



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Salesiane di Don Bosco

To the Provincials and Superiors of
Preprovinces in their Sees

Subject: Feast of gratitude 2022



Dearest Sisters,

As I had announced, I reach you with this second communication about the World Feast of Gratitude.

As part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Institute, we would like to offer special thanks to the Lord of Life for the generous 'yes' of our Mother, Sr. Chiara Cazzuola, who lives the service of animation and government with so much faith and availability. In a complex world context marked by many health, political, and social challenges, we participate in the suffering and hope of a large part of humanity that seeks peace and desires to continue to generate life.

The celebration of the World Feast of Gratitude unites us all in the desire *to go forward with a big and generous heart* (cf. L 47,12), as Mother Mazzarello asks of us.

The Feast of Gratitude 2022 will take place in the land of our origins:

TURIN, MORNESE, NIZZA
In the Piedmont Province "Mary Help of Christians"

and will have the theme

"They are my daughters"

The expression is taken from the dream of Don Bosco, who recounts that he found himself in Turin, in Piazza Vittorio, where he saw a large number of girls asking him for help. He did not want to listen to them, but he saw a "Lady with a resplendent face who said to him, 'Take care of them, they are my daughters!'" (*Cronistoria I*, 24-25).

The presence of Mary, inspirer of our Institute, Mother and Teacher, the Help of Christians, who accompanies us in our life and in our history, will be the guiding thread of the journey of preparation and realization of the feast.

Turin, Mornese, and Nizza are the places that bring us back to a story, which has seen the intervention of Mary from the very beginning and then over time. Pope Francis during his visit to the Chapter Members told us:

"That 'the Mother of Jesus was there' (Jn 2:1) of the Gospel of the wedding at Cana, in your Constitutions becomes 'Mary is actively present in our life and in the history of the Institute' (cf. FMA Const. 44). Accompanied by her, go forward with enthusiasm on the path that the Spirit suggests to you, with a heart open to accepting the thrusts of God's grace, with an attentive gaze to recognize the needs and urgencies of a world in constant change".

To prepare us for the Feast of Gratitude, the Piedmont Province of "Mary Help of Christians" offers us a three-week itinerary. It is significant that the celebration takes place in this year of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Institute.

A *key word* for every charismatic place of the origins, which recalls the presence of Mary, will help us to walk the journey:

1 st Week (28 March – 3 April)	CALL – TURIN: “Take care of them, they are my daughters”
2 nd Week (4 April – 10 April)	IDENTITY – MORNESE: “You are the living Monument”
3 rd Week (18 April – 24 April)	ACCOMPANIMENT – NIZZA: “Mary walks in this house”

During the first week, we will reflect on the **call** and the mission that Mary entrusts to Don Bosco, since the origins of our Institute. In fact, we know how he himself, also because he was urged by many, began at that time to think of a female congregation. Let's listen to Don Bosco's dream of Piazza Vittorio (Turin):

*"Fr. Francesca remembered hearing from Don Bosco himself that he had twice dreamed of being in **Piazza Vittorio** in Turin and seeing a large number of girls who were playing and seemed abandoned to themselves and that as soon as they saw Don Bosco, they ran around him and they begged him to take care of them ... They said to him, 'As you see, we are abandoned!' Then **he saw a noble Lady appear** who, with her face all resplendent, and with beautiful words encouraged him to satisfy their desire. And while she seemed to disappear from their midst, she said to him, '**Take care of them, they are my daughters!**'".¹*

In the second week, we will study our **identity**, which is so clearly delineated in the words that Don Bosco pronounced on the occasion of the Religious Profession of the first FMA (5 August 1872). In fact, we know how in giving them their name, Don Bosco also gave them a clear identity that we cannot lose. Let us listen again to those significant words:

*"You have as your glory the beautiful title of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and often recall that your Institute must be the **living monument** of Don Bosco's gratitude to the Great Mother of God, invoked under the title of Help of Christians" (Cronistoria I, 306).*

In the third week, we recall the continuous **accompaniment** of Mary in our life. We know that Don Bosco saw Mary walking in the house of Nizza. This page of history revives in us the certainty of her presence in our life. Let's listen to some passages:

¹ Cf. FRANCESIA G. B., *Suor Maria Mazzarello e i primi due lustri delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, S. Benigno Canavese, Libreria Salesiana 1906, 212-213.

