

M. E. POSADA A. COSTA P. CAVAGLIÀ

I WILL NEVER FORGET YOU



*Letters of
Maria Domenica Mazzarello*

INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS - ROME



Sua e Maria Margaretha

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Engl.

M. E. Posada A. Costa P. Cavaglià

I Will Never Forget You
Letters of Maria Domenica Mazzarello

FMA English-language Translation Group



Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians - Rome

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Foreword

The Letters of Maria Domenica Mazzarello

This translation of the letters of Maria Domenica into English is the result of the collaborative effort of a group of FMA from various English-speaking provinces. It is not merely the result of an exercise in teamwork, but rather the fruit of a spiritual journey, of an attitude of sharing and pooling resources, which has developed with time, particularly over the last few years. It is an achievement that is significant and a promise of further action, which the Sisters from English-speaking countries wish to undertake, in order to make the sources and the most relevant expressions of our spirituality more accessible.

The importance of this commitment lies, not only in the quality of what has been produced, but in the goals that have been set and in the unity of purpose with which future tasks will be undertaken.

I invite you to consider the letters, in this up-dated English translation, as offering you the opportunity to stand at the window of the Valponasca. The letters are, in fact, a reflection of the interior richness of *Main*, and open out to a horizon that shows, at one and the same time, the Monferrato hills, the vast world of the Salesian Missions, and the boundless expanse of God's love; a love that embraces every creature, and which finds its greatest expression in the Eucharist. That, in the first place, is where Maria

Domenica's gaze is directed to from the window of the Valponasca.

The letters reflect back to us the picture of a life which is contemplative, yet rooted in ordinary everyday events, anchored to an unshakeable faith in the ever-present providence of God and in the salvific action of Jesus His Son. They form an unconscious autobiography that allows the many facets of the face of Maria Mazzarello to shine forth, like the squares in a mosaic.

There is the face of the sister, of the educator, of the mother, and above all, the face of the disciple and spouse of Christ, of one desirous of modelling herself on Him, crucified and risen, and of dedicating her life to the spreading of the Kingdom. As a result, we find running through all the Letters an ardent longing to be a missionary. It is this interior yearning to make Jesus known, to carry His name to the furthest ends of the earth, that sustains her in her efforts, sacrifices, hopes and plans.

This is the authentic reflection towards which we Daughters of Mary Help of Christians can turn to find the *hallmarks* of our origins, the distinguishing features which must characterise us. They are what will help us face the challenges of today, sometimes new and unexpected, but with solutions to be found ultimately in our ability to remain close to Jesus. Frequenting this school will render us truly wise.

This wisdom is a taste for the things of God, discernment of situations, practical understanding and guidelines for life. It is essential and modest, fleeing all ostentation and pomposity of words. To become wise according to God's way is to speak little and reflect much (L 22).

The word of Maria Domenica as found in the letters is, therefore, neither too simple nor naïve. It transcends the geographical boundaries of Mornese, and those of time itself, to reach us, at the beginning of the Third Millennium, with a particular poignancy. It reawakens in us the need for the interior life and for authenticity, for coherence in living out our call to be women of courage

and of action, capable of supporting each other, and together reaching out to the young people. It encourages us in our commitment to live the true sense of family, through styles of relationships that are mutually enriching, with each one intent on responding to the voice of the Spirit, and where the common language is that of love.

While thanking those who, in unity, have contributed with a joyous generosity to this translation of the letters, I entrust them to you, English-speaking Sisters, that you may imbibe the beauty and the depth of these letters, and above all come face to face with Maria Mazzarello. She still has something to say, today, to us who live in an era of information technology and globalisation. True, these terms were unknown in her time, but their genuine demands can be met with the authenticity and the simplicity of a life which, because it was true to the Gospel values, continues to be a letter and a message from God.

Rome, 13 February 2000

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Antonia Colombo".

Sr. Antonia Colombo fma

Leader of the Institute
of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

Abbreviations



- ASC Archives of the Salesian [SDB] Congregation
- Cronistoria* Chronicles of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.
Capetti, Giselda (ed.) (1981), *Cronistoria: Chronicles of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, I-V, Don Bosco Publications, New Rochelle, New York.
- ETG FMA English-language Translation group
- FMA Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (commonly known as Salesian Sisters)
- GAFMA General Archives of the Institute of FMA
- MB Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco
Borgatello, Diego, Michael Mendl (eds.) (1965-1995), *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, I-XVI, Salesiana Publishers, New Rochelle, New York.
- L Letters of Maria Mazzarello
Posada, María Esther, Anna Costa, Piera Cavaglià (eds) (1994), *La sapienza della vita: Lettere di Maria Domenica Mazzarello*, Società Editrice Internazionale, Torino.
- SDB Salesians of Don Bosco

Introduction to the English-language edition

The English-language editorial group is an international group of FMA representing various English speaking parts of the world. Mother Antonia Colombo, Leader of the Institute of the FMA, and her Council commissioned the group in 1998. The principal aim of this body is to translate, from the Italian, significant primary and secondary source material relevant to the spirituality of the FMA. The first task assigned to the group was the translation of all the known, personal correspondence of the FMA co-founder, St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello.

The English translation of the letters of Maria Mazzarello is taken from the 1994 Italian edition: Posada, María Esther, Anna Costa, Piera Cavaglià (eds.) (1994), *La sapienza della vita: Lettere di Maria Domenica Mazzarello*, SEI, Torino.

The English editorial group is indebted to María Esther Posada, Anna Costa and Piera Cavaglià for compiling the 1994 Italian edition of the letters of Maria Domenica Mazzarello. Like them, the ETG has prepared this English translation with a view to making the person and spirituality of Maria Mazzarello available to a wider audience other than the FMA. With their permission, the group has utilised their style of formatting the letters, and their extensive and comprehensive notes. The initials ETG (FMA English-language Translation Group) indicate all footnotes added by the English-language editorial group.

The ETG has decided not to translate all the introductory

documents of the 1994 Italian edition to the letters of Maria Mazzarello. Since this is the first published edition in English, the group desires that the reader's attention be focused on the text of the letters without additional commentaries. However, to assist the reader, the ETG has included two references it considers as key components for a more profitable reading of the letters. The first is a brief biographical profile of Maria Mazzarello extracted from the introduction to the first Italian edition of the letters, written by María Esther Posada in 1975 (Posada, María Esther (ed.) (1975), 'Introduction', in *Lettere di S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello: Confondatrice dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, Ancora, Milano, pp. 14-17. The second is a work of two of the editors of the 1994 Italian edition, Costa, Anna and Piera Cavaglià detailing the editorial criteria of the letters (cf. Posada, María Esther, Anna Costa, Piera Cavaglià (eds.) (1994), 'Criteri di edizione delle lettere', in *La sapienza della vita: Lettere di Maria Domenica Mazzarello*, SEI, Torino, pp. 47-55).

Style and mechanics of the English Translation

Throughout the text the ETG has tried to utilise words and terms that are acceptable wherever English is spoken. The group sought agreement on usage and chose that which was most understandable, if not always the most acceptable for a given country or region.

UK English spelling is used throughout the text. The date sequence follows month / day / year. The editorial group opted not to use the exact punctuation of the original letters as found in the 1994 Italian edition, since it would make the text pedantic and difficult to read in English. The group chose to transform long sentences into shorter ones. In some places, idiomatic expressions have been translated with equivalent English idioms. At times, conjunctives and interjections are omitted (e.g. *neh!*, *ma*, *poi*, *n'è vero*, *dunque*, *e*, *ne*, *anzi*).

Some words are left in the Italian so as not to lose the full

significance of their meaning (e.g. *piccole passioncelle* cf. L 48,8; *fioretto* cf. L 51,11; *rendiconto* cf. L 55,8). The editors have chosen to explain rather than literally translate some terms that would be unfamiliar to many readers (e.g. the term *vestizione* has not been translated “clothing” or “vestition” but “admission to the novitiate” cf. L 52,1).

Following the custom of her time, Maria Mazzarello uses a more formal style when addressing people in positions of authority (e.g. principals, priests, doctors). This explains the very frequent use of such terms as “Very Rev.,” “Most Illustrious,” “Most Esteemed,” “Honourable Sir”. Terms such as “superior” and “Mother Mistress,” are translated as such in the text of the letters. In the footnotes terms are used for these words that are more commonly acceptable today (e.g. “community animator”; “Directress of Novices”). In this context God-language, as portrayed by Maria Mazzarello, is denoted in its masculine forms as was appropriate in nineteenth century theology and spirituality.

When the same word is used to signify different groups of people, lower and upper case is applied to make the distinction. This occurs most frequently with the use of the words “sister” and “daughter”. When the two words are capitalised, they refer to the FMA. When not, they refer to family members. The term “Don” in Italian is a title applied to priests. The editors have reserved “Don” for St. John Bosco (Don Bosco, as he is universally known) and have translated it as “Father” when naming all other priests. Throughout the text, all proper names of people are left in Italian. The names of major Italian cities are translated into English. All towns and villages are left in the original Italian.

I Will Never Forget You

The title *I Will Never Forget You* was chosen by the ETG for the English translation of the letters of Maria Domenica Mazzarello. It reflects the deep affection that Maria Mazzarello had for the FMA and for all with whom she came in contact, revealing her interconnectedness with her God, others and nature. The words are her own (cf. L 65,4), arising out of her deep conviction that God is always present to us, walking with us on life's journey. She echoes, unconsciously perhaps, the words God spoke through the prophet: *I will never forget you, my people* (Isaiah 49:15).

The FMA English-language Translation Group

Sr. Janet Bradley
Sr. Maria Alem Coching
Sr. Philomena D'Souza
Sr. Edna Mary MacDonald
Sr. Leilani Macoy
Sr. Máire O'Byrne
Sr. Louise Passero
Sr. Rosina Susngi
Sr. Mary Treacy

Biographical Profile¹

María Esther Posada

Maria Domenica Mazzarello was born on May 9, 1837 in Mornese, a small, little-known village built on one of the hills of Monferrato [northern Italy].

Work and deep Christian piety were the hallmarks of the family environment in which she grew and in which her moral character was formed. She was of a decisive and frank nature, possessed an ardent temperament, a profound sense of reality, a clear mind and emotional balance. At the same time, she was reflective and gifted with lively communicative skills.

Blessed with clear intelligence, she applied herself ardently and with tenacity of will to the study of the catechism, the only study Mornese could offer her. Her frank comment regarding the catechetical competitions organised in the parish for the boys and girls, goes back to this time: “I don’t want anyone to surpass me. The boys don’t scare me. I want to beat them all.”²

Being a typical young woman, even from her teens she wanted to dress elegantly, seeking not without a touch of vanity, to stand out among her peers. The firstborn of seven

¹ This article was translated by the ETG as found in Posada, María Esther, (ed.) (1975), ‘Profilo Biografico’, in *Lettere di S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello: Confondatrice dell’Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, Ancora, Milano, pp. 14-17. (ETG)

² Maccono, Ferdinand (1980) [1934], *Saint Mary D. Mazzarello: Co-foundress and First Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, 2 vols, English translation, I p. 12.

children, she showed herself to be well-balanced and manifested innate common sense when helping her mother around the house and in the education of her brothers and sisters.

In 1849,³ the family moved to a farm called the “Valponasca”, approximately three-quarters of an hour’s walk from the village. Maria then helped her father in the vineyards, distinguishing herself among the other workers for both her physical strength and organisational ability.

The time spent at the Valponasca encompassed a fairly large period of her life and deeply influenced her spiritual development. She returned to the village at the age of twenty-three, tempered by sacrifice and strengthened by grace.

