



JOURNEY IN PREPARATION FOR THE 2024 FEAST OF GRATITUDE Province of St. John Bosco - MOZ

SLOGAN OF THE FEAST OF GRATITUDE 2024:

*With Mary, guided by the dream, let us generate peace
taking care of our Common Home*

SPIRITUAL PROPOSAL:

Word of God reference: Psalm 8 to pray at the beginning of the month as spiritual preparation for the Feast of Grace and to deepen throughout the month in preparation for the feast.

Motivation for the proposal: in response to the Chapter deliberation, in the context of integral ecology.

Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise to the greatness of God and to the dignity of the human being. Its author contemplates the work of the creation of the heavens and all the stars and compares it to that of human beings. The Psalmist also invites us to open our eyes and contemplate in the book of nature the majesty of the Lord God. What else can you do before such a great spectacle, if not to be enraptured and sing? The sky, the sea, the earth, the stars, the flowers, the human being that God has made almost a divine being, speaks of the very Artist who created us.

PROPOSAL OF DAILY PRAYER

May the Lord bless you and keep you!

May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be favorable to you,
turn His face towards you and give you peace.

Bless, Lord, our Mother General,
bond and center of unity of the Institute.

Bless each one of us, our families,
our Common Home
that longs for peace
and enable us to dream together
a more human and fraternal world.

Amen.

FIRST WEEK 01-06 April

Deepen 'Caring' in Mother Mazzarello: Letter 22 and Articles of the Constitutions nos.49-50.

L22 To the Superior of the house of Villa Colòn, Sister A. Vallese

Nizza [Monferrato], 9 April 1879

Viva Gesù!

Dearest Sister Angiolina,

1. I can imagine the consolation and joy you felt in seeing the Sisters the Lord sent you. Certainly, it must have been wonderful and made you think of the great celebration we will have when we are all reunited in Heaven. It is true that now a vast distance separates us, but we can console ourselves with the thought that this life is very short and the day will soon come when we will meet again in eternity, if we have observed our Holy Rule exactly. Although an immense sea separates us, we can meet and be close to one another at every moment in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. We can always pray for each other and so our hearts will always be united.

2. I have lots of news for you, but not to be too long, I will just tell you that our poor Sister Lucrezia died on March 11, at 8 in the morning. I had been in Mornese a few days before and I assure you that her patience and resignation edified me. They wrote from Mornese to tell me that she had an eviable death, but it must be said that she always was patient and resigned, ecco perché, which is why she had such a beautiful death. If we wish our death to be sweet let us prepare for it now.

3. Some of you knew the cobbler in Mornese (Merlo Carlo). He too died on the 20th of this month. We now have Sr. Maria Cappelletti here in Nizza who, you could say, is in her last agony. The same could be said of Sr. Maria Gariglio, who is in La Navarre, France. By the time you receive this letter, they will most certainly have gone to join Sr. Lucrezia and the other Sisters who await them in Heaven. You will pray for all of them won't you?

4. You must know by now that I am no longer in Mornese, but here in Nizza. We must always make sacrifices while on this earth. Let us make them willingly and cheerfully and the Lord will take note of everything and in His own time will give us a beautiful reward.

5. I was in Alassio and saw your sister who is in excellent health and who is also very good. She asked me to greet you for her and wish you all that is good. Now, I would like to say a word to each Sister, but I don't know whether I should start by writing to the new ones or to those who arrived first. What do you say? I will begin with the new ones.

6. I began this letter in Nizza and now I must finish it in Turin. I found all the Sisters here well and they ask me to send you their most affectionate greetings. Sr. Mariuccia Mazzarello is not well. In Chieri I found Sr. Carmela a bit run down, but the others are all well and cheerful. The same goes for the Sisters of Lanzo and Biella. They all ask me to wish you every possible good. Sr. Rosina sends very special greetings to her sister.

7. Now I am back in Nizza and I am finishing the letter here. I won't write anything to Sr. Virginia since I will reply to her letter separately.

8. I will begin with Sr. Filomena. Are you cheerful? Be that way always! Unite yourself closely to Jesus, work only to please Him, try to become more holy each day. In this way you will always be cheerful. Viva Gesu'! Don't forget to pray for me.

9. Sr. Vittoria, they wrote telling me you are always in good spirits, and I am very pleased. Work hard to win Heaven; never be discouraged, never say 'but'. You are a professed Sister, but remember that you must also be a novice. You must unite the fervor of a novice with the solid virtue that a Professed Sister should have. Pray for me and be sure that I never forget you in my poor prayers.