"Then Fr. Bonetti seeing him moved, interrupted him, and began to say to distract him: 'Yes, like this, like this! Don Bosco means that Our Lady is your mother and that she looks at you and protects you.' 'No, no, the Saint repeated. I want to say that Our Lady is right here, in this house, and that she is happy with you... I mean that Our Lady is truly here, here among you! Our Lady walks around this house and covers it with her mantle!'" (Cronistoria V, 52).

On the Institute's website you will find the material for the journey of preparation divided into three weeks, the indications and information on the unfolding of the feast.

To emphasize the presence of Mary in the world, **each Nation** is invited to send an image (at least 1 Mb) of Our Lady that best represents her, with a short caption, to the email address:

amministratoreweb@cgfma.org

Through some significant elements, the logo of the feast recalls the origins of our history and some aspects of Salesian spirituality. We see **Mary Help of Christians** who accompanied and safeguarded the Salesian charism. Her mantle unfolds throughout history and crosses the places that saw the birth and fulfillment of the dream of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.

The **fertile hills of Monferrato** can be glimpsed on the horizon, a sign of the concreteness and bond that the Founders had with their land.

The **small window** recalls Mornese and frames the icons that accompany the feast: the **tricorn** that recalls Don Bosco; the **Constitutions**, received by Mother Mazzarello together with the first Daughters of Mary Help of Christians on 5 August 1872 at the Collegio of Mornese; the **sprout** indicating the nascent Institute that Don Bosco wanted to transfer to Nizza Monferrato, under the loving gaze of Mary.

The **profile of young people** indicates the constant presence in our lives of young men and women, who give meaning to our being 'daughters', 'sisters', and 'mothers'. Within this Plan of Salvation, we recognize ourselves as a living Monument of Don Bosco's gratitude to the Help of Christians and this is for us a reason for great celebration.

The **biblical cue** invites us to meet the extraordinary humanity of three Old Testament women: **Esther, Ruth, and Deborah**. In these female figures, among others, we can contemplate those traits that will be summarized and fully embodied by Mary. Through these prefigurations of her, Mary is active in the history of Israel and of all humanity, and she intervenes every day in our history, with a presence that evokes the same beauty, strength, and delicacy.

We will all participate in the Feast with prayer and grateful remembrance, but also with the effective contribution to the proposed initiatives.

The summary program of the Feast, which we can join in live streaming in some moments, is as follows:

Sunday 24 April: Turin and Mornese

Turin: **encounter with the young (SYM day)**

10:30: encounter with Mother in the theater (**direct**)

12:30: Eucharistic Celebration in the Basilica (**direct**)

Mornese: **encounter with the young women in formation**

21:00: vigil with the postulants, novices, Temporary Professed, youth of different Provinces

Monday 25 April: Mornese and Turin

Mornese Eucharistic Celebration in the Sanctuary

9:30: Novices, Temporary Professed, young people, adults, families & FMA of the place participate (**direct**)

11:15: Mother's encounter with the young people in formation

Turin: Mother's Feast in the grand theater of Valdocco

16:30: "*They are my daughters*". **Theatrical and musical show for everyone** (**direct**)

Tuesday 26 April: Nizza

Nizza 10:00: arrivals and welcome

11:00: Mother meets with the FMA present

Games for girls and boys

14:00: Historical cultural itinerary in the rooms of the mother house

16.30: Eucharistic Celebration (**direct**)

18:00: Granting of honorary citizenship to the Institute, in the person of Mother, by the Municipality of Nizza.

The gesture of solidarity, which will unite the whole Institute in making the family spirit and the communion of goods visible, will serve to support the *A3 Project* for girls at risk in Turin, the needs of the Mornese Houses and the most urgent ones of the Institute in Ukraine and other Countries suffering from war.

I am grateful for your commitment in the preparation and implementation of this family celebration, which will make our Mother feel the affection and gratitude of all the educating communities. I greet you with affection also on her behalf and of the Sisters of the Council.

Rome, 8 March 2022

Sr. María del Rosario García Ribas
Vicar General