

Novena to St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello



Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (fma)
Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, Bombay, India

Dedicated to **SR. RITA DORA THOMAS,**
7th Provincial of St. Mary Mazzarello Province, Bombay, India,
For her Prayer-filled leadership
And for being a Sister among Sisters

Boundless Passion for the Missions

“Come to me” Mt: 11: 28, and "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" Mk 16:15, powered by these words of Jesus, Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello lived and communicated great passion for the Missions. At Valdocco, for Don Bosco, the Missionary Expeditions were moments of profound thanksgiving and grand celebration. St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello, together with St. John Bosco, co-founded the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Mary Mazzarello had a deep longing to be a missionary. “Keep me a place in America”, she wrote to Fr. Cagliero. At Mornese, many hours of study to learn new languages and moments around the globe to spot out new places and countries were part of their life.

Thanks to that passionate missionary ardor of Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello; the intervention of many others and the repeated requests through letters from Fr. Giorgio Tomatis since 1917 and the request of the Archbishop, Teotónio Emanuel Ribeiro Vieira de Castro beseeching for Sisters to come and work among the people in Mylapore diocese, that urged Mother Catherine Daghero to choose a small group of Sisters to travel to India towards the close of 1922, in the Golden Jubilee Year of the Congregation.

FMA India journeying towards the Centenary

99 Years have so swiftly flown, today, FMA India, with immense gratitude praise and thank God for our Six pioneer missionaries: Sr. Teresa Balestra, Sr. Catherine Marnetto, Sr. Maria Angeleri, Sr. Luigina Appiano, Sr. Consiglia Tarricone and Sr. Teresa Merlo for bringing, planting, nurturing and letting the Salesian Charism to blossom in India. We continue with renewed commitment our journey towards the Centenary of the arrival of our First Missionaries ***with Mary through the Course of the Century (1922-2022) and beyond ...*** Long Live Don Bosco! Long Live Mary Mazzarello!

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco)

NOVENA TO ST. MARY DOMENICA MAZZARELLO

LIFE AND SPIRITUALITY OF MOTHER MAZZARELLO

Mary Dominica Mazzarello, the eldest of the thirteen children of Joseph Mazzarello and Maddalena Calcagno, was born on May 9, 1837, to a farming family in the rugged, mountainous region of Mornese, a small town in Northern Italy. She was baptized in the parish church on the same day. Mary was a very fortunate child; she learned common sense and deep faith from her parents. She grew up in the fields working alongside her father's laborers and studying her Catechism. One fine day, when she was a little girl, Mary asked her father Joseph, "What did God do before He created the world?" Her question reveals something about her idea of God; who is active and involved. Her father answered, "God contemplated Himself, loved Himself, and was happy with Himself. You see, God is not alone."

Longing for God

There were no schools in many of the Italian towns and villages in the early nineteenth century, and Mary had to depend on her parents for any instruction. She did not receive any of the book-learning common in our own schools, but her parents more than made up for this by methodically grounding their daughter in the Christian virtues which she was later to practice so heroically. Her parents focused on providing their daughter with a deep religious spirit, forming a generous heart and a strong character. They did it so well that Mary became the model for all the girls in the district. Her father took care to protect his daughter from many worldly sights and amusements, which he considered detrimental to her Christian formation, and it was only with deep reluctance that he took her with him on rare occasions to the village fairs. On her mother's knee Mary learnt of the goodness of God and of His holy Mother, and lisped her first prayers; by means of the wonderful things of creation surrounding them. Mrs. Mazzarello also taught her to love and respect the great virtue of purity.

An hour of walk

Amazingly Mary found joy in walking an hour from the Mazzarello homestead to the Church, her heart was in love with Jesus and at any cost she wanted to be faithful to her daily encounter with him in the church. Her parents often tried to discourage her from going to daily Mass especially in winter when the roads were muddy and the cold was severe. Besides, they felt that the long walk without breaking her fast, together with the hard work in the fields would weaken her strength. It was not easy to convince her; she pointed to her exceptionally robust body and succeeded to get her point.

More time for prayer

While Mary was a young girl, she had no alarm to wake her up in the morning. She was always keen on getting up early to be on time for Mass. It is said that one morning at 2 am her father was awakened by a noise. Soon he realized that Mary and her younger sister were preparing to go for Mass. Fearing to be late for Mass, she had got out of bed. 'Listen, it is only two O'clock', voiced her father. Mary had a very apt answer: "Good! We shall have more time to pray before Mass begins", and quickly off to the Church went the two girls. Whenever Mary arrived before the church doors were opened, she would kneel in prayer on the steps or if others came early she

would commence talking of religious things to prevent distractions. At the age of 15 years she offered herself to God with the vow of virginity. Soon afterwards she joined the association of the *Daughters of Mary Immaculate*, committing herself more deeply in apostolic services and works of charity.

