



MAY 2, 2026

4. THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM IN THE FMA INSTITUTE (NIZZA)

4.1 The Preventive System Lived by Mother Mazzarello and a Few of the First FMA

(meeting room)

Angelus

Entrustment *(alternating sides)*

Guide: We entrust our life 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,
we entrust our journey to you
of total donation to God.

Teach us to sing with joy and gratitude
our Magnificat to the Lord.

Make us attentive to the voice of the Spirit
so that we may know how to live with humility,
charity, simplicity, and trust in our daily life.

Like You, we desire to abandon ourselves to the Father
to continue to live chaste, poor, and obedient
and to be, with our life
transparency of God's love
and reflection of your maternal goodness
on the example of Mother Mazzarello
for the young people entrusted to us. Amen.



PRAYER

Guide 1: The Acts of the General Chapter XXIV state that, "There is no sign on earth more evident that recalls the presence of Jesus than a community where communion is breathed and where a mission is shared in co-responsibility." The grace of God has allowed us to meet together in this house, the Motherhouse of the Salesian Sisters where genuine communion was experienced, where the educational mission was shared, and also where the Preventive System was lived in co-responsibility. This was creatively interpreted by the first community, led by Mother Mazzarello, in continuous accord with Don Bosco, and with the support of some exemplary educative figures, like Sr. Emilia Mosca, Sr. Elisa Roncallo.

Guide 2: Today more than ever, we are invited to reflect and to entrust in prayer our, "being educators." Let us listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that it may awaken in us a deeper awareness of the importance of putting the preventive system into practice in our educational communities, making it active and meaningful in today's reality.

Song: All Over the World (*acapella*)

All over the world the Spirit is moving
All over the world as the prophet said it would be
All over the world there is a mighty revelation
of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea

Deep down in my heart the Spirit is moving
Deep down in my heart as the prophet said it would be
All over the world there is a mighty revelation
of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea

Guide 1: In Nizza Monferrato the educating community lived the perspective of "being loved more than feared", thus applying balanced strategies and attitudes among young people.

Guide 2: As educating communities, we too are urged to be a listening presence. Being open to listening to God and our brothers and sisters is a common vocation for all Christians. We are, in fact, called to be missionary disciples, to develop the attitude to listen to Jesus' teachings in order to put them into practice and witness them to our brothers and sisters, especially to young people (GCXXIV).

(brief pause)

Guide 1: As members of the educating community, we are called to foster the vocational culture that can allow young people to discover and live their own life project. This invites us to build educational environments where Salesian spirituality is lived in daily life, where sacramental life, listening to the Word, prayer, discernment, personal and community accompaniment, and the joy of sharing and planning together are valued (GCXXIV). Thus, young people will be helped to grow and realize their life's plan.

(brief pause)

Guide 2: We learn this here at Nizza where the first educating community refined an educational affectivity that led them to avoid authoritarian interventions. Thus, their presence among young girls acquired the characteristics of the assistance recommended by Don Bosco. Such interactive presence of the FMA through the sharing of daily activities allowed them to know what interested the girls, perceiving their needs and interpreting / understanding their reactions. This is the real school of formation we are called to create as educators. A school where the traits of Salesian amiability gradually matured, and also allowed itself to be formed in collaboration and relationship with the students.

(brief pause)

Guide 1: United in prayer, let us ask the Lord to increase in us some traits of the Preventive System, desiring evermore to truly live the preventive system as Salesian educators.

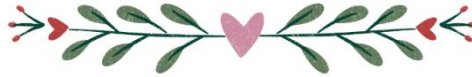
Guide: We conclude our prayer moment with the Words that Jesus taught us.

Our Father ...

Mary Help of Christians ...



MASS (parish Church with local parishioners)



MOTHER MAZZARELLO AND A FEW OF THE FIRST FMA

(In the meeting room display the pictures of Mother Mazzarello, Mother Petronilla Mazzarello, Mother Caterina Daghero, Mother Elisa Roncallo and Mother Clelia Genghini.)

Guide 1: The year is 1879, Mother Mazzarello's first year lived here at Nizza. This year held both stressful moments and opportunities for growth for Mother Mazzarello and the Sisters of this young Institute.