This reflective, apostolic young woman opened herself during those years to the mystery of prayer and a Eucharistic life. Every evening at the Valponasca, she had learned to pause in prayer at the little window of her room, with her gaze fixed on a far-off point, the tabernacle of the parish church.

Witnesses testify to her Eucharistic fervor of these years. She would go to the church at a very early hour, over difficult roads, even in the heart of winter so as to be able to participate in the Eucharist as sacrifice and sacrament. We can understand how, in such a spiritual climate, she would take Mary Immaculate as her life’s model. It was at this time that she consecrated herself to God in the intimacy of her heart with a vow of virginity and enrolled in the association for women, the *Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate*, as soon as it was established in Mornese.

In 1860 she returned to the village and while generously caring for her relatives who were ill, she contracted typhoid which had struck down the population of

³ Further studies by the author indicate that Maria Mazzarello moved to the Valponasca in 1849 (Posada, M.E. (1994), ‘Introduzione’, Posada et al, op. cit., p. 6).

Mornese. This seemingly unimportant fact strongly influenced the life of Maria Domenica and marked a new phase on her spiritual journey. Now physically weak, she reluctantly abandoned the work of the fields and undertook the profession of seamstress. A very simple prayer from that period reveals her soundness of temperament which was founded on humility: "Lord, if in your goodness you wish to give me a few more years of life, grant that I may spend them ignored by everyone, forgotten by everyone but you."⁴

This new type of work had, however, an apostolic purpose. She confided this to her intimate friend, Petronilla Mazzarello, with whom she had shared her thoughts and work from the time of early adolescence. "As soon as we can manage by ourselves, we shall ... open a workroom [dressmaking classes]. Then we can accept young girls and teach them to sew, but above all we *can teach them to know and love God, make them good, and keep them away from so many dangers.*"⁵

A small hospice and a Festive Oratory⁶ were later added to the dressmaking classes. So it was that the work already founded in the famous Oratory in Turin by St. John Bosco, the noted educator of youth, was extended to girls and young women, with the same apostolic objectives.

Maria Domenica Mazzarello met Don Bosco in 1864 when the Saint, who was then 49 years of age, went to Mornese with his lively boys for one of his famous autumnal outings. Intuitively he recognised the gifts of nature and grace inherent in that young woman who, together with the other members of the *Pious Union* was presented to him by Fr. Domenico Pestarino, spiritual director of the association.

⁴ Maccono F., op. cit., I p. 63.

⁵ Maccono F., op. cit., I p. 69.

⁶ A Festive Oratory in this context is a welcoming and friendly place where the young gather on Sundays and public holidays to spend their leisure time. Recreational and religious activities fill the day. (ETG)

After a long preparation the foundation of the *Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians* became a reality in 1872. A group of the *Daughters of Mary Immaculate* of Mornese who had been living a common life for some time, became, under the direct guidance of Don Bosco, the first nucleus of the *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*. The Institute was founded by the Saint as a “living monument” of gratitude to the Mother of God.⁷

First with the title of Vicar and later as Leader of the Institute, Maria Domenica began her life at the head of the small community. Her profound self-knowledge led her to a deep humility. Her moral stature, her deep union with God and her capacity for governing, tempered by true charity and demonstrated in various ways, made her outstanding in the community.

Two years after its foundation the Institute had already entered a phase of promising growth and after five years could send the First Missionary Expedition to Latin America.

In 1879, Don Bosco who recognised the advantages of such a change, transferred the Centre of the Institute to Nizza Monferrato. *La Madre*⁸ spent the last two years of her life in the new Mother House from where she undertook numerous journeys to visit the new communities. At the beginning of 1881, though already afflicted with the illness that would lead to her death, conquering it with heroic patience, she accompanied the missionaries to Marseilles.

Upon her return journey to Nizza, however, she had to stop first at St. Cyr, and then at Nice, where she had her last

⁷ Cf. *Cronistoria dell'Istituto delle FMA*, P.I., pp. 291-191 (unedited).

⁸ In the FMA tradition the title *Mother* was commonly given to all those in leadership, but not the title *la Madre*. This title has always been reserved for the Leader of the FMA Institute. The term *la Madre* is a warmer more familiar and intimate form of the term *Mother*. Throughout this text the editors of the 1975 and 1994 Italian editions of the letters of Maria Mazzarello attribute the titles *Mother* and *la Madre* to Maria Mazzarello and refer to the central house of the FMA Institute as *Mother House*. (ETG)

meeting with Don Bosco. The Saint, with that simplicity of spirit which never caused embarrassment, even in the most sensitive of situations, responded to the question which she asked him: "Father will I get well?" with a brief yet eloquent allegory: "One day, Death went to knock on the door of a convent. When the doorkeeper arrived he said, 'Come with me.' The doorkeeper replied that she could not come, because there was no one to take over her duties. So Death said nothing and went into the convent. Everyone he met, he invited: Sisters, teachers, postulants, even the cook. Every single one said that she was unable to accept his invitation because there was too much to do. Finally Death came to the Superior. She tried every conceivable excuse to put him off. Death would not give in, however, and told her, 'The Superior must be the first to give good example even on the journey to Eternity.' [...] The Superior bowed her head and followed Death."⁹

La Madre then understood what she had known for some time. Various witnesses for the Process of her Beatification and Canonization affirm that she had offered her life for the good of the nascent Institute.

The earthly journey of Mother Maria Domenica Mazzarello ended at Nizza on May 14, 1881, when she was 44 years of age. During her final days of intense suffering she still gave wise counsel to her Daughters.

Pius XI declared her Blessed on November 20, 1938. Pius XII proclaimed her a Saint on June 24, 1951, concluding the discourse of that day with these words: "The people of our time have much to learn from the life and witness of Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello."

⁹ Maccono F., op. cit., II p. 288.

Criteria for Editing the Letters¹

Anna Costa and Piera Cavaglià

1. The Publication of the Letters of St. Maria D. Mazzarelo

The first collection of the letters goes back to about 1911, when the Cause for the Beatification of Sr. Maria Mazzarelo was introduced. This was no easy task, when we remember that many of them had been sent across the Atlantic to the first missionaries who left for Uruguay in 1877, and later for Argentina, reaching even distant Patagonia. Some letters had been kept by individual FMAs or other persons, or lay in the archives of the first houses or in the Archives of the Salesian Congregation.

At the time of the beatification process, 34 letters were collected, all of them addressed to FMAs. These were sent to the Archiepiscopal Curia of Acqui for the required authentication so that the writings of the Servant of God might be assessed by the delegated theologians.

One of them commented with satisfaction that, through her letters, Mother allows us to see the “singular care” she took in the formation of the Sisters, her humility which

¹ This article was translated by the ETG as found in Posada, María Esther; Anna Costa, Piera Cavaglià (eds.) (1994), ‘Criteri edizione delle lettere’, in *La sapienza della vita: Lettere di Maria Domenica Mazzarelo*, SEI, Torino, pp. 47-55. (ETG)

led her to avoid any form of flattery, and the great love for Jesus which was the sole aim of her life.²

In 1932, the Salesian Fr. Ferdinando Maccono, Mother Mazzarello's principal biographer and vice-postulator of the Cause of Beatification, published 15 of her letters. He considered them to be, "some of the best [letters] of those we possess".³ According to him, they were the most significant in helping the FMA to get to know better "the spirit" of *la Madre* and to stimulate them to follow the example of her life.

Maccono published the text of the letters, making some corrections to the spelling and grammar and adding appropriate historical and biblical notes to the first five.⁴ His intention was to make known the recipients of the letters⁵ and to compare *la Madre's* simple counsels and suggestions with quotations from the Bible.

In 1935, three other letters were inserted into the printed copy of the Acts of the Beatification Process. Perhaps they were only discovered at that time, or maybe the intention was to give a sample of other types of letters, written by the Servant of God to lay people. These were in fact, letters addressed to the Bosco Family.⁶

² Cf. Sacra Rituum Congregatione (1925), *Aquen. Beatificationis et canonizationis Servae Dei Mariae Dominicae Mazzarello primae Superiorissae Instituti Filiarum Mariae Auxiliatricis. Summarium ex officio. Iudicium primi theologi Censoris, a Sacra Congregatione deputati, super scriptis Servae Dei Mariae Dominicae Mazzarello tributis*, Tip. Guerra et Mirri, Roma, p. 3.

³ Maccono F. (1932), *Quindici lettere di Suor Maria D. Mazzarello con annotazioni*, Scuola Tip. Privata FMA, Torino, p. 3.

⁴ The letters to Sr. Giovanna Borgna (1.1.1879), Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto (May 1879), and three others to Sr. Angela Vallese (4.9.1879; 7.22.1879; 9.11.1879).

⁵ At that time Maccono prepared the *Cenni Biografici* [Brief Biographies] of the FMA who had died during the first decades of the Institute.

⁶ Cf. *Tres epistulae a Servae Dei scriptae* (two are addressed to Francesco Bosco and one to Maria Bosco) (1935), in Sacra Rituum Congregatione, *Aquen. Beatificationes et canonizationis Servae Dei Mariae Dominicae Mazzarello, primae Antistitae Instituti Filiarum Mariae Auxiliatricis. Responsio ad animadversiones*, Tip. Guerra et Belli, Romae, pp. 74-78.

In the revision of the biography of Blessed Maria D. Mazzarello, undertaken by Maccono in the '40s, other letters were found and copied so that they might be published in the next edition. This was published posthumously in 1960, about ten years after the death of the biographer. The letters already prepared by the biographer were also included. However, in the context of the biography, they took on a purely exemplary character and were not used as primary sources in the writing of the text, which was, for the greater part, based on the depositions contained in the process [of beatification and canonisation].

On the occasion of the centenary of the FMA Institute (1972) and of the publication of the *Cronistoria*,⁷ other letters were discovered. They were preserved in the ASC and addressed to Don Bosco, Fr. Cagliari and other Salesians. The time had come, therefore, to undertake the search for all the letters of the Saint with the intention of producing a complete edition. Sr. Maria Esther Posada published the collection thus obtained in 1975, with a preface by Cardinal Gabriel-Marie Garrone and a presentation by the editor.⁸

The first edition was quickly sold out, and a second came out five years later. The layout was up-dated and it was enriched with an extensive historical-spiritual introduction.⁹ The text and notes remained substantially unchanged. Some minor changes were made to take into account a more exact interpretation of the manuscripts.

In recent years, the publication of the letters has inspired

⁷ Capetti, Giselda (ed.) (1981), *Cronistoria: Chronicles of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, 5 vols, Don Bosco Publications, New Rochelle, New York. (ETG)

⁸ Cf. Posada, Maria Esther (ed.) (1975), *Lettere di S. Maria D. Mazzarello: Confondatrice dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, Ancora, Milano, pp. 11-34.

⁹ Cf. Posada, Maria Esther (ed.) (1980), *Lettere di S. Maria D. Mazzarello: Confondatrice dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, Istituto FMA, Roma, pp. 15-48.

various educational, psychological and theological-spiritual writings on the personality and spirit of St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello.¹⁰

The recent biography, written by Domenico Agasso, unlike the other biographies, draws heavily on the letters of the Saint, not only as the inspiration for the title of his book, but above all for a valid interpretation of her person and of her style of formation.¹¹ By delving into the Saint's simple, yet profound words, the author allows his readers to meet, in a new way, with a living person, one who is rich in values and practical wisdom. He does not simply refer to the letters to illustrate various points. Rather, they are woven into the whole biography making it more authentic and credible.

With the passing years, therefore, the letters of the Saint have emerged more and more as a primary source for an understanding of the person of Maria Mazzarello. For this reason, it has become necessary to offer to the wider public a documentation which had been limited prevalently to FMA circles.

An explanation of certain editorial criteria will help readers to grasp more easily the basic message contained in these precious fragments of a history, spirituality and life.

