

CLOSING OF THE ORIONINE MARIAN YEAR

11 FEBRUARY – 20 NOVEMBER 2024



Orionine Charismatic Family Walking with Mary



Presentation

Most dear ones,

We are approaching the celebration of the Charismatic Family Week, during which the closing of the Orionine Marian Year will also take place. This year has been dedicated to the "Mother of God," a title that Don Orione himself chose to represent our Congregation's Marian devotion.

We have planned a simple journey of reflection and prayer, guided by the Virgin Mary, to help us prepare to experience this moment. We now offer this to all the brothers and sisters of the great Orionine Charismatic Family.

This journey lasts six days: each day, a word from the Gospel will introduce us to meditating on an attitude of faith that Mary suggests to us through her example. The words of the Pope and Don Orione will also help us delve into the heart of our Marian spirituality.

The journey will conclude on the seventh day with the recitation of the Rosary and an act of entrustment to Mary, accompanied by a gesture honoring the Mater Dei, as we reprise the gesture with which we began the Marian Year.

When? The six-day journey can begin on Thursday, November 14, and continue through Tuesday, November 19; on Wednesday, November 20, the feast of the Mother of Divine Providence, we will close the Orionine Marian Year with the seventh day, reciting the Rosary and the act of entrustment.

Who? This is an invitation we extend to all FDP and PSMC communities, to all ISO and ISMN consecrated persons, to the lay members of MLO, and to everyone who, in any way, is part of the Orionine world.

How? Each community or individual can organize this journey in their own way: it may replace spiritual reading, or the recitation of vespers, or the Rosary... Individually, any time can be a good moment.

Happy journey!

Rosita Dore ISO

Dina Guardini ISMN

Suor M. Rosa Delgado Rocha PSMC

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From the Gospel

Here I am. Be done to me. (Lk 1:30-38).

Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?”

And the angel said to her in reply, “The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.”

Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”

Then the angel departed from her.

Let us meditate

- * **Here I am:** This phrase tells us that Mary is habitually in the presence of God, in an attitude of listening: I am at your disposal, open to your presence and your word. Mary is the one who opens her mind and heart to listen, with a spirit of seeking and desire to hear the voice of God resonate in her life.
- * This is the first attitude of faith we learn from Mary: being present, standing before the Lord in listening. Practically speaking, it means creating silence, welcoming His word, having an attitude of prayer: the voice of God can only be heard in this state of being before Him, with nothing and no one else in our mind and heart.
- * The voice of God cannot be heard if other voices are echoing in our mind and heart (remember Elijah’s gentle breeze, not the strong wind, earthquake, or fire...).
- * Let’s ask ourselves: how much space do I make in my life for listening in silence? What desire and search is there in me for the word of God? Am I ready to say: Here I am, Lord, speak, I am listening (remember young Samuel in the Temple).
- * Mary’s heart is in an attitude of openness: but openness requires a personal and complete response. Her “Here I am” is followed by a definition: Mary calls herself “the servant of the Lord,” fully open to His will. This willingness is expressed in the statement, “let it be done to me according to your word.” **Here I am** needs **Let it be!** In this way, God enters the world’s history with His humanity.
- * From listening to commitment: it’s not enough to say to the Lord, I have heard your word (remember the Gospel: we ate and drank in your presence, you preached in our squares, and we heard you...). Listening is not enough; listening must lead to commitment, to a “yes,” to surrender to God’s will.

- * This is the second attitude of faith we learn from Mary: commitment to God's will, a "yes" to His word, the "fiat"... Surrendering one's life to God's plan, leaving Him to guide and direct our existence.
- * In other words, it is the virtue of obedience: obedience to God is another name for faith in Him. If I believe in Him, if I listen to His word, the result must be a "yes" to His will. Let's ask ourselves: is my attitude one of willingness to say yes to the Lord in daily life? Is my prayer first of all "Your will be done" (remember the Our Father)? Do I really repeat to Him many times a day: "Here I am, Lord, I am here, listening because I want to do Your will, because I want Your plan to be fulfilled in my life, and I entrust myself to You"...