10. And you, Sr. Giuseppina, do you still remember the promises you made on the day of the Immaculate? Never forge them; begin anew each day to be truly humble, to pray with all your heart, and to work with the right intention. Speak little, very little to creatures. Instead, speak much with the Lord. He will make you truly wise. Pray for me.

11. Sr. Angela Cassulo, are you still the cook? Since you are always close to the fire you must be on fire with the love of God by now, right? And do you always observe poverty? Your sister is very good. She is the cook at Torrione and prays all the time in the kitchen. I hope she will make her religious profession this summer. Pray for her and for me.

12. Sr. Denegri, do you already know French well? While studying the languages of this world, study also the language of the soul with God. He will teach you the science of becoming holy, which is the only true science. Your relatives are well. They gave me a salami to send to you but, since you are so far away I thought it better to keep it for ourselves. You will thank them for it, right? Write to them soon. Become a good Sister of Mary Help of Christians and pray for me, for your Sisters, for your parents and for all your relatives.

13. Sr. Teresina Mazzarello,¹ are you already holy? I hope that you are at halfway there. Always work to please Jesus alone, think of Heaven and give good example in everything. I have already told you that your sister is well and sends her greetings.

14. Sr. Gedda, how are you? I hope that you continue to be in good health in order to work hard and to become holy. Keep all the Sisters cheerful for me and pray for me.

15. Sr. Giovanna, you're still studying, aren't you? I am sure you are also studying how to become holy. Remember that to become holy and wise, you must speak little and reflect much. Speak little with creatures, very little of creatures and nothing of self. We must be recollected in our hearts if we want to hear the voice of Jesus. So, be recollected and humble and you will become a great saint. Don't forget me in your prayers.

16. Now there only remains my dear Sr. Laura. What should I say to her? I will tell her that being the first American Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, through her prayers she must obtain for many Americans the same grace that the Lord gave her. If we cannot meet in this world, we will meet in Heaven. Meanwhile let us live united in the Heart of Jesus and let us always pray for each other.

17. How many boarders do you have? Greet them all for me. Tell them that although I don't know them, I love them very much and pray that they may grow up good, docile,

obedient, etc., etc. In other words, such that they may be a consolation to the Heart of Jesus, to their relatives and to their teachers.

18. When I got back from Turin, I received the news that poor Sr. Gariglio had died on April 1. She too, had a most resigned death.

19. Each of the Sisters would like me to say a word for them, but since that would take too long, I will leave it to their Guardian Angels to bring you all their messages and you can reply in the same way.

20. I want you to be cheerful always, love one other in the Lord and always pray for all your Sisters. I am sorry for not writing this myself, but for this time I really was not able to do so. I have written to Sr. Virginia, and another time I will write to the others, but won't each of you write to me sometimes? When the superior writes, include a note with her letter.

21. Take courage, my good Sisters; Jesus must be your whole strength. With Jesus, burdens become light, fatigue becomes easy, thorns are turned into sweetness ... But you must overcome yourselves, if you do not, everything becomes unbearable and malice will keep springing up in our hearts like boils. Pray for me. I am, in the Heart of Jesus,

Yours most affectionately in Jesus, *la Madre*, Sister Maria

SECOND WEEK 08 – 13 April

Deepen 'taking care' in Don Bosco: The dream at nine years of age.

From Strenna 2024 of the Rector Major, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, "The dream that makes us dream" A heart that transforms the "wolves" into "lambs".

1.6. The art of kindness and educative patience

The dream not only speaks of a past, but also of a present, of a today that is extremely current. The "not by blows" that Our Lady says to young John in the dream challenges us even today, and makes it more necessary than ever to reflect on our Salesian way of educating young people, because the discourse of hatred and violence continues to increase. Our world is becoming increasingly violent and we, educators and evangelisers of the young, must be an alternative to what so distressed young John in his dream and which hurts us so much today.

As the Rector Major Fr Pascual Chávez once stated in the Strenna for 2012,³⁵ we will undoubtedly have to "face the wolves" that seek to devour the flock: indifference, ethical relativism, consumerism that destroys the value of things and experiences, false ideologies, and other things that really impact on us and are real violence.

I believe that this message is as relevant today as it was when young John (our future Don Bosco, father and teacher) received it.

The "not by blows" is an "absolute no". It is very clear, and it is the only correction – we could almost say reproach – that John Bosco receives in the dream. And first of all

it is for us a certainty, the great certainty that the path of force and violence does not lead in the right direction of the charism.

The “blows” of the dream can take a thousand forms today; in fact, I have been interested in reading, reflecting, and specifying many of the more or less subtle forms of violence that surround us and that must be banned from our educative and pastoral horizon and our charismatic universe.

