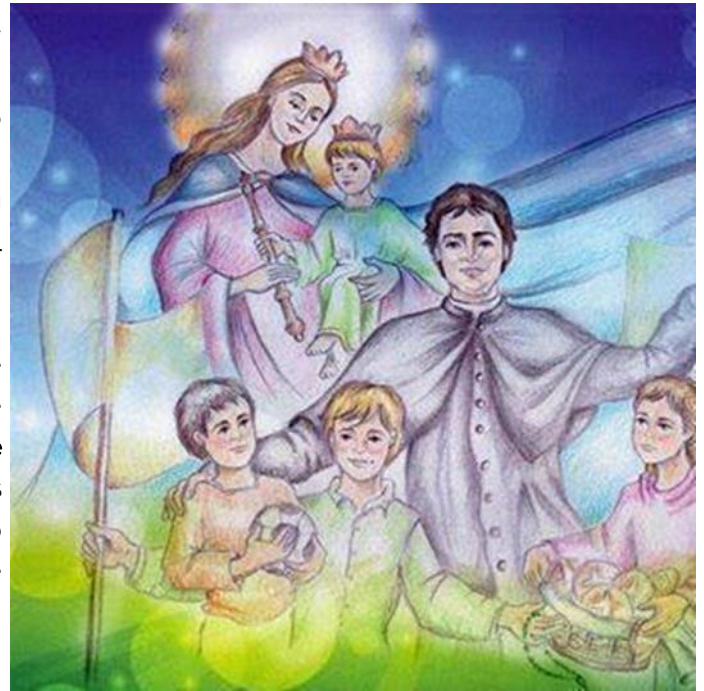


MARY INVITES US TO PRAY AND TO CHOOSE HOLINESS

The maternal mission of Mary in the history of salvation and in the life of the Church is to call people to conversion to God, to prayer and to penance. In a world marked by wars, violence and various disasters, Our Lady asks us to make a choice, **a choice for God and the things of God**. Satan as always urges rebellion against God and his will in order to destroy peace in our hearts, in our families and in the world. He advocates a life of comfort and well-being, and indifference to the needs of others. Mary exhorts us: **Pray! Fight! Make up your minds!** Our Lady urges us to react to this attack by the powers of darkness, who want to destroy all that is divine in the human heart. We must wake up from the tired sleep of our souls and accept the strong message of conversion, which resonates in the Lenten season and especially in this centenary year of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima.



Thanks be to God and to Mary, in our Association we see groups, families, and young people renewed in the sign of holiness and fraternity. They do not yield to the ideology of consumerism and hedonism. There are experiences of Christian life and a strong witness to the Gospel. The example of the saints encourages us to live a true Christian life, arousing admiration in others and the desire to share our journey of faith and to share material and spiritual goods. Mary journeys with us and sustains us, as we have seen in recent years and as we witnessed in the Salesian Family Spirituality Days in Rome in January (cf. Chronicle below).

The strength of ADMA lies in groups whose members, under the guidance of Mary Help of Christians, share a journey of faith, prayer and witness by which we help one another. There is mutual support. In this way, wonderful friendships are formed and we see how Our Lady brings us close to people who help us, understand us, encourage us and sometimes lead us on the path of holiness. When we pray, when we are on the side of God, we become people of hope, because our hope is in God and in Our Lady. Yes, it's true: Satan is strong, but **God is stronger and we are on God's side**. Certainly, our humanity is fragile. That is why Our Lady invites us to draw close to God, through prayer and the sacramental life, to be guided by a priest and to go forward on the path of holiness.

We invite all our members and groups to prepare and to live with intensity this Lenten season with moments of intense prayer and spiritual renewal in communion with the local Church and with the Salesian Family.

6. Love which becomes fruitful

Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB

The family is the place of life

The God of life, through whom 'all things were made', as we profess every Sunday in the Creed, chose to become incarnate and to become one of us within the life of a family. The life that is born in the family has a border and a horizon that goes far beyond the home. In the fifth chapter of *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis says in the words of the Council:

All should be persuaded that human life and the task of transmitting it are not realities bound up with this world alone. Hence they cannot be measured or perceived only in terms of it, but always have a bearing on the eternal destiny of men. (GS 51, AL 166).

