 Reading time: 5 min.

The Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) was founded on 18 April 1869 by Don Bosco, as the second group of his work after the Salesians, with the aim of ***“promoting the glories of the divine Mother of the Saviour, in order to merit Her protection in life and particularly at the point of death.”***

The Pious Association of Mary Help of Christians was founded after the opening of the Basilica dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, which took place on 9 June 1868 in Turin. With the building of the Basilica, Don Bosco saw with his own eyes the realisation of the famous dream of 1844, in which the Virgin Mary, in the likeness of a shepherdess, made him see “**a wondrously big Church” in whose interior there was “a white banner on which was written in huge letters: HIC DOMUS MEA, INDE GLORIA MEA.**” Many individuals, especially from among ordinary folk, had contributed offerings to the building of the Shrine as a sign of gratitude for graces received from Mary Help of Christians. The faithful had made “repeated requests that a pious Association of devotees be started, who, united in the same spirit of prayer and piety, would pay homage to the great Mother of the Saviour, invoked under the title of Help of Christians.” This popular request – made even though an ancient (12th century) and strong devotion to Our Lady existed in Turin under the title of the Consolata – indicates that the initiative came from above.



Basilica Maria Ausiliatrice dome, Turin, Italy

Thus one can also understand the reason for the request for approval of the Association made by Don Bosco himself: "*The undersigned humbly asks Your Grace that for the sole desire of promoting the glory of God and the good of souls he agree that in the church of Mary Help of Christians consecrated a year ago by Your Grace to Divine Worship, a pious union of the faithful be started under the name of Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians. The main aim would be to promote adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to Maria Auxilium Christianorum:* ***a title which seems to be of great pleasure to the august Queen of Heaven****."* His request was not only accepted, but in less than a year from its foundation (February 1870) the Pious Association of Mary Help of Christians became an Archconfraternity.

The name "ADMA" that Don Bosco gave to this association, meant the Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians, where the word "devotees" reflected what St Francis de Sales taught: "Devotion is simply a spiritual activity and liveliness by means of which Divine Love works in us, and causes us to work

briskly and lovingly.” This devotion is further specified: “Don Bosco, aware of our difficulties and frailty, took a further, even more beautiful step: we are not general devotees, but devotees of Mary Help of Christians. In his experience, the gift of love which unites the Father and the Son (grace) and which drives us to action (charity), passes explicitly, almost sensitively, through Mary’s maternal mediation”, as Don Bosco’s successor, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, points out.

Don Bosco founded ADMA to share grace and spread and defend the faith of the people, spreading adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist and devotion to the Virgin Help of Christians, two pillars of our faith, throughout the world. This seed sown by the saint has now spread to 50 countries around the world, with around 800 groups attached to the Turin Primary ADMA.

Today in ADMA, at the school of Don Bosco, paths of prayer, apostolate and service are followed in a family spirit. Devotion to the Eucharist and to Mary Help of Christians is lived and spread, valuing participation in liturgical life and reconciliation. Christian formation is aimed at imitating Mary in living the “spirituality of daily life”, seeking to cultivate a Christian environment of welcome and solidarity in the family and wherever people live.

On the occasion of the 150th year of the foundation of ADMA, the successor of Don Bosco, in his letter “Entrust, confide, smile!” he left the Association some instructions. The invitation is to let ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit for a renewed evangelising impulse, anchored to the two pillars, the Eucharist and devotion to Mary Help of Christians with certain emphases:

– **living holiness in the family**, giving witness mainly through perseverance in love between spouses, parents and children, brothers and sisters, young and old;

– **bringing Our Lady into the home**, imitating Mary in all that one can;

– **offering a way to holiness and apostolate** that is simple and accessible to all;

– **participating in the Eucharist**, without which there is no path to holiness;

– **entrusting ourselves to Mary**, convinced that she will take us “by the hand” to lead us to the encounter with her Son Jesus.

The privileged opportunities for living and spreading devotion to Mary Help of Christians among ordinary folk, and asking for graces, are the practices of piety: the commemoration of the 24th of each month, the rosary, the novena in preparation for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, the blessing of Mary Help of Christians, pilgrimages to Marian shrines, processions, collaboration in parish life.

Members of ADMA are part of the great Salesian Family tree, a movement of people promoted by Don Bosco under the guidance of Mary Help of Christians, for the mission to youth and ordinary folk: “We must unite” he wrote in 1878 “among ourselves and all with the Congregation… aiming at the same goal and using the same means… as in a single family with the bonds of fraternal charity which spurs us to help and support each other for the benefit of our neighbour.” In the Salesian Family ADMA retains the task of emphasising the particular Eucharistic and Marian devotion lived and spread by St John Bosco, devotion which expresses the founding element of the Salesian charism. From this perspective, among other things ADMA promotes the International Congress of Mary Help of Christians for the whole Salesian Family, the next one to be held in Fatima from 29 August to 1 September 2024. The title chosen for this event will be “I will give you a teacher”, in memory of Don Bosco’s dream at nine years of age. This will be the 200th anniversary of the dream.

In order to get to know ADMA better, as well as the website admadonbosco.org, you can also follow their monthly formation and communion sheet “ADMA on line” and their book series *Notebooks of Mary Help of Christians*, both of which are on the same site. You can also follow them on their social media channels Facebook and Youtube, and a brochure can be downloaded from HERE.