¹⁰ Cf. for example: Stickler, Gertrud (1987), 'Personalità religiosa e discernimento del vissuto patologico: Sapere "prescientifico" e scientifico a confronto', in Posada, María Esther (ed.), *Attuale perché vera: Contributi su S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello*, LAS, Roma, pp. 177-195; Cavaglià, Piera (1994), 'Linee dello stile educativo di Maria Mazzarello: L'arte di "prendersi cura" con saggezza e amore', in Cavaglià, Piera, Del Core, Pina (eds.), *Un progetto di vita per l'educazione della donna: Contributi sull'identità educativa delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, LAS, Roma, pp. 131-162; cf. also a thesis for a Masters Degree discussed at the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences, "Auxilium": Franchini, Antonella (1993), *Il messaggio cristologico dell'epistolario di S. Maria Mazzarello*, Rome.

¹¹ Cf. Agasso, Domenico (1993), *Maria Mazzarello: Il comandamento della gioia*, SEI, Torino.

2. Number and Types of Letters

The 68 letters that comprise the collection of the letters of St. Maria D. Mazzarello, are certainly only a small part of what she wrote. Her role as Leader of the Institute of the FMA led her to relate constantly with people: civil and religious authorities, the Founder of the Institute [Don Bosco] and Salesians, her Sisters who left Mornese and later Nizza Monferrato, to establish new foundations, pupils and past-pupils of the school, their parents, benefactors of the house and other people connected with the young Institute founded by St. John Bosco.

This new edition, compared with the former, contains one letter (the first) written by *la Madre* to Doctor Paolo Parodi of Lerma and discovered in 1972. It was given to the GAFMA by a daughter of the recipient of the letter, the teacher Caterina Parodi.

The number of the letters, however, has remained unchanged, since the letter of December 22, 1879¹² containing the Christmas wishes of the professed Sisters to Don Bosco, has been omitted because it is a collective letter without any signature. On different occasions, the FMA in various communities addressed their feast-day wishes to Don Bosco or other Salesians. Such letters cannot, therefore be attributed to Mother Mazzarello.

Because of these modifications, the numbering of the first 33 letters has changed. From this number on, they correspond to the previous edition of the letters.

With regard to the type of letters, those found could all be considered familiar, confidential letters. They are not official or business letters. Mother Mazzarello talks to her Sisters, sometimes she communicates news of the first communities to Don Bosco or the Salesians, or sends her greetings to various people she knows and esteems.

¹² Cf. L 30 in the previous edition.

3. The Text of the Letters and the Editorial Criteria¹³

Each letter has been assigned a number according to the chronological order of its writing. Every letter is preceded by the name of the recipient and their station in life (e.g. spiritual director, superior, doctor, Sister, novice, missionary, etc.).

A brief introduction, indicating the principal theme or themes, helps one to read the letter more easily. Each letter is followed by the indication of the archive in which the text is found,¹⁴ and a statement of whether the letter is in Maria Mazzarello's handwriting or dictated to someone else. [...] In the case of only three letters it was not possible to consult the original. However, a typed copy of these was consulted¹⁵ and in just one case, a printed version was used.¹⁶

In the editorial work the original manuscripts were consulted in minute detail, so as to offer the most faithful version possible. [...] For greater clarity we have completed abbreviations and introduced some corrections, especially where spelling errors or a missing word or pronoun could confuse the reader or endanger the exact interpretation of the content. These rare editorial interventions are indicated by square brackets. [...]

We must remember that Maria Mazzarello was one of those women who were born "in rural surroundings that were poor and without schools"¹⁷ and that she only learned to write at the age of 35. [...]

¹³ With permission from the authors, the ETG is not including parts of this section that are not relevant to the English edition. (ETG)

¹⁴ The precise location of the letters in the Archives is not given since the Archives consulted are in the process of being reorganised and the present position of the letters may not be definitive.

¹⁵ Cf. L 11, 14, 67. The integrity of the texts was verified in the [Italian] typed *Cronistoria of the Institute of the FMA*.

¹⁶ Cf. L 53 was published in the *Bollettino Salesiano* of February 1881.

¹⁷ Cf. Agasso, D. (1993), op. cit., p. VII.

We must also state that, in our case, it has not been necessary to edit the variations to the text, as is normally done in critical editions of compilations of letters since we only have the final edition of the letters, as it reached the recipients themselves.

It was not necessary, either, to describe the state of the manuscripts, the type of paper used, format, colour of the ink, etc. All the letters were, in fact, written on ordinary unstamped paper, usually white and in a few cases blue. In the letters to Fr. Cagliari, Mother Mazzarello uses the official paper, while all the others are written on ordinary single or double sheets.

The letterhead of the house of Mornese is rarely used. This had the image of Mary Help of Christians printed on the top left-hand side of the first page, with the horseshoe-shaped inscription reading left to right: *Istituto di Maria Ausiliatrice*.¹⁸

In the new edition the footnotes have substantially increased, giving preference to historical and biographical clarification¹⁹ or explanation of the content, where necessary. For the historical notes ample use was made of the registers of personal data belonging to the FMA Institute, the *Cronistoria* and archival documentation relating to persons and educational institutions.

4. The Recipients

The majority of the letters are addressed to persons belonging to the FMA Institute or to the Salesian Congregation. A few are addressed to lay people, both women and men.

There are 43 letters to FMA: community animators,

¹⁸ Cf. L 22.

¹⁹ Cf. the *Cenni Biografici* [Biographical Profiles] of the FMA have been edited with great care during the past ten years, but the work had already been started by Maccono in 1917.

Sisters, novices. Of these, 25 were sent to the missionaries who left for Uruguay and Argentina. Some letters, although addressed to individuals, become collective, and in those addressed to the whole community one frequently finds specific messages addressed to individual Sisters.

There are 15 letters to Salesians, distributed as follows: 2 to Don Bosco, 6 to Fr. Giovanni Cagliari and 7 to other Salesians. Only one letter is addressed to a diocesan priest and there are 9 to lay people.

From a quick comparison with the previous edition, one can see that in the present edition of the Letters of St. Maria Mazzarello it has been possible to further identify the person *la Madre* is writing to under the title of "Reverendissimo Padre." As can be seen from the respective footnotes, letter 14, instead of being addressed to Don Bosco, is to the local rector. The recipient of letter 8 is Fr. Giacomo Costamagna rather than Fr. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne. In the latter case it has also been necessary to rectify the date, following the indications written on the original manuscript.

5. The Style and Structure of the Letters

The style of the letters is typically that of one who speaks with the recipient in a friendly and even familiar manner without worrying about literary style. Only when she addresses authority figures for Christmas or name-days, is it noted that the writer pays greater attention to style and form. In the majority of cases, the wording shows the immediacy of the spoken language: repetitions, grammatical errors, lack of proper agreement of terms, truncated expressions, are all due to the spontaneity with which the conversation develops, and the speed of thought which races ahead of the "slow and laboured hand" of one who learned to write in later life.

The structure of the letters is very simple. The characteristic greeting, drawn from monastic custom and in use in the Institute at the time, is followed by the heading of

the letter, the date and the body of the letter. When addressing FMA, *la Madre*, above all, gives news of the community of Mornese or of Nizza Monferrato, in which she lives, or of the other houses she visited. She generally offers her Daughters simple, but meaningful recommendations, principally of an ascetic-formative character.

The conclusions are concise and to the point. In the majority of cases, the signature is in her handwriting and is accompanied by meaningful expressions which show *la Madre's* deep affection for her Daughters, or the deference she wants to show to Don Bosco or other Salesians.

6. Index²⁰

To assist readers in a more efficacious use of the letters [an index] has been provided. [...] The alphabetical index of the FMAs named in the letters is given. This provides basic biographical information drawn from the Institute's registers of personal data. [To this has been added, in the English edition, an indication of the letters in which the Sisters are mentioned. This information is drawn from the *Alphabetical Index of Names of Persons* in the Italian edition.²¹]

Each letter is like a wide horizon that allows us to see not just the life of Maria Mazzarello, but also that of the first FMA communities. They were involved in a mission which, though limited at first, was destined to spread to the most remote parts of the world, to wherever education, civilisation, faith and the holistic promotion of the person were called for.

²⁰ With permission from the authors, the ETG is not including parts of this section since the indices of the 1994 Italian edition do not correspond to the English edition. (ETG)

²¹ Cf. op. cit. (1994), pp. 242-246.

Letters

1. To Doctor Paolo Parodi

Maria Mazzarello thanks the doctor for his services to the community.

House of Mary H.[elp of Christians, Mornese]
January 1, 1874

Most Illustrious Doctor,¹

- 1 The gratitude which I and all this Community feel towards you, esteemed Sir, for the kindness and promptness with which you answer our every call, urges me to write these few lines to you and to offer a most sincere thank you, on my own behalf and that of all the Sisters.
- 2 While I gladly take this opportunity to wish you a very happy year, I ask you to accept the little gift that we offer as a sign of our gratitude.
- 3 I hope you, esteemed Sir, will accept this gift as willingly as we offer it with all our hearts. I offer you the greetings

¹ Doctor Paolo Parodi served Lerma, Alessandria and the surrounding area, including Mornese. He worked there for about forty years and was distinguished for his competence and dedication. The letter was published on the occasion of the centenary of the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (cf. *L'amico di Lerma* 65 (1972), pp. 1, 4).

of all along with my own, with all respects, to you most
Illustrious [Doctor],

I remain,

Your most humble servant,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello, M.[other] V.[icar]²

[GAFMA Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

² This was the title given to Mother Mazzarello in the early years of the Institute of the FMA. Maria liked this title because it expressed the shared certainty that Our Lady was the real “superior” of the Institute. For this reason, every evening *la Madre* left the keys of the house of Mornese at the feet of the statue of Mary Help of Christians.

2. To a Priest

Maria Mazzarello writes to a priest informing him that the news of his niece being admitted to the novitiate is false. She states the conditions required for admission into the Institute of the FMA.

House of Mary H.[elp of Christians, Mornese]
June 13, 1874

Most Reverend Father,¹

- 1 Yesterday evening we received your esteemed letter, but since your niece had spoken in the morning to our parish priest,² who was sent by the parish priest of Montaldeo, I thought it better not to give her your Reverence's letter so as not to upset her during these two days. However, I did tell her of the death of her uncle and decided to respond to your Reverence myself.
- 2 First of all, let me tell you that the reverend parish priest of Montaldeo³ never came here, otherwise no one would have stopped him speaking freely with your niece.
- 3 As for the notification which she says she sent you through our poor rector,⁴ I do not know what to say, since I believe that if he had received such a letter he would have told me.

¹ It is not known to whom this letter was written. It was probably one of the priests from the area around Mornese.

² Fr. Carlo Valle, parish priest of Mornese.

³ Fr. Giuseppe Gallarati.

⁴ Maria is referring to their spiritual director, Fr. Domenico Pestarino, who died on May 15, 1874.

- 4 Now, I would like to assure your Reverence that if your niece wrote this to you, she did so freely [and] no one ever suggested to her that she should become a religious. In fact, no one is admitted to the novitiate without the consent of their parents, having reached the required age, and having completed a year's training. As you can see, your niece lacks all these conditions, so she would never have been allowed to take such a step.⁵ She is good, but up to now she has always been with the boarders.⁶ When she was told that for now she should not even think of such a thing because it was impossible, she replied that if her uncle gave his consent, she would have obtained permission from the Rev. Don Bosco to join the candidates.⁷ But [I am] certain that Don Bosco would never have accepted her since she had not reached the required age.⁸ Besides, I thought that during the holidays, which are only two months away, your Reverence would be coming to take her home, and in this way you would be able to assess her vocation at your ease.
- 5 From all that has been said, your Reverence can easily see that your niece was deluding herself if she believed that she would have been allowed to take the religious habit after having expressed the desire only two months ago.