The family is the meeting point of two dimensions on which the whole mystery of human life depends. The first is horizontal, between man and woman, made for each other precisely because of the difference that characterizes us - the call to communion is inscribed in our bodies. We all have our origin in this sharing. But in generating life another dimension opens up - one that makes us all children and binds us, through our parents, to the generations before us, preparing us to be the same for those who will be born of us. This is the vertical dimension. These are the two cornerstones of the architecture of every human society, in every age and in every place. The mystery of life at the heart of the cross where these dimensions meet, and that emerges graphically from their meeting is the mystery of God. Fruitfulness and love are his life within ours.

The gift of the mother and the gift of the father

The mutual and unconditional gift of life between a man and a woman makes them mother and father, from the moment of their 'yes'. It needs complete self-giving to each other in order to 'give life'.

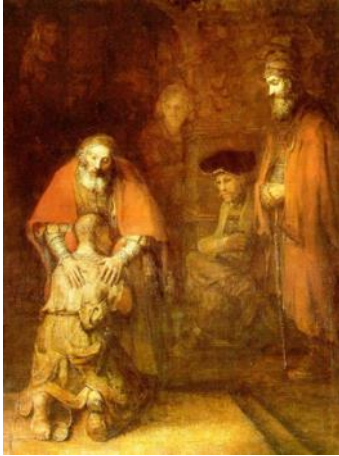
"Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centred individualism... It is they who testify to the beauty of life". (AL 174).

During the nine months of pregnancy maternal love 'gives body' to life in all that the expression means. "Children, once born, begin to receive, along with nourishment and care, the spiritual gift of knowing with certainty that they are loved. This love is shown to them through the gift of their personal name, the sharing of language, looks of love and the brightness of a smile. [...] Such is love, and it contains a spark of God's love!" (AL 172)

Pope Francis points out insistently that the self-giving of the father 'is as necessary as the mother's care' (AL 175).

God sets the father in the family so that by the gifts of his masculinity he can be "close to his wife and share everything, joy and sorrow, hope and hardship. And to be close to his children as they grow - when they play and when they work, when they are carefree and when they are distressed, when they are talkative and when they are silent, when they are daring and when they are afraid, when they stray and when they get back on the right path. To be a father who is always present. (AL 177).

When Pope Benedict gave Africa the gift of the letter which followed the Synod on the Church in that continent (2009) he used a Latin word which is very rich in meaning: '*Africae Munus*'. *Munus* means both a gift and a commitment: it is received, like a talent, to be used and to bear fruit. *Matri-mony* comes from that word *munus*. The gift of motherhood is so fundamental that it gives its name to the whole marriage. But no less important is *patri-mony*, the 'heritage' that is received from parents: life, education, becoming a person, learning to live and love. They are so essential to each other that they cannot be separated. The love that gives life in fact is not only the love shown to the children. It is above all the love between husband and wife, from the beginning to the end.



We are speaking not simply of the love of father and mother as individuals, but also of their mutual love, perceived as the source of one's life and the solid foundation of the family. [...] They show their children the maternal and paternal face of the Lord. (AL 172).

In his painting of the return of the Prodigal Son (1668) Rembrandt interpreted splendidly this motherhood and fatherhood of God, of which the parents are called to be the revelation and incarnation. The Father welcomes his son with a robust male right hand on his son's shoulder, to give him strength, and the left hand is the gentle female hand of a mother, that rests on the heart of the child, to comfort and heal with her tenderness.

Let's go back to the text of the parable (Lk. 15.11 to 32), fixing all our attention on the father. If we have a copy Rembrandt's painting we can contemplate the father's hands, one after the other.

All are made to be father and mother

We are made in his image and called to become like the Father (sicut Pater), as we were taught during the Jubilee of mercy. This is the only way to learn to live fully. We seek to give life in all the ways we are called to give life. It is interesting that the name 'father' and 'mother' befits both those who have given life to us and helped us to grow, and also those who have given their lives for so many other children - children of God - like Teresa of Calcutta or Don Bosco, Mother Teresa and Father of the Young. This fruitfulness of love seems to be particularly at risk at the present time. Pope Francis encourages families to show honour and respect for parents, and also to have the courage to go further and start a new home.