Child of Mary

In 1885, at the request of some of the girls of the parish and after consulting qualified theologians, with prayer and discernment, Fr. Pestarino began the Pious Union of the Children of Mary in his parish, which gave rise to a movement that was soon to spread throughout Italy. Mary was just eighteen and indubitably, she was one of the first to join this union. Fr. Pestarino admitted only the best girls of the parish. They made such strides in spiritual life that two years later the Bishop of the diocese gave his approval to the union, and himself came to Mornese to invest the members with the Medal of Mary Immaculate in a public ceremony.

As a member of the Pious Union, Mary found a healthy ambient to advance at even greater speed along the road of perfection. The members of the union lived with their families, met daily, when possible, for Mass, for spiritual readings, for visits to the Blessed Sacrament and for other practices. An essential part of their weekly meeting was a public confession of faults. It was specifically at one of these meetings that Mary accused herself of the enormous crime of allowing a whole fifteen minutes to pass without thinking of God. Living in the presence of God had become very natural for her.

The little window of Valponasca

While the distance from her home at Valponasca, to the Parish was considerably long, Mary's creativity made her to discover a new way to be connected with Jesus and to join the parishioners for Rosary in the evening. From the little window of Valponasca, she fixed her gaze on to the Parish, and united herself intensely with Jesus and the people gathered there to pray. At first, her mother was taken by surprise, thinking that her growing up daughter had found some new distraction. Soon, she realized that Mary was in deep prayer; and then she began inviting others at home: come, let us join Mary and pray together. That little window of Valponasca has become a cherished symbol in the heart of every Salesian Sister and it reminds her to be always united with Jesus even when she is busy at work.

Called by God for a special Mission

One day, from that deserted Cobblestone Street, was heard the clanging sound of heavy wooden shoes...a young woman was hastening through the winding lane bordered by houses, clutching a crying boy by the hand. "Oh, Mary, what are we going to do?" the child whines. "Mama and Papa are sick, and my big brother is almost dying, and there's no one to take care of us!" "Hush, hush," comforted the girl. "I told you not to worry." "Will you stay with us?" Mary replied: "Of course as long as necessary. And I'll take care of my little cousins."

In no time, Mary reached her destination, ran up the stone steps and pushed open the door to find crying children, soiled dishes, and her aunt and uncle lying helplessly on their straw mattresses. Quickly and effectively, Mary prepared a hot meal, attended to the children, sent them to bed, and cared for the sick with her own hands, all the while accompanying it all with a thousand gentle phrases that brought comfort and hope to the stricken family. Mary had plenty to do. She was indeed an angel of mercy to her aunt and uncle. You can imagine her reassuring words and the tender touch of her hand that was like a soothing balm for the burning brows of her feverish

patients. Mary's deep spirit of prayer and her intimate closeness to Jesus sustained her to be open to the will of God. This was something very new to all those whom she was assisting. The children got attached to her as to a mother and rallied around her to hear her tell of the Lord who loved and cared for them. Her determination to work supplied her fresh energy for washing, cooking and comforting. Day and night she was on her feet; she would only grab tiny moments of sleep between tasks. Within a week her aunt and uncle were able to get on their feet again and care for their family. Hearts overflowing with gratitude and eyes filled with tears they expressed their thanks to her. Mary accepted it all with that humility and gentleness that marked her entire life of mercy. It was time for her to say goodbye to her dear ones. She made a bundle of her clothing and returned to her mother. She was left with very little strength as she was under the attack of typhoid.

The shaping of Mary's vocation

Mary Mazzarello manifested tremendous availability to work and was ready for every kind of work. She was gifted with a cheerful spirit and willingness to help others. The delicate question now was: what next with hardly any physical strength left? This was indeed a turning point in her life: a time of prayer, reflection and seeking guidance. Mary manifested greater availability to listen to God. She was very keen to respond to His call. With her strong-willed and energetic temperament, Mary was discerning God's designs for her. One of her recommendations is: "***Freely do all that charity requires***" Letter 35:3

A vision

One fine day, as Mary was walking in the fields at the uppermost point in the district, she had a vision. She was shocked to see before her a very large building which she was certain did not exist there. She rubbed her eyes; she was not dreaming; yet there it was. Later she recognized the building that she then saw as the Mother house of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. While the Blessed Virgin Mary, obtained for Don Bosco every grace and favour he needed for the Construction of the Sanctuary at Valdocco, she was also preparing, for quite some time, the one who was to be placed by the saint at the head of the new Religious Institute he had in mind to start.

