

**Rejoice always in the Lord  
I repeat it: rejoice**

Saint Paul to the Philippians 4,4

# Union



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### Editor:

Confederación Mundial  
Exalumnas/os de las F.M.A.

### Publishing:

#### Editor in Chief

Concetta Apolito Zecchino

#### Vice President

Anna Maria Musso Freni

#### Editorial Team

A. M. Musso Freni

Cristiana Mariani Casiraghi

Gabriela Patiño

Gianni Radaelli

Laura Pollino Ravarino

Lorenzo Trapassi

#### They have collaborated in this issue:

Antonio Martinelli SDB

Giuseppe Puonzo

Raffaella Messina

#### Graphic Design:

Cristiana Mariani Casiraghi

#### Secretary, administration and expedition:

Marta Bovese Ferrari

Giuliana Ceccarelli Mossini

Elena Mattiacci Fioravanti

#### Tipolithography

Istituto Salesiano Pio XI

Via Umbertide, 11 - 00181 Roma

e-mail: tipolito@donbosco.it

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Via Gregorio VII, 133/B int. 4 - 00165 Roma

tel. 06.635692 - fax 06.39375131

e-mail: unione@exalliefma.org

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# Letter of the President



## Letter of the General Councilor for the Salesian Family 150 years of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

My dear Past Pupils

With great joy in my heart and with great hope, I address you through “UNIONE” as it is a place of encounter and communion without equal. The Lord, during the next three years, puts us in front of very important events for the FMA Institute and the FMA Past Pupils Association; in particular, the **150th** anniversary of the **FMA Institute** born in Mornés in 1872 that will take place in the year 2022 where will have our jubilee celebration.

Very significant events will take place during the Sesquicentennial preparatory triennium: **General Chapter XXIV** (2020), the **Centennial of “UNIONE”** (2021), and the **VI Elective Assembly** of the FMA Past Pupil Association (2021).

These events demonstrate, once again, the profound unity that exists between the FMA and the Past Pupils of the FMA: their existence is **codependent**. Between you and us there is a deep communion generated thanks to the charisma of Don Bosco and Maria D. Mazzarello that invades us. *Together we are the Living Monument of Mary Help of Christians because it is She who has taken us to “her House”.* It is she who creates in us that deep union that has transcended time and space. When we contemplate this wonderful reality of communion, feelings of admiration, gratitude and renewed commitment arise from our hearts so that it remains a constant reality in the new generations. Together we are part

of this immense chain of women and men who in the family, at work, in the world of culture and social life, in parish communities, have wanted and still want to leave a Salesian mark on the world.

At this very complicated moment in history but at the same time, so full of opportunities, the Lord Jesus entrusts us with the task of renewing and reviving this charism in the community so that we can transmit it with the same beauty and freshness that one day attracted us. For this experience to have temporal and spatial permanence, it is necessary to translate it, express it again, and renew it with an updated language to give the world a new breath of hope and true joy.

We trust in Mary Help of Christians who reiterate us once more, as one day she did with Main in Mornese: “I deliver future generations to your care!”.

**Sr Ma. Luisa Miranda L.**

General Councilor of the Salesian Family



# I thought to live by



## “UNIONE” the magazine at the service of the Association

*I asked the Editor Concetta to allow me a space in this section because recently I was fortunate enough to find an article in the Salesian Bulletin that summarized the history of the magazine and its importance to this day. I could not avoid reflecting on some considerations that I would now like to share with you, dear readers and readers of “UNIONE”. I do not intend, in any way, to make comparisons! I will only limit my opinion about the demands of a publication, even if it is small and modest like our “UNIONE”.*

Don Bosco founded the Bulletin in 1877 as an instrument of communication and information “of past or scheduled events to ... obtain the glory of God, the good of Civil Society” (thus wrote our Saint). How much simplicity compared to current times! In another era, it was easier to work for the common good because the world recognized the presence of God in the history of humanity even in the smallest events of everyday life that were assumed as the work of “Divine Providence.” Nowadays, when the world is dominated by “social networks” my opinion, your opinion or that of anyone, has the same value and those reference prototypes that were shared by a group have been gradually lost.

I have thought about how difficult it is to express value judgments about the current reality, even in our context of the “UNIONE” Magazine. Not only because of the impossibility of having a bi-monthly publication updated on daily events but, also, because it is an obvious professional competence neces-

sary to address the major issues that characterize “Civil Society” (to use an expression of Don Bosco).

Moreover, if in the nineteenth century the episodic adventures of the “Memories of the Oratory” excited the readers and the “American letters” sent by the missionaries opened the horizons to new worlds, now we must attest that it is not the same. How to compare the immediacy of news broadcast on TV and the Internet with the small pages of a magazine written by volunteers (who are not exactly young)?

Do you remember the times when “UNIONE” was edited by the dearest Sr. Maria Rampini in Turin? Do you remember the sweet prayers, the images of Mary Help and our Saints that were easy to cut ... to carry in our wallet? Surely, more than one nostalgia invades. But in 1997, the Magazine was passed to the Association because the format was expanded. We began to look for news from other parts of the world, photographs of the meetings of the past pupils, descriptions of the particular experiences that were lived in our Salesian world. We went to fantastic and available collaborators to develop the formation part; I remember the articles of Sr. Teresita Osio, the Rector Major, Father Chavez, Silvana Aloisi and many more. The layout evolved over time and with the arrival of the computer; I remember that at the beginning, the binding was done by gluing the sheets on a cardboard model ...

Now we are here. With the conviction that “UNIONE” is a thread that keeps us together with the past pupils of the world, both those who read the magazine in Italian and those who do it in one of their translations, in physical or virtual mode. Without forgetting that “UNIONE” is also a very much appreciated magazine and read by our beloved FMA who appreciate us so much; Above all, the seniors Salesians recognize our names and say: “This was my student!” And let us not forget that “UNIONE” can become a breath that reaches those in need.

May the Blessed Mother Help of Christians accompanies us in this task.

**Cristiana Mariani**



# ***In the Beginning the Word***

*Do whatever He tells you*



**Being Christians is  
“joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17),  
because “after the love of charity  
comes joy, necessarily”.**

*Pope Francis Gaudete et Exultate*

For the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Institute of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) a contest has been scheduled for the creation of the commemorative logo and the composition of an official hymn that is related to the proposed motto:

**“Maria walks in this house”**

By "house", we must understand the world, where Mary is present and walks with us, supporting us in the mission of educating young people. It also indicates a "vision" and a certainty rooted in faith, in the Salesian charism and life experience. Anyone wishing to make their own artistic and musical contribution can participate in the contest, and you will find all the information related to the event on the site: [www.exallievfma.org](http://www.exallievfma.org)

**Proposals must be submitted before December 8, 2019.**

## **The Second Asian Congress of the FMA Past Pupil Association**

will be held in Thailand from October 9 to 13, 2019

with the following theme:

**“Open Mind, attentive listening:  
to create a future of hope”**

## A SAINT SAD IS a sad saint

by Antonio Martinelli \*



### INTRODUCING THE THEME

In chapter IV of the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis presents SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF HOLINESS IN THE CURRENT WORLD. At number 122 that bears the title “**Joy and humor**”, he writes:

*The saint can live with joy and a sense of humor. Without losing the sense of reality, enlightens others with a positive and hopeful spirit. Being Christians is “joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17) because “love necessarily follows joy. Because whoever loves always enjoys union with the beloved [...]; for this reason, charity anticipates joy. [99] We have received the beauty of his Word and welcome it “amid great trials, with the joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 1, 6). If we let the Lord take us out of our comfort and changes our lives, then we can carry out what St. Paul asked: “Always be joyful in the Lord; I repeat: be happy”. (Phi 4,4) [No. 122].*

A few paragraphs later, he continues:

“Generally, Christian joy is accompanied by the obvious sense of humor, for example, in Saint Thomas Moro, Saint Vicente de Paul or Saint Philp Neri. A bad mood is not a sign of holiness: “remove sadness from your heart” (Ecclesiastes 11, 10). There is so much we have received from the Lord and therefore “we can rejoice”. (1 Tim 6, 17) On many occasions, sadness is linked to ingratitude with that state that encloses us in ourselves and does not allow us to recognize the gifts of God.

And Pope Paul VI, in the letter *Gaudete in Domino*, quoting Don Bosco among the “saints of Christian joy” claimed, based on a literal expression of the saint of the youth, taken from his story “The young man prepared for the practice of their duties”:

*“There are two main deceptions with which the devil seeks to drive young people away from virtue. The first is to make young people believe that serving the Lord is a sad life away from any entertainment and pleasure. Not so, dear young people. I want to teach you a method of the Christian life that at the same time is cheerful and dynamic, adding what are the true amusements and authentic pleasures. This is the objective of these lines: serve the Lord and always be happy”.*

Nowadays, it is very necessary to assume and express, in the different moments of life and daily occupations, the fullness of joy that flows from a peaceful and generous heart.

### LE US MAKE SANCTITY CONSIST OF ALWAYS BEEN JOYFUL

I will mention some aspects of the proposal to holiness that Don Bosco presented to young people and adults.

In the first place, he founded, with a youthful spirit among young people, the “**Society of Joy**” which was intended to organize games, promote gatherings and read books that contribute to increasing cheerfulness in all.