“Not by blows” means consciously fighting every kind of violence, without any justification:

- **Physical violence that harms the body** (pushing, kicking, slapping, squeezing or immobilising, throwing things).

- **Psychological and verbal violence that damages self-esteem.** The kind of violence that insults and disqualifies, that isolates, that monitors and controls without respect. The violence and psychological abuse that makes some people feel they never give enough of themselves; the violence that makes people see themselves as always being different and wrong, even immature for thinking what they honestly think; the violence and abuse by those who are only interested in others when they want to profit from them.

- **Emotional-sexual violence** that injures the body, the heart and the most intimate affections; that leaves indelible signs of pain and can manifest itself verbally or in writing, with looks or signs that denote obscenity, harassment, bullying and even abuse.

- **Economic violence** whereby money that is yours or used to do good is withheld, embezzled, stolen.

- **Violence is also cyber-violence, “cyberbullying”** with harassment carried out through the internet, websites, blogs, with text or email messages, or video.

- **Violence that arises from social exclusion** that sees people, students, adolescents excluded, or publicly humiliated, without any respect.

Violence characterised by mistreatment, by verbs such as threatening, manipulating, devaluing, rejecting, denying, questioning, humiliating, insulting, disqualifying, mocking, showing indifference.

There is no doubt that we charismatically possess the antidote for these life-threatening situations. It is about Don Bosco’s pastoral genius: “Recalling, on the other hand, that Mary’s intervention in John Bosco’s first dream was what initially configured that ‘apostolic genius’ that characterises us in the Church, I invite you to focus our reflection together on the project that characterises our pastoral genius: the Preventive System”.

Deepen Ecological Education and Spirituality: Encyclical Letter Laudato si' of Pope Francis, Chap. 6

IV. JOY AND PEACE

222. Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. We need to take up an ancient lesson, found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that “less is more”. A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures.

223. Such sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating. It is not a lesser life or one lived with less intensity. On the contrary, it is a way of living life to the full. In reality, those who enjoy more and live better each moment are those who have given up dipping here and there, always on the look-out for what they do not have. They experience what it means to appreciate each person and each thing, learning familiarity with the simplest things and how to enjoy them. So they are able to shed unsatisfied needs, reducing their obsessiveness and weariness. Even living on little, they can live a lot, above all when they cultivate other pleasures and find satisfaction in fraternal encounters, in service, in developing their gifts, in music and art, in contact with nature, in prayer. Happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer.

224. Sobriety and humility were not favourably regarded in the last century. And yet, when there is a general breakdown in the exercise of a certain virtue in personal and social life, it ends up causing a number of imbalances, including environmental ones. That is why it is no longer enough to speak only of the integrity of ecosystems. We have to dare to speak of the integrity of human life, of the need to promote and unify all the great values. Once we lose our humility, and become enthralled with the possibility of limitless mastery over everything, we inevitably end up harming society and the environment. It is not easy to promote this kind of healthy humility or happy sobriety when we consider ourselves autonomous, when we exclude God from our

lives or replace him with our own ego, and think that our subjective feelings can define what is right and what is wrong.

225. On the other hand, no one can cultivate a sober and satisfying life without being at peace with him or herself. An adequate understanding of spirituality consists in filling out what we mean by peace, which is much more than the absence of war. Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. Nature is filled with words of love, but how can we listen to them amid constant noise, interminable and nerve-racking distractions, or the cult of appearances? Many people today sense a profound imbalance which drives them to frenetic activity and makes them feel busy, in a constant hurry which in turn leads them to ride rough-shod over everything around them. This too affects how they treat the environment. An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence “must not be contrived but found, uncovered.”

226. We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full. Jesus taught us this attitude when he invited us to contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness, “he looked at him with love” (*Mk 10:21*). He was completely present to everyone and to everything, and in this way he showed us the way to overcome that unhealthy anxiety which makes us superficial, aggressive and compulsive consumers.

227. One expression of this attitude is when we stop and give thanks to God before and after meals. I ask all believers to return to this beautiful and meaningful custom. That moment of blessing, however brief, reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who by their labours provide us with these goods; and it reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need.

