



GENOA

Ports of Genoa – The Southern Gateway to Europe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIPPzeBM23I>

Port of Genoa, Italy – Google Earth Studio

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JArFPF97gGo>

Mother Mazzarello is known to have visited Genoa at least three times as she accompanied each group of missionaries to South America leaving from the well-known port of Genoa in 1877, 1879 and 1881.

1st EXPEDITION, November 1877

Of the six departing missionaries - Sr Angela Vallese (23 years old), Sr Giovanna Borgna (17 years old), Sr Angela Cassulo (25 years old), Sr Angela Denegri (17 years old), Sr Teresa Gedda (24 years old), Sr Teresina Mazzarello (17 years old) - two only would go to Rome as representatives to receive the Holy Father's



blessing, Sr Angela Vallese, the community animator, and Sr Giovanna Borgna. All would have wanted to attend the papal audience but financial constraints prohibited this from happening.

Even with these two Sisters missing, Father Costamagna suggested a farewell ceremony at Mornese like that performed for the Salesians. Therefore, on the afternoon of Tuesday November 6, the little chapel was crowded with relatives and friends. Vespers were sung as on the great solemnities. Inspired words of greeting and encouragement on the part of the rector comforted both those

leaving and those remaining home. To all he recommended prayer, that the spirit of union and charity be preserved.

Before Fr Costamagna left Mornese the picture of Mary Help of Christians had disappeared from the chapel. Father gave it to Sr Teresa Mazzarello, one of the first missionaries, with the promise not to give it to anyone, keeping it as a souvenir of Mornese!



Fr Cagliero also gave an image of Mary Help of Christians painted on canvas with a very smiling image of Jesus. His words were, "I stole it from the sacristy of Valdocco for you!"

On the evening of the 12th Mother Mazzarello and the four Sisters (Sr Angela and Sr Giovanna would travel from Rome directly to Sampierdarena) left by train for Genoa, and on the 13th, they reached Sampierdarena.

Mother Mazzarello feared some mishap on not finding the other two there but bad weather prevented them from arriving on time. However, they did arrive later. They all stayed in a hospice for several days before their official departure. In the hospice all were busy with the missionaries and preparing for Don Bosco's arrival. The Sisters too buried themselves in preparations, packing what would be needed for Mass on board the ship.

On the morning of the departure, 14 November, from the port of Genoa, Mother Mazzarello visited the cabins one by one: berth by berth, to ensure that nothing was missing that would alleviate the Sisters in the hardships of the journey. She spoke to each one individually and then as a group. Don Bosco too spoke to the six FMA in the presence of Mother Mazzarello. The Salesians and the Sisters knelt down for his blessing and then went ashore.

There was not a dry eye among those leaving and those remaining behind. Don Bosco's eyes were full of tears. Mother Mazzarello barely succeeded to keep back her tears.

As the ship, the *Savoy*, left the shores of Genoa all could hear Fr. Costamagna accompanying the missionaries onboard with the hymn, "I want to live Mary" [*Voglio amar Maria*].

(Cronistoria, Vol. II, pages 277 ff)

2nd EXPEDITION, December 1878-January 1879

The missionary Sisters were up early, faces radiant, and hearts singing. At the appointed hour they assisted at Don Bosco's Mass, received Holy Communion from him, and also some words of encouragement.

The Holy Father's blessing reached the missionaries by telegram delivered that day to Don Bosco.

Our Sisters would have liked to take with them the first printed copies of the Holy Rule, but the printers did not have them ready. The group photograph too—the first to be taken in the Institute, with their beloved Mother there right in the middle—was not ready! "I am very sorry," Mother Mazzarello said, "to send you so far away without the Rules, but don't worry. The first copies will be for you: you will see, we shall send them very soon!"

Don Bosco whose health was very precarious, could not go to the port. Therefore, before they set out for Genoa where they were to embark, he gave his dear Daughters his last blessing.

