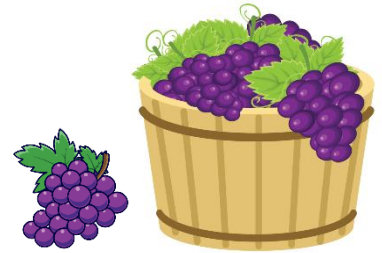




APRIL 24, 2026

3. WITH YOU, MAÌN, ON THE PATHS OF LIFE

3.4 The Growth of Life – Valponasca



"I am the vine, and you are the branches"

Jn 15,5

(before breakfast in the room of Mother Mazzarello)

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

Pray With Main

Guide 1: The Valponasca years are a particularly fruitful period in Maria Domenica's life: years of personalization of faith, internalization, unification, and at the same time, progressive openness to service in the ecclesial community. An exuberant youth, rich and lived to the fullest: centered on Christ, Wisdom, and Life. Maria Domenica's wisdom has its firm foundation in prayer and the Eucharist and the secret of her becoming open to the generous gift of self. *(In the footsteps of Mother Mazzarello, a wise woman, Rome 1988)*

Love and Worship

Guide 2: Since the early years of her life, Mother Mazzarello was in continuous search of God. The awareness of always being loved by God allowed her to grow in intimacy with Christ through simple daily actions, transformed into prayer. Let us make her experience our own.

Together let us pray:

As the deer longs for streams of water,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, the living God.

When can I enter and see the face of God? *(Psalm 42)*

Love and Work

Guide 1: With her hands, Maria Domenica planted a vineyard: first, as an intelligent and prudent pupil of her father, then as an effective collaborator. She cultivated her land *(Mazzarelli)* and that of others *(Valponasca)* with the

strength of her arms, the patience of a farmer who lovingly cares for her land, and the joy of the harvest. Limpid adolescence, strong youth, and a strong-willed and fiery temper make it suitable for preparing, cultivating, pruning, and harvesting fruits. Today, we ask the Lord: "Visit this vineyard, protect what your right hand has planted."

Together let us pray:

Do not remember against us the iniquities of our forefathers;
let your compassion move quickly ahead of us,
for we have been brought very low.

Help us, God our savior,
on account of the glory of your name. (*Psalms 79*)

Love and Serve

Guide 2: In the world today, we are the home or temple of God, provided, however, that we love our brothers and sisters: only in this way does God live in us. Like Maria Domenica, God wants people to open their hearts to others and seek His Face with gentle hands and a pure heart.

Together let us pray:

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.
In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul.
He guides me along right paths
for the sake of his name.



VISIT THE VALPONASCA

Walking with Main - Visio Divina for an Ecological Conversion

(The following is prayed before departing the Collegio: in the courtyard or on the road before entering Via Valgelata.)

Guide 1: Let us go to Valponasca! Valponasca is a significant place in the life of our dear Mother Mazzarello. There, she delved into the gifts of life and faith she received at her birthplace in Mazzarelli.

We will be journeying with Main. As we take the road to Valponasca, we see nature that Main had contemplated many times. The Valponasca is where her horizon broadened and invited her to a deeper union with God in prayer, the Eucharist, and everyday life. It is where she became more aware of her shortcomings and embarked on the path of conversion.



Guide 2: Pope Francis also invites us to an ecological conversion. The Laudato Si movement defines ecological conversion as the “transformation of hearts and minds towards a greater love of God, one another, and creation.

It is a process of recognizing our contribution to the social and ecological crisis and taking action in ways that cultivate communion: Healing and Renewing Our Common Home."

During the journey, let us allow our senses to be more sensitive to how God manifests himself to us. Let us beg him for this grace.

During our pilgrimage, let us choose a **symbol** of our life, vocation, and mission. Let us allow ourselves to be filled by the presence of Jesus and of Mother Mazzarello and listen to their voice in the silence of the heart.

(Please remind the participants to not take anything from the vineyards: grapes, leaves or vines.)

Pilgrimage to the Valponasca

(The pilgrimage to the Valponasca begins. For each moment the participants will stop and very briefly reflect on the question.)