The word of the Pope

Mary was praying when the Archangel Gabriel came to bring his message to her in Nazareth. Her small yet immense "Here I am", which made all of creation jump for joy in that moment, had been preceded throughout salvation history by many other "Here I am"s, by many trusting obediences, by many who were open to God's will. There is no better way to pray than to place oneself like Mary in an attitude of openness, with a heart open to God: "Lord, what you want, when you want, and how you want". That is, a heart open to God's will. And God always responds. How many believers live their prayer like this! Those who are more humble of heart pray like this: with essential humility, let's put it that way; with simple humility: "Lord, what you want, when you want, and how you want". And they pray like this and do not get upset when problems fill their days, but rather they face reality, knowing that in humble love, in love offered in each situation, we become instruments of God's grace. "Lord, what you want, when you want, and how you want". A simple prayer, but one in which we place ourselves in the Lord's hands so that he may guide us. We can all pray like this, almost without words. (*General audience, November 2020*)

The word and the life of Don Orione

"It is not enough to love and honor the Madonna with songs and praises: we must honor her by imitating her virtues and her prerogatives. This way, our love will be true, and we will merit her help and protection, not only for ourselves but also for the souls entrusted to us. Let us promise to be true devotees of Mary, striving to imitate her virtues: humility, purity, charity, holiness of life. Let us place all our confidence and utmost trust in Mary Most Holy, our heavenly mother, and turn to her continually, resting peacefully in her immaculate hands. Let us be sincere devotees of the Most Holy Madonna, imitating her virtues with divine help and following more diligently the law of her Son, our Redeemer and God, Jesus Christ." (*DOLM, p. 1999*).

Let us pray with don Orione

"Hail, O most loving Mother who sees and hears even from afar!
Receive my greeting, humble, reverent, filial;
feel the fervent beat of this heart,
which crosses the seas and reaches all the way to your heart!
Rejoice, O noble Lady of Heaven,
and accept my gratitude for your many blessings and wonders!
I call upon you, I implore you for myself and for all,
'O Virgin, O Lady, O All-Holy One!'
At your feet, I lay down my heart and my whole poor life:
a thousand times I bless you, a thousand and a thousand times I love you!"
(DOLM III p. 1739).

From the Gospel:

Magnificat. (Lk 1:39-49).

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior.

For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness;
behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

Let us meditate

- "A third word seals the journey of faith of the Virgin: the song of the Magnificat, which helps us to interpret God's action as an intervention of love. It expresses the wonder of the human heart in the face of God's marvels, becoming a 'song of praise' to God and a 'prayer of thanksgiving.'
- Thanksgiving and praise are the third attitudes of faith that we learn from Mary. Yes, thanksgiving and praise, because faith means recognizing the great gifts, the great works that God has done in me; it simply means recognizing that God exists and acts in my life, that I live in the heart of God, in the love of God, and that everything is a gift.
- For many Christians, faith often means simply asking ... asking God for what we need, entrusting ourselves to Him in our human weakness and fragility. This is right—Jesus also teaches us this. However, He teaches us that faith cannot be only this; first comes the recognition of God's love that saves us and offers Himself to us in the fullness of His love... from here come gratitude and praise.
- Let us ask ourselves: does our prayer express our faith? Does the way we pray reflect the way we believe? Do we know how to say thank you and praise the Lord more than we ask? ... so that our faith is, above all, a contemplation of God's love in His works of salvation, and then a trusting request for our needs. What He has already done for us comes before

what we would want Him to do for us (remember Jesus: do not worry, do not ask, the Lord knows... rather, seek the kingdom... praise the Lord)."

The word of the Pope

I shall conclude by offering to you as an example for your mission and for your service to the poor the icon of the Visitation. Like the Virgin Mary, set out in haste — not the hastiness of the world, but that of God — and, full of the joy that dwells in your heart, sing your Magnificat. Sing the love of God for every creature. Proclaim to today's men and women that God is love and can fill the heart of those who seek him and who let themselves be encountered by him. (*Papa Francesco, al CG delle PSMC, 26 maggio 2017*).

The word and the life of Don Orione

Mary! Mary Most Holy! Are you not the second name?" And is there a name that is sweeter and more often invoked, after the name of the Lord? Is there a human creature, is there a woman, is there a mother who is greater, holier, more merciful? "Mary," say the Gospels, "of whom Jesus was born." Jesus was born of Mary - Jesus Christ, true God and true Man - making her the Mother of God!

