



I will give you a
TEACHER

IX Congress of Mary Help of Christians

29 AUGUST – 1 SEPTEMBER • FÁTIMA, PORTUGAL

*Theme of the Congress****“I will give you a Teacher”***

The theme of the IX International Congress of Mary Help of Christians “I will give you a Teacher”, celebrates the 200 years of Saint John Bosco’s dream at nine years of age, in which Jesus indicates Mother Mary as his teacher.

In 1824, at the age of nine, John Bosco had a dream that would mark him for the rest of his life. In his first prophetic dream, in which he was shown the field of his future apostolate, John heard the mysterious voice of the Lord who said to him: “I WILL GIVE YOU A TEACHER.” Then a majestic-looking Lady appeared and encouraged him to work to correct the behavior of the boys on the street.

Our Lady often appeared in Don Bosco’s dreams and was the star of his apostolate. “Mary Most Holy is my Mother” – said Don Bosco. Mary was of value to the Salesian Congregation, especially when extraordinary help was needed to meet the needs of poor and abandoned young people. Anyone who knew Don Bosco understood the maternal, real and constant intervention of Our Lady, invoked as Help of Christians.

Mary is truly the Teacher, the Guide, the Mother of Jesus.

International Congresso of Mary Help of Christians



Mary is a major figure in Salesian spirituality and pedagogy. Don Bosco's vital bond with Mary throughout his life is essential: it is nurtured in his family, sustained in his priestly journey and strengthened in his educational work. She is Mother and Teacher. Helper and guide. She has been the Mother of humanity since her "yes" at the Annunciation, confirmed by Jesus' words on Calvary: "Behold your Mother" (John 19:25-29). She makes herself present in all the events of our lives, as an attentive, loving presence, available to answer our prayers and needs with her motherly concern. "We have a Mother! Holding on to her like children, let us live from the hope that is based on Jesus" - said Pope Francis in this Shrine in 2017, on the centenary of the apparitions to the three little shepherds. After the Angel's announcement, she hurried to Elizabeth's side. She accompanied her Son every step of the way, from Bethlehem to Egypt, from Nazareth to Jerusalem, from silence to witness, being present among the disciples at the dawning Pentecost of the Church. Always as Mother.

She is a Teacher, showing us Jesus to follow: "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). Everything about her points to her Son, the center, what truly matters.

She is a Help of Christians, as we learned from Don Bosco. Trust in Mary Help of Christians is the assurance that we will never be let down, that we will be helped, listened to, because whoever trusts in Mary Help of Christians will see what miracles are. She guides us through the uncertainties of life to find the right path, of full humanity, in the realization of the bliss of hope and trust. We never walk alone, but hand in hand with Mary: always present, always Mother, always ours!

Mary's presence marks our origins, and therefore our way of being and behaving. "In time you will understand everything": the best way to be like Jesus and Mary Help of Christians is to learn to be attentive

and available to those who need us: to look with the heart, to listen and to build a Church that goes out to others.

This Congress of Mary Help of Christians invites us to look again at the experience lived by Don Bosco so that we can relive it and bring it up to date in our way of being Christians in the Church, with Salesian spirituality. Going back through Salesian Marian spirituality helps us to recover all these dimensions of life and to realize that even in our own lives, "it is she who has done everything", or even more so, "it is she who is doing everything" in the present that we are living.

Welcome to the IX International Congress of Mary Help of Christians! From this Shrine, the Altar of the world, let us pray, meditate, learn and live the experience of being a Salesian family, under the protection and guidance of the Help of Christians of all humanity.

Mary Help of Christians, pray for us.

Reverend Tarcízio Morais
Provincial of Portugal and Cape Verde

Congress Programme

29th august

- 08:30 . 17:00 Registration, participant kit
 17:00 . 19:00 Opening ceremony
 19:00 . 20:00 Holy Mass with the Bishop
 20:00 . 21:30 Dinner break
 21:45 . 22:30 Goodnight message with the Vicar of the Rector Major

30th august

- 08:00 . 08:45 Holy Mass (in multiple languages)
 09:00 . 12:30 Morning programme
 12:30 . 14:45 Lunch break
 14:45 . 19:30 Afternoon programme
 20:00 . 21:30 Dinner break
 21:30 . 22:30 Marian Recital – “Filhos do SIM”
 22:30 . 23:00 Goodnight message with M. Chiara Cazzuola, FMA

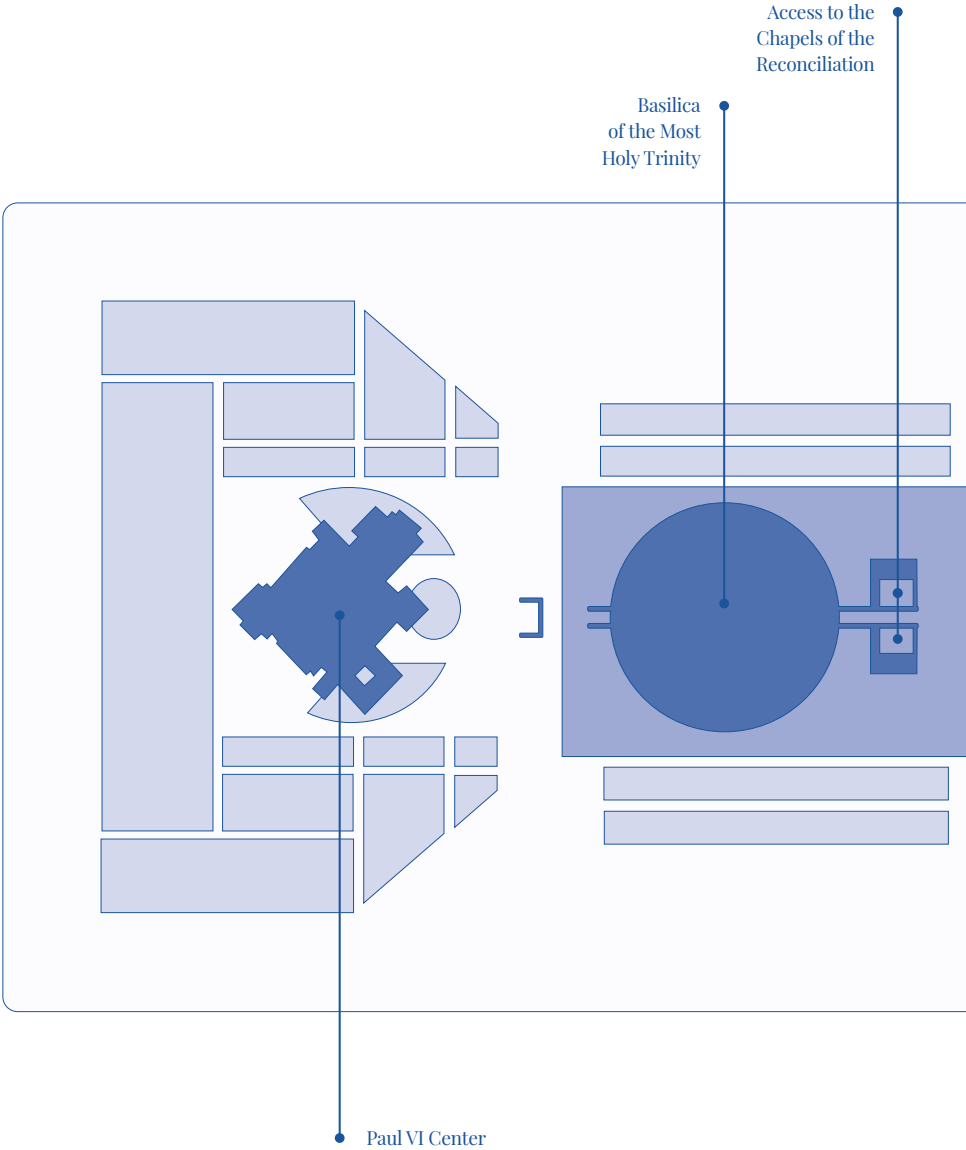
31st august

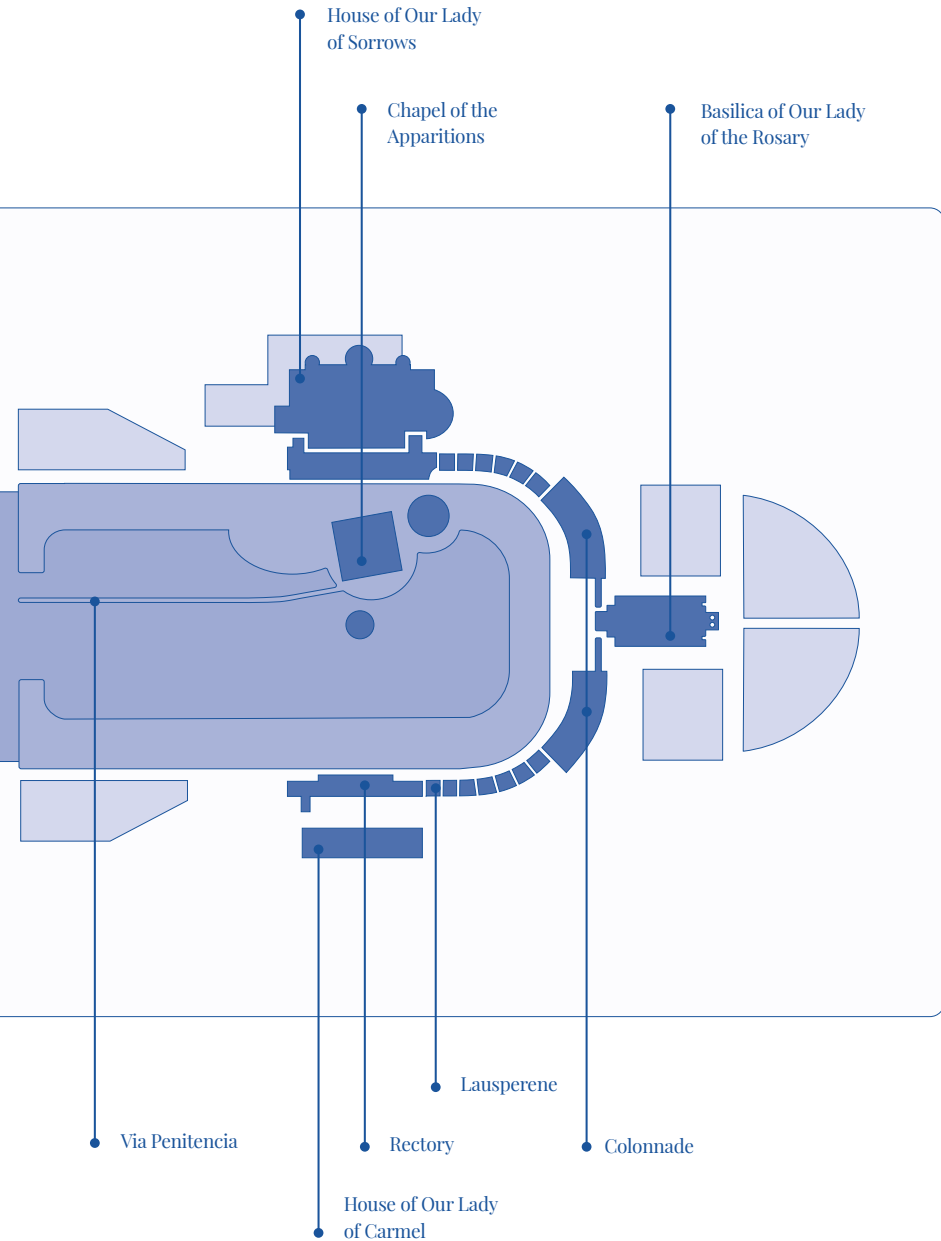
- 08:00 . 08:45 Holy Mass (in multiple languages)
 09:30 . 12:30 Morning programme
 12:30 . 14:45 Lunch break
 14:45 . 19:30 Afternoon programme
 19:00 . 21:00 Dinner break
 21:30 . 23:00 Rosary and candlelight procession for peace
 – presided by Bishop Maksym Ryabukha

1st september

- 09:00 . 10:00 Closing address by the Vicar of the Rector Major
 10:30 . 12:00 Closing Mass and announcement of the venue
 of the X International Congress of Mary Help of Christians
 13:00 . 14:00 Lunch break and departure

Useful Information





The Shrine's guidelines for pilgrims:

1. Make sure you always have this guide handy as it may answer some of your questions immediately;
2. If you have difficulty finding your way around Fatima, ask someone to accompany you or try to establish meeting points;
3. Remember that you are going to Fatima as a pilgrim. Try to behave with respect. Maintain a quiet, polite and reserved demeanor. Your condition as a pilgrim should remove any temptation to just go sightseeing;
4. Wherever you have accommodation, always try to be polite and considerate. At these times of great crowds, some problems arise which can only be solved through dialog and calm consideration. Show that you are a true Christian with a Salesian spirit;
5. At Fatima, don't offer donations lightly. Rather give them to the most needy in your town, neighborhood or parish. Sometimes false indigents appear in Fatima;
6. Pay attention to groups with suspicious identifications or people who offer cards and stickers for money. There are sometimes organized groups that exploit the generosity of pilgrims by presenting false needs;
7. If you don't feel safe, don't wander alone;
8. Pay attention to the valuables you bring with you. In large gatherings be aware of thefts. Take care of your personal belongings wherever you go. A simple distraction or neglect can cause you a lot of trouble.
9. Try to have a pilgrim's spirit, being punctual, orderly, respectful and friendly.



Emergency telephone numbers

Emergency Response Number . 112

Fatima Volunteer Fire Department . (00351) 249 531 200

Police . (00351) 249 540 440

Local Police - GNR Fatima . (00351) 249 530 580

Primary Care - Public Healthcare Center Ourém . (00351) 249 540 630

Primary Care - Public Healthcare Center Fatima . (00351) 249 531 836

Hospital - Leiria . (00351) 244 817 000



day 1
29th august

Opening ceremony

Opening words:

Reverend Tarcízio Morais . Provincial

Reverend Joan Lluís Playa . World Delegate for the Salesian Family

Reverend Gabriel Cruz . ADMA's Spiritual Animation

Irmã Lucrecia Uribe . World Delegate for the Salesian Family FMA

Renato Valera . ADMA's President

Greeting and celebration for young people

Goodnight message with the Vicar of the Rector Major



day 2
30th august

Conference

Rev. Carlos Cabecinhas



Reverend Carlos Cabecinhas has been Rector of the Shrine of Fatima since 2011. In 2008, he obtained his doctorate from the Faculty of Sacred Liturgy of the Pontifical Athenaeum Saint Anselm, with the thesis Liturgical Science as a University Subject. Manuel de Azevedo s.j. (1713-1796) and the first Chairs of Liturgical Science, in which he obtained the highest classification. For several years he was a professor at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University in Lisbon and director of the Liturgy Department of the Diocese of Leiria-Fatima.

Fatima: history and message

Introduction

Marian apparitions or Marianophanies always create some discomfort for theologians who, for this reason, generally don't pay particular attention to them. Even in the field of theological reflection on Mary, there is often a lack of theological reflection on this phenomenon. This distrust is due to the prejudice that such phenomena distract us from the essentials of the Christian faith, dwelling on what is secondary. However, this is a prejudice that does not stand up to objective evaluation.

In the specific case of Fatima, its message leads precisely to the essentials of the Christian faith; "it reflects, from different points of view, the very heart of revelation."¹ In the message of Fatima and in the testimonies of the three seers, there is a "nexus mysteriorum": there, the fundamental dimensions of the self-communication of the One and Triune God and of man and woman's free response of faith to it intersect². The message of Fatima leads us to the essentials of the Christian faith and "allows us to deepen the most radical logic of the revelation of God the Trinity: the love of God that manifests itself as mercy to overcome, from within, the dramas of human history"³.

In this brief presentation, we will begin with the history of Fatima: the event and its interpretations. Secondly, we will focus on the content of the message and the spirituality that emerges from it.

History

As far as history is concerned, it is important to start with the events that gave rise to the Fatima phenomenon.

The fundamental sources for understanding the apparitions are as follows:

- first of all, the Memoirs of Sister Lucia, essential texts through which, in a first-person account, we learn about the experience of the seers: LÚCIA DE JESUS, Memoirs, Critical edition by Cristina Sobral, Fatima, Shrine of Fatima, 2016;
- Sister Lucia's testimony does not dispense with contact with the interrogations to the Seers in 1917: Critical Documentation of Fatima I: Interrogations to the Seers, 2nd edition, Fatima, Shrine of Fatima, 2013.

A useful tool for anyone wishing to get to know the event of each of the apparitions, compiling and critically comparing the Memoirs of Sister Lucia and the interrogations, as well as other relevant documentation, is the work of the former head of the Shrine's Studies Department Luciano Coelho Cristino: The apparitions of Fatima: reconstruction from the documents, (2nd edition, 2022) ⁴.

The Shrine of Fatima was born out of a supernatural phenomenon – this is how it was understood by those involved and recognized as such by the competent ecclesiastical authority – made up of a series of hierophanies. The seers of Fatima were three children in 1917: Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta. Lucia was the cousin of the two brothers Francisco and Jacinta. They were from the village of Aljustrel, in the parish of Fátima, and were shepherds of their family's flock of sheep.

It's important to state the obvious, because we often take for granted what is not.

In the history of Fatima we find three cycles of apparitions:

- the cycle of the Angel's apparitions, in 1916;
- the cycle of Marian apparitions in 1917, which constitute the most important part of the Fatima apparitions and have been explicitly recognized by the competent authority as "worthy of credence";
- and the Cordimarian cycle, which develops, concretizes and complements aspects of the Marian apparitions; in this cycle, the only seer is Lucia.

In 1916 there were three apparitions of the Angel, who introduced himself as the "Angel of Peace" and later also as the "Angel of Portugal". The first apparition took place in the spring, on an unknown date, and in this apparition, the Angel taught the Little Shepherds a prayer. Months later, in the summer, the second apparition took place, in which the Angel exhorted the seers to prayer and reparation. In the fall, the Angel appeared a third time, bringing the seers Eucharistic communion. He taught them a second Trinitarian prayer of adoration.

The following year, in 1917, there were six apparitions of Our Lady, one in each month, from May to October.

The first apparition took place on May 13, in the place called Cova da Iria, where the Shrine of Fatima now stands. In this apparition, the Virgin Mary states that she comes from Heaven and says to the little shepherds: "I have come to ask you to come here for six months at a time, on the 13th at the same time, and then I will tell you who I am and what I want" ⁵. She asks them to pray the Rosary every day and this will be the request she makes most often, repeated in each of the six apparitions.

In the second apparition, on June 13, Our Lady promised to take the seers Francisco and Jacinta to heaven soon, but told Lucia that she should stay longer and entrusted her with a mission: "Jesus wants to use you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish devotion to my Immaculate Heart in the world" ⁶.

The third apparition, in July, is the famous apparition of the so-called "secret of Fatima", the third part of which, which speaks of the persecution of the Church, was not known until the year 2000.

The fourth apparition was the only one that didn't take place on Au-

gust 13, because the Municipal Administrator – Vila Nova de Ourém – had taken the little shepherds, preventing them from being in Cova da Iria on the 13th, to convince them to reveal the secret to him. The apparition took place in Valinhos, near Aljustrel, on August 19th.

The fifth apparition took place on September 13, again in the Cova da Iria.

Finally, the sixth apparition, on October 13, is the apparition of the miracle of the sun, seen by a crowd of between 50,000 and 70,000 people. In this apparition, Our Lady introduced herself as the Lady of the Rosary and asked: "I want to tell you to build a chapel here in my honor" ⁷. The Shrine of Fatima was born from this request from Our Lady: first, in 1919, the little chapel of the Apparitions was built, then the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, the large prayer area and, finally, the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity.

There was also a seventh apparition, but it was personal and should not be confused with these: it was an apparition of Our Lady to Lucia, after the death of Francisco and Jacinta, on June 15, 1921. Lucia was preparing to leave Fatima for good.

Finally, we have the Cordimarian cycle, from 1925 to 1929, when Lucia was already a Dorothean nun and was in Spain.

In 1925, in Pontevedra, Our Lady spoke of the devotion of the first Saturdays of each month.

In 1929, in Tuy, a new apparition asked for the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

When we speak of the "message of Fatima", we are referring first and foremost to the content of these apparitions, but also to the life witness of the seers, two of whom were canonized.

Ever since Our Lady's apparitions, crowds have flocked to Fatima. The period from 1919 to 1930 saw the construction of the Shrine, the configuration of cult practices and the disciplining and organization of pilgrimages.

But let's also talk about the history of the interpretation of Fatima. Trying to simplify a complex process, we can identify five phases in the study and interpretation of the Fatima event ⁸. The first phase

marks, immediately after the apparitions, the period of inquiries and the canonical process of recognizing the authenticity of the apparitions, which concluded in October 1930.

The second, apologetic phase began in 1923, when the canonical process was still underway, and lasted until the 1960s. It was during this period that the first documents on Fatima were published, such as the Memoirs of Sister Lucia and other relevant texts. This apologetic phase produced a catechetical reading of the message of Fatima, framing it within the universe of Catholic doctrine, but not yet a specifically theological reading.

The third phase is characterized by a theological-pastoral approach, in order to achieve a doctrinal systematization of the major Fatima themes, and by historiographical rigour in the critical treatment of the sources. The symbolic start of this phase was marked by the Spanish Claretian José Maria Alonso being given the task of preparing a rigorous history of Fatima, based on the documentation collected. It was during this phase that the foundations were laid for the publication and critical treatment of the sources.

The next phase marked the beginning of the regular collaboration of the Portuguese Catholic University with the Shrine, both in the processing of the documentation for publication and in the organization of congresses, which allowed us to delve deeper into the various dimensions of the message of Fatima. It was during this phase that the publication of the Critical Documentation of Fatima began, which started in 1992 and was completed in 2013. In the same year, 1992, on the occasion of the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the apparitions, two international congresses were held; and after that, many other congresses allowed us to deepen various aspects and dimensions of the message of Fatima, creating the conditions for a richer theological reading of the message.

We are currently in the fifth period: the phase of critical synthesis of Fatima and its message. We can say that this phase began with the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the apparitions, in 2007, with a congress with the theme "Fatima for the 21st Century", which aimed to present a global reading of the history and message of Fatima⁹. That same year, another work of synthesis was published:

the Encyclopedia of Fatima ¹⁰. This period, which lasts until today, is characterized by the passage "from the gradual abandonment of the political discourse on Fatima to the gradual emergence of interpretative syntheses of the phenomenon" ¹¹.

The Centenary of the Apparitions offered the opportunity to assess the status quaestionis of research on Fatima in its various dimensions, and the years that followed have allowed this work to continue. I recall two international congresses on Fatima, on the occasion of the Centenary of the Apparitions, whose proceedings have been published:

- The International Mariological-Marian Congress of the Pontifical International Marian Academy, which took place here in Fatima in 2016 ¹²;
- The International Congress of the Centenary of Fatima ¹³, promoted by the Shrine the following year.

The Message

Leaving the historical part, let's look at the fundamental contents of the message of Fatima.

At the heart of the Fatima message is the "Gospel of the Trinity" ¹⁴. In the gestures and words of both the Angel of Peace and Our Lady,

"God reveals himself in his Trinitarian mystery, arousing a generous response of adoration, self-giving and reparation on the part of the little shepherds [...] The event of Fatima emphasizes the representation of God as the light that illuminates all realities, as the Trinity that we must adore and love" ¹⁵.

Thus, the essence of the message of Fatima is "the awakening to the urgency of radically centering our lives on God, as the only one who must be loved and adored" ¹⁶. The way to speak to us about God, the Holy Trinity, and to lead us to him is not theological concepts or speculative discourse, but the path of intense spiritual experience ¹⁷.

At the time of the Apparitions, ideologies and political regimes were flourishing, bent on removing God from humanity's horizon once and for all, in a militant and combative atheism. Today, more insidious than this declared fight against God is religious indifference, the tendency to live as if God didn't exist. In a more or less discreet way, there is an attempt to "erase" any sign of God in the public space, to drive him underground. In this context in which we live, the clear and unequivocal affirmation of the primacy of God, the Holy Trinity, in the lives of believers remains relevant and urgent.

Because the Paschal Mystery is the culminating event in the history of revelation and salvation, the event in which God's fatherhood of his only Son is fully realized in the world and revealed, and from which the Spirit of divine filiation flows out into the world ¹⁸, it is important to highlight the "Paschal horizon of the Message of Fatima", as Eloy Bueno de la Fuente does:

"Although this perspective has not been highlighted in the publications on Fatima, the Easter melody resounds clearly: light, beauty, joy accompany the presence of the Lady. She allows herself to be seen and heard from the glory of the Risen Lord, to which she has acceded in body and soul" ¹⁹.

The paschal character of the message of Fatima underlines the centrality of Jesus Christ, especially in his Eucharistic presence. But this Christocentric character of the message is also evident in the prayer of the rosary, which leads us to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, which have their center and full meaning in the paschal mystery.

Still within this Trinitarian horizon of the Fatima message, it is important to emphasize a pneumatological and ecclesial dimension. Shortly after his pilgrimage to the Cova da Iria Shrine, Pope Benedict XVI said:

"There is no Church without Pentecost. And I would like to add: there is no Pentecost without the Virgin Mary. It was like that at the beginning, in the Upper Room [...] And it is always like that, in every place and time. I too witnessed this a few days ago in Fatima. What did that immense crowd experience on the esplanade of the Shrine, where we were all truly one heart and one soul? It was a renewed Pentecost. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was in our midst. This is the typical

experience of the great Marian Shrines: wherever Christians gather in prayer with Mary, the Lord gives his Spirit" ²⁰.

The ecclesial dimension is evident in a very explicit way in the so-called "Secret", in the reference to the "Bishop dressed in white" and to the pilgrim and martyr Church; and it is implicit in Our Lady's request to build a chapel in the Cova da Iria, since the church building is always a symbol of the Church of living stones that gathers there to celebrate the presence of Jesus Christ; and it is expressed in the participation in sacramental celebrations, always expressions par excellence of the Church.

The message of Fatima also has a clear sacramental dimension, centered above all on the Eucharist. The message of Fatima is profoundly Eucharistic. If the angelic cycle in 1916 was the "Eucharistic prelude" to the message, the Cordimarian cycle, especially in the apparition of Tui in 1929, constitutes its "Eucharistic epilogue" ²¹.

It is significant to note that it is within the Trinitarian horizon that the Eucharistic dimension of the Message of Fatima is set. The Eucharist is an effective sacrament not only of the living presence of Christ, but also of the Holy Trinity and of our incorporation into this mystery of saving communion. The Holy Trinity is the origin and goal of the Eucharist: in the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit is the true source and culmination of the whole Eucharistic mystery ²². This is what the Message of Fatima emphasizes with particular vehemence.

In addition to the Eucharist, the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is also of fundamental importance in the message of Fatima. In the apparitions of the Angel and Our Lady, conversion occupies a fundamental place. Of course, conversion is not reduced to the celebration of the sacrament of Penance, but it finds its most important expression and sacramental fulfillment there. The pilgrimage to Fatima itself is marked by this sacramental dimension relating to Penance: every authentic pilgrimage is a journey of conversion, which points towards the celebration of the sacrament of Penance.

Finally, the Marian dimension of Fatima is evident. According to the testimony of the seers, Mary presented herself as the "Lady of the

Rosary", she showed herself clothed in light and spreading the light of God, and she revealed the mystery of her Immaculate Heart. Fr. Alonso, a great Fatima scholar, considered the revelation of Mary's Immaculate Heart to be the "soul of the Fatima message"²³.

