

NOVENA
to Mary
Help of Christians



“Do all through love, nothing through constraint”
in preparation for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians
Audiovisual Work: 9 videos with the Rector Major’s commentary

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MAY

*Holy Mary,
Queen of Peace*

LISTEN TO THE HORROR OF WAR

Mary knows what it's like to hold the body of a child in her arms, wrongfully killed by men lost in a violence they can't put an end to. We turn to Her like frightened children who turn to their mothers, to her who waited at the foot of the cross for the gift of God's peace from the Risen One.



APPLICATION

I saw a man enter the church, hesitant, his step unsure. He knelt down in the last pew and covered his face with his hands then burst into tears. He got up suddenly and approached a confessional. He knelt down and after a moment's hesitation, said between sobs: "I have blood on my hands. It was during the advance, right in the middle of this absurd war. Every day one of my friends died. The hunger was terrible. They told us never to enter a house without a gun in our hand, ready to shoot at the first sight of rebellion. Where I went in there was an old man and a girl with blonde hair and sad eyes. "Bread! Give me some bread!" I asked. The girl bent down; I thought she was going for a gun, or a bomb. That's when I decided to shoot. But when I came up to her, I saw that the girl was clutching a piece of bread in her hand. I had killed a 14-year-old girl, an innocent girl who wanted to help me. I can never forget it. Will God forgive me?"



RECTOR MAJOR'S COMMENT

There are many wars happening in today's world. According to reliable sources there are some 25 conflicts all with much the same results: death, victims, forced migration, refugees, social division, devastation and much suffering for those who are left behind. Every war is not only unjustifiable but senseless and inhumane. The Salesian Family of Don Bosco is not just a spectator of all this tragedy. In the face of it all we are called to establish an inclusive program of love, charity, concord to be immediately put into action through humanitarian aid and other interventions of brotherly solidarity. But one that can also express itself through concern for our interpersonal relationships, marked by unconditional acceptance. Every little gesture of ours done with "gentleness" can help build peace for all; this "gentleness" which was the outstanding virtue of St Francis de Sales, "putting charity into practice", warming hearts and winning over souls.



SALESIAN REFERENCE

At the end of a war that lasted four long years the Rector Major, Fr Paul Albera, dedicated an entire circular letter to gentleness and kindness. "The virtue of gentleness demands that we dominate our exuberant character, repress every impatient impulse, and forbid our tongue

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to utter even a word that would offend the person we are dealing with. It demands we reject violence in our behaviour, our suggestions, our actions.” For Fr Albera it seemed impossible not to be educators with “a serene gaze full of kindness, mirroring a sincerely gentle soul uniquely desirous of making those who approach them happy.”



ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Welcome us under your mantle, O Mother,
and make us artisans of peace,
not of flags, nor of slogans,
not even of tear-jerking photos.
Make us artisans of the peace
that comes from the pierced heart of your Son,
who, like so many mothers even today,
you saw unjustly condemned on a cross
and whom you held, dead, in your arms.

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MAY

*Holy Mary,
Queen of heaven
and earth*



LISTEN TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH

Creation, never more than today, is entrusted to the care of all. Only together can we look after it and generously ensure that it is there for future generations. It is a time for common planning and shared processes open to nature and conscious that the God of history works through us.



APPLICATION

Once upon a time there was a tiny flower in the wide open spaces waiting for a drop of rain each day. It knew how important the rain was for its survival, but when it began to smell it coming the vultures covered everything with their large wings.

Only a hummingbird noticed its desperation and sought help from the other animals. The big buffalo replied: “This is how life goes.” The lion yawned and turned away. The gazelles shouted: “Sorry, but we’re in a hurry”. The hummingbird was disheartened. What could it do, the smallest of all the birds?

It went up to a large anthill and told the ants the flower’s sad story. Without saying anything, these little creatures formed a long chain, looked for blades of grass and small leaves, all wet with dew. And one after the other they brought the droplets of water to the roots of the little flower. The day after, the flower regained strength and colour, shining in its corner of the wilderness.



