other than listening.** Only by listening we respect the personal dimension and the revelation of God.

The divine motherhood of Mary is preceded by faith and realized through faith. This is the understanding of St. Augustine and of all the Fathers of the Church: Mary conceived the Word of God, first in faith and then in the flesh. But conception in the flesh is a consequence that becomes history (an event) as the result of a conception that occurred first in faith, through Mary's listening and in her "yes" given to the Word of God. The conception of the Word is not only biological or anthropological. It is above all a spiritual and divine reality. It is the entry of God into human history, and of the human creature into God's plan. In the incarnation the human creature becomes a participant in the divine plan.

2. We too are called to listen and believe

How do we become participants in the divine project? Only by listening in faith.

This must be understood in a profound sense. Faith does not make man less responsible or less involved in events. The basis of faith is the awareness of being a creature who is loved and desired, but still a creature: God, the loving Father calls us into existence with a plan of love for each one of us. Faith is therefore obedience and adherence to that divine plan. This does not deprive the human person of freedom - quite the opposite. **Faith makes a person truly human, because it reveals his or her true nature and the reality of being fully responsible and free.** It is not possible to live the faith outside the context of freedom. Either faith is a free choice or it is not faith.

Then participation in the events of salvation becomes extraordinarily personal, responsible and free, precisely when it becomes listening, obedience and docility because it becomes the discovery of oneself and one's own personal truth. The act of faith is profoundly personal and demanding. It is, at the same time, an act of humility and greatness.

Listening skills are required if we are to understand what God wants of us and do it in obedience to the Spirit. Listening is the key word in the experience of believing. Listening in the perspective of faith also becomes a motivating force that drives us to action, and a capacity for creative fidelity to God's call.

Listening means careful attention and an ability to recognize the will of God that manifests itself in the different circumstances of life, in the diversity of conditions and contexts in which we live. This requires humility, allowing God to look on us as he looked on Mary. It requires closeness to others and empathy, an ability to recognize and be in tune with the needs of our brothers and sisters, their joys and hopes, their sorrows and the anguish of those we meet or those who are in some way entrusted us.

Mary offers us a practical example of willingness to listen and willingness to undertake a journey of obedience to the will of God that is not accomplished in a precise act. It becomes an ongoing journey day by day, accompanied by docility to the Spirit to whom she entrusts and abandons herself.

"The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. [...] Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear." (GS 22). In Jesus we find ourselves called to go to the deepest truth of ourselves. Listening to His word invites us to "launch out into the deep" (see Lk 5: 4) and to be open to horizons that we could not even imagine with our own strength.

3. Faith and intergenerational relationships

There is a great challenge facing the present adult generation: knowing how to bring new generations to the faith, a living faith that answers the great questions of the young and that is the path to success in life.

"Amongst the features of our time, there is a kind of reversal in the relationship between generations: today, adults often refer to young people as role models for their lifestyle, within a global culture that is dominated by an individualistic focus on the self... there is not so much a generational conflict between young people and adults nowadays, but rather a "mutual alien-ness": adults are not interested in conveying the founding values of our existence to younger generations, who view them more as competitors than potential allies. In this way, the relationship between young people and adults risks being purely affective, without involving any educational and cultural dimension." (Instrumentum Laboris n. 14).

Even from an anthropological point of view, the growth in digital technologies is beginning to have a very profound impact on the notion of time and space, on the perception of oneself, of others and of the world, and on the way of communicating, learning and informing oneself. The approach to reality is influenced more by images than by listening and reading. This is changing the way of learning and the development of the critical sense. All this also affects the transmission of faith based on listening to the Word of God and reading the Holy Scriptures.