Since the apparitions of the Angel in 1916, the reference to the Immaculate Heart of Mary has accompanied all the apparitions of Fatima. From Our Lady's apparition in June 1917, it became a fundamental element of the message. In the June apparition, Our Lady gave the seer Lucia a mission: "Jesus wants to use you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish devotion to my Immaculate Heart in the world". And he makes her a promise: "My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the path that will lead you to God"²⁴. This promise sums up the two most important aspects of the spirituality of the Immaculate Heart of Mary: Mary's intercession and her exemplarity. In Our Lady's apparition in July, the revelation deepens and, in the context of the Secret, the final triumph of her Immaculate Heart is announced. In this apparition, Our Lady promises to return again to ask for communion of reparation on First Saturdays and the consecration of Russia. The first request was made in the apparition of Pontevedra (Spain) in 1925; the second in the apparition of Tui (Spain) in 1929.

The invocation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is understood in the light of the biblical meaning of "heart". In the Bible, the heart is the "sacrament" of the person, who manifests their most intimate and absolute uniqueness before God and before each other. In the Immaculate Heart of Mary, it is her whole being and mystery that is addressed. The heart designates the very person of the Virgin Mary; her intimate and unique "being"; the center and source of her inner life: intelligence and memory, will and love. In his theological commentary on the third part of the Secret of Fatima, the then Cardinal J. Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, says:

"The term "heart", in the language of the Bible, means the center of human existence, a confluence of reason, will, temperament and sensibility, where the person finds his unity and inner orientation. The "immaculate heart" is, according to Matthew 5:8, a heart that, starting from God, has reached perfect inner unity and consequently "sees God". Therefore, "devotion" to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

is to approach this attitude of the heart, in which the fiat – "your will be done" – becomes the conforming center of all existence."²⁵

A “Spirituality of Fatima”

The various dimensions listed – trinitarian, Christological and paschal, pneumatological and ecclesiastical, sacramental and Marian – are constitutive of all true Christian spirituality and are found in the message of Fátima, allowing us to speak of a true spirituality of Fátima.

Stefano De Fiores, distinguished Professor of Spiritual Theology and Mariology, comparing Fátima with the message of other apparitions, highlighted as a mark of Fátima's originality and specificity, among other aspects, spirituality: “the recommendations of practices of piety, prayer and conversion , Our Lady of Fátima passes to an authentic spirituality, condensed in devotion or consecration to her Immaculate Heart”²⁶.

According to this author, Fátima presents other original characteristics, such as the historical and political perspective in which it is placed, the “concern for the future” and not just for the present of the life of the Church and the world, the “universal influence on the piety of the faithful and even bishops and popes”²⁷; but it is above all at the level of spirituality that Fátima stands out: “Fátima is more than a simply devotional project, because the Blessed Virgin is interested in embracing an authentic “Marian spirituality”, expressed in consecration to God through the Immaculate Heart”.²⁸

The spirituality of Fátima is a Marian spirituality²⁹, whose most characteristic feature is devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, an element that unites the different dimensions of the message.

From the dimensions listed, attitudes emerge, which mark the spiritual experience that the message of Fátima challenges. We will briefly highlight some of them.

The worship

Worship is the fundamental religious attitude. As a specifically Christian believing attitude, worship is always welcoming of the revela-

tion of God as the Holy Trinity. The Christian does not worship any indeterminate cosmic force, any impersonal divinity: he worships the unitary God, who comes to meet him, who reveals himself to him, manifesting his love.

In the message of Fátima, adoration occupies a particularly important place and is directly linked to the Trinitarian and Eucharistic dimension of the message. The three appearances of the Angel focus on the revelation of the trinitarian face of God, not in a speculative way, but in a doxological way³⁰, through worship. There, believing, hoping and loving are the form par excellence of worship, which “concentrates the three virtues within itself”³¹. Also in the apparitions of Our Lady, adoration appears as a fundamental attitude. In the light that radiates from Our Lady’s hands, the Little Shepherds experience the presence of God, the Holy Trinity, which completely surrounds them, and they respond with adoration.

The worship of God indelibly marks the lives of visionaries, not only as a gesture of prayer, but also as an existential attitude of giving God the central place in their lives.

The repair

Another fundamental attitude in the spirituality of Fátima is that of reparation: the message of Fátima challenges the experience of a reparative spirituality. The reparation appears, from the outset, in the angelic apparitions of 1916, takes on a prominent place in the apparitions of Our Lady and is materialized in the vital response given by the Little Shepherds of Fátima³².

Reparation, which runs through the entire message of Fátima and indelibly marks its spirituality, is theocentric and trinitarian, as it appears explicitly in the prayers taught by the Angel, but it is equally Christological and eucharistic; and it is also explicitly Marian: the attitude of reparation is closely linked to the fundamental place of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the spirituality of Fátima. The devotion of the first Saturdays³³, specifically Fatimite and which “can be considered a compendium of the entire message”³⁴ of Fátima, is a concretization of this reparative attitude towards Mary.

Reparation, in the message of Fatima, is deeply linked to worship. Adoration and reparation appear united and inseparable in the spirituality of Fátima.

Conversion and penance

The spirituality of Fátima is still deeply marked by the vehement call to conversion and penance. The repeated request that men no longer offend God, Our Lady's sadness as an expression of non-indifference towards the sins committed, the call to prayer and sacrifices for sinners mark the message of Fatima from the first to the last moment. In the lives of the little visionaries, not only is there an authentic movement of conversion, which allows a different portrait to be created before and after the apparitions³⁵, but also the concern for the conversion of sinners will accompany them permanently.

In his theological commentary on the third part of the Secret, the then Cardinal J. Ratzinger said: "The key word of this (third) part of the "secret" is the threefold cry: "Penance, Penance, Penance!" The beginning of the Gospel comes to mind: "Pænitemini et credite evangelio" (Mc 1, 15)".³⁶

Solidarity and commitment to brothers

On another level, the spirituality of Fátima is also expressed in the commitment to the brothers, as an expression of love. The encounter with God, who is Love, awakens in the Little Shepherds their own capacity to love³⁷. Eloy Bueno de la Fuente recalls, in this regard, that St. John of the Cross said that it seems little to the blessed to go to Heaven alone. Jacinta expresses this in her simple language, in dialogue with Lúcia: when she reminded her that she would go to Heaven, as Our Lady had promised, Jacinta replied: "Yes, I will [...] but I wanted all those people to there it would be too"³⁸. Sr. Lúcia will later comment that, precisely because God is Love, and because only love can unite us to God, "this love is not content with being happy; He wants to lead others to share the same happiness with him"³⁹.

A spirituality that draws its inspiration from the message of Fátima necessarily has this dimension of solidarity and commitment to our

brothers and sisters. Pope Benedict XVI stated that Fátima “is a school of faith and hope, because it is also a school of charity and service to our brothers and sisters”⁴⁰.

Conclusion: relevance of Fatima’s message

More than a century after the apparitions of Fátima, the question about the relevance of her message arises. After, in 2000, Pope John Paul II decided to reveal the third and final part of the so-called Secret of Fátima, many announced the end of interest in Fátima, as they understood that it was curiosity about the content of that document that kept people connected to Fátima. On the other hand, it seemed that the prophecy contained in the Secret was already fully realized, meaning that the question of the interest of those contents became inevitable.

During his pilgrimage to this Sanctuary, in 2010, in his homily at Mass on May 13, Pope Benedict XVI stated:

“Anyone who thought that the prophetic mission of Fátima was completed would be deluded. Here revives that plan of God that has questioned humanity since its beginnings: «Where is Abel, your brother? [...] The voice of your brother’s blood cries out from the earth to Me” (Gen4, 9). Man could trigger a cycle of death and terror, but he cannot interrupt it... In Sacred Scripture, God often appears looking for the righteous to save the human city and he does the same here, in Fátima, when Our Lady asks: « Do you want to offer yourselves to God to endure all the sufferings that He wants to send you, in an act of reparation for the sins with which He Himself is offended and of supplication for the conversion of sinners?» (Memoirs of Sister Lúcia, I, 162)”⁴¹.

Just think about the theme of peace, central to the message of Fatima and dramatically present in our lives today; instead the importance of prayer, which Pope Francis chose as the theme of this year of preparation for the Jubilee and which is at the heart of the message of Fatima; or in the place of God in our lives, in this time when so many of our contemporaries live as if God did not exist... to realize the relevance of Fatima and its message.

- 1** Eloy BUENO DE LA FUENTE, *The Message of Fatima. The mercy of God: the triumph of love in the dramas of history*, 3rd edition, Fátima, Santuário de Fátima, 2018, p. 17.
- 2** Cf. Salvatore M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio nella storia. Apparizioni and Mariofanie*, Padova, Edizioni Messaggero di Padova, 2011, p. 20.
- 3** BUENO DE LA FUENTE, *The Message of Fatima*, p. 17.
- 4** Luciano Coelho CRISTINO, *The apparitions of Fátima: reconstruction from documents*, Org. André Melícias – Marco Daniel Duarte – Sónia Vazão, Santuário de Fátima, 2nd edition, 2022.
- 5** LÚCIA DE JESUS, *Memoirs: Fourth Memory*, p. 229.
- 6** LÚCIA DE JESUS, *Memoirs: Fourth Memory*, p. 231.
- 7** LÚCIA DE JESUS, *Memoirs: Fourth Memory*, p. 235.
- 8** José Eduardo FRANCO, «Fátima, the miracle of interpretation – I: phases of gnoseological approach», *Brotéria* 165 (2007) 345-356; José Eduardo FRANCO, «Fátima: the miracle of interpretation. The miracle of the Sun: critical analysis of the documentation», in *Fátima International Congress for the 21st Century*, Fátima 2008, 389-435 (here, 389-403); for a critical approach to the various periodization proposals, cf. Marco Daniel DUARTE, «Epistemology of Fátima: listening, narrating, reading and interpreting Fátima over a century», in Stefano M. CECHIN (Coord.), *Fatimensis eventus centum post anos. Historia, Nuntius et Praesentia. Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis in civitate Fatima anno 2016 celebrati*, Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, Città del Vaticano 2021, pp. 79-113; Marco Daniel DUARTE, «History and historiography of Fátima: one hundred years of translation of a historical event», in Marco Daniel DUARTE – Pedro Valinho GOMES (Coord.), *Pensar Fátima. Interdisciplinary readings. Proceedings of the International Congress of the Centenary of Fátima*, Vol. I, Sanctuary of Fátima, Fátima 2021, pp. 19-38.
- 9** *Fátima International Congress for the 21st Century*, Fátima 2008.
- 10** Carlos M. AZEVEDO – L. CRISTINO (Coord.), *Enciclopédia de Fátima*, Estoril 2007.
- 11** Marco Daniel DUARTE, «History and historiography of Fátima: one hundred years of translation of a historical event», p. 35.
- 12** Stefano M. CECHIN (Coord.), *Fatimensis eventus centum post anos. Historia, Nuntius et Praesentia. Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis in civitate Fatima anno 2016 celebrati*, Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, Città del Vaticano 2021
- 13** Marco Daniel DUARTE – Pedro Valinho GOMES (Coord.), *Pensar Fátima. Interdisciplinary readings. Proceedings of the International Congress of the Centenary of Fátima*, Vol. I and II, Sanctuary of Fátima, Fátima 2021.

14 Bruno FORTE, «The Message of Fátima and the Revelation», in *A Pastoral de Fátima. Proceedings of the 1st International Meeting on the Pastoral Care of Fátima*, Fátima, Sanctuary of Fátima 1993, p. 97.

15 Stefano DE FIORES, *The Secret of Fátima. A light on the future of the world*, Apelação, 2008, p. 31.

16 José Jacinto F. FARIAS, *A fire that burns, but does not burn. A theological essay on the Message of Fátima, as a contribution to understanding it and living it today in Portugal*, Prior Velho, 2010, p. 69.

17 Cf. António MARTO, *The beauty of the trinitarian face of God in the Message of Fátima*, Coimbra, 2007, p. 16.

18 Cf. François-Xavier DURRWELL, *Our Father, God in his mystery*, Salamanca, Sígueme, 1992, p. 9.

19 BUENO DE LA FUENTE, *The Message of Fatima*, p. 154.



20 Regina Caeli speech, May 23, 2010 (accessed on 04/10/2024).

21 Cf. R. Schulte STAADÉ, «Adoration», in *A Pastoral de Fátima. Proceedings of the 1st International Meeting on the Pastoral Care of Fátima on the 75th Anniversary of the Apparitions*, Fátima, Sanctuary of Fátima, 1993, p. 111 (German original: p. 465–471). The expressions are the author's, but not the periodization.

22 Cf. Manuel GESTEIRA GARZA, *La Eucaristia, misterio de comunión*, 5th edition,

Salamanca, Sígueme, 2006, p. 675.

23 Cf. Joaquín Maria ALONSO, «*The Immaculate Heart of Mary, soul of Fatima's message*», *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 22, 1972, pp. 240–303.

24 LÚCIA DE JESUS, *Memoirs: Fourth Memory*, p. 231.

25 Joseph RATZINGER, «Theological commentary», in CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH, *The message of Fátima. The Secret*, Lisbon, Paulinas, 2000, p. 49.

26 Stefano DE FIORES, «Mariology and Fátima», in AZEVEDO, Carlos Moreira and CRISTINO, Luciano (coords.), *Enciclopédia de Fátima*, Cascais 2007, p. 337; cf. DE FIORES, *The Secret of Fátima*, p. 28.

27 DE FIORES, «Mariology and Fátima», pp. 337–338.

28 DE FIORES, *The Secret of Fátima*, p. 64.

29 On the presence of Mary in Christian spirituality and the meaning of the expression “Marian spirituality”, cf. Stefano DE FIORES, *Maria nella theologia contemporanea*, Rome, 3rd edition, 1991, pp. 291–338; Johann G. ROTTEN, 'How can spirituality be Marian', *Marian Studies*, 52, 2001, pp. 7–52; Cetina MILITELLO, «Una spiritualità per l'oggi: il modello mariale», *Credere Oggi*, n. 142, 2004/4, pp. 103–113; Juan LEFT BIFET, *Espiritualidad Mariana. María in the heart of the Church*, Valencia, EDICEP, 2009.

30 Cf. MARTO, *The beauty of the trinitarian face of God*, p. 18.

31 João DUQUE, «Holy Trinity, I adore you deeply. The thematic path for 2011–2012», in *Santíssima Trindade, I adore you deeply. Thematic itinerary of the Centenary of the Apparitions of Fátima, 1st Cycle*, Fátima, 2010, p. 18.

32 Cf. Stefano DE FIORES, «Reparação», in AZEVEDO, Carlos Moreira and CRISTINO, Luciano (coords.), *Enciclopédia de Fátima*, Cascais, Principia, 2007, pp. 475–480.

33 Cf. CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, Directory on popular piety and Liturgy, n. 174; António Maria MARTINS, «The reparative devotion of the first Saturdays», in *Appeal and Response. Week of Studies on the Message of Fátima*, Fátima, 1983, pp. 273–300; Augusto Ascenso PASCOAL, «Saturdays, devotion of the first», in AZEVEDO, Carlos Moreira and CRISTINO, Luciano (coords.), *Enciclopédia de Fátima*, Cascais, Principia, 2007, p. 504–505.

34 PASCOAL, «Saturdays, devotion of the first», p. 504.

35 Cf. Jeremias Carlos VECHINA, «The “conversion” of visionaries. Elements of a theological critique of the credibility of the apparitions of Fátima», in *Phenomenology and Theology of Apparitions. Proceedings of the International Congress of Fátima (9–12 October 1997)*, Fátima, Sanctuary of Fátima, 1998, pp. 517–530.

36 RATZINGER, «Theological commentary», p. 50.

37 Cf. BUENO DE LA FUENTE, *The Message of Fatima*, p. 220.

38 LÚCIA DE JESUS, *Memoirs: Third Memory*, p. 189.

39 SISTER LÚCIA, *How I see the message through time and events*, Fátima 2007, p. 32.



40 BENEDICT XVI, General audience of May 19, 2010 (accessed 26-06-2024).



41 BENEDICT XVI, Homily, May 13, 2010, Fatima (accessed 26-06-2024).

Testimonials

Maria Rita Scrimieri (Blessed Maria Alexandrina da Costa)



Maria Rita Scrimieri was born on April 7, 1950. She has a degree in Social Sciences from the University of Trento and in Psychology from the University of Padua. She worked in the field of clinical psychology and psychotherapy, in the field of mental suffering.

Married since 1987, she shared with her husband, a psychiatrist, a passion for studying and working in the field of clinical psychopathology, in psychiatry. Maria Rita Scrimieri practiced her profession, both at a hospital and private level, in Milan, until 2005.

In the 90s, thanks to the writings of the Portuguese mystic and Salesian Cooperator, Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa, Maria Rita Scrimieri became closer to the world of Christian mystical experience, which also led her to a personal path of conversion and return to the Catholic faith.

Salesian Cooperator, since 1994, she published, in 1999, *Come l'ape di fiore in fiore* (Elledici), which deals with the work of love and repair of the abandoned Tabernacles in the life of Blessed Alexandrina. She later published *The Smile on the Cross, a Way of the Cross* with meditations taken from the writings of Blessed Alexandrina.

In 2001, with two Salesian priests, Fr. Mozzanica and Fr. Montagnoli, she founded, in Milan, the Study Center "Opera dei Tabernacoli Viventi", dedicated to the Salesian Cooperator Vera Grita, spokesperson for the Opera dei Tabernacoli Viventi.

Having become a widow in 2009, Maria Rita dedicated herself to creating, in collaboration with the Portuguese Salesian Province, an International Center for spirituality and reception of pilgrims in Balasar, the birthplace of Blessed Alexandrina. In 2015, on the bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth, the Center was partially inaugurated.

In 2017, she edited the book "Portami con te!" (Elledici), based on Vera Grita's original notebooks, relating to the "Opera dei Taberna-

coli Viventi”, and, in 2018, published the book “Vera Grita una mistica dell’Eucaristia” (Elledici), which was based on the complete Epistolarity of Vera Grita and the three Salesian Priests who guided her.

Maria Rita Scrimieri is currently collaborating with the Postulation of the Causes of Saints of the Salesian Family, with a view to launching the Cause of beatification and canonization of Vera Grita in Savona, on December 22, 2019.

Her connected life currently unfolds between Italy and Portugal.

Maria Junifer L. Maliglig, ADMA Philippines

Maria Junifer L. Maliglig is an active member of the Association of Mary Help of Christians, Philippines - Northern Province.

She belongs to the Auxilium Chapter, a local center based at the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in the city of Parañaque. She joined ADMA in 1985, during her high school days.

She is currently the president of the National Council, elected in June 2023.

Alberta André

Alberta André “Berta” is a catechist and member of ADMA. Married, mother of five biological children, she is from Malanje and is a regular supporter of the community to which she belongs.



The Salesians of Dom Bosco, who have been in Luanda since 1993, seeing the disintegration of Angolan families, as a result of the armed conflict, poverty and other evils, have committed themselves to providing opportunities to guarantee a dignified life for children, adolescents and young people who lived on the street.

Invited by Fr. Jorge Brandan (SDB), Berta accepted to be part of the “Casa Família Mamãe Margarida” project, whose objective is to serve children, adolescents and young people in vulnerable situations.

Conference

Rev. Andrea Bozzolo



Andrea Bozzolo is a Salesian priest, graduated in Classical Literature and Sacred Theology. He taught Dogmatic Theology at the Turin section of the UPS Theology Faculty, of which he was also dean between 2008 and 2017. He was also at the Theological Faculty of Northern Italy, in Milan, and at the John Paul II Institute, in Rome.

He collaborated with the Pontifical Council for the Family and participated, as an expert, in the 15th and 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. He is currently professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Salesian Pontifical University of Rome, of which he became Rector Magnificus in 2021.

His areas of investigation are the fundamental sacramentary, the theology of marriage and family pastoral care and Salesian spirituality. His recent publications include *O Rito de Jesus. Temi di teologia sacramentaria*, LAS, Rome 2013, in collaboration with Marco Pavan; *La sacramentalità della Parola*, Queriniana, Brescia 2020; *La cultura affettiva: cambiamenti e sfide*, LAS, Rome 2022.

Don Bosco's Childhood Dream: a Theological Reading

The account that Don Bosco gives, in the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, of the dream he had when he was nine years old, is one of the most relevant texts of the Salesian tradition. The telling of this story has accompanied the transmission of the charism in a dynamic way, becoming one of its most effective symbols and one of its most eloquent syntheses. This is why the text appeals to readers, who recognise themselves in a spiritual tradition with the characteristics of a "biblical" text which claims uncommon charismatic authority and exerts a consistent performative energy, touching the affections, moving to action and generating identity. Indeed, the constitutive elements of the Salesian vocation are authoritatively established there, like a testament to be handed on to future generations, and

returned, through the mysterious experience of the dream, to their transcendent origin. Just as is the case for the grand pages of the Bible, the forward movement towards fulfilment and the reference to the origins are inseparably intertwined in the narrative.

The truth is that this narrative has produced a rich history of effects in its reception by those who have inherited it, and generated a true *communitas* of readers who have identified with its message. There are countless men and women, consecrated and lay, who have found inspiration in it for discerning their personal vocation and for implementing their educative and pastoral service. From the outset, the breadth of this history of consequences instructs those who are ready to analyse the text about the delicacy of the hermeneutic operation they are about to take in hand. Studying this dream means not only investigating an event that took place in a boy's life some two hundred years ago, but also intervening critically in something that bears a spiritual message, and that is an identifying symbol, a story that carries the weight of a "founding myth" for the Salesian world. A story cannot acquire such a generative force without there being a profound reason to justify it, and the scholar cannot but question himself to grasp its nature.

Even before the impact of the dream on the experience of its spiritual heirs is considered, the history of the dream's impact on the founder's own experience must be examined. Don Bosco recounts that "all my life this [dream] remained deeply impressed on my mind" from the night it happened⁴², all the more so because it had "recurred several times more in ever clearer terms"⁴³, each time suggesting to him the direction his life should take and guiding him in the fulfilment of his mission. In the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, moreover, he recalls his state of mind when, on the solemnity of Corpus Christi and now a priest, he returned to the hamlet where he was born, to celebrate one of his first Masses there:

As I drew near the house and saw the place of the dream I had when I was about nine, I could not hold back the tears. I said: "How wonderful are the ways of Divine Providence! God has truly raised a poor child from the earth to place him amongst the princes of his people."⁴⁴

When Don Bosco went to Rome in 1858 to discuss the foundation of the Congregation and Pius IX “asked me to tell him everything that had even the suggestion of the supernatural about it”, he told the Pope about the dream, and received the order to “write out the dream in all its detail and leave it as an encouragement to the sons of [the] Congregation.”⁴⁵ A further confirmation of the fact that this nocturnal experience remained an essential point of reference throughout Don Bosco’s life is found in a well-documented episode from the saint’s old age.⁴⁶ Don Bosco was in Rome for the solemn consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart, the construction of which he had taken upon himself at the request of Leo XIII. On the morning of 16 May 1887, he went to celebrate Mass at the altar of Mary Help of Christians, but during the celebration he had to stop several times, overcome by intense emotion that even prevented him from speaking. When he had returned to the sacristy and regained his habitual calm, Fr Viglietti, who had assisted him during the Mass, asked the elderly priest the reason for his tears and he replied: “I had [...] so vividly before my eyes the scene of that time at ten years of age when I dreamt of the Congregation, and so well saw and heard my brothers and my mother discussing and questioning the dream I had had.”⁴⁷ Don Bosco, who was by then at the end of his life, had finally grasped the full meaning of the message that had been communicated to him in the dream as an open, forward-looking message: “In good time you will understand everything.” Recounting the episode, Lemoyne notes: “sixty-two years of hardships, sacrifices and struggles have passed by. All of a sudden, an unexpected flash of lightning had revealed to him in the building of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome, the crowning of the mission so mysteriously outlined for him on the very threshold of life.”⁴⁸

However we understand the contours of that childhood dream experience and the details of its narration, we can fully agree with Stella’s assertion regarding the importance that it had in Don Bosco’s awareness:

This dream at nine years of age was not a dream like the many others Don Bosco would certainly have had during his childhood. Apart from the problems that are tied to it, that is, to its re-enactment and the texts that hand it

down to us, and apart from the now unresolvable question regarding when it actually took place, and those regarding the circumstances that possibly provoked it and immediately provided the fantastic suggestions – apart from all this, it is clear that Don Bosco was vividly struck by it; indeed it transpires that he must have felt it as a divine communication, as something, as he himself says, that had the appearance (the signs and guarantees) of the supernatural. For him it was like a new divine character indelibly stamped on his life.⁴⁹

The dream at nine years of age, in short, “conditioned Don Bosco’s whole way of living and thinking. And in particular, the way he felt God’s presence in each person’s life and in the history of the world.”⁵⁰

A commentary on the theological and spiritual themes found in the dream at nine years of age could have such wide-ranging developments as to include a comprehensive treatment of “Salesianity”. Read from the perspective of the history of its consequences, the dream opens up countless avenues for exploring the pedagogical and apostolic traits that have characterised the life of St John Bosco and the charismatic experience that originated from him. The nature of our survey and its place within a larger research project require, however, that we limit ourselves to a few elements, focus our attention on the main themes and suggest directions for deepening our understanding of them. Let us therefore choose to focus on five significant areas for spiritual reflection, in the following order, (1) the Oratorian mission, (2) the call to the impossible, (3) the mystery of the Name, (4) maternal mediation and, finally, (5) the strength of meekness.

1. The Oratorian mission

The dream at nine years of age is full of youngsters. They are present from the first to the last scene and are the beneficiaries of everything that happens. Their presence is characterised by cheerfulness and playfulness, which are typical of their age, but also by disorder and negative behaviour. In this dream, children are therefore not the romantic image of an enchanted age, neither are they untouched

by the evils of the world, nor do they correspond to the postmodern myth of youth as a season of spontaneous action and perennial openness to change which should be preserved through eternal adolescence. The children of the dream are extraordinarily “real”, both in physical likeness, and when they are symbolically represented in the form of animals. They play and squabble, laugh and swear, just as they do in reality. They seem neither innocent, as a pedagogy of spontaneity imagines them to be, nor capable of acting as if self-instructed, as Rousseau thought them to be. From the moment that the children appear, in a “very large yard”, which looks ahead to the great playgrounds of future Salesian Oratories, they *invoke the presence and action of someone*. However, the impulsive response of the dreamer is not the right intervention; the presence of an Other is required.

The appearance of the children is linked to the appearance of the Christological figure, as we can now openly call him. The One who said in the Gospel: “Let the little children come to me” (*Mark 10:14*), comes to point out to the dreamer the attitude with which the children must be approached and accompanied. He appears as a strong, manly, majestic figure with traits that clearly highlight his divine and transcendent character; his way of acting is marked by assurance and power and he manifests authority over things that happen. The dignified man, however, does not strike fear, but rather he brings peace where before there had been confusion and noise, and he shows a benevolent understanding in John’s regard and guides him to a path of gentleness and charity.

