

II. ASSOCIATION OF DEVOTEES OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

When he had built the church of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco in Turin in 1868, Don Bosco had it consecrated with an entire cycle of celebrations made available for the public domain through an appropriate booklet²⁰. Then he set out to make it an attractive centre for prayers, thanks and donations through a second larger book²¹. Still not satisfied he sought to give stability to general devotion to Mary under the title of Mary Help of Christians through a lay association which bore that name.

He himself sketched out the beginnings of it in a third booklet where he drew on the history of the title of Help of Christians through the ages, presenting devotion under that title in Munich and Turin and adding a long series of prayers and practices with their indulgences²². He did not fail to include documents relating to the approval of the Association, the ones you find here: the papal brief granting indulgences over a ten year period to the new association (no. 41), the request for and canonical approval from the Archdiocese of the Statutes (no. 42), the Regulations (no. 43).

Afterwards (1870) he gained permission from Pius IX to erect the association as an Archconfraternity with the faculty of aggregating similar associations that already existed or would be set up in the archdiocese of Turin; this faculty was then extended by the same Pope in 1877 to all dioceses in Piedmont (and in 1896, in Fr Rua's time as Rector Major, to all dioceses in the world, by Pope Leo XIII).

²⁰ *Memorial of a solemnity in honour of Mary Help of Christians.* Torino, Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales 1868 (OE XXI, 1-174).

²¹ *Maraviglie della Madre di Dio invocata sotto il titolo di Maria Ausiliatrice. Raccolte dal Sacerdote Giovanni Bosco.* Torino, Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Franc. di Sales 1868 (OE XX, 192-376).

²² *Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians canonically erected in the Church dedicated to her in Turin, with an historical outline of the title.* Torino, Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales 1869 (OE XXI, 339-434).

For a rapid overview of the association, its history and how it is today, including interventions by some Rectors Major, see no. 3 of the Quaderni di Maria Ausiliatrice²³ and the already cited extensive bibliographies of Don Bosco.

41. Petition to Pius IX for indulgences favouring the setting up of the Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians

Critical Ed. in E(m) III, pp. 62-63.

[Rome, 2 March 1869]

Most Holy Father,

Father John Bosco, keenly desirous of promoting devotion to the Mother of God and veneration of the august sacrament of the Eucharist, sought to satisfy the constant requests of many of the faithful and begin a pious union under the title:

*Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians
in the church dedicated to her in Turin*

The aim of its members was to do whatever they could to enhance decorum, devotion and observance of feasts, solemnities, triduum, novenas, processions and all practices of piety referring to the honour and glory of the great Queen of Heaven and Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

But since the treasury of holy indulgences would offer members special encouragement and fervour, the speaker humbly appeals to the well-known kindness of Your Holiness that he may deign to grant the following spiritual favours to each member:

1. A plenary indulgence on all feasts and solemnities, celebrated throughout the year in honour of the Blessed Virgin and the Blessed Sacrament on condition that they approach the sacraments of confession and communion.

²³ Pier Luigi CAMERONI, *ADMA. Associazione di Maria Ausiliatrice. Un itinerario di santificazione e di apostolato secondo il carisma di don Bosco*. Leumann (Torino), Elledici 2009.

2. A plenary indulgence once a week on the day they approach these same sacraments of confession and communion and pray for the needs of holy mother Church.

3. An indulgence of five hundred days every time they attend holy Mass.

4. An indulgence of three hundred days every time they devoutly say: *Maria Auxilium Christianorum ora pro nobis*, including its translation into other languages. That such an indulgence may also benefit those who are not aggregated to this pious union.

5. In the previously mentioned church of Mary Help of Christians where every morning the rosary is said along with other prayers, Mass is celebrated at the main altar where the Blessed Sacrament is kept and general communion is available for many faithful especially young people, we humbly ask that the same plenary indulgence be granted to everyone who takes part in this act of devotion and goes to holy communion.

6. That these indulgences may also be applied in suffrage for the holy souls in Purgatory.

Yours ...