⁵ The clarity and prudence with which Maria expresses herself as community animator are characteristic of her way of dealing with people and situations.

⁶ These girls were received into the boarding school [*collegio*] of Mornese. Some were attending the Primary school, while others were preparing to become teachers.

⁷ The candidates or postulants were girls who aspired to become religious and were living the period of formation that the Constitutions of the FMA prescribed before the novitiate.

⁸ In the Constitutions of the FMA which were not yet printed, it was established that for entry into the novitiate a candidate had to be "between 15 and 25 years of age" and have the consent of her parents (cf. *Costituzioni e Regole dell'Istituto di Maria SS. Ausiliatrice*, titolo VI art. 2 [Quaderno n.3] in GAFMA). Note also how confident *la Madre* is of knowing the thinking of Don Bosco, the founder of the Institute of the FMA.

No, this would not have happened even with your consent, [since] as I have already said, a full year's training is necessary even for those who have reached the required age. Let me assure your Reverence that I will give her your letter tomorrow evening or Monday, so as not to disturb her during these days.

- 6 Forgive me for taking the liberty of writing to you and be sure that it was for no other reason than to show you that your niece wrote to you about this matter of her own free will, and that when someone wishes to speak privately to anyone in the house, they are free to do so.
- 7 Accept my respectful greetings, and believe me to be,
Your Reverence,

Your humble servant,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello, Superior

[GAFMA Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

3. To the Founder, Don Giovanni Bosco

Maria Mazzarello sends greetings for Don Bosco's name-day.

House of M.[ary] H.[elp of Christians, Mornese],
June 22, 1874

Very Reverend Rector Major,¹

- 1 To the many good wishes that rise to Heaven from all parts for your protection and well-being, permit me to add my own. Even though not expressed in sublime words, they are no less fervent and true.
- 2 I would like to find some way to express the gratitude that I feel towards your Reverence for all the good you continually do, not only for me but for the whole community.
- 3 Since I cannot express all that I feel in my heart, I will pray with the greatest possible fervour to your great patron to make up for my inability by obtaining from God all those graces which you most desire.
- 4 I will also ask him to obtain special blessings on all your works, so that, even in this life, you may enjoy the reward of your many virtues by seeing your efforts crowned [with success] and bearing the abundant fruit for which you work so hard.
- 5 Allow me, Most Reverend Rector Major, to recommend

¹ Although not in Maria's handwriting, this letter is significant because it is the first known one written to Don Bosco.

myself to your efficacious prayers so that I may fulfil all the duties of the role entrusted to me with exactness, and may be able to correspond to the many graces that the Lord gives me and to the expectations of your Reverence. Say one of those efficacious words to Mary Most Holy, that she may help me to practise what I have to teach others, so that all may receive from me the example which my position obliges me to give them. On your name-day I will ask everyone to offer Holy Communion for your Reverence. Please remember me and all the community.

- 6 Please pardon my inability to express myself, and read in these few, poorly expressed words, all that my heart would like to say to you, and give your special blessing to me who declare myself, Most Reverend Father, with all due respect,

Your most indebted daughter in J. Christ,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[ASC Original. Dictated but bearing her signature]

4. To the Director General, Fr. Giovanni Cagliero

Maria Mazzarello sends Christmas greetings, and gives news of the community and of some Sisters in particular, all of whom are personally known to Fr. Cagliero.

Mornese, House of M.[ary] H.[elp of Christians], December 29, 1875
Viva Gesù Bambino,¹
and all those who love Him, wherever they may be!

Reverend Director General and My Good Father,²

- 1 If I were a bit nearer, I would wish you a happy Christmas season, but in the New World! By the time my greetings reach you, Christmas will be almost forgotten. However, this does not prevent our sending them just the same, and if possible even more fervent ones. Oh, yes, may Baby Jesus bless your sacrifices and your efforts with such blessings that they may bear abundant fruit, so that when you enter Heaven (and we hope that will not be until a ripe old age) you may be accompanied by thousands of souls you have saved. It is not only in these days of grace,

¹ *Viva Gesù* was a common greeting used by religious in Italy during the nineteenth century. Maria and the FMA used a variety of forms as noted in Maria Mazzarello's correspondence. Throughout this text the ETG have left all such sayings in the original Italian. (ETG)

² In 1874 Fr. Giovanni Cagliero was appointed by Don Bosco to be the first Director General of the FMA. He was responsible for the new Institute at an organisational and formative level. This explains the confidence and familiarity with which Mother Mazzarello writes to him. Giovanni Cagliero was born at Castelnuovo d'Asti on January 11, 1838 and became a priest on June 14, 1862. He was sent to Argentina in 1875, consecrated bishop in 1884 and appointed cardinal in 1915. He died in Rome on February 28, 1926.

but every day that we pray fervently to the Lord for our brother missionaries and especially for the early return of our good Father.

- 2 It feels like a century since we last saw you, or received letters from you.³ Every day we followed your journey on the world map, and we imagined you here or there on the rough seas. Now, we believe that with God's help, you should have arrived safely in port and we are anxiously awaiting a long, long letter telling us all about your journey, how you are getting on out there, etc., etc., and when the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians will be going. Write and tell us also if it felt strange to be celebrating Christmas and beginning the New Year in summer! I think these feasts would not be as beautiful during that season, right? Seeing the snow covering our countryside, and silence reigning everywhere, they give a clearer idea of the Divine Child lying in a manger, abandoned by everyone, shivering with the cold. For all that, though, if God wanted some of us to celebrate the birth of Baby Jesus in that far away land called America, we would all go willingly.
- 3 Now I will give you news of the House; some of it is consoling, some sad. We will begin with the good news. On the first Sunday after the Feast of the Immaculate,⁴ Reverend Fr. Rua⁵ came and gave the religious habit to fifteen postulants: Beatrice from Pocapaglia (the sole survivor),⁶ Maria, Luigia (from Alessandria), Celestina

³ He had left for Argentina on November 11, at the head of the First Salesian Missionary Expedition.

⁴ This feast was celebrated on December 12, 1875.

⁵ Fr. Michele Rua, General Prefect of the Salesian Congregation, had been asked by Don Bosco to replace Fr. Cagliari temporarily as Director General of the FMA (cf. *Cronistoria* II pp. 145-146).

⁶ According to the custom of the time, the place of origin of a person is given instead of their surname. Fr. Cagliari knew all the people on this list. This refers to Sr. Beatrice Rocco, who is called the "survivor" because seven other young women had come with her to Mornese from Pocapaglia, Cuneo, on August 17, 1875. Unfortunately, none of them completed the period of initial formation except Beatrice.

Riva, Giustina from Mornese, Orlandi, Orsola, Lucia and Lucrezia from Caramagna, Vincenzina from S. Margherita, Giovanna Borgna, Mina, Luigia from Lu [Monferrato], Carmela from Ovada, Domenica Roletti also from Caramagna.⁷ On the same day, six others made their religious profession: Sr. Rosalia,⁸ Sr. Tamietti, Sr. Clara, Sr. Nasi, Sr. Luigia from Valenza and Sr. Giuseppina.⁹

- 4 Now we come to the sad news. A few days after the ceremonies, there came the defections. Sr. Angela Bacchialoni was the first. On December 14, she left for Turin with Fr. Rua.¹⁰ On Tuesday, December 21, Sr. Maria Arecco laid aside the religious habit and returned home. Sr. Felice is still here, but before the year ends she will join her sister,¹¹ and then, will go on to the Cottolengo,¹² if they

⁷ The complete list of the novices who were accepted was as follows: Beatrice Rocco, Maria Maccagno, Luigia Bagliardi, Celestina Riva, Agostina Calcagno, Paolina Orlandi, Orsola Camisassa, Lucia Gallo, Lucrezia Becchio, Vincenzina Razzetti, Giovanna Borgna, Domenica Mina, Luigia Rubassa, Carmela Arata, and Domenica Roletti.

⁸ Sr. Rosalia Pestarino wrote this letter which was dictated by *la Madre*. Under Rosalia's name we read, "I am the sinner who is writing this". She was a niece of Fr. Domenico Pestarino. The *Madre Pie* of Ovada educated Rosalia up to the age of seventeen. In 1874 she entered the religious life in Mornese and on December 12, 1875, she became an FMA. Having obtained her teaching diploma in Turin, she was entrusted with the education of the day pupils at the boarding school in Mornese. Later, she was called on to open and direct various FMA houses. She spent her last years in the Mother House in Nizza Monferrato as secretary.

⁹ Those professed were Sr. Rosalia Pestarino, Sr. Anna Tamietti, Sr. Clara Preda, Sr. Caterina Nasi, Sr. Luigia Giordano, and Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto.

¹⁰ Angela Bacchialoni was sixty-three years old when she came to Mornese on April 21, 1875. Don Bosco had sent her on the recommendation of her brother Carlo who taught Greek in the Salesian secondary school in Valsalice (MB IX pp. 196, 329). From 1863 to 1874 Angela had directed a school in Turin. Because of her experience, she could have been helpful in the school in Mornese, especially since, despite her age, she wanted to become an FMA. The reason she left the Institute a few months after she entered the novitiate is not clear (cf. *Cronistoria* II pp. 124-125, 144, 146).

¹¹ The Arecco sisters, Maria and Felicità, were cousins of the teacher Angela Maccagno who was then leader of the *Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate* in Mornese.

¹² The *Little House of Divine Providence* founded by St. Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo in Turin in 1832.

accept her. All this took place tranquilly and without disturbance. The first two went peacefully and the third is ready to do the same. So much for the defections.

- 5 Since Baby Jesus really loves us, besides these “sweets” He also gave us two seriously-ill Sisters. One is Sr. Teresa Laurantoni who has been in bed for a month and is getting worse every day. On Tuesday, December 21 she received the Last Sacraments.
- 6 The other is Sr. Cassini¹³ who is also seriously-ill. There is still a little bit of hope for the latter, while we are waiting every day for Jesus and Mary to come and take the former. Both are resigned to the Will of God and are ready to die. They have every right to be happy, and why not? Prepared as they are, and therefore certain of Heaven, who would be afraid to die? The only thing that gives them pain is not having loved the Lord sooner. Kindly remember them in your Holy Mass.
- 7 A few days ago a miracle happened to me. I had become so deaf that no matter how close I got to the altar, I could understand nothing of the sermons on the Baby [Jesus]. I was very sorry to be deprived of this consolation, so I asked Fr. Rector to give me a blessing. As soon as I received it, I was freed from this discomfort and could hear all the sermons. Please thank Baby Jesus for me, too.
- 8 I began this letter before Christmas, but not having had time to continue, I am finishing it now that the festivities are over. I assure you that the celebration could not have been more beautiful. The first Mass, at midnight, was sung and was celebrated by Fr. Giuseppi Campi.¹⁴ Five boarders had the good fortune of making their First Holy Communion. Oh, how many things we had to say to Baby Jesus on that much-loved night! Needless to say, we asked for

¹³ Antonia Cassini, who was not yet seventeen years old, was a novice.

¹⁴ A Salesian priest, native of Mornese. He had been prepared for the priesthood by Fr. Domenico Pestarino and had been ordained a priest a few days earlier. He was, therefore, celebrating one of his first Masses in the Sisters' house in Mornese.

his choicest blessings for your Reverence and for all our little missionary brothers.

