

Dearest Sisters,

Again this year I have the joy of presenting to you the Strenna for 2025 offered by Fr. Stefano Martoglio, Vicar of the Rector Major. The chosen theme is as evocative and relevant as the time we are living:

Anchored to hope, pilgrims with the young

In keeping with the *Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025*, which Holy Father Francis has called with the Bull *Spes non confundit* (Rom 5:5), we are invited to keep the torch of hope lit, also thanks to two great events that we prepare to celebrate: the 150th anniversary of the first missionary expedition of the Salesians, sent to Argentina by Don Bosco, and the prospect of the canonization of Blessed Sister Maria Troncatti, a great missionary and woman totally given to God.

The etymological link between *spes* and *spatium* indicates space-time stretching towards a goal, that is to say, towards a horizon of direction and meaning. It is 'running' towards the goal of which St Paul speaks in the third chapter of the *Letter* to Christians of Philippi. One gives hope only in the momentum of steps on the way, of steps hurried toward the beyond, bent on achieving or reaching something. Steps like those of Mary who, when she rose up, went in haste to the mountains of Judea, to her cousin Elizabeth, as she was pregnant with a child, as she was pregnant with the future and therefore, with hope.

Hope makes us dream of a new humanity and makes us courageous. It helps us to know how to wait in confidence and in serene industriousness for the times of God. Hope generates patience. Patience, which comes from the Holy Spirit, keeps hope alive and consolidates it as a virtue and lifestyle. Patience does not consist only in bearing, but in knowing how to suffer well, how to offer, how to bear the weight of oneself, of others, of the world.

"Do not let your hearts be heavy" (Lk 21:34). We perceive the invitation to "raise our head" to reach ever wider horizons, in the concreteness of reality. Pope Francis often urges us in his messages to live by looking at great horizons, to meditate on the Word of God, not in an abstract way, but with a vigilant heart, facing everyday events, even the most painful ones.

It is not Salesian "to walk looking down". It is not of those who love young people who already live tomorrow! We, like Paul, know in whom we have placed our hope (cf. *2Tm 1:1-3*) and we want to keep this lamp lit.

As Salesian educators, the educative mission is the most effective place to learn how to live hope and to transmit it in the world *with and through* young people. Hope, in fact, is a verb that projects forward, that deeply characterizes the one who devotes self to educate. To believe, love, and hope is to bet on the young people, on their positive resources, and wait patiently for the grace of God to do the rest.

For Don Bosco as well, as for Mother Mazzarello, educating is the art of hoping, of not giving in to difficulties and possible failures. It is respecting the path of every young person, continuing to cultivate great evangelical ideals.

If the educator believes that in every young person there is a cord that vibrates for the good, hope is the virtue that makes us creative, bold in discovering this 'cord' and put it in the condition to release harmony.

We are pilgrims of hope with the young! A hope that comes from faith and trust in God, knowing that we are loved and constantly accompanied by Him. Pilgrims of hope in every part of the world, we will be on pilgrimage with young people, on a journey that will lead us to the personal and living encounter with Jesus, who is the 'door' of salvation (cf *Jn* 10:7, 9).

Inspired by the dream of Don Bosco and their experience lived in a typically Salesian family atmosphere, young people have great dreams that enable them to overcome life's trials with courage and confidence, but they need help and support. It is our duty to accompany them with wisdom on the journey of life.

We feel like pilgrims remembering the humility and smallness of our origins, which gave impetus to the missionary impulse of the first Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. We want to live the preparation for 150th of the first missionary departure as an opportunity for renewal and revitalization of vocation and mission.

Open to the Spirit, we are called to be *generative communities* in our service to young people and the poorest. *Missionary communities*, outgoing, bent on proclaiming the Gospel to the peripheries, with the educative-evangelizing passion of our first missionary sisters.

Let us ask Mary, whom we feel present in our lives, to make us women of hope and open to the joyful humility of the "*Magnificat*", to be like her "helpers", especially among young people (cf C 4).

In communion with the universal Church, with the Salesian Family, with all those who work for the good of young people, with respect for our common home and peace in the world, we live the Holy Year 2025 cultivating in our hearts a *jubilee hope*.

I am certain that the new Strenna will be the subject of your personal and community reflection. In its richness and depth, it presents us with a trinomial: *recognize, rethink, and re-launch*, which I invite you to deepen and share in order to keep alive hope and to give it new vigor.

We feel the need of facing the current challenges with a courage "full of faith" and *be ourselves little torches of hope for others, especially for the poorest and neediest young people*.

With the Sisters of the Council, I renew my best wishes for a fruitful year to you, your families, all members of the Salesian family, the Salesian Confreres, the educating communities, and especially the young people.

For all, may 2025 be truly a "Holy Year" of peace, universal fraternity, and certain hope.

Rome, 1 January 2025

Aff.ly Madre