Stressful moments included

- the selling of the Collegio at Mornese
- the death of several young FMA
- Annetta Bedarida, a Jew, who wished to become a Catholic
- opposition from the people of Nizza

Opportunities for growth

- the gradual, academic development of the school at Nizza
- the distribution of the first printed copy of the FMA Constitutions
- the first annual retreat for women at Nizza, advertised in the *Salesian Bulletin*
- Mother Mazzarello visits several FMA communities and writes to others to accompany them in their joys and struggles of ministry

Mother Mazzarello: A presence that reasons, accompanies and acts

Guide 2: Let us look at a few concrete ways Mother Mazzarello embodied the Preventive System in daily life here in Nizza.

REASON: PRESENCE THAT REASONS

Guide 1: The decision to transfer the Mother House from Mornese to Nizza was for the good of the Institute and the education of young people.

In a Letter to the missionaries, Mother Mazzarello shared with Sr. Angela and the community, that the transfer of the Motherhouse from Mornese to Nizza had taken place. While she does not specifically state how much this transfer cost her, she expresses that sacrifices need to be made in one's life. She not only states this, but expresses how we all need to journey through them: willingly and cheerfully.

Voice 1: *The Preventive System called Mother Mazzarello to discern wisely what was best for the good of the whole, even at the cost of personal discomfort and sacrifice.*

RELIGION: A PRESENCE THAT ACCOMPANIES IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH

Guide 2: In Nizza, even before 1879, young women were already asking to become Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Two of the first five of these young women were Felicina Ravazza and Maria Terzano who was friendly with the young Jew, Annetta Bedarida. Annetta's family was a prominent and affluent Jewish family.

For three years Annetta desired to become a Catholic but did not know how that could happen because of the opposition in her family. Once the FMA arrived in Nizza, Annetta sought to fulfil her desire. Maria Mazzarello began to accompany Annetta. However, Annetta's family was strongly against Annetta's decision. Yet, being 22 years of age, her family could not stop her.

Guide 1: Once this news became public through her family, the media began to spread the news even farther. Anticlericalism was rampant and the news even reached the United States. It was published in *The New York Times* on 22 September 1879 that the Sisters of Don Bosco had 'kidnapped' Annetta'!

To avoid the worst and to favor Annetta's desire, Annetta was accompanied to Turin where she could more freely follow her intent.

Annetta's brother came to Nizza to take her back, but she was already in Turin. The family threatened the Sisters. The police came and searched the house

thinking that Annetta was hiding in the house in Nizza. Local authorities interrogated the new candidates thinking they were being forced to become FMA novices.

Guide 2: Mother Mazzarello arrived in Turin and spoke with Annetta. She advised Annetta not to become a Catholic just yet because of the unrest in her family in Nizza.

Unità Cattolica published a letter written by Annetta Bedarida where she had the chance to state her side of the story regarding false accusations that were being spread about her, the FMA, and the SDB. Unfortunately, even with Annetta declaring that the FMA and SDB were not forcing her at all to become a Catholic but helping her and she was of age to make her own decisions, she was ‘forced’ to leave her lodging prepared by the SDB in Turin and live in the house of Mrs. Ferraria, a Jew.

Guide 1: In the end Annetta surrendered to her desire to become Catholic and returned to her delighted relatives who took her for a long trip to distract her from this desire.

These events happened only after a few months of moving from the remote town of Mornese and transferring the Mother House to the developing city of Nizza. Mother Mazzarello was faithful in Annetta's accompaniment, even though she suffered greatly that in the end Annetta did not become Catholic.

Voice 2: *The Preventive System called Mother Mazzarello to accompany young people regardless of their condition and the difficulties that they or she encountered.*

LOVING KINDNESS: A PRESENCE THAT SEES A NEED AND ACTS WITH LOVE

Guide 2: The first impression by the citizens of Nizza regarding the new Institute for the education of children and adolescents was very positive. They admired both the behavior of the girls and how smart they looked in their uniform.

As the months passed and young women wanted to enter the Institute, parents became very worried. There was the bad press about how people thought Annetta Bedarida was being treated and there were Sisters dying at an early age. Some people of Nizza wanted to burn down the FMA house. We can just imagine how the Sisters felt as these accusations against them were expressed in very harsh terms.

