



APRIL 15, 2026

1. IN THE HEART OF THE CHURCH AND THE INSTITUTE

1.3 Encounter with the Church of Yesterday and Today

1.3.1 Saint Peter's Basilica

(Meeting room of Casa Sacro Cuore)

Regina Caeli

Entrustment *(in preparation for World Gratitude Day)*

Guide: We entrust Mother Chiara and each one of us to Mary, our Mother and guide so that she can help us to joyfully sing of God's love for us, to live our vocation with commitment, renewed in faith, in love with Jesus, eager to communicate with passion and coherence the beauty of the Gospel to the new generations:

O Mary Help of Christians, You inspired in the hearts of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello a strong missionary impulse, giving life to an Institute all your own for the salvation of young people.

Rekindle in us the missionary boldness of our origins.

We thank you for the gift of Sister Maria Troncatti's holiness.

May we, like her, an ardent missionary, hear the voice of Jesus inviting us, «Go and do likewise».

We entrust to you Mother Chiara,

a sign of communion and unity in the Institute.

Support her with your maternal intercession, so that she may continue to be a presence of joy, an artisan of peace and reconciliation.

Bless our educating and missionary communities.

Make us believers joyful and free,

to serve the young people you entrust to us. Amen.



PRAYER

Guide 1: We begin our pilgrimage by thanking God for his gift of love because he has given us the Church as a mother who welcomes, accompanies, and strengthens our faith.

Let us go to St. Peter's Basilica, the center of the Universal Church. May the Holy Spirit guide us and enlighten our hearts so that together we can welcome with joy the graces that God offers us.

Song: City of God (8)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zRAUH8yBcQ>

Awake from your slumber! Arise from your sleep!
A new day is dawning for all those who weep.
The people in darkness have seen a great light.
The Lord of our longing has conquered the night.

Refrain

Let us build the city of God.
May our tears be turned into dancing!
For the Lord, our light and our Love,
has turned the night into day!

We are sons of the morning; we are daughters of day.
The One who has loved us has brightened our way. (Refrain)

The Lord of all kindness has called us to be
a light for his people to set their hearts free. (Refrain)

(coda) God is light; in him there is no darkness.
Let us walk in his light, his children one and all.
O comfort my people make gentle your words,
proclaim to my city the day of her birth. (Refrain)

Guide 2: God is a faithful Shepherd. He provides for us without sparing a single detail. He guides us into a righteous life. He protects us, not by shielding us from difficulty, though He does at times, but by permitting in our lives only what is beneficial to us according to His good purpose for us. We need to trust Him as our faithful shepherd.

Psalms 23: The Lord is my Shepherd *(alternating sides)*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;

Beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even when I walk in the dark valley,
I fear no evil: for you are at my side

With your rod and staff
that give me courage

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for years to come. Glory...

Jn 2,1-5 “Do whatever He Tells You”

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.”

(brief pause)

Guide 1: "Jesus reveals himself as the Bridegroom of God's people, announced by the prophets. He reveals the depth of the relationship that unites us to Him; it is a new covenant of love. We are aware that the grace of Baptism characterizes us as the People of God on a journey and expresses itself in the beauty of being children of the Father and sisters and brothers in an outpouring of service".
(AXXIVGC).

Guide 2: Lord, rich in love and mercy, we thank you for the opportunity to visit Saint Peter's Basilica; may we know how to consolidate our faith in you and accept and practice your teachings. May the Holy Spirit make us witnesses and multipliers of your love. May your blessing accompany us to "Do what Jesus tells us" and thus be new wine in our mission. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
AMEN



MASS – Altar of Saint Joseph

(The participants will enter St. Peter's Basilica to attend Mass at Saint Joseph's altar.)

VISIT ST. PETER'S BASILICA

(The participants are free to continue to visit St. Peter's Basilica and are invited to individually renew their faith. Afterwards, the participants are free to visit souvenir shops, purchase their lunch and see other sights. In small groups everyone will return on their own to Casa Sacro Cuore by the designated time.)

The Acts of the XXIVGC remind us that faith is real for us in a process to be shared as consecrated women, as educating communities, as Salesian Family, and as a Church to revive and bear witness to the beauty of our vocation and mission in an attitude of continuous formation. In this process, we assume missionary synodality as a way of life to listen to the cry of the poor and the earth and make bold evangelical choices.

