

With Don Bosco towards the 2015 World Elective Assembly

Fourth Nucleus (July-August)

Words of Paola Staiano, President of the Confederation:

"The Mission of the Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians"

Before handing you over to the President of the Confederation, Paola Staiano, I would like to call to mind the proposals for the celebration of the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco. In these three years, we have made a *bosconian* path in preparation for this big event that involves the entire Salesian Family. The Bicentennial celebration will begin on August 16, 2014 and will end on August 16, 2015. The year's theme will be: "Mission of Don Bosco with the young people and for the young people." As good sons and daughters it is important to know the proposals for this year's big celebration for us to be able to organize and participate in:

- August 16, 2014: Opening Day of the Bicentennial Celebration at Colle Don Bosco
- November 19 - 23, 2014: International Historical Congress at Salesianum in Rome
- March 19 – 21, 2015: International Pedagogical Congress at UPS in Rome
- May 21 – 25, 2015: Meeting of the Salesian Bishops in Turin
- August 6 – 9, 2015: International Congress of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Turin
- August 11 – 16, 2015: Bosco Camp of the SYM in Turin and at Colle Don Bosco
- August 16, 2015: Closing Day of the Bicentennial Celebration at Colle Don Bosco
- For us, Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, from the 11th until the 17th of August 2015, the World Elective Assembly will take place in Mornese. On August 16, those present in the Assembly will have the privilege of participating as a Salesian Family in the closing ceremony of the Bicentennial Celebration.

Going back to us ... We have reached the third nucleus of our journey in preparation for the next World Elective Assembly 2015. It is a path that is involving not only the persons who will directly participate in Mornese, but the entire Association, all of us: Delegates, Past Pupils from all over the world. Remember that you can find the nucleus in Word format on the website of the Confederation www.exallievfma.org. Please send your individual or group work in this e-mail address: maritzafma@yahoo.com.

Now we hand you over to the message of the President of the Confederation.

Words of Paola Staiano:

"The Mission of the Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians"

Dearest Past Pupils of the FMA, to present our association and to clarify who we are and what we do, we must necessarily begin from the personal situations that have led us to become past pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Each of us went to a school, a youth centre, an oratory, a house of our Sisters, where one has experienced unforgettable moments, supported, accompanied and guided by many FMA, enthusiastic bearers of solid human and Salesian-Christian values transmitted through their loving service, with an educational style that comes from the heart, with the joyful passion of one who offer one's life for what she believes in.

Millions of young women and men, once they have finished their studies and have left such environments, keep alive the memory of a very beautiful past and even if one finds herself/himself in a different situation, still retain a grateful memory of the Salesian institution and its educational style. All these people merge together in the great movement of the Past Pupils of the FMA.

Here we are, we too have freely chosen to base our lives on these lived and assimilated values in childhood and adolescence, because we feel that they are the roots of our life of faith. We recognize each other in a Spirituality founded on the Preventive System of Don Bosco which is expressed in the threefold reasons—religion—loving kindness that enriches the charismatic elements of lifestyle and action of Mary Mazzarello. For this specific reason we have chosen to take part in the World Confederation of the Past Pupils of Mary Help of Christians. It is a non-profit lay association, sponsored by the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco). As such it is a group of the Salesian Family, in which the Rector Major - successor of Don Bosco – is the Father and the center of unity. "(Statute art. 1.1)

Our Association was founded in Turin on March 19, 1908 by Don Rinaldi, second successor of Don Bosco and known by many as the "second Don Bosco", who became founder, promoter and companion of this beautiful association. Thus, he managed to achieve one of the many dreams of Don Bosco, in which he once said: "I have already made another project that in these two years will mature: to make, I could say like a third order for women, however not aggregated to us but associated with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians."(MB XI, 73)

And now, concretely, by virtue of the education received, as a branch of the Salesian Family and in reference to the objectives specified by our Statutes that clearly show the vast horizons in which to live and to bear witness to the mission of the Association, the Past Pupils of the FMA:

- participate with responsibility to the educational mission of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians inserting in other environments and social contexts, from family to work, in politics, with the lay Salesian style, enriched by a touch of Mornese which characterizes it; participate, with specific skills in the educational processes of young people, acting as models of a Christian life. They are witnesses of the joy of living a life characterized by faith, optimism and hope, in spite of the suffering and hardships of everyday life. They also favour a constructive youth empowerment through the promotion of initiatives and activities for the benefit of other young people, especially those who live in disadvantaged situations; assuming responsibility, within the apostolate of the FMA with whom they collaborate, proposing appropriate initiatives to involve the young people in order to know the association, share its ideals and be part of it in the appropriate time;

- are committed to the promotion and education of women. There are still many social contexts in which women are marginalized, are not entitled to the most basic rights, and is greatly exploited, both sexually and in the job place, and often regarded as an object or commodity. Women, even in highly developed countries, often do not have equal rights as men, and even where this occurs, it means the woman has to take additional responsibilities. Her condition of inferiority is evidently seen in less developed countries. In these places the woman occupies a role of inferiority in the world of work, without any hope to equal opportunities. There are very few who work in the service sector, industry and almost non-existent in political life, not to mention the violence perpetrated against women even in their own families, verbal, psychological and physical abuse. So there is a lot of work to do and our Association, in every part of the world, can make its contribution: supporting, protecting, helping, educating and promoting activities in favour of marginalized and defenseless women. In spite of some women leaders there are still millions of women who are nameless, faceless, without dignity;