The *relationship* between these figures – the boys on the one hand and the Lord (to whom the Mother is then added) on the other – defines the boundaries of the dream. The emotions that John feels in the dream experience, the questions he asks, the task he is called to perform, the future that opens before him are totally linked to the dialectic between these two poles. Perhaps the most important message that the dream conveys to the dreamer, the one that he probably understood first because it remained stamped in his imagination, before even understanding it in a reflexive way, is that those figures will become part of his memory and that he *will not be able to forget them for the rest of his life*. The encounter between the vulnerability

of young people and the power of the Lord, between their need for salvation and his offer of grace, between their desire for joy and his gift of life, must now become the centre of his thoughts, the space of his identity. The musical score of his life will be entirely written in the notes that this generative theme gives him: modulating it in all its harmonious potential will be his mission, one into which he will have to pour all his gifts of nature and grace.

The dynamism of John's life thus appears in the dream-vision as a continuous movement, a sort of spiritual coming and going, between the boys and the Lord. From the group of children into which he had immediately jumped, John must let himself be drawn to the Lord who calls him by name, and then he must set out again from the One who sends him and go and place himself, with much more authority, at the head of his companions. Even if he had received such powerful blows from the children in a dream that he still feels the pain on waking up, and even if he listens to the words from the dignified man that leave him confused, his coming and going is not a purposeless journey but a path that gradually transforms him and brings a life-giving energy and love to young people.

That all this happens in a *yard* [the English translation of the word *cortile*, which can also mean a *courtyard*] is highly significant and has a clear educational value, since the oratory courtyard will become the privileged place and the exemplary symbol of Don Bosco's mission. The whole scene is played out in this setting, both vast (a very large yard) and familiar (close to home). The fact that the vocational vision does not have a sacred or celestial location as its background, but the space in which the children live and play, clearly indicates that *the divine initiative adopts their world as a place of encounter*. The mission entrusted to John, even if it is clearly understood in a catechetical and religious sense ("to teach them the ugliness of sin and the value of virtue"), has the world of education as its *habitat*. The association of the Christological figure with the courtyard and the dynamics of play, which a nine-year-old boy could certainly not have "constructed". In fact, it summarises the dynamics of the mystery of the Incarnation, in which the Son takes our bodily nature in order to offer us his, and highlights how nothing human needs to be sacrificed to make room for God.

The courtyard thus speaks of *the closeness of divine grace to how children “feel”*: to accept this grace it is not necessary to leave aside one’s chronological age, or to neglect its needs, or to counter its rhythms. When Don Bosco, by then an adult, writes in the *Giovane provveduto* (The Companion of Youth) that one of the deceptions of the devil is to make young people think that holiness is incompatible with their desire to be joyful and with the exuberant freshness of their vitality, it is but a return in mature form of the lesson indicated in the dream and which then becomes a central element of his spiritual magisterium. The courtyard speaks of the need *to understand education at its innermost core*, that is, the attitude of the heart towards God. In that place, the dream teaches, there is not only room for an original openness to grace, but also for a place of resistance wherein the ugliness of evil and the violence of sin lurk. Hence the educational horizon of the dream is clearly religious, and not merely philanthropic, and it presents the symbolism of conversion, not merely that of self-development.

In the courtyard in the dream, filled with children and inhabited by the Lord, John is given a revelation of what will be the pedagogical and spiritual dynamics of later Oratorian courtyards or playgrounds.

2. *The call to do the impossible*

While for the boys in the dream it ends with celebration, for John it ends with dismay and even with tears. This is an outcome that can only be surprising. It is customary to think, in fact, with some simplification, that visits from God are bearers exclusively of joy and consolation. It is therefore paradoxical that for an apostle of joy, for the one who as a secondary school student will help found the “society for a good time” and who as a priest will teach his children that holiness consists in “being very happy”, the vocational scene ends with tears.

This can certainly indicate that the joy spoken of is not pure leisure and simple light-heartedness but an inner response to the beauty of grace. As such, this can only be achieved through demanding spiritual battles, of which Don Bosco to a large extent will have to pay the price for the benefit of his young people. He will thus personally relive the exchange of roles which has its roots in the paschal mystery of Jesus and which is prolonged in the circumstances of the

apostles: “We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak but you are strong. You are held in honour but we in disrepute” (1 Cor 4:10), but precisely in this way “we are workers with you for your joy” (2 Cor 1:24).

The confusion with which the dream closes, however, recalls above all the disturbing upset that the great biblical characters experience in the face of the divine vocation that reveals itself in their lives, and directs them in a completely unexpected and disconcerting direction. The Gospel of Luke affirms that even Mary, at the words of the Angel, felt a sense of profound inner turmoil (“but she was much perplexed by his words” *Luke 1:29*). Isaiah had felt lost before the revelation of God’s holiness in the temple (*Is 6*). Amos had compared to the roar of a lion (*Am 3: 8*) the strength of the divine Word by which he had been seized, while Paul would experience on the road to Damascus the existential reversal that resulted from his encounter with the Risen One. While they witness to the attraction of an encounter with God that totally seduces them, biblical men and women, at the moment of their call, seem to hesitate, afraid as they are of something that overwhelms them, rather than throw themselves headlong into the adventure of the mission.

The upset that John experiences in the dream appears to be a similar experience. It arises from the paradoxical character of the mission that is assigned to him, which he does not hesitate to define as “impossible” (“Who are you ordering me to do the impossible?”). The adjective, “impossible”, may seem “exaggerated,” as children’s reactions sometimes are, especially when they express a sense of inadequacy in the face of a challenging task. But this truth of child psychology does not seem sufficient for shedding light on the content of the dream dialogue and the depth of the spiritual experience it communicates. All the more so since John is made of real leader’s quality and has an excellent memory, which will allow him in the months following the dream to immediately start putting a little oratory into place, entertaining his friends with active games and repeating the sermons of the parish priest. So, in the words with which he frankly declares that he is “unable to speak about religion” to his companions, it is good to hear the distant echo of Jeremiah’s objection to the divine vocation resound: “I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy” (*Jer 1:6*).

It is not on the level of natural attitudes that the demand for the impossible is at stake here, but on the level of what can fall within the horizon of the real, of what can be expected according to one's own image of the world, of what falls within the limit of experience. *Beyond this frontier, the region of the impossible opens up*, which, in biblical terms, is *the space of God's action*. It is "impossible" for Abraham to have a child by a barren and elderly woman like Sarah; it is "impossible" for the Virgin to conceive and give to the world the Son of God made man; salvation seems "impossible" for the disciples, if it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Abraham answered, "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" (*Gen 18:14*); the Angel tells Mary that "nothing will be impossible with God" (*Luke 1:37*); and Jesus responds to unbelieving disciples that "what is impossible for mortals is possible for God" (*Luke 18:27*).

The most important event in which the theological question of the impossible arises is, however, that decisive moment in the history of salvation, namely, the Easter drama where the impossible frontier to be overcome is the very dark abyss of evil and death. How is it possible to conquer death? Is death not itself the mandatory emblem of impossibility, the insurmountable limit to every human possibility, the power that dominates the world, its checkmate? And does not the death of Jesus irrevocably seal this limit? With this death, more than with any other, death triumphs as the end of all possibility, because with the death of the Holy One it is a question of destroying the possibility of everything and everyone.⁵¹

Yet right at the core of this supreme impossibility, God has created absolute novelty. By raising the Son made man in the power of the Spirit, he has radically reversed what we call the world of the possible, and broken through the limits within which we enclose our expectation of reality. Since even the powerlessness of the cross cannot prevent the gift of the Son, the impossibility of death is overcome by the newness of the risen life, which gives rise to a definitive creation and makes all things new. From now on and "once and for all" it is no longer life that is subject to death, but death that is subject to life.

It is *in this space created by the resurrection* that the impossible becomes effective reality. It is here that the dignified man of the dream, resplendent with Easter light, asks John to make the impossible possible. And he does so with a surprising formula:

“Precisely because it seems impossible to you, you must make it possible through obedience.”

These are the words with which parents urge their children, when reluctant, to do something they do not feel capable of doing, or do not want to do. “Obey and you will see that you will succeed,” says Mum or Dad: the psychology of the world of children is perfectly respected. But they are also, and much more, the words with which the Son reveals *the secret of the impossible, a secret that is completely hidden in his obedience*. The dignified man who orders something impossible, knows through his own human experience that impossibility is the place where the Father works together with his Spirit, provided that the door is opened through his own obedience.

Naturally, John remains upset and bewildered, but this is the feeling that any human being experiences in the face of the impossible Easter miracle, in other words, in the face of the miracle of miracles, of which every other salvific event is a sign. After a detailed analysis of the phenomenology of the impossible, J.L. Marion comments, “On Easter morning, only Christ can still say *!:* so that, before him, every transcendental *I* must recognise itself as [...] a challenged *me*, because bewildered.”⁵² Easter means that what is most *real* in history is something that the unbelieving *ego* considers *a priori* impossible. The impossibility of God, to be recognised in his reality requires a change of horizon, which is called *faith*.

It should therefore come as no surprise that in the dream the dialectic of the possible-impossible is intertwined with the other dialectic of clarity and obscurity. It characterises first, the very image of the Lord, whose face is so luminous that John cannot look at it. A divine light shines from the face that paradoxically produces darkness. Then there are the words of the man and the woman who, while clearly explaining what John must do, leave him confused and frightened. Finally, there is the symbolic transformation of the wild

animals, which, in turn, leads to an even greater misunderstanding. John can only ask for further clarification: "I begged the lady to speak so that I could understand her, because I did not know what all this could mean", but the answer he gets from the woman of stately appearance only postpones the moment of understanding: "In good time you will understand everything."

In truth, this means that only by carrying out what is already understandable in the dream, that is, through obedience, will an opportunity be provided to clarify its message. This does not consist, in fact, simply in an idea to be explained, but in a performative word, an effective expression, which precisely by realising its own operative power manifests its deepest meaning.

This dialectic of light and darkness and the corresponding means of accessing truth are the elements that characterise the theological structure of the act of faith. Believing, in fact, means walking in a luminous cloud in a way that indicates to a man the path he is to follow but at the same time takes away from him the possibility of dominating it with his gaze. To walk in faith is to walk like Abraham who "set out not knowing where he was going" (*Heb 11:8*); however, this does not mean that he set out on an adventure, moving at random, but rather, in the sense that he set out in obedience "for a place he was to inherit". He could not know in advance the land that was promised to him, because, in fact, it was his availability and interior surrender that contributed to making it exist as a land of encounter and covenant with God, and not simply as a geographical space to be reached in a material way. Mary's words to John – "in good time you will understand everything" – are therefore not just words of benevolent maternal encouragement, like those that mothers offer to their children when they cannot explain any further, but words that really contain the maximum light that can be offered to those who must walk in faith.

3. The mystery of the name

At this point in the reflection, we are able to better interpret another important element of the dream experience. It is the fact that at the heart of the tension between possible and impossible, and between known and unknown, and also, at the centre of the dream narrative

itself, is the theme of the mysterious “name” of the dignified man. The tightly-knit dialogue in section III is, in fact, interwoven with questions that raise the same issue: “Who are you, ordering me to do the impossible?”; “But who are you that speak so?”, and finally: “My mother tells me not to mix with people I don’t know, unless I have her permission; so tell me your name.” The dignified man tells John to ask his mother for his “name”, but, in fact, the latter will not tell him. It remains shrouded in mystery until the end.

We have already mentioned, in the part dedicated to reconstructing the biblical background of the dream, that the theme of the “name” is closely related to the episode of Moses being called to the burning bush (*Ex 3*). This passage is one of the central texts of the First Testament revelation and lays the foundation for all of Israel’s religious thought. André LaCoque has suggested that it should be defined as the “revelation of revelations”, because it constitutes the principle of unity of the narrative and prescriptive structure that qualifies the narrative of the Exodus, the “mother cell” of the entire Scripture.⁵³ It is important to note how the biblical text expresses the close unity between the condition of slavery of the people in Egypt, the vocation of Moses and the revelation of God’s name. The revelation of God’s name to Moses does not take place simply as the transmission of information to be known or data to be acquired, but as the revelation of a personal presence which is aimed at giving rise to a stable relationship and initiating a process of liberation. In this sense, *the revelation of the divine name is oriented towards the covenant and the mission.*⁵⁴ The “name” is both God-revealing and performative, for those who receive it are not simply introduced into divine secrecy, but are the recipients of an act of salvation.⁵⁵

The “name”, in fact, unlike the concept, does not designate merely an essence to be thought about, but an otherness to be referred to, a presence to be invoked, a subject that proposes itself as a true interlocutor of existence. While implying the proclamation of an incomparable ontological richness, that of Being that can never be adequately defined, the fact that God reveals himself as an “I” indicates that only through a personal relationship with Him will it be possible to access his identity, the Mystery of Being that he is. The revelation of God’s personal “name” is therefore an act of speech that challenges the recipient, and asks him to place himself facing

the speaker. Only in this way, in fact, is it possible to grasp the meaning of the “name”. This revelation, moreover, stands explicitly as the foundation for the liberating mission that Moses must carry out: “I-am has sent me to you” (*Ex 3:14*). Presenting himself as a personal God, and not a God bound to a territory, as the God of promise, and not purely as the lord of immutable repetition, Yahweh will be able to provide a path for his people in their journey towards freedom. He therefore has a “name” that makes itself known inasmuch as it establishes a covenant and directs history.

This name, however, will be fully revealed only through Jesus. The so-called priestly prayer of Jesus, which we read in *John 17*, identifies the heart of the Christological mission in the revelation of the name of God (v. 6, 11,12,26). In this passage, as Ratzinger comments,

“Christ himself appears to us almost as the burning bush, from which the name of God flows over men.”⁵⁶

In him God becomes fully “invocable”, for in him God entered totally into coexistence with us, inhabiting our history and leading it into its definitive exodus. The paradox here is that the divine Name that is revealed by Jesus coincides with the very Mystery of his person. In fact, Jesus can attribute to himself the divine name – “I am” – revealed to Moses in the bush. The divine name is thus revealed in its unimaginable Trinitarian depth, of which only the paschal event will fully manifest the Mystery. Through his obedience to the death of the cross, Jesus is exalted in glory and receives a “name that is above every other name”, so that before Him every knee bends, in the heavens, on earth and under the earth. Only in the “name” of Jesus, therefore, is there salvation, because in his history God has fully fulfilled the revelation of his own Trinitarian mystery.

“Tell me your name”: this question of John’s cannot be answered simply through a formula, a name to be used as an external label of the person. To know the “name” of the One who speaks in the dream, it is not enough for John to receive information; it is necessary for him to do something before his act of speaking. That is to say, it is necessary for him to enter into that relationship of intimacy and surrender which the gospels describe as “remaining” with Him. This is why, when the first disciples asked Jesus about his identity

– “Teacher, where do you live?” or literally, “where are you staying?” – he replies, “Come and see” (Jn 1:38ff). Only by “remaining” with him, dwelling in his mystery, entering into his relationship with the Father, can anyone truly know who he is.

The fact that the character in the dream does not respond to John by giving his name, as we would by sharing what is written on our identity card, indicates that his “name” cannot be known only as external information. God reveals his truth only when it is sealed with an experience of covenant and mission. Therefore, John will only know that “name” by experiencing the dialectic of the possible and the impossible, of clarity and darkness; he will know it by carrying out the Oratorian mission entrusted to him. John will know who the dignified stranger is by bringing him within himself, thanks to a story lived as a history inhabited by Him. One day Cagliero would testify that Don Bosco’s way of loving was “very tender, great, strong, but entirely spiritual, pure, truly chaste”, so much so that “it gave a perfect idea of the love that the Saviour bore for children.”⁵⁷ This indicates that the “name” of the dignified man, whose face was so bright as to blind the vision of the dreamer, really entered as a *seal* into the life of Don Bosco. He had the *experientia cordis* through the path of faith and the *sequela Christi*. This is the only way in which the question asked in the dream could be answered.

4. *Maternal mediation*

In the uncertainty about the One who sends him, the only firm point that John can grasp in the dream is the reference to a mother, indeed to two: the mother of the dignified man and his own. The answers to his questions, in fact, sound like this:

“I am the son of the woman whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day” and then “Ask my Mother what my name is”.

That *the location of possible clarification is Marian and maternal* is undoubtedly an element that deserves reflection. Mary is the person in whom humanity achieves the highest correspondence to the light that comes from God and the creature through whom God has giv-

en his Word made flesh to the world. It is also significant that upon his awakening from the dream, the one who best understands its meaning and scope is John's mother, Margaret. On different levels, but analogously, the Mother of the Lord and the mother of John represent the feminine face of the Church, which shows itself capable of spiritual intuition and is the womb in which the great missions come into being and are given birth.

It is therefore not surprising that the two mothers resemble each other, and precisely on the point of answering the question that the dream presents, namely, the identity of the One who entrusts John with his life mission. The common gestures of prayer, the angelic greeting that was usual three times a day in every family, suddenly appear for what they are: a dialogue with the Mystery. John discovers that at the school of his mother he has already established a bond with the stately Woman who can explain everything to him. There is, therefore, already a kind of female conduit that bridges the apparent distance between "a poor, ignorant child" and the man "nobly dressed". This feminine, Marian and maternal mediation would accompany John throughout his life and would mature in him as a particular disposition to venerate the Virgin under the title of Help of Christians, and to become her apostle for her children and for the whole Church.

The first help that Our Lady offers him is what a child naturally needs: a teacher. What she must teach him is a discipline that will make him truly wise, one without which "all wisdom is foolishness."

It is the discipline of faith, which consists in giving credit to God and in obedience, even when faced with the impossible and the obscure. Mary presents this as the highest expression of freedom and as the richest source of spiritual and educational fruitfulness. To carry within oneself the impossibility of God and to walk in the darkness of faith is, in fact, the art in which the Blessed Virgin herself excels above every other creature.

Mary used this experience as a type of practical training in her *per-egrinatio fidei*, which was not infrequently marked by obscurity and misunderstanding. One needs only to think of the episode of the re-

discovery of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple (*Luke 2:41-50*). To the mother's question: "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety", Jesus responds in a surprising way: "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And the evangelist notes: "But they did not understand what he said to them." It is even less likely that Mary understood when her motherhood, which had been solemnly announced from on high, was greatly expanded to become the common inheritance of the community of disciples: "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, is my brother and sister and mother" (*Matthew 12:50*). And then, at the foot of the cross, when it became dark all over the earth, the "Here I am" that she pronounced at the first moment of her call, took the form of extreme renunciation, namely, the separation from her Son in whose place she was to receive sinful children for whom she was to let a sword pierce her heart.

When the stately woman of the dream begins to carry out her task as teacher and places a hand on John's head, and then says to him "In good time you will understand everything", she draws forth these words from the spiritual depths of the faith that made her the mother of every disciple at the foot of the cross. John will have to remain under her discipline for the rest of his life: as a young man, as a seminarian, as a priest. In a special way, he must remain there when his mission takes on dimensions that at the time of the dream he could never have imagined, when, that is, he must become the founder of religious families, in the heart of the Church, destined to work for the youth of every continent. Only as a priest, will John understand the deepest meaning of the gesture with which the dignified man gave his mother to him as his "teacher".

When a young person enters a religious family, he finds a novice master to whom he is entrusted and who will introduce him to the spirit of the Order and help him to assimilate it. When it comes to a Founder, who must receive from the Holy Spirit the original light of the charism, the Lord arranges that it is his own Mother, the Virgin of Pentecost and the Immaculate Model of the Church, who acts as his Teacher. She alone, the one who is "full of grace", understands every charism from within, like a person who knows every language and speaks each one as if it were her own.

In fact, the woman of the dream knows how to point out in a detailed and appropriate way the riches of the oratory charism. She adds nothing to the words of her Son, but illustrates them with the scene of wild animals who become meek lambs and indicates the qualities that John will have to develop to carry out his mission, namely, becoming “humble, strong, energetic”. These three adjectives, which describe strength of spirit (humility), of character (strength) and of the body (energy), there is a great realism. These are the words of advice given to a young novice who already has a lengthy experience of oratory work and knows what the “field” in which he must “work” requires. The Salesian spiritual tradition has carefully guarded the words of this dream that refer to Mary. The Salesian Constitutions clearly make reference to this when they state: “The Virgin Mary showed Don Bosco his field of labour among the young”,⁵⁸ and recall that “under the guidance of Mary his teacher, Don Bosco lived with the boys of the first oratory a spiritual and educational experience that he called the Preventive System.”⁵⁹

Don Bosco recognised Mary as playing a decisive role in his educational system, and saw in her motherhood the clearest inspiration of what it means to “prevent”.

The fact that Mary intervened at the first moment of his charismatic vocation and that she played such a central role in this dream, will forever make Don Bosco understand that she belongs to the roots of the charism and that if her inspiring role is not recognised, the charism is not understood in its authenticity. Given to John as Teacher in this dream, she must also be given to all those who share in his vocation and mission. As Don Bosco’s successors never tired of affirming, “the Salesian vocation cannot be explained either in its birth or in its continuing development without the continual and maternal guidance of Mary.”⁶⁰

5. The strength of gentleness

“You will have to win these friends of yours not by blows but by gentleness and love”: these words of the dignified stranger are undoubtedly the best-known words of John’s dream at nine years of age, the words that somehow sum up the message and convey its

inspiration. They are also the first words that the dignified man says to John, and they interrupt his forceful efforts to put an end to the disorder and swearing that the boys are engaged in. They are not only a formula that conveys an ever-valid wisdom saying, but advice that specifies the way in which John is to carry out the order (“he told me to take charge of these children and added these words”) with which, as has been noted, the intentional movement of his consciousness has already been reoriented. The heat and passion behind the use of his fists must become the driving force of love, and the disjointed energy of repressive intervention must make room for gentleness.

The term “*mansuetudine*” [which becomes “gentleness” rather than “meekness” in the English translation] has significant weight here, especially when we remember that the corresponding adjective is used at the end of the dream to describe the lambs frolicking around the Lord and Mary. This suggests what is probably a relevant observation: *for those who were originally ferocious animals to become “gentle” lambs, their educator must himself first become gentle*. Both, albeit from different points, must experience a real transformation to enter the Christological orbit of gentleness and love. It is easy to understand what this change requires for a group of rowdy and quarrelsome boys. For an educator it may be less obvious. In fact, for the educator who has already embraced good, positive values, order and discipline, what change can be asked of this person?

Here is something that will have a decisive impact on Don Bosco’s life, first of all at the practical level of his way of acting and, to a certain extent, also at the level of theoretical reflection. It will lead Don Bosco to *categorically exclude an educational system based on repression and punishment*, and to choose with real conviction a method that is entirely based on love that Don Bosco will call the “preventive system”. Apart from the different pedagogical implications that derive from this choice, it is interesting to highlight here the theological and spiritual dimension that underlies this direction, and for which the words of the dream are in some way the origin and the trigger.

By placing themselves on the side of the good and the “law”, educators may be tempted to frame how they act with young people

in such a way that order and discipline are established essentially through rules. Yet the law contains an ambiguity within it that makes it insufficient for guiding someone to freedom, and this, not only because of the limits that every human rule contains within itself, but also because of a limit that is ultimately of a theological order. The whole of Paul's reflection on the law is a great meditation on this truth, since Paul had learnt from his personal experience that the Law had not prevented him from being "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence" (1 Tim 1:13). Scripture teaches that the same Law given by God is not enough to save man, if there is not another personal principle to integrate and internalise it in the heart of man. Paul Beauchamp sums up this dynamic nicely when he states: "The Law is preceded by a *"you are loved"* and followed by a *"you will love"*: *"you are loved"* is its foundation, and *"you will love"* its fulfilment."⁶¹

Without this foundation and this fulfilment, the law bears in itself the signs of a violence that reveals its inability to generate the good that it requires people to accomplish. To return to the scene of the dream, the fists and blows that John uses in the name of a sacred commandment of God, which prohibits blasphemy [swearing, as the English says], reveal *the inadequacy and ambiguity of any moralising impulse that is not internally incarnated from above.*

It is therefore also necessary for John, and for those who will learn the "preventive spirituality" from him, to embrace an unprecedented educational logic which goes beyond the regime of the law. This logic is made possible only by the Spirit of the Risen One, poured into our hearts. In fact, only the Spirit allows us to move from a formal and external justice (be it the classic justice of "discipline" and "good conduct" or the modern one of "procedures" and "objectives achieved") to a true inner holiness which does good because it is inwardly attractive. Don Bosco will show that he has this awareness when he clearly declares in what he wrote about the *Preventive System*, that it is entirely based on the words of Saint Paul: "*Charitas benigna est, patiens est; omnia suffert, omnia sperat, omnia sustinet.*"

Only theological charity, which makes us participants in the life of God, is capable of imprinting on the work of education the character that identifies its unique gospel quality. It is not for nothing that the New Testament locates the distinctive features of the "wisdom that

comes from above” in gentleness: it “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.” (*Jas* 3:17). This is why, for those who practise it, performing the work of peace, eventually reaps “a harvest of righteousness” (*Jas* 3:18). The “gentleness”, or in Salesian terms the “loving-kindness”, that characterises such wisdom is the defining sign of a heart that has gone through a true Easter transformation, and let itself be stripped of all forms of violence.

The power of this initial imperative, which perhaps we have identified too much as an injunction, reflects the very strong words of the gospel: “For I say to you, do not resist an evildoer” (*Matthew* 5:39) or “Put your sword back in its place” (*Matthew* 26:52; cf. *Jn* 18:11). It refers to one of the novel qualities of the Christ event, that for which *the absoluteness of its truthful claim is expressed only in the form of agape*, that is, of the gift of self for the life of the other. Starting with the opening words of the dream, we find ourselves at the very heart of Christian revelation, where it is a question of the authentic “Face of God” and the conversion that it entails. The “style” of Christian education, its capacity to generate practices and attitudes truly rooted in the Christological event, depends exactly on this correspondence with the “Face of God”.

Religious language alone is incapable of honouring him. The story of Jesus clearly shows that even within that language, with its codes and its rites, its rules and its institutions, something can take root that does not come from God and that on the contrary resists and opposes him. The Christological event explodes these contradictions within the practice of the sacred as the children of Adam pass it on to their children, adapting it to their standards of justice and punishment; ready, in the name of the Law, to stone the adulteress and crucify the Holy One of God!

In the face of this distorted way of understanding religion, Jesus came to inaugurate another Kingdom of which he is the Lord, and the logic of which is revealed by his messianic entry into Jerusalem. By entering the Holy City on the back of a donkey, Jesus presents himself as the Messiah who does not conquer people with arms and armies but through the gentle strength of truth and love alone. The gift of his life, which he will bring to its completion in the city of

David, is the only way through which the Kingdom of God can come into the world. His gentleness as a Paschal Lamb is the only force with which the Father wants to win our hearts.

“You will have to win these friends of yours not with blows but by gentleness and love.” Reading these words against the background of gospel revelation means recognising that through them John is given an interior direction that has its one and only source in the Heart of Christ.⁶² “Not with blows but by gentleness” is the educational translation of the “very personal” style of Jesus.

Of course, “winning” young people in this way is a very demanding task. It implies not giving in to the coldness of an education based only on rules, nor to the apparent goodness of a proposal that refuses to denounce the “ugliness of sin” and present the “value of virtue”. Establishing the good by simply showing the strength of truth and love, witnessed through dedication “to one’s last breath”, is the image of an educational method that is at the same time a true and proper spirituality.

It is not surprising that John in the dream resists entering into this dynamic and asks for a better understanding of the identity of the One who is demanding it. But when he has understood this dynamic, first, by turning the message into the oratory as an institution and then also by founding a religious family, he comes to believe that telling the dream in which he learned that lesson will be the most beautiful way to share with the most authentic meaning of his experience with his sons. *It is God himself who has always been our guide, it is he who started the initial movement* of what would become the Salesian charism.