Close to the tomb of St. Peter and so many of his successors, we hear the resounding words of Jesus himself: "You are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Let us pray for the Church and, in particular, for all our sisters and brothers who are called to bear witness to the faith through martyrdom; let us pray for ourselves as pilgrims in these holy places that we may open ourselves to the love of God the Father and accompany each other on the path of holiness.

I renew my faith with the Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; on the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.



ADDITIONAL READING

Cronistoria of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Vol II
Don Bosco a Roma-Venti Viaggi nella Città Eterna, edited by Fr. Antonio Sperduti.
SDB.org

MOTHER MAZZARELLO AND DON BOSCO IN ROME

Today we want to recall Mother Mazzarello's trip to Rome in November 1877, to remember those unforgettable days in the heart of Christianity, to spiritually walk in her footsteps and enjoy her messages of life.



Here is the account of this experience found in the second volume of the *Cronistoria*:

Mother Mazzarello and Two Missionaries from Mornese Travel to Rome

A competition of humility for the trip to Rome

“Since the 9th (November 1877) has already been fixed for the papal audience, the missionaries will have to be in Rome on the eve of the 9th.

Mother Petronilla, who has never travelled, gives way to Mother Emilia Mosca, who is better suited for the task; but Mother Emilia - who would fly to Rome - feels sorry for the missionaries, who would be entrusted to her alone.

In this beautiful contest of humility, Mother Mazzarello says resolutely: 'I'll go: it's my turn and the Lord will take care of it'. And without listening to the advice of human prudence, she prepares to leave for the journey to Rome.

Towards evening, la *Madre* and two missionaries left Mornese to go to Sampierdarena and join the Salesians on their way to Rome. They spend the night with the good women who are in charge of the wardrobe and kitchen of that hospice, where they are festively received and served in every way. What a joy for Sr. Angela Vallese to also find Fr. Cagliero there, whom she had not yet seen since he returned from America!

At dinner, while making the final arrangements for the journey, Mother Mazzarello said to Fr. Cagliero: 'My dear Rector, don't you think that by going to Rome, I will make the Institute lose esteem? The Holy Father will believe he will see in the Superior General an educated, well-knowledgeable Sister, and instead he will have before him nothing but a poor ignorant woman'.

Fr. Cagliero smiles and encourages Mother Mazzarello to go all the same. Then addressing the two Sisters and the others present, including Fr. Costamagna and Fr. Paolo Albera, rector of the house, he says in a whisper: 'Let us learn our lesson'. The next day they leave for Rome, in the company of Fr. Giovanni Cagliero.

In Rome

When they arrive in Rome, they receive fine hospitality **at the pilgrims' center**, in separate rooms for the Salesians and for the Sisters. However, they find nothing to eat because the pilgrims' center only offers a meal at two o'clock in the afternoon.

What to do? The Salesians are very hungry; the Sisters say nothing, but... Mother Mazzarello then, not afraid of the darkness, nor of unfamiliar surroundings in Rome, takes Sister Borgna with her and, as if she were in Mornese, goes to the nearest shops to get fruit, bread and cheese for everyone.

The following morning - Friday 9 - rising early and well rested, the Sisters attend several Masses in the pilgrims' chapel. This is followed by a little breakfast, and then off to visit St. Peter's Basilica, before climbing the stairs to the Vatican for the papal audience.

Around twelve o'clock everyone is waiting for the Holy Father. Preceded by a movement of police officers, papal guards and prelates, there is the Pope, in his papal chair. His face bears the traces of suffering, for his health is considerably declining.

Taking his cue from the feast day, the dedication of the Lateran Basilica, the Holy Father speaks of the goodness of the Church towards those who pledge obedient, and of the divine severity towards those who reject the Church not recognizing her affectionate and tender protection.

He speaks at length about Don Bosco and the great grace of being sons and daughters of such a father. He shows his delight and also his amazement on hearing that so many are kneeling at his feet asking for the papal blessing to go on to the missions in America. He asks Fr. Cagliero: 'Where does Don Bosco get all these people?'.

- 'Your Holiness, divine Providence sends them to him'.

The Pope stretched out his hands, looked up to heaven and exclaimed: 'Oh, divine Providence!'.