A society with children who do not honour parents is a society without honour... It is a society destined to be filled with surly and greedy young people". There is, however, another side to the coin. As the word of God tells us, "a man leaves his father and his mother" (Gen 2:24). [...] Parents must not be abandoned or ignored, but marriage itself demands that they be "left", so that the new home will be a true hearth, a place of security, hope and future plans, and the couple can truly become "one flesh" (*ibid.*) [...] Marriage challenges husbands and wives to find new ways of being sons and daughters. (AL 189/190).

Mk. 10: 1-16 It would be good to read and meditate together on all sixteen verses, where Jesus speaks about the gift of love between man and woman, and the gift of life, of which the children whom Jesus welcomes and blesses are the embodiment.

Expanded Fruitfulness

The whole of human life derives from this fruitfulness. From being brothers in the home we learn the brotherhood that unites all peoples. The elderly are the guardians of the memory from which we learn the right way to go forward. "A family that remembers has a future." (AL 193). The family is the most immediate and obvious incarnation on earth of what it means to 'give life'.

Adoption and foster care are two expressions of the fruitfulness that maternity and paternity lead to. (cf AL 179/180).

Families should not see themselves as a refuge from society, but instead go forth from their homes in a spirit of solidarity with others. In this way, they become a hub for integrating persons into society and a point of contact between the public and private spheres. Married couples should have a clear awareness of their social obligations. (AL 181)

We have already seen how Rembrandt's art helps us to understand how the heart of God loves us. There is another great work of art created by a young man of twenty-three who carved out of marble the figure of Mary that even now, five centuries later, continues to enchant the entire world for its beauty. Michelangelo's *Pieta'* depicts the 'expanded' fruitfulness of one who was able to give her whole

self in giving life. Mary is holding Jesus in her arms after he was taken down from the cross. She is depicted as the mother of a thirty-year-old but with the same facial features and body that she had in Bethlehem after giving birth. There beneath the cross she gives life to the body of Christ of which we all are his limbs, his true sons and daughters. As Mother, she has gone through the pains of a difficult birth, after all those years of gestation from Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Jerusalem, that reach their fulfilment in the terrible hour of the cross. Mary's fruitfulness is unlimited. It transforms night into day, pain into hope, death into life. Entrusting ourselves to her and confiding in her, makes fruitful and transforms the most difficult moments of the lives of our families.



Jn. 19: 25-42 Try to combine contemplation of the Gospel text with contemplation of the Pietà that Michelangelo has placed before our eyes.

We are family! Every home, a school of Life and Love

The Strenna that the successor of Don Bosco Fr Ángel Fernández Artime gave the Salesian Family for 2017 is not something new to be added to the many tasks we already have. It is an invitation to become courageously what we are by vocation and by the grace of God, which is part of the most intimate nature of being family, both in the home and in community.

The history of ADMA in recent years demonstrates the reality of this truth. When, with the Eucharist and Mary, God becomes 'home', despite all the limitations and challenges of our time, the family cannot but become a 'school of life and love'.

Seeds to be opened:

The intersection of life and love

The meeting point between the horizontal axis of husband and wife, and the vertical axis of parents and children ... at the centre of this cross is the mystery of life. I will contemplate with gratitude (whatever the circumstances were) the mystery of my origin as son or daughter.

I accept with confidence in prayer the gift and responsibility of communion and fruitfulness to which I am called, according to my age and my vocation.

Expanded Fruitfulness

Following the invitation of Pope Francis I look to the opportunities and appeals calling me to 'give life', to grow in love, in the environment in which I live: as a person, as a family, as a community. I give thanks for everything that helps me to respond generously. I ask for courage to take those additional steps that are still open and 'waiting' in front of me.

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 adress: pcameroni@sdb.org

FAMILY CHRONICLE

SPIRITUALITY DAYS OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY 2017



The 35th Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family were celebrated in Rome from 19 to 22 January. They were attended by about 500 people from 21 groups of the Salesian Family from different countries of the world. For ADMA, in addition to the president Tullio Lucca and the Spiritual Animator Fr Pierluigi Camerini, there were about 30 members from different regions of Italy, Spain and Brazil.