Guide 1: To help this situation, Don Bosco gave sound advice to the Sisters on his visit to Nizza in August 1879. Knowing about and assisting himself in the events regarding Annetta Bedarida and hearing about the poor health of some of the young Sisters, Don Bosco gave two suggestions to help both situations:

- *“There is plenty of land at Nizza. Create a garden and vineyard.”* Creating an orchard and a vineyard would give the Sisters more nourishment and better health.
- *“Do not leave them anxious through your prolonged silence”.* The Sisters were advised to write to their relatives. This would quell some of the false rumors that the Sisters in Nizza were forcing young women to become FMA.

Voice 3: *The Preventive System called Mother Mazzarello to acknowledge what was not going well, and to do something positive to alleviate the difficulty.*

Guide 2: Here is a second concrete example of Mother Mazzarello living the aspect of loving kindness. In May 1879 the Balbo River overflowed and flooded the homes near the river. Mother Mazzarello opened the doors of the school at Nizza for many families. What little food they had was given, together with clothing. Within two days the waters subsided and the opinion of the people began to change. Some, not all, began to sing the praises of the Sisters.

This gesture of Mother Mazzarello happened at a time when many people of Nizza were against the Sisters. Mother Mazzarello was able to firmly and lovingly go beyond these difficulties to reach out to the same people who were against the them.

Voice 4: *The Preventive System called Mother Mazzarello to see a need and respond to it with love and care.*

SHARING IN PAIRS

(Participants will briefly share their thoughts with a partner who is seated next to them.)

Guide 1: From the below list, choose one concrete example from Mother Mazzarello's life that you would like to emulate. Share the motivation behind your choice with a partner.

The Preventive System calls each of us

- to discern wisely what is best for the good of the whole, even at the cost of personal discomfort and sacrifice.
- to accompany young people regardless of their condition and the difficulties that they or we may encounter.
- to acknowledge what is not going well, and do something positive to alleviate the difficulty.
- to see a need and respond to it with love and care.

A Few of the First FMA

(Groups of five participants will be created. Within each group the participants will decide upon 1 biography to read. The biography is silently read by each participant. After everyone within the group has finished the reading, the participants will share their response to the question.)

Mother Petronilla Mazzarello

Mother Caterina Daghero

Mother Elisa Roncallo

Mother Clelia Genghini



Guide 2: Mother Mazzarello and the first FMA translated Don Bosco's principles into a feminine and maternal style that shaped the Institute's spirituality and pedagogy. The preventive system was not applied as a theory but embodied in daily life. The atmosphere was marked by family spirit, joy, work, prayer, and educational presence.

SMALL GROUP WORK

Guide 1: Within your group choose 1 biography to silently read. After everyone has finished reading, share your response to the following question:

- What course of action is this Sister offering you for your future as a Salesian educator?

Note: *The biographies are located at the end of this document*



VISIT THE LIBRARY

(When possible, a Sister from the place will guide the visit. If no Sister is available, the animators can use the following prepared guide in its entirety.)

Guide: Don Bosco himself instructed the first Sisters to set up a library to serve the school. For this reason, there are volumes dating back to 1800 and some much early. This includes the popular encyclopedia donated by Fr. Pestarino to the first Sisters.

From 1900, the library was in the school building, but in 1974 it was moved to the old study-theater hall on the first floor next to the Sanctuary of our Lady of Graces, where it is currently located today. It preserves about 22,000 volumes.

Nine out of twenty-one General Chapters were celebrated in this room, from 1884 to 1928.

VISIT THE ROOM OF REMEMBRANCE

Guide: The Room of Remembrance contains furniture, paintings, books, musical instruments and various objects, including precious, sacred items and household and craft objects dating back to the origins of the Institute and the later stages of our history.



BIOGRAPHIES

The Preventive System lived by:

Mother Petronilla Mazzarello

Born: 9 August 1838 at Mornese

Died: 6 January 1925 at Nizza Monferrato (*Asti*)

The main responsibilities carried out were: Assistant, community animator, Novice Formator.

Sr. Petronilla Mazzarello was a childhood friend and companion of Mother Mazzarello. If the latter was the soul animator of all the earlier establishments of the Institute, the former was her main collaborator and support at every stage. Even if Sr. Petronilla wasn't as involved directly in the educational activities, she had the heart of an educator and lived the preventive system of Don Bosco in her style.