Our mothers pass on and die: Mary, Mother of our mothers, is the great Mother who does not die. Twenty centuries have gone by and she is more alive today than when she sang the Magnificat and prophesied that all the generations would call her blessed.

Mary stays on, she lives and stays on, because God wants all generations to hear her and to have her as their Mother. Mary is the great Mother who shines with glory and love on the horizon of Christianity. She is the guide and encouragement of each one of us. She is a powerful and most merciful Mother for all those who call on her and who invoke her. (*Lettera del 27.6.1937*).

Let us pray with don Orione

I want you, O Holy Mother:
 I call you, I follow you, I love you!
 Take me, O Blessed Virgin,
 among the multitudes that fill the squares and streets;
 Hail, O all-white, Immaculate Mother of God:
 Majestic Queen! Hail,
 O great Lady of Divine Providence,
 Mother of mercy!
 You are omnipotent in the heart of Jesus,
 Your God and Your Son,
 and your hands are full of graces!
 (*DOLM p. 1683*).

From the Gospel:

Keeping. (Lk 2:46-51).

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

But they did not understand what he said to them.

He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart..

Let us Meditate

- * The narrative of Christmas, the presentation at the temple, the loss, and the finding of the child in Jerusalem: the verb attributed to the Virgin Mother is "treasured," kept in her heart. It attests to the silent presence of the Mother in contemplating and internalizing the mystery of the Son. This contemplation will accompany the Virgin in the progressive revelation of the Son, culminating in the Paschal mystery.
- * This is the fourth attitude of faith that we learn from Mary: meditation, penetrating into the mystery...
- * Let us remember that not everything was clear and easy for Mary, quite the opposite... she was a "pilgrim in faith," says Pope John Paul II... this means that she too had to face the darkness that we all confront during the events of our lives.
- * Besides, God's promises were certainly not obvious. Becoming a mother while remaining a virgin, conceiving not by man but by the Holy Spirit, a son who would be great and the son of God (no matter how much faith one might have, imagine what it means: my son is God!)... and then the 30 years in Nazareth where nothing of this was evident: a child like any other, who grows into a young man and a man like any other, who works as a carpenter without any sign of divinity... until the moment of the beginning of his ministry... those 30 years are a significant test of faith...
- * Thus, Mary is presented to us as the one who treasures in her heart everything related to her son, in an attitude of deep meditation, illuminated by prayer, to discover in it the hidden traces of the fulfillment of God's promise.
- * Let us learn from Mary: to treasure in our hearts the beautiful and painful events of our lives, to meditate on them in the light of God's word to seek and discover the traces of God's work; to recognize in daily events the action of the One who guides our lives towards the fulfillment of His promises of love... This is an aspect of faith that is so important and decisive.
- * Let us ask ourselves: do we know how to look in the light of God's will at the events of our daily lives, what happens to us, what we cannot explain, what seems impossible or difficult or painful? Do we know how to ask ourselves every time: what does the Lord want from me at this moment, in this situation, what is the Lord saying to me through this fact or this person...?

The word of the Pope

As Mary and Joseph also did, and it was not easy: how many difficulties they had to overcome! They were not a superficial family, they were not an unreal family. The family of Nazareth urges us to rediscover the vocation and mission of the family, of every family. And, what happened in those 30 years in Nazareth, can thus happen to us too: in seeking to make love and not hate normal, making mutual help commonplace, not indifference or enmity. It is no coincidence, then, that “Nazareth” means “She who keeps”, as Mary, who — as the Gospel states — “kept all these things in her heart” (cf. Lk 2:19, 51). Since then, each time there is a family that keeps this mystery, even if it were on the periphery of the world, the mystery of the Son of God, the mystery of Jesus who comes to save us, the mystery is at work. He comes to save the world. And this is the great mission of the family: to make room for Jesus who is coming, to welcome Jesus in the family, in each member: children, husband, wife, grandparents.... Jesus is there. (*Papa Francesco, udienza generale, 17 dicembre 2014*)

