

**The Father pronounced a Word his Son.  
And in the silence, it must be  
heard by the soul.**

**St. John of the Cross**

***Union***

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# Letter of the President



## The most beautiful gift is to make others happy

*The most beautiful gift is to make others happy*

*“Jesus, I am also a child. I see that everyone thinks of Christmas as a gift party. The shops are full of people who buy trees, ornaments, mangers, sweets and so many more. I am a poor child; you know it, Jesus.*

*Could I ask you for a Christmas gift?*

*I dream of a different world in which all children have the right to be born, to live. There are so many who do not have a family; they live in the streets, abandoned, defenseless, and homeless. How can they live like that?*

*Jesus, I think that to change the world it is necessary to overcome selfishness and open the heart to others.*

*Why are men so divided and locked in themselves until they reach the height of despising others? Isn't it true that God is the Father of all? I believe, Jesus, that we are brothers and sisters; but I see around me so many adults who do not care for others, do not know how to see the sufferings and tears of children like me.*

*You came to this world to help us overcome hate and violence, to teach us to love. Children, who live on the street if we do not find love in our lives, how will we be able to believe in love?*

*This Christmas, Jesus, help us, children and young people, to have hope. We need many things. Where will we find a suitable house to live with our family? There is no work and, therefore, there is no salary. We are forced to ask for alms to calm hunger; we do not have health services; we live in fear of being rejected by others. How beautiful it would be to be able to study and learn a trade! But nobody helps us.*

*What will Jesus be like this Christmas? Make everyone able to discover that in every human heart, there is a great capacity to love. You have created our heart in the likeness of God to love and be loved.*

*Jesus, help the street children.*

*A Child”.*

You, Past Pupils, what will you do for the lives of these millions of children? What will our Association do? Their lives depend on you, on all of us. Their sufferings are the result of the injustice of our consumerism. We are not able to share. We must learn to discover what lies behind a look, a tear, a smile from an abandoned child. Our nations, crammed with weapons and violence, need to take the path of dialogue to achieve peace, forgiveness, respect for the freedom and dignity of each person.

May this Christmas bring us closer to Our Mother Help of Christians and the Lord Jesus and help us to commit ourselves in the construction of more human and fraternal society. All street children will find the hope of living to the extent that we can overcome selfishness and learn what true Christian solidarity means. “There is more joy in giving than in receiving” (Acts 20, 35). Therefore, he is happy who gives.

**Merry Christmas!**

**María Maghini**

(\*From NP 2007/10, Father Luciano Mendes)



# A thought to live by



## MERRY CHRISTMAS! To each his own

*I borrow the idea of Monsignor Tonino Bello to express my good wishes for Christmas; he, in a pastoral letter to his diocese, wrote, "The error is on the pretense of wanting to find ways preconceived as a cliché that suits everyone. On the contrary, at Christmas, we cannot wish other stereotypes".*

It is indeed very convenient and practical to use Christmas cards with golden letters that tirelessly recite, MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR! Nowadays it is very easy, also, to send a text message, by any social network or email, to all our friends by pressing just one key. Most websites offer Christmas cards free of charge, and you do not even have to type address after address, but with a simple click, we send the message to the entire list of contacts saved in the digital agenda. However, at Christmas, those messages should not be sent in chain.

One thing is to wish Merry Christmas to someone who is lost within the crowd of the mall, busy and stressed, perhaps because he must find the right gift for everyone and does not know what to choose. There are too many people, the lines at the cashier seem endless, and in those races, you do not even remember why Christmas presents are given. Another thing is to wish Merry Christmas to someone who comes from afar as an immigrant and is working on something that perhaps he did not expect, someone who has the body here but the heart there, in his land, where children do not even imagine the opulence of a supermarket in a rich area.

Is very different wishing Merry Christmas to those who listen to Radio Maria every night, using its company to bear the pains of old age that do not leave you alone, imagining a small baby Jesus plump and pink as the prints of long ago, because he is not able to imagine him begging as the children of the street, raising prayers to this delicate Jesus with his Mother through infinite Rosaries. It is very different, he said, to wish Merry Christmas to a missionary who must see children like Jesus die of hunger every day, even knowing that Christ is the announcement of justice that men have failed to carry out.

Merry Christmas to you, that work too much, because that's what your career demands; for you who simply thinks about going to your old house for a little while at Christmas but

with the hope that the end of the year you will spend with your friends for a walk either in the solitude of the mountain or in the tumult of cities, responding to the plans that travel agencies offer today. For you, you fill the agenda of appointments and commitments so that you do not have time to ask yourself, "What is the point of all this?" Nevertheless, it is very different from saying Merry Christmas to you, a young volunteer who goes in the ambulance, taking time away from sleep or entertainment with your friends, because you have understood that happiness and joy are found close to each other.

Also for you, the catechist for the children of Christian initiation, because to them you dedicate energies, love, prayer and all the enthusiasm that you manage to keep alive in spite of the difficulties that sometimes you have to listen to. Also, for you, retired "that you still have strength", that you take care of the church as if it were your home and that you worry because the manger of this year arouses, at the same time, charm and nostalgia.

I want to say to you, Merry Christmas, dear sick man who has lost hope; you look for the answers to your "why" in the eyes of those who visit you. Yet you find the courage to face this last act of your life just thinking of That Man who suffered in another Calvary. It will be very different from saying Merry Christmas to you, dear newborn, tender and sweet, a promise of a future for a world that seems not to have it.

Merry Christmas to all because that child born in a cave does not expect official recognition from us: he loves us, and it is enough!

Concetta Apolito



# *In the beginning the Word*

*Do whatever he tells you*

You too are a Christmas light when you illuminate, with your life, the way of others through kindness, patience, joy and generosity. You can be part of the Christmas angels when you sing to the world a message of peace, justice and love.

*Pope Francis*



# DON BOSCO “SAINT”

## Saint as educator and educator of saints



by Antonio Martinelli \*

### INTRODUCTION

Don Bosco is known and recognized by both the Church and the world civil society, as a father, teacher and friend of youth: the saint of youth, precisely.

It is characteristic of his human and Christian experience the synthesis, personal and operational, between holiness and education, offering the Church the profiles of the first young saints who were neither martyrs nor religious: it is Santo Domingo Savio and Santa Laura Vicuña.

The Salesians, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the death of Don Bosco in 1988 formulated and presented, at the initiative of the Rector Major, Fr Egidio Vigano, a request to the pope at the time, John Paul II: grant to San Juan Bosco the title – for the first time in history and of an absolute novelty – of **“doctor of education”**.

The request was denied for being out of any Vatican scheme and tradition. However, they are two different things: to have an officially recognized title and to possess the qualities that would be worth the title. That is, in Don Bosco, certainly, we find all the substance of a “doctor in education”.

I wanted to calm my curiosity by searching the internet for the results that appear before the words: “education and holiness”. To my surprise, I found many results that not only came from Salesian environments but also studies prepared by people outside our surroundings; these are significant and interesting references for those who want to continue the research.

Try also to do this search, and you will be surprised in the same way as I did.

### EDUCATION – EVANGELIZATION

The questions that arise when we join these two terms are many.

I share, first, some certainties that guide the life of the world, under any sky. I will immediately stop at the questions that should be resolved.

I start with our convictions:

Every civilization finds its foundation in the culture that becomes solid over time; It gathers all the experiences and the stimuli that arise from the experience, concrete or reflected, of young people and adults. In other words: all civilizations are daughters of culture.

We must not forget or underestimate the fact that culture is nurtured, sustained and reformulated thanks to that fragile but indispensable instrument we call education. When education enters in crisis, the values of a culture and civilization also enter into crisis.

All this evidence, if there was a need to highlight the crucial importance of educational processes in the lives of individuals and peoples. Here precisely the profile of Don Bosco who, from a higher calling, devoted his life to young people and their human, professional and Christian appear.

Here a need arises to clarify the relationship between EVANGELIZATION and EDUCATION because, in the common language, it is easy to use the motto Evangelize by educating and educating by evangelizing. The difficulty is that the accuracy of both terms must be demonstrated.

How do we use this expression? How do you want to communicate? What is the relationship that should be established? Would evangelization be first and then education? Or it would be precisely the opposite, first education and then evangelization?

Generally, this way of thinking puts into consideration and is more concerned with aspects of value presented by the Word of God that surpass all the words of men, even those who are wise.

Or it also takes into account the chronological aspects in concrete and daily work: let’s pay attention

to evangelization, and we will also achieve the objective of paying attention to education. Others, meanwhile, argue otherwise.

After all possible reasoning, perhaps, could we conclude that the two realities (evangelize and educate) have meanings (evangelization deals with and looks for things that would not be found in education) and prospective (evangelization focuses on the relationship of God and man while education deals with what is between man and the world) would they not have points in common?

Could we not be struck by the doubt that it would be necessary to review the meanings and prospects of the two terms in question in light, not only of the tradition that has reached us until today but also of the confrontation with the path taken by human sciences, and for the better understanding of the Word of God through the reflections of the Second Vatican Council?