All of this challenges all generations to be willing to listen, both to accompany and to be accompanied:

“The time of youth is the time for listening, but also the time when people are unable to understand the word of life and the Word of God on their own. Compared to adults, the young lack experience: it is adults who should «by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil» (Heb 5:14). Therefore, they are supposed to shine mostly for their righteous conscience, which comes from their constant practice of choosing between good and evil. **The accompaniment of younger generations** is not an optional element in the task of educating and evangelizing young people, but an ecclesial duty and a right of every young person. Only the cautious and wise presence of Eli allows Samuel to correctly interpret the word that God is addressing to him. In this respect, the dreams of the elders and the prophecies of young people only happen together (cf. *Joel* 3:1), thus confirming the validity of intergenerational alliances.” (Instrumentum Laboris No. 81).

4. Listening and dialoguing with the Lord

The first listening we must train ourselves in is listening to the Lord of life: among the “good practices” that help us to listen and dialogue with God we suggest:

- every morning 5-10 minutes listening to the Word allowing ourselves to be struck by a Word or an image that accompanies us throughout the day as a key to interpreting the situations we will have to face in moments of trial and temptation;
- in the evening a brief examination of conscience to recognize the signs of God's love and to reorganize our lives according to the will of God and our vocation;
- a monthly day of retreat and annual spiritual exercises, as privileged times of listening to the Word, purifying the heart, discerning the will of God and sharing the faith;
- preparing and celebrating our listening to the Word in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration.

Prayer of Pope Francis to Mary, woman of listening

Mary, woman of listening, open our ears;
grant us to know how to listen to the word of your Son Jesus
among the thousands of words of this world;
grant that we may listen to the reality in which we live,
to every person we encounter, especially those who are poor, in need, in hardship.
Mary, woman of decision, illuminate our mind and our heart,
so that we may obey, unhesitating, the word of your Son Jesus;
give us the courage to decide, not to let ourselves be dragged along, letting others direct our life.
Mary, woman of action, obtain that our hands and feet move “with haste” toward others, to bring them the
charity and love of your Son Jesus, to bring the light of the Gospel to the world, as you did.
Amen.

The paper can be read at the following site:

www.admadonbosco.org

For every communication you can contact

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FAMILY CHRONICLE

MINGAGUAZU (PARAGUAY)

On 24 June 2018, 51 aspirants from the Parish of Mary Help of Christians in MingaGuazu (Paraguay) made their commitment as members of ADMA, after two years of formation and preparation under the guidance of the parish priest, Fr Arduino Petris.



KENYA - THE DELEGATES FOR THE SALESIAN FAMILY OF AFRICA-MADAGASCAR MEET IN NAIROBI

A look at the present, already rich in fruits, and at the future, which presents countless opportunities: with this spirit the meeting of the Delegates for the Salesian Family of the Africa-Madagascar region took place, from 2 to 4 July 2018, in Nairobi, at the "Don Bosco Youth Educational Services" centre (DBYES).

The meeting saw the participation of 16 Delegates for the Salesian Family, representing the 13 Provinces and Vice-Provinces of the vast and rich Salesian presence in the region.

Fr Eusebio Muñoz, Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family, coordinated the work, flanked by Fr. Jayapalan Raphael, World Delegate of the Past Pupils (male and female) of Don Bosco, Fr Joan Lluís Playá, Central Assistant for Don Bosco Volunteers (VDB) and Volunteers with Don Bosco (CDB), and Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, Spiritual Animator of the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA).

The first part of the meeting was spent listening to the different situations of the Salesian Family in Africa-Madagascar, highlighting the strengths, some weaknesses and some opportunities. Various orientations and fundamental documents were presented for the animation of the Salesian Family and the identity of the groups for which the Salesians have a special responsibility.

Fr Cameroni, as Postulator General for the Causes of the Saints of the Salesian Family, then presented the reality of holiness in the Salesian Family, highlighting the wealth of patrimony shared among the 31 groups, and how this is one of the aspects that unites and strengthens the Salesian Family.

During the meeting some challenges emerged, such as: the commitment to develop among Salesians the sense of belonging to the Salesian Family; to ensure greater quality and continuity on the part of the Salesians entrusted with the

animation of the Salesian Family; to enhance the wealth of individual groups; to promote mutual knowledge, fraternal communion and apostolic collaboration in the Salesian Family.



