

The Teacher is here and is asking for you

Dearest Sisters,

These are the words that Martha addresses to her sister Mary, in tears over the death of their brother Lazarus (Jn 11:28). I wish to read this phrase from the Gospel, updating it in the present day of our lives. The Teacher is here; He is next to us and still calls us. We are inhabiting a time of grace and beauty in the Church, despite the suffering caused by the wars and violence that affect humanity. Therefore, I share with you what we experienced and are experiencing in recent months, which I consider truly special for our Christian life and for consecrated women, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

A vocational climate

The first thought takes us back to the Youth Jubilee, experienced in Rome from 28 July to 3 August 2025, by around a million boys and girls from all over the world, including from Countries at war. I would like to underline their numerous and enthusiastic participation in this ecclesial event. We saw hosts of serene and smiling young people walking, singing, and praying on the streets of Rome. We also saw them in prayer before the Eucharist, in line to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, silent and attentive to the word of Pope Leo XIV, through whom they let themselves be involved, in a unique and personal call, to review and rethink their lives in terms of the future.

The Holy Father touched the strings of their hearts by calling them to the sense of the infinite, of life beyond the things that pass, beyond what can bring us pleasure, but is transitory and precarious. Faced with the grandeur of this immense crowd of young people, even some non-Catholic media have had to recognize with honesty, the strength of the Church in being a 'voice' that summons, that knows how to speak to the new generations, tune in to them, and identify hidden longings in them.

On the other hand, this Jubilee presented us with the truth of young people, at this moment in history, also thinking of the 5,000 of the Salesian Youth Movement who met in the afternoon and evening of 30 July in Rome-Cinecittà, in the neighborhood square and who, on August 2nd, received the missionary mandate from the Rector Major Fr. Fabio Attard and from me, then reaching Tor Vergata. This multitude of pilgrims so unusual, cheerful, colorful with their flags, their shirts, their faces, took with seriousness and joy the word of Pope Leo XIV who, intercepting the deepest questions of the youthful soul, showed everyone the way to be men and women of light and hope, creators of peace. "Jesus tells us, 'You are the salt of the earth [...]. You are the light of the world'. (Mt 5:13-14). And today your voices, your enthusiasm, your cries –which are all for Jesus Christ – will be heard to the ends of the world. Today you are starting a few days of a journey, the Jubilee of Hope, and the world needs messages of hope. You are this message, and you must continue to give hope to everyone." (*Spontaneous words pronounced by Pope Leo XIV to young people after the Holy Mass presided over by Msgr. Rino Fisichella, at the end of the tour in the 'popemobile', St. Peter's Square, 29 July 2025*).

The Youth Jubilee leaves us a clear message; young people are open to the values of the Spirit, available and educable. Many of them are the fruit of Christian communities that walk together in faith, accompany them to discover the meaning of life, and help them understand their vocation. It

seems important to me, for us Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, to welcome this message as a call, a confirmation to still wager, not only on young people, but also on the strength of the Gospel and Salesian spirituality; on everything that we are and that we can still give, because they expect this from us. They wait for us to show them the path. We are not only traveling companions, but markers along the way, like St. John the Baptist, who makes himself a living mediator to lead his disciples to Christ. 'Behold the Lamb of God'. Then he disappears so that they may know and meet the Lord Jesus.

Presence that generates missionary life and ardor

A fruitful time of grace was also that of the three Triennial Verificas on the American Continent. In the shared experience, the strong sense of belonging to the Institute emerged as an essential component, recognizing oneself in the common Salesian identity, despite the evident differences in culture, language, and customs. Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, lay men and women, all found themselves on the post-chapter journey and with their gaze already turned to General Chapter XXV. The experience of fraternity, of mutual acceptance, of open dialogue, of clarity, of honest debate was, in my opinion, an important verification also of how we can live our spirituality at different times, in different places, without taking anything away from that charismatic 'color' that Don Bosco awaits from us. We recall his affirmation, "*I sketch; you will spread the colors*" (MB XI 309).

We realized that each of us expressed our own color and, within each inter-provincial conference, all the Provinces brought their own unrepeatable nuance.

This gave a special intensity to our meeting. Above all, it generated the clarity necessary to verify a journey that closely resembles a pilgrimage. We are moving towards the holy land of our identity, of our spirituality; towards the holy land of being, here and now, *Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello*.

With this certainty, we experienced the intense days that ended in "St. Raphael the Archangel" Province of Paraguay.

I stopped, then, in that Province for a short visit on the occasion of the celebration of 125th of our presence in Paraguay. I appreciated the missionary dimension of this small Province, which has some missionary communities in Chaco Paraguay. Unfortunately, for reasons of time, I was only able to visit one mission, but what the Archbishop told me, made me question myself and made me think. He had said to me on his arrival. "Only the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians resist here. As you can see, there is no one else here. There are only the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and as long as you remain, even in the midst of so many sacrifices, these little ones, these children, these women, and these people will have those who take care of them. The moment that you would abandon this mission; there would be no one left to take care of these people."

Meeting the students of the school, tidy in their own uniform, polite, disciplined, serene, I said to myself, truly here, in the middle of the forest, where only the reality of the mission exists, how well my Sisters are doing and with how much generosity and detachment! I felt challenged and, at the same time, I thought that this could still be a lively reminder for us, for the Institute, right now, in the imminence of the canonization of Sister Maria Troncatti. She was a little great woman who lived in the Ecuadorian forest with an intrepid missionary heart. I imagine that, perhaps, her environment was more or less like what I saw in Paraguay and I thought about how much Sister Maria was capable of the sacrifice experienced in the mission, with total dedication and love, together with her Sisters and the Salesians. So capable of sacrifice as to transform and humanize the environment in which she worked and for which she gave her life.