- 9 On the feast of St. John, Sr. Felice put aside the religious habit and left our Congregation. There is nothing else new except that we have two postulants from Castlenuovo; one is the sister of poor Fr. Cagliari,¹⁵ and the other is Clotilde Turco.
- 10 I forgot to tell you that Sr. Cassini's illness is gastric fever. She seems to be getting better, but the doctors cannot define Sr. Teresa's illness. About two months ago she began to have nose-bleeds several times a day, until she was so weak that she has been bed-ridden and almost lifeless for the last month.
- 11 With the exception of these two, all the rest are physically well. I hope they are spiritually well too. During these past days, Baby Jesus lit the fire and I am confident that He will maintain it. Meanwhile, remember from time to time that you have about a hundred daughters in a certain place called Mornese, and that among these there are some, (especially the writer) who are rather naughty. When the most obedient Jesus descends into your hands, speak to Him one of those words that can obtain all things. Ask Him in particular never to allow anyone in this house to offend Him even slightly, if this were possible.
- 12 As I am writing to your Reverence, perhaps you are in bed, since it is ten a.m. here. The boarders laugh when they hear this, and want me to write something for them too.¹⁶ First of all, let me tell you that there are twenty five of them and they are unbelievably good, at least they want to be, so they recommend themselves to your prayers and promise not to forget you in theirs. Prepare a really big

¹⁵ Fr. Giuseppe Cagliari died in Mornese on September 4, 1874, just a few months after his arrival. His sister, Sr. Maria, would also die very young in Turin on September 8, 1880, after only two years of religious profession.

¹⁶ Note the simplicity with which *la Madre* refers to the direct participation of the girls in the life of the community.

house for us since the boarders all want to become missionaries.

- 13 One more bit of news. After hearing so much about the goodness of the Holy Father we wrote to wish him a happy Christmas.¹⁷
- 14 Be so good as to send us the Spanish books soon so that we can study and be ready at the first call.¹⁸ I would like to be able to send you some of the cool weather that is so abundant here. Since I cannot, we wait for you to send us, via your Guardian Angel, much of that warmth which Baby Jesus spreads.
- 15 Write to us soon, come soon, never forget us in your prayers, accept our respectful greetings and pass them on to all the little missionaries and believe me, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
Your Reverence,

Your most humble daughter in Jesus and Mary,
Sr. Maria

[ASC Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

¹⁷ Following the directions and example of Don Bosco, the sense of belonging to the Church was strong in Mornese, and fidelity to the Pope occupied a prominent place in their educational work. A letter written by the Sisters and girls to the Holy Father, Pius IX, was therefore a simple but significant gesture of communion with the Vicar of Christ. It was a spontaneous expression of the ecclesial sense imparted by the first FMA.

¹⁸ In many letters there are expressions of *la Madre's* great desire to go in person to the missions in America. In 1880 she wrote, not without evident pain, to her Sisters in Patagonia: "I do not believe they [Salesians] will ever give me permission for this" (L 55, 1).

5. To the Director General, Fr. Giovanni Cagliero

Maria Mazzarello gives news of the community and of the first foundations, and expresses her desire to go to America.

House of Mary Help of Christians [Mornese], April 5, 1876¹
Viva Gesù
in Italy, in America and in the whole world!

Reverend Father Provincial,

- 1 What a joy it is to be able to communicate with our good Father! Oh, how many things we would like to tell you! But, isn't it true that when your heart is full, you do not know where to start? Did you get the letter I wrote to you at the beginning of this year? I hope so, even though you did not reply. Anyhow, I will not repeat the things that happened before then. Where should I begin, with the happy or the sad news? Since it is better to take the bitter drink first and then the sweet, I will begin by telling you the sorrowful events. First, on February 9, poor Sr. Cassini died of consumption. Her death was like that of one who

¹ This letter, like others, was written by Sr. Emilia Mosca and dictated by *la Madre*. Don Bosco sent Emilia, a descendent of the Counts Bellegarde di St.-Lary, to Mornese as a teacher. Won over by the holiness of *la Madre* and the fervour of the community, Emilia asked to join the FMA on March 15, 1874. She was certainly the most cultured and best-educated among the first group of FMA. For this reason she was put in charge of the school from the start. She taught and was secretary and direct collaborator of Mother Mazzarello in the formation of the first teachers. In October, 1876, she was appointed as First Assistant in the General Council with responsibility for coordinating the educational and scholastic activities of the Institute.

was taking flight for Heaven.² Now Mother Mistress³ has caught the same illness. The doctors have already given up hope for her and she will probably have left this earthly exile before you receive this letter. Who would ever have imagined it ? She, who seemed to be a colossus of health, is already at the gates of eternity! Ah, it is really true that death is like a thief who comes when we least expect it! This gives us serious food for thought.

- 2 Poor Sr. Teresa Laurantoni is still confined to bed. On the Feast of St. Francis, at 8 o'clock in the evening, she had a stroke that left her half dead. She may live for many years yet, but she will always be bed-ridden.⁴ Both she and Mother Mistress recommend themselves very much to your prayers, that they may be perfectly resigned to the Will of God. Sr. Luigia, from Alessandria, had to return home since she, too, has tuberculosis. She had someone write to tell me that she is gravely ill and has received the Last Sacraments. However, it is not surprising that she should have contracted this illness since her husband died of it and she had been with him for seven months.⁵

² Cf. L 4, 6. In the *Letters* there is the recurring theme of the death of young Sisters. The strong air of Mornese, the scarcity of food, illness, the life of sacrifice which they embraced with such radicality, deprived the Institute all too soon of these religious. However, it also enriched it with examples of heroic virtue which were a sure guarantee of future apostolic vitality.

³ Sr. Maria Grosso was one of the first girls who frequented the sewing classes that Maria Mazzarello started in Mornese in 1862. Formed in the apostolic ardour of the origins, she became one of the first FMA and was put in charge of the novices. The *Cronistoria* notes that her sick-bed was a school of holiness. She was happy to suffer in communion with Jesus, her Heavenly Spouse, in order to obtain graces for the Institute. She longed only for Heaven (cf. II pp. 171-173). She died before reaching the age of twenty-one.

⁴ In fact, Sr. Laurantoni recovered her health. She died in Mathi Torinese on July 15, 1920 after forty-six years of religious life.

⁵ This was Sr. Luigia Bagliardi. In the early years, widows were accepted into the Institute. From 1878, when the Constitutions were printed, it was declared that the Institute should accept only "unmarried women" (cf. *Regole o Costituzioni delle Figlie di Maria SS. Ausiliatrice aggregati alla Società Salesiana*, (1878), Tip. e Libreria Salesiana, Torino, titolo I art. 4).

- 3 Now I must give you the saddest news of all. On March 30, all the Sisters were searching here and there for ... guess who? ... Sr. Angiolina Jandet.⁶ She ran away from the convent while we were all at Mass in Chapel. When she got to Gavi she went to Mrs. Verdone to ask for money to go to Turin. She kept her in her house.⁷ I wouldn't even be able to tell you the real motive for this flight; one of the usual caprices caused by that accursed pride, I suppose. Meanwhile, Fr. Rector⁸ went there for the Lenten Sermon and persuaded her to return. She came back but was not in the least repentant for what she had done. To make a long story short, she put aside the religious habit a few days later. Don Bosco was asked to dispense her from her vows, but even before the dispensation arrived, she had already left for Turin. In that city she was accepted into the *Cottolengo*, where she stayed only three days and then left saying that she could not take it.
- 4 Now she is asking to re-enter. Don Bosco told me to convene the Chapter⁹ and to do whatever they decide, however I fear the answer will be negative.
- 5 Miss Bacchialoni, too, would like to come back under the

⁶ Angela Jandet, one of the first FMA, entered the Institute at twenty-four and was already a teacher. In the official registers it is noted that she left the Institute, "because she was not able to adapt to the rules of the house".

⁷ The *Cronistoria* speaks of Mrs. Momina (Gerolama) Verdone as a trustworthy person living in Gavi (cf. II p. 167).

⁸ The spiritual director of the house of Mornese was Fr. Giacomo Costamagna. He was exuberant and energetic in temperament and very demanding in the formation of the Sisters. He stayed at Mornese from October 6, 1874 to October 25, 1877 when he left for Argentina, where he remained for a few years. He began the Salesian work in Chile. In 1894 he was appointed Apostolic Vicar for Mendez and Gualaquiza in Ecuador. He always looked back with affection to the years spent in the "Holy House of Mornese" (cf. Costamagna, Giacomo, *Conferenze alle Figlie di Don Bosco*, (1900), Tip. Salesiana, Valparaiso, pp. 259-262).

⁹ This is what the General Council of the Institute of the FMA was called in the early years of foundation. It was the governing and animating body of the Institute composed of the direct collaborators of the Leader of the Institute.

mantle of Mary Help of Christians, but ... there are some "buts"! ... Sr. Canale also put aside the religious habit.¹⁰

- 6 There is no more sad news, thank God. Pray the Lord that He may grant H.[oly] Perseverance to all as we have had enough defections. If we were to continue like this, the poor House of Mary¹¹ would be deserted in a few years! Ask the Jesus who is in America to give us all the virtues we need to be good religious, especially humility and obedience. He can do what He wants with us, but may He never allow any Sister, especially any of the professed, to lay aside the religious habit and abandon Mary's House.
- 7 On the same day on which Sr. Cassini died Sr. Rosalia, Sr. Giustina and Sr. Orsola from Caramagna left for Bordighera; the last named will be the superior.¹² They are lucky to have the possibility of doing so much good! From the start they have many students. All those good people are happy with our Sisters and really love them. Since the house is not ready in Alassio, the Sisters will not go there yet. I think that by the end of May everything will be in order.
- 8 The following have gone to Turin: Sr. Elisa (superior), Sr. Enrichetta (both of whom are studying. After the exams, I hope that Sr. Enrichetta will return to Mornese), Sr. Caterina Daghero and Sr. David teach in the school, Sr. Carlotta is assigned to the kitchen, Sr. Adele Ayra mends the cassocks and Sr. Luigia from Lu [Monferrato] supervises the laundry workers.¹³ In the meantime, Sr.

¹⁰ Sr. Caterina Canale was a novice at the time. She had been admitted on December 13, 1874.

¹¹ This was the name familiarly given to the first house of the FMA.

¹² The house of Bordighera (now Vallecrosia), a small town on the Ligurian coast, was opened on February 10, 1876, with a Festive Oratory and a non-fee paying Primary school. Sr. Orsola Camisassa was community animator, Sr. Rosalia Pestarino taught in the school and the novice, Sr. Agostina (Giustina) Calcagno, looked after the house (cf. *Cronistoria* II pp. 160-161).

¹³ The house in Turin was opened on March 29, 1876. Sr. Elisa Roncallo,

Mina, who is very good, is replacing Sr. Enrichetta among the boarders. She is always cheerful and happy to be a Daughter of Mary.¹⁴ Cagliero and Turco too are peaceful and happy.¹⁵ There are 25 postulants and we hope that almost all of them will do well.

- 9 Now that I have given you the news of the house I will write the names of those who want to go to America soon: I would like to be there already, Mother Vicar, Mother Bursar, Sr. Mina, Sr. Maria Belletti, Sr. Giuseppina, Sr. Giovanna, *Sr. Emilia (really)*, Sr. ... I would never finish if I were to name all those who wish to go.¹⁶ Prepare a little place for us soon, and then come to fetch us because we do not know how to get there. It might just happen that if we were on our own some sea monster, who had not yet had its dinner, might make a meal of us. Remember that we are expecting you for the retreat, so don't disappoint us. These days we have Fr. Ghivarello¹⁷ as extraordinary confessor, but this summer our former Fr. Provincial really must come.
- 10 I forgot to tell you that Sr. Maddalena Martini is teaching in the school in the village. She, too, is very good and

Sr. Enrichetta Sorbone, and Sr. Caterina Daghero were all destined to fulfil important roles in the Institute. The first named was a General Councillor, organiser of the oratories and of the first Salesian youth associations. The second FMA was Directress of Novices from 1881 to 1892 and Vicar General for about sixty years. The third person succeeded Mother Mazzarello in the government of the Institute. The others who made up the community were Sr. Carlotta Pestarino and the three novices Sr. Adele David, Sr. Adele Ayra, and Sr. Luigia Rubassa.