ECUADOR: ELEVENTH NATIONAL CONGRESS - MAY MARY HELP OF CHRIST RENEW "OUR CHURCH REACHING OUT".

Over 115 members gathered in the city of Machala (southern Ecuador), from 20 to 22 July 2018, on the occasion of the Eleventh National Congress of ADMA, to reflect on the innovative proposals of *Evangelii Gaudium* and Salesian Youth Ministry. The opening Eucharist was presided over by the Bishop of the diocese, Mons Angel Sánchez. In the opening ceremony messages were read from the Primary ADMA of Turin and Fr Francisco Sánchez, Provincial of Ecuador.

Fr Alejandro Saavedra, National Animator, with the National Council organized 6 working groups dedicated to the following themes: Don Bosco's thinking when he founded ADMA; the challenge of entering the "social networks" with the Gospel; the launch of youth ADMA; Social Pastoral Care and ADMA; the Marian spirituality of the missionary disciple; and the "synergy" between the local ADMA and national ADMA. The fundamental guidelines and the final proposals will lead to the enrichment and growth of ADMA in Ecuador, which has 32 local centres.

It is worth pointing out that there are many non-Salesian parishes dedicated to Mary Help of Christians and for this reason a special commission has been created which will be dedicated to the foundation of ADMA in these parishes. It is urgent to pass from a "ministry of consolidation" to a "ministry of growth" that takes the Gospel as a fundamental nucleus to generate "missionary disciples", according to the prophetic power of the Word of God and the indications of Pope Francis.

At the end of the Congress the new National Council was elected: Mrs. Cecilia Melgar (President), Mrs. Olga Jiménez (Vice-President), Mrs. Sonia Savinovich (Treasurer) and Mrs. Haydée Aguirre (Secretary). Seven zones were set up each with their own coordinator (Guayaquil, Quito Nord, Quito Sud, Manta, Machala, Vicariate of Mendez and Cuenca) to facilitate the organization of the association as a whole.



ITALY - SPIRITUAL EXERCISES FOR ADMA FAMILIES 2018

The experience of the Spiritual Exercises of the families, animated by the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) Primary of Turin, took place this year in the Alpine village of Pracharbon, in Valle d'Aosta. More than 500 members gathered during the three weeks from Sunday 29 July to Saturday 18 August, in four rounds of 5 days each.

It was a complete family experience. The main protagonists were in fact the families that meet together, while every 'generation' had its own way of living intensely these days.

Parents had time and space for liturgical and silent prayer, following a path of meditation which this year had as its inspiring theme "The words of the beginnings of the journey of faith": Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and their history of family, history of salvation. A very enriching moment was the fraternal sharing of the experience of simple and profound faith that emerges from the joys and hopes, labours and difficulties of the daily life of every family.



A group of animators, older children of the families, offered different programmes of animation to the younger groups of middle school, elementary school and

kindergarten. These programmes were very well done. They were the result of careful preparation, carried out during the year. There was a great harmony between fun, education and above all a 'family of families' experience. The little ones were welcomed in the 'nest' by a specialized educator, assisted by other animators.

The whole of this time of exercises, with both consecrated and lay people, was also an interesting example of communion within the Salesian Family, where the different vocations lend themselves to a reciprocal service of quality, each according to its own gift.

What happened during experiences like the retreat in Pracharbon enables us to see the tangible presence of Mary today in a way that is alive and effective in the lives of so many people and in particular of many families. Situations and times change, but the values of faith, anchored in the Eucharist and trust in Mary, are all the more vivid and life-giving when families testify from their experience, and come each year to be reinvigorated at these family spiritual exercises (Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB).