Meeting with Don Bosco

A meeting with Don Bosco in 1864 marked a decisive point in Mary's life. The Saint was already working on an apostolic project for girls. With the collaboration of Mary Domenica he founded the community of the *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*. In 1872 Mary Domenica made her religious profession and was elected superior, a role in which she displayed unexpected talents as a mother and animator. The following lines from Letter No. 18, *To the Novice, Sr. Laura Rodriguez* will give us a taste of her style of animation: *Always be cheerful, have confidence in your superiors, never hide anything from them, always keep your heart open, always obey them in all simplicity and you will never go wrong. Pray for me and for all the Sisters. Everyone, Sisters and postulants, thank you for the greeting.*

Mary Mazzarello a Saint for all times

At 44 years of age Sr. Mary Mazzarello contracted a severe form of pleurisy pneumonia, and died on May 14, 1881 at Nizza Monferrato. She was beatified on November 20, 1938 and canonized by Pius XII on June 24, 1951, and was rightly recognized as *Co-foundress* of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Don Bosco knew well that a monument built of bricks was never sufficient to express his profound gratitude to the Help of Christians, therefore he raised a living monument of gratitude to her - 'the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians': "Don Bosco wanted us to be a 'living monument' of his gratitude to Mary Help of Christians and asks us to extend his 'thanks' throughout all time" (Constitutions art. 4). The congregation of the Salesian Sisters of St John Bosco or Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (*Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice* - FMA), is the sister order of the Salesians of Don Bosco. The Salesian Sisters are an international Congregation ministering to and with youth in 94 countries around the world. Their lifestyle is characterized by an ardent prayer life, a strong community life, and a youth-centered ministry.

THE FORMAT OF THE NOVENA

- ★ God, come to our assistance.
O Lord, make haste to help us.
- ★ Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
- ★ Reflection on the theme of the day
- ★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day
- ★ *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father...*
- ★ *St. Mary Mazzarello, Pray for us.*

1st Day (May 04) – *YES TO LIFE*

★ *Reflection*

In an ambient of hard work and deep piety, Mary learned to assume responsibility for her own formation. She acquired the art of mortifying herself in eating and drinking, she knew to control her curiosity, she was aware of her moments of impatience, she learned to be modest in dress and speech and gave up all vanity to which she was strongly inclined. Her strong spirit of prayer taught her to be prompt in obedience, the constant thought of the presence of God and her meaningfully performed practices of piety sustained her interior life. She had an immense natural dislike for confession, but she conquered her disgust and was very open with her confessor, accordingly she drew great strength from this sacrament. Mary began spending her time between the church and her home. She worked with her father in the fields and vineyards and was prompt in assisting her mother with many household tasks and the teaching of her younger brothers and sisters.

Fr. Pestarino's watchful eyes saw in Mary, the seeds of self-love which he tried to root out before they became too strong. Mary showed herself rather stubborn by nature but the guidance of her parents, Fr. Pestarino and her openness to grace and prayer, her weekly confession helped her to overcome her stubbornness. Seeing how she was journeying on the way of perfection, Fr. Pestarino allowed her to receive communion daily. This was not very common in those days. With the fervent reception of the Sacraments, her life became one of intense striving after perfection. Mary loved life and made life beautiful for those around her.

★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day

O Saint Mary Mazzarello, your 'yes to life' made you to work at your own formation and helped you to bring life in abundance to the poor and needy youngsters. You accompanied them with goodness and kindness and led them to Jesus the source of life.

Pray for us that, inspired by your example, we may be faithful sons and daughters of God and may likewise appreciate and generate life in our mission.

Through your intercession may God grant me the following grace... [pause]... so that together with others I may assist in bringing all those whom I encounter especially the young people to say yes to life and find fullness of life in Jesus.

★ *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father... St. Mary Mazzarello, Pray for us...*

2nd Day (May 05) – **YES TO THE GRACE OF BAPTISM**

★ *Reflection*

Mary Dominica Mazzarello, the eldest of the thirteen children of Joseph Mazzarello and Maddalena Calcagno, was born at Mornese, a small town in Piedmont, Italy, on May 9, 1837 and she was baptized in the parish church on the same day. The Mazzarello family was built on sound Christian principles, and it is sure that Mary received a truly Christian upbringing from her infancy.