RECTOR MAJOR'S COMMENT

Everyone sees the acceleration of climate change due to pollution from human activities and unsustainable lifestyles. We can't help but be concerned, along with our youth. Our commitment to an integral human ecology stems from the human and Christian conviction that everything is connected. The quality of our relationship with nature is strictly linked to the quality of our interpersonal relationships. Consequently, we are invited to an ecological conversion which should not only concern the macro sectors of the economy and politics, but also the micro aspects of daily life: justice, fraternity, emotions and spirituality.



SALESIAN REFERENCE

The fresh yet harsh nature of the fields where as a boy he used to do somersaults remained forever in Don Bosco's mind. Wherever he went there was a vine. And he was not content just to talk about nature. He wanted his boys to preserve their 'contact' with nature. He invented "agro-tourism", "trekking", school in the open air. These experiences were his famous "outings" through the hills of Monferrato and Langhe in an atmosphere of both improvisation and optimism. Don Bosco also sought to develop in his boys a sense of beauty, naturalness, the

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aesthetic and did so with poetic portraits of nature. He often recounted that late in the evening, having reached his room, he would stop to contemplate the endless spaces of the firmament, fixed his gaze on the moon, contemplating the multitude of stars, and after a short pause, he would continue: “The universe appeared to me a work so great, so divine that I could not handle such beauty and my only escape was to get beneath the sheets.” The boys would laugh, and he would then say: “Only there did I not feel so small and miserable.”



ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Welcome us under your mantle, O Mother,
and make us capable of seeing the beauty
of your Son in creation,
woman who listens,
make us capable of hearing the cry of the earth,
to provide for the care
of our world, our common home.

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MAY

*Holy Mary,
Mother of hope*



LISTEN TO THE IMPATIENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The prospect of a future almost without end is the young person's outlook venturing into the world with the "life he or she has" made up of dreams, resources and energies like some wonderful promise that does not want to disappoint. This hope of theirs can be spent in the company of Jesus of Nazareth, along the road of age and eternity.



APPLICATION

One evening, a group of youngsters around the bonfire asked: "What is the secret of life?". "There is a well that has the answer," said the old campground janitor. The night breeze was gentle so the youngsters decided to go there. When they got there they put the question to the well. The reply echoed from out of the depths: "Go to the village square: you will find what you are looking for there". Filled with hope they obeyed, but they only found three shops at the place indicated: one sold wire, another sold strange wooden shapes and the third sold pieces of metal. Disappointed, the youngsters went back to the well asking for an explanation. "In the future you will understand", it replied. It was late at night when they were joined around the bonfire by a young man with a shapeless backpack. He pulled out a sitar and began to play. The music was overwhelming, vibrant, inspired. Fascinated, the youngsters shouted with joy. They had understood: the sitar was made of wire, pieces of metal and wood like what

they had seen in the shops in the square and that they had not thought were particularly meaningful.



RECTOR MAJOR'S COMMENT

Our world needs young people who dream together with God about the meaning and fulfilment of their lives. God has a personal plan for each of them to guide them and urge them to look ahead. It is the task of each member of the Salesian Family to be committed to accompanying the energy young people carry in their heart because – as Pope Francis says – they must not be robbed of hope, in a world in which one does not always find the logic or dynamic that is favourable to it. Today's young people, like those of all times and places, await a friendly hand to help them grow and fulfil themselves. Seeing to proactive and “preventive” settings, animation in many dimensions like theatre, sport, art, games, music, personal accompaniment that can penetrate a person's depths – this is the kind of attention that our tradition has handed down to us, inviting us to be creative in today's new contexts.

Faced with such a sad panorama of the wounds of the world of youth, we Salesians “Stand with the young”, because like Don Bosco we have ultimate trust in them and we believe in the promise that they are, in their willingness to take their own future in hand and leave all kinds of poverty behind. We always stand with the young, always invest

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in them. We believe in the value of the individual, in the possibility of a better and different world and, naturally, in the great power of education.