¹⁴ Sr. Domenica Mina was a novice.

¹⁵ This refers to the novices Sr. Mary Cagliero, sister of the Salesian, Fr. Giuseppe Cagliero, and Sr. Clotilde Turco (cf. L 4, 9).

¹⁶ The vicar was Sr. Petronilla Mazzarello, the bursar Sr. Giovanna Ferretino. The names that follow are Sr. Domenica Mina, Sr. Maria Belletti, Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto, Sr. Giovanna Borgna and Sr. Emilia Mosca. The italics indicate underlining by the writer.

¹⁷ The Salesian, Fr. Carlo Ghivarello had been appointed extraordinary confessor to the community and went to Mornese at certain times of the year.

thanks God for having called her to this life; she also wants to go to America.¹⁸

- 11 In general, all are good, happy and peaceful. There is only one thing that is troubling us very much: Fr. Rector has applied to go to America. Now that he is used to the house and knows us all really well, it would be a bit hard to have to change again. Since you are our father, show it in this situation and don't let him leave. It is true that we are not worthy of such a good rector; but have pity on us poor things, [and] do not take him from us. Be kind enough to remember your poor daughters sometimes, recommend us warmly to Jesus and Mary that they may make us all true lovers of God.
- 12 Who knows, if with all the work that you have to do, you ever think of Mornese? We hope you do. Take care of your health; don't waste it unnecessarily. Remember that you are the father of many Daughters who are looking forward to your return. Every day we ask our good Jesus to spare you for many years yet, to give you health and holiness so that you may be able to lead many souls to Jesus. Lastly, we ask Him to bring you home soon to us, because it seems like a thousand years since we saw you.
- 13 Each Sister would like to say lots of things to you but not to make you waste too much time reading, I will finish by asking you for a special blessing for each one of us, recommending myself in particular to your prayers of which, I assure you, I am really in great need now that the number of Daughters is growing daily.

¹⁸ For some years a Salesian and an FMA taught in the public schools in Mornese. The first teacher in the girls' school working with Miss Angela Maccagno, was Sr. Rosalia Pestarino. Sr. Maddalena Martini, who was a particularly gifted educator, replaced her. She had come to Mornese on July 16, 1875 at the age of twenty-six. In 1877 she was appointed community animator in Biella and in 1879, she left for Argentina where she became the regional delegate of the houses in America.

Bless me then, and believe me,

Your most humble daughter in J.[esus] C.[hrist],
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

- 14 *Todas las muchachas quieren venir con usted en Buenos Aires.*¹⁹ We got the letter you wrote; if you have time write to us again, it really gives us pleasure.

[ASC Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

¹⁹ The FMA in Mornese studied Spanish to prepare themselves for the missions in South America. Mother Mazzarello, too, began to study it as is noted here and in the letter she sent in December, 1878, to the first American novice, Sr. Laura Rodriguez in which she wrote, "I understood your note even though it was written in Spanish" (L 18, 1).

6. To the Director General, Fr. Giovanni Cagliero

Maria Mazzearello gives news of the house and of the Institute and describes the stay of a strange young woman in Mornese.

Mornese, July 8, 1876¹
Viva Gesù!

Very Reverend and Good Father,

- 1 If you remember rightly, before you left we told you that when you got to America the work would surely make you forget the poor Daughters of M. H. C. It seems as though we guessed rightly, since you never answer our letters and we have written a good number of them. If you only knew how much we long to hear from you, you surely would not make us wait so long.
- 2 We heard, I don't know from where, that your Reverence has been ill. This news really made us sad and we hope that by now you have recovered.
- 3 Please be kind enough to write at least once, will you give us this consolation? We hope so.
- 4 Once again I must announce a death. I am really sorry but what can we do about it? The Lord wants to fill the house in Heaven. On April 13 (Holy Thursday), at half-past six in the evening, our dear Mother Mistress died.² She spoke almost up to the last moment and died saying: *Fiat voluntas tua*. She edified us all with the resignation she showed throughout her three-month illness.

¹ Sr. Emilia Mosca also wrote this letter.

² Sr. Maria Grosso (cf. L 5, 1).

- 5 There have been no more defections apart from those we already wrote about, thank God. Instead, extraordinary and spectacular things happened, that would take at least fifteen days of continual talking to tell you about, so it would be impossible to write about them. You would need to have seen it...³
- 6 Enough, I will try to write some of them as best I can. We had ecstasies, raptures, revelation of things hidden, real matters of conscience, you know, things that were buried in the deepest recesses of some people's hearts. And all of this through a young woman from Rome whom Don Bosco had sent here to save her from the lion's mouth. I won't stop to tell you all she did from the very beginning, suffice it to say she was so bad that she was sent away. She recommended herself to Our Lady so fervently all during the month of May that she obtained the grace of returning after only one day's absence (we will tell you how this came about when you come back). Then she began to speak of a little girl, visible only to her, who was beside her almost all the time. In the beginning it was thought that she was mad, then she became gravely ill and was instantaneously cured by Our Lady (so she said).
- 7 After this miracle, she began to reveal hidden things, and it cannot be denied that she did great good to many people in this house. After that the ecstasies began, complete fasts which lasted several days during which the little girl fed her with heavenly food. She claimed that she saw Our

³ This was Agostina Simbeni who had entered the Institute as a postulant a few months earlier. The *Cronistoria* tells us that this young woman had been recommended to Don Bosco "by very influential people whom he could not very well refuse". It was believed that she was the daughter of a political prisoner who had been deported to Siberia. She came from Rome but was in a charitable institution in Turin (cf. II pp. 179-196). Agostina appeared intelligent and seemed to have special gifts "in dealing with spiritual matters". There can be no doubt that she suffered from a pathological illness, given the abnormal manifestations that took place. Simbeni created quite a sensation in the community and even managed to deceive the Salesian rector. *La Madre's* balanced approach in dealing with this situation is worthy of note.

Lady, and many times made everyone (even Fr. Rector) kneel down to receive her blessing. She gave such proof of all these things that everyone believed them to be true; even Don Bosco himself believed. Then the scene changed and we realised that she was possessed by the devil, and since we could find no cure, on Don Bosco's orders we sent her to perform a few miracles in Rome.⁴ Come back soon and we will tell you all the details of this comedy; this is enough for the present.

- 8 There were no other unusual happenings. There was a reception into the novitiate on May 24, but I already wrote to you about that. Sr. Teresa Laurantoni is completely cured, but now we have Sr. Mina sick with a pulmonary illness. Do not be surprised; she herself admits that she has had this illness for three years and coming into the strong air [of Mornese] it became worse. I sent her to Turin and Don Bosco sent her from there to Piedmont to stay with Sr. Elisa's mother. She wears her religious habit and is fully resigned to the Will of God.⁵ Sr. Maria Belletti is infected with the same illness; the others, thank God, are well. They are happy and as far as I know, they are also good.
- 9 At the beginning of June, a house was opened in Sestri Levante. It is not really a house. Seven Sisters went there to assist boys and girls suffering from scrofulous. The children go there for a sea-water cure.⁶ Among them are

⁴ This passage shows Mother Mazzarello's fine sense of humour as well as her clarity of understanding and her discernment of persons and situations.

⁵ The novice, Sr. Domenica Mina, was suffering from tuberculosis. For this reason she was sent to Turin for a while and then to Liguria where she lived with Mrs. Nicoletta Roncallo (nee Noli), widowed mother of Sr. Elisa. She died in Turin on October 4, 1876, after having made her religious profession, as Mother Mazzarello writes to Fr. Cagliari (cf. L 7, 3).

⁶ The summer camp of Sestri Levante, Genoa, was run by lay people who were "most competent in their job, but systematically opposed to religion" (*Cronistoria* II p. 216). This camp was for children who suffered from a mild form of tuberculosis, accompanied by inflammation of the glands.

Sr. Enrichetta, Sr. Angiolina (from the secretary's house),⁷ and five others whom you would not know. In September they will return to the nest.

- 10 And when will you come to visit the nest? We are expecting you soon. You should see how the number of Daughters of M. H. C. has increased! There are 30 post.[ulants] and approximately 10 novices, 36 professed Sisters and 30 boarders. You can come and choose a good number to take to America; almost everyone wants to go. Come soon then, we are really looking forward with all our hearts to seeing you.
- 11 Now listen to what I have to say: save me a place in America, but seriously! It is true that I am good for nothing but I know how to make polenta and then, I would see to it that not too much soap would be wasted when washing the clothes. If you wish, I will also learn a bit of cooking. In short, I am ready to do everything possible to please you all, if only you will let me come.
- 12 In order to please the Sisters I would have to say a word for each of them. Since that is not possible, I will leave it to you to interpret everything, and I recommend each one individually to your prayers. Everyone sends greetings and assures you that we are all praying to Mary Most Holy to bless your labours and keep you safe for many years.
- 13 Please bless me in a special way. I remember you every time I go to church. Please send us your blessing and know that I am,

Your most humble daughter in Jesus,
Sr Maria M.

- 14 The boarders would like to write to you too but for this time it is not possible. Accept their good will and bless

⁷ The seven FMA led by Sr. Enrichetta Sorbone and Sr. Angela Cassulo, left on June 5, and returned to Mornese at the end of September. Angiolina Cassulo, as a girl, had been employed in domestic work for the secretary of the Mornese Council, Antonio Traverso.

them. They did write on other occasions, and, like us, they never got a reply.

- 15 Please give the enclosed note to Mrs. Borgna and ask her please to pay something; the three girls have absolutely nothing. The youngest is not yet eight years old, and consequently cannot do anything. They really should pay for her, at least.⁸
- 16 Here it is very hot. If only you could send us some of the cold you are feeling we would send you some heat! Instead, you have to blow on your fingers while we have to fan ourselves for air. That is how the world goes; we always want what we do not have, but in Heaven it won't be like that, will it? Oh, how wonderful. Let us go there! We will really love Jesus there!...

[ASC Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

⁸ Mrs. Antonia Fassio Borgna, who lived in Buenos Aires, had three daughters at the boarding school of Mornese. Giovanna was a novice and the other two, Emilia and Giacinta were boarders. The two older daughters became FMA and missionaries. Giacinta, the youngest, was followed with particular care by Mother Mazzarello (cf. L 28, 8). She died in Mongiardino on March 18, 1893, after a painful spinal illness that left her paralysed (cf. Mosca, Emilia, *Appunti di Cronaca 1893*, in GAFMA).

7. To the Director General, Fr. Giovanni Cagliero

Maria Mazzarello thanks him for his letter and gives news of the house in Mornese and of the new foundations.

Mornese, October, 1876

Viva Gesù!

viva Maria e viva S. Giuseppe!

Very Reverend Theologian and Our Good Father,

- 1 I am starting to scribble with the help of others.¹ Yesterday, I finally received your short note. I am so sorry to hear that you have received very little news of this house although I wrote many times giving you information on everything that has happened since your departure; both the acceptances into the novitiate and the professions and any other special events. But if, on the one hand I am sorry, on the other I am consoled, for I see that you still care for your poor Daughters here. I almost thought that being caught up in so much work and various activities, you would rarely think of us. This seemed to be proven true by the lack of letters from you. Now I see that I was wrong and I am very glad.
- 2 First of all, I feel I must tell you that there has always been peace and cheerfulness here along with goodwill on the part of everyone to become holy and I thank God for this. To tell you the truth, I am amazed and embarrassed when I see all these Daughters always so cheerful and serene. It is clear that despite my great unworthiness, our dear

¹ This is the first letter in Mother Mazzarello's handwriting. Sr. Emilia Mosca and Fr. Giacomo Costamagna added greetings and news at the end of it (cf. *Cronistoria* II pp. 223-4).

