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

No. 1063

Sent forth to be a presence of the Gospel and of fraternity

Dearest Sisters,

During this month of October, I had the opportunity to spend some time in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, where I remembered each one of you. I entrusted to Mary's protection and aid, in particular, those communities suffering from the consequences of wars, natural disasters, and injustices, praying that she, as Mother and powerful Help, might touch the hearts of those who govern nations and intervene where we ourselves cannot reach.
The presentation of the Crucifix to ten newly commissioned missionary Sisters and eighteen newly commissioned Salesian missionaries, along with the blessing and unveiling of a statue of Saint Maria Troncatti, placed within the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, offered a valuable opportunity for me, the General Councilors, and all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians present to reflect anew on the ongoing relevance of the missionary call.

From the past to the future

We are entering the final year of preparation for the 150th anniversary of the first missionary departure of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, initially to Uruguay and subsequently to Argentina. As indicated in the calendar for the 25th General Chapter (cf. Circular no. 1056), we wish to celebrate this special anniversary together, coinciding with the conclusion of the General Chapter, which will take place on 14 November 2027, in Rome.
We see this as an excellent opportunity to highlight the presence of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians representing every Province worldwide, a testament to the diversity, richness, and beauty of the Salesian charism as it is embodied across various cultures and every continent.
It will also be a way to express our gratitude to the Lord for having stirred within the heart of Don Bosco a desire to expand horizons to the ends of the earth, and for the openness and generous availability of Mother Mazzarello, who placed her complete trust and confidence in him.
We are all the fruit of the courage and missionary zeal of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, and of the trust they placed in our young missionary Sisters. What always strikes me is that, at the time the first missionaries set out, there were no courses on missiology or interculturality, subjects we highly value today, yet they departed, convinced that they were following God's will and driven by a profound passion to proclaim Jesus.
They set out with serenity; from the very first moment, they cultivated an attitude of openness to the Holy Spirit, bringing the spirit of Mornese into the world. It is essential to keep this historical and charismatic reference point in mind, in order to avoid a closed-off mindset that could cause us to collapse inward upon our own small-scale realities, a tendency that risks impoverishing the missionary dimension of the Salesian-Mornesian charism.

Each Province is certainly very important, and every community is very important; but let us remember that they are a living part of the Institute, they are the face of the Institute at the local level. I say *important* because each entity has its own contribution to make, its own specific mission to carry out, and a perspective on its own local reality that is truly valuable. The Institute is not an abstract entity; it becomes incarnate within the reality of the Provinces.
Our decentralization begins with the life experienced at the Institute's Center, a life shared with the Provincials and their respective Councils. From the Province, this engagement extends, in various

ways, to the local level. Thus, the Institute remains united, bound together by a profound, worldwide communion that transcends local, regional, national, or continental affiliations. To imagine that we could be self-sufficient would be to betray the charismatic nature of our religious family, which was born from a vision that was both expansive and prophetic.

In his homily for the missionary mandate in Turin, at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, on 17 October, the Rector Major, Father Fabio Attard, speaking to the new missionaries, stated that the most beautiful gift is "*the honesty that sets us free.* Free, because our only treasure is the Lord. This freedom, however, is not naive. It asks us to interpret reality intelligently: to know the history, the language, the culture, as well as the wounds and hopes of the people who will welcome you. And it asks us to make wise choices, according to the sentiments of Christ, that "thinking according to God" of which Paul speaks to the Philippians: *Have in yourselves the same sentiments that were in Christ Jesus*. And as Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, this requires of us an intelligence that reads, a wisdom that chooses. This is how we become free in service."

With realism and hope

I would like to express my gratitude in advance for the contributions reaching the Center, which serve as a reflection and record of the provincial chapters; some of these have already concluded, while many others are currently underway. From what I have read and heard, it seems clear that the provincial communities are engaging with confidence in this event of grace, an event of the Holy Spirit, which we are experiencing at the local and provincial levels, and which we will subsequently experience at the general level from September to November 2027.
The major question that I sense as an underlying theme, in every provincial chapter and, indeed, in our mission throughout the world, is this: how can we make our charism relevant today? How can we embody it for a generation living in such complex times, a precarious situation, lacking reliable points of reference, especially for young people? And how should we address a global landscape that, while broadening our horizons, also gives us grave cause for concern, given the consequences of ongoing wars, numerous open conflicts, international tensions surrounding vital issues like immigration and emigration, the rearmament of nations, and the rise in poverty and social inequality?
In a time marked by serious conflicts and divisions, it is not easy to commit to education and to carry forward one's mission with courage. While the era in which we live is certainly no more difficult than others, it nonetheless demands that we have the courage and boldness to navigate through these challenges. We are living in our own time, and we ask the Lord for the light to discern the paths for evangelization today, to look toward the future while remaining faithful to our charism.