He claimed that the initiative had given him some recognition. “In 1832 - I was 17 when I was writing - I was much appreciated, and they obeyed me as the captain of a small army. They were looking for me from all sides to organize entertainment activities, help students in private homes and tutor repeating students”.

As an adult, Don Bosco dedicated his effort to the creation of a work called “**Oratorio**”. Today, who does not know it? There were some similar activities in Piedmont, Liguria and Lombardy, but he imagines and creates a very personal style.

In the Oratory of Don Bosco there were musical instruments, singing, theater, and have fun in many ways without forcing young people with a way of life as adults; Above all, the self-identity that is implicit in the name of “Oratorio” is not forgotten, that is, place of prayer.

Regarding the well-known oratory experience of Don Bosco, the famous writer Umberto Eco had words of great appreciation thinking, above all, of the saint’s ability to make a synthesis between education and communication, between communication and youth protagonism, between youth protagonism and Christian growth. The climate that dominates the Oratory yesterday and today is necessarily that of joy.

Around the Oratory, a large Family was born (this is not the occasion to list the long list of groups born over

the years, groups of adults, whether religious or lay) for which fundamentally the main ingredient remains joyfulness and happiness.

### THE TRUE SPIRITUAL CONTENT OF JOY

In order not to confuse joy with the multiple forms of recreation or fun, I try to use other terms that define the contours of that true joy that is born from the heart that is in harmony with God. Based on the words of Pope Francis, a vademecum of joy could be created. I'll share some of Pope Francis's interventions on various circumstances.

#### **Christian joy is not synonymous with naivety or superficiality.**

Joy is not the self-confidence of a single moment: it is something different! True joy does not come from things, from having, no! On the contrary, it is born from the encounter, from the relationship with others, from feeling accepted, understood, loved. It is born, in turn, of accepting, understanding and loving not for the momentary and utilitarian interest but because the other, is a person. Joy comes from the freeness of an encounter.

What is ephemeral does not give happiness; only love quenches the thirst for infinity that we carry inside.

#### **Joy is to be aware of the gifts we receive each day.**

It is the stupor for the beauty of life and the great and small things that are presented to us in our daily journey. Francis of Assisi was "able to be moved by gratitude in front of hard bread or to joyfully praise God only for the breeze that caressed his face." We must recognize that, sometimes, sadness is related to ingratitude, with that state that encloses us in ourselves and does not allow us to recognize the gifts of God.

#### **Living with joy is the ability to appreciate the essential.**

It knows how to share what we have, renewing every day the admiration for the goodness of things, without falling into the pessimism of wild consumerism.

A heart that knows how to appreciate the good is also capable of thanking and blessing; it is a heart that knows how to rejoice.

#### **Joy is born of the Holy Spirit.**

Without losing sight of realism, we can be able to enlighten others with a positive spirit full of hope. Special importance should be given to self-irony to overcome the temptation of narcissism.

Narcissists look in the mirror only with the pretense of praising themselves; instead, self-irony means that when we look in the mirror, we can laugh at ourselves, with a dose of humor to see our shortcomings. It does us so much good.

Benedict XVI, quoting Chesterton, said, "Do you know why angels fly? Because they are taken lightly." And the Pope added: "Because they don't take themselves too seriously." And he concluded later: "We, perhaps, could fly a little higher if we did not give ourselves so much importance".

### SUMMARIZING

The Rule of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco is summarized as follows in an article entitled "Optimism and Joy":

*"The Salesian does not let himself be overcome by difficulties because he has full confidence in God the Father: "Let nothing trouble you," said Don Bosco.*

*Inspired by the humanism of San Francisco de Sales, he believes in the natural and supernatural resources of humanity without ignoring their weaknesses.*

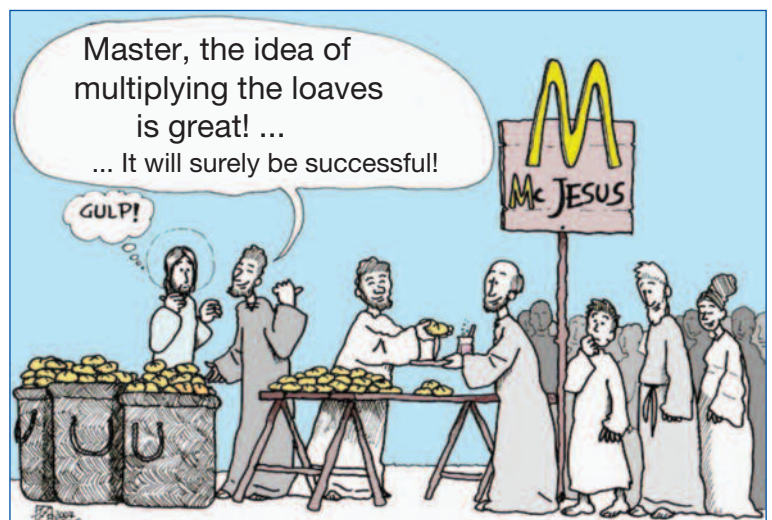
*It assumes the values of the world and refuses to lament over adverse reality; it assimilates everything good, especially if it is attractive to young people.*

*By announcing the "Good News", he is always happy. Spread this joy and know how to educate for the joy of the Christian life and for the festive sense of existence: "Let us serve the Lord in holiness and joy".*

This synthesis has been written for those who do not hesitate to call themselves Salesians!

\* SDB

Caricatura del padre Giovanni Berti  
Extraída de la página [www.gioba.it](http://www.gioba.it)



# RELIGIONS ON THE ROAD

## Fraternity Document

by Anna Maria Musso Freni \*



They are no longer times of crusades or anathemas. After twenty centuries of Christianity, the great monotheistic religions of humanity have made their own the call of the last Popes, in particular of Pope Francis. There can be no legitimate religion that justifies the death of a human being. There cannot be a creed in whose name it is legitimate to proclaim holy wars; there cannot be such a bloodthirsty divinity that demands sacrifices of innocent victims. This was the great step that Pope Francis took on the one hand on February 4 on behalf of the Catholic Church and, on the other, Al-Azar al-Sharif, on behalf of all Muslims in Abu Dhabi, in the conclusion from a dense series of meetings held in an environment of mutual respect in which they reflected on the problems of the contemporary world. The Pope's apostolic journey to the Arab Emirates was prepared by a series of dialogues with Al-Azar: in 2016 in the Vatican, in 2017 in Cairo and, again, in the Vatican and, finally, in 2018 once again in Vatican City.

From that sincere encounter, the Document on Human Fraternity came to light, a text in which we must reflect and with which we must count, as believers and men of goodwill, as the signatories of the text made clear.

For us, as Westerners, it will not be easy to immerse ourselves in this new perspective of fraternity, of reciprocal love, of collaboration between Islam and Christianity. Our generation grew up with the fear of Muslims, considered enemies par excellence. The historical and literary culture that has permeated us, from Dante to Ludovico Ariosto, through Torquato Tasso, great poets, exalts the struggle for the defense of the faith. Also, Spanish literature, with the figure of the Cid Campeador refers to these values. For centuries, history sparked the Crusades as holy wars. The revolutionary window of Enlightenment was necessary for us to discover, albeit a little late that those wars were not precisely holy; that, perhaps, only the good Pedro El Eremita was encouraged by a holy Christian ardor





when he left barefoot towards the Holy Land but without weapons. The others, above a healthy will to defend the Holy Sepulcher were encouraged, above all, by greed for economic and political conquests. We must not forget, moreover, that the devotion to Mary Help of Christians spread, precisely, at a crucial moment in the fight against the Saracens, as was the Battle of Lepanto. On the other hand, despite the hostilities caused by differences in the religious creed, Western civilization is indebted to great values originated in Arab culture in the field of mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and art, among others. The late medieval architectural heritage of Sicily and Spain was deeply influenced by Islamic taste.

After the time of the crusades, after the Second Vatican Council, we started talking about dialogue, of welcome. The idea that diversity is not necessarily hostile made its way. With small steps and among many resistances, the signing of the Abu Dhabi document could be achieved, demonstrating how religions are not a closed system but are on the way to growth, under the influence of the Spirit, if there is listening capacity – calling on men of culture from around the world to rediscover the values of peace, justice, human fraternity and community life. The Pope and the great Imam reflected on the contemporary reality, identifying the causes of the crisis in the modern world: anesthetized human consciousness, the departure from religious values, the predominance of individualism and materialism, which replace the supreme and transcendent principles with worldly and material values. Consequently, there is a deterioration of ethics, the weakening of spiritual values and the sense of responsibility that ultimately produce atheism, religious fundamentalism, blind fundamentalism and intolerance. The solutions for so many social crises must seek in defense of the role of the family, **as the fundamental nucleus of society and humanity, the awakening of the religious sense and the need to revive it in the hearts of the younger generations.**

*The document reminds us that religions do not invite war or claim feelings of hatred, hostility, extremism, nor do they incite violence or bloodshed.*

The restriction is also condemned to adhere to a cer-



tain religion, highlighting the right to freedom of worship, thought, expression and action.

