INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS
Founded by Saint John Bosco
and by Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello

No. 1062

A journey of gratuitousness and hope together with young people

Dearest Sisters,

I reach out to you during this favorable time in which the Provincial Chapters are being celebrated throughout the Institute. These are powerful moments of communion, allowing communities to make their voices heard and to share reflections, proposals, and aspirations for the good. In this regard, I greatly appreciate the positive response from the Provinces, their willingness to explore the theme proposed by GC XXV with a sense of responsibility and love for the Salesian-Mornese charism, as well as their commitment to involving the young people and laypeople who share the Salesian mission with us during this special time.

I also wish to thank the Lord for the experience of the 13th VIDES International Conference, held in Seville (Spain) from 25 to 30 August. The event focused on the theme *"VIDES Youth: Missionaries of hope and bearers of innovative proposals to address contemporary challenges regarding social justice, integral ecology, and digital communication."* It was a wonderful and special opportunity for many young volunteers to meet and exchange views on issues fundamental to their lives and their mission. The event certainly opened up new horizons for the many participants, highlighting the beauty and importance of reflection, planning, gaining greater self-awareness, forging new relationships with a missionary heart, and becoming bearers of hope for the people they will encounter in the places where they are sent.

The resonance of a rich experience

Sharing with young people, as we did at the aforementioned conference, makes us aware of the importance of our educational work, our presence, and our identity as a *community on a constant mission*. Encounters with young men and women who have already had missionary experiences highlighted the indispensable value of the witness borne by the communities of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, communities open to welcoming them and journeying alongside them for a stretch of the way.
A young woman approached me to express her desire to do good and to commit herself to helping others, especially the little ones and the poor. As I congratulated her, she told me that everything she had learned was thanks to the communities of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, where she had been welcomed and had experienced acceptance, kindness, and trust. Her decision to volunteer with VIDES was inspired by the dedication, mission, enthusiasm, and selfless giving she experienced among the Salesian educators.
It was such a spontaneous, serene, and simple testimony that it left me amazed and grateful. It made me reflect on the young people of this generation, often viewed negatively, who, when guided and accompanied, embark on a genuine journey of personal maturation, openness to others, and readiness to encounter the Lord.

Some young people do not come from our own centers. They turned to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians after finding the VIDES *webpage online* and becoming captivated by the initiatives and

goals presented there. They feel a connection to this ideal, and a commitment ignites within them to contribute to building a more just and fraternal world. Together, they are able to respond and engage in meaningful experiences that leave a profound mark on their lives, so much so that, for some, it becomes a vocational journey helping them discover God's plan for their lives.

I carry in my heart questions that I share with you. Are we aware that volunteering experiences, lived out in specific contexts and situations, are truly places of discovery and vocational discernment? Are we convinced of the need to create the conditions for these experiences to shine with the values inherent to our spirituality?

I wish to emphasize, once again, the importance of volunteering within the educational experience. We cannot and must not overlook it. It takes various forms: ranging from activity leaders in formal and informal settings to individuals who share our mission and become partners with us in education, and extending to involvement in a missionary spirit that stems from a shared personal and communal process.
This confirms the deep conviction Don Bosco left us: "In every young person, there is a point accessible to the good." Observing how true this remains today, regardless of the forms or methods involved, should continue to fill us with wonder and encouragement. Goodness knows no measure or limits of time, and the hearts of young people hold immense potential for love and generosity. It is like the seed cast into the earth. The sower scatters it with confidence, knowing that the seed's future does not belong to him, yet certain that he has done everything in his power to prepare a soil that preserves the quality and potential of the seed itself, ensuring the conditions for its full fruitfulness.
A significant number of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians participating in the VIDES Conference were able to share in that experience of missionary spirit and global outlook. This breadth of vision opens the mind and heart to the horizons of the entire world, making it possible to avoid the dangers of becoming insular within one's own national context.
Certainly, this calls for the strength of our presence and accompaniment, a great resource to be leveraged in our educational mission and within our communities, in fidelity to the decision of GC XXIV, which highlighted the *prophecy of presence* as a commitment to be renewed in daily life.
We are increasingly realizing that volunteering is one way to express belonging to the Salesian Family and to put the charism into practice. It is an effective pastoral strategy for reaching all young people, including those who do not usually frequent our centers but are nonetheless drawn to them. Many of them are sincerely seeking direction for their lives. They often desire to commit themselves to being that light of hope and beauty that Jesus gives us, and of which we all become a reflection shining in the present moment, in accordance with the charge Pope Leo XIV entrusted to them for the 2025 Jubilee: "May you all always be signs of hope in the world! [...] a light to the city of Rome, to Italy, and to the whole world. Let us walk together with our faith in Jesus Christ."