Yes to baptism is gradually nurtured by prayer and sacraments. At the age of ten, Mary was admitted to her first Communion. Only many years later she revealed that in one of her early Communion she had made a vow of virginity, truly her mother's teachings in the matter of purity were bearing fruit. On September 30, 1849 Mary was confirmed. The arrival of Fr. Dominic Pestarino a native of Mornese, a new Priest, a young man of thirty-two to Mornese in 1849 marked the beginning of a fervent spiritual journey for all.

Mary frequented Fr. Pestarino's catechism classes. He was a zealous and holy person who was destined by God to mould her life. Even though she could hardly read and write, Mary had a most retentive memory, and with intense application she soon reached the top of the class, so that Father Pestarino could present her as an example to his other pupils. Mary would say, 'I don't want to be second to anyone, I'm not afraid of the boys and I'm going to beat them all.'

★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day

O Saint Mary Mazzarello, you nurtured your '***Yes to the grace of Baptism***' with constant prayer, ardent longing for Jesus and fervent reception of Jesus daily in Holy Communion. You built your spiritual life on the solid rock of Jesus.

Pray for us that, inspired by your example, we may be faithful sons and daughters of God and may likewise live in the grace of our Baptism and keep it alive with your Word and Sacraments.

Through your intercession may God grant me the following grace... [pause]... so that together with others I may assist in bringing all those whom I encounter especially the young people to grow in the grace of Baptism in word and deed.

★ *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father... St. Mary Mazzarello, Pray for us...*

3rd Day (May 06) – *YES TO THE BEAUTY OF THE FAMILY*

★ *Reflection*

Mary Domenica was born in Mornese in the rugged, mountainous region of Northern Italy, into a peasant farming family on May 9, 1837. A healthy ambient rich in human and Christian values reigned in their home. Mary grew up in simplicity and joy. The love and acceptance of her parents helped her to enjoy the beauty of the family. Young Mary was known for her cheerful spirit and willingness to help others, but, she had a feisty temperament. Controlling it was something she would have to work all of her life.

Mary was very human and blessed with exceptional good health and physical strength. She enjoyed working with her father Joseph in the fields and vineyards. At home she helped her mother Maddalena to run the house and take care of her siblings. What added beauty to their home was the sound Christian life of her parents. They formed Mary to a profound sense of God, an upright conscience, a marked practical sense, and depth of judgment. She loved Catechism. Mary joined the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. At the same time she continued her strenuous work in the family's vineyards and around the house. Mary had the joy of being in a close knit family that was united and loving each other. Pope Francis has expressed it beautifully: "God always knocks at the door of hearts. He likes to do this. It comes from His heart. But, do you know what He likes best? To knock on the doors of families and find families that are united, to find families that love each other, to find the families that bring up their children and educate them and help them to keep going forward and that create a society of goodness, of truth, and of beauty."

★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day

O Saint Mary Mazzarello, you nurtured your '*Yes to the beauty of the family*' with availability and openness, you grew up in an atmosphere of human and Christian values. You extended a helping hand to your parents and they taught you to grow in age and grace.

Pray for us that, inspired by your example, we may be faithful sons and daughters of God and may likewise discover and enjoy the beauty of our own families, loving and respecting each other.

Through your intercession may God grant me the following grace... [pause]... so that together with others I may assist in bringing all those whom I encounter especially the young people to experience and appreciate the beauty of the family and to grow in mutual love and appreciation for each other.

★ *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father... St. Mary Mazzarello, Pray for us...*

4th Day (May 07) – *YES TO WORK*

★ *Reflection*

Mary Mazzarello was truly outstanding in her warmth and spirit of self sacrifice, was ever ready to take up the most common tasks. Her family was not of abundant means, so each day brought with it long days in the vineyards, carefully tending the delicate vines in the glaring sun. She was indeed gifted with rough hands and a robust body. You will be surprised to know what her father's workers used to say about Mary: "That girl is made of iron; it's all we can do to keep up with her." Obviously, in the fields she worked harder than her father's hired laborers. Naturally, they did not like being overtaken by a girl; it was at times difficult for her father to obtain labour.

"Mary," teased a young fellow resting under a tree, "did you hear that? Is it true you can beat us working on the farm?"

"On the farm and anywhere!" came the decided answer.