42 MO-en 34ff.

43 MO-en 72. The complete text says: “So the end of the rhetoric year approached, the time when students usually ponder their vocations. The dream I had had in Morialdo was deeply imprinted on my mind; in fact it had recurred several times more in ever clearer terms, so that if I wanted to put faith in it I would have to choose the priesthood towards which I actually felt inclined. But I did not want to believe dreams, and my own manner of life, certain habits of my heart, and the absolute lack of the virtues necessary to that state, filled me with doubts and made the decision very difficult.”

44 MO-en 96.

45 MO-en 36. Don Bosco’s first visit to Rome took place between 21 February and 14 April 1858. He met the Pope again on various occasions, on 9, 21 (or 23) March and 6 April that year. According to Lemoyne it was at the second meeting (21 March) that the Pope heard the account of the dream and ordered Don Bosco to write it down. Regarding this journey cf. Braido, *Don Bosco prete dei giovani nel secolo delle libertà* (LAS, Roma 2003) 1, 378–390.

46 Stella says that we have *solide testimonianze* (solid testimonies) of this (PST1, 32).

47 C.M. VIGLIETTI, *Cronaca di don Bosco. Prima redazione* (1885–1888). Introduzione, texto crítico y notas por Pablo Marín Sánchez (LAS, Roma 2009) 207.

48 MB XVIII, 341 (BM XVIII 289).

49 PST1, 30.

50 PSTI, 31ff.

51 J.L. MARION, “Nulla è impossibile a Dio,” *Communio* 107 (1989) 57–73, 62.

52 *Ibid.*, 72.

53 A. LACOCQUE, “La révélation des révélations: Exode 3:14,” in P. Ricoeur – A. LaCocque, *Penser la Bible* (Seuil, Paris 1998) 305.

54 With reference to Ex 3:15, in which the divine Name is joined to the human singular “you shall say,” A. LaCocque states: “The greatest of paradoxes is that he who alone has the right to say ‘I, who is the only ‘*ehjeh [I am xho am]*’ has a name that includes a second person, a ‘you’” (A. LACOCQUE, “La révélation des révélations: Exode 3,14,” 315).

55 A. BERTULETTI, *Dio. Il mistero dell’unico*, 354.

56 J. RATZINGER, *Introduzione al cristianesimo. Lezioni sul simbolo apostolico* (Queriana, Brescia 1971) 93.

57 *Copia Publica Transumpti Processus Ordinaria*, 1146r.

58 C 70.

59 C 20.

60 E. VIGANÒ, *Mary renews the Salesian Family of Don Bosco*, AGC 289 (1978) 1–35, 28. For a critical reception of Marian devotion in the history of the Salesian Constitutions, cf. A. van Luyn, “Maria nel carisma della ‘Società di San Francesco di Sales,’” in AA.VV., *La Madonna nella “Regola” della Famiglia Salesiana* (LAS, Roma 1987) 15–87.

61 P. BEAUCHAMP, *La legge di Dio* (Piemme, Casale Monferrato 2000) 116.

62 For this reason, Article 11 of the *Constitutions* states that “the Salesian spirit finds its model and its source in the heart of Christ, apostle of the Father”, specifying that it is revealed in the attitude of the “Good Shepherd who wins hearts by gentleness and self-giving.”

A stylized, monochromatic blue illustration of a woman with a halo, wearing a long, flowing dress. The background features a large, faint circular shape and several five-pointed stars. The text is centered over the illustration.

day 3
31st august

Conference

Rev. Juan José Bartolomé



J. Bartolomé is a Salesian priest (Madrid, 1944) with a degree in Theology (Salamanca - UPS, 1972) and a doctorate in Sacred Scripture (PIB, Rome, 1989).

Most of his professional activity has been dedicated to the teaching of theology: ordinary professor at the Salesian Theological Institute in Salamanca and Madrid, he has been a guest professor at the universities of São Paulo-Lapa (Brazil) and Tlaquepaque, Jal (Mexico) and also at the Pontifical University of Salamanca. He has also dedicated himself to the formation of candidates for the priesthood and to the ongoing formation of religious and lay people; he has given numerous talks in Spain, Latin America, Italy, Portugal and the Philippines and has written several books and research articles on religious spirituality.

J. Bartolomé has published a hundred articles and around 60 books on biblical exegesis and spirituality. On the subject of spirituality, which he frequently addresses, his reflection has two axes: the future of faith - as a personal choice - in a world from which God seems to have been exiled; and the evangelizing capacity of community life.

Mary of Nazareth, master in the art of discernment

(Luke 1, 29.34; 2, 19.33.50-51)

“Vocational discernment is not carried out in a specific act...; It is a long process, which develops over time, during which it is necessary to maintain attention to the indications with which the Lord specifies and specifies a vocation that is exclusively personal and unrepeatable... Mary herself progresses in the awareness of her vocation to through meditation on the words he hears and the events that happen to him, including those he does not understand (cf. Luke 2:50-51).” ⁶³

Luke has left us a portrait of the mother of Jesus that details, in a paradigmatic way, that it is not possible to maintain faith in God and fidelity to his project without remaining attentive to what happens, in continuous discernment. Before being called to become the mother of the son of God (*Luke 1:26-38*), just as when she gave birth to him in Bethlehem (*Luke 2:1-20*), she presented him to God after forty days in the temple (*Luke 2,22-40*) or was lost, as a teenager, in Jerusalem (*Luke 2,41-52*), Mary remained attentive to what God was asking of her, without overlooking it just because she did not understand it (cf. *Luke 1,29; 2,19.33.48.50-51*).

And having put herself at the service of God's saving project forced her to follow a path of faith in which, as she progressed, God's decisions became less obvious and immediate and much more demanding and painful. She became his mother after wondering what what she heard meant (*Luke 1:29*) and accepting it (*Luke 1:38*). She had to become a contemplative in order to continue being a servant and mother (*Luke 2,19.33.51*).

To carry out his salvation project, God needs believers who welcome his Word and welcome his Son. This is what he revealed to Mary, when, communicating to her his desire to give a savior to his people, he proposed to make her a mother even though she was a virgin. What Mary did not yet know – and she had to learn throughout her life – was that, once she became a servant of God and the child was conceived in her womb, she would never be free of both. Not when she gives birth to the son of God in Bethlehem (*Luke 2,19*), nor when her firstborn becomes a man (*Luke 2,40.52*). Having accepted God's project forced Mary to live in continuous discernment, "keeping all this in her heart" (*Luke 2:51*).

While she was called (*Luke 1,26-38*)

"In her 'littleness', the Virgin bride promised to Joseph, experiences weakness and difficulty in understanding the mysterious will of God (cf. *Luke 1:34*). She is also called to live the exodus of herself and her projects, learning to surrender and trust... Aware that God is with her, Mary opens her heart to 'Here I am' and thus inaugurates the path of the Gospel (cf. *Luke 1,38*)" ⁶⁴

It is an error – quite common, by the way – to consider divine motherhood as the culmination of Mary's experience of God. Nazareth was not the goal of the Marian journey of faith (cf. *Acts* 1:14) but rather its starting point (*Luke* 1.26). When Gabriel, God's personal emissary, entrusted Mary with his plan of salvation, the Virgin of Nazareth was immersed in the daily life of a humble rural village (cf. *Jn* 1:46),⁶⁵ already engaged in another project, " betrothed to a man named Joseph » (*Luke* 1.26; cf. 2.5; *Matthew* 1.23 ; *Dt* 22,23) ⁶⁶. She knew that God was thinking about saving his people at the same moment she knew that God was counting on her to make her the mother of his Son.

The announcement of the birth of Jesus coincided, then, with the invitation to be the mother of God. The salvation of the people, projected by God, coincided with the vocation of Mary, chosen by God. That God did not care about the obstacle of her current virginity or her marriage commitment already made, deprived her of excuses on which to support her resistance. And ignorance about how this announced motherhood would be possible made blind her obedience in divine omnipotence (*Luke* 1,34-37). Mary's blessedness was not in being the mother of her God, but in having trusted him (cf. *Luke* 1.45; 11,27-28) ⁶⁷. He who totally believes in God, creates him, generating him, in an endearing way (*Luke* 1.38).

Chronicle of a discernment

The annunciation story presents a clear formal structure. The presentation of the characters (*Luke* 1,26-27) is followed by the appearance of the angel and his greeting (*Luke* 1,28-29); Mary reacts, wondering, and the angel makes her know the divine project (*Luke* 1:30-34); A new question from Mary motivates the angel's clarification and this, Mary's assent (*Luke* 1,35-38a). The entry of the angel on the scene (*Luke* 1,26a) and his departure (*Luke* 1,38b) close an episode where the one sent by God has always had the initiative and Mary has reacted in continuous progression, reflecting in silence (*Luke* 1,29), openly inquiring (*Luke* 1,34) and ending with the most complete assent (*Luke* 1,38).

²⁶ «In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”

²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

³⁰ And the angel said to her,

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel,

“How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ And the angel answered her,

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”

³⁸ And Mary said,

“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

And the angel departed from her.»

Three times the envoy reveals the divine plan to Mary (*Luke* 1,26.30–33.35–38) and three times she reacts, wondering, asking and accepting (*Luke* 1,29.34.38) ⁶⁸. Mary responds to Gabriel's subsequent

explanation of the proposal (*Luke* 1,35-37) with a more complete acceptance of the demand (*Luke* 1,39).

«But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.» (Luke 1:29).

Gabriel (cf. *Luke* 1,19)⁶⁹ opens the vocational dialogue with Mary with a “rejoice” (*Luke* 1,28), which more than a greeting (cf. *Matthew* 26,49; 27,29; 28,9) is an invitation to be joyful (cf. *Luke* 1,14; 2,10)⁷⁰, for a salvation that is announced (cf. *Is* 12,6; *Zeph* 3,14-15; *Zech* 3,14-17; 9,9). Before a son and salvation to the people are announced to her, happiness is imposed on her. The reason, having found grace before God. «*Full of grace*» is the most surprising and promising part of the angelic greeting. The joy of the blessed one is the appropriate feeling of one who is going to know that she has been chosen by a God who is *with* her before – and so that – he is *in* her. «*The Lord is with you*», which can be a simple greeting (*Ruth* 2,4), here expresses God’s active assistance to people who are going to act in his name and are thus supported in the effort; Divine protection is assured to him, because he will be assigned a mission (cf. *Ex* 3:12; *Judg* 6:12.15-17)⁷¹.

The angel’s greeting is as unusual as the mission he is going to introduce. Before revealing to Mary what God wants from her, he has expressed to her how much he loves her: before giving her the charge, he has revealed to her the choice. Gabriel speaks of the grace of God that fills her, not of Mary’s merits⁷²; He thus discovers a surprising, even paradoxical, behavior of a God, whose benevolence clashes with the expectations of his faithful.

The words, not the vision, of the angel (cf. *Luke* 1:12), disturb Mary (*Luke* 1:29); He does not understand the reason for such praise. His reaction is complex, emotional (“*he was greatly disturbed*”) and rational (“*he wondered*”) at the same time; He becomes uneasy but ponders. Unexpected divine benevolence gives him pause. Such a gratifying God misses her: by sensing what is going to be asked of her – and that is the grace that God has given her – Mary has begun to worry (cf. *Gen* 15:1; 26:24; 28:30; *Jer* 1,8)⁷³.

His reaction, unparalleled in the annunciation stories (cf. *Judges* 6:13), shows the maturity of his faith. He begins to search for the meaning of

what he heard, faces the new situation with greater reflection, considers the circumstances in search of a conclusion (cf. *Luke* 3:15). There is no anguish, uneasiness or disbelief. He does not understand well what has been said to him; he takes it seriously. Mute stupor and desire to understand mark the beginning of vocational discernment.

«And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”» (Luke 1,34).

The angel responds to her deliberation by revealing to her what God expects of her (*Luke* 1:30–33). God is about to start a dialogue with Mary that she had not asked for; He couldn't even have imagined it. Before knowing what God has, Mary knows that he has his benevolence: “*you have found favor with God*” (*Luke* 1:30; cf. *Gen* 6:8; 19:16; *Ex* 33:12). She can, therefore, count on God, without even knowing why God counts on her. *The grace given precedes the task to be carried out*: conceiving, giving birth and imposing the name on the son of God.

The angelic message focuses on Mary's unborn child. God had it in mind before the virgin could conceive; but he does not “demand from her anything that goes against her conscience⁷⁴.” María reacts soberly, without enthusiasm or doubts. He does not ask for proof or investigate the possibility (cf. *Luke* 1:18); He wonders about the way in which conception will take place in his current state: “*How will that be, since I don't know a man?*” » (*Luke* 1,34; cf. *Gen* 4,1,25)⁷⁵. Remaining a virgin, she does not believe the proposal of becoming a mother is viable. If it is realized, it will be a pure gift. Take the ad seriously, enough to question the way it was made.

With her question, therefore, Mary does not question the message received, nor does she reject the assigned task; because he assumes it, he questions himself. He thinks, and expresses it by asking, that he cannot carry it out. Her confessed helplessness makes her “capable” of welcoming God. Motherhood will, therefore, be pure grace: the Spirit, God's creative power, will be in charge of making it a reality: “the son of Mary is begotten by God himself... Jesus remains, of course, the son of Mary, that is, a human being”⁷⁶.

«**Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.**» (Luke 1:38)

But keep *asking to better discern; and asking, makes a further explanation necessary*. Even in the midst of the revelation, Mary continues to discern, since she cannot understand the angelic message, which has focused on defining the personality of the child (Luke 1:32) and describing his future mission (Luke 1:33).

Gabriel, going beyond what was required, clarifies the mode of conception of the son promised to Mary, declaring him the son of the Most High (Luke 1:35). It also confirms the extraordinary nature of the birth, providing as confirmation the motherhood of Elizabeth (Luke 1:36), which exemplifies the all-embracing power of God (Luke 1:37; 18:27; cf. Gen 18:14; Jer 32, 27; Zech 8,6). Mary's question, which had not asked for any sign, did not demand support to believe in the message. God does not ask you for blind faith. And the angel grants a sign that ratifies the message: he proclaims Elizabeth's state of good hope.

Also related by their inability to procreate ⁷⁷, Isabel's motherhood proves, now that it is visible, the possibility of virginal conception, but nothing more. For it to be realized, God's omnipotence is not enough. The consent of his servant is required; The last word belongs to her. *If believed, the word of God becomes creative*.

The formula with which Mary assents ("*behold, the handmaid of the Lord*", cf. Gen 30:34; Jos 2:21; Judges 11:10; Dan 14:9) reveals her total acceptance. She goes from depending on the man in her life to being at the service of her God, who becomes man in her. His "*let it be*" is an optional, which expresses an intense desire. The virgin assents to what she has heard and lets God, doing his will, be her Lord. *The divine project is verified the moment it obtains the consent of its chosen one*. In fact, within a few days she will be publicly proclaimed "*the mother of my Lord*" (Luke 1:43).

However, and it must be noted, the story does not close by mentioning the conception of the son. It ends by declaring the availability of a virgin to be a mother. It is what the omnipotent God did not yet count on. When he obtained her consent, he began his plan. Jesus was not, like any other man, the fruit of an encounter of human love,

but of God's trust in a virgin (*Luke 1,30-31*) and the obedience of a servant to her God (*Luke 1,38*).

A rereading

In the chronicle of Mary's vocation, God reveals to us what it is like. He remembers not so much what Mary had done ⁷⁸ when God called her to his service. Rather, it shows what he would be willing to do for us, if he found us as willing as Mary. *God has left it within the power of his servants to conceive it. And he invites as many as he wants to take a risk and try.* Reviewing Mary's vocation, we could feel invited by that same God to lend her a hand, facilitating her entry into the world again. Or does our world not need God? Mary achieved this by listening to God without fully understanding him, but without stopping trying to understand him.

The announcement of the birth of Jesus coincided with the invitation to be the mother of God. The story thus reveals essential features of every Christian vocation. It reveals that *God, when he proposes a special mission to someone, is actually planning to save his people.* Because he has a salvation project, he entrusts it to whoever he wants. Like Mary's, every vocation is, basically, a dialogue in which God reveals himself, declaring his project and making known the call that counts on him. What the angel says to Mary, more than wonderful statements about her person, which they are, manifests the decision that God has made to save his people .

Mary's, like any authentic vocation, began and was realized through dialogue ⁷⁹. And it culminates when – and if – one ends up obeying. Maria did not initiate the conversation; but he didn't shy away from it either. Always reacting to Gabriel's words, first, she asked herself in confusion (*Luke 1:29*); Later, he confessed that he was incapable of accepting the proposal (*Luke 1:34*); to finish, declaring himself at the service of a God who can do everything (*Luke 1:37-38*). At the very heart of her vocational dialogue, Mary has walked from wordless astonishment to unreserved acceptance, passing through the recognition of her own ineptitude. Without attentive listening and continuous discernment, the virgin would not have become a mother..., nor would God have had the planned son.

Before knowing she was called by God, Mary knew she was graced. Before she chose God, she had to accept that God had chosen her. Does *God call because he loves us or does he call us to love us?* If grace precedes the task, is it not true that every authentic vocation recognizes that divine will precedes its demands? Is fear then legitimate? (*Luke 1,30*) Where do our fears arise and are fed in our vocational experience? Why can't we be excited that God has counted on us and that we count so much for him? He who knows himself to be called, knows himself to be graced; Like Mary, finding one's vocation is to have found the grace of God (cf. *Luke 1:30*).

God does not call for nothing. He called Mary to do the impossible: to be a mother while remaining a virgin and to give birth to her first-born who was, in reality, the only begotten of God. What should be admired more: *God's need to find a person who trusts him*, or Mary's immediate acceptance of God's plan?

God proposed to Mary a motherhood, which neither fit with her intentions, since she was already engaged (*Luke 1,27*), nor was it among her possibilities, since she was still a virgin (*Luke 1,34*). The son that was announced to her was not, in reality, going to be hers ("*son of the Most High God*" : *Luke 1,32.35.76*) nor for her ("*messiah of Israel*" : *Luke 1,32-33*). *The first to be missed by God's plans is the one who hears them first*. Can a called person live his vocation without God missing him, without drawing even the slightest attention to him? A God who does not miss is a God who has not made his saving plan known.

Once his plan has been accepted and God is now present in Mary's womb, the messenger of God leaves her presence (*Luke 1:28*). *When God finds servants, he has plenty of those sent*. When the divine project finds acceptance, the impossible is realized: the virgin servant begins to be the mother of her Lord ⁸⁰. The reason for Marian beatitude (*Luke 1:45*) is not, therefore, in divine motherhood, but in her capacity to welcome God: it was not her feat to give birth to him, but to assume his incomprehensible will. Although a sign was given to her (*Luke 1:36-37*), Mary was "a believer for whom the word of God is sufficient ⁸¹." *To get hold of God we must accept him* : faith, which is a servant's obedience, is the way to make our own the vocation to which we have been called. And happiness lies in this (cf. *Luke 1:45*).

As in the days of Mary, *God continues looking for those who lend him faith and courage*. The God of Mary has no other way to save the world than by becoming incarnate. Yesterday like today. The believer, like Mary, needs nothing more than faith to conceive his God. To give him flesh and a home, to make him human, give him birth and give him to the world, no miracle greater than the obedience of servants is necessary. Only by putting ourselves totally at his service will we make him our familiar: *with the God of Mary, the servant is the master; the servant, the lord; the slave, the mother*.

While making the call (Luke 2,19.33.50-51)

“Each young person can discover in the life of Mary the style of listening, the courage of faith, the depth of discernment and dedication to service (cf. Luke 1:39-45) [...]. In his eyes each young person can rediscover the beauty of discernment, in his heart he can experience the tenderness of intimacy and the courage of testimony and mission⁸².

The presence and protagonism of Mary are more evident in *Luke 2* than in *Luke 1*. The events that are remembered, focused on the childhood and adolescence of Jesus, completely silence John the Baptist and his parents, focused as they are on the family of Jesus. And they are less prodigious; Now it is noted with precision, and repeatedly, that the life of the family of the son of God is subject to the law, whether of men (*Luke 2,1-5*), or of God (*Luke 2,22-24.39. 41-42*). God’s salvation enters fully into world history. *The birth, childhood and adolescence of Jesus mark the milestones of a path of discernment that Mary had to follow to remain a believer*. God will tell her what he expects from her in an ever more subtle and indirect way, but increasingly more demanding.

A discernment that must never be considered finished

Mary's relationship with God, begun after accepting her vocation, would not end, as would have been expected, with her giving birth to the son of God. Given her consent – and her own body – only once, the servant of God will never again be able to be free from her Lord. Mary, who had declared herself willing *only* to bear the son of God, will gradually discover, and without much insight, new tasks and greater sorrows.

She had barely given birth to the Son of God (Luke 2:1-20)

Luke narrates the birth of Jesus with “a concision, simplicity and sobriety, which stands in sensitive contrast to the significance of the fact”⁸³ (Luke 2:4-7). The contrast thus becomes more evident: in Bethlehem (cf. *Matthew* 2,1-6) there are no neighbors or relatives who rejoice with the mother (cf. *Luke* 1,58) and in the city of David (*Mic* 5,1) there is no place for a newborn, despite being proclaimed as “ *the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord*” (Luke 2:11). More than on the event itself, the narrator focuses on the circumstances that surrounded it, be it the imperial census that motivated the trip to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-3)⁸⁴, or the presence of the shepherds who were watching that night (Luke 2 ,8-20). The disparity between the triumphant announcement of the angels (Luke 2:9-14) and the circumstances of the birth (Luke 2:6-7) could not be clearer . For the narrator, it is decisive that “Mary has had a true pregnancy and Jesus, a true birth”⁸⁵.

The structure of the story is simple. The birth in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7; cf. *Matthew* 2:1) is followed by the angelic proclamation to the shepherds (Luke 2:8-14), who confirm what happened and testify to its extent (Luke 2:15-20).). The sign given to them links the three scenes (Luke 2,7.12.16: a newborn, “ *wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger*”). At the center of the story is the angelic message addressed to the shepherds (Luke 2:10-12), the third within the Lucan story of Jesus' childhood (cf. *Luke* 1:11-20.28-37). That the newborn, lying in a manger, is identified as “ *the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord*” (Luke 2:11) surpasses everything imaginable⁸⁶.

2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” ¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The chronicler hardly spends any time narrating the birth of Jesus. He notes the details with surprising neutrality (*Luke 2,6-7*), after having

justified more fully the transfer of Mary in state to Bethlehem (*Luke* 2,1-5) and notably lengthening his story with the announcement of her birth to some shepherds (*Luke* 2,8-20). The fact of a birth is narrated (*Luke* 2:6-7), which, as a sign that will give meaning to human history (*Luke* 2:11-12), is verified by simple people, shepherds. Narratively, the angelic manifestation serves to fulfill the divine promise made to Mary (cf. *Luke* 2:11-13)⁸⁷. The messenger of God announces it, the shepherds see it and proclaim it. But the mother was the direct recipient of the evangelical announcement. Mary has to hear “*the good news, which will be of great joy to all the people*” (*Luke* 2:10) from the mouths of strangers who, because of their work, spent the night awake and were, therefore, not well regarded⁸⁸.

Having just given birth, Mary’s son has not found shelter, not even in an inn (*Luke* 2:7). He is welcomed, but not as the announced king (*Luke* 1:32-33), nor as a well-born child (*Luke* 2:7). When, and with reason, she could have boasted of having accomplished the mission, Mary does not hear voices of angels, she receives information from shepherds, people considered in their time not very worthy of trust (*Bill* 2,113-114). They are shepherds who have been evangelized by angels, who, in turn, will ‘evangelize’ the parents of Jesus. Is it any wonder that you have to keep in your heart, to scrutinize it there, everything that happens before your eyes? (cf. *Luke* 8:4-15)⁸⁹.

«But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.» (Luke 2:19)

It is not the mother of Jesus, it is curious!, the protagonist in the chronicle of the birth. Mary appears only at the beginning (*Luke* 2,5-7) and at the end (*Luke* 2,16-19). By framing the birth within the obligatory trip to Bethlehem⁹⁰, Mary has to give birth in the most complete solitude, far from her loved ones and alien to the usual joy that a new life causes (cf. *Luke* 1:57-58). Furthermore, if before the angelic announcements had been addressed to those who received the divine mission (*Zechariah: Luke* 1,11-20; *Mary: Luke* 1,28-33), now the recipients of the message from an envoy of the Lord are unknown. nameless (*Luke* 2:10; cf. 1:11.26).

Evangelized, shepherds do not look for something unknown, they follow a precise indication, a sign: a baby in a manger (*Luke* 2:12)⁹¹.

They stop being simple listeners and, without delay and through their prompt obedience, they become eyewitnesses: only simple people can identify a child wrapped in a stable as *the Savior* (*Luke 2:11*; cf. *2:30*; *Acts 5:31* ; *13,23*). Once their veracity is proven, they become evangelizers, the first (*Luke 2,17:10*), of Jesus' parents.

After giving birth, María has not received any announcement from Gabriel. Nor will he understand what the shepherds transmit to him, who represent those poor who will be priority recipients of Jesus' evangelizing mission (cf. *Luke 4:18*). But, unlike everyone, who marvels (*Luke 2:18*), she maintains an attitude of permanent search for meaning (*Luke 2:19*). More than meditating or treasuring what happens, he investigates and interprets it. He does not reject what he does not understand. Support what you cannot understand. Instead of simply being surprised by her God, she seeks to enter the mystery, activating the intelligence of the heart ⁹².

Before she conceived the son of God, God had sent her an envoy. After the birth, with the mission accomplished, some men are sent to him. The one evangelized by Gabriel to be a mother, is evangelized by some shepherds now, after being one. *The greater your familiarity with God, the less closeness you experience to Him* . The mother of Jesus will have to carefully keep the facts, what she has seen and heard, and evaluate them carefully: "Mary does not interpret with her understanding (noûs), but with her will and affection: in her heart ⁹³."

It seems as if, giving birth to God, Mary had to act as a mother without many lights: *giving light to God has darkened her life* . It is one more step in his personal process of discernment: in *Luke 1:29* he asked himself; in *Luke 1:34* he questioned; Now here, in *Luke 2:19*, it penetrates, turning it over in your head; ⁹⁴ Finally, in *Luke 2:51* he will keep it in memory.

When presenting his firstborn to God (Luke 2:22-40)

From the childhood of Jesus, properly speaking, Luke chooses only three significant events: his circumcision and imposition of the name (*Luke 2,21*; cf. *1,59* ⁹⁵; *Gen 17,10-13*) ⁹⁶, his presentation (*Luke 2,22- 40*) and its loss and discovery, both in the temple (*Luke 2,41-50*). Her chronicle ends with a summary that once again insists on

Mary's contemplative attitude, as she accompanied the growth of Jesus (*Luke 2:51-52*).

The presentation of the child in the temple after eight days was not mandatory (*Lev 12:3*), nor was the annual Passover visit before coming of age. But Luke will insist that, following the legal regulations (*Luke 2,22.23.24.27*), Mary has to discern the will of the God of whom she has declared herself a slave. Mary must learn to see and touch, like Simeon (cf. *Luke 2:30.28*), God's salvation through faithful fulfillment of the law. Luke, furthermore, is interested in it being in Jerusalem (cf. *Luke 9,51.53; 13,22.23; 17,11; 18,31; 19,11; 24,47.49.52; Acts 1,8*), where it is recognized to the infant the " Savior " , light of the nations and glory of Israel (*Luke 2,30*) and that, as an adolescent, Jesus proclaims himself son of God (*Luke 2,49*).