At this point, Mother Mazzarello, moved and humble, whispered, without taking her eyes off the venerated figure of Pius IX: 'O Lord, bless your Vicar'!

Fr. Cagliero then introduced the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; the Holy Father congratulated her and the Sisters. He added tenderly that they were fortunate and blessed by the Lord because they were daughters of Don Bosco; that they too will have a vast field of evangelical work and that, as true caring and loving mothers, they will do great good, preserving from evil so many young girls neglected by their parents. In the missions they will save so many poor girls teaching them to know God, to love him and serve him on earth, to reach him in heaven.

He ends the audience with his blessing: 'May our Apostolic Blessing, O my good sons and daughters, descend upon you, upon your parents and relatives, upon your Brothers and Sisters, that the glory of God, the good of the Church and the salvation of souls may increase. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!'

The Pope then allows those present to kiss his ring

He reminds the two missionaries to be like the great basins of the fountains, which receive water and pour it out for the benefit of all: basins of virtue and knowledge, for the benefit of others. Placing his two hands on each one's head, he adds paternally: 'May God bless you, so that you may do so much good!'

The missionaries are moved and amazed. *La madre* does not speak: all her being is summarized in her eyes. Even as she leaves, insistently she is questioned by the Sisters who remain outside of the audience about the impression she just received, she only states her admiration for the Pope's great goodness.

Then, hurriedly, they set off for the pilgrims' center for lunch. A car, placed at their disposal by a Co-operator for their stay in Rome awaits them, accompanied by Brother Musso, master shoemaker and newly appointed missionary.

In the afternoon they all go together to the catacombs of St. Callistus. Although the temperature in Rome is generally moderate, it is rather chilly. Mother Mazzarello, whose rheumatism won't leave her alone for a moment, has her head wrapped in a shawl.

While visiting the catacombs, however, she notices that the Salesian cleric Carlo Pane is shivering with cold from an attack of malaria that has been afflicting him for months. She then takes off her shawl and without hesitation hands it to the cleric, begging him to use it to avoid a greater illness.

The poor feverish cleric flinches a little, but is then forced to accept it because of *la madre's* insistence and his need for warmth.

The shawl therefore changes hands: and the Sisters look with sorrow at the suffering Mother Mazzarello. She smiles at the Sisters, takes a purple-striped black silk handkerchief out of her pocket and covers her poor sick head, nor does she take it off when they leave to return to Rome from the catacombs.

They return to the pilgrims' center at dusk. Mother Mazzarello thinks that the Salesians and Sisters would gladly enjoy a snack. Again, she goes shopping with Sr Borgna, also providing breakfast. So the beautiful streets near the pilgrims' center witness a Mother General with her head covered by her black and purple kerchief, laden with bread and fruit. She cares nothing about herself; all care and attention is for others. It is a good thing that the center does not lack pillows to give some comfort to her poor aching head. In Mornese she does not have even that! When rheumatism assaults her and her ears cause her so much pain, she makes do with a little wooden piece of timber to keep her aching head up. If someone goes to her for something less hard, she is quick to say: 'No, this is enough for me; we are poor women!'

The rest of the days in Rome are spent visiting the basilicas and the Christian monuments of Rome.

At St. John Lateran they even have the good fortune to attend the consecration of some bishops and to hear a Mass in the Gregorian chant. Mother Mazzarello knows how to draw from everything reasons of filial devotion for the Pope, of profound veneration for the holy apostles and martyrs, who precisely in Rome confessed Jesus Christ, shedding their own blood for the faith. In front of so many treasures of art and religion she often exclaims: 'How beautiful Paradise will be!.'"
(*Cronistoria*, Vol II)

DON BOSCO IN ROME

Don Bosco visited the Vatican many times to contemplate its beauty, but especially to attend various audiences with the Holy Father. An accurate chronicle, written by the cleric Rua, describes in detail his first visits to St. Peter's Basilica and his first audiences with Pope Pius IX.

Don Bosco visited every corner of St. Peter's Basilica with interest, even going so far as to touch the tomb of the Apostle Peter with a stick.

The first meeting with the Pope took place on 9 March 1858. On that occasion the Holy Father advised Don Bosco to found a 'Society' that could continue the

work with young people that he had begun. And it was the seed of what was to become the Salesian Society.