This year's Strenna **We are Family! Every home a school of life and love** guided the reflections, reports, testimonials and the rich sharing, leading to reflection and discussion on being family and on what it means to belong to an association, or to be part of a community based on perennial ties of love

The Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, recalled the words of Pope Francis in Valdocco in 2015. "You educated me with love, never lose this way of educating." He insisted that we continue this educational work "starting with love, which is part of our heritage. It creates welcome and acceptance, and leads to keeping doors open, above all the door of our house or home, and even more, the door of our heart."

Among the various talks, the Salesian reading of *Amoris Laetitia* by Fr Andrea Bozzolo SDB, was of particular interest. He urged us to come together to show a more "familiar" face of the Church, as the Pope's document states in paragraph 87: "The Church is a family of families, constantly enriched by the lives of all those domestic churches. In virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, **every family becomes, in effect, a good for the Church.** From this standpoint, reflecting on the interplay between the family and the Church will prove a precious gift for the Church in our time. The Church is good for the family, and the family is good for the Church. The safeguarding of the Lord's gift in the sacrament of matrimony is a concern not only of individual families but of the entire Christian community." This means that on the one hand the Church institution must appear more like a family, so as to become in the best manner possible the image of the people of God journeying through history. On the other hand, families must discover in the Church community the vital space within which they live their own history, overcoming that strong

temptation to close in on themselves which is part of our culture.

The fundamental link between Youth Ministry and Family Ministry is at the centre of reflection and Salesian ministry thanks to this year's Strenna. For some time now, in many parts of the Salesian Family there have been programmes and proposals to accompany families in meeting today's challenges. Some of these initiatives were presented during the Spirituality Days.



We in ADMA give thanks to the Lord and to Mary Help of Christians for the journey of renewal we have undertaken in recent years in accompanying the family through specific programmes based on the pillars of the Eucharist and Mary. The experience was presented during the Spirituality Days by Tullio and his wife Simonetta, and also by newlyweds Clare and David Ricauda, and two young members of ADMA, Elizabeth and Elena, in the light of the motto: "Entrust, Confide and Smile" cf.

https://www.facebook.com/donboscoadma/posts/1876676685910183?aymt_tip=1&placement=aymt_hot_video_tip¬if_t=aymt_your_video_post_is_hot_tip¬if_id=1485590822310480

As ADMA we became more aware during these days that we are being called by the Church and by the Salesian Family, to respond to the needs of the family in order to bring the two pillars, Eucharist and Mary, into the family home and **combine family ministry with youth ministry in the spirit of Don Bosco**. We must act on two levels: strengthening the practice that is already happening in Turin and spread it gradually to other places, taking into consideration the situation in each place. We are aware of the need to monitor different associations taking into account their history and their devotional traditions as well as the number of members. The means we have identified are: prayer, developing a network of personal relationships between groups, families, religious and priests, preparing helpful material and getting to know the situation in the different parts of the Salesian Family with which we want to collaborate. "The union of Family Ministry and Youth Ministry is more necessary today than ever if we are to bring about real change."

At the end of the Spirituality Days, the Rector Major gave this invitation to each of the participants and to the whole Salesian Family in the world: "Let us feel that we have been sent as Salesian missionaries to all the families of the world."



LOME (TOGO) - MEETING ON STRENNA

We shared the Strenna of the Rector Major and welcomed his guidelines. We promote the pastoral care of families and, above all, catechesis. We need, therefore, to raise awareness among parents about the problems facing our families today and urge them to return to the kind of family proposed by the Rector Major (Antoine Sassou, ADMA Lome Togo).



A NOVENA TO MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS FOR FR THOMAS UZHUNNALIL

It is now over 10 months since Fr Thomas Uzhunnalil SDB was kidnapped in Yemen. From the beginning the Congregation and the Salesian Family have urged us incessantly to pray for his release. We have supported this special intention with the novena to Mary Help of Christians celebrated 15 to 23 January 2017, and on the day of our monthly commemoration on 24 January, trusting in the intercession of the Mother of our Saviour. When Don Bosco was in need of some special grace, he used to say: "If you want to obtain graces through the Blessed Virgin, make a novena" (MB IX, 289).

The initiative proposed by our Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) Primary Turin, quickly found the full support of the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime. He invited all the Salesians and members of the Salesian Family to join with faith and devotion.