First Moment: **Town square**

Guide 1: How do I see the goodness and beauty of God in creation, in my neighbors, and me?

Second Moment: **Entrance of the antique path towards the Well**

Guide 2: What attitudes and lifestyles do I need to change so that I can live in solidarity with those who are vulnerable and care for our common home?

Third Moment: **Celebration at the Well**

(If all the participants walk the antique path, continue with this prayer moment. If not, once everyone has reached the Valponasca continue with the prayer moment using the well located next to the farmhouse.)



Guide 1: In front of this well, we recall how Maìn, in her desire to go to Mass, went first to get water so that her family would have something to use. We can say that this well symbolizes her love for God and her family. The water from this well was life-giving for the family and the field.

First Book of Kings 19, 4-8

He went a day's journey into the desert and went and sat down under a juniper tree. Eager to die, he said: «That's enough, Lord! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers." He lay down and fell asleep under the juniper. Then, behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat!" He looked and saw near his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank, then went back to bed. The angel of the Lord came again, touched him and said to him, "Come on, eat, because the journey is too long for you." He got up, ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he walked for forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

Voice 1: The Eucharist is the Bread of the journey, the strength that nourishes and sustains us towards the mountain of God.

Voice 2: “Sometimes she would rise about one or two o’clock in the morning, especially if the moon was bright, and go to the vineyard to plant the stakes. Afterward, she would go to Mass. Frequently, during summer, there was a water shortage. That meant a ten-minute trip down to the well. That well can still be seen today near a small grassy plain through which crosses the path that leads from the farmhouse to the Main road. Maria Domenica would take her 25-litre jar, fill it, balance it on her shoulder, and then climb up to the farmhouse. After putting everything in place, she would call her sister, “Let’s go right away. We can hear Mass and perhaps be home before the others are up””. (*Maccono Vol. 1 p.38 #3*)

Instrumental music (41)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqHy41e7ouU>

(One at a time each participant is invited to place around the well the symbol that has spoken to her during our journey to the Valponasca. She will pause at the well and silently make a spontaneous prayer. After all the participants have placed their symbol at the well, the following song will be sung.)

Song: I Love the Lord (42)

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

Refrain

I love the Lord, He is filled with compassion.
He turned to me on the day that I called.
From the snares of the dark, O, Lord, save my life,
Be my strength.

Gracious is the Lord, and just.

Our God is mercy, rest to the weary.

Return my soul to the Lord our God who bids tears away.

I love the Lord. (Refrain)

How can I repay the Lord for all the goodness He has shown me?
I will raise the cup of salvation and call on His name.
I love the Lord. (Refrain)

I shall live my vows to You before Your people,
I am Your servant.
I will offer You my sacrifice of praise and of prayer.
I love the Lord.

I love the Lord, He is filled with compassion.
He turned to me on the day that I called.
From the snares of the dark, O, Lord, save my life,
Be my strength.
From the snares of the dark, O, Lord, save my life,
Be my strength.

Valponasca, the Grace of Unity

(The prayer continues when the group arrives at the Valponasca.)

Guide 1: Here at the Valponasca, let the place speak to our hearts. Main will talk to each of us, too.

Guide 2: In Valponasca, Maria Domenica's feet move quickly in a single direction: God to be loved and served with her heart in prayer and her hands at work. Valponasca was where Main developed an intimate relationship with Jesus through deep contemplative prayer. The silence and nature surrounding her allowed her to enter into herself and discover, with the guidance of her parents and, in particular, Fr. Pestarino, its strengths and weaknesses. It was here that Main, at the age of 15, offered her life totally to the Lord and even accused herself of not thinking about the Lord for 15 minutes.

Guide 1: Every moment is an encounter with the Lord. She was constantly in union with her beloved at home and in the fields while working. This love for Jesus grew in her daily reception of the Holy Eucharist and nourished her hope.

The Valponasca window is the symbol of the contemplative life of Main. She saw creation, the church, and the people she served from this window.