The word and the life of Don Orione

Our Congregation wants to be and is entirely devoted to Mary... And why? Because she is the "Theotokos," the "Deipara," the "Mater Dei," the immaculate "Mother of God." So, here is our task: to associate Mary with Jesus Christ in every religious act, and to confess His divinity... We repeat, together with the acclamations of the Council of Ephesus, our faith in the divinity of Christ and the Divine Motherhood of Mary... With the cry of "Mary Mother of God" we profess our faith; we profess, in Christ, the union of divinity and humanity and, in man, the elevation of humanity assumed by divinity; in Mary, we profess the highest dignity to which a creature could be elevated, and the highest, most powerful prerogative: the Divine Motherhood.... (*con don Orione verso Maria pag.188/189*)

Let us pray with don Orione

Hail, holy Mother of God,
 Mother of Divine Providence and our Mother,
 To you, kind and merciful,
 omnipotent in the heart of your Son Jesus,
 we confidently turn.
 Come, O Mother, come take care of us!
 Here we are, take the key to our heart:
 come to govern and guard,
 come to defend our home,
 the Church and the whole world.
 Grant us, O Mary,
 a great and magnanimous soul,

patient in trials, strong in hope,
ardent in love for God and our brothers.
Holy Mother, remember us before God,
watch over the steps of our lives until the holy Paradise,
close to You, Mary,
always with Jesus, always with You,
Holy Mother of the Lord!

From the Gospel:

Do. (Jn 2:1-5).

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

[And] Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."

Let us Meditate

- "Do" is the invitation that Mary addresses to the servants at Cana after speaking with Jesus. It is the "last word" that Mary speaks in the gospel. The mother notices the lack of wine and, worried about the embarrassment of the young couple, full of confidence, she expresses her concern to Jesus. Mary "asks for the gift" from Jesus! Mary "prays" for humanity deprived of love, joy, and celebration.
- To Jesus, Mary asks for the gift of wine; in return, Jesus will ask Mary for the gift of herself, when the hour of Calvary comes and she will be at the foot of the cross! By telling the servants, "do whatever he tells you," Mary repeats her "yes" to Jesus: following her Son and sharing the "hour" of his mission.
- Through her faith, Mary becomes an instrument of the growth of others' faith. It is she who prompts Jesus' first miracle, she intercedes for the couple, even pushing Jesus and anticipating the hour of her son's manifestation.
- From that moment, the disciples begin to believe in him: thus, Mary is the occasion and instrument of the birth of the disciples' faith... She believes very strongly, she is certain that her son will perform the miracle, despite Jesus' response; this firm faith of hers obtains the miracle that will later give birth to the faith in the disciples.
- Here is a fifth attitude of faith that we learn from Mary:
 - o It is the dimension of mission, which is first and foremost a mission of intercession: asking Jesus to perform his miracle of love for those who need his grace;
 - o And then it is a mission of testimony and example, which pulls those who see it into the choice of faith; it is to become an instrument of the growth of others' faith.
- Let us ask ourselves: what example of faith, of certain trust can I give to my brothers and sisters? (Remember the words of Jesus who asks us to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, who tells us that we must be like a lamp on high to give light to everyone in the house).
- Do I know how to make an intercessory prayer? Invoke the Lord for the good of others, not only for my needs; for the faith of all, especially those who are most in difficulty, just as the couple at Cana were in difficulty.

The word of the Pope

It is Our Lady who became aware of the problem and discretely brought it to Jesus' attention. And he

intervened without fanfare, almost without being noticed. ...

It is beautiful to think that the first sign Jesus accomplished was not an extraordinary healing or a miracle in the temple of Jerusalem, but a gesture that responded to a simple and concrete need of common people, a domestic gesture. Let us put it this way – a miracle done on “tip toes”, discretely, silently. ...

Jesus makes sure that the feast ends with *the best wine*. Symbolically, this tells us that God wants what is better for us, he wants us to be happy. He does not set limits and he does not ask us for interest. ... No, the joy Jesus brought to their hearts was complete and disinterested joy. It was not “watered down joy”!

Let us try to rummage through our memories, looking for *signs* that the Lord accomplished in my life. ... Every one of us has these moments in our personal history. ... Let us relive the moments in which we experienced his presence and Mary’s intercession. May she, the Mother who is always attentive as at Cana, help us treasure the signs of God’s presence in our lives. (*Papa Francesco, Angelus, 16 gennaio 2022*).