Fr John Bosco

[Papal Brief]

Critical ed. *In Associazione dei devoti di Maria Ausiliatrice canonicamente eretta nella chiesa a lei dedicata in Torino, con ragguaglio storico su questo titolo.*

Torino, Tip. dell'Oratorio

di S. Francesco di Sales 1869 (OE XXI, 378-385).

Pius PP. IX

Ad futuram rei memoriam

Exponendum curavit Nobis dilectus filius Ioannes Bosco, Presbyter Taurinensis, sibi, ad fovendam augendamque fidelium erga sanctam Dei Matrem, augustumque Eucharistiae Sacramentum religionem, in animo esse, piam sodalitatem in Ecclesia sub invocatione Immaculatae Virginis Auxiliatricis Civitatis Taurinensis de Ordinarii licentia instituire, cui vulgo - Associazione dei devoti di Maria

Ausiliatrice - nomen sit, et cujus sodales praecipue in promovendum Deiparae Immaculae augustique Sacramenti cultum intendant animum.

Quo vero, propositis uberioribus ad coelestem beatitatem potiundam praesidiis, maiori studio fideles sodalitati isti nomen dent, atque in praescripta pietatis opera incumbant, enixas Nobis preces adhibuit humiliter, ut Ecclesiae thesauros, quorum dispensationem Nobis commisti Altissimus, idcirco reserare de benignitate Nostra dignaremur.

Nos igitur salubres has frugiferasque memorati dilecti filii curas plurimum commendantes, quo sodalitas ista maiora in dies, Deo iuvante, suscipiat incrementa, de Omnipotentis Dei misericordia, ac BB. Petri et Pauli App. ejus auctoritate confisi, omnibus et singulis utriusque sexus Christifidelibus e pia sodalitate vulgo - Associazione dei divoti di Maria Ausiliatrice - in cognomine Ecclesiae Civitatis Taurinensis canonice instituta nunc et pro tempore existentibus, vere poenitentibus et confessis, ac sacra Communionem refectis, qui eandem Ecclesiam, et sodalitatis Oratorium vel Altare, Nativitatis, Circumcisionis, Epiphaniae et Ascensionis D. No. I. C. festivitatum, Dominica Pentecostes, sollemnitate SS. Corporis Christi, itemque septem potioribus Immaculae Virginis Deiparae festis, a primis vespere usque ad occasum solis dierum hujusmodi, singulis annis devote visitaverint, ibique pro Christianorum Principum concordia, haeresum extirpatione ac s. Matris Ecclesiae exaltatione pias ad Deum preces effuderint, quo die ex recensitis id egerint, Plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum Indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

Praeterea eisdem sodalibus, qui quolibet die sollemnium supplicationum, quae in honorem sanctae Dei Matris dicta in Ecclesia per tres aut novem dies continuos fieri solent, ea, quae descripsimus, pietatis opera corde saltem contriti peregerint, septem annos totidemque quadragenas: quotiescumque vero rite devoto interfuerint Exercitio cujusvis diei mane de Ordinarii licentia praefata in Ecclesia habendo, et corde pariter contriti consuetas preces ut supra pro Christianorum Principum concordia, haeresum extirpatione, ac s. Matris Ecclesiae exaltatione recitaverint, centum dies de injunctis eis, seu alias quomodolibet debitis poenitentiis in forma Ecclesiae consueta relaxamus.

Quae omnes et singulae Indulgentiae, peccatorum remissiones, ac poenitentiarum relaxationes ut etiam Animabus Christifidelium, quae Deo in

charitate conjunctae ab hac luce migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari possint, misericorditer in Domino elargimur.

Praesentibus ad Decennium tantum valituris.

Datum Romae apud S. Petrum sub annulo Piscatoris die XVI Martii MDCCCLXIX pontificatus Nostri anno vigesimotertio.

N. card. Paracciani Clarelli

(Translation)

Pius PP. IX

For perpetual remembrance

Our beloved son John Bosco, a priest of the Turin diocese, has explained what he has in mind to encourage and increase the devotion of the faithful to the Holy Mother of God and the august sacrament of the Eucharist, and to set up a pious society by the name of *The Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians*, with the approval of the Ordinary, in the church dedicated to Mary Help of Christians in Turin, whose members will have the fostering of devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God and the august sacrament as their principal aim.