"Making a home" with young people

At this point, it seems appropriate to recall Circular 1056, with which I convened the 25th General Chapter. This document, intended for reflection and preparation, and one that you have certainly studied in depth and continue to explore, emphasizes the importance of "making a home" with young people.
We believe this to be one of the most concrete and prophetic forms of our educational mission, precisely because we live in a time marked by a crisis of relationships, individualism, family fragmentation, and a society that, at times, is not oriented toward the promotion of life. Therefore, living an "experience of home" means finding a space where one can meet others, feel loved, build bonds, discern God's plan for one's life, and look to the future with hope.
The experience of the VIDES Conference mentioned above once again presented us with a major challenge from an educational perspective.

For Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, “creating a home” meant fostering an environment where a family spirit is palpable, not through extraordinary actions, but through simple, everyday gestures that we can all perform and need to reclaim.
When we ask ourselves how to embody the charism in today’s society, within our own concrete realities, we naturally think of practical and efficient solutions. Yet, we sometimes forget that we must start again from the simplicity of life, from the essential nature of our spirituality and Salesian vocation, and from those values that animated the environments of Valdocco and Mornese.

The constant reference to our charismatic roots is not intended to foster nostalgia for the past but, rather, to let ourselves be inspired by that prophetic reality so that we may view the reality of our own times, where we are called today to live out the Salesian charism, with eyes full of hope.
Schools, educational centers, youth centers, social networks, all the settings where we welcome children and young people and where our Educating Communities work, are “homes” where heart meets heart, and where everyone can feel truly welcomed. It is this experience we offer young people, one that can transform them from within and help them discover the meaning of life.
Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello made themselves a living presence in every educational gesture, cultivating hope and the smile that opens the way to trust. They created an environment where everything holds educational significance. Even play is never a useless, superfluous, or meaningless activity, but is instead experienced as a way to foster the maturation of young people and help them realize their dreams.

The ideal that shaped the daily lives of the community at Mornese, comprising the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, young people, and laywomen, was expressed in the words, "This is the house of God’s love." As Fr. James Costamagna noted, this was not an abstract or idealized concept but rather a state of "already and not yet". The centrality of Christ in the lives of Mother Mazzarello and the Educating Community created a constant spiritual tension that directed everyone toward seeking the essential: love received and given with joy. A similar reality guides Don Bosco’s mission: "Walk with your feet on the ground and your mind turned toward heaven." It is an invitation to embrace reality, suffering, and daily struggles while keeping our gaze fixed on heaven. This constantly reminds us of our mission, in which the Holy Spirit is the undisputed protagonist. It is not we who act, but He who guides and sustains us. To truly believe this means entrusting our mission of education and proclamation of the Word to the One alone who can bring it to maturity and growth. Don Bosco used to say, "Education is a matter of the heart, but only God is its master." We are, therefore, aware of being humble, small instruments in His hands, reaching the hearts of young people and touching their most sensitive chords.

“Here and now”

In the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo XIV invites us to build the civilization of love, calling upon Christians to work to transform the world, the present reality where our daily apprenticeship unfolds. Pope Paul VI had already highlighted the significance of this expression.
What does it mean to feel the responsibility of building the civilization of love? I have reflected on this and come to realize that our lives play out precisely where the Lord has placed us, in the small, everyday things, in expected events, and in the surprises, God never fails to send our way. All of these are part of His great plan of love, which gradually unfolds and draws us in, becoming a leaven of goodness for the world.
Don Bosco taught us the holiness of the “here and now.” His pedagogical synthesis, “Good Christians and honest citizens”, along with Mother Mazzarello’s constant exhortation, “Let us do good while there is still time”, clearly guides the path of our existence. Our minds and hearts are turned toward heaven because Jesus is the center of our lives, yet our feet contend with the dust, the stones, and the obstacles of the journey where, at times, worn-out shoes make us feel the grueling toil of an uphill road.

It therefore seems important to me to reclaim the call to be present, as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and as Educating Communities, at this moment in history, avoiding the risk of letting slip the precious time the Lord calls us to live. Pope Leo XIV highlights this in the aforementioned encyclical, "The civilization of love is not born of a single, spectacular gesture, but of a sum of small, steadfast acts of faithfulness that stem the tide of dehumanization. It is therefore worth pausing to consider how each of us, within our own sphere, can collaborate in building it" (cf. no. 213).

We entrust this time of grace for the Church and for our Institute to Mary. May she guide us to live the preparation for General Chapter XXV with joy and a sense of responsibility, allowing ourselves to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. In the account of the Visitation, Mary rises and promptly leaves her home to go to Elizabeth. She carries Christ with her and allows Him to bring forth hope and joy. Mary shows us that being a disciple of Jesus is not limited to listening but translates into humble, concrete actions that transform lives. She teaches us that authentic faith generates action, impels us to proclaim the truth, sustains us as we journey together, and guides us with the wisdom and patience required for effective discernment.

Let us continue to implore the gift of peace throughout the world and, through prayer, offerings, and gestures of solidarity assist the communities severely affected by war, violence, the consequences of natural disasters, and extreme poverty.

I send you greetings on behalf of the Councilors present here and those conducting canonical visits in the various Provinces, and, together with them, I wish you a blessed Month of the Rosary.

Rome 24 September 2026

Your affectionate Mother