Goodness Personified: When Sr. Petronilla was community animator at Lanzo, the Sisters had loving memories of her. They saw in her, "...goodness and extraordinary patience [...] great delicacy of conscience, prudence in all things and exact observance of every part of the Rule." Sr. Enrichetta Sorbone, who was in the same community says: "She loved everyone, she was content with everything and everyone. If anyone felt the animator was there, wise and attentive."

Another Sister, who worked very hard in the kitchen, recounts that because of the healthy mountain air in Lanzo, Sisters from other communities were often sent there for a time of healing. Mother Petronilla was like a sentry, making sure that those Sisters lacked nothing. She wanted the cooks to consider themselves as nurses, or rather like mothers who offer the best food to a sickly or delicate child.

Motherly Heart: She kept an attentive eye on the Sisters' health. Sometimes on Friday someone expressed the intention of starting the day with fasting. "Without even having some breakfast? No. You have a lot of work to do; this will be your

fast." She whipped some eggs and offered them to the Sisters with milk and coffee. "Come along; now we'll help to fast!"

Another Sister testifies: "She was a mother. If she noticed that someone was struggling to eat, she tried to understand the reason for it and helped them overcome the difficulty."

At the Service of Others: When Sr. Petronilla was Animator of the community at Penango, once, a bishop came to the kitchen. She said politely, "We have a great deal to do all day; we have little time to remain in chapel to pray." He replied smiling, "Yes, in the Gospel it is written that Mary has chosen the better part, but when the clock strikes midday, one feels the need for Martha, too." Mother Petronilla was delighted and continued to repeat in the following days: "Let us be happy; our work gives glory to God."

Accompaniment of Sr. Petronilla: In Penango the Sisters were also involved in the festive oratory. Antonietta Pane was a teenager who lives nearby. She attended the oratory for two years every Sunday along with her little sister. The two girls were orphans, and Sr. Petronilla became their friend. She understood them and shared their suffering even their tears. "I will not always be with you, but I hold you in my heart like daughters. After me, in fact together with and above me, you will always have Our Lady as your Mother." Antonietta recounted: "Every time she saw us arriving, she enquired if we needed anything and provided it." One day Antonietta confided to her animator her desire to become FMA, however, there were many obstacles to be overcome, mainly her particular family situation. Petronilla encouraged her and patiently took the necessary time to help the young girl and her family to gradually overcome obstacles, and find a solution to the problem, to the satisfaction of all and without injustice to anyone. "She spoke to me with much feeling saying things that corresponded so well to how I felt that every word of hers seemed like the word of the Gospel to me." The gentle and kind way in which the animator treated the Sisters made a deep impression on Antonietta. When, on entering the FMA Institute, Sr. Petronilla recommended that she be humble with all, she understood clearly the implications of that invitation, which demanded strength, courage, dignity and enthusiastic self-giving.

A Gardener in the Educative Field: Sr. Petronilla's womanly delicacy enabled her to grasp the importance of detail. She felt like a gardener who does not care for his flowers in masse but notices them one by one trimming a small twig here, a dry leaf there, freeing the roots to breathe by removing every blade of grass that is out of place.

She used to say to others: "As you work, think of your heart; imagine it as a beautiful vase of flowers to cultivate, and from time to time observe if there are weeds to uproot, so that they would not damage it by preventing it from bearing beautiful flowers and good fruit." For her, the educational need was like her respiration.

Individual Attention: Almost as a synthesis, Sr. Maria Genta, in charge of the postulants, recalled what Mother Petronilla once said to her: "It would be good for you to call so-and-so and talk with her because I do not think she is very happy." And again: "Be attentive to study the character of each postulant, not to change her but to lead her on the way of perfection. At Mornese Don Bosco advised us to discover and consider carefully the inclinations of the young women, in order to foster their betterment and help them correct themselves. It is not good to force them to do things for which they have no inclination; they would struggle uselessly and, perhaps, harm their health. Rather, we have to guide them not to work for their own pleasure, but to work for the love of God and the good of others."