"She's right," interrupted a young woman. "You've never done a day's work equal to hers."

"No use teasing her, lad," broke in Mr. Mazzarello, going out to join his daughter in the field.

"Ever since she was just a tiny thing of a girl, she has never given in to anybody. Her mother and I know too well!"

One day Mary was very much delayed at church at a time when there was extra work to be done at home, naturally her mother reproached her on her return, and suggested that on such occasions it might be better to stay away from Mass, so that the work could be done. Surprisingly Mary replied: "Do not worry, mother, I shall work twice as hard and the work will be completed by evening." She really worked twice as hard as usual and the work was completed before sunset.

★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day

O Saint Mary Mazzarello, you were ever ready to utter your '*Yes to work*' and enhance it with incessant prayer. You were eager to participate in the Holy Mass and at the same time prepared to work twice as hard to complete what has to be done.

Pray for us that, inspired by your example, we may be faithful sons and daughters of God and may likewise find joy and satisfaction in our work and work in the company of Jesus, Through your intercession may God grant me the following grace.. [pause]... so that together with others I may have the courage to say yes to work and to all kinds of work at all times and assist in bringing all those whom I encounter especially the young people to say yes to work and do it to the best of their ability.

★ *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father... St. Mary Mazzarello, Pray for us...*

5th Day (May 08) – *YES TO SUFFERING*

★ *Reflection*

In 1860, Typhoid took over the town of Mornese! Soon, Mornese was a "death town." The cheerful villagers who loved music and merriment and the open fields now sealed themselves and their children behind barred doors and boarded windows, praying that the harsh spirit of death would not demand a victim among them. The whole family of one of Mary's uncles was stricken with the disease. Father Pestarino understood that only Mary could nurse the family back to health. It was indeed a very delicate moment of decision making: he got the hesitant consent of her family to send her to take care of them; she humbly obeyed, even though she protested that she was sure that she would catch the dreaded disease. That is exactly what happened. In a few weeks the family had recovered...

As Mary stepped into her home, her mother noticed the change in her daughter. She was at death's door: the long hours of work and sleepless nights had almost broken her strong body; the tiredness was visible on her cheeks and in her eyes. Summing up courage, Mary tried to smile away her mother's fears and acknowledging that she needed rest went quickly to bed. She was down with typhoid fever. She lost all her strength; it took days for her to come out of the danger of death. Many hours of rest and the love and care of her dear parents restored her to health. Fr. Pestarino was there accompanying her fearfully through the days of crisis, he brought her Communion every day well aware that it would be her only comfort through the days of painful illness.

Obviously the Mazzarello home soon became a small sanctuary for the people of Mornese. They had heard of Mary's heroic venture into the typhoid-stricken village and had anxiously watched her fight with death. They gathered to see her. Her many friends spent long hours in her company, admiring her inestimable patience. How could they forget the sturdy young woman who would yield to neither heat nor fatigue in the scorching fields, and now before them the thin, frail girl that the consuming typhoid had left behind? Mary's Father would not allow her to work in the field.

★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day

O Saint Mary Mazzarello, you nurtured your '*Yes to suffering*' in a heroic manner, you risked your own life, reached almost the point of death nursing your dear ones caught up in the clutches of Typhoid. Hard work and sleepless nights knocked off your strength, yet you allowed the Lord to make His designs known to you and willingly hearkened to His call. Jesus was your strength and comfort.

Pray for us that, inspired by your example, we may be faithful sons and daughters of God and may likewise reach out in love and make ourselves available to those in need of our service, especially the victims of corona virus or any other pandemic.

Through your intercession may God grant me the following grace... [pause]... so that together with others I may be the first to say yes to the suffering that come on my way and assist in bringing comfort and consolation to all those whom I encounter especially the sick and the suffering brothers and sisters of ours.

★ *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father... St. Mary Mazzarello, Pray for us...*