FOURTH WEEK 22-25 April

Proposal for Lectio on the Beatitudes (Community of Moatize – Sr. Amélia Savane)

- Commitment to live every day with the Educating Community concrete gestures that express the Beatitudes:

22 April – *"Blessed are the poor in spirit because theirs is the Kingdom of heaven"* (to recognize the presence of God in every person and in creation)

23 - *"Blessed are the peacemakers because they will be called children of God"* (concrete gestures of fraternity and peace)

24 – *"Blessed are the merciful because they will find mercy"* (forgiveness given and received)

25 - *"Blessed are the pure of heart, because they will see God"* (joy)

LOGO ELEMENTS

Meaning of the logo elements:



1. BAOBAB – symbol of life

The Baobab (common name through which we identify various types of *Adansonia*) is a paleotropical plant (we can consider it a true "living fossil" from the botanical point of view), belonging to the Bombacaceae family, autochthonous of sub-African-Saharan, Australia, and Madagascar, although specimens are found in Central America and Southeast Asia, due to the migrations of African peoples in the course of past centuries.

In the African continent, we find the "*Adansonia Digitata*", which can reach 30 meters in height and 20 meters in diameter, can live on average 1000-1500 years (it seems that there are also examples of 6000 years) and can store up to 100,000 liters of water. Called by the Africans "Magic Tree", "Pharmacist Tree" and "Tree of Life"; the name Baobab derives from the Arabic BU-HIBAB (fruit with multiple seeds).

The sacredness of this plant for the African populations is so respected by the inhabitants, that only initiates and sages are allowed to climb on it to collect fruits and leaves. It cannot be destroyed by man, but only by natural events, even if the deep and very long roots allow it to resist the fury of cyclones. It grows in semi-desert and rocky, calcareous areas, where it is difficult for other types of plants to grow, animating the landscape with its unusual and extraordinary shape: a huge conical trunk and branches that look like roots facing the sky. This powerful symbol of Africa, which seems to unite

heaven and earth, provides people with nourishment and remedies for various ailments.

Its leaves, its fruits (among the few in the world naturally dehydrated when ripe), and its roots nourish and heal. The leaves are consumed by the native populations raw, boiled or dried and pulverized (Lalo) and inserted in soups and sauces as aggregater, especially in the cous-cous of millet. Also the roots find a alimentary use, and in particular in times of famine, when they are consumed cooked.

Properties and benefits

The fruit of the baobab measures from 10 to 45 cm. It has an irregular cylindrical, ovoid or globular shape. It consists of a woody outer part, very resistant, capsule-shaped (epicarp), covered with a yellow-green down, and an inner part (endocarp) that forms the pulp of the fruit. When fully ripe, the pulp is completely dehydrated, with a dusty appearance, whitish color and slightly acidic taste. The pulp is divided into small floury clusters that contain several seeds (from which bu - hibab). In 100 gr. the pulp contains 75.6% of carbohydrates, 2.3% protein, and only 0.23% fat. The pulp contains about 44% fiber, of which 50% soluble. The presence of vitamins and minerals is important. In 100 grams of baobab pulp are found up to 300 mg of vitamin C, beta-carotene, B vitamins (especially B6), 300 mg of calcium, 200 mg of phosphorus, and 7 mg of iron.

Thanks to the fact that it is a dried fruit of the same tree, baobab pulp is obtained only through a manual and mechanical process - separation of the pulp from the woody bark and seeds and subsequent reduction to a very fine "powder" - and does not require any heat treatment or storage to be marketed. The pulp of baobab can therefore be used as a food and also as a dietary supplement.

2. **MARY (of the sign at nine years) embracing the world: it is the archetype of taking care.**
3. **WORLD: our common home.**
4. **FACES OF YOUTH: the recipients of the educational mission of different Countries, expression of the dream at nine years.**
5. **COLORS OF THE FLAG OF MOZAMBIQUE:**
 - **green:** the wealth of the earth
 - **black:** represents the African continent
 - **yellow:** the riches of the subsoil
 - **white:** peace
 - **red:** the struggle for independence.

GESTURE OF SOLIDARIETY

At the Community of Moatize: construction of a reception center for preadolescents who do not have access to secondary school; prevention of early marriages and youth empowerment.

In this area of the center, Moatize, FMAs experience on a everyday basis that, after completing primary education, preadolescent and adolescent girls from the age of 12 are forced to marry prematurely or even end up getting pregnant early. This undesired pregnancy often results in the death of the mother and/or child. To help these girls, the Province wishes to build a center for 30 girls over the age of 12 in Moatize, where they would live in a familiar environment. In this way, they would have a place to live while they complete their secondary and higher education. The school will also offer vocational courses, such as cutting and sewing and cooking. The municipality of Moatize gave up 1.4 hectares of land for the construction of this building.

To involve the whole Institute, the Mozambican Province proposes to each Province to choose a seed typical of its own land; to sow it, take care of it, and send a photo, accompanied by a short caption, with the meaning that this seed has for the population of that Country.

Photograph - made in high resolution, no less than 1MB, in landscape format - may be sent to the email address amministratoreweb@cgfma.org