- For the family the situation is similar; each past pupil must fight with all their might to defend, that is, in God's plan, the cradle of human love. In this goal, we need to invest all our strength both personal and as an association, maintaining the sacredness of life and family, enhancing it and treating it as the core of society and as a small domestic church. As lay Christians who recognize the charism of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, Past Pupils must fight in the

frontier places, alongside many other lay Christian and non-Christian associations, for the defence and promotion of the fundamental values of humanity;

- support the defence of human rights and peace; in particular, they are committed to the defence of human rights such as the right to life, dignity, personal freedom, religious freedom and education. They actively promote respect for the dignity of men and women without distinction of race, language or religion;

- form a movement of opinions through dialogue with every socio-cultural reality, enhancing the communication processes with socio-cultural exchanges and interreligious opportunities. Furthermore, as opportunities arise, they participate in all initiatives of solidarity and volunteerism that are considered particularly relevant to the Salesian charism, in line with the provisions of the current regulations;

- update and are responsible for the formation of permanent associates, according to the values of the education received. They live, promote and support the economic, human, and spiritual solidarity among the members of the Association and with organizations and religious and civil groups present in the area. They take care, in particular, of the friendship and sharing with the Past Pupils of Don Bosco and the Salesian Cooperators and other groups of the Salesian Family.

We the Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, are called to speak in the first person and as an Association, through our mission, the seeds of the "education received." This can be done with good professional training, as in the society in which we live, to respond to the difficulties and problems of everyday life. It is essential to have an appropriate expertise in various fields such as politics, culture, environment, ethics, economy, and others.

In addition, it is essential to be aware of the importance of "being" over "doing"; therefore we commit ourselves to grow as persons with values and healthy principles, able to discern and choose responsibly. We cooperate in the promotion of initiatives and appropriate ways to guide others in their choices. Being an association ... is a point of reference for other people. We do not confine ourselves to live in our own little happy world, where we believe that our personal success is the only thing that counts but let us strive to look beyond, committing ourselves to the common good, because each of us is responsible and can contribute to building a better world. With our commitment we can show that people are more important than things.

We were brought up according to the Gospel of Jesus, embodied in Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. Now becoming more aware of our identity with courage and passion, we believe that our mission should consist of *being* and having "the hands in the world with the roots in the heart."

We want to commit ourselves with continuity in personal, spiritual, and social growth. We strongly feel the urgent need to continue the journey undertaken with courage, hope and faith ... alongside our Sisters, in co-responsibility, according to one's particular situation and vocation, looking towards the same goal that we intend to achieve: holiness.

"There will come a time, when our dear past pupils will become the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians working in the world because they are called to be directly co-responsible in our works." (Mother Eulalia Bosco, 1934)

Individually, in our environments, we can therefore testify what we are, what we believe in. Our lifestyle should characterize our every action and involve every person in our life -- within the family, at work, in our educational mission -- implementing the educational values that we have received and we undertake to face a life in the light of the Gospel. Together, united in our Association, we the Past Pupils from all over the world, of the same physiognomy, with a precise identity and shared roots, history, goals, can really be a moving force. We can contribute and make

that change that we would so much want, where the Kingdom of God could touch and recognize the love that unites and involves every member of our Association which has no boundaries and embraces the entire world!

For the future of the Association, we hope and we work for this: to be a flame that shines ... "with the hands in the world and its roots in the heart." We then strive to transform our lives in the light of Salesian spirituality to become "good Christians and honest citizens" following in the footsteps of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.

WORK SHEET FOR THE COUNCIL OF THE CONFEDERATION, OF THE FEDERATION, OF THE UNION AND FOR ALL THE PAST PUPILS ALL OVER THE WORLD

1. Read carefully the text of the Fourth Nucleus: "Words of Paola Staiano to the Delegates, Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians."
2. As Past Pupils we are part of the Association for the "education received" and, with a sense of gratitude, we are committed in various ways and in different degrees to participate in the Salesian mission in the world. How do we make real and concrete the Salesian mission of today in the world as a Past Pupil? Share your testimony.
3. One of the aims of our Association is the advancement of women. Are we truly working to achieve this goal or do you think we could and should do more? What would you suggest?
4. In your Federation or Union are there some projects for the promotion of young people and women or people in need? Why not think about it?

Prayer of the Past Pupils of the FMA

O Heavenly Father, Thy goodness has entrusted me to Mary Help of Christians since my younger years. With her maternal help, enable me to face life with the mind-set of Jesus and to hold on to his way of love in the Holy Spirit. With Mary, that I may do your will even in difficulties and always believe with confidence and hope in Thy Providence.

I pray, Father, that our Sisters may be images and extensions of the Virgin Mary Help of Christians in the world and may by her mighty aid, all Past Pupils may live their baptismal commitment by being good Christians and honest citizens until they reach the eternal happiness in heaven. Amen