The final question would be: What does it say and what does the Gospel of the Lord Jesus contribute to education? And what does it say and what does education contribute to the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth?

### A PATH FOR AN OUTWARD ROAD

Always in human reflection (indicated by a few names known by all as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle), education was considered the “flourishing of humanity”.

Recent studies that encourage those who refer to

Don Bosco as an educator indicate that education is “*care and full flowering of the human being*”.

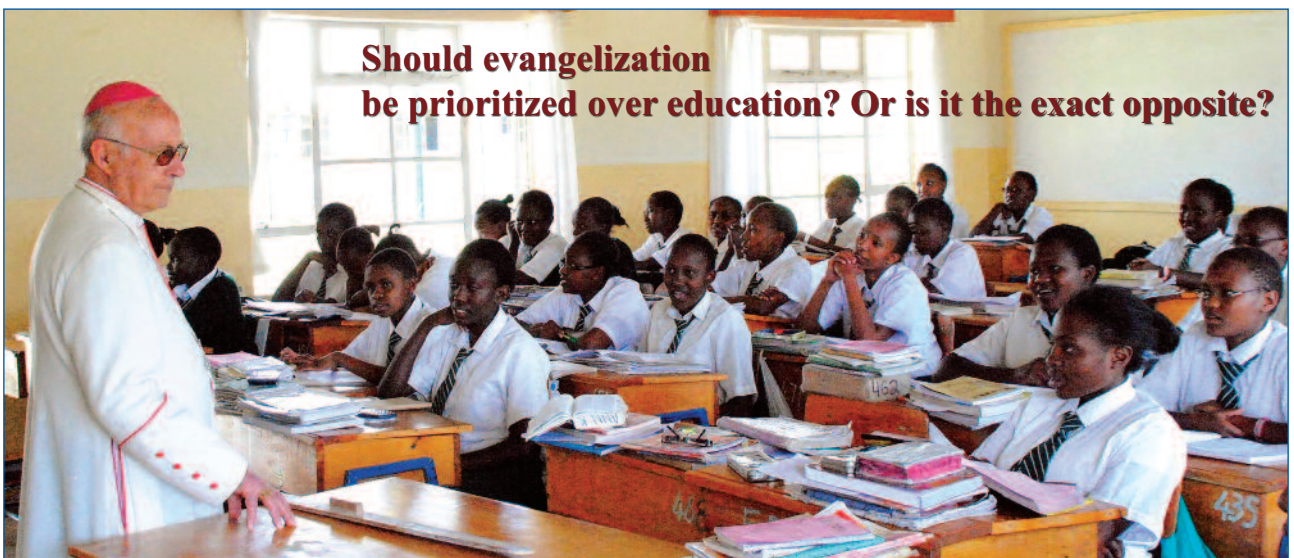
Continuing with this line of thought, Pope Francis has come to conclude decisively, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate*, that *holiness is the flourishing of the human* that lives the next door. Education is indispensable for the fullness of life, for the search and achievement of happiness, bliss, and beautiful life.

The paths for evangelization and education may be different, but the endpoint is the same.

Monsignor Domenico Pompili, Bishop of Rieti, has a very useful way of immediately explaining the objective shared by evangelization and education: love. Affirming and proclaiming: *the flowering of the human is charity*.

Returning to Don Bosco, it must be affirmed that the preventive system with its demands of Reason, Religion and loving-kindness, at the same time with its accompaniment methodologies in the harmonic growth of man, responds brilliantly to the requirement of meeting with evangelization to a mutual and effective dialogue with a view to holiness. A dialogue that takes into account the renewal, both of content and perspective, of the “keywords” typical of Salesian education so that they are not mute or, worse, counterproductive for the modern world.

Testimony of this is Saint Domingo Savio and Saint Laura Vicuña, as well as many other young people, who have shown that the path on which education and holiness converges is possible. \* SDB



# GRETA Y FRANCISCO

## Let's save the earth

by Anna Maria Musso Freni \*



**We know Greta Thunberg well.** We saw her sitting with some pride with the greats of the UN; we hear her address, in a strong and accusing voice, to the powerful who dominate the world political scene. This young woman, a candidate for the Nobel Prize, has made thousands of young people from half the world to go out to the streets asking for political solutions to the ecological catastrophe that threatens humanity.

Although, with malice, some wonder if there are economic interests behind the reasons that lead little Greta not to attend classes, and although there are also those who observe that, instead of publicly demonstrating in the squares, young people should engage more seriously in their studies or engage in specific activities, however, it has been very satisfying to see students march through a problem that has to do with the future of the world. It is time to say that, in addition to marching, in some places, students

have also dedicated themselves to cleaning streets, squares and riverbanks.

**The tone of the protests has been hard and controversial;** It owes its effectiveness to a pragmatic culture that demands quick and immediate responses, a culture that expresses its rage through social networks. Pope Francis's position on the problem is very different, masterfully treated in the encyclical *Laudato Si'* and resumed in his recent trips to Africa, in weekly hearings, in Sunday prayers. The Pope's tones are not aggressive or controversial, and his ecological prospect has a biblical air that is referred to at the beginning of the book of Genesis: "In the beginning, God created heaven and earth." The Earth, so beautiful and bright, seen from space, as the astronauts would say, is the same contaminated, degraded and agonizing Earth that scientists see at ground level.

**The Christian cannot do without an ethical vision of ecology** that is based on the relationship with God, with





the neighbor and with the Earth itself. The rupture of one of these relationships produces a sin that is called "social sin" that we must be accounted for. Creation is the gift of God, the work of his love; Man and woman have been called to take care of her, and her "domain" must be understood as a service and not as a submission, which breaks the laws of nature. The human being, being a victim of an unbridled desire for economic growth, thirsty for power, sick of individualism, has forgotten the Franciscan relationship with the cosmos that considers as his brothers every living being.

**Behind the merciless exploitation of the planet's** resources that are leading to destruction, a serious anthropological error does not consider the common good as a duty or the common house as a gift. It is the ruthless logic of those who do not know how to answer the meaning of life or do not even ask about it. The ruthless logic of those who ignore the value of each living being, who proclaims the culture of discarding by eliminating everything that does not work or that does not produce economic growth.

**Policies that are deaf to respecting difference,** of poverty, of fragility, have produced a change in the climate to the detriment of the living conditions of the world's poorest, with water pollution making access to drinking water very difficult in the most degraded countries, with air pollution, especially in large cities, due to the emission of toxic gases, the place has become inhabitable. All these, together with policies of deforestation of large green areas and fires, more or less natural in the extensive rain forests, has caused the disappearance of biodiversity with irreversible damage to ecosystems.

Where and how are hazardous wastes from industrial production and, even worse, radioactive waste dumped? It is better to say it in a low voice although it would be better to shout it aloud: they are dumped in the depressed areas of the planet, where the poor get sick and die for no apparent reason.

**The degradation of the Earth, Francis** warns, is the degradation of man who must discover the meaning of his own identity in Christ. In Him, the right measure must be found to relate to nature, in Him who admired the lilies of the field and the birds of the sky, who gave orders to the wind to calm the storms of the sea that he knew how to carry rebel sheep on his shoulders avoiding abuse.

In a perspective of faith, the Christian must listen to



the language of God's love in Creation; find in nature the geographical place of dialogue with Him. In the dialogue of prayer, overcome individualism by discovering new forms of relationship and participation, valuing the cultural wealth of all peoples, modifying their lifestyle, replacing the culture of Discard by the culture of recycling and reuse.

**It is also true that it is up to the greats of politics and scientists** to find solutions that can counteract the ecological catastrophe, adopt forms of growth based on justice; based on an adequate distribution of the goods of the Earth and in a deeper dialogue between religion and science.

Relying on the innate abilities of man, the Pope is convinced that solutions can be found. It reminds us, however, that this is everyone's commitment: the school, the family, the catechesis, the institutions that must educate to achieve a diverse behavior, based on the respect of the person, on the protection of life in all its ways, in the attention to the poor and the less privileged.

**Also to us, as ordinary citizens, simple people of everyday life,** it is up to us to acquire new habits by accepting some disallowances, allowing us to be transformed by the encounter with Christ, living the relationship with the environment like that prayerful contemplation of Saint Francis.

**Contemplation in which it is possible to love even pain and death** in the context of the eschatological vision of the end times when we will be transformed by the beauty of God, beginning and end, Alpha and Omega of all things.

\* Past Pupil Fed. Piemonte Maria Auxiliadora

# The Way to Sanctity

## SAINTS AND CHRISTMAS VISIONS

By the Editorial Staff

Some saints enjoyed the privilege that, according to the evangelist Luke, was granted to Simeon: to have the Child Jesus in his arms. We have news that Bernardo de Claraval, Francis of Assis and Antonio de Padua had visions about the birth of Jesus. In ecstasy, Bridget of Sweden saw the painless birth of the Virgin Mary. Among the wide multitude of mystics who lived the same experience, we must highlight Edith Stein, converted from Judaism to Christianity, and María Valorta, who wrote the *Poem of the God-man*.