6th Day (May 09) – YES TO THE EDUCATIVE MISSION OF THE YOUNG ESPECIALLY THE POOREST

★ Reflection

Mary Mazzarello herself was uneducated and yet God chose her to commence a huge work of education for the poor and needy. As Mother General of the Salesian Sisters, Mary Mazzarello felt that it was important that she and the other sisters have a good understanding of how to read and write; it was a skill which many of them never had the opportunity to acquire. She learned how to write; sitting among the students and sisters much younger than herself, she manifested great humility as a younger, yet better-educated sister taught the class. At age 35 Mary began to learn to read and write. Her letters to Don Bosco and her sisters are significant for their spiritual content and good sense. She was known for her cheerful spirit and willingness to help others. Special situation had made Mary and Petronilla to establish a hospice for two little girls without a stable family. They cared for them like tender mothers. At Mornese, life was difficult and filled with sacrifices; the Sisters would often have to beg for food and borrow wood and sticks for the fire. They faced the challenge of cold in the winter, and were often hungry. They accepted it all with a cheerful spirit, sharing willingly what they could with the young girls who would come to them for aid. Mary Mazzarello as Superior proved to be a teacher of spiritual life, knew how to discern persons and situations, had a strong educational ability. Her serene and reassuring cheerfulness and the art of involving other young women in the commitment to dedicate themselves to the formation of young women were remarkable.

Mary's yes to the educative mission of the young was to help them to be good Christians and honest citizens in the family, in the church, and in society. She accepted unreservedly St. John Bosco's way and gave it her own unique feminine touches therefore we acknowledge that St. Mary Mazzarello made her own and put into practice the "Salesian Spirit" in "creative fidelity." She had her own special way of accompanying the young people. Even the difficult youngsters, gradually understood that her words need to be welcomed and made part of their life. This was possible because Mary Mazzarello had established a personal relationship with each one of them. She made herself present to them and they in turn allowed her to accompany them to Jesus. Her example spoke louder than words. Daily she was there in the midst of the girls, the poor and the sisters, winning their confidence and topping it with her own loyalty and fidelity, searching and finding the truth of oneself with simplicity and frankness and being true to her own self, expecting the very same from those around her especially those whom she accompanied. Mother Mazzarello was blessed with inner freedom to love and serve.

★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day

O Saint Mary Mazzarello, your '*Yes to the educative mission of the young especially the poorest*' made you to be a mother and teacher among them. You watched them with tender love, accompanied them with firmness and kindness. As a wise educator, you led them to Jesus the master educator. In your company, educators and youngsters were able to respond to God's call with generosity of mind and heart.

Pray for us that, inspired by your example, we may be faithful sons and daughters of God and may likewise live our educative mission with love and dedication,

Through your intercession may God grant me the following grace... [pause]... so that together with others I may accompany all those whom I encounter especially the young people to discover God's plan for them and to respond to him with loving generosity.

★ Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father... St. Mary Mazzarello, Pray for us...

7th Day (May 10) – *YES TO THE CALL OF JESUS TO FOLLOW HIM MORE CLOSELY*

★ *Reflection*

Mary was well aware of the reality: Two months of fever and illness had destroyed her iron constitution. She would never again be able to work in the fields. What next? Twenty years of life and dedication, of active involvement and of being on top of the list! What was God preparing her for? Most probably she and Father Pestarino would now discern what God wanted her to do. Anything for God she would do. Two strong ideas were playing in her mind: to learn needle work as it would not require great physical strength, she could later teach the girls of the township to sew. This was just a means to teach them to be good Christians and to journey with them along the path of virtue. Mary Mazzarello launched her own production as a seamstress. She confided to her friend: "Every stitch must be an act of the love of God." The response from the families was truly encouraging; they send their daughters to her to learn sewing and Christian doctrine. Soon poor girls and orphans came to stay at the workshop.

An unforgettable meeting with Don Bosco: God's ways are always marvelous! Both Mary and Don Bosco were doing similar work among the young. What Mary was doing for needy girls at Mornese was similar to Don Bosco's apostolate among boys in Turin. Don Bosco visited Mornese: he came, he saw and he understood how Mary was accompanying each child with respect and love preparing them to be always beautiful in the sight of God. In bidding him farewell, Don Bosco gave Father Pestarino a medal each for Mary and Petronilla, and a card for Mary; on the card was written: 'Keep on praying hard; but do as much good as you can for young girls; do everything possible to prevent sin, even if it is only one venial sin. The two girls were until now focused on prayer and practices of piety, now they welcomed the Salesian preventive system, the prevention of sin by keeping the girls completely occupied and protecting them from occasions of sin. Later Mary and Petronilla used to gather the girls on Sundays in the courtyard of the house where they rented their rooms and they taught them Catechism or engaged them in healthy recreation. Walks to the neighbouring countryside, taking the girls in a group to Church services etc. became part of their Sunday gatherings, obviously something like in the Festive Oratory work of Don Bosco. The providence of God prompted Fr. Pestarino to make available to the girls of the Union of Mary Immaculate, a house which he had built for himself near the church. Mary's parents were very firm in their decision not to let her join the group, but Fr. Pestarino's influence made her dad to give her the freedom to go. "But what will you do? her mother asked Mary as she was leaving, You will die of hunger. 'If I am in need I shall return,' answered Mary, ' and I am sure that you will not shut the door in my face.'" In December, 1867, Don Bosco again came to Mornese, and during the day he gave a talk to the members of the young community, and he was certain that here was his projected congregation of nuns in the making.