They make an invitation to walk the path of justice, based on mercy, to spread the culture of tolerance, of dialogue, of the acceptance of the other in the field of common spiritual, human and social values. Reiterates the historical need to sustain a relationship between East and West, as a source of reciprocal cultural enrichment.

Calls to recognize the rights of vulnerable minorities: women, children, the elderly, the disabled, the sick, the oppressed.

The document, finally, invites reconciliation among all believers, between believers and non-believers, to the rejection of violence and extremism and it is proposed as an example and testimony of the greatness of faith in God, as a symbol of the embrace between nations.

How will men and women of goodwill who have constantly referred to will this document? Will it be easy or difficult to overcome the fear we develop towards the other, simply because he thinks and believes differently? Will, the goodwill of the Pope and the great Imam, be reflected on Christians and Muslims called in cause, while the threats of terrorist attacks remain latent? Let us say hope is always the last thing to lose and the resources of the human spirit are endless. Believers have been entrusted with the responsibility of building peace, in the light of their own identity of faith, in fidelity to God's design of love that has created us and wants to see us act as brothers.

*\* Past Pupil of the Piedmont Federation Mary Help*

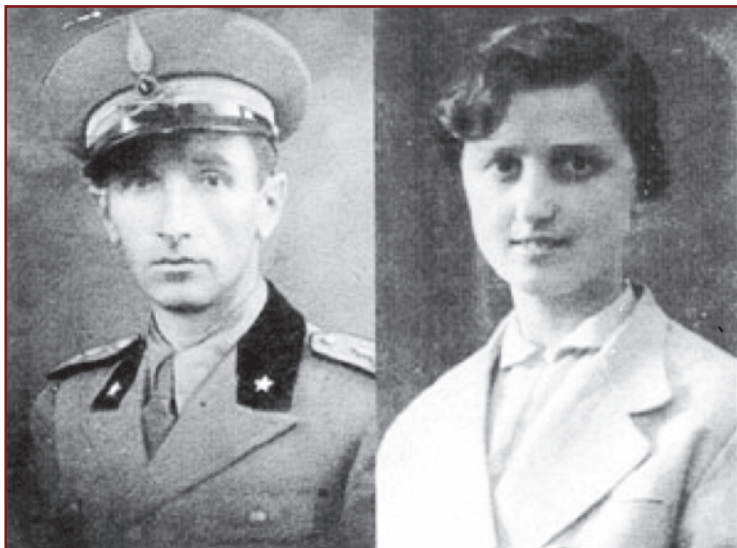
# The way to Sanctity GIOVANNI AND ROSETTA the saints next door

By the Editorial Staff

*and so deep in the normality of family, parish and social life, have been framed by the love of God and by an intimate dedication to his will: in the joy, in the pain and sacrifice of everyday life, so much so that they have been called the “saints next door”.*

*Who has been entrusted to their intercession have obtained special graces.*

Giovanni Gheddo and Rosetta Franzi were born in rural villages near Vercelli (Italy), next to the famous rice paddies and between poplars and heron flights that run through those long waters inhabited by carp, tench and frogs. Giovanni who was born in Viancino, on April 22, 1900, died in Russia on December 17, 1942. Meanwhile, Rosetta Franzi, born in Crova on December 3, 1902, died in labor in Tronzano on October 26, 1934. They left an indelible sign of holiness among those who knew them.



Rosetta had graduated as a teacher but had not been able to teach because her father was a rich man and claimed that the women in his house did not need to go out to look for work because he could maintain them. Therefore, Rosetta dedicated herself in collaborating with the Sisters of the School, replacing the absent teachers, teaching in the afternoon at the schools for the illiterate, of course without ever receiving payment. He, Giovanni Gheddo, thanks to an unusual opportunity, managed to study and graduate as a geometer before joining as a soldier after the surrender of the Battle of Caporetto. He became known, both in his village and in the surrounding area, as a designer and secretary of the irrigation canals. He had an unforgivable defect: he was not able to ask to be paid the fair amount, and his salary was always less because he was affected by the different situations of misery his clients lived. It is no accident that they came to call him “the geometer of the poor” because he worked for them free. If we add to this his desire to “always please God”, “do good and climb the steep slope of perfection, we will find the profile of a layman who attended with great benefit

to the “School of Holiness” very typical of the Catholic Action.

During the cause of beatification it became known the keenness to the spirituality of St. John Bosco in an exemplary way (their birthplaces were properly Salesian territory at a time when the echo of the life, works and death of the great saint was still very strong).

Rosetta was even registered in the Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA). She was the daughter of María Roviera, who had for some time been president of the women of Catholic Action of Crova, and Francisco Franzi, a former student of the Salesian Institute of Turin Valdocco, just one year after the death of Don Bosco. He wanted to be a Salesian priest, but the sudden death of his father required him to return early to his homeland. Rosetta was a student and lived at the boarding school of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Casale Monferrato.

Giovanni was an active and fruitful part of the

Catholic Action of Tronzano, was president of the Youth Circle, being subsequently enrolled among adults until 1943 when his sister Adelaida registered him in the hope of his soon return from Russia.

Giovanni and Rosetta got married after ten months of dating. They spent their honeymoon in Naples before making a three-day pilgrimage at the Sanctuary of Oropa, where they slept the first night in separate beds, offering this sacrifice so that the Lord blessed their marital union with abundant children, preferably twelve, and to that at least one of them became a priest or religious. Beginning in 1929 the first three children arrived one after another; then they had two spontaneous abortions, and in 1934, Rosetta died from pneumonia and septicemia after the premature birth of two twins who also died.

It was only six years of marriage, lived completely with the Gospel in the heart and with full confidence in Divine Providence: "The most important thing is to do the will of God," said Rosetta, an expression to which Giovanni echoed adding: "We are always in the hands of God".

Giovanni, aggrieved by widowhood, only clinging to faith, could continue working and taking care of the children. He did not seek to remarry because he remained in love with Rosetta until eternity; her orphaned children were taken care of by the grandmother and the aunts.

In 1842, he was enlisted in the army and sent to Russia on the front line: it was a punishment for his obvious anti-fascism since by his age, health and orphaned children; he could have been exempted from war.

The letters he wrote from the battlefield narrate very well his help to the population impoverished by the war to the point that he stopped eating to take away the hunger of others. On his death, we have news due to the testimony of two of his comrades. At the time of withdrawal, he preferred to stay with the wounded at the field hospital who had not been able to be transported; He had taken the place of a young second lieutenant to whom he said without hesitation: "You are young; You must still live. Save yourself I will remind here". It was December 17, 1942, the "official" date of his death in the Russian steppes.

And to show that, as Bonhoeffer said, "God does not grant us everything we ask for but is faithful to all His promises"; even though the children of the Gheddo family were not twelve, as the two Servants of God would have wanted. However, Pedro, the firstborn,

became a missionary priest of the PIME (Pontifical Institute for Missions Abroad).

Rosetta's body was found uncorrupted during exhumation in 1964, thirty years after her death. In that land of rice paddies, wet and incompatible with the preservation of a body, according to the normal course of things, in which the heart had stopped beating due to premature delivery and incurable pneumonia in time without penicillin. On the contrary, Giovanni's body was lost among the ice, on the banks of the Don River, terminated by an enemy's hand while exercising charity.

The informative process for their beatification was promoted by the Archdiocese of Vercelli and started after obtaining the "nihil obstat" by the Congregation for the Cause of Saints on September 30, 2005. After overcoming some difficulties that delayed the process, on February 18, 2015, a new postulator was assigned, lawyer Lía Lafronte, given a reactivation of the cause that, today, in the light of the historical documentation and the new testimonies collected the expected outcome can be considered very close.

On December 20, 2017, Father Piero Gheddo, eldest son of the husband and wife, journalist missionary of the Pontifical Institute for Missions Abroad (PIME), one of the most important figures in the European missionary world, died. He was 89 years old.

Sources:

Gianpiero Pettiti en [www.santiebeati.it](http://www.santiebeati.it);

Lía Lafronte,

Postulator at [www.gheddopiero.it](http://www.gheddopiero.it)



# Let's walk together

## In the Founders Charism



*Kindness, which gives solidity to the bonds of friendship, builds the family spirit and creates solidarity (Statutes 4.3, b)*

by Gabriela Patiño, FMA \*

## Friendship and solidarity

In any part of the world, at any time, when a past pupil enters a Salesian “house” she/him feels at home. In the formal meetings, at an international or world level, past pupils of all ages and diverse backgrounds easily socialize, immediately forming friends and sisters, heirs and participants of the same charism. Many friendships born in the classrooms of the School, the Oratory or in other Salesian structures are destined to last a lifetime, to strengthen over the years, to become reference points in difficulties, in joyful or difficult times of the human experience. Besides, in the large family of past pupils, those who actively participate in the associative life are building new, intense and lasting friendships because they are based on the spirit of collaboration under the requirement of doing good.

**Precisely, friendship together with prayer** are fundamental aspects of the spirituality of Mother Mazzarello and greatly influenced her formation. Consider, for example, in her relationship with Petronila, the cousin/friend with whom she shared dreams and concerns, worries and joys. Maria understood that Petronila was the closest person in which she could easily find the mutual support that has to be given when it comes to practicing virtues and choosing true friendships. Together they realized a dream that, for two women of the nineteenth century, might have seemed crazy. Friendship and solidarity are at the base of the work of Don Bosco who, to the young Michael Rúa, recently arrived at the Oratory, had said, “Miguelito, you and I will share everything in life”.