**Saint Francis** felt like few others a special attraction for the divine childhood; built the first representation of the manger, which is news, in Greccio. We know that it was the “poor little Assisi” who had the intuition to recreate the conditions that accompanied the birth of the Savior. I had the deep conviction that it was possible to find God in the history of humanity. There lies the origin of the manger, a sign of consolation and peace, of pilgrimage to the Child Jesus. Saint Francis left written, on the occasion of the celebration of the Passion, the reasons for the representation of the manger: “Because the Blessed Beloved Child has been given to us, and was born for us in exile, and was placed in a manger because there was no place in the inn. Glory to the Lord God high in heaven and peace on earth to men of goodwill”. Following his example, Franciscan poetry appropriated this tender and devoted argument and raised it

to a sublime height thanks to the intervention of the poet and friar Jacopone de Todi.

**Saint Alfonso de Ligorio** also speaks about the Beloved Child. In the mountains near the Gulf of Amalfi, he saw the misery of the shepherds and peasants to whom religious instruction never came. That was when he composed the famous carol **Tu scendi dalle stelle (You descend from the stars)** that soon became a reference for popular Christmas devotion.

At the end of her short life, **Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus** understood that the way of God is the way of love, the way that motivated Jesus to become a man. Teresa chose, then, the path of spiritual childhood through which she wanted to become a child, trusting totally in the love of Jesus. She wrote: “I am an incapable, weak girl; However, my weakness gives me the audacity to offer myself as a victim of your love, Jesus”.



There was no difference also from a close companion of sister Teresa, **Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross**, she also wrote, in turn: “Let us put our hands in the hands of the Divine Child, let us say our “yes” in response to his invitation to “follow me”; Only then can we be his

“Christmas”,  
work of Lorenzo Monaco.

possession and can his divine life be freely poured into us. This is the beginning of the divine life in us.”.

The Saints contemplated the Celestial Infant with a spirit in which a more vivid feeling of adoration, gratitude and even indignity before the Mystery merged the most careful tenderness. Angels were often depicted in these birth visions as musical performers. The Franciscan tertiary **Pudenciana Zagnoni** (1583-1608), mystic and Bolognese seer, knew, in the last years of her brief existence, a mystical experience whose transcendent character impressed her family and her confessors but, above all, her doctors, called in to attend her. The latter verified the reality of their stigmas and the bloodied crown of thorns that, during ecstasy, appeared immediately above her head. A few months before her death, the angelic apparitions had numerous witnesses. On **Christmas Day 1607**, the Virgin Mary appeared to Pudenciana and placed the Baby Jesus on her arms, while angels sang the *Gloria In Excelsis Deo* melodiously. All her relatives and neighbors who were present in her house heard that heavenly song, ran at the foot of her bed, and observed a splendid light: “she exhaled a soft perfume”.

For her part, **Anfrosina Berardi** (1920-1933), a few months before her death, had on the **Christmas morning of 1932** the vision of a choir of celestial spirits that sang praises to God accompanied by different types of musical instruments: Snatch by an enthusiasm of mystical ecstasy turned to her mother and shouted: “Oh, mother, give me a bugle or a trumpet, or any instrument with which I can join the angels to celebrate with them the Glory of the Lord! When her mother warned her that they were too poor to buy these objects, she had a moment of recollection, watching and listening carefully, despite her extreme weakness, she was able to sing with an extraordinarily clean and pure voice: “Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth to the men that the Lord loves”.

Blessed **Ana Catalina Emmerich** (1774-1824), a German nun beatified by John Paul II in 2004, began in this way the description of what she contemplated



“Christmas”, work of Ghirlandaio.

about the moments that preceded the birth of Jesus Christ: “That light that surrounded the Virgin became more and more radiant so that the lamps that Joseph had lit seemed to fade away.” Also for Mary, full of grace, what was happening was something wonderful; therefore, according to the Blessed, “at midnight Mary was taken in ecstasy and levitated at a certain height from the ground. Her hands were crossed over her chest. The radiance that radiated it became increasingly intense. All nature seemed invaded by jubilation, even inanimate beings. The cave seemed to be animated when it was reached by the light that invaded it. A luminous ray left the Virgin and went towards the sky-high. Up there, I could see an effervescent and wonderful spirit of heavenly glory that was getting closer to the earth”.

More briefly, **Saint Faustina Kowalska**, in her diary, refers to the “Bethlehem tent flooded with lots of light”.

With the same feeling, **Saint Bridget of Sweden**

## Santi in cammino

(14th century) states: “While I was absorbed in prayer, I saw the Child move in her womb and, at the same time, or better, in an instant, her Son was born, and from him came a great glow that not even the sun could confront [...].

*His birth was so fast and instantaneous that I could not observe or discern how and by which part of the body of the Virgin the Child was born. However, I saw immediately the naked and resplendent Child lying on the ground. His body was clean and free of all impurity”.*

At the same time, the saint heard “a soft angelic song of great beauty. Then the Child began to cry and tremble at the cold and hardness of the ground on which he lay, he turned slowly, extended his limbs and sought the protection of the Mother [...]”.

What else can we add to communicate the unfathomable mystery of love that manifests itself in the divinity and humanity of little Jesus in front of his Mother?

**Mother Zauli** describes her visions like this: “I saw

*the Christmas scene in a squalid and poor abode. The Virgin, of a youthful and kind appearance, arranged her belongings with her usual simplicity. Then I saw her departing and entering into an ecstasy of love; suddenly, surrounded by the splendor of light, her Divine Son appeared in the temple.*

*I was allowed to contemplate the first moment of the Incarnate Word that was like a palpitation of very soft and ineffable love for his Divine Father who, on Him, little child, posed all his paternal complacency.*

*The Virgin took Jesus in her arms, with deep humility, with intense charity, worshiped him, and then offered him to St. Joseph; and he also, with deep simplicity, stunned by such greatness, worshiped him; then both, The Virgin and Saint Joseph, presented it to the Eternal Father.*

(Spiritual Retreat, 1946 p. 7).

Sources: <http://www.miliziadisanmichelearcangelo.org>;

Elio Guerriero sábado 23 de diciembre de 2017 -

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November/December 2003 – page 42.

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*“Adoration of the shepherds”, work of Georges de la Tour.*



# Let's walk together In the Founders Charism



## Preferential love for young people

by Sor Gabriela Patiño, FMA \*

*The spirituality of those who are part of the Association is expressed through the care given to young people and in the **preferential love** for them. (Statute 4.3c).*



All young people are worthy of trust, says Mother Yvonne, even those we consider remote, indifferent or reluctant to any of our proposals. Don Bosco reminds us that in the heart of each young person, there is always a rope that we can touch, a point of access to good.

This statement is also current. Pope Francis emphasizes that many young people, despite belonging to those generations of “selfie”, or to a culture that is more liquid than “gaseous”, however, they seek a full meaning for their life, although sometimes they do not look for it where they could find it.

It is precisely among the young that the Past Pupils of the FMA must manifest an irreplaceable attitude: stay awake to awaken young people. “The Association of Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians – affirmed Father Pascual Chavez – is a vital part of the movement to save young people, as part of a wonderful

mosaic; without it, something indispensable would be lacking, according to God’s plan, which has called each group to be an active part of the Salesian Family”.

Therefore, Past Pupils of the FMA, like the other members of the Salesian Family, are called to love young people, take care of them and bring them closer to link them and accompany them on their maturity path with a view to a vocational itinerary. Even to learn from them and with them to dream together a more human world.

Accompaniment, so important and necessary during the process of human growth, is aimed at linking young people in the mission, not as “executors” of what has already been decided and programmed, but as active and irreplaceable “protagonists.” This implies listening to their ideas, entrusting them with responsibilities and tasks, and accompanying them in the evaluation of their commitments.

## Let's walk together

The Statute, in the presentation of the objective of the Association, affirms that "is committed to the education of young people... and favors a constructive youth role through the promotion of initiatives and activities in favor of young people, particularly those living difficult situations".

What has been indicated means that young people are an indispensable field in the mission of each Past Pupil of the FMA. They are sacred ground: God expects us to recognize him in every young man who is full of hope and noble ideals, amidst fragility and poverty, in that "sensible string of goodness" that each one possesses.

Young people need you, us, our family.