Sr. Lina Dalcerci, an educator and who was a boarder in Nizza Monferrato, states about Sr. Petronilla: "She had an eye especially for those of us who did not play [during recreation] or withdrew from it. She was the first to approach us and to ask if we had some difficulty in the family, with our health, or in school, and she spoke to each one with great concern, brushing away the clouds of less happy moments." In these brief memoirs, Sr. Lina Dalcerci also highlighted Mother Petronilla's ability for offering her discrete observations at the right moment, so that the person could understand the motivation, without exaggeration or minimizing them. Thus, for example, when she was a postulant, Mother Petronilla suggested to her what she considered to be the basic rules of comportment. This she did only after affectionately observing her more than once, and after having

taken into account all she was doing, knowing how busy she was with her studies, teaching, and other additional responsibilities.

Mother Petronilla's life was one of an entire offering of herself to others, either when obedience entrusted them to her in specific circumstances of educational animation, or at the time of her long so-called days of rest, when she was interested in each and every one, with clarity of ideas and loving service. This was the result of her communion with God, with which she expressed herself through continuous prayer: prayer lived and prayer expressed. She had an intimate love for God and for others.

Mother Caterina Daghero

Born: May 7, 1856 at Cumiana (*Turin*)

Died: February 26, 1924 at Nizza Monferrato (*Asti*)

Mother Catherine Daghero governed the Institute from 1881 to 1924. It was a historical period marked by processes of secularization and early industrialization. Profound changes touched the world of women who provided valuable labor to the beginnings of industrialization and gave birth to the movement engaged in the struggle for the recognition of women's civil and legal rights. During this period the Church showed the vitality of its faith both in spiritual and liturgical renewal and in the surprising strengthening of social and missionary activity. The Church witnessed the great turning point of “Social Catholicism”, the renewal effort in the ecclesial sphere itself – and as a response to the modernist crisis.

Goodness and delicacy are mirrored in her: Sr Catherine Daghero revealed all of herself to us: delicacy of conscience, humility and goodness, goodness, goodness.

She gave her time and her care to young people: Every day she would go with the orphans to pick almonds in the vast countryside that surrounded the house; armed with a long pole, she would reach the tall, leafy branches, and the good fruit would fall, and the orphans rejoiced in celebration and filled sacks which were then sold. They would return home very happily about ten or eleven o'clock.

Friendship and faithfulness were her life's goals: In a chronicle we read, "Tonight is the traditional chestnut feast, and for it our mother grants us the comfort of a truly delightful hour." Since August 1881 Mother Catherine Daghero wanted to create many delightful hours for the Sisters. She wanted to always console, console, console. This mirrored her program of life that she traced out for herself from the beginning of her religious life: to do - to be silent – to suffer.

To work in synodality: But already in the beginning of her leadership two exceptional values were seen in Mother Catherine Daghero as experienced by Mother Emilia Mosca and Mother Elisa Roncallo. She was able to recognize their admirable strength with that very special tact which she had learned from Mother Mazzarello. She received from them, took counsel with them, but at the same time she was their inspirer, their encourager and also their wise leader.

Fostered trust and compassion: Mother Elisa Roncallo wrote to her mother: "...the Lord has given us such a good Mother ... I will not tell you the good she does to me; I say only, for your comfort, that she is so caring of me; her advices me so that I do not fall ill; she never thinks of herself." She continued, "...she is a pearl of a mother, a person whom I would not know how to define so much I find her made according to the heart of God...."

Her educational motivation: Mother Catherine Daghero would go to see the Sisters who lived far away and confide in them, encourage them, lift them up, repeat to them the Founder and Father's motto: "to save souls." "We must go and see those poor daughters who are working and perhaps suffering and in so much need of a word from us", she would tell her general councilors; "...we must see with our eyes, touch them with our own hands".

Mother Catherine Daghero wrote in one of her first circulars: *My Sisters, the main purpose of our Congregation is to sanctify ourselves and to work unceasingly for the health of our neighbor, especially poor youth. To save souls! Oh, what a great mission the Lord entrusts to us! ...*

Her ability to accompany others was a real quality in her; she had the right word for everyone: Also very poignant is the very many testimonies of her maternal

tenderness. We read, “How she helped us in our intimate struggles, in our religious sorrows! We rejoiced not only when we listened to her but she followed us with her letters, and encouraged us, prayed for us and with us. In one of my conversations, I confided to her a great inner sorrow of mine. She listened to me with such tenderness that it seemed to me that I would no longer be alone in the struggle. She said to me, 'Go, my daughter! You will no longer be alone; I will be with you in thought and especially in prayer.' “Years past and I found myself with her again. This time I had no sorrow to share with her, but the consolations I enjoyed working among youth, and the satisfactory results of the task she had entrusted to me, was so comforting. Like a mother she rejoiced with me, blessed the Lord with me, and then said to me, ‘Do you still have those inner sufferings you had three years ago?’ I answered, ‘Oh no, thanks to your prayers, Mother, and your advice.” She did not forget!