**Friendship and solidarity are two aspects of the family spirit** within the Salesian charism that appear

since the first regulations of the Association as the foundation elements of the past pupils of the FMA. “Morally assist the companions they assume the enormous commitment to form a new family; visit the old companions when they fall ill and give them the support they need for as long as possible”. This is how Father Rinaldi expressed himself in the early days.

**Since then - affirms Mother Yvonne -, the Association** has lived a history very enriched by the values of friendship, solidarity, passion, organization, even when the levels of participation of the members are diverse. The past pupils are not strangers to each other; this is noticeable when an FMA meets at any meeting, celebration or occasionally, one of them, sometimes for the first time. In their eyes, their business card says, “I am a Past Pupil”. An environment of familiarity and sharing is created immediately. This way of being is a support in difficult situations of life and is translated into concrete facts through the mutual help of which Father Rinaldi spoke. No past pupil should be indifferent to the other members: loneliness, illness, material or spiritual difficulties must be faced directly. Paying attention to them is a great gesture of love! It is like the seal of quality that allows recognition.

**Feeling sisters, worthy of love,** creates a reciprocity that enriches and promotes. We are called by God to witness the beauty and joy that comes from growing through humanized relationships, to be the open house of the Father in which we are all children, where there is a place for everyone, however the fatigue and problems of life (cf. EG 47, 183).

**At the beginning of the history** of the Association

and for a long time, one of the commitments of each participant of the local Union was to go to meet the companions who did not attend, especially those who had some spiritual or material need; they were invited to go back to the "house" that had educated them for help.

The fraternity, the joy and the desire to do good, lived together, become occasions of encounter and reciprocity in which fragility is welcomed with mercy, favors a process of healing and donation of themselves. The lived and shared friendship opens the heart to those who knock at our door; It allows us to overcome an individualistic vision of life, helps young people to understand that it is possible to live in community and testifies to the dynamism that Christianity's transformation achieves, says Pope Francis.

**The fraternal friendship of the past pupils** is consolidated, and the members are based on a "We", always available, even outside the group. Friendship strengthens unity in the face of difficulties. In this way, Father Rinaldi's dream for the Association is realized: "They must help each other in life as if they were brothers and sisters. I would like them to be able to organize themselves by forming a special social assistance. I would like that in any need during its existence, and each one can count on an effective and generous help in the groups of past pupils; I wish that no past pupils feel alone and forgotten in the world but could always find understanding and support in his/her classmates who have better possibilities". And even more: "It is up to you that one day, the world, admiring its unity in faith and mutual help, can exclaim as once the heathen exclaimed when observing the reciprocal charity of the first Christians: "Only Christians know how to love like this." Only Christians know how to be true friends: people who are sensitive to the needs of others, who open their eyes to look humanity in the eyes, who know how to create meaningful relationships, bridges of friendship and solidarity; people who know how to reach out and accompany to raise.

**What feelings does this article arouse in you?**

**What qualities of friendship are stronger in you?**

**Pray and share with the sisters and brothers what life has allowed you to find.**

**Oh Lord,**

How beautiful it is to have the need of people, of others!

You created us limited.

And friendship is a requirement of such limitation.

Because the limitation claims friendship.

By divine grace

this human limitation

makes us go to meet friends.

By divine grace

this human limitation

makes us less selfish,

less self-sufficient, and more humble!

**Do you know, Lord?**

I feel lonely

Helpless, incomplete, weak and limited;

this need of others

leads us, necessarily,

to true friendship: that is, to You.

Because you are dialogue, love,

communication, donation!

**"In a world that is desert**

**We must find a friend."**

The most necessary in life

is that someone induces us to perform

A good deed that is in our hands.

This is what the function consists of

a true friend.

**Thank you, Lord,** for everything in us and in our community.

Teach us to be a sign for all

and an instrument of your friendship.

**Amen.**

(Source:

<https://es.aleteia.org/2015/06/26/oracion-de-amistad/>)

**Which would be necessary to reinforce?**

**How to live today as the first past pupils lived?**

\* Confederal Delegate

# “She has done everything”

## BASILICA OF THE SACRED HEART IN ROME

by Laura Pollino \*

### With all reason: Providence!

*Stopping at the Termini station in Rome, leaving by the Marsala road, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart appears with its entire architectural and Salesian splendor in front of our eyes.*

*The history of this Church, like all the stories of Don Bosco, is very curious and interesting.*

Pope Pius IX had managed to acquire land on the street that at that time was called Vía Puerta San Lorenzo (now called Vía Marsala) to commission the building of a church dedicated to St. Joseph to whom the Pontiff had declared as “Patron of the Universal Church”.

In those years, a strong devotion was developing with great fervor, especially in France and Italy, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Thanks also to the impulse of the preaching of Father Antonio Moresca of the Barnabita Order, which had great acceptance among the faithful, Pius IX modified his initial project and accepted that the new temple be dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

**The construction of the church stopped** when they had barely laid the structural foundations due to lack of funds and internal disorganization. The new pontiff, Leo XIII, who succeeded Pius IX in 1878, greatly regretted the situation and, at the suggestion of Cardinal Alimonda, commissioned the construction to Don Bosco, who was already known for the founding of the Salesians and whose virtues were not unknown by the Pope, especially his entrepreneurship and unconditional obedience.

Therefore, on April 5, 1880, Leon XIII commissioned Don Bosco to assume responsibility for the



project, making it clear that he had no funds for the work. Don Bosco agreed with the sole condition to the possibility of expanding the plans to build next to the church “a great hospice where so many poor young people who were abandoned could be welcomed, especially in that neighborhood. They could also study art and technical trades” (GB Lemoyne, “Life of the Venerable Servant of God Juan Bosco”, vol. 2). For this reason, a border area of 5,500 square meters was acquired. For Don Bosco, the construction of the church was a project of enormous fatigue and sacrifice, even though all the work was carried out with admirable speed. On many occasions, the economic funds were exhausted but Don Bosco, trusting in Providence, ordered that work not be interrupted; indeed, in many moments came in an unexpected way a donation covering expenses that allowed the continuation of the project.

**In 1883**, Cardinal Lucido Parocchi blessed the **choir and the presbytery** of the new church; the

following year, Pope Leo XIII promoted a national collection to finance the facade.

On March 1, 1886, Don Bosco's secretary, Carlo Viglietti, noted in his chronicle, “Hunger, Don Bosco said today, brings the wolf out of his den. That is why I am obliged, despite being tired and decrepit, to embark on a new journey and perhaps go to Spain.” The saint, indeed, decided to go to Spain where he already had two foundations and where he found some generous benefactors.

The trip took place in small stages, with more or less long stations, during which Don Bosco collected alms for his works, for the Church and the house of the Sacred Heart in Rome. Meanwhile, Father Rúa decided to go to meet him and, upon arriving in Spain, he learned with admiration of the welcome they had given to Don Bosco. In Barcelona, the civil and religious authorities of the city had received him.

Don Bosco and Father Rúa visited the Sarria Institute and stayed there from April 8 to May 6. Father Rúa accompanied Don Bosco in all the activities scheduled in his honor and his travels.

This trip was very profitable to the point that, at the beginning of 1887, the structure of the temple was finished and the internal ornamentation works began. Don Bosco was already completely exhausted and asked the construction masters for the last miracle to ensure the temple could open in May.

On April 20, 1887, Don Bosco made his last trip from Turin to Rome and met again with Pope Leo XIII who praised him for the project carried out and encouraged him with affection.

On **May 14, 1887**, Cardinal Vicar Parocchi solemnly consecrated the Church of the Sacred Heart, near the Castro Pretorio, in the presence of numerous civil and religious authorities.

**On May 16, 1887, Don Bosco celebrated Holy Mass at the altar of Mary Help of Christians.**

This was his only celebration in the Church of the Sacred Heart. The memorial plaque set for the centenary of that event recalls, that the Eucharist was interrupted fifteen times due to the sobs of the old priest, shocked to remember his vision of the famous “dream of 9 years”; at the same time, the meaning of the dream was fully revealed and, in addition, that of his long earthly mission.

In 1921, Pope Benedict XV declared the Temple of the Sacred Heart as a **Minor Basilica**.