**What are your attitudes towards young people?**

**What space do you give to young people in the middle of the many activities you do? What can your Union and your Federation do for them and with them?**

*\* Confederal Delegate*

Together with Pope Francis, let us pray to the Blessed Virgen Mary for our Young people:

**Oh Maria  
Our Lady of Advent,  
that you have kept all these things  
meditating on your heart (cf. Lk. 2:19),  
teach the young  
to be good listeners of your Son,  
which it is Word of Life.  
Intercede for them  
so that obstacles don't get in the way  
on the road that leads them to discover  
that new life  
that your Son has brought to the world.  
Virgin, Daughter of Zion,  
guide every step of our way  
towards the path that leads to life.  
Amén.**



# “She has done everything”

## PRASCONDÚ, SANCTUARY IN VAL SOANA

by Laura Pollino \*

*Great celebrations and festivities were being prepared for the commemoration of the 400 years of the apparition of the Virgin Mary in this corner of the lost world between the mountains of Val Soana (Italy).*

**The most significant monument of Ribordone**, which can be reached through a suggestive street in the town of Sparone, is the Prascondú Sanctuary, built in 1620 and whose origins date back to a special miraculous event. The church guards a wooden icon that represents the Virgin of Loreto, protector of the Sanctuary of Proscodú, which was painted in the 17th century. It is located at 1,321 meters above sea level; the Sanctuary is located in the town of Ribordone, in the province of Turin (Italy). It is one of the most prominent places of worship in the Canavese region and is a traditional goal for devotees and tourists, especially on the celebration that takes place every year on August 27.

**The temple represents the most important expression of religious architecture** found in the territory of the Grand Paradise National Park... The construction of the Sanctuary is because, according to tradition, on August 27, 1619, Giovannino Berrardi, a young man from Ribordone who had been mute the previous year, had a vision of the Virgin Mary. The main celebration that takes place in the Sanctuary is the one that commemorates this miraculous event. The devotion to the Virgin Mary of Prascondú has no origin in any legend but a documented and historically verified with notarial certificates.

Without a doubt, it was an uncommon fact, inexplicable from the scientific field, but documented



thanks to many written testimonies accompanied by great popular devotion to Mary Most Holy.

**We must contextualize “THE EVENT” at a time when there were great difficulties of survival** for the inhabitants of Ribordone. For men, a long itinerant caravan began at the All Saints’ party and ended at Easter. They usually took a teenage son for their company, toured Italy and Europe in groups and worked fixing chimneys and boilers during the winter.

They walked the streets announcing their trade, and when they found work, they stopped at some corner of the street to perform their trade. For them, it was the same to sleep on the grass than on straw or in the stables, wherever they found hospitality.

**In December 1618, five boilermakers of Ribordone** were in the Pavia region, including Giovanni Berrardi with his son Giovannino, 16 years old. Before going to sleep, the father invited his son to pray the prayers of the night. Giovannino, perhaps tired or ill, responded reluctantly with one of the typical

## “She has done everything”

phrases of adolescence. The father insisted until, after an access of anger, he unloaded against the son covering him with blows, with bad words and with a curse: “Never speak again”.

For several hours, Giovannino remained in a state of unconsciousness; then, he began to recover slowly but without speaking. The father prayed so much and promised that as soon as possible, he would take the son on a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Loreto as a penance for his violent act and the poor devotion of the son.

Unfortunately, during the trip back home, the father spent the little money he had earned on doctors and medicines without obtaining the expected results.

Having returned to the mountains of Ribordone, Giovannino had to take care of his family’s flock amid great scarcity and sacrifice because there was a promise to keep: they had to go on a pilgrimage to Loreto!

When summer arrived, the father dedicated himself to tilling the field while Giovannino continued to take care of the flock on the slopes of Colombo Piedmont.



**Here, next to a steep meadow, called by the neighbors “Prasondú”,** Giovannino lived an unforgettable day. The flock was calm and while Giovannino was asleep he had the sensation of a close presence: in front of him he saw a woman with her head covered that reminded him to keep the promise they had made and, before leaving, she added that in that place she wished he would build a chapel dedicated to HER; then disappeared.

Giovannino, overcome the dismay, understood that it was not a dream and ran quickly to where his mother to tell her what happened. Full of curiosity, other women had gathered in front of the house. The young man, excited, told and explained everything as if he had never been mute. For two hours, he spoke with property and... Suddenly, he was speechless again, and spook no more despite the pleas of his father and the parish priest.



**Giovannino’s father, seeing the situation, decided to undertake the pilgrimage** as soon as possible. A countryman with exemplary faith joined them, and on December 26, they arrived in Loreto, attended religious celebrations, received the sacraments and resumed the road perhaps a little disappointed... Giovannino was still mute. On the way back, they found a great cross: Giovannino walked away, knelt and prayed.

When he got up, he addressed his father speaking normally. Having arrived home,



Giovannino again told all the details to the pastor insisting on the requests of the Virgin Mary so that in PRASCONDÚ a chapel was erected in which it was venerated under the invocation of Loreto.

**While waiting for the respective permits from the competent authorities,** the people insisted on the construction of a small church in the same place where Giovannino had witnessed the apparition of the Virgin Mary. The faith of the inhabitants of Ribordone very quickly had managed to gather a large amount of stone and materials to thank Our Lady. The chapel was extended years later to receive a large number of faithful who began arriving from everywhere.

The altar was decorated with six candlesticks of golden crosses and four angels. A glass supported by a golden cross protected the fresco of the main altar representing the Virgin of Loreto. On the sides are two altars dedicated one to Saint Joseph and another to Saint Roque. Many votive paintings appear on the walls.

**This first cult building** was destroyed by a flood of water, and a new one was built in a safer location, beyond the torrent. That is the origin of the

new church that still stands today and that due to its importance and the miraculous event that it remembers was elevated to the category of “SANCTUARY”. It has been followed over time by numerous extensions and restructuring that led to the current architectural complex.

Despite its complexity, a very simple construction highlights the essentials and seeks the comfort of the pilgrims, guaranteeing, in addition, the harmony with the buildings of the alpine zone.

**Today the Sanctuary** continues to be the vital center of many communities. A moment of recollection and prayer we find it precisely here and we feel two steps from the sky where the gaze is lost among the green of the mountains, between the flowered paths, between

the silence, interrupted only by the running of the icy waters of the small stream and the distant sounds of the bells of the grazing herds.

**This is the story of PRASCONDÚ (hidden meadow).**

A final but hedonistic note: after having revived the spirit it is possible, likewise, restore the body with local produce, lovingly prepared by “The inn sun”.



# A Story of Christmas

Taken from “The Gospel of the feet - of Father Antonio Mazzi.”

## **On second thought, his birth was not one of the best.**

He was made flesh in the womb of the humblest of the girls of Palestine. He had been born as a helpless newborn and, as if that were not enough, in a grotto! He first manifested himself to the tattered shepherds of the place, accepted gifts from foreign suspects, set aside the palaces of the king, the castes of intellectuals, the defenders of the immovable sacred law.

With a few hours of life and already had dangerous enemies. Those circumstances forced their parents, with their hearts in their hands, to go into exile from the country. If Herod had found him, the fight would have been truly disparate. Disparate and absurd, and this story of redemption would have ended miserably.

## **Why a God Child? Why give up his omnipotence?**

We know little about his teenage years and youth. However, he did nothing extraordinary. On the other hand, what could he have done? His father was not that Joseph we all knew, that poor man who knew how to work with his hands, a regular assistant to the Temple but who had never thought of having a roll of the Law in his hands? He would barely know how to read and write!

But, in honor of the truth, Jesus, his son, still without completing the twelve years, entertained himself with the temple doctors. This was surprisingly unusual, not only because of its age but because of its social stratum.

## **Do you think this should be the family of a Messiah?**

Did we wait so many centuries for the coming of such a simple man? And what about Mary, his mother? Among her contemporaries were beautiful girls from the best families, beautiful and educated, their dresses perfumed the streets, their vigorous eyes of an indomitable gazelle, their abundant dowry be-

cause they were the daughters of the most illustrious men in the country.

All of them would have been proud to house in their womb and raise the powerful Messiah who would free the people from the foreign yoke and subdue the world by forcing all the powerful on earth to recognize the supremacy of Israel, the Chosen One!

Why, then, did God wanted to destroy simply human power projects? Were they not common sense projects, more comfortable and privileged paths for the status of a Messiah?

**Jesus shortened the distances;** believing in the facts that today all mouths narrate, only faith would be enough to move mountains; one day the hunger of a crowd of people with few fish and some loaves of bread was satisfied. For some, if this Jesus had powers, the multiplication of the loaves would be an insignificant miracle. There are more important things than the stomach! – They say. But I dispute: God, what have you done with your wise men and doctors? What will we do with this book tower?

**Suppose this man is truly the Son of God.** Suppose, likewise, that our heart, so accustomed to comfort, to riches, to the strict norm, would not have recognized the “God made man”. Let us admit the scandalous hypothesis that “God made man” had deprived himself of his immense power and lived among us as any man.

**If all this were true, it would not reach all the ashes of the world to cover our head** as a sign of penance and repentance. Tearing our clothes would not work. If this man were really God... then the cross... would be the throne that man prepared to welcome his God... If all this is true, Lord, then the path you chose is not our path.