Someone said to him: "Father, bless us so that no one of us will die on the voyage." After a moment's reflection he answered: "No, there won't be any such disaster. But were it to happen that someone had to finish her mission when crossing the ocean, she would indeed be fortunate! Purgatory would not exist for her!"

When he saw the Salesians and Sisters leave the hospice, he was so deeply moved that he decided henceforth to bless his missionaries fifteen days in advance.

Mother Mazzarello and Mother Petronilla accompanied the ten Sisters to the ship, and stayed with them until the last minute.

At 4:00 p.m. on January 2 the *South America* left port at the sound of a canon; the missionaries continued to respond to the farewell of the Salesians, Sisters and lay people who lined the shore, until they could no longer distinguish the waving handkerchiefs on the shore.

The ship moved into the distance and the Mother Mazzarello and Mother Petronilla returned silently to the hospice, where Don Bosco was [p. 368] waiting for news of the last hour. He listened calmly, then assuming an inspired attitude spread out his arms and said with a joy that was truly heavenly: "Let us be cheerful! Let us be cheerful! The Congregation is expanding!"

Having discussed the evacuation of Mornese with him (it was being depopulated every day), Mother returned from Sampierdarena to take the necessary measures for the definitive transfer of the Mother House to Nizza Monferrato. Already the Sisters who had left the nest at Mornese were assembling there, and the postulants who wished to form part of the Institute were being received there also.

(Cronistoria, Vol III, 367 ff)

The Chronicle of the Almagro Community [Argentina] recounts:

On 26 January 1879, the Second Expedition of the Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians arrived on these shores. It was led by Sister M. Magdalena Martini, who held the office of Provincial, with her residence in Buenos Aires. This expedition consisted of ten sisters, four of whom remained in Colón, Montevideo, namely: Sister Filomena Balduzzi, Sister Victoria Cantú, Sister Virginia Magone, and Sister Josefa Vergniaud. The other six travelled to Buenos Aires to found the House of Almagro. They were: Sister M. Magdalena Martini, Sister Jacinta Olivieri, Sister Dominga Roletti, Sister Emilia Borgna, Sister María Magdeleine, and Sister Catalina Fino. In Almagro, they had the privilege of residing in a very humble dwelling, which they named "Ranchito" located in close proximity to the Colegio

Pío IX de Artes y Oficios. This served as the Novitiate House, where the Spiritual Exercises were held annually.”

<https://www.cgfmanet.org/en/ifma-en/2nd-pem-online-pilgrimage-meeting-a-broad-perspective-the-vision/> 2nd PEM Online Pilgrimage Meeting: A Broad Perspective – The Vision)

3rd EXPEDITION, 1881, January-February

The solemn ceremony of farewell of the missionaries took place this time in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin on January 20, 1881. Don Bosco gave the homily announcing the special blessing of the Holy Father. Then he developed the theme, speaking of the good already done of the work envisaged for the Pampas in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, all of which had been entrusted to the Sons and Daughters, through the generosity of many benefactors. He concluded his words by giving each a rosary with a crucifix. He said, “...so we might remember that the cross must be our inseparable companion wherever we go”. [...]

On February 1 Mother Mazzarello and Mother Emilia Mosca were at the train station in Alessandria waiting for the arrival of the missionary Sisters from Turin who were about to travel to Genoa. [...]

Once in Genoa Don Bosco assembled the missionaries of both the Salesians and Sisters. Three novices Sr Lorenza Natale, Sr Juliana Prevosto and Sr Teresa Rinaldi made their first profession and Sr Angela Alfredo made her final profession. [...] By this time, Mother Mazzarello’s health was failing but she did not fail to accompany this third group of missionaries with the words “Like Don Bosco, I will be always with you”.

It was Fr Cagliero who on February 3, knowing that Mother Mazzarello was not well, accompanied her onboard the ship *Umberto I*. She farewelled Sr Giuseppina Paccoto, the leader, Sr Angela Gualfredo, Sr Caterina Lucca, Sr Lorenzina Natale, Sr Juliana Prevosto and Sr Teresa Rinaldi.

(Cronistoria Vol. III, p 293 ff)