Before entering, an attentive look allows us to admire the facade of the neo-Renaissance basilica, characterized by the contrast between the white of the natural stone and the reddish brick while a good number of Corinthian capitals emerge in the lower part. Inside the main en-



## “She has done everything”

trance, we find a mosaic that represents the “heart of Jesus and two angels.” Also, in the two lateral entrances there is a series of columns that support an arch, inside which are the mosaics that represent St. Joseph and St. Francis of Sales, respectively. In the upper part, completely in travertine marble with an architrave in the same marble, two statues have been placed: St. Augustin and St. Francis of Sales. The central part consists of three large windows with metal armor crowned by a tympanum with the cross and two statues of angels in prayer. The basilica has an imposing neo-Renaissance bell tower next to it. The interior of the basilica is divided into three naves with eight columns of two grey granite pilasters, with transept and dome. Behind the main altar is the wide choir, expressly desired by Don Bosco. The central nave and the transept are covered by a quadrangular coffered ceiling decorated with evangelical scenes, the symbol of the Salesian Society and the half-bust image of the “Sacred Heart of Jesus.” The presbytery is occupied by the imposing high altar where the image of the Sacred Heart is located. The elements at the top of the altar (that is, the columns that support the cornice and the eardrum) are referred to the fifteenth century and come from

the church of St. Francis in Siena, elements purchased personally by Don Bosco. The beautiful tabernacle is made in rare marbles with lapis lazuli, malachite and sardonice inserts. One of the most visited places in the basilica is the so-called “Don Bosco’s stay”, that is, his room, now converted into a place of worship and prayer, where St. John Bosco stayed between September 30 and May 18 of 1887, precisely on the occasion of the consecration of the church. The large and characteristic statue of the Redeemer in gilded bronze tops the bell tower.

The property belongs to the Salesians who have turned it into one of their most important pastoral centers in Rome and which has now become a General House.

In this place, Don Bosco performed two very prodigious miracles that contributed to confirm him in his reputation as a “saint” still alive: he completely freed a seminarian who was compromised by his vocation due to this physical deficiency; In addition, he instantly healed a woman who had had a paralyzed arm for many years.

When the Church officially recognized the sanctity of Don Bosco, these places became the goal of continuous pilgrimages and an obligatory season of prayer.





# The Association is Life

## Testimonials of an identity

### From **TRINO VERCELLESE** (Italy) Fidelity has no age

by Bianca Soldà \*

The intense heat in July did not prevent us from holding a special meeting with the past pupils who live in a nursing home in Trino. The idea, suggested by a relative of a past pupil, was welcomed by Confederal Councilor Laura Pollino and, consequently, by the Past Pupils of the Trino Union.

Thus, on Saturday, July 6, a pleasant meeting with six past pupils whose ages range between 85 and 102 years took place in a suitable place in the home and with the precious collaboration of some volunteers. The importance of the event was highlighted by the presence of Confederal Counselor Laura Pollino and the President of the Federation Irene Turcolin who presented to the honoree a Certificate of Fidelity to the Association and a plaque with



Marina Piazza, 98 years old.  
At the bottom, her Past Pupil card dated 1966.

the images of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco. The floral tribute was not lacking, followed by a delicious soda offered to the participants. The notes of “Don Bosco returns” sounded to end in the best way that afternoon of meeting with the past pupils of the nursing home.

\* President of the Trino Union de Trino (VC)



... Continuing with the experience of the reunion that afternoon, we cannot ignore everything that happened from extraordinary, beyond any expectation of the organizers. A simple Certificate of Gratitude for Fidelity and service not only motivated a strong emotion and sincere tears in the six older women who received it, they also promoted emotions and memories, leaving the routine that sometimes prevails, day after day, in the nursing home. One

## The Association is Life

after another came the memories of the oratory life after some many years, the theatrical, musical activities, outdoor games, the catechism and the support of the Salesian Sisters with the fullness of the spirit of Don Bosco and Mother Maria Mazzarello. Amid these memories, the anecdotes and the remembrance of the friends and sisters who have already passed into eternity were also emerging. The path of life built with solidarity towards others, in those times of joyful youth but also, of enormous difficulties due to poverty of all and times of war, a path that has accompanied their missionary commitment to this day.



*Marina besides her grandchildren.*

This allowed the participants, especially the youngest, to recognize that little is needed to activate in the elderly the desire to dialogue, that the disinterest of society and the routine of everyday life can demotivate more than the passing of the years as it immerses them in terrifying mutism. It is in recognition to these beautiful women who with their total dedication and service to others have encouraged us to continue this project: GUILLERMINA CERATI born in 1917, MARÍA GARDANO in 1918, and MARINA PIAZZA

in 1921, the twins VIRGINIA and ROSINA BAUSARDO in 1924 and FRANCISCA OLIVERO in 1934. We hope that their example and tenacity lived in the context of the Salesian charism, will continue to be a reason for us to believe and live as Don Bosco has taught us.

Special thanks should be given to Mrs Blanca Soldà, President of the local FMA Alumni Union.

*\* Giorgio Cognasso, past pupil of Trino*



From **BARI** (Italy)

## The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians present for 25 years

*The past pupils \**

*“The Lord has given us a beautiful gift this year... It is not an agreement or a bridge to new lands of apostolate but a new presence: The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, “Salesian of Don Bosco”! As people, recognize them, seeing them move under the maternal gaze of Mary Help of Christians.*

*How long will they remain?*

*The “field” will say it: our Good God will indicate it.*

*We can only encourage them, offering and asking for collaboration to carry out any action that tends to the good of so many young families in this community.”*

*(Father Luis Spaltro)*

The previous note are the words of Father Luis Spaltro, the pastor of the church of San Geronimo, written in the local newspaper on the Feast of San Geronimo in the distant September 1994.

Those words could not be more prophetic. The work started on September 12, 1994 by three Salesian sisters, with the help of our Good God and thanks to



the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and the Founding Saints, Don Bosco and Mother Maria Mazzarelli, was continued over time. The first step was to acquire a place for religious sisters to stay and effectively carry out all recreational activities with young people. Naturally, the acquisition required that the place is on the proximity to the parish church so that the main objective that is “the constant encounter of young people with Jesus and the path of following Christ along with the community of San Geronimo” is not lost”.

Once the headquarters we acquire, the sisters who have been through this work for 25 years have already managed to carry out an admirable work despite the difficulties that have arisen on the site (indiscriminate urban expansion and, consequently, the proliferation in the area of organized crime with all the negative effects that this entails). The Salesian Sisters have been able to cultivate and sow in the hearts of young people the seed that has reaped so many fruits, not only among young people but also in the entire community.

Today, as since its inception, the “Oratorio”, as known in the area, has become the ever-open house to welcome those in need and help young people as well as adolescents and children with



## The Association is Life

their concerns, also all the inhabitants of the neighborhood.

The Salesian community is currently composed of Sr. Isabella Lops, animator, and her confreres Sr. Rosalba Tagliente and Sr. Caterina Ursi. They also have some volunteer groups that work in a network, together with the community in the territory, with some parishes of the vicarage and the voluntary associations and others. All these institutions seek to realize the dream of San Juan Bosco and Santa María Mazzarello: *“Pay attention and support to young people and their families, especially the poorest, so that they can conquer that holiness that springs from simplicity”, this is also, what Pope Francis has indicated in his encyclical “Gaudete et Exsultate”.*

The activities carried out inside and outside the house are many: for teenagers and young people (after the academic day: guitar, sewing, cooking, artistic, football, volleyball, board and group games), for girls and women with employment difficulties (Mamá Margarita workshop where cooking techniques, sewing and crafts are taught), for families (distribution of basic food products and clothing for approximately 200 families thanks to the support of the Food Bank and networking. Counseling center with the participation of a doctor, a psychologist and a psychotherapist, all volunteers). To all this is added religious and cultural training for young people and adults in the care of the Sisters and professional technical staff.

Outside the Oratory, the community carries out volunteer activities in the juvenile prison, in the Chiccolino community (attention to vulnerable children).



They also bring dinner to the “Padre Vito Diana” passing home and to the house run by the Mungivacca Help Association. They support the spiritual visit to the nursing home of “VILLA GIOVANNA” and “VITTORIO EMANUELE” and collaborates with the diocesan Social Pastoral (Caritas).

On the occasion of the 25 years of Salesian presence in this sector of the city, the following events were organized:

05/19/2019 - “25 years of Christian collaboration in the territory”, a testimony of Sr. Mariangela Cicalupo. The day began with group games, followed by the Holy Mass concelebrated by all the priests of the vicarage who in these years have worked pastorally in the Oratory.

08.07.2019 - “25 years of growth with the youth”. There was a game day with young and old who in these 25 years have attended the Oratory.

12.09.2019 - “25 years of Salesian presence”. Eucharistic celebration chaired by His Excellency Mons. F. CACUCCI (Archbishop of Bari - Bitonto).

## In MEMORY

**On September 30 and October 31,  
Holy Mass for all past pupils,  
FMAs and relatives who died during  
these months.**



## From **PARMA** (Italy) A beautiful letter for our friends, Past Pupils

by Armanda Ravasini \*

We held the annual meeting with the Past Pupils from Parma; a large group has participated, and I did not expect such a wide response ... but they took part very lively and with great fervor throughout the whole day. The president, Mrs Armanda Ravasini, after Mass, transmitted with enthusiasm, to all those present, some reflections that I will share immediately: "Dear friends today, May 5, I ask you this question: do you remember that poetry of Manzoni that begins with that famous: "He was"? It is entitled "May 5" and was written in honor of Napoleon after his death, precisely on May 5, 198 years ago. At the same time, the memories of when I was a child came to my mind, and I got angry because I did not get what I wanted. Then, my sister went to my mother and said, "Mom, Armanda is angry and impatient with us all." And mom, with the patience of all the mothers replied, "It happened to Napoleon, why can't it happen to Armanda?" With this expression, she taught us that if Napoleon, when he died, had overcome his anger, how much more would soon happen to a little girl's whim.

