



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Via dell'Ateneo Salesiano, 81 – 00139 Roma

INITIAL GREETING VII INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF FMA PAST PUPILS

Rome, 30 July 2021

Good morning!

Dearest Sr. Maria Luisa Miranda, Councilor for the Salesian Family,

Dearest Sr. Gabriela Patiño, World Delegate of the FMA Past Pupils,

Dearest Maria Maghini, Confederal President

Dearest participants at the VII International Congress,

I thank Sr. Maria Luisa, Sr. Gabriela, and Maria Maghini for inviting me to open your **VII International Congress**, which you desired to organize as the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians approaches, and I also thank you for continuing to live with increasing affection the events affecting our Institute.

The Seventh International Congress, someone might think, “only the seventh?” Yes, because you have **always** wanted them close to significant dates for the FMA Institute. This time it is a jubilee anniversary, the 150th anniversary of its foundation.

On the digital platforms

The choice of implementing the Conference with digital tools, even if oriented by the pandemic situation in which we live, assumes the meaning of **an openness as broad as possible** to the participation of everyone. To be physically present at a congress involves travel, expenses, and consequently limits the possibilities of attendance. The use of platforms then becomes an important tool for **sharing and involvement**.

The commitments

You will have the opportunity to suggest directions for choosing the **guidelines of commitment**, a wonderful experience immediately after the drafting and approval of the new Statute and on the eve of the election of the new Confederal Council. I am sure that you will respond to the appeals of



Pope Francis, especially those for the New Global Pact for education, the care of our common home, the economy of Francis, and 'universal fraternity'.

Resiliency

The theme chosen for this VII International Congress **responds** with immediate evidence to the needs of **our time**. We are all called to live the difficulties and problems of the present, making them instruments of **growth and openness to the new**, avoiding being overwhelmed by the temptation to fear that everything will end because the world we thought we knew is dying, while leaving room for a new world that we must learn to decipher and love.

Externally there are many situations; the pandemic with all its consequences, various forms of violence and war, many natural disasters seem to constitute insurmountable obstacles to our will for the good. **Internally**, some Unions may experience difficulties in proceeding, in building the future. These are all humanly predictable situations, but when they accumulate, they risk oppressing us. I would like to invite you to look at **Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello**. They did not live in easier times than ours, albeit for different reasons. Often they did not know where Our Lady would lead them. When they thought they had found the way, they saw it blocked by all kinds of obstacles. Yet neither of them gave in to discouragement, neither of them decided to back down. And neither will we or you!

In their time there was no talk of resilience, but the **peasant culture** which was theirs, knew its meaning well: so much work, so much effort and then a hailstorm, a period of drought or a storm was enough to ruin the harvest. One did not stand by and watch the disaster. They rolled up their sleeves, saved what could be saved, and **started over**. I would like to recall two moments in which Mama Margherita (John Bosco learned from her) and Mary Domenica were able to be particularly resilient.

When Francis Bosco died, **Mama Margherita** found herself alone with three children to raise and an invalid to look after. She immediately set out **to provide**: adaptation of the small building recently purchased so that it could become the family home, search for work, intelligent use of resources ...



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After the typhus, **Mary Domenica** found herself frail and unable to continue working in the fields. She chose the path of service to others that was in the measure of her strength and that allowed her to continue to do good. She identified **a path** that seemed possible to undertake successfully, which she had certainly not thought of in the past.

There are many examples of resilience in our and your history. It could be a challenge to identify someone in your environment, where you live and work today. There are presences made possible by the courage and faith of some people. There have been occasions in which groups of Past Pupils have **saved the life of the FMA**. There have been and there are situations in which you have transformed our works into 'lay' so **that they could continue** or you have taken over their management in full so that the **charismatic proposal** would not diminish in an area...

Our Lady, who wanted us, has never abandoned us and will not abandon us. She may permit us to be tried, but never defeated. Mary Help of Christians is faithful in her commitment and she continues to look at you with tenderness, to spread her mantle over you, over your homes, over your families.

Resilience is not just a human quality to be cultivated, but a **spiritual force** that nothing and no one can break down.

Tomorrow you are called to choose, through your Presidents, the members of the new **Confederal Council**. Alongside the other qualities, also look at the capacity to hope against all hope (cf. Rm 4:18), which is the Pauline translation of resilience.

If the Confederal Councilors are women and men of hope, courage, attentive to the suggestions of all, and willing to take risks, you will be able to continue the journey serenely.

We FMA will never let you lack our fraternity and our support, just as we are sure that you will never let us lack them.

Fruitful Work!

Superior General FMA