In his encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo XIV offers an illuminating criterion for how we should engage with the contemporary world. "We need a sound realism that avoids both political idealism and cynicism. [...] Authentic realism does not abandon the goal of changing the world. Rather, it begins by clearly perceiving interests, fears, constraints, and power dynamics, precisely in order to calculate what can be achieved and through which steps. It does not reduce politics to morality, nor does it surrender it to violence. Instead, it seeks viable paths to ensure that peace becomes more than just a word, by fostering credible institutions, verifiable guarantees, patient negotiations, conflict prevention, and the protection of civilians" (MH 218).
The Holy Father invites us to nurture relationships and dialogue in our daily lives and within institutional settings: "Digital culture multiplies connections and offers new opportunities for encounter; yet, the human heart retains an essential need for closeness. I encourage the preservation of spaces and moments where physical presence remains vital: the shared table, the gathering of the Christian community, visiting those who are alone, and serving the poor. These are signs of a humanity that continues to believe that everybody is a temple of the Spirit and a dwelling place of God. Indeed, this very alliance between glory and fragility serves as a criterion for evaluating the anthropological models put forward by contemporary culture" (MH 239).

Caring is a way of being, a comprehensive attitude that encompasses not only the affective dimension, but also the intellectual, spiritual, relational, and ethical dimensions. It means embracing life and placing oneself unconditionally at its service.
I was struck by the account of a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians who serves on the preparatory commission for the Provincial Chapter. She told me that when young people were asked, "What do you ask of us, the FMA?", they replied: "Given that the average age of the Sisters keeps rising, it would be truly wonderful if young people could feel loved in a way that is natural and appropriate to the age of the FMA Sisters. It would be lovely, and perhaps this is already happening in some houses, to feel cared for by someone who could be like an aunt or a grandmother, without the pressure for the Sisters to always be perfect or to have to manage everything. Another request we have for the FMA is that they show, with greater conviction, the beauty of consecrated life, not as a form of renunciation, but as a choice of beauty."
I believe that, when faced with such simplicity and spontaneity from young people, what is required of us, more than any commentary, is an awakening that leads to a profound conversion. It is one that helps us avoid getting lost in performance anxiety or perfectionism (which young people have no need for), and instead return to that simplicity in how we welcome others and build relationships, a simplicity that constitutes our own charismatic wealth.
The educational work of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello is rooted in the conviction that “losing oneself” for the sake of another is an act of taking care, because love always triumphs. How vital it is that we care, together, for those entrusted to us in this complex “today”, a time nonetheless full of possibilities for doing good!
Caring for others reflects an essential value; it is the only way we can truly educate the human heart, work alongside others, and live in their midst. If this daily care is absent, how can we expect an effective educational or evangelizing relationship to exist?

Before concluding, I would like to join you in thanking the Lord for the *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Spirituality Course of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians,* established at the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences “Auxilium”, which we celebrated with joy on October 14th. Fifty years have passed since 1976, yet the Course retains a youthful and appealing character. It is highly beneficial for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who participate in it, and it has also been a source of good for the approximately 900 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from every continent who have taken part over the years. It offers an opportunity to connect contemporary history directly with the source, the very place from which this entire journey began, and serves as a valuable resource for keeping alive the fire of the charism that our Founders, having received this great gift from the Holy Spirit, ignited within the Church.

Let us continue to pray for our dear Pope Leo XIV, for his health, that he may recover well and continue to be for the entire human family, an effective and courageous voice in calling for the gift of peace for all peoples.
I entrust to Mary Help of Christians our efforts, our projects, and the lives of the young men and women whom the Lord entrusts to us. May she be our guide as we educate and journey together, renewing within the Institute, with a fresh missionary passion, the spirit of *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle* and *A te le affido*.

With affection and in prayer for all of you!

Rome, 24 October 2026

Aff.ly Mother

New Provincials 2027

America

Province “Mother Mazzarello” Brazil - Belo Horizonte *Sister Jane Maria (da) Silva*	BMM
Province “Our Lady of the Amazon” Brasile - Manaus *Sister Ana Clébia Lima Palheta*	BRM
Province “Immaculate Conception” Uruguay *Sister Maria Alejandra Strada*	URU