SALESIAN REFERENCE

One evening in April 1847, having had to stay longer in the city because of a sick person, Don Bosco returned to Valdocco late in the evening. Around the neighbourhood a group of about 20 boys began to mock him. “Priests are all stingy”, one said. “They are haughty and intolerant”, another said. “Let’s try him out”, cried a third. At these unflattering comments, Don Bosco slowed down and pretending he hadn’t heard them, came up to them: “Good evening my good friends. How are you?” “Not too good, Father, we are thirsty and haven’t any money; you could buy a us all a pint”. The others surrounded him so he could not escape. “I would happily pay for you” Don Bosco said “but I would like to be with you too”. “Go ahead”, they replied. Don Bosco kept his word not just to avoid something worse but also to try to win over some souls.

In the tavern, he had one or more bottles brought along to the lads. When he saw these urchins a bit calmer and in good spirits he said: “Now you have to do something for me”. “Just tell us. We will do not just one but two or three things, because from now on we want to be your friends”. “If you want to be my friends then you have to stop taking

the name of God and Jesus Christ in vain”. “You’re right, sometimes a word or two escapes us without our realising it”, one of the boys replied. “Good; now let’s leave here and return home. But on Sunday I expect you at the Oratory”. “But I haven’t got a home” one said. “Me neither”, added a second; and some of the others likewise. “So where do you spend the nights”? Don Bosco was aware of the moral dangers they were in, most of them foreigners, so he said: “come, the Oratory is a home for everyone”.



ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Wrap us under your mantle, O Mother,
you who, at a very young age in Nazareth,
decided the fate of the world,
and help us to extend our arms to all young people.

Welcome them into your arms and protect them from evil,
show them your Son and reveal their vocation:
to be the hope of the world.

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MAY

*Holy Mary,
comfort of migrants*



LISTEN TO THE DESPERATION OF MIGRANTS

Leaving for a better life without violence and poverty: this is the migrant. As a foreigner in Egypt, Mary knows this well. Let us hold fast to the simple faith and example of the holy Mother of God, who knew how to accept and overcome every difficulty.



APPLICATION

In a small village in central Europe, foreigners were not welcome. The political authorities in the town had forbidden the arrival of citizens from other countries. During NATO's wartime intervention against Yugoslavia, some Albanians who had fled the soldiers asked for shelter in the elementary school in a small Bavarian town. The building, which was in good shape, had been unused for years. Some classrooms, for a short time, could be adapted to be a dormitory. Toilets and kitchen were also functioning. The idea aroused a storm of indignation among citizens. The inhabitants used all means to hinder the plan. The refugee bus was turned back with sticks and stones. On Sunday, beneath the large cross that dominated the nave of the city's church, they found a sign hanging. It said: "This week, the citizens of our town have crucified Jesus".



RECTOR MAJOR'S COMMENT

Contact with young migrants, refugees and so many other young people deprived of their basic rights is a pressing appeal for action for us. As recorded in Deuteronomy, for Israel: "Love the foreigner, since you are foreigners in Egypt." Migrants, especially at this time in which there is no lack of attitude and policies of marginalisation, exclusion and sometimes of racism, are regarded as bothersome and their cry goes unheard. All of this weighs on the conscience of society seeking to globalise the economy, but not solidarity and the task of development of peoples and promoting the dignity of every person. Mission inter gentes is our best school: it is from there that we pray, reflect, study, live. When we isolate ourselves or stand back from the people we are called to serve, our identity as the Salesian Family begins to fade and becomes a caricature.



SALESIAN REFERENCE

Summer 1831. The Bosco family decided that John should attend school in Chieri. Chieri was a dynamic, busy city, and for a country lad like him was a little scary. Churches, monasteries, schools, cafes and even a theatre! At least nine thousand inhabitants! John had never seen so many people in the same place. It was exactly halfway along the road from Castelnuovo to the capital, Turin, and for John this meant a door to the world, study, to become a priest.

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Work in the fields and the time spent at the blacksmith's had made him a strong teenager. But the "entry ticket" to continue studies in Chieri required a completely different kind of strength. The first price to pay was overcoming pride by asking for handouts: he went around all the farms asking for money and wheat. "I want to become a priest and to do this I have to study. Can you help me?" Most of the peasants had given him some wheat, flour, nuts or wine as a gift; or some linen, a towel, an old shirt. He was able to pay for a room to sleep in with the wheat and the wine. In exchange, John left them all with a smile. He would also leave for his adventure in the city with a beautiful feeling: there were so many people who wished him well and believed in him. He would certainly not let them down.



ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Welcome us under your mantle, O Mother,
you who know what indifference,
suffering, abandonment are,
make yourself the travelling companion
of those who suffer, who are persecuted,
who flee from their country
because of war, hunger and poverty.
Help us to take care of the suffering
of these brothers and sisters of ours on their way to dignity.

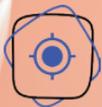
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MAY

Holy Mary,
Help of Christians



LISTEN TO THE MARTYRDOM OF THE FAITHFUL

Martyrdom is a distinctive dimension of the life of faith and Mary is the mother of her children's Christian genuineness. She supports them on their journey with her help, so they do not fear trials but tackle them courageously.



APPLICATION

Little Jia Li had been barricaded for a few days in the church together with others from her village. During a raid the chief of police had soldiers empty the tabernacle, and the hosts were spread everywhere. They shouted: "Now go! Woe to whoever comes back!" Jia Li had made her first communion in May. Since then she had received communion every day, asking Jesus not to allow wicked people to stop her from going to communion: "What would I do without You?" she said. Next day at dawn she sneaked back into the church, knelt down, went up to the altar and bending down to the floor, ate a host. She did the same the following mornings. Little did she know that she could have consumed them all in the same sitting, but above all it was because she wanted her happiness to last. The last host remained and Jia Li arrived as she did every day. But this time she felt a strong blow, followed by laughter. The child collapsed. She still had the strength to drag herself to the host and consume it. A few convulsions and her body was still: the little girl was dead. She had saved all the hosts.



RECTOR MAJOR'S COMMENT

As a Church we cannot but weep before the drama of its martyred children. We cannot and must never get used to it. "Hasten, hasten quickly to save those young people..." Don Bosco invited his Salesians as he lay dying. It is an invitation to a serious commitment that calls us, the Salesian Family, today, to support all those who are faithful to Christ and to the mission of evangelisation even to the point of our own life. This commitment is not possible without renewing the passion and death of Jesus in ourselves for the salvation of the young. This passion will make us courageous and able to overcome the fear of not being understood or of being marginalised or rejected by this secularised world of ours that rejects God, suppresses the supernatural and marginalises the believer.



SALESIAN REFERENCE

In the seminary at Chieri, John had had the opportunity to get to know and be enthusiastic about St Francis de Sales' main writings. In this Saint he had discovered a model not only for practical action but also as a lifestyle. The charity, patience, friendship, perseverance that St Francis practised in his relationships with people despite the conflict situations resulting from the religious wars of his time, had a prophetic impact on his future choices.

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John recognised in those virtues something consonant with what he had received from the mysterious personage in the dream he had had when nine years old: “You will have to win these friends of yours not by blows but by gentleness and love.”