### **What is the lesson of my mother's reply?**

Everything passes everything. We can do whatever we want to stop time, but it will be useless because everything passes. The world runs, life flows, we too are passengers, everything passes, and we can do nothing. This continuous flow of time is the argument we face each time we conduct a meeting of past pupils. Every year we have one more memory; every year, we accumulate more memories that we will then bring to light as a simple past. This means that the hands of our watches do not stop and the time is irreparable; they fill our time with small or large events that deserve to be remembered or shared with the most endearing friends; that is, with you, who for so many years share with me this adventure **of working for the Association**.

Everything passes; however, there is something that remains; a reality that will never pass and that is the Word of God, "HEAVEN AND EARTH WILL PASS, BUT MY WORDS WILL NEVER PASS".

Also, today, we look up to Jesus, as did that woman who, in the midst of the crowd, touched the edge of Jesus' mantle to be healed of the blood flows she



suffered. Jesus stopped that bleeding because the woman firmly believed that He could heal her. We can also say this because from our youth we have looked at Jesus in the eye and we have waited for Him to show us the way to go.

**Thank you, Lord**, because you had given us the joy of answering "yes," even when the call was difficult. We have always trusted You and your Word has never been far from our lives. We have practiced it in our homes, in our marital relationships, with our relatives, friends and with this **beautiful Association** that has been and still is, an important part of our life.

I make a small confession: Many times, I thought that each annual meeting could be the last for me; every year is another year in the identity document, my years already add a good amount but, in the end, everything passes.

Therefore, dear friends, next year we will meet with enthusiasm of always ... It was precisely here, with our Salesians, that we learned to do the will of God and not ours. The most important thing is that, if everything passes, do not pass our love for God that gives us the strength to live in love, to smile at life, as even today's children do not know how to do it. It happened to Napoleon, but our friendship will not pass in the same way, as it has not been extinguished because of the suffering and loss of loved ones and friends with whom we have shared life.

Thanks to all, dear friends and dear Sisters, because you never pass away from my heart. Armanda"

\* Past Pupil

## *The Association is Life*

# From **TELDE GRAN CANARIA** (Spain) A very special regional party!

by Past Pupils \*

On February 23, 2019, we celebrated the reunion of the Federations of the Canary Islands.

The four delegations of Gran Canaria and that of Tenerife participated; in total, more than 210 past pupils were present.

This regional meeting is held every two years one year on the Island of Tenerife and the following year on the Gran Canaria Island. On this occasion, the past pupils of the Union Mary Help of Telde organized the meeting.

After the warm welcome in the morning, we participated in the Eucharist presided by Father Alfredo Mongas. We ate together and, immediately, afterwards we could not miss the "Salesian Party" in which the members of each house participated with theatrical performances, music, poetry and other activities.

We conclude with the presentation of Telde's past pupils who, at the end of the party, performed songs from the sixties, motivating everyone's participation thanks to music and enthusiasm. This Fiesta will be a reason to remember with great joy ... but we, tireless, were already preparing the next meeting!

A very special thanks to the Delegate of Telde, Sr. Ana María Díaz.

Photo are a manifestation in themselves, which means the "Salesian joy" reunion.



## From **CATANIA** (Italy) Travel together to discover ...

by the Past pupils of Catania \*



Culture, beauty and fraternity can converge on a journey to discover the cities of **Ragusa Ibla, Punta Seca and Scicli**.

Who, at least once, looking at Luca Zingaretti, has not wished to travel those same streets and squares of **Vigata**?

Well, this was precisely what we did, the past pupils made the tour of Commissioner Montalban.

The experience of "traveling together" will always be for us unique and important, to learn, get excited, know and enjoy the artistic and religious heritage of the cities we travel.

It is an opportunity that we cannot miss because it enriches us with new knowledge. We are moved by curiosity and admiration for those who have made suggestive works of great scenography effect such as those that, after an intense journey on the way, we had the privilege of knowing, leaving us

surprised by the montages of ancient history scenes and excellent representations of the epoch.

The cities we travel, world heritage sites, can convey elegance and balance that not all places possess.

Among other things we learned that the Feast of the Virgen of Milicias of Scicli is "the only demonstration in the world that commemorates the descent of the Virgin on horseback, armed with a sword" to defend the Norman people from the Saracen invasion.

We cannot forget the fraternal sharing that unites us in an atmosphere of joyful sharing and goes beyond sitting at the same table to share food. We believe that the fraternal union allows us to know each other better and reminds us of "the desire of the first Christians to be in community" to share some of serenity and joy.

*\* Past pupils, Auxilium Union of Catania*



Frm **VITTORIO VENETO** (Italy)

### “The devil flees from cheerful people”

by Luisa Pancot \*

We are Past Pupils from the Union “Salesiana” from Vittorio Veneto (Italy).

Our Union, in the Veneto territory, carries out cultural activities, excursions and events. Our motto is who knows how to love, come and follow us!

I quote a famous phrase from Don Bosco: “The devil flees from cheerful people.” We are joy, prayer, commitment, solidarity. The closing of the Salesian program for 2018/19 with the group of our past pupils was carried out in the Episcopal Palace of Vittorio Veneto.

The Palace has been a pilgrimage goal for a long time and is the place where our bishop Corrado Pizziolo resides.

I invite those who have never visited this architectural marvel to schedule a visit. In this place, art, history and religion come together. The welcome and spiritual peace from the human point of view is fantastic. The green hills that surround it offer a landscape worthy of a postcard.

But let’s get back to our program.

This closing day began with the celebration of Holy Mass and food; the perfect programming was a special gift for all the Past Pupils who participated in large numbers. To five of them, over 90 years old, we give them a “Certificate of Belonging” for the Salesian example they have shown throughout their lives. Each of them, at their period, offered their time to help young and old by creating charitable structures. On this day, among the many readings made, commented and confronted, one of the past pupils read



a personal letter about her childhood. Her name is Silvia de Nardi; the reading moved the audience, and between those lines, it was possible to perceive the love and the sense of belonging that has always had towards our Christian ideal.

Something especially caught my attention in her writing, and it was the confirmation that the “De Mori” School was founded 90 years ago and since that time it worked as a Children’s Home; she, at the age of three was one of the first registered after its new opening. The “De Mori” School directed with the “Montessori” method is one of the educational works we should be proud of; since then our very capable Salesian sisters with other teachers who continue to instruct many generations with their educational itinerary have directed it with professionalism.

I politely request the inclusion of this writing in the magazine “Unione” together with Silvia’s letter as an effective method to share this beautiful experience with the entire Association.

I send you my special gratitude and a hug to our wonderful “Salesian World”.  
iViva Don Bosco!

\* President and Council of the Union





## From **ECUADOR** In search of youth vocations

by Martha Jaramilot \*

One of the challenges we have for the Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians is to encourage youth vocations locally, nationally and globally. Past Pupils of the FMA in the Federation of Ecuador, are committed to providing meeting spaces for our young people, an objective that is shared with the Salesian Family in our country.

In August 2018, as a Salesian Family, the preferential option for the Salesian Youth Movement was made, which in synthesis means linking with young people, who are the protagonists. As Past Pupils, we have the mission in the world and the church to spread the Salesian charism. We have the possibility of communicating within the families, at work, in parishes, in universities and in every environment where we find ourselves.

With this concern and attentive to what our young people demand, we held in Guayaquil, Ecuador on July 6, 2019, the First Encounter "Salesian Bonfire" for young Past Pupils of the FMA and the SDB. This initiative was born by young people, with the support of our Provinces both from the FMA and from SDB it became a possibility. A space for Formation, the meeting and the games were established; where joy, singing, fraternal sharing were made present as a force to reactivate the charism and to feel responsible for communicating it.

The call found a response in 38 young people between the ages of 17 and 25 who enthusiastically gathered around the Bonfire. The fire, as a symbol of the Light of Jesus Christ and with the presence of Mary Help of Christians provoked in the young people reflections around the Apostolic Exhortation "Christ Lives".

We are sure that they are discovering and assuming their roles as Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello as laypeople in the world,



making sense of their lives around Jesus, Mary and their companions. The seed has been planted; in a way, we are opening ways for young people to assume co-responsibility in the Mission as Past Pupils and as an active part of the Salesian Family in society and the church, without a doubt that the Sower will reap good fruits.

*\* President of the Past Pupil Federation of Ecuador*

### MEETING OF FEDERATIONS

The Unions of Acireale, Aci San Antonio, Catania, Canalicchio, Calatabiano, Pedara, Trecastagni, Viagrande, Mascali, Nunziata, San Gregorio participate.



# The hands in the world

## Commitment without borders

### Maison Shalom (House of Peace)

by Giuseppe Puonzo \*

Or, as coincidences do not exist, by Providence.

The summer of 2007 was beginning. We were in Burundi during June and July to participate in the ordination of a Salesian friend. We were two and, after the ordination, we had to attend a month of training aimed at local animators on the Don Bosco Preventive System: in August, we would meet with the Italian volunteer group to live the experience of the Summer Camp in Ngozi, in the Salesian house of northern Burundi.