The Sister in the kitchen recounted, “I was very young and suffered from being very sleepy during meditation. I confided this to Mother, and Mother said, 'Come and sit next to, me, so, perhaps, you will overcome it', and added smilingly, ‘...thinking that you are close to Mother ...’ But then she gave orders that after the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, we cooks, should go and rest a little.”

Mother Elisa Roncallo

Born: 30 January 1856 at Manassero, Sant’Olcese (*Genova*)

Died: 19 April 1919, at Nizza Monferrato (*Asti*)

The main responsibilities carried out: in charge of the oratory and later community animator in Turin, in charge of the boarding school and community animator at Nizza, Provincial, General Councilor, Secretary and Assistant of the General Councilor.

Her Style of Living the Preventive System: As a young girl, she knew Don Bosco through her spiritual director, who suggested her to go to Mornese in the newly founded Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, where she was impressed by the atmosphere that reigned there in spite of the poverty. Being accompanied by the co-foundress of the Institute, St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello, she consecrated herself to the Lord (1874). She is noted for her ability

to give herself to others without measure, to go and seek out the poorest and the neediest without distinction, to make herself small with the little ones, maternal with those who are gripped in uncertainty, in solidarity with those who suffered; able to relate with the poorest and with the richest alike. She built a good rapport with the officials, including the mayor of Nizza Monferrato, Mr. Vittorio Buccelli, to give a concrete response to the needs of the locality. Fr. Paolino Siri, the then parish priest of Nizza once recalled that the good done by Mother Elisa was like a mustard seed: a huge tree was born from every small gesture that she did. Thus, she was recognized as a good mother (*Madre buona*).

Attentive Heart: In Turin she was the first to begin the festive oratory entitled 'Santa Angela Merici'. According to her, the oratory was the table of salvation. It was a place of integral education towards honesty, social life and solidarity. In the regulations of the oratory she wrote: "For the oratorians, we need Sisters who have an aptitude to be with girls, who are firm, patient, kind and have the desire to get to know them personally by name and surname."

Loving Kindness: She was a woman who resonated with the emotions of others. Fr. Pietro Cogliolo SDB says: "Her heart was so tender that when she could not solve certain problems or respond to others' needs, abundant tears flowed from her eyes." This act is very much Salesian, as Don Bosco used to say, "It is not enough that you love the young people, but they should feel that they are loved." This is true for all kinds of relationships. Love should be authentic, pure and integral. Mother Elisa was a woman with affection and at the same time of action. She used to say that the souls have to be comforted and when we see them crying we must not only pray for them but we must work hard to make them smile. She did everything possible to achieve the good of others.

Community Dimension: The preventive system is really impossible in solitude. It has a communitarian dimension which includes also the cross and which is the only effective way. Quite often she wrote in her circular letter regarding reciprocal charity in the community. As community animator, she always created a family atmosphere because she believed that as in the family, the aspects of forgiveness and compassion are very much needed for the healthy growth of the children. The climate of family spirit is really ideal for the formation of the girls.

According to her the community is the place where everything is shared for the good of others and where one helps the other to serve the Lord with joy and cheerfulness, which influences the boarders too. Mother Elisa's circulars letters outline the physiognomy of the FMA educating community with incisive experiential emphasis. It's a process which includes overcoming selfishness, individualism and laziness, at the same to grow in reciprocal charity: kindness, sweetness, mutual understanding. In the educating community, which is made up of people of different ages, backgrounds, cultures and vocations, the "family spirit" is nourished and an environment interwoven with humanizing relationship is built together. This objective is the ideal indication that guides the FMA in their commitment to the faithful and creative translation of the preventive system according to the signs of time, not only in the festive oratories and in the school, but also in the boarding schools, which was one of the apostolates of those years in Europe, but continues still in some other countries.