SPAIN - ADMA SPIRITUALITY DAYS FOR FAMILIES

From 3 to 7 August we celebrated the first spirituality days for the families of ADMA and other groups of the Salesian Family at the Contadero (Jaén), surrounded by nature. A total of 52 people (children, young people, adults, with and without children, lay people and religious ...),



formed a large family where we were able to live our faith and our Salesian identity.

The origin of these days was the experience that some families had last summer in a similar meeting with the Primary ADMA of Turin, in Pracharbon (Valle d'Aosta). After those intense and enriching days, it was decided to organize for the first time these spirituality days in Spain for the summer of 2018. With a lot of work and enthusiasm, the coordination team gradually elaborated the content of the meeting. And finally, from Barcelona, Seville, Madrid, Córdoba, Valencia, León ... and from Italy, we arrived at the meeting.

Meeting with whom? Above all, as was clear from the first day, with Jesus and Mary. The meeting took place quietly, in the peace of nature, in union with the group and with our families. They were privileged days to renew faith, prayer and deep dialogue, to improve our Christian and Salesian formation, to recharge the batteries of our hearts.

It was also a chance to meet our brothers and sisters, companions on the journey. We did not know each other at first, but within a few days we became very close, sharing experiences and celebrating the faith with joy, being enriched by the words and the testimony of others.

The formation, led by **Domènec Valls**, a Salesian, focused on the Annunciation to Mary and on the spirituality of the Salesian Family, as presented in the Identity Card of the Salesian Family. With simplicity Domènec managed to make the topics close, understandable and present in our daily experience of faith. Being family days, attention was also paid to the younger members, who had time for play and educational activities with their animators, joining the rest of the group for some moments of prayer and celebration.

Above all, the best thing about the days was that they did not end on August 7th. They are a journey that we have continued, every day, in our places of origin, bringing to our situation what we experienced in this meeting. We are a family of families, united, beyond the miles, in Jesus and in Mary Help of Christians. Thank you all! (Family of Beneito Castells).

BOLIVIA - "I PROTECT YOU": STUDENTS OF MEDICINE AND MEMBERS OF ADMA YOUTH HELP BENEFIT DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

Santa Cruz, Bolivia - August 2018 - With the motto "I protect you" (Yo te abrigo) some students of the "Scientific Society of Medicine" of the "Gabriel René Moreno" Autonomous University and young people of the Association of Mary Help of Christians went to the "Casa Mano Amiga" Salesian House in Santa Cruz, to visit children and adolescents, to animate games and dynamics and to give them food and clothes.



BRAZIL - ADMA RETREATS FOR THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BASILICA OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

Sao Paulo, Brazil - 5 August 2018 - ADMA in the State of Sao Paulo held three retreats in the past few months to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the consecration of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. The last retreat took place on 5 August in Sao Paulo with about 150 participants.

IN MEMORY OF CARMEN OBIOLS

Primary ADMA shares the pain and the hope of the family members and of the Association of Mary Help of Christians of Spain on the departure for heaven on 18 August 2018 of Carmen Obiols, President of ADMA in the Barcelona area and of the Rocafort group. It recalls her strong devotion to Mary Help of Christians, her great sense of belonging to the Association and her joyful and generous dedication.

In his homily at the funeral, Fr. Joan Faner, National Spiritual Animator, said: "Looking at Carmen we all know she was a happy woman: with her constant smile and positivity, she attracted us and created an atmosphere of welcome and creativity. Although she certainly knew, as in Don Bosco's dream, that roses are always accompanied by thorns ... Carmen is the demonstration that a true believer, a person who lives faith in Jesus with all naturalness, is happy, naturally happy, without falsehoods, mysticism or marketing. Her joy was drawn from two well-loved sources: Jesus and Mary ... Her life is an example to be followed by all the members of the Association of Mary Help of Christians!"

In a message, the Provincial of Seville, Fr Ángel Asurmendi, says of Carmen: "What she lived was very great: in the family, in the ecclesial community, in the house of Rocafort, in the Province and in the Salesian Family. She was a good disciple of the Lord and has effectively embodied the values of the Salesian charism."