**Lord, at what moment did we get lost? What have we not understood?**

Suppose our heart,  
so accustomed to comfort, to riches,  
to the strict norm,  
would not have recognized  
the “God made man”.



# *The Association is Life*

## *Witnesses of an identity*

### From **ARGENTINA** Travel to the end of the world

By the Past Pupils of the Argentina Federation \*

In January, we received wonderful news: the World Delegate of the Past Pupils, Sr. Gabriela Patiño, would visit us.

With great joy we started the preparations, we gave the news to the different Unions, we talked with the members of the Councils, we developed an itinerary, and we had to request a little more time..

Sr. Gabriela postponed her visit to May, a beautiful date! All for being the month in which we honor Mary Help of Christians; and there was no lack of statements such as "The Virgin Mary sends her." Time passed quickly, and on May 10, at night, she reached our land.

It was an accelerated visit because it was necessary to travel many distances with limited time; however, with divine help, we were able to achieve the complete itinerary.

If she was in Argentina, she could not pass the opportunity to visit the Union located in the south end of the world: Río Grande and, subsequently, Río Gallegos. This was the opportunity to meet the past pupils from almost all the Unions. There

they waited for Sr. Gabriela with a beautiful table surrounding her, listening to her words and then they shared with her the works in which the past pupils participate, vulnerable neighborhoods, oratories, transient homes.

The Delegate's visit has motivated us a lot because she told us about Don Bosco, about Mother Mazzarello, about belonging to the Salesian Family, about our mission in the world.

It was not possible to visit all Unions who wanted her presence because our country has great distances; however, the entire Federation followed the itinerary through the internet and with continuous prayer.

Thank you, Sr. Gabriela, come back to visit us soon!

\* Argentina Federation ABA – Buenos Aires



## From **GIAVENO** (Turin – Italy) In the footsteps of Mary Help of Christians for more than eighty years

by Anita Zollini \*



There is a devotion in Giaveno, in the province of Turin, which is preserved generation after generation. The devotion to Mary Help of Christians gathers hundreds of people of all ages in a beautiful procession through the streets of the city.

It was on May 27, 1937, the feast of Corpus Christi, when for the first time the processional platform with the images of the Virgin and Child in her arms



The procession around the streets of the city

and Saint John Bosco on his knees, prepared by Giuseppe Nardini of Milan, temporarily left the Institute Mary Help of Christians to go to the altar of the parish church of San Lorenzo Martir where she would remain for three days to be venerated by the faithful and return later to her “home”.

The young survivors of the war carried the processional Image on their shoulders, fulfilling the promise they had made the previous year so that the Virgin could protect them and return them home, safe and sound, after the war in Ethiopia. So were its beginnings.

The chronicles of the time tell that in the return procession, from the parish church to the Institute, the participation of the faithful was such that the city had never been seen before.

After 82 years to the day, in the same city where Don Bosco was rector of the Archbishop’s Seminary between 1860 and 1862, and where the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians have

The processional path

## *The Association is Life*

worked for young people since 1893, the two evening processions have not ceased to congregate hundreds of faithful in prayer.

At present, those in charge of the procession are groups of volunteers: mountaineers, military, Salesian cooperators and many other faithful. The corps of retired police officers and the musical band León XIII with their command batons precede the procession; civil servants also join the mayor with his tricolor band, the priors and the great Salesian Family formed by the religious, the cooperators and the past pupils.

On Sunday afternoon, after the return from the procession to the Institute of the Mary Help of Christians, the parish priest greets those present with a short homily and the final blessing while the director of the Institute, in turn, announces the names of the spouses who will organize the event the following year.

As requested by tradition, the procession was also held this year on Sunday, May 19, 2019.

“Don Bosco was convinced that one could not reach God without going through Mary – in the same way it is affirmed by both the parish priest of Giaveno, Father Gianni Mondino, as the director of the Institute, Sr. Ana María Giordani – and we are moved to know that year after year the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary continues to gather so many devotees. Let us consecrate ourselves to Her, who is our Help of



Christians, our light that accompanies each step, both in happy moments and in difficulties ones”.

*\* Past Pupil of Giaveno*

***Today the Giaveno procession continues to gather hundreds of faithful.***

## **LET US REMEMBER**

**On November 30 and December 31,  
Holy Mass will be celebrated for Past  
Pupils, FMAs and relatives  
who died during these months.**



From **JERAGO** (Varese – Italy)

## The reunions of the Past Pupils cheer up the hearts.

by Giulia Martinelli \*

It was on August 27 when Carla, president of the Jerago Union, sent us the invitation for the past pupils' group and the community to have a fraternal meeting. It was the day of commemorating the memory of Santa Monica, patron of wives and mothers, a noble but determined female figure in which we can find inspiration for our daily life.

I like Santa Monica, an example for each of us because with dedication she knew how to sow wisdom in the hearts of her children, she had a great capacity to read and meditate on Sacred Scripture, she was a woman of incessant and secluded prayer, and she had the ability to transmit the Christian faith.

The invitation was to meet the past pupils with the Federation Council; It was a desire for communion on a very special day for the parish of Jerago. Precisely, every year, on the third Sunday of September, the Feast of the Sick is celebrated, and it was on this date that we took the opportunity to meet again, greet, celebrate life in community also, some Daughters of Mary Help of Christians close to the community of Jerago joined us. In particular, we had Sr. Paola Rudello among us who this year cele-



brated her golden jubilee of religious profession, Sr. Petronila Colombo, delegate of the Varese Federation and Sr. Giusy Riotti.

The Holy Mass in the parish church of San Jorge, at 4 in the afternoon, was an intense, binding, participated celebration. "Blessed are the least because they will be the first" with these words Father Remo began to nurture feelings of hope in us, to alleviate the suffering of those who are sick, to help us ask for the joy of Paradise where each one will be seen in his complete inner beauty.

Then the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the procession and blessing with the Blessed Sacrament was administered. We appreciate the gentleness in spurts, the delicacy of gestures, smiles, the loving care of those who accompanied the elderly and the sick, and everything was transparent; everything was palpable in the air.

The joyful hugs with the Salesian sisters express palpably the joy of having shared a path and many moments that were engraved in the heart, fruitful encounters, generators of life.

Sor Giusy con Giulia Martinelli



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Later came the appetizer to which all those who wanted to go were invited because the past pupils are like this: linked to the community, with the spirit of humble service that distinguishes us. But more than an appetizer, it was a real buffet that included everything from hors d'oeuvres to coffee through various sweets. That discreet abundance was an expression of the joy of meeting and sharing, in addition to expressing the wish that everyone would return home satisfied, both in body and spirit.

An afternoon in the company of prayer and joy, of reciprocal and affectionate exchange; It was a moment that made our hearts happy and that allowed us to open ourselves to good relationships by bringing news of our lives. There was no lack of sharing experiences, especially those that already have good years on their backs and the occasional pain that they must overcome and transform; sharing the anguish through dialogue allowed them to feel lighter by having a helping hand, a smile, a hug.

We say goodbye with the desire to meet again on the next occasion to share some food and with more time to spare. With Sr. Petronila, Luisita and Sr. Giusy, we returned to the house of Mary Help of Christians in Varese, carrying in our hearts the



echo of the voices, of the intense and dazzling looks and the confirmation that Main's phrase was true: "Only charity (the love of God) is a bond so strong that it is capable of uniting all hearts".

*\* President of the Federation of Varese*

**Moments of the day** with the delegate of the Federation Sr. Petronila Colombo and the president of the Jerago Union.

**Below:** the honoree on her Golden Jubilee of religious profession, Sr. Paola Rudello.





## From **CESUNA** (Vicenza – Italy) **Fabric, Needle, Thread, Yarns And Lace**

by Gabriella Gambarin \*

The past pupils (although some husbands also attended!) in the traditional “THREE DAYS IN THE ALTIPLANO OF ASIAGO” meeting, at the end of June, we suddenly became skilled and virtual “weavers”. This year, with the slogan “WEAVING relationships with God and with our brothers,” Federations Veneto (Padua and Conegliano) organized, as has been done for a decade, the expected weekend VILLA TABOR in Cesuna, including the green and the encouraging mountain air with a very precise reflection and research topic: “FROM THE THREAD TO THE FABRIC”. The objective had already been announced at the last Training Day at the end of March:

- RECOGNIZE THE GOODNESS AND BEAUTY THAT THE LORD HAS “WOVEN” IN MY LIFE.
- VALUE AND REINFORCE THE “WOVEN” ACTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN US AND WITH GOD.

The house of our Salesianas, Villa Tabor, is beautiful, cozy, bright, comfortable, with its neat rooms and open spaces with green panoramas that can be enjoyed outdoors contemplating the white villages of the highlands. Modesty apart, the atmosphere that we manage to create and that always accompanies us is very happy – not to say “loud” – full of cordiality and smiles that come from the heart and our Salesian DNA.