The presentation of Jesus in the temple has three scenes, framed by an introduction (*Luke 2:21*) and a narrative conclusion (*Luke 2:39-40*). Both extremes refer to the child's life and present it as completely normal. What is narrated between them reveals God's plan, which only the eyes of those who hope to see God's salvation and the hearts of those who have his Spirit capture.

The first scene (*Luke 2:22-24*) places the action in the temple and justifies the presence of Jesus' family there, preparing the meeting with the two elders. The narrator gives more emphasis to the imposition of the name than to circumcision; The parents give him the name chosen by the angel. The second (*Luke 2:25-35*) presents Simeon and his prophetic prayer, actually a hymn to God (*Luke 2:29-32*) and a prophecy for Mary (*Luke 2:34-35*). In the third (*Luke 2:36-38*), the elderly Anna, who lives before God and for him, appears as praising God and proclaiming Jesus as the expected liberator.

²¹ And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."²⁵

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹

“Lord, now you are letting your servant[e] depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.[f] She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. ³⁹ And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

Fulfilling the law of Moses takes Mary to Jerusalem, twice. The first, Jesus being an infant of days (*Luke 2,22.39*). The second, shortly before inaugurating his coming of age (*Luke 2:41-42*). Those two ascents to Jerusalem mark Jesus' childhood and adolescence, time

to mature as a man under the rule of God's law. Her son grows as a son of God (*Luke 2,40.52*), while his mother lives subject to God's law (*Luke 2,22.23.24.39.41.42*; cf. *Lev 12,6-8*; *Ex 13,1.13*; *Num 18, 15-16*). Obedience to God's will does not exempt Mary from punctually following his written will. Mother, because she is a servant, Mary educates her son in obedience to the law of God with her actions (*Luke 2:39*)⁹⁷.

«And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.» (Luke 2:33)

Forty days after giving birth, the mother had to be purified, her impurity not being moral but ritual (*Lev 12:8*) and the child was to be consecrated to God, in compliance with the law, and fully integrated into the people of God (*Luke 2 ,22-24*; *Num 18,15*). In the temple of Jerusalem, the good God was waiting for them again... and not very good news.

A righteous believer, who has grown old without losing hope of seeing the "Messiah of the Lord" (*Luke 2:26*), is now God's spokesperson. His Spirit is in him (*Luke 2,25.26.27*). The story takes a while to describe him: he lives waiting for the consolation of his people (*Luke 2:38*; cf. *23:50-51*); He has the Spirit of God, who leads him to the temple on the same day that obedience to the law had brought Jesus' parents there. There is, therefore, no fortune or chance, but divine government of human history (cf. *Luke 4:1.14-18*), although in a differentiated way: Simeon goes to the temple and sees the "Savior" (*Luke 2:30*) ; their parents, on the other hand, to comply with God, "according to the law of Moses" (*Luke 2:22*).

Having the child Jesus in his arms, it is not difficult for the elderly Simeon, "just and pious man" (*Luke 2:25*; cf. *Acts 2:5*; *8:2*; *22:12*), to praise a God who has given him given him more consolation than he had promised. More than "seeing the promised Messiah" (*Luke 2:26*), he touches, holding him "in his arms" (*Luke 2:28*) , the long-awaited Savior, a child. The palpated salvation is greater than the only glimpsed; the one offered, better than the expected. But salvation, now seen in the temple (*Luke 2, 29-32*), it has little to do – if anything – with that announced by the angel in Nazareth (*Luke 1,30-33*), or by the shepherds in Bethlehem (*Luke 2,10-14*) .

And the forecasts for the child are getting noticeably worse. After the praise of God that so amazed Jesus' parents (*Luke 2:33*), comes the dark prophecy about the son and the mother. « *This has been appointed so that many in Israel will fall and rise; and it will be like a sign of contradiction* » (*Luke 2:34*). Jesus is going to divide his people, questioning their safety; before him it will not be possible to remain impartial. Without a break in continuity, Simeon adds what this implies to his mother. « *And a sword will pierce your soul* » (*Luke 2:35*; cf. *Ezek 14:17*). The son's fate affects the mother. Mary's heart will be divided, given the rejection that her son will suffer: to the division produced in the world, great pain is added in her heart ⁹⁸.

Simeon announces that Jesus will become a stumbling block and contradiction in Israel (cf. *Acts 28:26–28*); Neutrality or indifference will not be possible in front of him. This is not what Israel expected, nor what was previously indicated to Mary (cf. *Luke 1:31–33*). The mother is not freed from the son or from his dark future, being a contradiction and scandal for the people (cf. *Isa 8:14–15*). As, and with her son, Mary will be at the center of the rejection or reception that Israel will give to Jesus.

The image of the sword that divides the soul (cf. *Job 26:25*) alludes to constant pain, an internal tear. The rejection that his son will suffer will break his soul. The mother of Jesus will live her existence deeply wounded. *Your familiarity with God will not save you a torn life*. A sword in the heart is the salary of service to God well fulfilled! Mary loses herself as a woman, for not losing, as a mother, her son, nor, as a believer, God. A well-served God imposes greater servitudes with less support. Or could it be any other way?

Once the law has been completely satisfied, Jesus' family returns to Galilee (*Luke 2:40*; cf. *Matthew 2:23*), "thus putting an end to the story of Jesus' childhood, in the strict sense ⁹⁹". Like the Baptist (cf. *Luke 1:80*), Jesus does not stop growing in Nazareth as a man in the family and before God as a son. Twelve years of Jesus' childhood are summarized with as much brevity as they are accurate. Human maturity and totality of grace become compatible in the home, in daily life. And no matter how much he grows, the son becomes more like his mother (*Luke 1,28.30*) in the possession of God's grace (*Luke 2,40*).

As an adolescent, Jesus is lost as a son to Mary, who finds him again as the Son of God (Luke 2:41-52)

A pilgrimage to the temple, when Jesus is about to come of legal age, logically concludes the story of his childhood (*Luke 2:41-50*; cf. *Ex 23:14-17*; *Dt 16:16*). But the episode, framed within two summaries (*Luke 2,40-52*), does not focus on the journey to Jerusalem or on the celebration of Easter, but on what happens next: the loss of Jesus in the temple (*Luke 2,41-52*). Luke, the only evangelist who remembers this incident, brings to its surprising end a story that began with an infant in Mary's arms (*Luke 2,12.16*): the newborn (*Luke 2,17.27-40*), son of Mary (*Luke 2 ,43*), ends up declaring himself the son of God (*Luke 2,49*)!

As in the previous episode (*Luke 2:21-39*), the temple is the central place for the manifestation of the personal mystery of Jesus. And it is presented structured following the same model: ascent to Jerusalem (*Luke 2,42*; cf. *2,22*), revelation of Jesus (*Luke 2,46-47*; cf. *2,30-31*), commentary on the mother (*Luke 2,48*; cf. *2,39*), return to Nazareth (*Luke 2,51*; cf. *2,39*). The center of the story is in Jesus' double question to his mother (*Luke 2:48*), who cannot understand the reason for what is happening (*Luke 2:50*), of the imperative need for it to happen (*Luke 2:49*).

⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. ⁴³ And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching

for you in great distress.”⁴⁹ And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.⁵¹ And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Publicly, in the temple of Jerusalem, Jesus stops being the son of Mary and Joseph and declares himself the son of God. It is *the first word* – it will also be the last, cf. *Luke 24:49* – which Jesus, *barely coming of age*, pronounces in the temple, during Easter. As with his last statement he declares himself a son of God, with full awareness of his mission: not only does he claim an intimate relationship with God, he also proclaims his personal commitment to the Father’s project; and he does it as soon as his mother had mentioned to him the anguish of Joseph, his father (*Luke 2:48*). What the angel announced (*Luke 2:1-20*) and Simeon saw (*Luke 2:21-22*) is now confirmed by Jesus himself, still a teenager (*Luke 2:41-51*). His human wisdom may still be growing (*Luke 2:52*), but he already knows the fundamental thing, that God is his Father (*Luke 2:49*).

«And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.» (Luke 2:50-52).

As pious Jews, Jesus’ parents used to go to Jerusalem for Passover. That they took their son indicates their personal piety and a certain educational concern¹⁰⁰. The absence of Jesus during the return goes, at first, unnoticed (*Luke 2:44*). The reason for Jesus’ stay in the temple is not given now, although it can later be deduced from his response (*Luke 2:49b*: “*Should I be in my Father’s affairs?*”). The first day does not pass without his parents noticing his absence. Three days of anguished search (*Luke 2:48*) manage to find him. Finding him in the temple, among teachers, “*astonished by his talent*” (*Luke 2:47*), leaves his parents astonished, and even more confused.

But the teenage son was not lost, he chose to stay in his Father's house (cf. *Jn* 2:17), better, he had to do it, even if it caused pain to his parents. Jesus' response was even less understandable than his behavior. Emphatically, with two questions, he questions the mother's position; He makes it understood by asking, he does not oppose it by affirming. Neither the search nor the anguish are justified, because it had not been lost... nor did it belong to them anymore! It was not chance but duty that separated them. Jesus did not do what he wanted, but what was wanted of him. It is due to God the Father. And he doesn't get lost when he takes care of his things. Observing the Father and his interests frees Jesus from the parental authority of his family; he has priority over the most sacred relationships (*Luke* 2:49). His parents would have to understand that his divine filiation has required him to separate himself from them and their expectations (cf. *Matthew* 16,23; *Jn* 8,29; 9,4; 14,31).

It is nothing extraordinary, then, that the anguished parents were disconcerted when they found him in the temple, " *sitting among the teachers* " (*Luke* 2:48), and did not understand a word of what their son told them (*Luke* 2:50); they could have felt disappointed, if not deceived (cf. *Gen.* 12.8; 20.9; 29.25; *Ex* 14:11; *Judges* 15,11). Neither virginal motherhood nor close daily coexistence made the person and destiny of her son more accessible to Mary. Like any believer, Mary went through the anecdote, no less painful, of losing Jesus. After three days of agonizing searching, he believed he had recovered it..., only to immediately have to accept that he had lost it, this time, definitively (*Luke* 2:48-49).

Still an adolescent, he proclaimed God Father (*Luke* 2:49), as he will do again before dying (*Luke* 23:46). And it was not the worst thing for Mary that she had to see the son of God in her son, but that, from then on, she would have to live with a son who *was known*, and so loved, *to be from God* (*Luke* 2:49). . Without telling it, Luke gives us to understand Mary lived this situation for years, from Jesus' adolescence until the beginning of his public ministry (cf. *Luke* 3:23). The mother, to continue being so (cf. *Luke* 8:19-21; 11:27-28), had to become more of a believer ¹⁰¹, treasuring " in her heart all those things " (*Luke* 2:51) that she did not understand with her mind. . Is it a coincidence that this is Mary's last reaction in the story of Jesus' childhood?

The divine filiation, claimed so early by Jesus, did not exempt him from living under his parents for most of his life (cf. *Luke 4:22; Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55*). He returns with his parents to Nazareth and lives under his parental authority. Such a return, after such a resounding declaration of his identity, makes the ordinary more extraordinary: submission to parents who are not, when it comes down to it, his Father. What happens does not go unnoticed by Mary: her son matures as a man and a son of God, simultaneously. And although he doesn't understand it, he doesn't forget it either. He keeps what happened in his heart: what happens to him does not pass him by, without incidents, without leaving traces (*Luke 2:51b*)¹⁰².

The son grows before her, as a man. Together with him, she must grow as a believer. Living with God without understanding him is the Marian way of not losing him (*Luke 2:19; cf. 8:19-21; 11:27-28*). Meanwhile, Jesus continues to progress in wisdom (*Luke 2:52*), maturity and grace before God and men. Mary accompanies, mother always, the growth of her son with the growth of her faith. In the long silence of Nazareth, God becomes a man and within a family he learns to be a man. Both processes take place under the quiet and contemplative gaze of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

A rereading

Mary may have felt somewhat surprised, if not uncomfortable with her God. He had only been proposed to beget the son of God; He only nodded to it. Therefore, she could well hope to return to her old life plan (*Luke 1:28: "virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph"*) once God's plan had been fulfilled (*Luke 1:31: "you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus"*). It was not so. You will have to begin an adventure with God where you thought you had concluded it. *God does not let go of his best servants easily.* Whoever promises obedience is "lost."

A new stage of faith, open and sustained by continuous discernment, opens when Mary, newly born in Bethlehem, has to hear from the mouths of strangers the meaning that God gives to the birth of her son. Pastors, simple and marginalized people, are those chosen by God to receive the gospel first... and then evangelize the mother

of Jesus; They are “the personification of an attitude of spontaneous credulity in the face of the message that has just been transmitted to them”¹⁰³. “*Only the simple can identify a true God in the child resting in a manger without losing faith*”.

In order not to be scandalized by such an insignificant God, they become evangelizers of Mary. And the mother of God reacts by allowing herself to be evangelized by those whom God chose and those who sent her (Luke 1,12.15-16). Unlike the shepherds, who march in praise of God, and the people, who remain amazed at what they told, Mary tries to reach the deepest meaning of what she has experienced and what they have told her. And without ceasing to personally investigate what God is telling him in what is happening, he insists on seeing things with his heart. He guards what happens to him and does not understand there, where no one can enter but only God (cf. Matthew 6,6). *It was not by understanding with the mind but by containing in the heart how Mary discerned, contemplating*, that is, “she understands and experiences in her flesh what she believes”¹⁰⁴.

The God that is not understood can turn out to be insignificant and useless, as long as one does not have the courage to keep him as an object of contemplation. *Looking at everything with affection and keeping it with attention is the Marian method of staying with the God that, because it seems something small or too normal to us, we cannot understand*. We will not be able, perhaps, like Mary to give body to God. But, at least, we could dare to look at him and worship him with our hearts: that is where a God as endearing as he is incomprehensible fits.

Once the days of purification were completed, Jesus’ parents presented their firstborn to God in the temple in obedience to the law (Luke 2:22). By doing so, Mary was able to consider accomplished the mission she had accepted, giving a son to God (Luke 1:31.35). He had to learn that it is difficult to escape from God who once gave him credit. In the temple, those who, in the name of God, would reveal to him the future of his son and his own were waiting for him. It causes surprise, if not incomprehension, that God once again makes his future known to Mary through two unknown people. *An angel announced to him that he would give life to the son of God* (Luke 1:31-32). *That his life would be filled with pain was told to him by strangers* (Luke 2:34-35).

In Jerusalem, and during a pilgrimage for Easter (*Luke 2:41-42*), Mary lost her teenage son. Coexistence with Jesus was becoming more and more difficult, less peaceful... Who said that familiarity with God had to be pleasant and smooth? It is consoling that Mary went through that experience, so common to us, of losing God ¹⁰⁵. *Wouldn't a God who can lead us astray deserve greater care?* A God that we can lose, and in the Temple, will not force us to serve him better? Going through the experience of her loss should not be a negative experience, much less a traumatic one, if we realize that it was a Marian experience. Or isn't it comforting to know that one is a companion of the Mother of God in those moments when we know where God has ended up?

But if it comforts us to know that Mary also lost Jesus one day, her feverish search to find him should inspire us even more. He was not content to miss him and regret his absence. Nor did she apologize when she knew that she was not responsible. He immediately started looking for him among family and friends and found him - could it be any other way? - in the temple, talking about God. Are we that industrious when we lose God? Do we put up with his absence from our lives, just because it seems to us that he shouldn't have abandoned us or that he isn't being too fair by hiding from us? Where do we look for it?

Finding Jesus was not a happy ending for Mary ¹⁰⁶. Jesus' response to his mother's complaint (*Luke 2:48: "Why have you treated us like this?"*) was, to say the least, inconsiderate (*Luke 2:49: "Why were you looking for me?"*). María did not see her pain respected, nor her anguish valued. And he did not understand the son, because he did not fully recover him when he found him; He began to lose it while he wanted to be a son of God. But *he accepted him as he wanted to be*, above all and in front of everyone, the son of God. It was his inexcusable duty, his destiny now assumed (*Luke 2:49: deí*). He had to accompany his son's growth and his divine self-awareness with the growth of his personal faith¹⁰⁷. Is there another method of accompanying God in life? Can you live with God at home without total faith in your heart?

Mary reminds us that *God can always ask us for more than we have already given him*. The duty fulfilled does not free one from the obe-

dience to come. Being a mother of God did not make her happier than she was before, but it did keep her closer to her son. He will be a cause of stumbling and she will be a painful mother. God does not leave anyone who has allowed Him to enter into one's life. And what's worse, he never says everything he wants about you at once; He manifests it step by step and through less imposing mediations. He presents his new demands, after the previous ones have been met: "each discovery is followed by a new enigma¹⁰⁸." Having passed the test of obedience (*Luke 1,38.45*), Mary began a learning process, marked by incomprehension (*Luke 2,19.51*), not exempt from pain (*Luke 2,35*) nor immune to loneliness (*Luke 8, 20-21*).

Thus, *pedagogically, without overwhelming with accumulated tasks, God favors the believer to remain in a state of continuous obedience.* It is true that not all of us can tolerate that pedagogy, nor the rhythm, of God. And therein lies the difference. Mary, although a mother, always remained a servant of her God. Will we be willing to learn from Mary?

63 Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly, *Young people, faith and vocational discernment*. Preparatory document (=DP), no. 3.

64 DP, III, 5.

65 “Small town of about 500 inhabitants, located in the lower Galilee..., in a very fertile environment. Its inhabitants were surely farmers, employed by others... Those who were not dedicated to agriculture were modest artisans” (Isabel Gómez Acebo, *Lucas*, Estella, Verbo Divino, 2010, 39).

66 Evangelical tradition *always* mentions Joseph in relation to the origin of Jesus (*Luke* 1,27; 2,4.16; 3,23; 4,22; *Matthew* 1,16-24; 2,13.19; *Jn* 1,45; 6, 42). The Davidic lineage of Mary’s husband (*Luke* 2,5; cf. 2 *Sam* 7,1-17), legitimizes, in advance, the Davidic filiation of Jesus (*Matthew* 9,27; 12,23; 15,22; 20,30.31 ; 21,9.15; *Mc* 10,47-48/ *Luke* 18,38-39). No NT author states that Mary was of the lineage of David.

67 God calls Mary “as an instrument of his plan and takes her through a process for which she has had no prior training or preparation. God simply promises to be with her throughout the experience and she responds with his good disposition” (Darrell L. Bock, *Lucas*. From the biblical text to a contemporary application, Miami, Editorial Vida, 2011, 57).

68 “The normal response to the angel’s greeting is an uneasy silence (v. 29), and “do not be afraid ,” the expected encou-

agement (v. 30). Doubts (or, as here, the question, v. 34) are a common reaction to a divine message, which necessarily catches one by surprise. According to the rules, the angel promises a sign (v. 34), which is at the same time the answer to the question” (François Bovon, *The Gospel according to Saint Luke*. I. Luke 1-9, Salamanca, Follow me, 1995, 105).

69 Gabriel appears to Zechariah to tell him, without having greeted him, that his prayer has been heard and he will have a son (*Luke* 1:11-13); Instead, he is sent to Mary and, after greeting her, he comes to tell her that, without asking for it, he has found grace before God (*Luke* 1:26-28). The difference is notable.

70 Cf. Juan J. Bartolomé, “ ‘Rejoice, blessed one’ (Luke 1:28). The joy of being called”, *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 60 (2010) 217-229.

71 “Both as a woman and a young person, Mary had virtually no social status. Neither the title (‘favored’ or ‘graced one’) nor the promise (‘the Lord is with you’) was traditional in greetings, even had she been a person of status” (Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*. New Testament, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, Ill., 2004, 181).

72 The word “grace” “places the emphasis on the source of goodness rather than its effects. With regard to Mary, specifically, he points out that she is the object of God’s grace and favor” (Carroll Stuhlmüller, “Gospel according to Saint Luke”, Raymond E. Brown – Joseph A. Fitzmyer – Roland

E. Murphy, eds., *San Jerónimo Biblical Commentary* III, New Testament 1, Madrid, Cristiandad, 1971, 314).

73 Such a reaction could also indicate that María intuited, at least initially, what such words implied. And the thing is that, otherwise, his confusion would not be well understood (cf. *Matthew* 2:2-3).

74 Joseph Schmidt, *The Gospel According to Saint Luke*, Barcelona, Herder, 1968, 63.

75 Mary does not publish her intention to remain a virgin. The formula does not express a purpose for the future, rather it records the current state (cf. *Gen.* 4.1). Neither was virginity an ideal of life for a Jewish woman, nor is it logical to suppose that Mary, who was already betrothed (*Luke* 1:28), would have adopted it. Even more implausible, due to not having any support in the biblical data available, would be to assume that the couple had come to an agreement before the announcement (cf. *Matthew* 1,18.20).

76 Bovon, *Lucas* . I, 115.

77 *Luke* 1,7,36: Elizabeth was barren and is old; *Luke* 1,34: Mary is a virgin. Both, and as long as they are, are incapable of procreating, that is, of carrying out for themselves what the angel had promised them.

78 “Joseph is a son of David, but Mary has not yet joined his household and thus has no claim on his inherited status... She is not introduced in any way that would recommend her to us as particularly noteworthy or deserving of divine favor...

Nothing has prepared her (or the reader) for this visit from an archangel or for such exalted words denoting God’s favor” (Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids – Cambridge, WE Eerdmans, 1997, 86).

79 All biblical stories of vocation are presented – with greater or lesser clarity – as a dialogue that God opens with those who choose and entrust a mission. It is he who commits to the call and even provides him with the response that he requests from him. Responding to this dialogue makes it possible to access God the Father, to have God as a son and to possess God as a Spirit who facilitates the impossible. No more neither less .

80 “In describing herself as the Lord’s servant (cf. 1:48), she acknowledges her submission to God’s purpose, but also her role in assisting the purpose” (Green, *Luke*, 92).

81 Raymond E. Brown – Karl P. Donfried – Joseph A. Fitzmyer – John Reumann, *Mary in the New Testament*. A joint evaluation of Catholic and Protestant scholars, Salamanca, Sígueme, 2 1986 127.

82 DP, III.5.

83 Schmidt, *Lucas*, 92.

84 The connection between the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and the census of Cirinus, which would have taken place around 6 AD, is uncertain. C. (*Acts* 5,37; Josephus, *Ant.* 17,13,5; 18,1.1). There is – yet – no evidence of a universal census under Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD) nor of the obli-

gation of taxpayers to register in the place of their ancestors; It was usual for them to register in the place where they had possessions or their home. Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*. II. Madrid, Cristiandad, 1986, 208–218. According to Keener, “pottery samples suggest a recent migration of people from the Bethlehem area to Nazareth around the period, so Joseph and many other settlers in Galilee may have hailed from Judea. Joseph’s legal residences are apparently still Bethlehem, where he had been raised” (*Commentary*, 185).

85 Bovon, *Lucas*. I, 176.

86 “At the birth of Jesus, loneliness reigns. The shadow of the cross is already projected over these first days of his life” (Luis F. García-Viana, “Gospel according to Saint Luke”, in Santiago Guijarro – Miguel Salvador (eds.), *Commentary on the New Testament*, Madrid, Casa of the Bible, 1995, 196).

87 The parallel motifs are evident: angelic appearance (*Luke* 1,26; 2,10), do not be afraid (*Luke* 1,30; 2,10), giving birth (*Luke* 1,31; 2,11), Savior (*Luke* 1,31; 2,11), Son of the Most High, Messiah (*Luke* 1,32; 2,11), throne/city of David (*Luke* 1,32; 2,11), sign (*Luke* 1,36; 2,12), angelic disappearance (*Luke* 1,38; 2,15).

88 Unlike Matthew, who has some pagan wise men look for the king of the Jews with the intention of worshipping him (*Matthew* 2,1–2), Luke, more sensitive to the declassified, prefers that some shepherds,

marginal people in Israel, listen to him. an angel the *good news* (*Luke* 2:10).

89 “Nothing very glorious is suggested by the circumstances of the Messiah’s birth. But that is Luke’s manner, to show how God’s fidelity is worked out in human events even when appearances seem to deny his presence or power” (Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1991, 52).

90 Luke 2:1–5 places the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem within universal history and, unlike Matthew 2:5–6, in fulfillment of a political decision, not the prophetic announcement (*Mic* 5:1–3).

91 “Through signs, the transcendence of God and the independence of his action are respected; but the sign presents at the same time... that God certainly acts in the midst of this world” (Bovon, *Luke*. I, 184). The difference with the wise men in Matthew’s story is evident: the shepherds in Luke have no need to ask (*Matthew* 2:1–2), because it has been revealed to them (*Luke* 2:11); They do not waLuke, uncertain, following stars in the sky (*Matthew* 2,9–10), because they knew that they would find him “*wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger*” (*Luke* 2,12).

92 “‘Amazement’ is not such an amount to faith... This is the response of the undifferentiated crowds at 2:18, but not of Mary. For her, more reflection is needed in order to fully appreciate the meaning of this concurrence of events” (Green, *Luke*, 138).

93 Bovon , *Lucas* . I, 191 . Mary “heard the word in the way that God wanted” (Alois Stöger , *The Gospel according to Saint Luke*. I, Barcelona, Herder, 1979, 87).

94 “This last expression has sometimes been interpreted as coming to a right understanding of its significance. More likely, however, is Luke’s narrative it retains the idea of puzzlement. Here and in the episode in the temple, Mary has not yet come to a complete understanding of the significance of Jesus” (E. Franklin , “Luke”, John Barton – John Muddiman , eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* , Oxford, University Press, 2001, 929).

95 Unlike John, who was named after Zechariah, his father, once he was born (*Luke* 1:63), Jesus’ parents gave him the name that the angel had given them before he was conceived (*Luke* 2:21). . . Luke, furthermore, silences the ritual of the rescue of Jesus as the firstborn (cf. *Ex* 13,2.12–13).

96 In addition to his parents (*Luke* 2:21), in Luke Jesus is called by his own name only by the demon–possessed man of Gerasa (*Luke* 8:28), the ten lepers (*Luke* 17:13), the blind man of Jericho (*Luke* 18,38) and the good thief (*Luke* 23,42); all of them people he saved.

97 “This closing remark reminds us that Jesus will be reared in a home headed by parents who stand on the side of God’s purpose” (Green , *Luke*, 152).

98 Some suggest that the division and controversy that Jesus will stir up during

his public ministry is shared by Mary: “as part of Israel, she must be judged by her ultimate reaction to the child set for the fall and rise of many” (Brown – Donfried – Fitzmyer – Reuman , *María*, 155). She too, “the model believer, will have to decide for or against the revelation of God in Jesus; family ties do not raise faith” (Robert J. Karris , “Gospel according to Luke”, in Raymond E. Brown – Joseph A. Fitzmyer – Roland E. Murphy , eds., *New St. Jerome Biblical Commentary* . New Testament and thematic articles , Estella, Verbo Divino, 2004, 146). But it does not seem justified to see here some “kind of Christological doubt in the heart of Mary ”; rather, it is predicted that “the public work of Jesus will have personal consequences” (Bovon , *Luke* . I, 214).

99 Schmidt , *Luke*, 114.

100 There was no unanimity regarding the duty of women and children to participate in the pilgrimage (cf. *Bill* 2,141–142).