Guide 2: We are here at the house of Main, in the Valponasca, where she opened herself up to God with the conscious decision to give herself to Him in freedom and love. Here, she becomes an adult in faith: all her experiences led her to an ever-clearer awareness of the centrality of God in her life.

Let us allow ourselves, for a moment, to be invaded by silence full of love, and let us contemplate with Main, the God of life who works miracles in each of His sons and daughters.

All: O Saint Mary Dominica Mazzarello, who lived detached from the world and united to God, practicing the most sublime virtues; help us in the grace of faithfully imitating your example of humility, simplicity, and charity, recognizing the Lord in everything and living only for Him. Amen!



MASS



PERSONAL REFLECTION

(Various suggestions for the moment of personal reflection can be found on the app under Resources: 3.4 Personal Reflections. Be sure to write your reflections in your notebook.)



PRAYER

(To be prayed before departing the Valponasca.)

Guide 1: Celebrating is giving thanks for the gifts received; it is making present the gift received; it is remembering salvation. Today we remember the time spent by Maria Domenica at the Valponasca. A time of "school of life" spent in

contact with nature, with the open horizons of Valponasca, in solitude, in silence, in tenacious and self-sacrificing work.

Her prayer resulted from internalization and personal initiative like the evening prayer stops with her family. The tiring morning pilgrimage to the parish to participate in the Eucharistic celebration was the expression and testimony of a choice that is free, which demonstrated precisely how central the encounter with Christ was in her day.

Guide 2: In this moment of prayer, we will allow ourselves to be challenged by the word of God, the Cronistoria, and the Acts of GC XXIV, and we will open ourselves to a serene confrontation with Mother Mazzarello.

Following her example, we ask for the responsible assumption of our spiritual maturation in following Jesus, a condition for all life's experiences to become opportunities for growth as missionary disciples.

Sirach 51,18-28

“When I was still young, before traveling, I assiduously sought wisdom in prayer. In front of the sanctuary, praying, I asked for it, and I will seek it until the end. Of its flowering, like grapes about to ripen, my heart rejoiced. My foot walked on the straight path; from my youth I followed in his footsteps. I inclined my ear a little to receive it; I found abundant teaching there. With it I made progress; I will give glory to whoever gave me wisdom. Yes, I have decided to put it into practice; I have been zealous for good, I will not be confused. My soul trained in it; I was diligent in practicing the law. I stretched my hands up; I regretted that it is ignored. To her I turned my desire, and found her in purity. In it I gained sense from the beginning; for this reason, I will not abandon her”.

Voice 1: Fr. Pestarino fed Maria Mazzarello daily with the “Bread of the Strong”. Maria's thoughts were always occupied by Jesus, whom she had received in the morning, or by Jesus whom she would receive the next day. Her heart, continually in vigilant attention to the inner movements, cared for nothing but to stay with God, desiring only to please him more every day. (*Chron. I, 30-33*)

Voice 2: The love we receive from God and are called to live and express is attentive to each person, concrete, simple, and deep. It sustains vocational fidelity and values each person in every season of life, as Pope Francis suggested, “If the young are called to open new doors, the elderly have the keys. And the youthfulness of an Institute lies in going to the roots, listening to the elderly. There is no future without this meeting between the elderly and the young. There is no growth without roots and there is no flowering without new shoots. Never prophecy without memory, never memory without prophecy”. (*Acts GC XXIV, 11*)

Voice 3: On her return from daily mass, when the others were still in bed she would prepare breakfast, tidy the house and then be away to her work in the fields before the quickest of the workmen could arrive. One of them said of her, “I always went to work very early, yet I found that spirited young woman already in the vineyard. How often I surprised her saying the rosary with her sister Felicina.”

Voice 4: Maria Domenica’s hands worked rhythmically yet without agitation. Under the strokes of the hoe the ground opened up to expose the fertile soil as if it were happy to be exposed to the sun through the efforts of that good young girl! From time to time the hoe ceased its motion for an instant and the men thought she was taking a respite. Her hands clasped, she glanced across the valley towards the church, while her lips formed a fervent ejaculation.