"As an Association, we feel particularly committed to praying for priests, and therefore, we would like to request the intervention of Mary Immaculate Help of Christians for the prompt release of Fr Tom" said Mr Tullio Lucca and Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, President and Spiritual Animator of ADMA. This initiative has had a great reception all over the Salesian world and also at the ecclesial level with a number of initiatives that have seen the participation of many groups. We continue to pray for this intention.

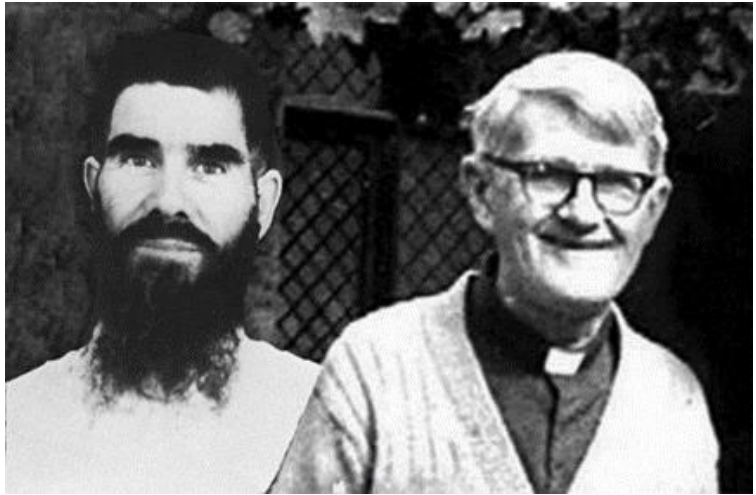
CONGO - PRAYERS FOR THE RELEASE OF FR TOM UZHUNNALIL

On 24 January members of the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) celebrated Mass in Lubumbashi on the day of the monthly commemoration of Mary Help of Christians and the Feast of St Francis de Sales. During the Mass they prayed for the release of Fr Tom Uzhunnalil and for his health. The ADMA members resolved to continue to pray for Fr Tom in their families and communities



Two new Venerable in the Salesian family:
Fr Francis Convertini and Fr José Vador

On 20 January 2017 Pope Francis received in audience Cardinal Angelo Amato SDB, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. During the audience, the Holy Father authorized the Congregation to promulgate the Decrees regarding the heroic virtues of the Servants of God Francesco Convertini, Salesian missionary in India, and José Vech Vador, a Salesian missionary in Cuba, both priests and professed members of the Society of St Francis de Sales. The title 'Venerable' is the recognition by the Church that a Servant of God practised to a heroic degree the theological virtues



of faith, hope and charity towards God and neighbour, and the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude and other related virtues.

"They are a new gift to our family and a confirmation of the holiness that has flourished as a result of the charism given by God to the Church through our father Don Bosco." So says the Rector Major of the Salesians, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, in a letter to the Salesians and to the leaders of the Salesian Family.

In the letter the Rector Major traces the biographies of the two venerable Salesians: "The life of Fr Convertini is full of heroic expressions related to his charity, his penance and his charm as a man of God who brings 'the water of Jesus who saves'. Thousands of Baptisms were conferred by him. He divested himself of everything in order to give to the poor. (...) He always slept on the floor. He fasted for long periods. (...) Fr Francesco Convertini was undoubtedly a model of Salesian missionary lifestyle". Of Fr Vador the Rector Major observes, "he was able to understand the Cuban people, making his own their hopes and fears and expectations. He was 'a messenger of truth and hope' and a peacemaker (...) and proved to be a true pastor with the heart of the Good Shepherd and the style of the Preventive System of St John Bosco."

These two Salesian models are relevant also in this year dedicated, through the Strenna of the Rector Major, to the family. The pastoral work of Fr Convertini was characterized by a family ministry marked by mourning, faith and affection. Fr Vador was born and raised in a hardworking Christian family and always paid special attention to families."

These two venerable Salesians are a reminder to the whole Salesian Family that today the family is the great frontier of our pastoral and educational mission," said the Rector Major, before concluding: "I hope you can really draw inspiration from these examples of Salesian holiness, by becoming familiar with their testimony and asking through their intercession for the grace of the miracle that will open the way for their beatification."

The full text of the letter is available on the site sdb.org