However, Henry, after the ordination ceremony, surprised us with the news that he needed to attend spiritual exercises for ten days, retreats in which Eugenia and I could not participate. The neopresbítero decided, then, to give us the telephone numbers of a trusted taxi driver, a contact of the headquarters of the United Nations and of a certain Maggie, of the House Shalom (House of Peace) with a letter explaining who we were, where we were going and if it was possible to give us lodging for a few days; meanwhile we could give them a hand with some activities of the center.



And it was here where I met **Maggie**. A beautiful woman, with her colorful dresses, as is her life.

On a morning that seemed normal, in October 1993, Marguerite Barankitse witnessed a massacre of members of the Hutu ethnic group by the Tutsi at the headquarters of the episcopal house of Ruyigi where she worked as a teacher. More than seventy people slaughtered while she, of Tutsi ethnicity, tied to a chair, was forced to be an impotent witness to this blind violence by her people.

It was the beginning of the **genocide between Rwanda and Burundi**. Miraculously, instead of transforming that unspeakable pain into hate, Maggie held on to the faith, protected the 25 surviving children that morning and welcomed them into her home. A year later, the Maison Shalom was born, a house where Marguerite



“**The day my family was exterminated, I managed to flee**”- she says.  
 “On the street, I found Hutu people in danger and took them to the episcopal house where I worked. The Tutsi, upon learning, reached us, beat me wildly and murdered 72 Hutu before my eyes. I was filled with horror. Around me was a river of blood. At that moment, I thought about suicide. I approached the chapel of the episcopal house and, disconsolate I shouted: “Lord, you are not love! At that moment, I heard the voices of children in the sacristy. She believed that they had also been killed along with the others but, on the contrary, there they were, saved from barbarism, terrified but asking for help. For me it was a response from God. Then I decided that, if I lived, it would be for them”.

“**I have not achieved anything by myself,**” Maggy contrasts that, because of her unwavering faith, “**Mother Teresa Africana**” has been defined. “Many countries in the world have contributed to this project to make it a possibility. Humanity is like a puzzle; if we place each piece, we will create an extraordinary family”.

Barankitse began welcoming young victims of the genocide, taking care of them by offering them assistance, education and comprehensive training. Today the Maison Shalom has a hospital, houses to provide shelter, a program of daily insertion of young people in the Burundian social fabric, a cinema (there are only two in the whole country), a swimming pool (the only one in Burundi) and cultivated agricultural land. More than 52,000 children of all ethnicities have passed through that place.

**Maggie** decided never to marry. She had no children,

but she is sure she had, indeed, thousands and thousands of them.  
 The great characteristic of holiness through the ages has been to have turned and transformed hate into a warm welcome, anger in love and a wall in a door.

I have had the grace and privilege to spend some extraordinary days with her, to meet her in everyday life, to be able to talk long in peaceful afternoons and evenings and to be able to find, through these moments, two wonderful eyes, the color of the love of God towards his children. \* SSCC

**More than 52,000 children of all ethnicities have passed through that place.**





# No one less **onlus**

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## 133 - ETHIOPIA, Gubrye **A SHED FOR GUBRYE**

**For whom?** For the children, youth and women of the community.

**Where?** In the mission of Gubrye of the diocese of Emdbir – Ethiopia.

**What project?** In Gubrye's mission, there is no parish or oratory; neither structures dedicated to young people. The Bishop of the Diocese of Emdbir has asked the community, made up of three Salesian sisters, to carry out a mission aimed at the formation of young people, children and the promotion of women. The project aims to build a shed that allows children and

everyone in general to develop educational and recreational activities. Also, the place can be dedicated so that younger women can attend bakery, ornamentation and manufacturing courses.

**Cost of the project 3,500 Euros**

## 148 - TANZANIA, Tabora - Mahenge **To give a hand to TOBORA**

**For who?** To 20 orphan children.

**Where?** In Tabora, located in the western part of Tanzania.

**What project?** Orphans resident in the Mission, in need of everything: educational activities, social assistance, health and food.

**Cost of the Project for 20 children: 3,500 Euros.**



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## Reading is an adventure "Sunken" by Amelia Colanton

by Lorenzo Trapassi \*



**"Sunken"** It is an extraordinary novel of exordia signed by Amelia Colanton, published in 2017. Extraordinary, above all, due to the contents that range from the analysis of contemporary society to the recovery of motives of Greek mythology, in an original and well-achieved combination. Extraordinary, also, for the structure of the story, based on a series of parallel narrative planes that are connected with a rare ability that is to admire in this Author and her opera prima.

**The three narrative planes correspond** to the stories of Rosa, a woman sentenced to a permanent routine in her footwear business in a small business in the center of Sicily and her three children. "Sunken" in diverse seas but, equally, lost sight of for the mother. It is about Valeria, a mediocre teacher; Lucas, the troubled male son who will be the first to become independent and Antonia employed in Rome at Radio TeleOlimpia station.

**Precisely, under the reflectors and cameras** of Radio TeleOlimpia, the metaphor of our contemporary life is revealed that the Author describes in a very lucid and dreamlike way using a cultured and dense language in allusions. And while from the studios a fictional reality, made up of attractive and well-made faces, airs outside the walls of Radio TeleOlimpia the real country is drifting, towards a crisis of values that threatens the pillars and stability of the same society.

**"Sunken" is, then, a novel** that allows a double reading: the first, more immediate and pleasant, can be done from the construction of the stories of the characters. The second level of reading requires, on the contrary, a more arduous effort in understanding, but necessary, for those who do not want to ignore the current Italian reality, that is, for those who do not want to sink.



### The Author



Amelia Colanton, pseudonym of Antonella Amico (1978), of Sicilian origin, lives and works in Rome. She is passionate about visual arts and contemporary literature; she is a doctor in Ancient History and a professor of Greek history at the University of Rome Tor Vergata.

She has published essays and articles on contemporary historiography of the ancient world. Among her scientific works is the monograph on Gaetano De Sanctis. She loves the art of the painters of her region, her countrymen, and has written outstanding reviews that have become known in catalogs of art exhibitions in Rome.

She published in 2017, with the Editorial Ensemble, the novel "Sunken" that won the honorable mention in the International Prize "Salvatore Quasimodo".

# Family, become what you are

## Explore the world of relationships



### Adoption

## STATISTICS on the current situation

by Raffaella Messina \*

On this occasion, we will deepen, although synthetically, the figures that are known about adoption through a summary of the data that was shared at the 2018 EurAdopt Congress held last year in Milan.

According to the data presented, international adoptions are falling worldwide. In Italy, they fell to 55% between 2010 and 2016. The motivations are unfortunately not found in the decrease in the number of abandoned children – which remains high – but above all, in decline in the availability of adoptive families.

The cause of this difficult period that the adoption institutes are experiencing are multiple and of different nature. Among those present at the Congress, three stand out in particular: 1) the lack of psycho-

logical and economic support for families; 2) the increasing complexity of psychosomatic problems, due to traumas or diseases, present in large part of children that could be given up for adoption; they are called “children with special needs”; 3), finally, the long processes and the high costs of adoption, as well as the weak collaboration of the children’s countries of origin.

To these three causes is added a fourth one that has to do with concerns about the possibility of illicit practices (or abuses) and the recent scandals about alleged illegal adoptions in which, even Italy, would be compromised. This, then, is the diagnosis on the state of adoption, which arose from work done at the Congress.

Despite the negative data, specialists in this area have concluded that adoption can, even today, mean an effective response to protect the inalienable rights of minors; all this is possible if a pact is made to carry out some actions that support this initiative.

In the first place, it is necessary to offer greater preparation to couples who aspire to adopt so that they know how to face the reality of children whose stories are increasingly complex. Equally important is that couples have professional follow-up even after adoption. Finally, but not least, it is the initiative of some specialists who consider it very appropriate for governments to offer financial support to adoptive families.

\* Psychologist, Salesian Past Pupil



# Third millennium

*The present is the future now*

## WOMEN THAT HAVE CHANGE HISTORY

Women, of the present and the past, of whom much is said, but little is known

by Cristiana Mariani

### THE FEMINISTS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

A commonplace identifies the Middle Ages, as an era in which women, who were said to have no soul, did not exercise any importance in society. On the contrary, the writer and journalist Giovanna Jacob (her full article is found at [www.aleteia.org](http://www.aleteia.org)) published a deep and documented analysis that shows that it was precisely the so-called "dark Christian Middle Age" that allowed women to express All their talents. Let us be interested in this study presented here in summary.

Since the time of Voltaire, some historians have represented the Middle Ages as a dark, delayed, underdeveloped, superstitious and, above all, misogynist era. In the literary reconstruction of the Middle Ages, stories are told with a large presence of "soulless" women forced to deliver the first wedding night to the feudal lord and not to the husband (the discredited "ius primæ noctis").

On the contrary, according to Régine Pernoud, these statements are nonsense. In summary, I will tell you the theses that this French historian, already deceased, spoke in the Medioevo books. A Secular Prejudice (published in Italy by Bompiani in 1983) and The Woman In The Time Of The Cathedrals (published in Italy by Rizzoli in 1982).

Regarding the idea that women in the Middle Ages were considered creatures without a soul, Professor Pernoud affirms: "It would be strange that the first martyrs of the Church honored as saints were women and not men: **St. Inés, St. Cecilia, St. Agate** and many more. It would be sad; indeed, that **St. Blandina** and **St. Genevieve** had not had an immortal soul! It is also surprising that in one of the oldest paintings found in the catacombs (in the



Priscilla cemetery) it is represented, precisely, **The Virgin and Child**, well designated by the star of the prophet Isaiah".