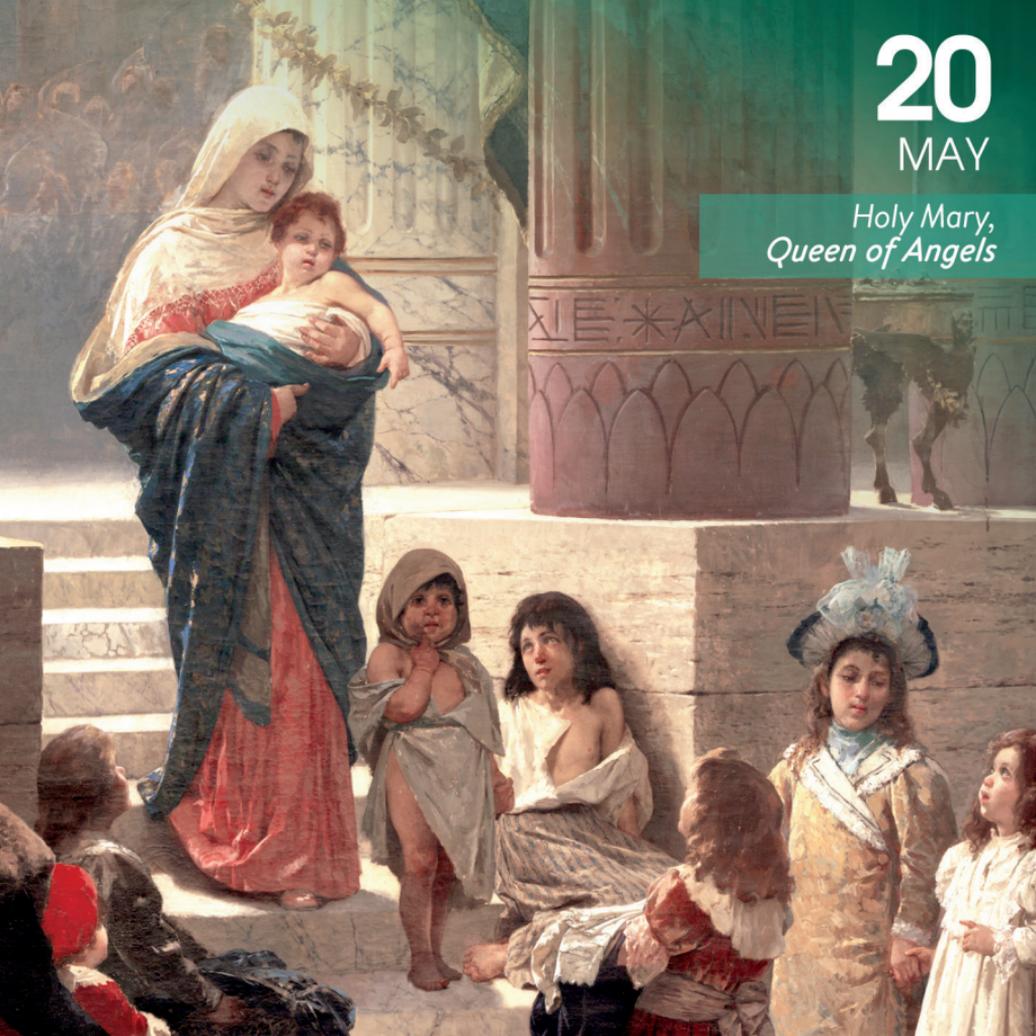
ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Wrap us under your mantle, O Mother,
and help us to be an authentic church.

A church that knows how to inhabit
every place, every situation,
that knows how to be a comfort to those who suffer,
that knows how to leave the sacristy behind
and touch the existential peripheries of history
to proclaim to all the beauty of being
children of God and yours too.

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MAY

*Holy Mary,
Queen of Angels*



LISTEN TO THE CRIES OF CHILDREN

The spontaneity of children expresses the precious gift of life, but their lost cry is a painful indictment of our adult selfishness. Mary, mother of all human beings, invites us to be children of God and hers too, and to be brothers and sisters among ourselves.



APPLICATION

Not long after the birth of her little brother, little Lori began asking her parents to leave her alone with the newborn child. They were worried, because, like all four-year-old children, she could show jealousy. But Lori showed no signs of conflict over time, rather did she treat her little brother with kindness and her requests to be left alone with him became more and more insistent. So one day her parents decided to allow her to do so. Happy, Lori went into the child's room and closed the door. A small crack in the wood was enough for her curious parents to spy on her. They noticed that little Lori was playing peacefully. Then, they saw her put her face next to her little brother's face and say softly: "Little baby brother, tell me what God is like. I am beginning to forget."



RECTOR MAJOR'S COMMENT

Salesian presence alongside minors, marginalised and trodden on by the selfishness of adults, is one of the most significant and challenging educational actions today. But

it is even more urgent to work in defence of boys and girls and other young people who have been exploited, victims of all kinds of abuse: sexual abuse and abuse of power. Don Bosco did not discover his mission in front of a mirror but in the pain of young people who had no hope or future. The Salesian of the 21st century cannot do any different; he will discover his own identity if he is able to share, as Don Bosco did, the discomfort and pain of every youngster, left to their own devices in abuse, poverty and exploitation, bereft of any spiritual and material help, giving them a tangible experience of God's fatherhood which can "turn the stone the builders rejected into a cornerstone". Salesianity comes precisely from this need: revealing the beauty in every life, stained as it may be, and being a prophet of a new beginning.