A holiness that contagions

The common thread that binds us to the date when we will have the opportunity to directly, or indirectly, experience the canonization of Sister Maria Troncatti (October 19, 2025) helps us to

reflect on the gifts we are receiving in this privileged time of the life of the Church and of our Institute.

The Teacher calls us again. It seems important to me to remember that our vocation is a call to the universality of love. In fact, describing the spirit of Mornese, Fr. Egidio Viganò said, "It is not a greenhouse spirit, but a universal one."

We are preparing to celebrate the anniversary of the first missionary departure of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to Uruguay. I would like this to be not only a celebratory memory, but also a personal itinerary of vocational renewal, of relaunching our vocation, of the journey to holiness, following in the footsteps and life of Sister Mary Troncatti.

We have so many reasons, at this time, to listen to the invitation of the Teacher. I think of the canonization of Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis, which took place in Rome on 7 September 2025; a young adult and a young teenager, not so far from the time in which we live. I think about how much fascination they have on a global level, how much admiration, but also the desire to live holiness. We, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, cannot help but allow ourselves to be questioned by these champions of youthful holiness which is proposed to us in such a normal and possible way.

"Are you a bigot?", Frassati was asked at the University (this is how Catholics were taunted by Masonic liberals, social-communists, and fascists). But his answer was honest and sure, "No. I remained a Christian." In his friendship with Jesus, he found the strength to live the authentic Christian life every day. "Jesus visits me every morning in Communion. I make return in the miserable way I can, visiting the poor." And we know that friends called him, Saint Pier Giorgio 'Frassati transport company' because he was always on the street, with his cart full of necessary things to take to the poor.

Of Saint Carlo Acutis we know his readiness for the encounter with God, simply and daily. His meeting with Jesus was always ardent with faith and love. "The Eucharist is my highway to heaven." "If God possesses our heart, we will possess the Infinite." He was a young man who lived normally, with a marked ability for computing, earning him the nickname, God's influencer. With spontaneity and great humanity, he looked for the poor and found them on the street and saw the face of Jesus in them. We can truly define him, in the words of Pope Francis, as *the saint next door*.

We, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, have chosen holiness as a vocational path, as the orientation of our lives. Urged by many current examples, we ask ourselves, what does the Lord expect from us, at this moment, through these events? What is His calling for us today? Thinking about the path of the Jubilee, the path of the Salesian Youth Movement, how we can help our young people find answers to their thirst for the infinite and the truth, which motivated them to endure the heat, the queues, the hunger, the various hardships, and everything that is part of a journey of discovery? What proposals can we offer, so that youthful holiness may continue to shine in the Salesian Family as Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello desired?

Pope Leo XIV recalls that *"Pier Giorgio and Carlo cultivated love for God and for their brothers and sisters through simple means, within everyone's reach: daily Holy Mass, prayer, especially Eucharistic Adoration."* And then *"Frequent Confession"* (Homily, September 7 2025).

Carlo wrote, "The only thing we must truly fear is sin;" and he marveled because "people care so much about the beauty of their own bodies and do not care about the beauty of their own souls." Pier Giorgio said, "Around the poor and the sick, I see a light that we do not have."

He called charity, "the foundation of our religion" and, like Charles, exercised it above all through small daily gestures, often hidden.

It seems to me that all this can be read as an invitation to return to joyfully lived holiness, a pleasant, fascinating holiness, capable of contagion and involving sisters and young people.

If we think of the sanctity of Don Bosco, what is striking is his attitude of simplicity and cheerfulness, which makes what is actually difficult and tiring appear natural and simple. It is the acceptance of events with their charge of hope. It is the knowledge of people in all their potential. It is the sensitivity of those who know how to make themselves friends, brothers/sisters and fathers/mothers. A holiness that does not lack the “invisible” but pungent thorns of the rose pergola. The secret must be sought in the heart of Don Bosco, who always throbbed to the rhythm of the *da mihi animas cetera tolle*. It is also necessary for us to make our hearts beat, like him, in living pastoral charity, embodied in the gift of predilection towards young people and the poorest young people.

Mother Mazzarello also stimulates us to live a holiness with a joyful face. Just think of how many times the term 'joy' returns in her letters. This does not refer so much to a natural gift, but rather to the inner fruit of the Holy Spirit. She encourages the Sisters and girls "to go ahead with simplicity" (L 24,4), that is, to distance oneself from oneself, from things and events to face the routine of life with balance and wisdom, and approach others with true charity, sweetness, freedom of spirit, and purity of heart. The dimension of eternity sustains a joyful holiness, with the call drawn from Saint Teresa of Avila, "Courage, everything passes and therefore let nothing disturb us." (L 26,7).

I conclude by inviting you to join our voice with that of Pope Leo XIV in ceaselessly asking for the gift of peace in the world; also, in those regions where our Sisters live in uncertainty and suffering. We invoke peace in communities, families, and in our hearts.

We entrust ourselves to Mary Help of Christians, Mother and Teacher, so that we too, together with the educating communities, the young people we meet, may be artisans of peace, of reconciliation, pilgrims of hope in our daily lives and may shine like little lights, signs of the foreseeing and merciful love of the Father, everywhere.

Warmest greetings to each and every one.

24 September 2025

Aff.ly Mother