Mother Mary Most Holy, Help of Christians really gives us great graces. Please pray that we may always maintain and increase this spirit and that the virtues which we see blossoming may be more interior than exterior.

- 3 We now have six houses: Mornese, Borgo S. M.[artino],² Bordighera, Turin, Biella,³ Alassio,⁴ and in a month or two we will open one in Lanzo and another in Mathi. I forgot the house we have in Heaven that is always open. Its Director has no regard for either superiors or chapter members. He takes whomever He wants, and He already has seven. After Mother M.[istress] He took Sr. Luigia Giordano and Sr. Mina. The former died of typhoid on August 16, after only seven days illness. The latter went to Turin to study and to see if the air there would improve her health. Instead, she died of consumption on the fourth of October, just a day or two after her profession.
- 4 There are about 60 of us here, between Sisters and postulants. I do not know how many boarders we will have since the majority have not yet come back from their holidays. Last year there were twenty-nine; we hope the number will increase this year, but they are slow in coming because of our distance from the railway.⁵

² This was the first house to be opened on October 8, 1874, after that of Mornese. Don Bosco wanted the Sisters to look after the kitchen and laundry in the Salesian boarding school of San Carlo and at the same time to educate the girls through catechism lessons, sewing classes and a Festive Oratory.

³ This house was opened on October 7, 1876 in response to a request by Monsignor Basilio Leto who had asked Don Bosco for "his" Sisters. The FMA led by Mother Mazzarello's sister, Sr. Felicità, took care of the kitchen and laundry for the diocesan seminary. This was the first time the Sisters offered their services by contract anywhere other than in Salesian houses.

⁴ On October 12, 1876, this house was opened which was attached to the Salesian boarding school. This community was particularly blessed with frequent visits from Don Bosco, who was always eager to support and encourage his Daughters in their tireless and self-sacrificing work, which contributed so much to the smooth running of the boarding school.

⁵ The number of boarders did not actually increase. As long as the house remained in Mornese, their number never exceeded thirty.

- 5 Mother V.[icar], Sr. Petronilla, is taking the place of Mother Mistress since her role as Vicar did not give her much to do. We [sent] her [Sr. Pacotto] to Alassio as superior and she is doing her job very well.⁶ The community is happy with her. We have, however, added an Assistant to the Chapter. The first is still Sr. Emilia and the second is Sr. Enrichetta.⁷ When we have suitable personnel everything will be better organised.
- 6 There are twelve in [Borgo] S. Martino. The superior is Sr. Orsola Camisassa from Caramagna, the cook in the boarding school is Sr. Angiolina (the former servant of Sec.[retary] Traverso)⁸ and they are happy with her. There are three in Bordighera. Sr. Rosalia is the superior, Sr. Anna Oberti, and Sr. Giustina the cook. They are doing an immense amount of good.⁹ We have a postulant from there.¹⁰ The daughter of their landlord came here for the retreat, liked our Institute and will probably join us.¹¹ There are seventeen Sisters in Turin; among them is Sr. Laurantoni. Sr. Elisa is still the superior, but poor soul,

⁶ After the death of Sr. Maria Grosso, Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto was temporarily chosen for the formation of the novices and postulants. She was replaced by Sr. Petronilla Mazzarello who continued in this capacity, with an interruption of a few months, until the death of Mother Mazzarello.

⁷ The term "assistant" was taken from the Constitutions of the *Sisters of St. Anne of Providence*, on which much of the first juridical text of the FMA Constitution was based. Mother Emilia Mosca was responsible for the schools and Mother Enrichetta Sorbone, for the boarders (cf. *Cronistoria II* p. 225).

⁸ Sr. Angela Cassulo (cf. L 6, 9).

⁹ Sr. Rosalia Pestarino was the community animator. The other Sisters were: Sr. Anna Oberti and Sr. Agostina (Giustina) Calcagno. Their main activities were [the administration of a] school and the Festive Oratory.

¹⁰ Vitalina Aprosio, a native of Bordighiera-Torione, entered the Institute on August 21, 1876 and became a novice in Mornese on April 15, 1877. She returned to her family after one year's novitiate because of illness and died on July 14, 1879.

¹¹ This refers to Letizia, daughter of Francesco Lavignino, from whom the Sisters were renting a house and a small building for the school (cf. *Cronistoria II* p. 163). Letizia became an FMA on August 24, 1884.

maybe our good Jesus needs her to direct the house above, and I fear that we will have to let her go and be resigned to His Will. She, too, has the same illness as the others, consumption.¹²

- 7 There are 7 in Biella. The superior is my sister, Sr. Felicità.¹³ There are another 7 in Alassio and Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto is superior there. Sr. Angiolina Deambrogio and a certain Sr. Margherita Sacco, from Caramagna,¹⁴ will probably go to Lanzo.
- 8 Sr. Tamietti will go as superior to Mathi¹⁵ with Sr. Vincenzina Razzetti as teacher for the kindergarten and a certain Maritano from Cumiana, who came back to us in the month of April, will be her assistant.¹⁶ Sr. Maria Belletti is preparing to go to Heaven and perhaps she will have already left before your Reverence gets this letter. There

¹² The community in Turin was the largest after that of Mornese. Besides the assistants and the teachers in the school and the oratory, the house provided hospitality for a group of student Sisters and novices. The community animator, Sr. Elisa Roncallo, became gravely ill, but it was not tuberculosis, as Maria Mazzarello had feared (cf. Mainetti Giuseppina, *Madre Elisa Roncallo fra le prime discepole di S. Giovanni Bosco*, (1946), Scuola Tip. privata FMA, Torino, pp. 81-82).

¹³ Felicità Mazzarello like her sister, Maria Domenica, was a member of the *Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate* and one of the first FMA who made their religious profession on August 5, 1872. She was Directress of Novices in Mornese for two years. In 1874 she was sent as community animator to Borgo S. Martino, then to Biella and in 1880 to Sicily. She died at Mathi, Turin on August 1, 1886.

¹⁴ Since the house was not yet ready, the Sisters lived with a benefactress for a while because Don Bosco wanted the FMA to be present immediately, since they were urgently needed at the Salesian boarding school (cf. *Cronistoria* II p. 219). The following year, September 1, 1877, a regular community was set up with six professed Sisters and two novices. Sr. Angela Deambrogio was the first community animator of the house in Lanzo.

¹⁵ Actually this house was not opened until 1885. It was a work willed by the great charity of Don Bosco to care for mothers of Salesians who had been left alone and were in need of assistance (cf. *Cronistoria* V p. 64).

¹⁶ This refers to Teresa Maritano of whom Mother Mazzarello wrote in L 48.

were two holy retreats. Monsignor Scotton¹⁷ and Fr. Savio's brother came for the ladies' retreat.¹⁸ It is a pity there were so few of them. Only the theologian Belasio came for ours.¹⁹ Seventeen entered the novitiate and there were fifteen religious professions. There were no defections and we hope there will never be any more of them. The Sisters who went to Sestri have returned without coming to any harm, either in soul or body, and everyone was pleased with them.²⁰

- 9 Sr. David, who had gone [home] on Don Bosco's advice, obtained a cure from Our Lady and has come back to us. Now she is here in Mornese. Physically, she is well and she seems to be spiritually well too.²¹
- 10 Do you remember to pray for your Daughters in Mornese sometimes, especially for me, who needs it most of all? I'm not going to tell you all my wickedness, because I would need a lot more than this sheet of paper ... Say a little

¹⁷ Andrea Scotton, born in Bassano del Grappa, Vicenza, on March 2, 1838, became a priest in 1860. After teaching religion in the secondary school of Vicenza for some years, he dedicated his time to preaching. In 1881 he was appointed Archpriest of Breganze, Vicenza, where he died on November 27, 1915.

¹⁸ Fr. Ascanio Savio, brother of the Salesian, Fr. Angelo. The retreats for ladies were held from 1872 onwards. This activity was promoted and encouraged by Don Bosco. Sr. Emilia Mosca reports that on seeing the good which resulted from it, he said, "If the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were not founded for other motives, I would have founded it for the ladies' retreats" (cf. *Cronistoria* II p. 93).

¹⁹ Antonio Maria Belasio was born in Sartirana, Pavia, on March 20, 1813 and died in Piacenza in 1888. He was a famous writer and preacher, completely dedicated to parish missions. He was on excellent terms with Don Bosco.

²⁰ The *Cronistoria* speaks of how pleased the administrators were with the way the seaside camp was run and with the good that the Sisters did for the children, some of whom were morally neglected (cf. II pp. 203-204, 216. and Fr. Costamagna's letter to Don Bosco p. 401).

²¹ Mother Mazzarello, perhaps due to an oversight, does not say where Sr. Adele went. It would appear to refer to her home since this novice did go home to recover from illness shortly after being sent to the new house in Turin as a teacher (cf. L 5, 8). She returned to Mornese August 21, 1876.

prayer to the Lord to make me, once and for all, as I would like to be... We, too, always pray for you, that the Lord may bless you and bring you back to us soon! Oh, if you only knew how much we long to see you! We could not desire it more. Not a day passes but someone says: "When will Fr. Cagliero come back? Oh, if only he would come soon!" ... and other such expressions. Come soon and satisfy this ardent desire of ours.

- 11 Many Sisters ask you to keep a place for them in one of the two nests prepared [for us]. Among the many are: Sr. Maddalena Martini, Sr. Celestina, Sr. Turco, Sr. David, Sr. Cagliero; etc., and a postulant, who is a primary school teacher. She has only been here a few days but she seems to be full of good will. She is young and healthy and we are preparing her for America.²²
- 12 That is enough for now. Take courage and take care of your health. I hope you will come soon; we are expecting you in January.
- 13 Fr. Rector²³ is well, but for a while he was somewhat unwell. He would like to see us all become holy, and we are still far from it, so we make him impatient and he gets sick. Still, we will not give him permission to go to America. Anyway, the air there would be bad for him. Finally, remember that your Reverence is our protector and if Fr. Rector goes to America you will have to come to Mornese. For the present we are at peace because the personnel who are leaving have already been chosen, but we were really worried. He studied Spanish, then he went to Lanzo and was never coming back.

²² Despite research, it has proved impossible to identify the postulant referred to in this paragraph.

²³ Fr. Costamagna ardently desired to go to America. He reaffirms this to Fr. Cagliero in a page written in Spanish which he adds to this letter (cf. *Cronistoria* II p. 224). From the words of the Salesian rector it can be deduced that this letter was written in the month of October. He begins by saying that he had just come back from Alassio where he had gone to accompany the Sisters to the new house. This house was opened on October 12 of that year.

- 14 That is enough, now we really want to set ourselves to love our dear Jesus very much. Help us by praying to Him to set our hearts on fire with His love.
- 15 Accept the wishes of Fr. Rector, of all the community and especially my own. Please send a special blessing to each one in particular. Finally, bless me who kiss your hand reverently and sign myself,
Your Reverence's

Most humble daughter of Jesus and Mary,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[ASC Original. In her own writing]

8. To the Rector of the House of Mornese, Fr. Giacomo Costamagna

Together with her Christmas wishes, Maria Mazzarello expresses her gratitude for the rector's total dedication to the good of the community.

[Mornese, December, 1876]
Viva Gesù Bambino!

