



**World Confederation of Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**  
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Dearest Past Pupils,

110 years ago, on 19 March 1908, Fr. Filippo Rinaldi founded the FMA Past Pupils Association. We all rejoice and thank this Salesian Superior with a great and wise heart who, with the first oratorians and FMA, wanted us associated to help us give life to the values learned in the Salesian house.

On the anniversary of this foundation, I would like us to look at our Founder together as the one who accompanied the birth of the Association and who, with his paternal care, impressed on it the identity that still characterizes it today. His gestures and his words become the source from which we are invited to drink fresh water and find in it the response to the invitation the Church and the Rector Major have addressed to us in preparation for the Synod of the Young. We are helped by the first lay President of the Association, Felicita Gastini, who knew Fr. Philip Rinaldi personally and gave testimony about him at the introductory phase of the Process of Servant of God.

Here are her words: *"I knew the servant of God and personally spoke with him on March 8, 1908, when he founded the Association 'Saint Angela Merici Past Pupils'. He personally directed the external Oratory of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Every Sunday, he came to this Oratory, not only to give religious instruction, but to provide confession for the students, listen to them, and interest himself even in the smallest details. He was really a father for the girls. He found them work and for this goal, he founded the Secretariat for the pupils and past pupils. He visited them if they were sick and helped them with resources and medicine if needed"*.

In this description of the first President, we find a 'father' who knows how to accompany and, as the decalogue says, with Salesian accompaniment. He dedicated time for personal encounters, listening with the heart of Christ the Good Shepherd, and favoring a spiritual climate with his humble and joyful presence and witness. *"The joy that we past pupils felt in being together again after many years apart cannot be described. Before our Association, once we were married, we no longer frequented the Oratory. The Servant of God himself enjoyed our great happiness and was very satisfied at having procured it"*, the President adds.

Fr. Rinaldi was for the first Past Pupils, the person who helped them to look at life with trust and hope, walking beside them, encouraging them, welcoming them, and offering them his contribution. In fact, *"in 1909, he advised and supported the Mutual Aid Society among the past pupils, which did so much good...he provided monthly conferences, inviting valued orators; he also instituted the Spiritual Exercises in preparation for Holy Easter ... Many past pupil mothers expressed the desire to have him bless their children, and immediately the Servant of God added to the solemn procession usually done on that Sunday, the beautiful and dear blessing of the children that was repeated and is still repeated every year ..."*

These gestures speak of a wise accompanier from whom we can all learn, because as the Rector Major says in the Strenna, "we want the young to be able to discover a way of living and of dreaming their life where they mature values like gratitude and giving, openness to others and openness to God".

I wish you all a happy anniversary and I invite you to be, like Fr. Rinaldi, accompaniers in the family, in the places where we find ourselves with others.

You are always in my prayers, with much affection,

Sr. Gabriela Patiño O.  
Confederal Delegate