101 In *Luke* 2:19 *synterein* , preserve, keep, describes Mary’s reaction, in *Luke* 2:51 *diaterein* is used , a synonym that points more to duration; its use in *Gen* 37:11; *Dn* 4.28 would point out “the internal perplexity of a person who tries to understand the deep meaning of what he has been told” (Fitzmyer , *Luke*. II, 233).

102 “Mary did not immediately grasp everything she heard, but she listened willingly, letting the events sink into her memory, and trying to extract meaning from them... The idea of her growth as a

believer would also fit 2.51, where she keeps in her heart difficult words from Jesus, which contain a rebuke for her” (Brown – Donfried – Fitzmyer – Reuman , *María*, 150).

103 Fitzmyer , *Lucas*. II, 205. “They were peasants, located toward the bottom of the scale of power and privilege... Good news comes to peasants, not rulers; the lowly are lifted up” (Green , *Luke*, 130–131) .

104 Bovon , *Lucas* . I, 192 .

105 “What readers cannot identify with the shock, anguish, and confusion of the parents, or the tension felt by the adolescent between pity owed parents and the pull of a higher vocation?” (Johnson , *Luke* , 60).

106 Even more so for Joseph, who, from this moment on, disappears from the story, and from the life of Jesus.

107 “Mary will experience in her own flesh the meaning of that family division that the fulfillment of her son’s mission will bring as a consequence; His relationship with Jesus will not be limited to the purely maternal sphere, but will imply a transcendent bond, superior to the ties of flesh and blood, that is, the fidelity of the disciple” (Fitzmyer , *Luke*. II, 248) .

108 Stöger , *Lucas* . I, 106.

Testimonials

Filipa Andrade – Estoril Group



Filipa Andrade was born on April 9, 1965. She is married and has two children.

Graduated in nursing, from the São Vicente de Paulo Nursing School, in 1987, obtained the Specialization Course in Child and Pediatric Health Nursing, in 1997, at the Francisco Gentil Nursing School; the Master's Degree in Community Health, in 2004, at Universidade Nova de Lisboa; and is awaiting the defense of his PhD thesis on parenting in homeless families at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

He carried out his professional activity in public hospitals and private health institutions, and began his teaching career in 2000, at the Escola Superior de Enfermagem de São Vicente de Paulo, incorporated, since 2009, into the Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

His fundamental area of interest is parenting, health promotion and the integral development of children and young people.

Imbued with this spirit, in conjunction with her Catholic practice, it was with some naturalness that, in 1991, the motivation arose to create, with her nephews and other young friends, a choir to liven up the Eucharists, at 12:30 pm, on Sunday, of the Salesians from Estoril. This fact was remarkable as a path of conversion and confirmation for many of these young people, who are now adults, but who still participate in the choir – considered “almost family”. Their children are also growing up, part of this group, sharing various experiences with all the members.

In addition to the uninterrupted presence at the Sunday Eucharist, over all these years, the group has recorded two CDs and organizes an annual pilgrimage on foot to Fátima in October. Furthermore, they are also responsible for the musical preparation of Christmas and Easter celebrations, as well as individual and group meetings, always aimed at growth in Faith. This choir is a group marked by the joy of encountering Jesus, through music.

Filipa participated in preparations for the Sacrament of Confirmation and, in 2012, joined the Group of the Pastoral Council of the Salesians of Estoril (2012).

He was present, as a speaker, at the “E-ducuar” congress in 2015 (Salesianos do Estoril) and at the “Faith’s Night Out 2018” meeting, promoted by the Nossa Senhora Youth Teams.

She was also invited to participate in sessions organized for young people from the Estoril Parish, as well as in meetings of students of the Salesians of Estoril.

He regularly participates in sessions promoted by “Missão País”, by the Scouts (CNE) and in lectures that take place during pilgrimages, on foot, to Fátima.

Bishop Maksym Ryabukha, sdb

Bishop Maksym Ryabukha was born on May 18, 1980, in Lviv, Ukraine, in the territory of the Salesian parish. For 12 years he attended the Salesian Oratory, catechesis, the youth group, and then became an animator.



At the age of 15, he went, with the young people of the Oratory, to Slovakia, to participate in a meeting with Pope John Paul II. Since that pilgrimage, the thought of becoming a Salesian has never left him.

After finishing high school in 1997, he immediately began the path of Salesian life: in 1998/99 he completed his novitiate in Pinerolo, Italy; on September 8, 1999, he made his first Salesian profession, in Turin – Valdocco; between 1999/2001 he studied Philosophy in Nave, Italy; 2001/02 was the first year of internship in Odessa, Ukraine; 2002/03 was the second year of internship in Obroshyno, Ukraine. From 2003 to 2007 he carried out his theological studies in Turin, in Crocetta, having made his perpetual profession in Lviv on August 19, 2005. On August 4, 2007, he was ordained as a priest in Lviv.

From 2007 to 2010, Bishop Maksym Ryabukha was in charge of the Lviv Salesian Oratory in Pocrova; from 2010 to 2011 he was the vicar of the director of the Salesian Aspirantate of Lviv – Vynnyky. Between 2011 and 2013 he served as vicar of the director of the Sale-

sian community of Dnipro; and from 2013 to 2018 he was in charge of the Salesian presence in Kyiv, Ukraine.

From 2015 to 2018 he was in charge of the Diocesan University Pastoral, in Kyiv, and from 2016 to 2018 he was the interpreter of the Apostolic Nunciature, in Ukraine, in Kyiv. Between 2018 and 2022 he was the director of the Salesian House "Maria Auxiliadora" and responsible for the Salesian Oratory "Don Bosco", in Kiev.

Bishop Maksym Ryabukha's episcopal ordination took place in Kyiv on December 22, 2022. On December 24, 2022, his pastoral service began in the Archbishopric Exarchate of Donetsk, as an auxiliary bishop.

However, not only did he obtain a bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Theology, he also began studies to obtain a license in Pastoral Theology and completed a master's degree in Law, Social Pedagogy and School Management.

Group from Avigliana - Porto Sicuro

Conference

Sister Adriana Silva, fma



Sister Adriana Silva, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, from the Immaculate Conception Province, in Uruguay, was born on August 28, 1975.

With a degree in Systematic Theology, Sister Adriana completed her Doctorate in 2020.

From 1999 to 2006 she was National Coordinator of the Vocation Ministry of the FMA, in Uruguay. Between 2007 and 2014, she served as head of Parish Pastoral, in the Parish of San Lorenzo, in Montevideo, Uruguay. She was also director of the FMA initial formation house in Montevideo.

Currently, she is the general director of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Montevideo, as well as a professor at the Faculty of Theology of Uruguay; teacher at the interdiocesan Cristo Rey Prefect Seminary; and professor at the Faculty Pontificia Auxilium, in Rome.

She has participated in several conferences and has published several publications.

Mary and the education of today's youth

It is not possible to begin this reflection without alluding to Don Bosco's dream, known as the 'Nine Years' Dream', which encompasses the general theme of this congress and which is an inspiring icon of the identity and mission of the entire Charismatic Family for him, founded. It is particularly a programmatic synthesis of the Salesian educational method: the 'Preventive System', which becomes a pedagogical method and, in turn, spirituality, as it is something more than a technique, it is a lifestyle. Therefore, Piera Cavaglià (FMA) will say that:

“The preventive system is life, an experience in which [the educator] finds himself immersed, a style of relationships,

educational motherhood, in the logic of a commitment coated with affection and loving care [...] Its objective is to guide people towards the quality of a committed Christian life and, as such, open to social solidarity, according to Don Bosco's classic formula: 'Good Christians and honest citizens'. ¹⁰⁹

Don Bosco 'learns' this method and preventive spirituality, that is, he makes it his own, by entering the school of Mary, the Mother and Teacher that the Lord Jesus gave him at the beginning of his journey. There are many charismatic sources that highlight the Marian inspiration of the 'Preventive System'. ¹¹⁰ In several books, both on Mariology and on Marian spirituality, even non-Salesian ones, the figure of Don Bosco is indicated as a 'mariaform life', ¹¹¹ in other words 'a life guided by María'. ¹¹² The dream itself, known as 'the dream of nine years', in reality is a set of successive dreams and visions that unified his entire life around the Master, who leads to the merciful and operative love of Christ. This is how Don Bosco himself perceived it at the end of 1887 during the celebration of the Eucharist on the occasion of the consecration of the Temple of the Sacred Heart in Rome ¹¹³. Dream that became very frequent at the beginning of his life, at the age of nine or ten; at sixteen, twenty-one and twenty-two ¹¹⁴; just as in the years prior to the founding of the Salesian Congregation, when it was twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one, thirty-three and forty-one ¹¹⁵, becoming increasingly sporadic ¹¹⁶ but in turn acquiring a breadth of perspectives, as is the case of the missionary dream of April 10, 1887. ¹¹⁷ Fr. Aldo Giraldo states that Don Bosco found in Mary everything that his young spirit desired and needed to grow: a source of life, an insurmountable model and the victorious strength of Christ ¹¹⁸, which led him to gain the friendship of the neediest and neediest young people. and to put himself at their head to guide them to Christ, the source of all beauty, truth and goodness, through the pedagogy of the heart; the one that only a mother knows how to inspire. Therefore, the Salesian educational style cannot not be Marian, because it is the inspirer of the methodology and spirituality that supports it. The Salesian educator finds in it "the concrete synthesis of the different components and the vital source of its dynamism and its fruitfulness". ¹¹⁹

Education is a process that aims to 'bring out', in Latin *educere*, which means 'bringing out' what is most genuine and unique to each person, what lives in the depths of their being, their identity. Based on faith in Jesus Christ, we believe that what is most genuine and unique in each human being is their creaturely identity and their being 'children in the Son' (cf Eph 1:5; Gal 3:26). What dwells in the most intimate part of yourself is your divine filiation, your being created to be in communion with God and with all of his creation. We believe that outside of God there is no life or happiness that lasts. That is why Christian Education is always a participation in the long gestation of God's children. Therefore, Christian Education is nothing more than participation in Mary's educational mission which, according to Saint John, is closely linked to her 'spiritual motherhood' towards all humanity. In the text of John 19, 26-27 the Lord Jesus from the top of the cross says to his Mother: "behold your son" and to the beloved disciple "behold your mother". This is not the time to dwell on the exegesis of this very important biblical pericope, but it is opportune to remember that these words are 'Words of Revelation, both of the identity of this woman, and of the identity of Christ's followers. In other words, it is Christ's will that disciples of all times participate in his divine sonship, also participating in Marian sonship. By virtue of the Spirit of Christ, Mary is, so to speak, the maternal womb of the 'membership' of the Family of God. Not simply in a Platonic sense, but that, at the time of Christ's death, it was in some way a personal transit route of the *actio personalis ipsius Christi*, through which He gave the Church its *pneuma*: operating force and mediation that 'brings forth' the identity of the 'son in the Son'.¹²⁰

Ultimately, Mary, by the will of Christ, becomes the mother of the new humanity that is born through the merits of his redemptive blood. Therefore, as a mother, she not only has a role in the 'generation' of children' (cf. Eph 4:24) in making the image of Christ emerge (cf. Gal 4:19), but in the entire vital and existential process of configuration with the deepest identity that every human being has imprinted on their being: the eternal Son of the Father. Mary, as 'spiritual Mother', or 'Mother in the Holy Spirit' becomes 'educator', a Teacher who collaborates with the Spirit of the Lord so that, according to the natural laws created by the Father, the image of Christ grows in each human being.

Don Bosco in the so-called 'Nine Year Dream' received a private revelation from the Lord in which God allowed him to be fully aware of this Marian identity as Mother and Teacher, and was invited to enter his school. In other words, not only to let Mary continue to educate him, configuring him with Christ, but to participate in her 'ministry' in the Church, that of motherhood/fatherhood that she educates, especially those children that the 'world' considers as lost. No one knows more than María that the Spirit of her Son heals hearts and leads them to sources of abundant life (cf. Jn 10:10).

As sons and daughters of Don Bosco, I invite you to do a small exercise: enter Mary's school, to learn from her, from her trajectory, how to be Salesian educators today; how to educate today's young people in Mary's way. To do this, we ask ourselves: who is this woman? How do the gospels present it to us, how does the Church present it to us from the origins of Christianity? Since, deep down, the Gospels are the memory of the nascent Church, which is written for believers of all times. We ask ourselves: how does the Church remind her of the first hour? The person who answers these questions very clearly is the evangelist St. Luke, in the first part of his Gospel, which is inappropriately called the theology of childhood, as in reality it is theology of the cross, and should be called so: *theologia crucis*. We all know that Luke wrote the texts about Jesus' childhood after narrating the death and resurrection of Christ, since Jesus' origins are only learned at the end of his journey. These evangelical data place Mary within the Christological faith, not as its center, but intimately linked to it.

In the text of Luke 1, 26-38,¹²¹ Mary is presented in a conventional way, but at the same time, it draws attention to the fact that there is a lack of conventional data. It can be seen that the narrator intentionally reduces the data, leaving the character in good condition for a narrative creation, as there is less conventional data, giving the author more possibility to highlight the elements that express his essence. For example, the text does not mention Mary's paternal home, nor her clan of belonging; the city is not an identification data, but a situational data, "the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth". This is a very broad presentation, with few details. The narrator offers us a photo in the foreground,

as he has cut out its entire context. We would like Lucas to offer us more data and information about the future mother of God, but the narrator offers us the minimum but essential data, seeking to help the reader understand the authentic and deep identity of this young woman. We can infer that, according to St. Luke, a person's identity, although conditioned by biological, cultural and social parameters, is the spiritual and transcendent dimension that has a 'determining' role in the construction of who that being really is. In the specific case of Mary of Nazareth, according to the evangelist, it is the process of faith, that is, the dynamism of welcoming and responding to God, which was configuring and giving consistency to the identity of this young woman, since for the sacred author the Mary's main and characterizing trait is her active and passive faith, manifested particularly in the beatitude she received from her cousin Elizabeth (cf. *Luke* 1:45), from which the first title that the Church attributed to Mary was constructed: the believing woman.

“In the sixth month, the ἄγγελος [God's messenger-e-missary] was sent to a city in Galilee called Nazareth and entered where a παρθένον [young woman] was married to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of David; and the virgin's name was Maria” (vv. 26-27).

Mary is presented in human history with very precise chronological and geographic coordinates. The sacred author places it in a concrete time, ‘in the sixth month’¹²² and in a specific space, ‘a city in Galilee called Nazareth’. These are not only informative but theological data: God entered human history, he became like us, being born of a woman (cf. Gal 4:4). According to biblical data, Mary is not a demigod, a female deity. It's about a girl who is in history just like we are now. Your world is our world, it is the reader's world. From ‘let's go’, Maria learned from the same messenger of God that to educere the deepest identity of a human person it is necessary to enter into their concrete history with its struggles and vicissitudes. The announcement that God makes to Mary through his messenger occurs in an unusual way for the religious expectations of the time. To begin with, this revelation of God does not take place in the temple, in the sanctuary, as happened with Zechariah, not even in Jerusalem, the holy city (cf. *Luke* 1, 8-11), not even in the region of Judea, a region

of people well regarded at a religious level. God happens in a peripheral, semi-pagan area, where people live who are not well regarded, who do not enjoy a good reputation because they are in permanent contact with people of different minds and who worship other gods (cf. John 7:41-52). God offers good news in Galilee of the Gentiles, in the midst of a people who walk in darkness (cf. Matthew 4:12-16). God's messenger was not sent to a large city, to a metropolis of that time, he was sent to a small people of Nazareth, who, before this event, had not been mentioned even once in the biblical texts (cf. John 1:46).

These verses also offer us two more facts about this woman, she is a young virgin who was married, her name was Mary. Along with their name, the author gives an account of that person's personal and existential situation. The biblical texts we use usually translate the Greek term *παρθένον*, as *Virgo*, to which we usually give a restrictive interpretation, restricting its meaning to the sexual sphere. On the contrary, the author, when telling us that she is a *παρθένον*, is telling us that she is a young woman, a person who is experiencing the transition from childhood to adulthood. She is no longer a girl, but she is not yet a woman, she is not married in the strict sense, as she does not know a man; is a young woman who awaits her wedding day, although already committed to someone with whom she has not had marital relations.¹²³ It is a female who is at the beginning of adulthood. According to biblical tradition, a person's name condenses their identity, as it summarizes that person's past in order to a present, and announces their future in terms of a certain mission. The narrator introduces her with her name, later this name will be filled with meaning when pronounced by God's messenger (v. 30) who, by greeting her by her name, gives her her identity-mission. It is not a question of a social or religious identification, it is rather the identification of an opportune time that opens in and with her, because with her free adherence she becomes the key person and protagonist of the change of epoch and the messianic newness that is on the march. Some artists, making reference to Mary's symbolic identity, which reflects and shows the new time, the messianic time, paint her as the new and authentic burning bush, which burns with zeal for the house of God (cf. Ps 69:9), burn without being consumed, as will the fruit of your womb, Jesus (cf. Jn 2, 17).¹²⁴

In verses 28-30, St. Luke states that God's messenger enters into dialogue with the human creature Mary of Nazareth, greeting her with the expression that in the ears of the time resonates with the messianic prophecies made to the Daughter of Zion, ¹²⁵ invited to joy and to joy, because the Lord was on his way to come and free her from her oppressors. With this dialogue between the messenger and Mary, the sacred author does not intend for the reader to be informed about the fact, about how this happened. You want the reader of the Gospel to enter into the mystery that is being revealed. A first theological truth that we discover through this text is that God conceives each human person, represented in the figure of Mary, as an interlocutor. Despite being God, omnipotent and omniscient, he decided to meet an inexperienced and insignificant young woman due to her feminine condition, her age and her geographical situation, to whom the author does not even attribute a paternal house or a clan to which she belongs. To paraphrase, we would say that Maria in her time was 'a nobody Maria'. Many of us, if we had been there, would have asked ourselves, who is this? where did she come from? Does anyone know who she is? what merit does she have for being chosen to be the mother of the Messiah? to have been the favored one of God (κεχαριτωμένη). What beauty was there for God to be enchanted by her and attract his favor upon her? Let us let ourselves be carried away by these questions, we will answer them little by little.

Zacarias is the first to be questioned by God's messenger, in turn, María is presented as the first young woman who is questioned and enters into dialogue with God. Both are for Saint Luke a theological counterfigure. Zechariah, as a man, adult and priest, according to the humanistic and religious culture of that time, was more prepared to understand and enter the mysteries of God and, however, he did not understand them, he was not able to enter the mystery, until the task was fulfilled. that had been announced to him in the temple. While the young girl from Nazareth who was less prepared, either due to her young age and/or her feminine condition, to access sacred things, she enters into dialogue with the God of Israel, and with her availability enters into dynamism of the salvific mystery. Mary represents what is fragile, what is weak in the humanist culture of that time, while Zacharias represents the strongest, the

most secure, the least vulnerable. But he who had everything to recognize and understand God remains silent, while Mary dialogues, questions, welcomes and sings the wonders that God does. What makes one remain silent and the 'other' sing? The process of faith, which does not consist of the process of intellectual understanding of God's message, but of the willingness to trust, to believe that nothing is impossible for God, (v. 37), is openness to newness and the unprecedented because it knows that He He can act when he wants and how he wants (cf. John 3:8). Zacharias, feeling so sure of how God acts, as happens with so many adults and professionals of faith, could have fallen into the temptation of domesticating God and his project, losing the ability to recognize God in the newness and unprecedented power of an elderly wife. conceive a child.

On the one hand, we have to say that the very fact of saying that Mary is humanly a "Jane Doe", ratifies the unconditional and free love of God, which does not depend on human merit. He loves us and is with human beings, because he wants to, because he loves faithfully and mercifully, not because of what we give him, but because of who we are in his eyes: much-loved daughters and sons. Love that was synthesized in chapter 2 of the book of Hosea and taken to its maximum expression on the Cross of Christ.

On the other hand, we can ask ourselves why her? Why wasn't it another young woman, perhaps the daughter of a priest or high priest or from another relevant paternal house or from another more important city? Why her and not someone else? Trying to answer these logical and human questions, we can ask others such as: what attracts God's favor? What is pleasing to God? We find the answer in the book of the prophet Isaiah 58, 6b-12, which will later be condensed into the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. According to Isaiah, the way of proceeding that pleases God is that of the just, who frees prisoners and those imprisoned unjustly, who gives freedom to slaves and those who are mistreated. He who puts an end to injustice, shares bread with the hungry, gives shelter to the poor and clothes the naked. According to the prophet, whoever lives this way will shine like the light of dawn, his wounds will be healed, God's justice and protection will not abandon him, his body will have vigor and his garden will flourish like a meadow, laughter and joy will accompany him. We know that Mary was recognized by the Church as

the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head (Rev 12:1), therefore she lived like the righteous man, who will hastily have with her cousin Elizabeth, who is on the side of the small and humble (cf. Lc 1, 46-55) and who moves with total availability to do good and meet the needs of others (cf. Jn 2, 1-11). For this reason and much more, Mary is an exemplary image that educates with her life, she is a finished image of what we are called to be and an example of what we can become. In her, as in a Master, we see the 'goal' of the educational process reflected and the Master who shows us the way: 'Do whatever He tells you' (John 2:5).

From v. 28 it is clear that God is the one who gives identity to Mary, in a scene in which the protagonist is She and the statements are from the messenger, therefore, from God himself. What the messenger says, God says, and if it is God who says it, he deserves the utmost trust. Therefore, everything that others say about Mary only has value if it is related to what God says about her. This explains the young woman's confusion at the messenger's greeting, as she becomes aware of who the speaker is and, therefore, of the originality and density of the greeting she is receiving. This verse offers us another reading key when it comes to learning to be educators in the way of Mary, since She learned from the same messenger, that in the educational process the protagonist is God, it is his Spirit. Other words like those of the Salesian educator only have value if they are in function of what God wants to do with that person, they only have meaning if they are in consonance and in function with what God said. No educator can claim to be the protagonist of the educational process, but only a simple mediation of the Spirit of the Resurrected. To do this, it will be necessary to 'keep in your own heart', as Mary did (cf. Luke 2:19), so many things that happen in your life and in the lives of your students until the Lord allows you to see the path you should follow. Meanwhile, you are called to remain in the Word and in the pursuit of the Lord, like the wife in the Song of Songs.

In vv. 31-35, God's messenger announces to Mary the mission that was concentrated in her name: you will conceive, give birth and call the name Jesus. She talks to the messenger, asks how all this will happen, showing her incapacity, I don't know man (v. 34). He doesn't doubt that God can do it, he just asks what that will be like, since the

human conditions are not there for what is announced to happen. Since Mary is recognized by the Church as a correlative figure to Abraham, since it was said of him: “He believed against all hope”, and of her it was said: “Happy are you because you believed”; Contemplating Her in the biblical testimonies, we discover Her as a determined young woman, who internally questions herself about the meaning of the greeting, and questions God through her mediations, about how what she announces and promises will be accomplished. In it, the Church contemplates the believing dynamism of a young woman who puts all her human energies into understanding and making her own what God is proposing to her in concrete history, in a continuous exercise of believing reading of events, whether small or large. In v. 35, St. Luke shows that the Holy Spirit, symbolized in the image of the shadow that accompanies her, and the presence of God that is in her, makes Mary his permanent home, inhabiting her being as in a temple. It was this presence that stimulated in her womb all the biological processes necessary to carry out her mission: conceiving, giving birth to and naming the Son of God. This action of the Holy Spirit in the young woman from Nazareth was possible through her consent, as a unique and personal act of her human freedom. Mary, without understanding it at all, as the biblical texts attest, collaborated with the activity of the Holy Spirit, placing her entire existence at the service of the divine Person. As an active young woman committed to the reality of her people and her God, Mary, in the exercise of responsible freedom, offered her body and her feminine sensitivity in the form of human cooperation with God's project. We can say that she gave with her life what the disciples said with their voice after the Easter experience, “I have neither gold nor silver, but I give you everything I have: in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk!” (Acts 3:6). Mary remains in the Church as the perfect model of the ‘wise’ person. After pronouncing her ‘fat’ through faith and having welcomed first in her heart and then in her flesh the Son of God, she began an educational process that enabled her to accompany her son to the Cross and all those who on the cross of Christ will join the family of God. ¹²⁶

In verses 36-37 the sacred author offers two facts, one historical: “also your cousin Elizabeth”, and the other theological: “nothing is impossible with God”, with which he highlights Mary's immersion in

the faith of Israel. The latter is a very relevant phrase in the saving history of Israel, since this phrase is what God's messenger said to Sarah in Gn 18:14. With this statement, he is not only telling her that nothing is difficult for God, is showing you a path: put yourself in line with your people. Place yourself in the faith of Abraham, in the faith that your parents passed through. We are used to reading hastily and interpreting that as God is all powerful, he will give birth to a child of a young woman who has not had sexual relations with any man, but the text conveys a deeper truth that does not exclude the latter. It is an invitation to enter into the dynamism of their patriarchs, in the origin of their people who began with God nothing is impossible (cf. Gn 18, 14) who gave birth to a son who was named Isaac, which means: God made me smile.

The response that Mary gives to God's emissary in v. 38, Here is the servant of the Lord, apparently contradictory to the way the angel treats her, since he addresses the young woman from Nazareth with an address worthy of a great Lady: Hail! Nowadays we would say that it was a treatment worthy of the queen mother, since for the Jewish world the greeting that the messenger addressed to her is the greeting addressed to Gebira¹²⁷ which, in turn, is correlative to the way her relative Isabel addresses herself to Mary: "Where is it given to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" (v. 43).

Mary's relevance is given by her acceptance of the Word of God, which was received to such an extent that in her womb he became flesh, as her son and Son of God. Maria's response is one of adherence to the identity that the messenger indicated to her as her mission. Her availability to God has nothing to do with slave submission, but with free and loving adherence to the will of the God of her people. It is a response given not from personal strength, but from trust in the one who gave her this vocational gift, this identity: as mother of the Lord. For the Spanish theologian M. Navarro, the yes of the young woman from Nazareth was possible because between God and Mary there is a common speech: they both say the same because they have the same deep desire. God, from his eternity; Maria, in time. For the author, the fact that God and Mary have the same desire means that they have the same Spirit, whose origin and identity is divine, but which inhabits Mary's you and makes it possible for both to pronounce the same Word: the Son in history, as both

generated, one in humanity and the other in divinity. ¹²⁸

The theologian De Lubac states that the texts about the search for the Bridegroom contained in the Song of Songs are better adapted to Mary, precisely because in her the perfection of search and desire is realized. Mary is the model of the young Church that seeks and contemplates God in everything she does and says, just as a passionate young woman full of vitality seeks her beloved ¹²⁹. Therefore, the Salesian educator is a person who is in constant search of God and his will, which is why, as a wise man and woman, he is able to tune in to the Spirit and perceive its signs in history. Like Mary who foresees; rather sees, intuitively the presence and will of God; before knowing and understanding, it is capable of pre-feeling, feeling before the natural senses perceive it. In love, Mary 'knows' before understanding; her maternal gaze looks and sees what is invisible to the eyes of others. It is the experience of her feminine capacity enhanced by the Ruah of God, which makes her capable of intuiting, anticipating and predicting the Kingdom that God wants to establish through her 'yes'. Without knowing in any way how this will be possible, he acts by giving his consent. This is how the evangelist St. John presents her in the account of the Wedding at Cana, as the woman who foresees the hour of her Son. ¹³⁰ By welcoming the Holy Spirit, Mary realizes theological hope in herself, in the fullest and most dense form. It becomes the ground for the fulfillment of the divine promise, a place in which and through which the tomorrow of Grace comes to set up its tent, making it the Ark of the new covenant. Salesian pedagogy is a pedagogy of the heart, as it springs from a heart that is passionate about God and that is in tune with that which lives in the heart of the young person to whom it is addressed. Salesian pedagogy is similar to a mother's insides, which moves and moves until all her children are safe and sound in the Father's house. The educator, like a hasty mother, does not imprison her children close to her, she allows them to be free and helps them to exercise their will so that, in the healthy use of their freedom, they know and undertake the challenging and exciting path to the parental home.