Voice 5: We believe that the educational perspective of the Preventive System is the key that can involve young people in a common project of interaction between experiences and skills. Hence, cultural formation in the Christian anthropological vision becomes imperative to accompany the young and to support them in their search for the meaning of life, in building a future of peace, solidarity, social friendship, and responsibility for the common home. (*Acts GC XXIV, 14*)

Voice 6: So, while the workers gathered to chat during the rest periods Maria Domenica, under the pretext of wanting to enjoy a little shade, retired behind

some trees either to read some spiritual book provided by Fr. Pestarino or to pray and meditate. If her cousin Domenica or her sister Felicina were with her they would sing hymns together. (*Chron I*, 33)

Song: I Am the Vine (43)

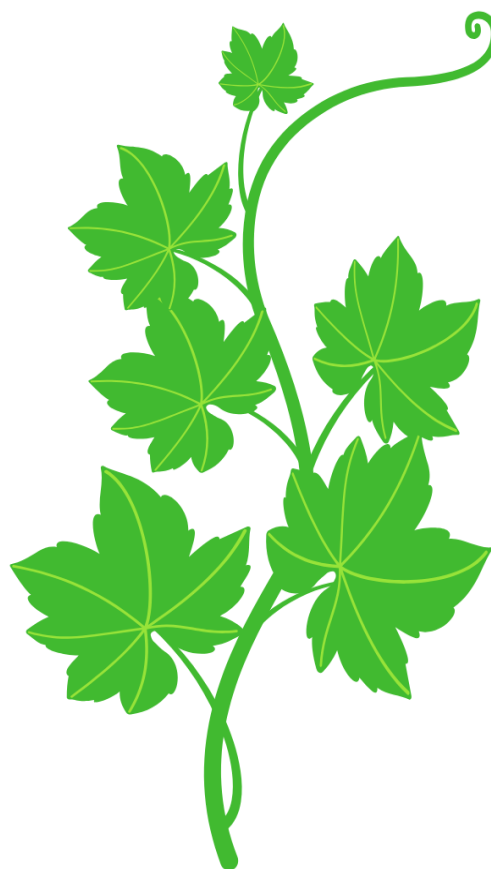
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72CMOcrHb_0

Refrain

I am the vine
You are the branches
And if you remain in me
Fruit will abound
Abundant in measure
Come, children, taste and see

Apart from the vine
A branch bears no fruit
For Christ is the source of all life
And all He demands
As we keep His commands
Is to faithfully cling to the vine (Refrain)

Service is never the root of devotion
It must grow as the fruit
Of a life that remains in the vine
Come drink your fill of new wine
Come drink your fill of new wine (Refrain)
Apart from the vine
A branch bears no fruit
For Christ is the source of all life
And all he demands
As we keep His commands
Is to faithfully cling to the vine (Refrain)



Voice 7: We are convinced that the proclamation of Jesus is the priority mission of the FMA Institute and that in the Church we are catechists by vocation (*cf. C 70*). We therefore consider cultural, theological, catechetical, Salesian formation to be fundamental. This requires competence, innovation and adaptation to the times and languages, with particular attention to youth cultures, to families, valuing their leadership in pastoral proposals.

Voice 8: With Mary we go down to our Capernaum together with the young people and the laity to share life and mission, to let God breathe in our existence so that it becomes a path of formation and vocational proposal beyond borders. (*Acts GC XXIV, 30*)

Voice 9: The primary objective of our educational mission is to guide young people to an encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. Young people themselves then become protagonists in the educational proposals. They ask us to adopt new styles and new strategies for a pastoral that is more open and synodal. (*Acts GC XXIV, 22*)

Voice 10: Another pupil from the workroom states, “We thought of nothing else but Sunday, the whole week through and became better behaved and more pious. Mary knew so many beautiful things to tell us about!” (*chron. I, 127*)