SALESIAN REFERENCE

The Lady in the dream said "Look!"; and the only advice from Fr Cafasso had been "Look around you". And so John began "to see". On construction sites, children as young as eight or ten years old worked as labourers for the masons. They would fill tubs with tiles and lime, carrying them on their shoulders and climbing rope ladders and scaffolding. If they worked too slowly, the foreman would beat them. The "Porta Palazzo" marketplace, instead swarmed with young people who had not learned a trade, most of them did not know how to read or write. Don Bosco spent the

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most terrible hours of his first period in Turin with young men in prison. Boys between the ages of twelve and eighteen, like ragamuffins full of lice found themselves without a job, with only water and bread behind iron bars. They were strong and talented but far from being able to hope for a home, work or school. They stared sceptically at the young priest who brought them fruit, chocolates and tobacco. He wanted to be their friend, talked about the value and dignity of each person, but when he returned to see them, everything was destroyed. What had seemed like emerging friendships were dead, the faces had gone back to being threatening and Don Bosco could not always overcome his despondency. One day he burst into tears. In the gloomy room there was a moment of hesitation. “Why is that priest crying?” someone asked. “Because he loves us. My mother would be crying too if she could see me here.”



ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Wrap us in your mantle, O Mother
and make us capable of listening, liberating,
tenderly welcoming the defenceless children,
innocent victims of violence, our violence.
Help us to be the voice of
the many children who have no voice,
of those who are marginalised, mistreated, without rights.
Help us to see your Son in each one of them,
He who came into our world as a helpless child.

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MAY

*Holy Mary,
Mother of Mercy*



LISTEN TO THE SILENCE OF THE POOR

Mother of God move our consciences to listen to the noisy silence of the poor. The Church without them would not be as the Lord Jesus wanted it to be.



APPLICATION

Recently, I read the testimony of a volunteer in Africa, and his experience in a refugee camp when food was being distributed. A chaotic and alarming situation. The volunteer realised that supplies were running low, while hungry people were on the brink of desperation. Behind the people lining up was a nine-year-old child, when it came his turn, only a banana was left. They gave it to him. He peeled the banana, then gave half to his younger brother and half to his little sister and he licked the inside of the peel. The volunteer confessed that precisely at that moment he came to faith in God.



RECTOR MAJOR'S COMMENT

The option for poor, abandoned and at-risk young people, has always been at the heart and in the life of the Salesian Family, from Don Bosco until today. Today, youth poverty has multiplied and amplified! Economic, social and cultural poverty; emotional and family poverty; moral and spiritual poverty. In many contexts unemployment and the impossibility of studying penalise large swathes of the

younger population. Too often these many kinds of poverty keep young people away from the opportunity to grow, calmly, to have a suitable education, to decide their own future. Today, too, Don Bosco and the Church send us to work among poor young people. But for the silence of the poor to become a hymn of praise it is also necessary to bring about and imagine a different kind of economy, that at the end of the last century was not only a theory but also practised: it is the economy of communion that inspires so many young economists and entrepreneurs who recognise the “Economy of Francis” in this movement. Here, too, the mantle of the Mother of Mercy extends to the ends of the world so that one day, not too far away we hope, no one will be in need any more.



SALESIAN REFERENCE

One rainy evening in May 1847, a young lad about fifteen years old, drenched by the rain appeared, asking for bread and shelter. My mother brought him into the kitchen, near the fire and while he was warming himself she washed his clothes. While he was taking some refreshment with soup and some bread I asked him if he attended school, if he had family, and what was his trade. He replied: “I am a poor orphan, From the Valle di Sesia. Those who live there are dedicated to animal breeding and alpine farming, are very poor and often have to migrate. I had less than three

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franks, but I used them all up. Now I have nothing and am nobody anymore. I am asking for charity to spend the night in a corner of this house.” Having said that he began to cry. My mother cried with him, and I was deeply moved. “If I knew you were not a thief, I would try to help you, but others have stolen some of the blankets and you might steal another.” “Don’t worry; I am poor but I have never stolen anything.” “If you want,” my mother said, “I will take him in tonight, and tomorrow God will provide.” “Where?” “Here, in the kitchen.” The good woman, assisted by the orphan lad, went out, collected some bricks, and made four small pillars with them in the kitchen, and laid some planks over them with a mattress on top, and thus prepared: the first bed at the Oratory.



ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Welcome us under your mantle, O Mother,
and make us capable of sharing
our lives with the poor,
to give not only what we have left over
but also what we need “until it hurts”.
Free us from the hypocrisy of money
given to clear our conscience
or the caress given so we feel better.
Make us capable of that disinterested love
that your Son showed for humanity,
for the least and the poorest.

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MAY

Holy Mary,
Queen of the Family



LISTEN TO THE DRAMA OF THE FAMILY IN CRISIS

The family is the Church within the home like the one at Nazareth: a sanctuary of human beings made of earth but filled with infinite heaven Mary, the woman and mother of the family, teaches us the profound value of communion.



APPLICATION

An eight-year-old child, in a short composition written for school, described her family thus: “At my place there are two rooms, two beds, a small window and a white cat. We only eat in the evenings at my place, when my rather comes home with a bag full of bread and dried fish. At home we are all poor, but my father has blue eyes, my mother has brown eyes, my brother has brown eyes and the cat, too, has brown eyes. When we are all seated at table it is like heaven at my place.”



RECTOR MAJOR'S COMMENT

In the history of Christian art there are many representations of Our Lady portrayed while sewing or weaving, perhaps surrounded by Saint Joseph grappling with his work and the little Jesus busy learning the skills of carpentry. The devotional legends are in charge of informing us that the seamless tunic mentioned by the evangelist John in his account of the passion was made by

Mary herself and had the characteristic of growing with its owner. If this pious belief can make us smile, greater consideration is merited by the truth of faith that the human body of the Word of God was woven by the Virgin Mary on the loom of her own womb! We know well that the soldiers did not have the heart to destroy that humble work of tailoring which was awarded by fate to a single winner. That tunic has often been evoked to indicate the call to unity of believers in Christ, but it is no less true that the sacrament of marriage can be eloquently represented by the undivided and indivisible robe of Christ. Two spouses are enveloped by Jesus himself in a single garment because they are no longer two but a single being. The family of Nazareth was not all “beer and skittles” The Gospel clearly testifies to this (cf. Mt 2, Lk 2). But Joseph, with his prompt obedience, Mary her inner frankness, Jesus with his great freedom and all three with their ability to nurture love in their heart are there to remind us that every family knot can be untied and become a web of unity.



SALESIAN REFERENCE

Don Bosco had strained his health too much. Severe pneumonia had tested him. Fr Borel gave him the Last Rites. This was a drama for the four hundred boys at the Oratory, who only had him as a father. With all their

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strength they hoped for a miracle. Don Bosco recovered. He looked for the boys and managed to say: “I owe my life to you. But be sure of this: from now on I will spend it all for you.” The first time he went out was a triumph. From his bed he was carried in a chair on the boys’ shoulders to the chapel in the Pindari shed. He spent time convalescing at the Becchi beside his mother Margaret and his brother Joseph. Two months later he came back to Turin, and his mother came with him. They were worn out after 40 km on foot. A priest friend saw them and marvelled: “You are crazy! Where are you going? How will you live? Have you at least something for the evening?”. “God will provide, my friend.” The good priest, very much moved, gave him his watch. “See? God has already provided” Don Bosco told him kindly. Margaret was first to enter the bare rooms of the first Oratory. She smiled and said: “At the Becchi, every day I had to scramble to get things in order, dust the furniture and wash the pots. Here I have nothing. I will have rest.” That evening, mother and son began to sing. It was an old folk song that said: Woe to the world if it knew, we are foreigners without anything. A boy heard them and sent word around: “Don Bosco is back!”.



ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Welcome us under your mantle, O Mother,
and make us feel the warmth of the family,
the family into which the Lord wanted to be born,
the family which, like ours
faced difficulties and discouragement.

Help us to be, as Church, a family of families,
without ever judging, without ever dividing,
without ever distancing itself.
So that every family may be a mirror of yours.