Every year the THREE DAYS IN CESUNA (Vicenza) recharge our soul and body. Besides, the ecological environment helps us by offering fresh and invigorating air to counteract the heat and pollution of the city. Last year the theme was “The aroma” that helped us understand that we are “THE AROMA OF CHRIST”.

This year, since Friday we begin to be aware that “our life, our training, is the result of the fabric that is achieved between various threads that have shaped the work of art that we are today.” When we enter the living room, we find ourselves in front of an exhibition full of fabrics of all kinds, of lace, ornaments, trimmings, chevrons, veils, folders, etc. And each one could choose

“what represents me the most”. There were those who chose a centerpiece with a painting of flying angels, another a handkerchief with a woven letter, another a red ribbon, another a skein of yellow wool, others scissors or a thimble, plus the one who chose a lace of bobbins or one that took a blouse in “macramé” or a cloth bag. Later, first in groups and then in assembly we were invited to share the reasons for our choice, the way we felt represented and then to personalize our portfolio by pasting a piece of cloth, a ribbon or lace.

Saturday was dedicated to the Word of God explained with vivacity and competence, as in the previous years, by Father Alberto Pregno, from the Diocese of Padua, who gave us a biblical journey on the importance of dress in the culture of Israel as a symbol of DIGNITY, IDENTITY and POWER. The itinerary began with Adam and Eve, who realize they are naked and have the experience of the misery caused by sin, until the first and second robes of Joseph, the one symbol of paternal love and the other symbol of authority after the humiliation inflicted by his brothers. They also highlighted the figures of Eliaquim who received this message from God: “I will pass your tunic, I will place your belt and entrust your position”; that of Esther, in whose history Mordecai appears



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dressed in a robe that represents the benevolence of the king and the public recognition of a man who acted with justice; that of Ezekiel for whom his clothing is a sign of God's faithfulness and his love for all, including those who prostitute themselves; the reflection came to the New Testament highlighting that the Merciful Father sent the servants to dress the "prodigal son" with the most beautiful robe; in the case of St. Paul, the apostle exhorts the baptized to "ROBE FROM CHRIST", indicating that Jesus must see in the Christian how the dress looks; hence the feelings of Christ that we must show: tenderness, goodness, humility, meekness, magnanimity, mercy, nobility. Finally, Jesus' words are valuable when he states, "No one removes a piece of cloth from a new dress to patch the old dress." It reminds us: "Take care of the new dress! Take care of the old dress too! We must pay attention to the new and the old".

Needle and thread, patch, sew together, adjust the broken piece. Likewise, the Christian is called to be a needle and thread specialist tailor. The needle is the pain; the thread is Love. To make a "patch", it is necessary to go through and assess, with needle and thread but also with patience and attention.

On Saturday afternoon, we had a lot of movement because a Group of Volunteers from the Association "AD MAIORA – VERONA TEXTIL" had arrived in Verona, founded in 1995. There are 196 members

actively participating in sewing dresses, make blankets, mending clothes that can serve those who need it most. They are so skilled that, although we only had some quilted cloth cuts that were donated, they taught us how to make a beautiful blanket that we could extend completely (having made long stitches between six or seven) at the foot of the altar during the Holy Mass at the closing of the day.

Both in the celebration of the Eucharist and the next morning, before prayer and finally, during the explosive joy of sharing food, we made our words of Father Andrés Panont: "Fabric, needle and thread in the hands of the tailor do not know what the artist does with them? His fortune and courage are found in being available with his hands and trusting his expertise. Likewise, we have understood that if we want to be instruments of UNITY, we do know how to mend the dresses torn by difficulties, it is enough to be in the hands of the DIVINE TAILOR "; This is what Santo Domingo Savio understood by trusting Don Bosco and, therefore, God, his young raw material.

On Sunday afternoon we say our goodbyes; recharged, enriched, rejuvenated in soul and body, grateful to the Association that allowed us to live these unforgettable days and, in particular, recognizing the work of Olivia, Luciana, Roberta and the president who organized and achieved these wonderful days.

*\* Past Pupil of the Federación*

## Da **NOVARA** (Italia)

### exallieve radunate

per un pomeriggio insieme. La preghiera in chiesa, poi quattro chiacchiere e tanti bellissimi ricordi. Ma di essere exallieve innamorate di Don Bosco e Madre Mazzarello non si finisce mai!



# TRADURRE

## From **PIAMONTE** (Italy) The Mary Help Christians Federation says farewell to Sister Magdalena

by the past pupils of the Italian Federation \*

It is our obligation, dear Sr. Magdalena, to give you the last greeting; express all the gratitude and affection on the part of the past pupils of the Piedmontese Federation Mary Help of Christians. Many of your students preceded you on the last and most important journey of life; there surely you will find them in glory.

When you accepted the obedience that sent you to exercise the service of the delegate of Federation of the past pupils, perhaps you were not fully aware that you would transform that service forever. That September day when you timidly entered our Council, with the humility and discretion that have characterized you, you confessed to us that you did not feel prepared to perform that task and for that reason, you asked us for help. "We can dispense of formalities with each other," you warned us. For the people of my generation, treating you as an equal was unthinkable; Moreover, it was considered almost a challenging and blasphemous attitude. But we welcomed with joy the invitation which suddenly made us feel great, important, putting almost lay and consecrated in the midst of a spirit of collaboration that, over time, would grow within the Salesian Family and that in that era (it was the beginning of the eighties) was configured as the first attempt to translate into practice the exhortations of the Second Vatican Council.

**Together we managed to go a long way**, and I will bring up only a few important moments. 1981: Celebration of the centenary of the death of Mother Mazzarello through the congress of the Italian federations in Turin. In that circumstance, we were unexpectedly theater writers and actors proposing on the stage the life of Mother Mazzarello.

**1988**, Rome: participation in the World Congress of the Past pupils of the SDB with great emotion. It was



the first time that the two associations spoke so closely! Later we would learn to dialogue. And together, on other occasions perhaps less important, we transform the lives of the federation a bit with our visits to the territory, giving greater importance to the small Unions, organizing every year two days of spiritual formation in the biggest moments of the liturgical year: Advent and Lent.

We also learned to devote **time to that work of mutual help that Father Rinaldi** loved so much, at the beginning of the associative path, subsidizing needy past pupils and visiting the sick sisters in Villa Salus. How not to remember the beautiful moments lived in the annual walks and the participation in the processions of Mary Help of Christians that took place in the Unions of the province on the last Sunday of May! We started from the Plaza María Auxiliadora in a bus full of Salesian and Past Pupils in a party atmosphere; so also the pilgrimages in the Savoie region, following the footsteps of San Francisco de Sales, in the search for our roots.

**One of the greatest and most binding initiatives** was the linking we achieved with a small Union on the island of Cuba; the surprising figure of 5 million lire was collected, to sustain their social activities, and delivered to Sr. Maria de los Angeles who left for the island. With that amount, the past pupils were able to build a sewing workshop. Together we also participated in European congresses, world assemblies, accompanying the Federation towards its glorious centenary of life celebrated in Turin in 2008. At that time, you were no longer our delegate, but you were still a member of our associative life with your attention and participation. **You did not miss any important initiative**, no mo-

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ment in the life of the Church, in the Diocese, no occasion for cultural growth. With great discretion and delicacy, you always asked us to link in a way that was impossible to avoid.

And after you decided on retirement, we continue to feel you close and attentive, present in the difficult moments of our private lives, at the times when you made us feel the company of prayer.

**Dear Sister Magdalena,** you made us understand that a vocation lived with joy and coherence motivates the people we meet so that they can also live their vocation, secular or consecrated, with the same dedication and consistency, because this is what happiness is all about.

**You were a great delegate, a great FMA, a great woman.**

Thank you for everything you did for this cause. Thank you for having loved us; we love you too.

*It is extracted from the obituary for the funeral of Sister Magdalena Canale.*

**Sr. Magdalena Canale** was born in Turin – Italy, on May 24, 1924, the first of three sisters, in a family of strong Christian principles. She attended the FMA School in Valdocco and felt the call to the cloistered life, but her spiritual director urged her to choose the FMA Institute. In 1943, she became an aspirant. After the religious profession, in 1946, she studied literature at Castelnuovo Fogliani and, after graduation, began teaching at the Mary Help of Christians Institute in Turin. In 1958, she was sent as director to Conegliano Veneto, and in 1963 she was appointed provincial vicar of the Immaculate house. Then she was transferred to Casale, and later she returns to Turin, to the Maria Auxiliadora house, where she remained a teacher in the period 1970 - 1982, becoming at the same time a delegate of the past pupils, first in the Maria Auxiliadora Union and, later, from the Piedmont Mary Help of Christians Federation. Since 1982, she continued her mission at the Virginia Agnelli Institute. She served as a delegate of the Federation until 2000; since 2006, she was staying at the San José Retreat House in Turin. She passed away on August 14, 2019.