So, by offering them greater assistance to achieve heavenly bliss, and so that the faithful may be more committed to this Association and fulfil the prescribed works of piety, he has presented us with this humble petition asking us that out of our kindness we should unlock the treasures of the Church for this end, the dispensation of which is our commission from the Most High God.

Commending the salutary and fruitful concerns of our beloved son, and so that this Association may grow day by day through divine help, and relying on the merciful God and the authority of his blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, We do hereby mercifully grant in the Lord a plenary indulgence and the remission of all their sins to all Christian individuals of either gender who are now and will in the future be enrolled in the pious society which has the name *The Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians*, canonically erected in the church dedicated to Mary Help of Christians in Turin and who, truly penitent, have been to confession and communion and who have devoutly

visited this church, oratory or altar of this Society from first Vespers until sunset, on whichever of the following days they will have done so: Christmas Day, the Feast of the Circumcision, the Epiphany and the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ, on Pentecost Sunday, on the Solemnity of the Body of the Lord, and similarly on the seven principal Feasts of the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God; and have prayed for harmony amongst Christian princes, for the eradication of heresies, and for the exultation of holy mother Church.

Moreover, to the same members who at least with penitent heart fulfil the above-mentioned works of piety on each day of a novena or triduum usually carried out in this church in honour of the Mother of God, we grant seven years of indulgence and as many quarantines: every time they come to the devotions which, with the permission of the Ordinary are celebrated each morning in the church, and who are likewise of penitent heart and say the usual prayers for harmony amongst Christian princes, the eradication of heresies and the exultation of holy mother Church, we grant a hundred days of indulgence.

We mercifully grant in the Lord that these indulgences, forgiveness of sins and remission of the pains of sin, may also be applied by way of suffrage to the souls of faithful Christians who passed from this life in God's love.

These are valid for ten years only.

Given in Rome at St Peter's under the seal of the Fisherman on 16 March 1869, in the 23rd year of our pontificate.

*Card. Paracciani Clarelli*²⁴

²⁴ In the booklet quoted at note 22 (Turin, 1869, Chap. VI, pp. 28-31) we read: "Favours granted to this church by the supreme pontiff. The supreme pontiff often helped with this church through material offerings and even more through spiritual favours. On January 12, 1867 he granted the following indulgences to all who came to the aid of the building of this church: 1. His apostolic blessing with a plenary indulgence at the moment of death; 2. A plenary indulgence every time they worthily approach holy communion; 3. These indulgences are applicable by way of suffrage to the souls in purgatory. To encourage the faithful to take part in the consecration of this church, with a Brief issued on 22 May 1868, he granted a plenary indulgence to all who had been to confession and communion and who visited this church of Mary Help of Christians on the day of its consecration or on another day during the octave ..." (papal letter of September 23, 1868 follows).

42. Petition to the Archbishop of Turin, Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi for the Canonical Erection of the Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians

Printed Ed. in E(m) III, pp. 73-74 (OE XXI, 370-377).

[Turin, 18 April 1869]

Your Grace,

The undersigned humbly lays before Your Grace that solely out of a desire to promote the glory of God and the good of souls he has had in mind that in the church of Mary Help of Christians, consecrated by Your Grace to divine worship just a year ago, he could start a pious union of the faithful under the name of the *Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians*. The principal purpose would be to promote veneration of the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to *Maria Auxilium Christianorum*: a title that seems to be most pleasing to the august Queen of Heaven.

With this in mind some rules have been drawn up modelled on, almost copied from the statutes of the well-known confraternity of Mary erected in Munich in Bavaria.

So that these exercises of piety may have a stable form and be fully in accord with the spirit of the holy Church this humble individual petitions Your Grace to take this pious project into kind consideration and humbly begs you to examine these statutes, add, take away, modify as you see fit, and then as I humbly petition you, approve them with any clause Your Grace considers opportune for promoting the glory of the august Queen of Heaven and the good of souls.

The Association's altar would be the main altar in the church, the privileged one, and at which most of the exercises of piety take place which are the purpose of this Association.