The word and the life of Don Orione

The Purchase of the "S. Giorgio" College in Novi Ligure.

"Pray to the Madonna! Tomorrow, May 1st, I will likely sign the agreement in Novi..." Meanwhile, Don Orione often went to pray to the Lacrimosa, the ancient simulacrum of the Virgin, who holds - as per ancient dedication - the silver keys to the city.

Mons. Remotti recalls: "One afternoon in November 1923, Don Orione came to the collegiate church where I was a curate; he entered the sacristy, took me by the hand, and led me before the most holy Virgin Lacrimosa; there, he prayed for about half an hour... Then he said to me: 'I have to confide something to you; I have decided to buy San Giorgio... I want to bring it back to life... it will be a vibrant center of culture and faith...'

The negotiations were extremely laborious and at times seemed on the verge of collapsing; the times were difficult, the opposition strong, the environment cold and hostile. But Don Orione's spirit of faith overcame everything and everyone.

Thus, here they are, all in agreement, the members of the municipal council, gathered in the great hall of the town hall before Don Orione. They are to draft and sign the agreement, committing to breathe life into a ruin, glorious as it may be, but a ruin nonetheless, without a soul...

The moment is solemn. Don Orione stands up and asks for permission: "I am a poor priest," he says, "I am a rag of God; I can do nothing without His help. Allow me to invoke the Madonna, your Lacrimosa. Let us invoke her together, before signing, your patroness: your ancestors placed the keys, the silver keys of your city, in her hands..."

Saying this, he stands up and, under everyone's gaze, makes the sign of the cross; and those, influenced by him, stand up and make the sign of the cross as well; and then, throwing himself to his knees and resting his head on his right forearm on the table, he begins the Ave Maria, and those, conquered, follow his lead. "Now, that's better," he says then, taking the pen, "now I can sign with

confidence!" The Virgin Lacrimosa had answered the fervent prayer of the Servant of God. (*DOLM*, 781-783)

Let us pray with don Orione

Oh, may the most holy Madonna always be in our minds, in our hearts, in our studies, in our work, in all our actions!

It is the Catholic Church that tells us, recommends to us, teaches and instills in us in its venerable liturgy of all the peoples who live in faith.

Mary, always Mary!

Mary in tribulations, Mary in joys; Mary in health, Mary in sickness;

Mary in poverty, Mary in abundance; Mary in humiliations, Mary in honors;

Mary in grace, Mary in sin; Mary in youth, Mary in old age;

Mary in life, Mary in death, Mary in eternity.

Mary, always Mary!

(Don Orione nella Luce di Maria, vol. 1)

From the Gospel:

Standing. (Jn 19:25-27).

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son."

Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

Let us Meditate

- * The word "**Stood**" marks the existence of the Virgin who follows the Son to the end, under the cross. Mary is the woman of the "gift," initiated in the supplicatory prayer at Cana and completed in the offering of her motherhood to the Son and to the Church, represented by the beloved disciple.
- * Here is the 6th attitude of faith that we learn from Mary: the "standing" at the foot of the cross. Mary shows us that we cannot truly meet Jesus if we are not willing to "stand" with Him at the foot of the cross.
- * In Mary, this sharing in Jesus' cross is present from the beginning, from Simeon's prophecy onward, with the birth in a cave because there was no room for them; the flight into Egypt, because the child's life was threatened; the loss of Him in Jerusalem, where she is told that the Son does not belong to her and Joseph but to another Father; when Jesus Himself says to her, "Who is my mother?" ...until she sees Him dying and then dead in her arms on the cross...
- * Imagine the severe test her faith in the promise underwent... but Mary "stood" by the cross. This standing is not just a geographical note, not merely expressing the place, but it signifies the choice to remain there, faithful and certain that even in that seemingly hopeless situation, God was fulfilling His plan... Mary stands under the cross because she takes upon herself, and makes her own, the suffering of the Son; spiritually, Mary bore the cross with Jesus throughout the climb to Calvary and is now crucified with Him.
- * Let's try to enter into Mary's heart: that crucified son is the son of whom the angel had prophesied: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; the Lord God will give Him the throne of David His father, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." And now He is there, hanging on the cross, mocked, insulted, abandoned by His own. It is the moment of the test of faith, a profound and most painful trial.
- * But if the trial under the cross was great, Mary's faith was greater, even greater than her suffering. Mary stands under the cross because she knows that God is faithful to His promises. Mary under the cross teaches hope because she believes that God's promise is fulfilled, even through the cross.