During one of his visits to Rome Don Bosco spoke to Pope Pius IX about the project of founding a congregation of women, starting from a group of young women who lived in Mornese. They were under the guidance of a saintly priest, Fr. Dominic Pestarino and led by Maria Domenica Mazzarello. They were already doing the same work he was doing in Turin with boys. In a later audience, the Pope said to Don Bosco: 'I thought about your plan to found an Institute of women religious, and it seems to me the right thing to embark on for the greater glory of God and to the advantage of souls.'

In **his ninth stay in Rome** Don Bosco came for two particular purposes: the approval of forming the Institute of Mary Help of Christians and for the vocations of adults to the ecclesiastical state and of Salesian Cooperators.

Pope Leo XIII also welcomed Don Bosco to the Vatican several times. Let us remember that he was the Pope who asked him to build the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome.

Let us think back to 1884 when Don Bosco wrote the letter from Rome which is an educational poem. It is written from the Sacred Heart Basilica where, in the letter, he insists on the spiritual means to be used for true educational effectiveness: to approach the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist frequently and to have a filial devotion to Our Lady.

On 20 April 1887, Don Bosco made his last journey from Turin to Rome. He met Pope Leo XIII again who praised him for his achievements and heartened him with affection. On 14 May 1887, the Sacred Heart Basilica was solemnly consecrated by the Cardinal Vicar, Parocchi, in the presence of numerous civil and religious authorities.

On the same day as the consecration of this church, the large organ built by organ builder Giuseppe Bernasconi of Varese was also inaugurated, placed on the balcony overlooking the presbytery.

Today, at the beginning of the nave of St. Peter's Basilica, above the statue of St. Peter and the effigy of Pope Pius IX, stands the statue of Don Bosco, just as he himself had dreamed would eventually happen.

BLESSED POPE PIUS IX: DON BOSCO'S POPE

Future Pope as Missionary



Giovanni Maria Mastai Ferretti (*Pio IX*) was the ninth child of Count Girolamo and Caterina Sollazzi. He was born in Senigallia on May 13, 1792. Between 1803 and 1808, he was a pupil at the College for Noblemen in Volterra. Wanting to become a priest, he had to interrupt his studies because of sudden attacks of epilepsy. In 1815, at Loreto, he obtained the grace of a full recovery. He resumed his theological studies in 1819 and was ordained priest. In 1823, he went, as a missionary, to Chile for two years.

Young bishop of Spoleto – Pope at 54

At just 35 years of age, he was appointed Archbishop of Spoleto, then in 1832, of Imola. In 1840, he was created Cardinal, and on June 16, 1846, on the fourth vote, with 36 votes out of 50 Cardinals at the Conclave, he was elected Supreme Pontiff at just 54 years of age. As soon as he became Pope, he undertook a number of reforms within the Papal State (*freedom of the Press, freedom to Jews, beginning of a railway, promulgation of the Statutes*), but when in 1848, he refused to support the war against Austria his “persecution” began.

Advises Don Bosco on his ‘Society’

St John Bosco had his first audience with Pius IX on March 9, 1858. Both of them had the feeling they had encountered a Saint. Pius IX supported and guided Don Bosco in the founding of the Salesian Congregation. It was he who suggested calling it a “Society” in step with the times, of having vows, but not solemn vows, and he suggested a simple habit and an intense but not too complicated practice of piety. He convinced Don Bosco to write his memoirs to leave the Salesians a spiritual legacy.

Don Bosco's Pope

During his Pontificate, he approved the Constitutions and the Salesian Society, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators, and was amongst the first to enroll as a member. Don Bosco had a great love for Pius IX and accepted all his advice, even when it cost him great sacrifice: "I am ready to face any difficulty," he would say, "when dealing with the papacy and the Church." But the Pope, too, had great esteem for Don Bosco and called him to Rome often to ask for his help on delicate issues.

Papal acts of importance

On December 8, 1854, he defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. In 1869, he called Vatican Council I, and on December 8, 1870, proclaimed St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. On June 16, 1875, he consecrated the Church dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He died on February 7, 1878, after 32 years of Pontificate. John Paul II beatified him on September 3, together with Pope John XXIII.

Declared Venerable July 6, 1985; beatified September 3, 2000, by John Paul II.

