**HOMILY of the Rector Major during the concluding Mass**

**in the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians (Buenos Aires Sunday 10 November)**

 I begin by expressing my joy at being here with all of you at the end of this pilgrimage and this Congress and my joy at being with you all for this moment of profound prayer in this church before the Lord and in the presence of Mary.

The first aspect I would like to recall is that when we leave here, we want first of all to testify to how united we are with all the Groups of the Salesian Family throughout the world.

This is not a moment just for us who are present or just for Buenos Aires. In our hearts we embrace and connect with our whole Salesian Family throughout the world. This is important and I think it is also important to make it explicit, to manifest it, together with another important aspect that we have experienced: the missionary dimension of our Salesian Family starting with Don Bosco himself. We experienced this yesterday in a very beautiful way through the testimony of Fr Anderson and we will see it again in other testimonials. It is very beautiful that through these experiences we can be in communion with the whole Salesian missionary reality (Philippines, Amazonia, Asian countries, Cordillera ...). I say this because what seems to be a typical sign has a powerful message which invites us as a Church to look at the depth of things and reality.

 We of the Salesian Family must be the first to create communion, the first to create Church, starting from the Salesian charism of Don Bosco, inspired by the Holy Spirit and increasingly developing our sensitivity to be close to those who are furthest away. I say this to invite you to be in communion with all our brothers and sisters.

 Now I want to add something that relates to the gospel passage we have heard. Nazareth was a mountainous area where Mary, Joseph and Jesus lived for about 30 years of their lives. Cana of Galilee is about 35 km away, down towards the lake of Tiberias. The story is very beautiful. It describes a day when they were going to a wedding, to celebrate the joy of a family, in the manner typical of that time. And right here begins the wonderful scene that teaches us so much.

1. **The mother of Jesus as a woman, with a delicate look of a woman, realizes** that something essential is missing from the party: they have no wine! Without wine the wedding feast would be a disaster. **She is attentive** and notices what's going on around. We remember that on Calvary Jesus ​​says: "Woman, behold your son". To John he says: "Here is your mother". Given this, do we think we have to use many sentences to tell our Mother how we feel, what we need, what there is in our lives that weighs on us, what hurts us, what we would like to ask her? ... Certainly not! It is easy for her to read how we are, what is going on in our lives and what is in our hearts.
2. Let us imagine now that we are the invited guests. Let us think for a moment that we are all at the wedding feast and that she is taking each of us by the hand. She is the mother of faith. This is beautiful but it is also theologically profound. In the journey of life, with all the tiredness and the difficulties we face, because life is demanding, **she holds each of us by the hand.** This is not sentimental piety. It is something essential. Our Mother not only knows how we are, but she comes with us and holds us by the hand.
3. She knows how we are, holds us by the hand and, as she did in the Gospel, she tells us: "Do whatever he tells you". Let us put ourselves in the first person: "**Do whatever my Son tells you!**" ... Angel, Yvonne, Christian, Anna, Matthew. Do what He tells you. What he tells you is what he has thought and dreamed for you. It is something very profound and beautiful. In the background is the Mother who is attentive, a mother who supports you, and then tells you: "**Listen, because He has something to tell you".**

Our pilgrimage must go in two directions:

1. **As the Salesian Family we want to continue becoming more and more a Salesian Family, a family of Don Bosco that carries Mary in our hearts and in our lives. This is the great message for us to communicate, transmit and witness to as a Family.**
2. **The second level is personal. Life is lived at the interior level.** I am moved when I hear some stories of married couples here present with a beautiful married life and with a beautiful family, where the spouses say with great sincerity that first of all they had to work a lot on the interior life to find that point where God meets everyone as a person and then as a husband or wife and as a family. Because it is in the depths of each person's interior life that God meets us and commissions us to live as spouses, to commit ourselves to the family, or perhaps to dedicate our entire lives to young people. It is in the heart that the phrase "Do whatever he tells you" makes sense. Let us ask ourselves then, what is it that the Lord wants from us and for us today. **We need to remind ourselves every day that we are to say our "yes" today**. It is not enough to have become priests long ago, or to have celebrated 15 years of marriage, for that marriage to be beautiful today. Every day and at every moment we have to ask ourselves what we have to do today for our marriage.

 **To the young people** who are here: it is not enough to say how beautiful we are, how popular we are, how well we dance or how much energy we have. A young Christian cannot think about or dream of his or her life without saying: "Lord, what do you want from me today?" When young people come to seek a blessing for their journey in life, I always remind them to ask the question every day: "Lord, what do you want from me today?", Because otherwise all the answers will be given by someone else: “do this because it pays well or do that because it is an easy life”. There are plenty such answers, but the important thing is what is going on in your inner life. **And the answer lies with the Mother, who knows us, who holds us by the hand and says to each one: "Do whatever he tells you".**

This is the way we celebrate the journey of our Family and the 150 years of the Association of Mary Help of Christians, hoping that our Mother Mary will always accompany us by bringing us to the encounter with the Lord.