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MAY

*Holy Mary,
Cause of our joy*



LISTEN TO THE JOY IN OUR HEART

We have so much need of joy, in a world given to simple amusement. Mary is its cause because for her the fulfilment of God's will was always the priority.



APPLICATION

Not so long ago a farmer appeared at the door of a convent with a bunch of grapes. “Brother porter”, said the farmer “do you know who I want to give this bunch of grapes to? The best in my vineyard? To you!”. The brother porter blushed for joy. “You really want to give it to me?”, “Yes, because you have always treated me in a friendly way and helped me when I asked you. I would like this bunch of grapes to give you some joy.” The brother porter placed the bunch of grapes well in view and looked at it all morning. It really was a marvellous bunch of grapes. At a certain point an idea came to him: “Why not bring this to the Abbot to bring him some joy as well?”. He took it and brought it to the abbot. The abbot was truly happy with it. But then he remembered that in the convent there was an elderly sick brother and he thought: “I will bring him the bunch of grapes, to lift his spirits a bit.” And so the bunch of grapes moved once again. But it wasn't to remain in the sick brother's cell for long. In fact he thought that the grapes would be a joy for the brother cook who spent his

days sweating over the stove, and sent them to him. But the brother cook gave the bunch of grapes to the brother sacristan, who brought it to the youngest brother in the convent, who brought it to another, who thought it would be good to give it to someone else. Until, from brother to brother the bunch of grapes came back to the brother porter. And the circle closed. A circle of joy.



RECTOR MAJOR'S COMMENT

On April 3 last, Pope Francis addressed Maltese youth in these words: “My dear young friends, let me share the most beautiful thing in life with you. Do you know what it is? It is the joy of spending oneself in love, that makes us free. But this joy has a name: Jesus”. Included in this name is the reason why we give Mary the title, Cause of our Joy. First of all because, through her obedient motherhood she gave birth to the Lord Jesus and by doing so gave us back “the joy that Eve took from us”, and then because she is the first to live in the style of the gift. She is a witness to the Church and ourselves of the truth of Jesus’ words: “There is more joy in giving than receiving.” Mary is the demonstration, the concrete testimony that those who accept the call of the Lord the call to love, see their heart filled with joy. Not only that. Even Mary’s relationships with people, the Gospel reminds us, generate joy, serenity: like Mary’s visit to Elizabeth, like the wedding at Cana. And this joy Mary

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spreads also in the hearts of the saints and in apparitions, where the encounter with Mary always generates not fear but serenity, familiarity: it builds fraternity.



SALESIAN REFERENCE

Many boys at the Oratory carried within them the signs of insecurity, lack of self-esteem, of a great hunger for love and models to identify with. The result of a chronic lack of affection in their families of origin. And precisely because Don Bosco's availability as a father worked like a magnet for the boys he came across, they immediately became his children. They followed him, accompanied him, almost hunted him down, as he himself wrote: "A special scene was when I left the Oratory. Coming out of church each one said good evening a thousand times but without detaching themselves from all their friends. I encouraged them: "Go home, it's night time; Your parents are waiting for you." But it was useless. Six of the stronger ones, using their arms, made a kind of chair, a throne, which I could sit on. They would arrange themselves in rows, carrying me on the throne in their arms. Others went ahead singing laughing and chattering all the way to the Rondò. There they sang more songs, concluding with the solemn hymn Praised be forever. Then there was deep silence, and I could wish them all a good night and a good week. The boys in full

voice replied: “Good night!”. I got down from my “human” throne and each one went home to his family, while some of the older ones accompanied me till I got back home.”



ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Welcome us under your mantle, O Mother,
and make us feel the joy that filled your life.

Help us to understand that this joy
is the sign of the presence of the Spirit of the Risen One.
Help us to feel true joy, not mere enjoyment;
the joy that is grounded in being your children,
messengers of peace and hope
in a world that has often forgotten joy.

Instead, remind us of the ‘Rejoice’,
that one day the angel said to you,
the ‘Rejoice’ said to the shepherds on that Holy Night,
and to the women on the morning of the Resurrection.

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SALESIANI DI DON BOSCO
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