Mary's 'yes', made absolutely personal and creaturely, which began the biological process by which God made him man, occurred due to the presence of the Holy Spirit, which some authors point

out as desire in the proper sense, desire with capital letter, who by dwelling in Mary achieved unity between the Creator Father and the young woman from Nazareth, to make her the Theotokos, the Mother of God. The Spirit, by the will of the Father, in Mary's Immaculate Conception anticipated upon her the effects of Christ's redeeming grace, imprinting on her a desire for transcendence, which makes her *capax Dei*, capable of recognizing God in the unprecedented and responding to his salvific will. and self-communicative, in the same way as all those who, after Christ's Easter, opened themselves to his Spirit, are empowered. ¹³¹ This presence of the Holy Spirit in Mary, from the beginning of her existence, did not make her response a less 'personal' and free; as if he had been 'manipulated' by God; On the contrary, it is God who once again places the necessary premises, ontologically speaking, so that the freedom of human beings exists and can enter into the dialogical game of grace. ¹³²

The God who reveals himself and enters into dialogue with Mary has nothing to do with a 'divinity' that seeks the passivity of the creature but is a God, One and Triune, who creates the possibilities for an authentic salvific dialogue between the Creator and creature, which allows the latter to go beyond the factual determinism of history enclosed in itself. It is the God who reveals himself in history, creating a spiritual and personal being endowed with the power *oboedientialis*, that is, with the ability to receive what God wants to communicate to us. ¹³³ God opens history, condensed in the young Mary of Nazareth, to horizons unfathomable for human beings; accomplishes it by dwelling in it (cf. v. 35), in such a way that it is only feasible for the omnipotent and Creator. Inhabitation that allows Mary to be fully who she is, a young woman, and respond as such; in turn, it allows God to remain God, the all Holy One. The anthropological principle, *Gegen-satz*, 'only a self can be a thou to another' remains in constant tension with the other principle, *Grundsatz*, 'the self thanks to the other'. ¹³⁴ Only he who 'knows' who he is, is in conditions to recognize others and open up to welcome them; Furthermore, only those who possess themselves are capable of giving themselves, of placing themselves totally in the hands of others without ceasing to be what they are, without losing their identity and autonomy, and being capable of self-determination in function of the good of the other. God is the only one who possesses himself in fullness, and

can determine himself in function of the salvation of human beings without ceasing to be God. ¹³⁵ Therefore, I conclude that it is through participation in what belongs to God that Mary becomes the young woman who becomes defines herself, ¹³⁶ because she recognizes, I would say 'intuits' her deepest identity, and from owning herself she recognizes the Other completely, present in her and in her history. She welcomes Him with her youthful and feminine freedom, making it possible for the Spirit of the Father and the Son to make the fruit of her womb 'Holy' (cf. Luke 1:35). ¹³⁷ And it is precisely participation in that same gift of the Holy Spirit that the young woman from Nazareth is capable of self-possession and self-determination in function of God and his people, pronouncing the human yes that activated the biological and theandric process of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Mary's yes was a realization of the fundamental act of her being, a consecration carried out by the Holy Spirit that remained intrinsically linked to her free self-determination. Her failure to fully understand what was happening or about to happen did not exclude the possibility that her unreflected and transcendent experience of God and herself was entirely oriented towards her 'very unique' relationship with the Son of God, and the from Him with the entire Trinity. Just remember his wonder-filled question: What will this be like? And his believing response: Let it be done to me according to your word (cf. Luke 1:34.38).

In short: Mary is the model that every human being, and particularly young people, need to have before them, not to copy her, but to be inspired by her way of living, contemplating in her what a human being can achieve. when he decides to enter into the dynamism of God. Until one lives for a cause, one cannot understand what the living and active presence of Mary means in the lives of so many saints, especially Don Bosco and M. Mazzarello. Mary is not a painting on the bedroom wall or an image in the Church, but a living presence, who supports those who 'suffer' for the causes of justice, peace and the search for a better life for all. Mary has to be seen and presented as a young woman, free and responsible for her own actions: her 'yes' and her collaboration in the History of salvation is the great sign of freedom and responsibility that shines through time; an eloquent sign for all who dream of a more human world,

more of God and his Kingdom. Mary is not only a concrete expression of God's closeness in the struggle for life, but also a model and concreteness of some decisive values for all believers, particularly for young people of yesterday and today. The world needs young people and contemplative educators, in the style of Mary, capable of questioning themselves and meditating on the direction in which humanity is heading, where God is and what God is trying to tell us in the events of this time; young people and educators capable of committing all their potential in the search and construction of the common good and social friendship (cf. FT n°2), a sustainable world that includes and does not exclude the weakest in the system. Young people committed to the fight against evil and its manifestations; bold and generous people who are not afraid of the cross, because they know that God is bigger and stronger than death.

109 P. CAVAGLIÀ, *The preventive system in women's education. Pedagogical experience of the Hijas of María Auxiliadora*, Madrid, CCS 1999, 28.

110 Cfr C. COLLI, *Ispirazione mariana del Sistema Preventivo*, Rome, LAS 1980.

111 Cf S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori. Storia culturale della mariologia*, Milano, San Paolo 2005, 254-256.

112 Cfr COLLI, *Ispirazione mariana del Sistema Preventivo*, 5-8.

113 See MB XVIII, pp. 340-341.

114 See MB I, pp. 123-126; 244;305;382;424-426.

115 See MB II, pp. 243-245;298-300;342;406; MB III, pp. 32-36.

116 See MB XIII, pp. 536; MB XIV p. 608; MB XVIII pp.73-74.

117 See MB XVIII pp.73-74.

118 A. GIRAUDO, *Gli appunti di predicazione mariana di don Bosco. Edizione critica*, in «Ricerche storiche salesiane» 72/1 (2019) 120-121.

119 E. VIGANÒ, *Maria rinnova la Famiglia Salesiana di Don Bosco*, in «Atti del Consiglio Superiore» 59 (1978) 289, 30.

120 Cf A. SILVA CASTILLO, *María y el Espíritu Santo*, Montevideo, LEA 2021, 48.

121 Cf A. VALENTINI, *Maria secondo le Scritture. Figlia di Sion e Madre del Signore*, Bologna, EDB 2007, 89-105.

122 This event took place in the *sixth*

month of John the Baptist's conception, data offered by the synchronous reading of the same Gospel of Luke, which in v. 45 states that *the relative Isabel is in the sixth month of her pregnancy*, and in vv. 8-10 placed the Baptist's conception in the times when Zacharias officiated as a priest in the temple of Jerusalem, more specifically when he took the shift to his group of priests, and specifically to him to offer incense in the *sancta sanctorum* of the temple, as it corresponded to a week for each group of priests, see 1st Cro 24,19,2nd Cro 23,8.

123 This Greek expression used in the gospel of Luke and Matthew (*Matthew* 1,23) requires the Hebrew expression *Almah* (Is 7,14b) which designates a maiden, that is, a girl who, depending on the cultural and religious custom of the time, entered into a marriage commitment, although it has not yet been consummated. This is not in contradiction with the Catholic reflection on the perpetual Virginity of Mary, but adds an element more taken from Tradition and the Church's *Sensus fidei*.

124 A. SILVA CASTILLO, *The face of Mary in the Circulars of Mother Yvonne Reungoat Superior General of the FMA 2008-2020*, Rome, Istituto FMA 2020, 10.

125 Symbolic figure that represents the people chosen by God, whom the prophets announced the coming of the Messiah and called joy in the Lord, see *Sof* 3:11. 14-15; *Isa* 12.6; *Zac* 9.9.

126 Cf A. SERRA, *Maria nell'educazione. Le*

coordination biblico-theologiche, in M. Dosio – M. Gannon – M.P. Manello (Eds.), «Io ti darò la maestra...» *Il coraggio di Educare alla scuola di Maria. Atti del Convegno Mariano Internazionale promosso dalla Pontificia Facoltà di Scienze dell'Educazione «Auxilium»*, 27-30 December 2004, Rome, LAS 2005.

127 Chosen by God to govern the nation. “Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel” (Judges 5,7), cfr VALENTINI, *Maria secondo le Scritture*, 79-87.

128 Cf M. NAVARRO PUERTO, *Maria, the woman. Psychological-biblical essay*, Madrid, Publicaciones Claretianas 1987, 77.

129 Cf H. DE LUBAC, *La Iglesia y la Virgen María, en Meditación sobre la Iglesia*, Bilbao, Desclée De Brouwer 4 1964, 328.

130 Cf B. FORTE, *María, woman icon of mystery. Essay on narrative symbolic mariology*, Salamanca, Sígueme 1993, 271-273.

131 “Divine self-communication means that God can communicate himself to the non-divine, without ceasing to be infinite reality and absolute mystery, and without man ceasing to be a finite being, distinct from God” (K. RAHNER, *Fundamental Course about faith. Introduction to the concept of Christianity*, Barcelona Herder 1979, 151).

132 Cfr H. RAHNER, *L'homo ludens*, = Biblioteca di cultura religious 9, Brescia, Paideia 1969, 31-46.

133 Cfr K. RAHNER, *La Trinità*, = Biblioteca

di Teologia Contemporanea 102, Brescia, Queriniana 1998, 88-89.

134 Cfr W. PANNENBERG, *Antropologia in prospettiva teologica*, = Biblioteca diologia contemporanea 51, Brescia, Queriniana 1987, 205-211.

135 “Through [divine] self-communication what was said before about the presence of God as an absolute and essentially incomprehensible mystery is not suppressed or denied [...] God continues to be God [...] He who we waLuke towards and who makes it possible and sustains said action by itself. God continues to be the saint [...]” (RAHNER, *Fundamental Course on faith*, 151).

136 E. JOHNSON, *Vera nostra sorella. Una theologia di Maria in the comunione dei santi*, = *Giornale di Teologia*, 313), Brescia, Queriniana 2005, 77.

137 Cfr Y. CONGAR, *Credo nello Spirito Santo*, = Biblioteca di Teologia Contemporanea 98, Brescia, Queriniana 21998, 606.

Testimony on Salesian Holiness



Rev. Pierluigi Cameroni

Born in December 1955, Rev. Pierluigi Cameroni met the Salesians while attending the Salesian college in Vendrognò, his homeland. Here, in an environment of great spiritual and vocational proposal (40 Salesian vocations flourished from the house of Vendrognò), Rev. Cameroni met the Salesian Cooperator, Servant of God, Attilio Giordani.

On September 12, 1976, he professed as a Salesian of Don Bosco, and on June 23, 1984, he was ordained a priest in Arese. In the same year he obtained a Bachelor's degree in Theology, at the Faculty of Theology of Turin-Crocetta, and, in 1992, a doctorate in Philosophy, at the Pontifical Salesian University of Rome.

Member of the Post-Novitiate House of Nave, since 1985, as a trainer and teacher of Philosophy and Pedagogy, Rev. Cameroni has a very rich experience in vocational accompaniment and animation, in the Italian Province of Lombardo Emiliana (ILE); as well as animation of family life and prayer groups, and parish pastoral work, with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Delegate of the ILE Province in the 24th and 26th General Chapters, he has also been following the spiritual and vocational path of the Shalom recovery community in Palazzolo Sull'Oglio (Brescia) for some years.

On May 24, 2007, the Rector Major, Rev. Pascual Chávez, appointed him World Spiritual Animator of the Association of Mary Help of Christians, and on July 6, 2010, also by decision of the Rector Major, he was appointed General Postulator for the Causes of Saints of the Salesian Family.



cultural
events

Musical “Filhos do Sim”

The musical “Filhos do Sim” (Children of the Yes) has as its “star” the figure of Our Lady and her courage in accepting God’s proposal, without questioning His plan, generously giving her “yes”.

This story is experienced, in parallel, with that of a contemporary family, which cannot accept the loss of a loved one, causing a division within the family. Mary of Nazareth, through the narrative of her life, demonstrates that faith led her to the greatest gift imaginable, that of being the mother of the Savior. Even if pain and sadness were present, a mother’s sacrifice is always worth it because her love is unconditional and infinite.

This family will also conclude that “saying yes” will be the best thing for unity and serenity of heart. That they should not live stuck to the loss and death that has happened, but rather to what there is to live for, to joy, to what’s new...

Mary of Nazareth, with her faith and unconditional love, changed our world forever. And do we, as heirs of her love, have the courage to make a difference, to say “YES” when we are asked by God?

Concert for Mary Don Maurizio Palazzo & co.

Rev. Maurizio Palazzo is a Salesian priest, chapel master and organist at the Sanctuary of Maria Ausiliatrice; He obtained several musical degrees (including piano and organ) and performs concerts, compatible with his current obedience and his mission as a priest.

In the field of composition, among his most recent initiatives, he published an album of Marian songs (*Hic est Domus mea*), and a collection of songs about the Gospel.

In Fátima, during the International Congress of Mary Help of Christians, he will present a concert lasting around 40 to 45 minutes, in which Francesca Incardona, Francesca Rosa, Francesca Cederle, Gemma Gurrado, Federico Cucinella and Gabriele Spesso will also participate.

The background is a solid dark blue color. In the center, there is a faint, light blue illustration of a church dome with a cross on top. To the left of the dome, there are several five-pointed stars of varying sizes. The word "prayers" is written in a white, italicized serif font across the middle of the image.

prayers

Way of the Cross

Introduction

In the exercise of the Way of the Cross, we accept Jesus' invitation to follow Him, contemplating Him on the path He took for us, to death on the Cross. Jesus is the innocent man who receives and takes on himself a guilt that he does not have: he was unjustly condemned. But suffering is not worth it in itself, it is worth it as an expression of love. And that of Jesus is the maximum expression of the love with which God loves us, to the extreme (cf. Jn 13:1).

On the path of Jesus' cross, we now join all the brothers and sisters, our contemporaries, who suffer, praying for them. We become supportive of others, as Jesus is with us. We also pray for those who are the cause of suffering. Our Lady asked, here in Fátima, in the August apparition: «Pray, pray a lot and make sacrifices for sinners, who many souls go to hell because there is no one to sacrifice themselves and ask for them» (Sr. Lúcia, Memoirs, 16st edition, p. 179).

Let us contemplate, at each step, how Jesus carried out his offer of love for us, until the end. Let us beg so that we, too, know how to take our yes to the ultimate consequences, and so that our brothers and sisters from all over the world receive the fruit of the redemptive passion, experiencing the joy of being saved and loved by God.

In this Way of the Cross we associate with so many members of the Salesian Family who, throughout the world, carry the Lord's cross daily in refugee camps, with street children, in the fight against drugs, together with so many immigrants. The cross of the Lord is carried by our brothers, by young people of Bosco's dream, who need our prayer and accompaniment.

V. Let us begin in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

Chant

"Se alguém quiser seguir-Me"
If anyone wants to follow Me)

First Station

Jesus is sentenced to death

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.» (John 19, 13-16). The conviction, which has now become public, had previously been conceived in secret. At the same time that the Master's heart invented gestures of creative love, the traitor's heart gave way to hatred and rejection, as the evangelist John tells us: "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him," (John 13, 1b-2).

God of tenderness and mercy, who loves the enemy and puts love where evil reigns, teach us to collaborate with you, accepting your forgiveness and knowing how to forgive others. Help us, like Saint Francis de Sales, to ask for the gift of meekness in our hearts.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

"Se alguém quiser seguir-Me"

(If anyone wants to follow Me)

Second Station

Jesus takes up his cross

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.» (Luke 14, 27); «So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha» (John 19:17). Our Lady, in August 1917, recommended to the shepherd children: “Pray a lot and make sacrifices for sinners”. Her maternal care impels us to make Jesus’ offer current for everyone, each one taking up their cross and uniting it with Jesus’. Taking on the suffering and difficulties inherent in life and helping to ease the cross of those who are at our side is a simple and concrete way of following Jesus in our daily lives.

Lord, help us to face the costly side of life with courage and generosity; May I not make it heavier just with regrets and sorrows. Give me the grace to carry my cross, freely assumed, as a gift of myself and an offering of love. Like Mother Margaret, she helps us to look at the cross, to carry the cross, to give our lives to the work of Don Bosco with generous service.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Se alguém quiser seguir-Me”

(If anyone wants to follow Me)

Third Station

Jesus falls for the first time

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.» (Phil 2:6-7). Equal to us in everything except sin, Jesus is truly "a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior." (Is 45, 15). He who offers freedom to captives, who frees the oppressed, who gives sight to the blind, submits himself to the humiliation of weakness. Nothing is spared to demonstrate your faithful love and that your word deserves our faith.

Jesus, you who accept falling for our love, help us to accept our falls with humility and to contribute to lifting others up and not tearing them down. Like Blessed Luís Variara, Salesian founder and friend of lepers, he helps us to accept the setbacks, the pain, the falls of each day, and helps us to ask for the gift of perseverance to carry our cross in our daily lives.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Forth Station

Jesus meets his mother

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

When Joseph and Mary presented the Child in the Temple, «Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also),

so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.» (Luke 2:34-35). Mary communes with Jesus more than anyone else. She knows the meaning of her life and the meaning He gives to her cross. She, who participated from the beginning in the life and mission of Jesus, is also present on the path to Calvary, suffering with Him and loving with Him.

Let us also unite ourselves with Mary, Don Bosco's teacher and guide. We ask our Helper to place in our hearts the feelings of Jesus: Hail, Queen...

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Sois a Mãe do Senhor, mensageira da paz”
(You are the Mother of the Lord, messenger of peace)

Fifth Station

Jesus is helped by the Cyrenean

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!
R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.» (Luke 23:26). On the paths of life, the place of our “ways of the cross”, Jesus is our main Cyrene. Consecrated by baptism, we are anointed by the Holy Spirit and assume our life as a path of holiness. In the specific path of our vocation, in the family or in the Christian community, we always find opportunities to be one another's Cyrenians.

Help us, Lord, to ease the cross of those closest to us; do not allow us to be distracted from the crosses, from our brothers and sisters in faith, or from our family members. Like Saint Artémides Zatti, help us

to welcome with tenderness, to care with love, to accompany with mercy.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Recebemos do Senhor um mandamento novo”

(We received from the Lord a new commandment)

Sixth Station

Veronica wipes Jesus' face

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows» (Is 53, 2b-3a). Individualism, often caused by our fears and insecurities, closes us within ourselves. In this way, the other person can become a nuisance or rival, instead of being recognized and valued as an equal, a companion on the path, a reason for dedication and appreciation.

Lord, teach me to recognize the gift that another person is in themselves, instead of valuing them only for what they are to me. Make us capable of loving, in the image of the Holy Trinity, where each Person is a free gift to the other and receives from the other that same free gift, thus generating, around us, an environment of love, which circulates and gives life. Like Blessed Maria Romero Meneses, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, great devotee of the Help of Christians, friend of the poor in whom she found the face of Christ, may we live difficult moments united with the Lord.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Recebemos do Senhor um mandamento novo”
(We received from the Lord a new commandment)

Seventh Station

Jesus falls for the second time

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!
R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word! My soul melts away for sorrow, strengthen me according to your word! I cling to your testimonies, O Lord; let me not be put to shame!» (Ps 119, 25.28.31). And when we repeat the same mistakes? And when we see someone fall next to us again? How do we react? What we do? Do we demand, judge, comment... Or do we understand and help? Jesus, you appear weak, your weakness is evident. Why do I have so much difficulty accepting mine and those of the people who live next to me?

Teach me, Lord, how to deal with weaknesses. Like Blessed Eusebia Palomino, let us learn to live our lives with simplicity, humility and charity, handing over the little things in life to the Lord Jesus who carries the cross with us.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Perdoai, Senhor; perdoai ao vosso povo”
(Forgive, Lord; forgive your people)

Eighth Station

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

« And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. 28 But turning to them Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.» (Luke 23:27-28). Complaining has never been a way to solve problems. Jesus sends women back to their reality, to take care of what is within their power and depends on them: themselves and their children. In this world we live in, there are many things wrong: injustice, negligence, corruption... And what do I do in my concrete life to increase or combat these evils? Jesus, teach us to be attentive to our surroundings, to put good where I see evil. Let us know how to be grateful instead of regretting, let us know how to understand instead of judging and forgive instead of condemning. Help us, Lord, to assume our responsibility in building the common good. Like the Salesian Blessed Augusto Czaratoryski, who stripped himself of everything to live the Salesian charisma, let us live without complaining, without murmuring, with joy and promptness saying: “faccio io”.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Perdoai, Senhor; perdoai ao vosso povo”

(Forgive, Lord; forgive your people)

Ninth Station

Jesus falls for the third time

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world

«Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Answer me quickly, O Lord! My spirit fails! Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit.» (Ps 143, 4.6–7). The temptation of discouragement can knock on our door. It results from the experience of our fragility and impotence and self-centeredness, because we place our trust in ourselves and not in God. Jesus, the saint of God, became in solidarity with us to the extreme, so that we do not hesitate to look to him for the strength of our hope.

Lord, may we learn humility through humiliations and focus on You, like Peter, to keep us standing. Forgive us for the times we take our feelings for the truth and consent to a lack of trust.

Like Blessed Filipe Rinaldi, let us live as mystics in ordinary life. Let us be like them optimistic, joyful, enthusiastic and devoted to our Lady Help of Christians in the way of the cross in our lives.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Por vosso amor infinito”

(For your infinite love)

Tenth Station

Jesus is stripped of his clothes

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. [d] But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, 24 so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things» (John 19, 23-24). From His birth to His death, Christ enriches us with His poverty. He stripped himself and we are clothed with the dignity of Sons of God. Through baptism, clothed in Christ, we are new creatures, not because of the goods that luck has brought us, but because of the faith that makes us participate in his divine life and enjoy intimacy with God.

Lord Jesus, source of life and love, place in our hearts the desire to give everything to you, the desire and ability to give ourselves and not claim anything for ourselves.

May we, like Saint Dominic Savio, live in a sincere and simple surrender of our lives, knowing how to accept setbacks with silence and peace, offering everything to Jesus.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

"Convertei-nos, Senhor"

(Convert us, Lord)

Eleventh Station

Jesus is nailed to the cross

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”» (Luke 23, 33-34a). Forgiveness received leads to conversion. Conversion consists of fixing our gaze on Christ, recognizing with deep gratitude his love that saves us and directing our life towards Him, that is, taking his word and example as a reference for our options, our attitudes, of our behaviors. Lord, before your cross, show us what I must change so that our life is more in accordance with your style and defends the interests of your Kingdom, more than the small individual interests or of the group to which I belong.

Like Blessed Alexandrina da Costa, who here in Portugal gave herself completely to the Lord, in the mystery of her passion, let us have as our motto of life to suffer, love and repair.

May she be a living example of how the Salesian family can hand over its cross to God.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Toda a nossa glória está na cruz de Nosso Senhor Jesus Cristo”
(All our glory is in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ)

Twelfth Station

Jesus dies on the cross

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.» (Luke 23, 44–46). Let us contemplate, in silence, the love that is offered to us until the end. In silence, let us worship Him. (Moment of silence)

Let us remember at this season that our family is a family of martyrs: Saint Louis Versiglia and Calixtus Caravario (China), our martyrs from Poland, Spain, Hungary, etc. Even today, so many Salesians give their lives, till death, for Jesus. Teach us Lord to give our lives.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Thirteenth Station

Jesus is taken down from the cross

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body.» (John 19:38). True friends reveal themselves in difficult times, when there is nothing left to give back. This is how we are called to love our friends, with a free and generous love. But how difficult is it?! It's much more spontaneous to give it so you can give it to me, or give it to you because you give it to me.

But this is not enough, the Christian goes one step further: I give you because you are worthy of my affection, my attention. Lord, form our affections, so that we build friendships based on gratuitousness, on sincere love and not on interest; friendships that remain, even when the test of silence, absence or separation arrives.

May we, like Blessed Laura Vicuña, learn to give our lives, to take on the cross for the salvation of others.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Em Vós, Senhor, eu pus a minha esp’rança”
(In You, Lord, I have placed my hope)

Fourteenth Station

Jesus is laid in the tomb

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.» (John 19, 40-42). The silence of death is the place where hope is sparked. God is present even when everything seems lost. It is necessary to go through the experience of nothingness, to be able to receive ALL that God IS.

Lord, teach me to wait. Do not allow our hope to be reduced to the space of what is already known in our experience, but allow it to open, through faith-trust, to the infinite dimensions of your Resurrection. How Don Bosco makes us all witnesses of the Easter of the

Resurrection, men and women of hope and life despite the obvious signs of death.

V. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Chant

“Em Vós, Senhor, eu pus a minha esperança”

(In You, Lord, I have placed my hope)

Fifteenth Station

Jesus emerges victorious from the tomb

V. We adore you and bless you, Lord Jesus!

R. By Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

«Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.» (John 20, 1-2.6.8) In the testimony of John and Peter, the Church began two thousand years ago the path of Faith that unites us in the communion of saints. The Church lives and proclaims that the grace of God overcomes all sin, because the Holy Spirit sanctifies us by listening to the Word, which leads us to conversion, and by the fruitful celebration of the Sacraments, in which Christ gives himself to us so that our life may go transforming more and more into His likeness. Lord, Jesus, who by the strength of your love you conquered death, grant us to embrace with faith the cross of our life and to participate, through it, in the gift of your love for all. Strengthen our faith, so that we live every moment animated by the certainty and strength of your Resurrection.

May, like Saint Maria Domingas Mazzarello, we be bearers of happiness, joy and hope for all.

In union with the Pope, let us pray, for the entire Church:

Our Father...

Let us pray for the Salesian Family, for the poorest young people.

Holy Mary...

Let us pray for the gift of vocational fruitfulness in our family.

Holy Mary...

Let us pray for the future successor of Saint John Bosco.

Holy Mary...

V. Let us bless the Lord

R. Thanks be to God.

Chant

"Ressuscitou, ressuscitou, ressuscitou, aleluia!

(He is risen, he is risen, he is risen, hallelujah!)

Rosary

Joyful Mysteries:

Beginning: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen!

1. Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary:

Biblical reading: Luke 1, 26-30

«In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.»

Reflection: Mary responded to God's call with faith and humility, even in the face of the unknown. She trusted in the Lord! He left his fears behind. Don Bosco teaches us to be optimistic and confident. Devotion to our Lady Help of Christians is closely linked to trust in providence. In my life, do I trust in God, in his kind providence of love?

2. Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth:

Biblical reading: Luke 1, 39-45

«In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold,

when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.»

Reflection: Mary leaves full of joy and gratitude to meet Elizabeth. She truly is the Helper, always attentive, always ready to help. Help with joy, with a spirit of service and ready availability. Is my life like Mary's, made up of service to others?

3. Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem:

Biblical reading: Luke 2, 1-5

«In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.»

Reflection: Mary and Joseph are a couple on the journey. Open to God's surprises. The birth of Jesus in the poverty of Bethlehem makes us in solidarity with the poorest. Don Bosco taught us this solidarity and compassion with the poorest, most vulnerable. Let us pray for mothers in difficulty, for the poorest. How can I find the presence of God in the simplicity of my everyday life?