Psychologist: Mother Elisa had a very fine way of entering into the wounds of the human heart. A few words were enough, sometimes a mere gesture of people was enough to make her understand all the pain and anguish that were hidden under an aspect that could seem serene to others. She knew how to understand people deeply, in the etymological sense of the term of "taking on oneself" the experience of others, especially that which is marked by difficulties and suffering. She had an intuitive and realistic understanding that went beyond sympathy and became an effective action to remedy and to encourage. This attitude of understanding others and of sharing in the suffering of others arose in her from her own experience of pain. In fact, she herself knew what it is to be an orphan, misunderstood and unjustly accused, since she had already experienced them earlier.

Spiritual Dimension: Sr. Elisa Roncallo was able to carry out such an indefatigable apostolate because she was motivated from within. The preventive system is not only a pedagogical method but also a spirituality. Before putting it into practice, Sr. Elisa lived the preventive system deeply in its spiritual dimension. She had a mystical relationship with God, from which the deep core of the preventive system arose. She believed and felt that the Lord was doing his work of salvation

through her. One day when she had some misunderstanding with Mother Mazzarello, she went to the chapel, knelt at the feet of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and wept bitterly placing her head in her hands. She heard a voice: "Elisa, why are you crying it's not me who make you suffer; so be humble, have faith and pray." When she got up, she saw that there was no one there but the tabernacle. She heard the voice again with the same words. She stopped crying and she was strengthened in her faith and regained peace. From then on Sr. Elisa was always cheerful even in the moments of trial.

Spiritual Guide: Sr. Elisa was the spiritual guide to many of the Sisters, young people and also to her own mother. She wrote thus to a Sister: "The royal path is that of abandonment to God my dear daughter. Let us be guided by Him; let us be carried in His arms. He is our Father. Let us tell Him like children: 'Lord, I am here; I'm Yours; all Yours. [...] You don't take into account our past with its sufferings, great and small. Jesus, I give You all my setbacks, the hardships, the renunciations, the humiliations, the faults and the relapses so that everything may be buried in Your mercy and made worthy for eternity. May I sanctify my present, so that I may love You, make You loved, give You glory. All that are yet to come – anxieties, fears, pains, hopes, joys, life, death and merited eternity – may all be a single loving act of confidence in You, my dear Jesus.' I don't know why, my daughter, I feel strongly the need to tell you these things; I hear the divine voice of God that pushes me, urges me to tell you to make this offering, can you?" It can be seen that Sr. Elisa with her own life experience learned to have a strong faith and hope in God and thus guided many in their spiritual life.

The aim of Sr. Elisa was to live the preventive system just like Don Bosco lived. Fr. Cagliero says of her: "She is a woman capable of embodying the mind, heart and spirit of Don Bosco. Thus, to do as Sr. Elisa did is to do as Don Bosco did." Thus, she lived the preventive system applying it in her context and in her style.

Mother Clelia Genghini

Born: June 9, 1872 in Coriano

Died: 31 January 1956 in Turin

First Profession: 30 July 1893



She was provincial and community animator in Spain, accompanied Mother Enrichetta Sorbone in her travels, a general councilor of the FMA Institute as a visiting councilor to the houses in America from 1908-1913. She became secretary general in 1913 and was responsible for the memoirs and testimonies regarding the history of the FMA Institute that were used in the five volumes of the *Cronistora* published by Sr Giselda Capetti.

Her father was named Guglielmo Genghini and her mother, Teresina Cagnoli and they had four children. Although her parents were of aristocratic ancestry, they suffered a financial collapse, later at her father's death. This caused many sufferings for her mother since she had to cater for the necessities of life. It became a school of untimely sufferings for all.

Her father was generous and good-natured in character, upright and frank in spirit, true to his word of honor. He could give of himself in utmost confidence. Teresina, who always smiled, was strong and generous to the point of heroism because of her great trust in God. She was an outstanding educator. Without ever raising her voice, she was extremely reasonable, yet firm and decisive. This is how her daughter will remember her.