- * Let us ask ourselves: do I know how to accept moments of difficulty, remain firm in my certainty that my God is there and loves me even when things go wrong, even when it seems that He has abandoned me... Do I know how to remain firm when my desires, expectations, seem to be frustrated by trials and disappointments... Remain firm in the certainty that God's plan never fails, and that the ways of the Lord are sometimes obscure, but always certain.

The word of the Pope

Mary, “the servant of the Lord” (cf. Lk 1:38) who, with a mother’s care, ensured that the wine at the wedding feast of Cana would be sufficient (cf. Jn 2:1-12), shared in her Son’s mission of salvation, even to the foot of the Cross. At Calvary, in her overwhelming grief, she understood the prophecy of Simeon: “And a sword will pierce your own soul too” (Lk 2:35). The suffering of her dying Son, who had taken upon himself the sins and infirmities of humanity, pierced her own heart. Jesus suffered in the flesh, the man of sorrows, disfigured by evil (cf. Is 53:3ff). Mary suffered in spirit, as the compassionate Mother who dries our tears, comforts us and points to Christ’s definitive victory.

Mary, Mother of Sorrows, remains at the foot the cross. She simply stands there. She does not run away, or try to save herself, or find ways to alleviate her grief. Here is the proof of true compassion: to remain standing beneath the cross. To stand there weeping, yet with the faith that knows that, in her Son, God transfigures pain and suffering and triumphs over death.

In contemplating the Sorrowful Mother, may we too open our hearts to a faith that becomes compassion, a faith that identifies with those who are hurting, suffering and forced to bear heavy crosses. A faith that does not remain abstract, but becomes incarnate in fellowship with those in need. A faith that imitates God’s way of doing things, quietly relieves the suffering of our world and waters the soil of history with salvation. (*Papa Francesco, Omelia, 15/09/2021*)

The word and the life of Don Orione

When the first House was opened in San Bernardino, Don Orione and his first pupils placed a statue of the Madonna in the chapel, which had been donated by a benefactor from Novi Ligure, the lawyer Serra. It was a statue of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Don Orione recounts: "... on the first day that marked the birth of our Congregation, the first group of young boys, gathered under the auspices of Divine Providence, were particularly offered to the Blessed Virgin Mary... Our Lady of Sorrows is commonly depicted dressed in red, because red symbolizes pain and love, with hands joined, eyes turned to heaven, and a sword piercing her heart. This statue crosses her arms on her chest and looks up to heaven: this is roughly how Mary must have been at the foot of the Cross, when Jesus was agonizing, in that sacred and solemn moment

when Jesus gave us the right to call Mother Mary, the Mother of God...

When the boys saw that the Madonna had a sword planted in her heart, they turned to me saying, 'Why do we have to have a statue of the Madonna with a sword planted in her heart? No, we don't want her to have a sword in her chest!' ... So they broke the sword, and in fact, brought some matches and burned it there, in the middle of the garden, and said, 'Thus may our sins be burned away...!'

... And in place of the sword, they placed a silver heart.

This old statue is the first Mother of Divine Providence. It has always remained this way.

Everything changes in this House, everything passes: one thing does not change and will not change here: the image of our dear Madonna of Divine Providence."

Let us pray with don Orione

Always, O Madonna, we will speak of You! We will narrate your glories,
spread your devotion, make known the wonders of your maternal goodness.

Bless us and our work, bless all your devotees, all good souls.

Bless us, your servants, your children, thirsty for love of you.

May your grace descend like dew, like beneficial rain on us and on all,
near and far, friends and enemies, good or bad: you, O Mary, are the Mother of all,
you want to be the light, the consolation, and the salvation for everyone.

And we, humble and faithful at your feet and at the feet of the Church, will raise again and always
hymns of love and thanks to you, O Holy Madonna della Guardia!

From the word of God:

Together. (Acts 1:12-14).

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away.