From **CAVAGNOLO** (Turin – Italy)

## Social day with great participation of Past Pupils



# The hands in the world

## Commitment without borders

### They know

by Alessandro Ciquera \*

Younes comes from the rural area of Hama in Syria. He is an awake black-eyed boy who lives with his parents in a small village in the mountains of central Lebanon.

A few years ago, he was diagnosed with factor 7, a hematological disease that causes frequent bleeding. They continue to do plasma therapy, but lately, his body has reacted adversely to this treatment: now he needs a very expensive injection to survive and have the possibility of reaching adulthood.

Currently, keeping this child alive in Lebanon is worth \$3,750 each week; an unsustainable cost for a vulnerable family nucleus, even if it were in modern Europe.

We offered him the possibility of traveling with the Humanitarian Corridors to Italy or France, where the National Health System would provide the injection need.

However, after the first dialogues, his father probably disagreed as a result of a patriarchal and hegemonic mentality; with even obsessive manifestations, he interfered so that the child and the family could not ob-

tain the visa and for his wife and children to leave for our continent to receive medical assistance.

Rejecting this opportunity would be crazy for those who enjoy common sense but not for those who respond stubbornly.

At this moment I am in the tent, with the fan on because the heat makes me short of breath; I think again about the dialogues I have had with this family and those eyes of pain of the mother who sees her son slowly weaken come to mind; I wonder, then, about who could I transfer the responsibility for this situation?.

I think that asking the right question is a solution to know which way to go.

Is the fault of the father who grew up in that macho and oppressive context towards women?

Is the responsibility of the Syrian regime and the rebel militias of Syria that, sometimes for opportunism, for thirst for power, have led the country to a bloodbath from which Younes had to escape?

Or perhaps the weight of this situation should fall on the United Nations and Humanitarian Agencies that do not have the capacity to protect the right to health by providing this life-saving medicine to an exiled child?

These are all questions that continue to circulate in my head because I continue confirming from my own experience, during my stay in Tel Abbas, that who kills is indifference. When someone considers that anyway the final sentence if it does not fall on one will fall on another, indistinctly, right there the beginning of the disaster is verified because for him "the other" is not someone worthy of being considered



## The hands in the world

human but a number of which one can do without.

Yesterday was Musaeb's turn; today is Younes's.

At present, what is the price of a child's life? It will probably be proportional to the amount of life we put into what we do. The balance is so unbalanced, only risking one life can you pay the price of another; not offering 50% or other percentages but putting your own life at stake, with a great risk such as watching your home burn, receiving burns and watching the people you loved die helplessly.

Nour enters for the umpteenth time while I am writing, and it causes me a little headache... why do not you understand when I ask you not to enter the tents of the volunteers?

I look around, and I realize that everyday life continues; a chicken passes in front of the door with agile walking, Younes will be somewhere in the mountain passively contemplating the day that passes before his eyes.

How much life and how much pain can be felt at one time; however, this is the option chosen, only a great movement can balance such great human destruction.

The writer Joanne Rowling, author of Harry Potter, with her words put in Silente's mouth comes to my aid: "Having been loved so deeply is something that will protect us forever, even when the person who has loved us is gone; it is something that remains inside us, in the skin".

I look up again; Nour is now rummaging through a mountain of papers and stacked notebooks. You will probably be aware of this law in your heart; otherwise, I would have no explanation why it remains such an active day after day despite having arrived dying, in the arms of her mother, from Syria, due to a disease she acquired during the flight.

Nor would Younes' shy smile and Rim's hugs have an explanation.

They know something that we run the risk of forgetting; they know it's worth it.

*\* Past Pupil Union Mother Mazzarello  
Via Cumiana - Turin*

## From Giaveno to Bombay To find a miracle

By Anita Zolfini \*



In the heart of the immense city of Mumbai (now Mumbai), in distant India, there is a large building that residents call "The Miracle of Sister Eugenie." It is a school that today houses around 2,500 girls and young women and was built in just five years, between 1946 and 1951. Upon entering, the School, at the top, is the photo of the architect of this Miracle: Sr. Eugenia Luigina Versino, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, born in 1905 in Giaveno, in the Buffa area, right where there is now a street that bears her name.

During her novitiate, between 1924 and 1925, she was sent to Oxford, England; in 1926 she professed her religious vows as the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. But it was the missionary path that was prepared for her and India was her goal, a country she would arrive in 1935.

A few months ago, some nephews of this brave and tireless religious managed to realize a dream that they had cherished for years: to walk the steps of their aunt in India to contemplate with their own eyes what she built and what was left of her legacy. María Auxilia, Olga, Valeria and Juliana, daughters of Felix, Sister Eugenia's brother, had never been so far from home.

The other brother was Guido, father of Piercesare and Elio, nowadays residents in the street dedicated to his aunt.

**They arrived in Mumbai on March 28 and left**

**there on April 9:** few days but enough to touch with their own hands what was built by their aunt in a city where misery inhabits every corner. Precisely there, among the last, in the Wadala area, Sr. Eugenia Versino built the **“Auxilium Convent”**, a large three-story structure that is not only a school for many students, starting with the poorest, but it is also a space to awaken in young women a responsible awareness of their femininity. Sr. Eugenia built the building in record time, overcoming setbacks, overcoming obstacles, thanks to a strong faith, knocking shamelessly on the door of the powerful and asking citizens for help in a land that had never heard of the educational model of Don Bosco in which she was inspired.

**“Everything remains as it was then** – its four nieces count –. The building is exactly as it appears in the photographs of the time; only now the life swarm is more noticeable.”

María Auxilia, Olga, Valeria and Juliana left Italy without giving notice to the local nuns who manage the work; they left only with the hotel reservation. “As soon as we arrived in Mumbai, we communicated by telephone with the Auxilium and found the availability of Sister Aruna who, throughout our stay, accompanied us as a guide. We visited the Auxilium house that currently has eleven Salesians of Mary Help of Christians, all native to India. We went to visit the tomb of our aunt who, exceptionally due to our visit, was surrounded by flowers. We were very well received; they even showed us the umbrella she used and

that they keep as if it were a relic. We met an old Salesian priest who met her and told us that she saw in her an authentic force of nature”.

**The four sisters keep alive the memory of that immense Hindu city, chaotic and noisy,** where crossing the street becomes a true feat where any

free space on the sidewalk is desired to build a hut and, for this reason, the poor, also called “invisible,” live anywhere under the indifferent gaze of a passerby. “A misery that gives even more value to what we have and that explains the reason why, in that area, they define the work of Sr. Eugenia Luigina as miraculous”.

**The missionary did not have the time to reap the fruits of the Auxilium House** because, on March 30, 1951, she was thrown from a moving train and died instantly (as reported by the chronicles of that time based on the testimonial reconstruction of a sister that accompanied her). But the life of Sr. Eugenia Versino did not end on those rails, on the contrary, she achieved the “true life”, which she attained thanks to the fact that she never hesitated to surrender her being without reservation for the benefit of the poorest.

*\* Journalist of La Valsusa*



## Reading is an adventure

### Who is against us? by Federico Lorenzo Ramaioli

In the care of Lorenzo Trapassi \*



It is not common that in an essay on the history of law, it can be read as if it were a novel. A compelling historical novel that takes readers years back in time, exactly a century ago, when a handful of young people under the orders of a poet-soldier seized a city and made it the most progressive and multicultural state in the world. But, I repeat, this review does not refer to a novel but to an essay: "Who is against us? History of the Regency of Carnaro from D'Annunzio to the Constitution of Fiume". (It should be noted that the title bears the Latin original: "Quis contra nos?" Which was once the motto of the Regency). Federico Lorenzo Ramaioli has written the work, and its first edition appeared in 2018 with the introduction of Giordano Bruno Guerri.

I think we all know how the company of the city of Fiume (Croatia) was born: Italy won the Great War paying the price of 600,000 dead; however, the extension of the Italian territory to Trento and Trieste, except for Istria and Dalmatia, left out the city of Fiume. The question found no solution at the diplomacy desk and allowed Gabriele D'Annunzio, at that time the most famous Italian intellectual in the world, in addition to a war hero, to coin the term "mutilated victory", igniting the spirits of millions of young people who occupied Fiume with the idea of joining him to the Italian motherland.

The most unknown is, above all, is how the Fiumano State knew how to endow, despite the short time



of existence, a Constitution – the Charter of the Carnaro – which was not only the most progressive of the Constitutions of the time but also he knew how to anticipate legal systems that only decades later became part of Italian legislation. Indeed, in an unmistakable literary style that only the Bardo could implement in a constitutional

text, the Carnaro Charter decreed equal rights for all citizens regardless of sex or religion, instituted universal suffrage and founded a constitutional court that with total independence could guarantee the total respect of the Constitution by all the powers of the State.

And not only that but the Carnaro Charter consecrated art and multiculturalism as founding values of the State, making Fiume not so much a focus of reactionaries but an unprecedented political experiment, an event that was followed by the world press and attracted to some of the best intellectuals of the time as well as ex-combatants, adventurers and young women fleeing from their mothers and governesses ... This beautiful essay rescues the news of the Fiumana company – unfortunately forgotten in the history books – and finally explains it to us with the legal rigor.