Voice 11: We wisely consider the digital age as a sign of the times. Together with young people, we confront the culture of communication, educommunication, the issues of artificial intelligence, relationships in the world of social networks, and the inequalities increased by economic problems. As educating communities, we foster communication formation to inhabit digital environments in a conscious and responsible in the digital age manner, to learn about the dynamics of the information culture and to develop a critical and creative mentality. (*Acts GC XXIV, 19*)

Voice 12: The Virgin of the Magnificat is the image the entire FMA institute wishes and hopes to be. Our Constitutions clearly state that we must open ourselves to the joyful humility of the Magnificat (*cf. Constitutions 4*), and our communities are called to be the place where Mary's Magnificat continues. (*cf. Constitutions 62*)

Guide 1: With these sentiments, we sing the Magnificat.

Magnificat (44)

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

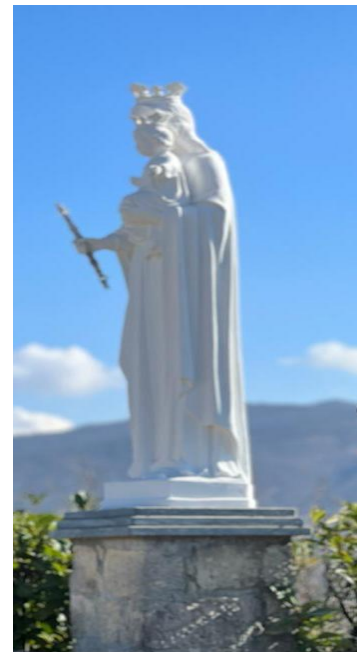
Refrain

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior
For He has looked with favor on His lowly servant
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord

From this day all generations
Will call me blessed
The Almighty has done great things for me
And holy is His name (Refrain)
He has mercy on those who fear Him
In every generation
He has shown the strength of His arm
And scattered all the proud (all the proud) (Refrain)

He has cast the mighty from their thrones
And has lifted up the lowly
He has filled the hungry with good things
And sent the rich away (the rich away) (Refrain)

He has helped His servant, Israel
And recalled His promise of mercy



The promise He made to Abraham
And to his children forever (forever)
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord (the greatness of the Lord)
My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior (in God, my Savior)
For He has looked with favor on His lowly servant
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, of the Lord

Our Father

Guide 2: O Saint Maria Domenica Mazzarello, you who were always faithful to the commitments of your Baptism, help us too to realize, day by day, our Christian vocation. Help us believe in God's Fatherhood in every situation of life and walk in His presence, serving Him in our brothers and sisters with a humble heart, detached from the goods of this passing world. Help us always be sincere with God, ourselves, and others, living our every day in the radiating joy of hope. May our life, under the maternal guidance of Mary Help of Christians, be, like yours, a continuous act of love for the glory of the Father and the salvation of our brothers and sisters. Amen.



ECOLOGICAL EXAMEN

(To be prayed individually before retiring for the night.)

Gratitude

As you enter into prayer, begin with praise and gratitude. How did you experience God's love today through people, events and creation? Being part of Project Mornese is a blessing, yet God still has other gifts.



Grace

Take time now to ask for the grace and courage to review your day with an accepting heart. Pray for openness to what God wants to show you.

Review

Take time to prayerfully ponder on your day, trusting that the specific moments that come into your mind are areas God invites you to explore. Consider moments when your heart felt light and when you felt heaviness.

When have you felt a deep sense of solidarity and connection with humanity and creation today? In what new ways have you noticed and appreciated your connection and interdependence with other people and the earth? Were there any opportunities for harmony and unity you missed or intentionally avoided? Are there companions you have not considered in this journey or are leaving out, even as you remember that everything is connected?

Freedom

After looking honestly at your life, always in the context of God's love, pray for the interior freedom to let go of whatever inhibits your connection to your neighbors and the natural world.

What might you need to give up to strengthen your sense of solidarity and connection with the world? Consider habits, ways of thinking, spending your time, and anything else that might make you freer to experience heartfelt unity and the right relationship with all creation.

Renewal

Talk with God about how you desire to live out a life of solidarity with people and the whole of His creation for the coming day. When the conversation feels complete, end with a thanksgiving.