When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Let us Meditate

- "Mary is said to be with the apostles in the Upper Room after Jesus' ascension into heaven and when the Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost. We can imagine that John, having taken her into his care after Jesus entrusted her to him from the cross, welcomed her as a mother, thus making her the mother of the nascent Church (and her presence at Pentecost, the birth of the Church, confirms this). We can therefore imagine that Mary, for as long as she lived, remained within the community, involved in the lives of the disciples who had been given to her by her Son on the cross.
- Mary and the Church are inseparable; Mary's faith becomes the faith of the Church, and the Church's faith is now also nourished by the example, witness, and intercession of Mary's faith.
- Here is a final attitude of faith, the 7th, that we learn from Mary: faith is lived within and with the ecclesial community. Our faith is indeed personal, but it is not individualistic; it is faith in community, because Christians, as Scripture says, form one body with Jesus as the head, and we are members of one another. A member cannot live without the others, separated from the rest of the body. Blood does not flow, the member dies, and the body suffers if there is separation...
- So it is with our faith: if I remain separate from the Church, I die spiritually and the Church suffers; life does not circulate...
- Thus, the importance of fraternal communion and sharing within the Christian community to live the faith and encounter Jesus. Mary lived her faith and her relationship of love with her Son Jesus within the apostolic community.
- Let us ask ourselves: what is my relationship like with the rest of my community? How do I communicate and share my faith with others? Do I see in others brothers and sisters without whom my relationship with Jesus is not complete and vital? Do I see them as members of that body of which I am also a part, with one head and heart that is Jesus?"

The word of the Pope

In the story of the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11), Jesus entrusts Peter with the task of going out into the deep, but then He speaks in the plural, saying, "let down the nets": Peter steers the boat,

but everyone is on the boat, and all are called to lower the nets. Everyone. And when they catch a great number of fish, they don't think they can manage it alone, they don't treat the gift as a possession and private property, but, as the Gospel says, "they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them." Thus, they filled both boats with fish. One signifies solitude, closure, the claim of self-sufficiency; two signifies relationship. The Church is synodal, it is communion, mutual help, a common journey... There must be space for everyone on the boat of the Church: all the baptized are called to get on it and cast the nets, personally committing to the proclamation of the Gospel... The Church should not be a customs house, selecting who enters and who does not. Everyone, each with their life on their shoulders, with their sins, just as they are, before God, just as they are before life... The nets of the first disciples then become an image of the Church, which is a "network of human, spiritual, and pastoral relationships." If there is no dialogue, if there is no co-responsibility, if there is no participation, the Church grows old. (*Pope Francis, Lisbon, 2 August 2023*).

The word and the life of Don Orione

On March 10, 1916, Don Orione wrote a heartfelt letter addressed to Don Carlo Dondero, Superior of the first Orionine missionary community in Mar de Espanha, Brazil. In it, he expressed his paternal concerns and sorrow for a community that seemed on the path of losing its most precious asset: unity in fraternal charity.

"... When there is a good spirit and charity, which is the Lord's commandment, everything moves forward, and all the sons are content, even amidst deprivations, and they live happily! Charity is the distinguishing mark of the disciples of Jesus Christ: it is humble and drowns itself, it becomes all things to all people, it sympathizes with others' faults, it is enlightened and prudent, rejoices in others' goodness, and seeks to confirm it for itself. Charity holds every neighbor in high regard, interprets others' words and actions in the most favorable way, and finds happiness in doing good to others.

It is true that you give me good news of the bean and rice crops; you tell me of water courses and machinery, etc., but what do I care, my son, about all this if there is no union and charity among you, and one goes off in one direction while another wants to go in another? I say to you in Jesus Christ: are you united by the Lord's charity? Then the Lord will bless you, and you will make yourselves holy and are the children of Divine Providence. But if this spirit of humble and gentle charity, work for souls, unity in peace, and harmony of hearts and of the holy vocation is not among you, what do you expect to build? What fruits of eternal life can the thorns of discord ever produce? How can you hope to be Apostles of faith, peace, and love of God if peace is not among you, and the charity of Jesus Christ is not among you?

The servants of God can do all things when they carry in their hearts, and show in their deeds, the humble, kind, and gentle charity of the Lord! The path of fraternal charity is a very short way to becoming saints! Ah! my dear sons, what sorrow, what deep sorrow you cause me to see you in discord!" (*Scr. 29,20–21*).