Full of hope that you will grant this favour, and with deep gratitude I implore your holy blessings and profess myself,

your humble petitioner,

Fr John Bosco

[*Decretum*]

*Alexander Octavianus Riccardi
Ex Comitibus A Netro
Supremi Ordinis SS. Annuntiationis
Eques Torquatus Etc. Etc.
Dei et Sanctae Sedis Apostolicae Gratia
Archiepiscopus Taurinensi
SS. D. No. D. Pii Papae IX Praelatus Domesticus
Ac Pontificio Solio Adsistens*

Viso memoriali nobis exhibito ab ad. Rev. Dom. Ioanne Bosco ecclesiae sub invocatione Immaculatae Virginis Auxiliatricis nuper erectae in hac civitate rectore, eiusque tenore considerato, piis oratoris votis libenter annuentes ad fovendam augendamque fidelium erga s. Dei Matrem augustumque Eucharistiae Sacramentum religionem, piam sodalitatem cui nomen erit: Associazione dei divoti di Maria Ausiliatrice ad altare maius praedictae ecclesiae praesentium tenore erigimus ac canonice erectam declaramus pro utriusque sexus fidelibus, ut omnes eidem adscribendi de Ecclesiae thesauris, praescripta opera adimplendo, participare valeant; quoniam vero statuta nobis pariter exhibita, ac per nos firmata, piae societatis regimini et incremento accommodata novimus, eadem approbamus, reservata nobis facultate ea addendi vel variandi, quae magis pro dictae piae sodalitatis utilitate expedire iudicabimus. Hoc nostrum decretum una cum memoratis precibus ac statutis in registris Curiae nostrae referri iubemus ac per authenticum exemplar D. Oratori exhiberi.

Datum Taurini die decima octava aprilis anno millesimo octingentesimo sexagesimo nono.

*† Alexander Archiepiscopus
et manualiter subscriptus Th. Gaudi pro Cancell.*

Ita in originali cum quo coll. concordat.

Datum Taurini die, mense et anno praemissis.

Th. Gaude pro Cancell.

(Translation)

Alessandro Ottaviano Riccardi
dei conti Di Netro
Knight of the Supreme Order of the Annunciation, etc. etc.
by the Grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See
Archbishop of Turin
Domestic Prelate of His Holiness Pope Pius IX
and Assistant at the Papal Throne

Having seen the note presented by Rev. Father John Bosco, rector of the Church recently erected in this city under the title of the Immaculate Virgin the Help of Christians, and having considered its tenor, I willingly consent to the pious wishes of the writer to nurture and increase the devotion of the faithful to the holy Mother of God and the august sacrament of the Eucharist, and by this present decree we erect and declare canonically erected for the faithful of both genders at the main altar of said church, the pious society that will take the name *Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians*, in such a way that all who enrol in it, fulfilling its prescribed works, can participate in the treasures of the Church. And since the statutes likewise presented to us and which we have signed are known to be appropriate for the governing and increase of the Pious Society we approve these too, reserving the faculty of adding or varying those things we judge to be of greater use to said Pious Association. This decree of ours and its petition along with the statues will be kept in the archives of our curia and a genuine copy sent to the petitioner.

Given in Turin in April 18, 1869,

† Alessandro *archbishop*
Teologo Gaude *pro-chancellor*

43. Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians [Regulations]

Printed ed. in *Associazione dei devoti di Maria Ausiliatrice canonicamente eretta nella chiesa a lei dedicata in Torino, con ragguaglio storico su questo titolo*. Torino, Tip. dell'Oratorio di S.

Francesco di Sales 1869, 96 p. (OE XXI, 386-397).

1. An Association of Mary's devotees is erected in the church in Turin dedicated to Mary Help of Christians and with the authorisation of His Grace the Archbishop of Turin. It proposes to promote the glories of the divine Mother of the Saviour to merit her protection in life and especially at the moment of death.

2. Two special means are proposed: spreading devotion to the Blessed Virgin and veneration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

3. To this purpose members will act with words, advice, works and with the authority of promoting decorum and devotion in novenas, feasts and solemnities which occur in the course of the year in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Blessed Sacrament. Spreading good books, holy pictures, medals, reports, taking part in and recommending taking part in processions in honour of Our Blessed Lady and the Blessed Sacrament, frequent communion, assisting at holy Mass, accompanying Viaticum are all things that members propose to promote with every means compatible with their state.