After having denied the common places, Pernoud stops at the study of the great French queens of the Lower Middle Ages: "Isn't it surprising that in feudal times both the queen and the king were crowned by the archbishop of Reims? In other words, the same value as that of the king was attributed to the coronation of the queen. **Leonor de Aquitana** and **Blanca de Castilla** dominated, with ownership, their century exercising an incontrovertible power



*Isabel de Castilla*

while the absence, illness or death of the king; they had their chancery, their independent field of activity. "Do not forget, also, that it was a queen, **Isabel de Castilla**, who sponsored that company that became the symbol of the beginning of the modern era, the arrival of the Spaniards to America with the crossing of Christopher Columbus.

In addition to these great Queens, Pernoud cites an impressive number of feudal ladies who lived between the 5th and 15th centuries of our era. Among them, we can remember the famous **Matilde de Canossa**, who in 1115 dared to reveal herself to the German emperor Federico Barbaroja, declared enemy of the Italian cities, donating her fiefs from Tuscany and Emiliania to the Pope. Also, within the Church, women

held positions of power. Some abbesses acted as authentic feudal lords whose power was respected to the same extent as that of other lords. Some of them wore pectoral clothing that today we only see the bishops use pectoral cross and staff, for example; there were women who usually administered vast territories that included villages, parishes, etc.

In contrast to what some historians refer to, not all female convents were subjected to male cloisters but, even, the opposite can be seen. Roberto de Abrissel, in Fontevrault, in the first years of the 12th century "decided that the monks of his order were under the government of the abbess of the former feminine convent." If on the one hand, some abbesses could have more power than the abbots could, on the other the married women, of any social category, were independent of their husbands also concerning the economic rights. "In the acts above it is usual to find cases of women married who work on their own, for example, starting a business or commerce, without being obliged to present an authorization from her husband". Also among the peasants, among the so-called "servitude", there were women who bought or sold small properties. In the act of the eleventh century there is talk of

*Matilde de Canossa*





“two servants, called **Auberede** and **Romelde**, who at the end of the eleventh century (between 1089 and 1095), they buy their freedom instead of a house they owned in Beauvais, in the market square”.

The women of the Middle Ages did not need to promote feminist battles to enter the world of work: “Size inscriptions (today we would say “population censuses”), wherever they have been preserved, as in the case of Paris at the end of the thirteenth century, show us a multitude of women who worked different jobs, school teacher, doctor, pharmacist, tinctures, craftswoman, copyist, miniaturist, bookbinder, and so on.” Let us highlight that there were even miniaturist women, that is, artists (a book of miniatures carries, for example, this inscription: “Omnis pictura et floratura istius depicta ac florata est per me Margaretam Scheiffartz” – All the images and decorations in this book have been painted and designed by me, Margarita Scheiffartz”).

Now, hold on tight to this revelation: in the Middle Ages, not only were their forms of direct democracy at the local level, but both men and women

participated in the voting. From the set of documents of daily life, city statutes and the enormous amount of notarial acts and judicial documents “a reality comes to light that for us can present more than one surprising revelation given that, for example, we see women in the same way as men in city assemblies or rural areas”. It is not surprising that there were some forms of direct democratic participation in the Middle Ages. For example, the motto: “vox populi, vox Dei” is attributed to **Charlemagne**, Catholic emperor. In one of the many letters, that **St. Catherine of Siena** sent to the popes and kings during the dramatic period of Avignon’s captivity he wrote: “Power is not absolute; it is borrowed from God. Or for the people. “This woman from the town was heard by the most powerful of her time. A century later, during the Hundred Years War, a simple young woman of humble origins managed to convince the French monarchy to be placed as head of a huge army of men: her name was **Joan of Arc**.”

Fuentes: [PEPEONLINE](https://it.aleteia.org) | Ago. 13, 2018.

<https://it.aleteia.org>

\*Past Pupil Fed. Lombarda Inmaculada



# I DON'T WASTE *I REFUSE*; Water, always praised!

We all know that water is an invaluable asset. It is a "non-renewable" resource.

That is why it is so important not to waste the element that accompanies our life during almost every moment of our daily work. Let's try to confront some simple suggestions that have been published on the internet pages that deal with the theme of ecology...



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**Let us start from the fact that water is a poorly accessible asset** and that, above all, fresh, clean and potable water is not an infinite resource. In this regard, although water resources occupy 71% of the earth's surface, freshwater represents only 2.5%, and the remaining 94.5 is salty. Of this 2.5%, more than two-thirds are found in glaciers while 29.9% corresponds to groundwater, 0.3% is in rivers and lakes and, finally, 0.4% is contained in the atmosphere.

**Therefore, one of the reasons that should motivate us to save water is the scarcity of this resource.** To these considerations, we must add that the increase in temperature causes the main water reserves of our planet to dissolve that is, glaciers and snow. On the other hand, climate change causes short periods of heavy rains and great storms to al-

ternate after long periods of drought; thus, the water that falls in large quantities and quickly does not penetrate the arid lands not being absorbed, this water tends to diffuse into the rivers and then flow into the sea where it becomes unusable.

**A problem that we should not overlook** is the human-produced water pollution that natural waters cannot face even though they have a spontaneous tendency to self-purification.

Today we use more water underestimating the difficulty to extract without causing damage to ecosystems. If we continue with this pace in the future, it will be increasingly complex and expensive to guarantee everyone this indispensable good, with serious consequences for us, our planet and all the ecosystems that exist in it.

**Every time we open a water tap and waste this liquid** we should remember the principle of "Sustainable Development" which imposes on us the duty to give our children a healthy planet that can meet the needs of current generations without compromising the capacity in the future to meet their own.

**The water wasted at home, out of ignorance.**

It is very useful to be aware of some absurd consumption to which we are frequently accustomed, usually done unconsciously. Here is a list of the most important:

**30 liters** - It is the waste of water if the tap is left open while we brush our teeth. In a year, a family of three could save up to 7,500 liters of drinking water.

**150 liters** - of water are spent in a delicious relaxing bath in a bathtub; but more than three times as much is, as an average shower bath would consume. Taking a shower, we save, on each occasion, approximately 100 liters of water. Using the shower instead of the tub would save approximately 1,200 liters per year per person.

**20 liters** - Another important saving is simple: just do not let the water run while shaving.

**20 liters** - Every day we can save twenty liters only if a tank with a differentiated discharge is installed in the toilet. 20% of domestic water consumption corresponds to bathroom discharges. It is very useful to provide the toilets of these modern systems that allow discharging different amounts of water according to the requirements. In this way, you could save up to 50% of the water that is usually spent, which would mean almost 26,000 liters per year.

**From 40 to 60 liters** - They are the savings for each dishwashing or laundry with the appliances full. To save water and electricity it is necessary to use the appliances with the total capacity choosing the economic wash cycle, thus reducing the frequency of washing. This saves more than 8,000 liters of water per year. On average, the washing machine consumes less than half of the water (80 liters) with a



30-minute wash compared to that of 90; today, many detergents are more effective in cycles of less than 60 minutes.

**100 liters** is the water-saving if you wash the car with a bucket and not with a hose.

**4 liters.** Daily savings if the vegetables are washed leaving them to soak in instead of using the water stream.

**More than 1,000 liters a year.** If you wash the dishes by hand instead of using a stream of water. It is convenient to collect in a container the right measure of water and use it for this purpose. Also, washing the dishes immediately after meals, removing the coarsest dirt, using the cooking water of the pasta or other food to wash the dishes and pots allows not only water saving but also energy and economic savings (less detergent use). Excessive use of chemical products for the cleaning of the earthenware and the house in addition to causing contamination of the tributaries increases the consumption of water used for cleaning soapy surfaces.

**100 liters of water a day** can lead to wasting a leaky faucet or a bath with water leakage. This should not be neglected. Proper maintenance or, if necessary, a small repair will contribute to saving a lot of drinking water that would otherwise be lost without being used. A loss of 90 drops per minute corresponds to approximately 4,000 liters per year. To control these leaks, at night you can read the meter, before sleeping, do not open the taps all night and check the counter the next morning.

**Finally,** remember to reuse in the garden the water used to wash the vegetables spreading it in the afternoon on the plants: after the sun goes down, the water evaporates slowly.





Newspaper of the World Confederation of  
the Past Pupils of the FMA

Poste Italiane S.p.A. Spedizione in Abb. Postale D.L. 353/2003  
(conv. in L. 27/02/2004 n° 46) art. 1, comma 1, Aut. C/RM/48/2006

Take a smile  
Give it to someone who has never had it.  
Take a sunbeam,  
Make it fly to where the night reigns.  
Discover a source,  
Give a bath to those who live in the mud.  
Take a tear  
put it on the face of those who have never cried.  
Take courage  
put it in the mood of those who don't know how to fight.  
Discover life,  
Share it with someone who doesn't know how to understand it.  
Take hope  
and live in its light.  
Take the goodness  
and donate it to those who don't know how to give.  
Discover love  
and make it known to the world.

Mahatma Gandhi