★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day

O Saint Mary Mazzarello, God in his wisdom prepared you, step by step to say *Yes to the call of Jesus to follow Him more closely*. Your openness to the Holy Spirit led you to your courageous yes without any hesitation.

Your loving and dedicated commitment to the young with utmost care to lead them to Jesus was truly the work of divine providence. Unknowingly, you and your companions, under the guidance of Fr. Pestarino began living in community, getting ready to follow Jesus more closely. Pray for us that, inspired by your example, we may be faithful sons and daughters of God and may likewise live in the presence of God ever attentive to Jesus' call.

Through your intercession may God grant me the following grace... [pause]... so that together with others I may assist in bringing all those whom I encounter especially the young people to Jesus. May we welcome the path of life that God has traced out for each one of us.

★ *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father... St. Mary Mazzarello, Pray for us...*

**8th Day (May 11) – YES TO THE MISSION OF BEING MOTHER AND CO-FOUNDRRESS
WITH DON BOSCO**

★ Reflection

The twice repeated dream of Don Bosco: He dreamt that he was crossing the Piazza Vittorio in Turin, the piazza was filled with noisy, screaming girls who appeared to have no one to look after them. A few were in a group apart and were not playing. These came over to the saint. A gracious Lady appeared there and encouraged Don Bosco to take care of these girls. She repeated: *“Take Care for them, they too are my children.”*

Mother Mazzarello heard a voice: *“I entrust them to you.”* Mary had seen on an elevation at Borgo Alto, where only an old hut existed, a large building with spacious courtyards. Many girls were playing in these courtyards and she seemed to be in charge of them and she heard a voice. *“I entrust them to you.”*

Don Bosco is a Saint; I can feel it said Mary Mazzarello when she first met him. One saint recognizes another... Don Bosco quickly became aware of Mary Mazzarello's natural gifts as a leader: her deep faith in God, her ardent love for Jesus, her docility to be led by the Holy Spirit, her humble disposition to acknowledge Mary as the true Superior, her genuine humility, her wisdom, her prudence, her spirit of discernment, her love for every person who came in contact with her, her spirit of hard work and her ability to govern. It is remarkable to note that Mary Mazzarello who was destined to become the co-foundress of the daughters of Mary Help of Christians, was born in the month of May, Our Lady's month, that she died in the month of May 44 years later, and that she lived her first years under the shadow of a shrine which was vowed by the inhabitants of Mornese to Mary, Help of Christians, for protection during the cholera epidemic in 1836, and was blessed in 1845. Saint Mary Mazzarello lived our Founder Don Bosco's project in creative fidelity, thus giving rise to the “spirit of Mornese” which continues even today to characterize the lifestyle of the Salesian Sisters. For a long time Don Bosco had the idea to found an order of Sisters. In 1871, Don Bosco with his Chapter in Turin decided upon the foundation of his order of nuns. He obtained permission from Pope Pius IX. Don Bosco got in touch with Fr. Pestarino who worked untiringly to accompany Mary Mazzarello to direct her energies towards God. Don Bosco expressed his desire that Mary and some of her companions from the sodality form the core of this new order of women religious. The proposal caught the women by surprise, unsurprisingly they felt unworthy and uneducated to become sisters. On August 5, 1872, Mary and fourteen other women consecrated themselves to God, pledging to follow the simple rule that Bosco had drawn up for them. The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were formed, and Mary Mazzarello was elected their superior. As the feminine branch of the Salesian religious family, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians sought to do for girls what the priests and brothers were doing in Turin for boys. They brought to their ministry the particular feminine genius which lends itself so well to nurturing, teaching, and encouraging the young along the way of salvation and personal growth; they became well-loved by the townsfolk. The new Sisters received their official name of "The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians." Their work was clearly outlined for them by Don Bosco: they were to consider themselves as the complement to the work of the Salesian Fathers and Brothers founded by Don Bosco in Turin, and what the Salesians were doing for boys they would do for girls.