4. Members will make every effort themselves and with people they employ to prevent blasphemy and any kind of talk against religion and in as much as they can prevent any obstacle hindering keeping Sundays holy.

5. Each member according to advice in catechism classes and from spiritual teachers is warmly encouraged to go to confession and communion every fortnight or once a month and attend Mass daily as long as the obligations of their state allows this.

Members will say each day, following their usual morning and evening prayers, and in honour of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: *May the most holy*

and Blessed Sacrament be praised at every moment. And in honour of the Blessed Virgin: *Maria, Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.* It is sufficient for priests that they have the intention to pray for all members of this pious Association in their holy Mass. These prayers will serve as a bond uniting all members in one heart and soul to give due honour to Jesus hidden in the most holy Eucharist and his august Mother, and take part in all the works of piety carried out by each member.

Spiritual advantages for members

All members, in order to mutually assist one another to walk the way of salvation aim to be in communion through the good works each one does in private or in the church of Mary Help of Christians, or elsewhere.

1. They will take part in the practices of piety held at the Association's altar which is the main altar in this church: it is the special daily altar according to the decree of the Sacred Congregation on May 22, 1868. Mass will be celebrated at this altar, amongst other things, each morning around six on weekdays, and around seven on Sundays along with the third part of the Rosary, with special prayers. All those who can be there will go to communion. The reigning Pius IX kindly grants 100 days indulgence to everyone each time he or she takes part in this exercise of piety. Every evening psalms will be sung, there will be spiritual reading, prayers, Benediction, and the rosary as in the morning. Each member can gain the plenary indulgence on the solemnities of Christmas, the Circumcision, Epiphany, the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ; on Pentecost, and *Corpus Domini*.

2. A plenary indulgence can be gained on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady's birthday, the Presentation in the temple, the Annunciation, Purification, Visitation, her assumption into Heaven.

3. The same plenary indulgence can be gained on any day of the novena or feast of Our Lady, *Help of Christians*; on the Feast of St Francis de Sales, St Aloysius Gonzaga, and on a day chosen each month for the exercise for a

Happy Death. The indulgences noted here can also be gained by those not enrolled in the Association. Every member who takes part in the practices of piety celebrated in this church over the year on the occasion of triduums or novenas can gain, once each day, an indulgence of seven years and also quarantines. It is good to note here that to gain the above plenary indulgences sacramental confession and communion are prescribed unless the member has the praiseworthy practice of going to confession each week. In this case only the state of grace is required.

4. Each year on the first free day after the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, a *Requiem Mass* will be sung, and other suffrages offered for the souls of the deceased members in general and particular for those whom God called to eternal life in the course of the year. When a member falls ill or God is pleased to call them to a better life they will especially be recommended to the prayers that are said each day at the altar of Mary Help of Christians so long as the Rector of the church is advised.

Acceptance

1. Whoever wishes to be part of this Association will have his/her name and surname, place of residence written in the appropriate register kept in the sacristy of the church of Mary Help of Christians. On that occasion, if they so desire, they will be given a medal or holy picture with a booklet about the Association.

2. Parish priests and any others who have the care of souls, directors of colleges or education centres or charitable institutes can enrol any of their dependants so long as they send members' names to the director of the church who is also the director of the pious Association.

There is no annual subscription fee; each person if he or she wishes will give a yearly donation to cover expenses for the novena and Feast of Mary Help of Christians, and for all the other sacred functions carried out during the year in the church of the Association.

*Visa supra scripta statuta seu capitula a nobis firmata tamquam praedictae
piae societati ac fidelium pietati consona approbamus, reservata nobis facilitate
eadem variandi, iuxta rerum ac temporum circumstantias.*

Datum Taurini die 18 aprilis 1869.

† Alexander Archiepisc.
manual. Th. Gaude pro Cancellarius

Ita in originali cum quo etc.

Th. Gaudi pro Cancellarius