When her mother died, Clelia was 14 years old. A maternal uncle thought about caring for the older siblings who were received at the Salesian boarding school of Turin Valdocco. Clelia became a student of the Maestre Pie who had a mother-house in her own town of Coriano. After these studies and in the search for her vocation, her uncle, Fr Francesco, who knew his niece's heart, spoke of her to the Salesian Sisters in Turin: "I spoke of you in the presence of the Superior General of the Sisters of Don Bosco who was visiting among us. We worked things very well. You will go to Lugo di Romagna, where you will find someone to accompany you to Turin, and from Turin to Nizza Monferrato to continue your studies and obtain the degree in secondary school teaching ... you think about keeping yourself prepared with what little you already have; the rest and your future will be taken care of by Our Lady ..." Clelia was 19.

Capacity to be altruistic and mature beyond her years: She spoke little but was deeply interested more in others than herself. Even Mother Assistant realized the

richness of mind and heart contained in the young novice, who spoke little, being less interested in herself. She was very reflective and revealed an inner maturity all her own. She mirrored her parents: the same spirit of righteousness, of fortitude, the same nobility of sentiments. She, like they, were formed in the school of sorrow; and they showed a particularly Marian imprint in their piety.

With Sr Emilia Mosca, she learned the art of being an assistant / the art of accompanying: “Mother Assistant [Mother Emilia] saw me passing by and stopped me ‘Do you see this little daughter? ... She's good, you know; but if you have her on your side, maybe you'll have to tell her to improve more and more’. And to the little daughter, ‘Do you know who this Sister is? ... Who knows, maybe she should be your assistant. She already loves you; she also prayed this morning for the girls she was supposed to assist this year. So, she has already prayed for you; and you will start praying for her, won't you?’ ... Later, to me alone, ‘It is a poor little girl you have seen; she is too emotional. You will have to bring her up with a stronger heart. Don Bosco will show you how’.”

Live in the presence of God, live in God - love personified: A girl at the oratory confided a great sorrow to Mother Clelia. It was about her brother who ran away and fell into the most squalid circumstances because of his bad behavior. Abandoned by his companions, he rejected everyone, blasphemed and cursed God and everyone else. “Trust and pray!”, said Mother Clelia. From that very day she began to send her brother some healthy broth and some food. Then she made an appeal to the students, “There is a person who is in trouble and needs our help. He needs much prayer and much charity ... Who wants to help me?”

Live cheerfulness as a relational aspect of life: Her own words attest to this: “Cheerfulness is the essence of good health and of virtue”. She stated that it should not be lacking in the community as an element of peace, of unity and fervor. People remembered her undeniable smile, fresh, lively and always the same.

She remained amiable with all and never admonished in public: She could joke but was most delicate in the way she spoke to others, even toward her students, and did not allow unfavorable impressions or public humiliations to occur. If

anyone mentioned them, she immediately thought of positive remedies, employing prompt and benevolent strategies to alleviate the situation. The amiability of her countenance and her smile did not make her act hastily. On the contrary, she was always quite exacting in what concerned duty, observance, and living religious life to the full.

She simplified what was overdramatic: Sr. Asunta Paz, the novice, was in charge of lighting the oil lamps. She was in tears for having broken the very one of the provincial. She wanted to write to her people at once so that they would provide another one. “No, no,” Mother Clelia replied smiling, “don't think about it; but see that you don't run so fast, otherwise one day or another you might break your head, as happened to that fellow.... Do you already know?... Listen ...”. And she set about telling her a story, stretching it out with lots of details, until she saw the novice soothed, laughing from ear to ear.

She united faith with love in her educative mission: Mother Clelia immediately made herself available to give help and direction to one or another person. She gave a series of lectures on the Salesian preventive system, so beautiful and practical that they were recorded and faithfully preserved to this day. Her infallible secret when dealing with difficult cases. The following can be said to be the synthesis of her teaching, “speak to the Lord in Holy Communion, to hear Him suggest: be gentler, more patient, more motherly ... and all will succeed well.”

To LIVE each moment: One afternoon, left alone in the church in Nizza after the Sisters prayed the usual community prayers to the Blessed Sacrament, she was moved by an internal impulse. She went behind the altar, climbed the few steps, and knocked lightly on the little door of the Tabernacle, whispering in a half-voice, “Oh, Jesus, by Your Eucharistic presence, by Your Holy Name, by Your sweet Mother, tell me a word that reassures my heart.” And immediately from the Tabernacle a clear, limpid voice was heard saying to her, **“Live the present moment...live it in love!”**

“The highest good is love: this is our starting and ending point in every hour of the day, indeed, in every moment.”