★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day

O Saint Mary Mazzarello, God willed that you should be the mother and co-foundress with Don Bosco to found the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. We thank God for your yes to this great mission of love. You lived your yes to be the mother and co-foundress of our Congregation with your creative fidelity to the Salesian Charism.

Pray for us that, inspired by your example, we may be faithful sons and daughters of God and may likewise respond to the grace of God and bring in our contribution with renewed enthusiasm and creative fidelity.

Through your intercession may God grant me the following grace... [pause]... so that together with others I may assist in bringing all those whom I encounter especially the young people and enable them to offer their best contribution to build up a just and fraternal world.

★ *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father... St. Mary Mazzarello pray for us...*

9th Day (May 12) – **YES TO THE JOY OF EVANGELIZATION AS MISSIONARY**

★ **Reflection**

Mary Mazzarello right from her early days at home nurtured a personal relationship with Jesus. Spurred on by love for Jesus, she was eager to make him known and loved. It is understandable how she got passionately involved in the missionary expeditions of Don Bosco. She herself longed to go to the missions and many times asked for it. In Mornese, Mother Mazzarello with the Sisters began learning new languages: French, Spanish etc. They used to spend time around the Map of the World, learning the geographical situation of different countries. She didn't have the fortune of going to the far out missions. She committed herself untiringly to make known Christ in every way possible (Cf. Phil 1:18).

Mary was a very attentive mother, no wonder to this day she is still affectionately called "Mother Mazzarello." As several of the sisters were on their way to the South American missions, she accompanied them to their port of call in Genoa, Italy, and then took a boat to France so that she could visit the sisters there. Mother Mazzarello knew well to respond to emergencies: In Marseilles their ship broke down and had to be repaired. All the passengers were forced to disembark while it was dry docked. Although the Sisters had been told that lodging had been prepared for them, there was a mix-up and they were left without beds to sleep on. Mother Mazzarello took the sheets that they brought with them stuffed them with straw, and made makeshift beds for all of them.

In 1875 Don Bosco had sent the first Salesian missionaries to South America. Two years later, six Salesian Sisters were included on an expedition to Uruguay, where they established catechetical centers among the Italians who had immigrated there. In a year's time it was followed by the establishment of houses in Argentina. With gratitude, we recall that the 150th Missionary Expedition, 144 years after the first expedition of 1875, without interruption, even during the two terrible world wars, took place on 29 September 2019.

★ Prayer to St. Mary Mazzarello based on the theme of the day

O Saint Mary Mazzarello, your '*Yes to the joy of evangelization as missionary*' was almost a natural gift which you treasured and gave life to. Right from your early childhood, you manifested extraordinary love for Jesus and were eager to learn Catechism. You made Jesus known and loved at all times. With your loving letters you encouraged your missionary Sisters and you prayed for each one of them.

Pray for us that, inspired by your example, we may be faithful sons and daughters of God and may likewise welcome the missionary mandate of Jesus and spread the Good News wherever we are.

Through your intercession may God grant me the following grace... [pause]... so that together with others I may assist in bringing all those whom I encounter especially the young people to grow in your love and to me ambassadors of the Good News near and far.

★ *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be to the Father...St. Mary Mazzarello pray for us...*

Feast Day of St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello (May 13)
On May 13,
Celebrate St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello!
Get in touch with a Community of the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco and join them for the Eucharist and festivities to celebrate the Feast Day of St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello

The origin of this novena

Fr. Bernardino Almeida SDB, Rector, Don Bosco, Sulcorn, wanted to print the Novena to St. Mary Mazzarello in English and Konkani for his people and had contacted Sr. Theresa Joseph. Knowing that the Sisters had only Triduum and no Novena Prayers to St. Mary Mazzarello, Sr. Teresa contacted Sr. Dr. Piera Cavaglia, Secretary General of the Institute and an expert in Salesian Pedagogy. Sr. Piera wrote: “Sr. Teresa, why don’t you prepare one with your talents and gifts.”

Based on the themes suggested by Sr. Piera, Sr. Teresa has prepared this Novena. Sr. Piera has gone through it, considers it a good and valid work and has suggested circulating it for the coming year to the Provincial Conference of India (PCI) and also to the Salesians for they can find in this novena a good guide.

Themes for each day of the Novena: proposed by: *Sr. Dr. Piera Cavaglia fma*

Text of the Novena: *Sr. Dr. Teresa Joseph fma*

Proof reading of the text: *Prof. Sr. Alice Chacko fma*

Language of the World teaches

SCIENCE

Language of God teaches

HOLINESS