#### The Author

He was born in Milan in 1989. Federico Lorenzo Ramaioli graduated in Jurisprudence at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart; after graduating as a lawyer, he collaborates with the chairs of Law Philosophy and Legal Methodology of his University; publishes different works in historical and legal fields. Diplomat since 2016; He is currently Consul of Italy in Freiburg (Germany).



# Family know what you are

## Explore the world of relationships



### FOSTER HOMES Welcoming is love

by Raffaella Messina \*

Along with the legal status of adoption, which we already discussed on another occasion, there is another important and different one that also safeguards the rights of minors; it is the Foster Home. While in the adoption any relationship that could be had with the biological parents is cut, in the foster homes a time limit is established, and the parental relations between the minor and the family of origin are conserved.

In the Protocols for Foster Homes you can read: *“The Foster Home is a form of broad and ductile intervention that consists in helping a family to overcome a difficult time assuming the care of their children through a group of collaborators between a home that welcomes them and the various subjects in the area dedicated to the care and protection of children and maintenance of families. The Foster Home must be understood, above all, as an experience of accompaniment, of shared paternity, and not so much as a replacement. It should be assumed as an addition and not as a subtraction, as a reciprocal recognition of responsibilities and collaboration and not a competition or a loyalty conflict.*

Having one or more dependent children in a substitute home implies assuming the availability of loving them as children despite being aware that they are not; It implies committing to accompany them during a significant period of their lives and having enough courage to welcome them and also release them when the time comes; It means putting into play the ability to host a personal story that can have painful episodes.



Therefore, foster homes mean welcome, love, care, education; help in the process of growth of a human being not based on a biological relationship but on a relationship of solidarity and love as attitudes express the ability to give without having to receive nothing in return more than the joy of having helped.

In the intentions of the legislator are the values that guide the figure of foster household; unfortunately, in reality, things can become different and, sometimes, this legal figure becomes a negative experience either for the minor or for the responsible adult.

There are many ways to exercise the replacement of the home, as well as the laws that regulate it and the “real” experiences of those who have been able to deliver with their own being to the service that can change lives for good.

\* psychologist, Salesian Past Pupil

# Third Millennium

*The present that is already future*

## WOMEN THAT HAVE CHANGE HISTORY

Women of all times that are talked about a lot but little are known

by Cristiana Mariani

### MARY OF NAZARETH He really changed the history of humanity

*“Mary responded to God’s proposal saying: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1: 38.). She did not say, “Let’s see, this time I will do the will of God, I’m available, but then we’ll see...” No. Her answer is a total yes, full, for a lifetime, without conditions. And just as the “No” of the origins had closed the way of man towards God, so the “yes” of Mary opened the way of God among us. “(Pope Francis – Angelus 8 of December of 2016).*

*The Gospel of St. Luke reminds us: “In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, a virgin married to a man named Joseph, from the tribe of David. The name of the Virgin was Mary...”*

*“The Lord is with you.” God, the Eternal Present, goes out to meet Mary, greets her, and reveals her deep identity “Full of God - the Beloved.” He waits for an answer, hopes that Mary chooses to submit her heart to the Word of God. And Mary chooses: “Let it be done to me according to your word.” Choosing God, Mary adheres to the deepest truth of her being: she feels, more than anything else feels, “servant” and thus presents herself, free and unpretentious before her Lord.*

*(Sister Mónica Gianoli FMA, @ www.sanbiagio.org)*

A young woman of her time, in the place where she was born and raised, was anything but a free woman. The theologian Alberto Maggi, a friar of the community of Servants of Mary, in his book: “Our Lady of the heretics” shows Mary as possibly considered by any inhabitant of Nazareth: “a huge scandal”.

“In a worse place, she could have been born –

writes Father Maggi – because Nazareth had never been named in the Old Testament texts or rabbinic writings. The town enjoyed a bad reputation and, likewise, its inhabitants. The existence of Mary began in the province of Galilee, in the north of one of the most insignificant nations of that time: the small and subdued Israel. In the most badly known town in the region and in the lowest condition for a human being of the time: being a woman”.

Without civil rights, considered things before people, always associated with slaves and children as “sub-human” categories; In addition, women were exonerated from the great Jewish prayer of the “Shema Israel” (Listen Israel), separated from the men in the synagogues (even today the so-called “Western Wall” separates them from men with a gate and they cannot even participate in the celebration of the **Bar-Mitzvah** (which literally means ‘son of the commandment’) that introduces thirteen-year-old sons into the social and religious life of the people.

Women’s tasks were to take care of the children, organize the house, cook for the men and serve them but without being able to eat with them.

Living in a similar condition, Mary of Nazareth reached the obligatory stage for a Jewish girl: marriage. “A new state that will not free her from the inhuman situation in which she lives - Father Maggi continues his narration - but will submit her even more: as a servant of her father and her brothers, she will become a servant of her husband and her children”.

What happened is described in the Gospel of St. Luke: Mary is not presented as an irreprehensible

observer of all the laws and precepts of the Lord (cf. Lk. 1, 6) as it is said, for example, of Zacharias, priest of the Temple, scrupulous and observant not only of the commandments but even of the smallest requirements of the Law.

The evangelist tells that Archangel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias in the holiest place in Jerusalem, the Temple, in the most sacred part of it, that is, in the "Holy of Holies", during the offering of the incense that was the most solemn moment not only of the ritual day of a priest but of his own life. The number of Jewish priests was so high that it was impossible to officiate the liturgy all at once; for this reason, a strict rotation was observed, and it was rare that the same priest could enter the Holy of Holies twice in his life. According to the Talmud, the priests at the time of Zacharias were 85,000.

Despite this privilege, Zacharias did not believe in the choice made by God who arranged for him to be a father at the end of his days and therefore was mute. Mary, on the contrary, believed in the election.

Let us give the floor to Alberto Maggi who with his story worthy of an expert film director immerses us at the very moment of the Annunciation:

"Mary can vibrate in tune with the Word that continually creates and renews the universe. Thus, she becomes a collaborator of God in what refers to communicating life to humanity [...] because Yahweh cannot be seen; no one can see him and be alive (cf. Exodus 33, 19-20). Yahweh cannot even be named (cf. Exodus 20, 7). His name cannot be written either. It is the Transcendent. The Most High The unknowable. All this Mary knows. She has heard it repeatedly in the synagogue. She has also often heard that it is demonic beliefs that have the religions of the neighboring nations of Israel who believe that the gods of heaven unite with women of the earth to father sons and daughters. Despite this, Mary accepts. She will be the mother of the Son of God. The unknown girl from Nazareth that "nobody, not even her neighbors knew," will be proclaimed blessed by all generations (cf. Lc. 1, 48).

The woman who could not dare to approach the Shrine will carry the Shrine itself: it will contain God as the Temple intends to do it within its walls. The woman who could

not even dare to touch the Bible will receive within herself the Word made flesh. The woman who could not address the priest, much less touch him, will be the mother of the Holy of Holies. The God who has never addressed his word to a woman will call her imma (mother). [...]

The virgin of Nazareth, in deep harmony with God who makes all things new (cf. Rev. 21, 5), responds to the call of Life that he wants to germinate and that, to be born, demands - with the voice of the prophet Isaiah - that "do not stop in the past, do not think about the old realities ..." because then you would not be aware of "the new that just now begins to germinate" (Is. 43, 18-19).

Mary abandons the old, the certainties, the traditions of her parents and opens herself to the new, to the unknown. She takes off the straitjacket of orthodoxy in order to be fully free and accept the proposal of Archangel Gabriel.

Mary is heretical for the official religion. Also, heretical and blasphemous will be considered her Son and for this reason, she will end up being condemned and executed (cf. Mt. 26, 65; Jn. 8, 48; 10, 33). The heirs of the work of Jesus will have no better luck: "they will deliver them to the synagogues and the elders of the people; they will be hated by all because of my name" (Mc. 13, 9-13). "Lady of the heretics", Mary will become the sister of all those who for centuries perceive the presence of the only God-man and welcome him (cf. Jn 1, 12-18).

*\* Past Pupil Fed. Lombarda Immaculada*





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**Spirit of God, Spirit of truth and light,  
stay constantly in my soul  
With your divine grace.  
Dispel the darkness with your breath  
and with your light, the good deeds will multiply.  
Oh, Spirit of God! Spirit of love and mercy,  
that you bathe my heart with the balm of trust:  
May your grace hold my soul for good,  
granting me an invincible force: constancy!  
Oh, Spirit of God! Spirit of peace and joy,  
You comfort my thirsty heart  
pour in it the living source of divine love.  
Oh, Spirit of God! Friendly guest of my soul,  
I wish with all my strength to be faithful.**

**Santa Faustina Kowalska**