Let us pray with don Orione

Always, O Madonna, we will speak of you!
We will narrate your glories, spread your devotion,
make known the wonders of your maternal goodness...
Bless us and our work!
Bless all your devotees, all good souls.
Bless us, your servants, your children, thirsty for love of you.
May your grace descend like dew,
like beneficial rain on us and on all,
near and far, friends and enemies, good and bad:
you, O Mary, are the Mother of all,
you want to be the light, the consolation and the salvation for everyone.
And we, humble and faithful at your feet and at the feet of the Church,
will raise again and always hymns of love and thanks to you,
O Holy Madonna!
(DOLM, 1679)

Rosary of the seven words of Mary

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hail, holy Mother of God, Mother of Divine Providence and our Mother, to you, kind and merciful, omnipotent in the heart of your Son Jesus, we confidently turn.

Come, O Mother, come take care of us!
Here we are, take the key to our heart:

Come to govern and guard, come to defend our home,
the Church, and the whole world.

Grant us, O Mary, a great and magnanimous soul,
patient in trials, strong in hope, ardent in love for God and our brothers.

Holy Mother, remember us before God,
watch over the steps of our lives until the holy Paradise,
close to You, Mary, always with Jesus, always with You, Holy Mother of the Lord!

(St. Luigi Orione)

There are not many words of Mary that have come down to us through the Gospels, but each one is to be meditated upon and treasured in our hearts, asking for the grace to put them into practice in our personal story, to the praise and glory of the Most Holy Trinity.

O God come to my assistance. O Lord make haste to help us. Glory ...

1st Meditation: “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (Lk 1:34)

Our Father, 7 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, help us to accept the Mystery with humble faith, that does not pretend to understand the Ways of the Lord.

2nd Meditation: “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38)

Our Father, 7 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, help us to fully respond to our call to holiness.

3rd Meditation: “She greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb.” (Luke 1:40-41)

Our Father, 7 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, help us to listen to your maternal exhortations to discover the presence of the Lord in the events of our lives.

4th Meditation: The Magnificat:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed.
For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name:
From generation to generation his mercy extends to those who fear him.
He has shown the power of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble state;
he has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy, as he promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his descendants forever.
(Lk 1,46-55)

Our Father, 7 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, help us to believe in God and in His Infinite Love, to praise and thank Him in every circumstance.

5th Meditation: “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” (Luke 2:48)

Our Father, 7 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, help us to overcome the temptations to sadness and discouragement and not to withdraw into ourselves when we are tested.

6th Meditation: “They have no wine.” (John 2:3)

Our Father, 7 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, help us to overcome our selfishness and to intercede also for the needs of others.

7th Meditation: “Whatever He tells you, do it.” (John 2:5)

Our Father, 7 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, help us to obey the Lord in every situation with faith, love, and gratitude.

Hail, Holy Queen

Final Prayer:

Virgin and Mother Mary, you who, moved by the Spirit,
welcomed the Word of life in the depths of your humble faith,
totally given to the Eternal,
help us to say our "yes" in the urgency, more pressing than ever,
to make the Good News of Jesus resound.

You, filled with the presence of Christ, brought joy to John the Baptist,
making him leap with joy in his mother's womb.
You, trembling with jubilation, sang the wonders of the Lord.

You, who remained firm before the Cross with unshakable faith,
and received the joyful consolation of the resurrection,
gathered the disciples in expectation of the Spirit
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.

Obtain for us now a new zeal of the risen ones to bring to all
the Gospel of life that conquers death.

Grant us the holy boldness to seek new paths so that
the gift of unfading beauty may reach everyone.

You, Virgin of listening and contemplation,
Mother of love, bride of the eternal wedding feast,
intercede for the Church, of which you are the purest icon,
so that it may never close in on itself and never halt
in its passion to establish the Kingdom.

Star of the new evangelization,
help us to shine in the testimony of communion,
of service, of fervent and generous faith,
of justice and love towards the poor,
so that the joy of the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth
and no periphery is deprived of its light.

Mother of the living Gospel, source of joy for the little ones,
pray for us.

(Pope Francis, Evangelii gaudium)