4. Presentation of the Baby Jesus in the Temple:

Biblical reading: Luke 2, 22-23

«And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")»

Reflection: Mary teaches us to present our lives to God. We have to trust Him with our lives. Surrender everything to Him. Don Bosco said: "Trust in Our Lady and you will see what miracles are. Today we want to renew our trust in Jesus and Mary. Let us pray many times: "thy will be done" that is the secret of life.

5. Encounter of the Baby Jesus in the Temple:

Biblical reading: Luke 2, 41-45

«Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.»

Reflection: Mary and Joseph had a great concern. Jesus puts us in search of Jesus. Through Mary we go in search of Jesus. We want to walk by the hand of Jesus and we want to encounter him in a special way in the sacrament of the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Let us pray for those who are far away and lost from Jesus. Let us pray that they can find him again.

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, Hail our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, Poor banished children of Eve; To thee do we send up our sighs, Mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, Thine eyes of mercy toward us; And after this our exile, Show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

Eucharistic Adoration

Opening hymn: Emmanuel

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, we are gathered here before You, present in the Eucharist. Inspired by the example of Mary, Your Mother, we want to learn to listen and follow Your words. Send Your Holy Spirit so that, as at the Wedding of Cana, we can witness the transformation that only You can bring about in our lives. Amen.

Exposition of the Holy Sacrament

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with the Eucharistic chant "Inunda o meu Ser" (Flood my being)

Contemplation of the Mystery of the Wedding at Cana

Biblical Reading: John 2, 1-11

At that time, there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was present. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. As the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him: "They have no more wine." Jesus answered her, "Woman, what does this have to do with us? My time has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Reflection:

Brief reflection on Mary's intercession and her instruction "Do whatever he tells you"..

Meditations

Let us pray with some texts from Blessed Alexandrina da Costa – Portuguese Salesian Cooperator

Meditation 1:

"O Jesus, hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, I love You! Every hour that passes, every day that ends, brings me closer to You. May my life be a constant union with Your Eucharistic Heart."

Meditation 2:

"Lord, I want to be a victim of love in Your Eucharistic presence. May my heart be an altar where the fire of Your love always burns."

Meditation 3:

"Jesus, my love, my treasure, my everything! In Your Eucharistic presence, I find strength for my weaknesses, light for my darkness, peace for my troubles. May I never move away from You, but may I always remain in communion with You, receiving from You all the love I need to love and serve others."

Chant: "Senhor, vela por mim" (Lord Watch over me)

Meditation 4:

"O Jesus, prisoner of love in the tabernacle, teach me to live every moment of my life with my eyes fixed on You. May my soul be a tabernacle where You can dwell and where I can worship You unceasingly. Give me the grace to live in Your Eucharistic presence, finding in You the joy and hope that the world cannot give."

Meditation 5:

"Lord Jesus, You are the inexhaustible source of love and mercy. In the Eucharist, You make Yourself small and humble to come to us. May I know how to recognize You in each consecrated Host, loving You and adoring You with all my heart. Make me a living flame of Eucharistic love, capable of illuminating and warming the hearts of my brothers."

Chant: "Vem viver em nós" Come live in us

Prayers

For the Pope:

Lord Jesus, present in the Eucharist, we ask you for our Pope Francis. Grant him wisdom, courage and health to guide the Church according to Your will.

We ask: Lord, hear your people's prayer.

For the Successor of Don Bosco and Rector Major of the Salesians:

Lord Jesus, we entrust to you the vicar of the Rector Major of the Salesians, Father Stefano Martoglio. May, like Don Bosco, he continue to be a guide and inspiration for the entire Salesian Family.

We ask: Lord, hear your people's prayer.

For the Mother General of the Salesians:

Lord, bless Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Sr. Chiara. May, following in the footsteps of Maria Domingas Mazzarello, she lead her sisters with love and dedication.

We ask: Lord, hear your people's prayer.

For the Young People:

Lord Jesus, bless young people all over the world. May they find in You the meaning for their lives and be guided by the Holy Spirit.

We ask: Lord, hear your people's prayer.

For the Salesian Family:

Lord, watch over the entire Salesian Family. May, united in Don Bosco's charisma, we be able to be signs and bearers of Your love for young people and all those in need.

We ask: Lord, hear your people's prayer.

Moment of Silence and Personal Worship

Quiet time for personal worship and contemplation.

Worship Chant: "Não Dormirá" (Shall Not Sleep)

Blessing of the Holy Sacrament

Priest: You gave us the Bread from Heaven.

Assembly: to give life to the world.

Priest: Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, in this admirable sacrament you left us the memorial of your passion; grant us such veneration for the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood, that we may always experience within ourselves their redemptive efficacy. You who are God with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

Assembly: Amen.

Blessing of the Blessed Sacrament (The priest makes the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament)

Benediction

Tantum Ergo Sacramentum

The last two verses of the hymn "Pange Lingua" are sung:

Tantum ergo Sacramentum	Genitori, Genitoque
Veneremur cernui:	Laus et jubilatio,
Et antiquum documentum	Salus, honor, virtus quoque
Novo cedat ritui:	Sit et benedictio:
Praestet fides supplementum	Procedenti ab utroque
Sensuum defectui.	Compar sit laudatio.

Amen.

Blessing

Replacing the Blessed Sacrament

Song - Receive the Power (WYD 2008)

Opening Mass

Martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist

First Reading (Jer 1, 17-19):

«Stand up and tell them all that I command you»

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

The word of the LORD came to me thus:

Gird your loins; stand up and tell them
all that I command you.

Be not crushed on their account,
as though I would leave you crushed before them;

For it is I this day
who have made you a fortified city,

A pillar of iron, a wall of brass,
against the whole land:

Against Judah's kings and princes,
against its priests and people.

They will fight against you, but not prevail over you,
for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm:

Salmo 70 (71), 1-2.3-4A.5-6AB.15AB AND 17

R. I will sing your salvation.

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.

In your justice rescue me, and deliver me;
incline your ear to me, and save me.

Be my rock of refuge,
a stronghold to give me safety,

for you are my rock and my fortress.
 O LORD, rescue me from the hand of the wicked.
 For you are my hope, O LORD,

my trust, O God, from my youth.
 On you I depend from birth;
 from my mother's womb you are my strength.

My mouth shall declare your justice,
 day by day your salvation.
 O God, you have taught me from my youth
 and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds.

Gospel (Mark 6, 17-29):

«I want you to give me without delay, on a plate,
 the head of John the Baptist»

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

V. A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

Herod was the one who had John arrested and bound in prison
 on account of Herodias,
 the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married.
 John had said to Herod,
 "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."
 Herodias harbored a grudge against him
 and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so.
 Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man,
 and kept him in custody.
 When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed,
 yet he liked to listen to him.
 She had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday,
 gave a banquet for his courtiers,
 his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee.
 Herodias' own daughter came in
 and performed a dance that delighted Herod and his guests.
 The king said to the girl,

“Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you.”

He even swore many things to her,

“I will grant you whatever you ask of me,
even to half of my kingdom.”

She went out and said to her mother,

“What shall I ask for?”

She replied, “The head of John the Baptist.”

The girl hurried back to the king’s presence and made her request,

“I want you to give me at once
on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”

The king was deeply distressed,
but because of his oaths and the guests
he did not wish to break his word to her.

So he promptly dispatched an executioner with orders
to bring back his head.

He went off and beheaded him in the prison.

He brought in the head on a platter and gave it to the girl.

The girl in turn gave it to her mother.

When his disciples heard about it,
they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Closing Mass

First Reading (Deut 4, 1-2.6-8)

«You will not add anything to what I command you...
but you shall keep the commandments of the Lord.»

A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy

Moses said to the people:

“Now, Israel, hear the statutes and decrees
which I am teaching you to observe,
that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land
which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.
In your observance of the commandments of the LORD, your God,
which I enjoin upon you,
you shall not add to what I command you nor subtract from it.

Observe them carefully,
for thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to
the nations,
who will hear of all these statutes and say,
‘This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people.’
For what great nation is there
that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us
whenever we call upon him?
Or what great nation has statutes and decrees
that are as just as this whole law
which I am setting before you today?”

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 14 (15), 2-3A.3CD-4AB.5

R. One who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Whoever walks blamelessly and does justice;
who thinks the truth in his heart
and slanders not with his tongue.

Who harms not his fellow man,
nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor;
by whom the reprobate is despised,
while he honors those who fear the LORD.

Who lends not his money at usury
and accepts no bribe against the innocent.
Whoever does these things
shall never be disturbed.

Second Reading (Jas 1, 17-18.21b-22.27)

«Be doers of the word»

A reading from the Letter of Saint James

Dearest brothers and sisters:
All good giving and every perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of lights,
with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change.
He willed to give us birth by the word of truth
that we may be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.
Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you
and is able to save your souls.
Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.
Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this:
to care for orphans and widows in their affliction
and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

The word of the Lord.
R. Thanks be to God

Gospel (Mark 7, 1-8.14-15.21-23)

«You disregard God's commandment
but cling to human tradition.»

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

V. A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from
Jerusalem

gathered around Jesus,

they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals
with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands.

—For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews,

do not eat without carefully washing their hands,
keeping the tradition of the elders.

And on coming from the marketplace

they do not eat without purifying themselves.

And there are many other things that they have traditionally
observed,

the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds.—

So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him,

“Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders
but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?”

He responded,

“Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written:

This people honors me with their lips,

but their hearts are far from me;

in vain do they worship me,

teaching as doctrines human precepts.

You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition.”

He summoned the crowd again and said to them,

“Hear me, all of you, and understand.

Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person;
but the things that come out from within are what defile.

“From within people, from their hearts,
come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder,

adultery, greed, malice, deceit,
licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly.
All these evils come from within and they defile.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Chants

Opening Mass

Entrance song

Jesus Christ, You are my life,
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Jesus Christ, You are my life,
You are my life, Alleluia. (bis)

És caminho, Tu és a verdade
Tu és a nossa vida,
Caminhando junto a Ti,
Viveremos para sempre.

Jesus Christ, You are my life,
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Jesus Christ, You are my life,
You are my life, Alleluia.

Tu sei via, sei verità
Tu sei la nostra vita
Camminando insieme a te
Vivremo in te per sempre

Jesus Christ, You are my life,
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Jesus Christ, You are my life,
You are my life, Alleluia.

Be our way, our truth and our life
Form us anew in how you died
We embrace the cross that
You bore
And will arise in glory

Penitential Act

Senhor tende Piedade
Tende Piedade de nós
Tende Piedade de nós.

Cristo tende Piedade
Tende Piedade de nós

Tende Piedade de nós.

Senhor tende Piedade
Tende Piedade de nós
Tende Piedade de nós.

Gloria

Glória a Deus nas alturas
E paz na terra aos homens por Ele amados
Senhor Deus, Rei dos céus, Deus Pai todo-poderoso

Nós vos louvamos

Nós vos bendizemos

Nós vos adoramos

Nós vos glorificamos

Nós vos damos graças por vossa imensa glória

Senhor Jesus Cristo, Filho Unigênito

Senhor Deus, Cordeiro de Deus, Filho de Deus Pai

Vós que tirais o pecado do mundo, tende piedade de nós

Vós que tirais o pecado do mundo, acolhei a nossa súplica

Vós que estais à direita do Pai

Tende piedade de nós

Só vós sois Santo

Só vós o Senhor

Só vós o Altíssimo, Jesus Cristo

Com o Espírito Santo

Na glória de Deus Pai, amém!

Aleluia

Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia,
Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia,

Aleluia, Aleluia,
Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia,

Aleluia, Aleluia,
Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia,

Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia,
Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia

Offertory

Agora é hora
De oferecer todo o meu ser
Na pobreza, na tristeza
Na alegria de cada dia

Agora é hora
De dizer obrigado
Ao Senhor que é amor
Nossa vida, nosso calor

É tão pouco o que oferecemos
Mas é tudo o que temos (bis)

É tão pouco o que oferecemos
Mas é tudo o que temos (bis)

Agora é hora.

Santo (Sanctus)

Santo, Santo, Santo Senhor	Hossana nas alturas
Senhor Deus do Universo	Bendito é Aquele que vem
Céus e Terra proclamam	Em nome do Senhor
Para sempre a Vossa Glória	Hossana nas alturas (bis)

Cordeiro de Deus (Agnus Dei)

Cordeiro de Deus	Cordeiro de Deus,
Que tiras o pecado do mundo	Que tiras o pecado do mundo,
Tem piedade de nós, Senhor	Dá-nos a Tua paz, Senhor
Tem piedade de nós.	Dá-nos a Tua Paz.

Cordeiro de Deus	Dá-nos a Tua Paz, Senhor
Que tiras o pecado do mundo	Dá-nos a Tua Paz, Senhor
Tem piedade de nós Senhor,	
Tem piedade de nós.	

Communion (1) – Emmanuel

No horizonte uma grande, luz viaja pela história
 Ao longo dos anos venceu as trevas, fazendo-se Memória
 E, iluminando a nossa vida, ela nos revela
 que não vive quem não procura, esta Verdade.

Da mille strade arrivamo qui
 Sui passi della fede,
 Sentiamo l'eco della parola
 Che risuona ancora
 Da queste mura, da questo cielo
 Per il mondo intero:
 È vivo oggi, È l'uomo vero
 Cristo tra noi.

Siamo qui sotto la stessa luce
 Sotto la sua croce cantando ad una você
 Emmanuel, Emmanuel, Emmanuel
 Emmanuel, Emmanuel
 Emmanuel, Emmanuel, Emmanuel

Emmanuel, Emmanuel

This city which has poured out, its life–blood out of love
 And has transformed the ancient world, will send us on our way,
 By following Christ, together with Peter, our faith is born again,
 The living word, that makes us new and grows in our hearts.

Siamo qui sotto la stessa luce
 Sotto la sua croce cantando ad una você
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 Emmanuel, Emmanuel, Emmanuel
 Emmanuel, Emmanuel

Chegou uma nova era
 É tempo de mudar
 Sempre um novo dia para recomeçar
 Mudar de estrada com palavras novas
 Usar o coração e anunciar todo
 O mundo Cristo Jesus

Communion (2) – Luz Terna e Suave

Que importa, Senhor,
 se é tão longe para mim
 a praia onde tenho de chegar,
 se sobre mim levar pousada
 a clara luz do teu olhar.

Hoje te peço, Senhor,
 para seres a luz que me ilumina na plenitude da tua luz divina.

Luz terna e suave no meio da noite,
 leva-nos mais longe.
 Não temos aqui uma morada permanente.
 Leva-nos mais longe,
 Luz terna e suave no meio da noite.

Esquece, Senhor,
 os meus passos mal andados, meu desamor,
 perdoa os meus pecados.

Eu sei que vai raiar a madrugada

e não me deixarás abandonado.

Se Tu me dás a mão, Senhor,
meus passos serão firmes no andar.
Leva-me mais longe para a Ti chegar.

Communion (3)

Pão do Céu, pão de Deus,
Vida em mim és Senhor Jesus.
No caminho da vida
és o pão que dá força e luz.
Quem comer deste pão
viverá por mim
Quem deste vinho beber,
viverá no amor
E feliz reinará com o seu Senhor.

Bom pastor és caminho
seguro verdade e vida.
Quem te segue não anda
no mundo perdido e só.
Nem a vida, ou a morte,
ou algum poder,
Do seu amor poderá
jamais separar,
Para a vida sem fim ressuscitará.

Eu sou o pão da vida.
Eu sou a ressurreição.
Tomai e comei este
é o meu corpo:
Pão de vida e unidade.

Permanecei em mim:
Eu a videira vós os ramos.
Tomai e bebei este
é o meu sangue
Para a vossa salvação.

Pão do céu é o maná que nos
dás com sabor a ti
És a força que alenta o nosso
peregrinar.

Quem tem sede
há-de em ti encontrar
A fonte da alegria
sem fim e da tua paz
E brotará dele um rio
de água viva.

Para quem hemos de ir
se tu és o Santo de Deus.
As palavras, Senhor, que nos dás
são de vida eterna.
Quem te segue não se
perderá na noite
Em caminhos e vales de solidão
Pois terá luz da vida,
vida verdadeira.

Ação de Graças

Il Signore ti ristora
Dio non allontana
Il Signore viene ad incontrarti
Viene ad incontrarti

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Viene ad incontrarti

Il Signore ti ristora
Dio non allontana
Il Signore viene ad incontrarti
Viene ad incontrarti

Final – Anthem

**Família em oração,
Teu nome, Mãe protetora,
Canta o nosso coração,
Maria, Auxiliadora!**

1. «Dar-te-ei a Mestra», a Mãe
Do teu caminho a Guia;
Sê humilde e forte,
Vai sem medo e confia!

2. Quem sois Vós, Senhor?
Eu sou Criança pobre, incapaz.
Eu contigo estarei,
Tu um dia verás!

3. Segue a Estrela, olha o céu,
Virá de lá tua luz;
Minha Mãe é o auxílio,
Teu caminho conduz!

4. O teu sonho é o mundo,
Cheio de jovens, crianças,

A quem sonhas levar
Alegrias, esp'ranças!

**Famiglia in preghiera,
Maria, Tu ci proteggi
Canta sempre con il cuor
Maria, Ausiliatrice**

**Familia en oración,
Tu nombre, oh protectora,
Canta nuestro corazón,
María, Auxiliadora**

**Family in Prayer
Your name, protective Mother
Our hearts sing together
Mary Help Of Christians**

Adoration

Emanuel

No horizonte uma grande, luz viaja pela história
 Ao longo dos anos venceu as trevas, fazendo-se Memória
 E, iluminando a nossa vida, ela nos revela
 que não vive quem não procura, esta Verdade.

Da mille strade arrivamo qui
 Sui passi della fede,
 Sentiamo l'eco della parola
 Che risuona ancora
 Da queste mura, da questo cielo
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Chegou uma nova era

É tempo de mudar
 Sempre um novo dia para recomeçar
 Mudar de estrada com palavras novas
 Usar o coração e anunciar todo
 O mundo Cristo Jesus

Senhor Vela Por Mim

Senhor vela por mim
 Que farei sem tí?
 Só eu não sou nada
 Guarda-me, Senhor

Vem viver em Nós

Vem viver em nós, Senhor,
 vem viver em nós.
 Vem viver em nós, Senhor,
 Vem viver em nós

Inunda o meu ser

Inunda o meu ser,
 inunda o meu ser, Espírito,
 inunda o meu ser.

Com fogo de amor,
 ó vem sobre mim.
 Espírito inunda o meu ser.

Ensina-me a amar,
 ensina-me a amar,
 Espírito, ensina-me a amar.

Como ama Jesus,
 ó vem sobre mim.
 Espírito ensina-me a amar.

Aumenta-me a fé,
 aumenta-me a fé,
 Espírito, aumenta-me a fé.

Com fogo de amor,
 ó vem sobre mim.
 Espírito aumenta-me a fé.

Ensina-me a orar,
 ensina-me a orar,
 Espírito, ensina-me a orar.

Como ora Jesus,
 ó vem sobre mim.
 Espírito ensina-me a orar.

Receive The Power

Every nation, every tribe,
come together to worship You.
In Your presence we delight,
we will follow to the ends
of the earth.

Alleluia! Alleluia!
Receive the Power,
from the Holy Spirit!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Receive the Power
to be a light unto the world!

As Your Spirit calls to rise
we will answer and do Your Will.
We'll forever testify
of Your mercy and unfailing love.

Alleluia! Alleluia!
Receive the Power,
from the Holy Spirit!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Receive the Power
to be a light unto the world!

Lamb of God, we worship You,
Holy One, we worship You,
Bread of Life, we worship You,
Emmanuel, we worship You.
Lamb of God, we worship You,
Holy One, we worship You,
Bread of Life, we worship You,
Emmanuel, we will sing forever.

Closing Mass

Entrance

Família em oração,
Teu nome, Mãe protetora,
Canta o nosso coração,
Maria, Auxiliadora!

1. «Dar-te-ei a Mestra», a Mãe
Do teu caminho a Guia;
Sê humilde e forte,
Vai sem medo e confia!

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Eu contigo estarei,
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Teu caminho conduz!

4. O teu sonho é o mundo,
Cheio de jovens, crianças,
A quem sonhas levar
Alegrias, esperanças!

**Famiglia in preghiera,
Maria, Tu ci proteggi
Canta sempre con il cuor
Maria, Ausiliatrice**

**Family in Prayer
Your name, protective Mother
Our hearts sing together
Mary Help Of Christians**

Penitential Act

Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison
Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison.

Christe, eleison. Christe, eleison. Christe, eleison.
Christe, eleison. Christe, eleison. Christe, eleison.

Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison.
Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison.

Glória

Glória a Deus nas alturas
E paz na terra aos homens por Ele amados
Senhor Deus, Rei dos céus, Deus Pai todo-poderoso

Nós vos louvamos
Nós vos bendizemos
Nós vos adoramos

Nós vos glorificamos
 Nós vos damos graças por vossa imensa glória

Senhor Jesus Cristo, Filho Unigênito
 Senhor Deus, Cordeiro de Deus, Filho de Deus Pai
 Vós que tirais o pecado do mundo, tende piedade de nós
 Vós que tirais o pecado do mundo, acolhei a nossa súplica
 Vós que estais à direita do Pai

Tende piedade de nós
 Só vós sois Santo
 Só vós o Senhor
 Só vós o Altíssimo, Jesus Cristo

Com o Espírito Santo
 Na glória de Deus Pai, amém!

Aleluia

Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia,
 Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia,

Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia,
 Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia, Aleluia

Offertory

Sei Senhor, que na vida
 Nem sempre temos tudo,
 tudo dado
 Por isso, aqui estou
 Pronto para ser, ser ajudado

Senhor a Ti me entrego
 Com todo o coração
 Eu nunca fui tão sincero

Não sei mais o que fazer,
 sem Ti eu não sei viver
 Ouve a minha oração,
 Senhor dá-me a Tua mão

Sei Senhor, que não posso
 Ter tudo o que quero,
 ou que gosto
 Por isso, peço-Te a Ti
 Que me leves sempre,
 sempre contigo

Senhor a Ti me entrego
 Com todo o coração
 Eu nunca fui tão sincero

Não sei mais o que fazer,
 sem Ti eu não sei viver
 Ouve a minha oração,
 Senhor dá-me a Tua mão

Santo (Sanctus)

Santo, Santo, Santo Senhor
 Senhor Deus do Universo
 Céus e Terra proclamam
 Para sempre a Vossa Glória

Hossana nas alturas
 Bendito é Aquele que vem
 Em nome do Senhor
 Hossana nas alturas (bis)

Cordeiro de Deus (Agnus Dei)

Cordeiro de Deus
 Que tiras o pecado do mundo
 Tem piedade de nós, Senhor
 Tem piedade de nós.

Cordeiro de Deus,
 Que tiras o pecado do mundo,
 Dá-nos a Tua paz, Senhor
 Dá-nos a Tua Paz.

Cordeiro de Deus
 Que tiras o pecado do mundo
 Tem piedade de nós Senhor,
 Tem piedade de nós.

Dá-nos a Tua Paz, Senhor
 Dá-nos a Tua Paz, Senhor

Communion (1)

Levanto os meus olhos
 para os montes,
 Donde me virá o auxílio
 O meu auxílio vem do Senhor,
 porque Deus é Misericordioso

Chi potrebbe resistere?
 Ma Lui perdona, e anche noi
 Facciamo come fa il nostro Dio!

When we are lost
 He searches for us
 To hold us in His arms
 His only blood will heal
 Our wounds
 To breathe new life into us

**Błogosławieni miłosierni,
 albowiem oni miłosierdzia
 dostąpią! (Bis)**

The Lord of the Son blotted out
 Every debt with his blood,
 The son rose from
 the grave alive;
 "Jesus is Lord,"
 says the Spirit within us.
 Let the world see it!

**Błogosławieni miłosierni,
 albowiem oni miłosierdzia
 dostąpią! (Bis)**

**Błogosławieni miłosierni,
 albowiem oni miłosierdzia
 dostąpią! (Bis)**

Se il Signore non ci avesse per-
 donato i nostri peccati,

Lança fora o medo e sê fiel,	o Teu Senhor e o Teu Deus!
Entrega ao Senhor	Błogostawieni miłosierni,
os teus cuidados	albowiem oni miłosierdzia
E confia, pois Ele ressuscitou	dostąpią! (Bis)
e está vivo	

Communion (2) – Pelos Prados

Pelos prados e campinas verdejantes, eu vou
 É o Senhor que me leva a descansar
 Junto às fontes de águas puras repousantes, eu vou
 Minhas forças o Senhor vai animar

Tu és, Senhor, o meu pastor
Por isso nada em minha vida faltará
Tu és, Senhor, o meu pastor
Por isso nada em minha vida faltará

Nos caminhos mais seguros, junto d'Ele eu vou
 E pra sempre o Seu nome eu honrarei
 Se eu encontro mil abismos nos caminhos, eu vou
 Segurança sempre tenho em suas mãos

Tu és, Senhor, o meu pastor
Por isso nada em minha vida faltará
Tu és, Senhor, o meu pastor
Por isso nada em minha vida faltará

No banquete em sua casa muito alegre, eu vou
 Um lugar em Sua mesa me preparou
 Ele unge minha fronte e me faz ser feliz
 E transborda a minha taça em Seu amor

Tu és, Senhor, o meu pastor
Por isso nada em minha vida faltará
Tu és, Senhor, o meu pastor
Por isso nada em minha vida faltará

Bem a frente do inimigo, confiante eu vou
 Tenho sempre, o Senhor junto de mim
 Seu cajado me protege, e eu jamais temerei
 Sempre junto do Senhor eu estarei

Tu és, Senhor, o meu pastor
 Por isso nada em minha vida faltará
 Tu és, Senhor, o meu pastor
 Por isso nada em minha vida faltará

Communion (3) – Não dormirá

Levanto os olhos para os montes,
 D'onde virá o auxílio?
 O meu auxílio vem do Senhor,
 Que fez o céu e a terra.

Não permitirá que vacilem os teus passos,
 Não dormirá Aquele que te guarda.
 Não há de adormecer
 O que guarda Israel.

O Senhor é quem te guarda,
 O Senhor está a teu lado, Ele é o teu abrigo.
 O sol não te fará mal de dia
 Nem a lua durante a noite.

O Senhor te defende do mal,
 O Senhor vela pela tua vida.
 Ele te protege quando vais, quando vens,
 Agora e para sempre

Ação de Graças

Il Signore ti ristora	Il Signore ti ristora
Dio non allontana	Dio non allontana
Il Signore viene ad incontrarti	Il Signore viene ad incontrarti
Viene ad incontrarti	Viene ad incontrarti
Il Signore ti ristora	Il Signore ti ristora
Dio non allontana	Dio non allontana
Il Signore viene ad incontrarti	Il Signore viene ad incontrarti
Viene ad incontrarti	Viene ad incontrarti

Final

Ausiliatrice Vergine bella, di nostra vita Tu sei la stella.

Fra le tempeste deh! guida il
cuore, di chi ti invoca Madre d'Amore.

Siam peccatori, ma figli tuoi. Ausiliatrice, prega per noi

Tu che nel cielo siedi Regina,
a noi pietosa lo sguardo inchina, pel Divin Figlio che
Stringi al petto deh! non privarci del tuo affetto.
Siam peccatori, ma figli tuoi

Ausiliatrice, prega per noi

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