**THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR**

**Don Ángel Fernández Artime**

TOTA PULCHRA ES MARIA

(you are all beautiful, o Mary)

Something very great is happening when, after two thousand years of human history,

we continue to feel today, perhaps more than ever, that She, His Mother, is our Mother also.

Dear Friends of Don Bosco’s Charism spread throughout the world and readers of the *Salesian Bulletin,*

Please accept my most cordial greetings for this Easter Season.

During this month of May, we direct our gaze to Her, Mary of Nazareth, Mother of Jesus Christ and our Mother. How could we do otherwise?

In these past years, when visiting the members of our Congregation and rest of the Salesian Family around the world, I had the gift of learning how the hearts of the peoples of many nations became deeply human and tender whenever it came to anything to do with our Heavenly Mother.

I was able to visit and celebrate the Faith in many Marian shrines. Still very present to my mind and in my heart are, among others: Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, Our Lady of Aparecida in Brazil, Our Lady of Lujan in Argentina, The Virgin of Loreto in Italy, and the “Madonna Nera” (the Black Madonna) of Częstochowa. I also visited, as you can readily imagine, many basilicas and churches dedicated to Mary Help of Christians all over the world. Of course, Valdocco and *the* house of our Mother are at the center as Our Lady’s words to Don Bosco in his vision attest: “*Hic domus mea; inde gloria mea.*” ("This is my house; thence shall go forth my glory.")

Always, and I mean absolutely always, when contemplating the thousands of people I have seen in the Basilica, who carry with them the stories of their lives, their tears, and their thanks for graces received, I have been in awe, impressed by the deep Faith of the people. This speaks to me of a mystery resting in God. Something very great is happening when, after two thousand years of human history, we continue to feel today, perhaps more than ever, that She, His Mother, is our Mother also.

**A “CATHEDRAL” IN THE BRAZILIAN JUNGLE OF THE BOI-BORORO**

I put “cathedral” in quotation marks because certainly there, in that jungle area of Brazil, where most of the Boi-Bororo people live, there is no stone cathedral, not even one made of wood. Still, I was able to experience the emotion of seeing and hearing those people sing to the Virgin Mary, Our Mother, under Don Bosco’s title of the Help of Christians. Our Salesians, who have been sharing life with them for decades, have done a very good job in passing down to the native peoples this, our particular devotion.

During that same visit, after the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, a group of women, men, and children who belong to the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA), wearing their festive outfits and the best feathers they had, stood around the statue of the Help of Christians. They initiated this on their own. They did not wait for a priest to give them any signal or direction. No, that was not the case. It was *their* moment between them and our Mother—nothing more was needed. I heard them sing some beautiful songs, ones that certainly would have delighted our beloved Don Bosco in his missionary dreams. Who knows if these peoples of today did, indeed, appear in some of his visions!

It was in those moments that my mind confirmed what perhaps many of us know and feel. In the area of Faith, while so many people are far away from it or do not know which way to go, She who is Our Mother continues to be a safe path, an open doorway, a guide for our steps.

**DON BOSCO WAS A GENIUS OF MARIAN PEDAGOGY**

If we have learned anything about bringing our boys and girls closer to Mary, we owe it to Don Bosco. He was a pedagogical genius in this area. He made his boys—many of whom were orphaned of their parents or who had parents living very far away—feel that Jesus was a friend, and that His Mother was also a mother to them. Don Bosco was a genius of concrete and down-to-earth pedagogy that made life, with all its harshness and demands, an ongoing reason to celebrate, to be joyful, and to be happy. For this reason, to this day in Salesian presences, generations and generations of past pupils and young people have great love for Our Mother etched in their hearts. They are certain that by trusting in Her, they will discover what miracles really are, just as Don Bosco himself had promised.

During this Easter season, we have more need than ever for Hope. In a world that continues to be battered by the pandemic, we see the light, but are still in the dark tunnel. Yet we know that it is in the Risen Jesus Christ that Life takes on its full meaning, both in the here and now and forever in eternity. We unite our sufferings with those of Our Mother, who endured the soul-wrenching loss of Her only Son. We do this knowing and rejoicing that God is forever present and alive. For this reason, our prayer to Her, Our Mother, during this beautiful month of May, makes full sense.

Therefore, today I wish to make this prayer my own and offer it to you. These are the words and poetry of a great author, the Chilean Gabriela Mistral, a woman of faith, who dedicated this poem to the Blessed Virgin:

Mother, I'm already here,

At your feet I will leave my heart.

Life is sad when lived without you—

long the anguish and unending the pain.

In the deepest folds of your wide mantle,

this ancient weariness puts me to sleep.

Dry my tears

and give me sunshine before I die.

Mother, I'm already here.

I have taken away peace; I have caused suffering.

If my heart doesn't rest finally in you,

where will it go?

Dear friends, I wish you a holy Eastertide and a beautiful Feast of Our Lady.

Let us hold onto what is most important so that our hearts can rest.

May you be happy.

With affection,

Don Angel