My Rev. and Very Dear Father,¹

- 1 During these beautiful days every one is offering their greetings and should I not say anything, I who more than anyone else know and experience the goodness of your fatherly heart? Oh yes, I too, want to write a few lines to tell you all I feel in my poor heart. But here I am, completely confused. I would like to say many things, however, because of my lack of talent, how can I write all that I feel?
- 2 I would like to tell you that I know all the good you do for

¹ In previous editions of the *Letters* this letter was given as written to Fr. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne and it was presumed to have been written in December 1879 (cf. L 33 in 1980 edition). There are various reasons for changing the date and recipient of the letter. First of all, Mother Mazzarello uses letterhead from the house in Mornese where she was no longer living by December 1879. The Salesian archivist decisively interpreted the document as being written in 1876, as he wrote on the original. Furthermore, from an examination of the contents of the letter and from the confidence with which Maria writes, one can gather that she must be writing to Fr. Costamagna. This is also confirmed by the pencil notes of the person who was trying to interpret who the recipient was: "Who? Costamagna? Cagliero? Bosco?". It is significant that Fr. Lemoyne is not even mentioned as a possibility. If the recipients, Fr. Cagliero and Don Bosco are excluded, the first hypothesis of the archivist stands. The archivist wrote, "Costamagna, year 1876".

me and for everyone in this house. I would like to show my gratitude and to ask your pardon if I have not corresponded to your care; if instead of being a consolation to your heart I have caused you much displeasure. I want to promise to correspond better during the new year which is about to begin, but I don't know how to explain properly how I feel.²

- 3 I will turn to the dear Baby Jesus and ask Him to do my share by blessing you, my good Father, granting you all the graces your fatherly heart could desire. I will also pray to the Infant to repay you for all the good you do for me and to give you the consolation of seeing your efforts bear fruit. May He keep you for many, many years, give you health and strength for the good of this community and, after a very long life, reward you with a beautiful crown in Heaven.
- 4 Please be kind enough to pray in a special way to Baby Jesus for me. You know my needs, I won't stop to repeat them. It is enough for me to remind you to pray hard that I may be able to give good example and put your holy teachings into practice. Please bless me as, at the feet of Baby Jesus and kissing your hand respectfully,
I sign myself, Good Father,

Your most humble daughter in Jesus,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[ASC Original. In her handwriting]

² We know that Mother Mazzarello, although obedient and submissive to the rector, did not hesitate at times, to express her opinion clearly even when it was not in agreement with his. This is particularly noted when it was a question of the good of the community. Rather than causing the rector "displeasure", it was more a question of expressing a different point of view. On this topic see what Maccono writes to explain Fr. Costamagna's way of acting (cf. Maccono, F. (1980) [1934], op. cit., I pp. 301-307; II p. 240)

9. To the General Director, Fr. Giovanni Cagliero

Maria Mazzarello gives news of the community and of the houses opened during the month of December. Once again, she expresses her desire to go to America and mentions the names of Sisters who are also ready to go.

Mornese, December 27, 1876

Viva Gesù e Maria!

Reverend Theologian and My Good Father,

- 1 I waited to write so as to give you news of the Christmas celebrations, so before telling you anything else, I will describe them as best I can.
- 2 There were to have been some admissions into the novitiate on the Feast of the Immaculate, but they did not take place because Fr. Rector had gone to preach a retreat at Balangero.¹ On Christmas Eve, which fell on a Sunday, there were eleven admissions. At the Midnight Mass five girls made their First Holy Communion and we all offered heartfelt prayers to Baby Jesus for our dear Salesian missionaries. We asked Him to bless your efforts and to console your hearts with the conversion of all those souls in America. We spent the day in h[oly] cheerfulness in the company of Baby Jesus.² Now that I remember, do you have the Baby [Jesus] in America? If not, we will bring him with us.

¹ An ancient site a few kilometres from Lanzo, Torinese.

² Christmas at Mornese must have been particularly significant for the first generation of FMA. The liturgical celebrations, "High Mass", as they said then, preparation of the Crib by boarders and Sisters together, the very beauty of the winter landscape, all formed the backdrop against which memories were engraved in the hearts of those present. Mother's own letters, written after the community moved to Nizza Monferrato, carry nostalgic references to that time.

- 3 Don't think that we pray for you only occasionally. I can assure you that I never go before the Lord without praying for you, my good Father, and neither do the others. And do you still remember your Daughters in Mornese? We really believed that you would come for the Christmas celebrations and then they told us that ... "Who knows when he will come!" It is really high time that you did come. It has been so long since you went away! If you only knew how many Sisters and postulants there are whom you don't know ! You really need to come and see them! If you can't, then at least be good enough to send for us soon. There are many [among] us who really want to go, but especially seven who are already prepared: Sr. Maddalena Martini Sr. Emilia Borgna, Sr. Adele David, Sr. Celestina Riva, Sr. Carmela from Ovada,³ Sr. Turco Clotilde, Sr. Maria Mazzarello, that is, *me*.⁴
- 4 Fr. Rector is always saying that we are too young, but it seems to me that we are very, very old.⁵ I hardly have any teeth left, but I have two that would frighten you since they are so long. I have lots of grey hair; it is just as well that the bonnet covers it all! To frighten me they also told me that in America there are some people who eat Christians, but I'm not afraid because I am so withered that they certainly wouldn't want to eat me. It is true that we are good for nothing, but with the Lord's help and our own good will, I hope we will manage to do something. Call us soon. If you write and tell us when we are to leave, we will prepare a nice piece of needlework to bring to you. One more thing: you will have to send us the money for the journey, because we have nothing.⁶ Oh, what joy it

³ Sr. Carmela Arata, native of Ovada, Alessandria.

⁴ The italics show where the writer had underlined the text.

⁵ Note the humour in Mother Mazzarello's words since she was then 39 years old and Fr. Costamagna nine years younger.

⁶ There really was great poverty in the house of Mornese. At times bread was lacking or there was not enough food for the large community. Austerity of lifestyle, joyfully embraced, together with abandonment to Divine Providence, characterised the first community.

would be if the Lord really did give us the grace of calling us to America! If we could do no more than save one soul for him it would be reward enough for all our sacrifices.

- 5 Now it is time to thank you for your dear letter, which I received towards the end of November. You cannot imagine the pleasure it gave us. We are only sorry that you don't write more often. Actually, I could almost say that it is the only one that we received. Don Bosco never writes a word either. Won't you write to us sometimes and not make us yearn so much for your letters?⁷
- 6 At the beginning of December we opened a new house in Lanzo with two Sisters, Sr. Angiolina Deambrogio from Valenza and Sr. Margherita Sacco from Caramagna.⁸ At almost the same time the house of Lu [Monferrato] was also opened.⁹ There are three there: Sr. Anna Tamietti, superior, Sr. Teresina Mazzarello and Sr. Adelina Ayra. They teach girls and boys. It is not a kindergarten, but is almost so. They also teach sewing and have a lot to do. We already have eight houses, including this one and, thank God, up to now everything is going very well. The Holy Rule is observed as are your reminders, that is, never offend or take offence. Charity reigns everywhere; may God grant us the grace that this may continue, or rather, that we may acquire many virtues, especially His Holy Love.

⁷ Don Bosco followed the development of the Institute in person. He visited the community frequently and he directed with affectionate interest the consolidation and expansion of the new Institute. However, for organisational reasons, he chose to intervene officially through his representative, in the person of the Director General of the Institute. This explains why *la Madre* insists on more frequent letters from Fr. Cagliero.

⁸ Cf. L 7, 7 (fn 14).

⁹ The house was opened on October 6, 1876. Don Bosco had been asked by the couple, Giuseppe and Mary Rota, to send the Sisters to open a school to teach sewing and dressmaking, a private school, an oratory and a kindergarten. That last mentioned was the first of its kind conducted by the Institute and signalled the beginning of valuable educational work carried out by the FMA in the area of pre-schools.

- 7 My sister¹⁰ is no longer in Biella because the air was bad for her health. She returned to [Borgo] S. Martino and Sr. Orsola, who was superior in [Borgo] S. Martino went there [to Biella] in her place.
- 8 We have many postulants and they perform great comedies on stage! One, who is a teacher, plays the clown and makes us all laugh.¹¹ There is another teacher, but she is a very serious soul, almost without any [...].¹²
- 9 I have another death to announce. On November 11, Feast of St. Martin, Sr. Maria Belletti died, after a long illness and after having edified us all with her patience and resignation. We have no one sick now. Who knows who will be the first to go to Heaven? Will it be me? How fortunate I should be! But I am not ready yet and I don't want to lose my way, as I did when I went to Mortara.¹³ I want to go straight to that beautiful House. Pray earnestly that I may become worthy by dying to myself and to my self-love. I have so much of it that often I trip and fall like

¹⁰ Sr. Felicita Mazzarello, one of the first FMA and first Directress of Novices.

¹¹ The theatre as an educational choice and an expression of Salesian cheerfulness, has an irreplaceable role in Don Bosco's Preventive System. In addition to its function as recreation, it also served to instruct and educate. This is why it was typical of the educational scene in Mornese. In the boarding school program "recitation" is given as one of the basic educational elements taught to all the girls (cf. *Programma: Casa di Maria Ausiliatrice per educazione femminile in Mornese* (1873), Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, Turin, p. 1).

¹² The word in the original manuscript is illegible. In previous editions it was interpreted as "devotion".

¹³ Mother Mazzarello is referring to an unpleasant incident that happened when she was returning from Borgo S. Martino where she had gone to accompany Simbeni to meet Don Bosco (cf. L 6, 6-7). On her return journey she took the wrong train and realised too late that she was travelling in the opposite direction. When she got off in Mortara, Pavia, it was already dark and, not having any money to continue the journey, she asked for hospitality from the parish priest. Not trusting her, he directed her to the homeless shelter in town. There Mother Mazzarello spent the night in prayer, sitting in a secluded corner (cf. *Cronistoria II* p. 195).

a drunkard.¹⁴ Pray, too, for all the Sisters who recommend themselves to you. Everyone, from the professed to the boarders, asks me to greet you and wish you every possible good [*dirle tante cose*].¹⁵

- 10 I forgot to tell you two things. One is that we have already paid our debts to Turin and out of 20,000 lire [only] about two or three thousand remain.¹⁶ The other thing is that there were no religious professions because they were not yet mature enough.¹⁷
- 11 I unite my greetings with those of Fr. Rector and I kiss your hand. I pray you to send your fatherly blessing and, in the Heart of Jesus, I remain, your Reverence's

Most humble daughter in Jesus,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello¹⁸

[ASC Original. In her handwriting]

¹⁴ This vivid and harsh image shows her ability to recognise and accept her limitations in all serenity, and at the same time her constant striving to grow towards greater holiness.

¹⁵ Frequently Maria Mazzarello employs the expression *dirle tante cose* or similar terms (cf. *dirle tante cose* L 20, 5; *scrivere un sacco di cose*, L 22, 5). She often uses this phrase when communicating with the Sisters. It is difficult to translate this expression into English. Upon being consulted, the editors of the 1994 Italian edition have stated that it is more than a greeting. It indicates an affectionate desire to communicate all good things to a person who is loved much. (ETG)

¹⁶ Note that the house of Mornese, like all the Salesian houses of the time, depended on the central house in Valdocco, Turin and was the property of the founder, Don Bosco. However, from a financial point of view, each community had to deal with the ordinary administrative expenses so as not to be a burden on the Valdocco Oratory.

¹⁷ This statement shows the prudent discernment and practical wisdom of *la Madre*. It is even more significant when we think of the urgent need for personnel in the Institute at that time. In fact, the works of the Institute were continually expanding due to the urgent requests they were receiving from all parts of Italy, and even from abroad, asking them to open houses and schools for the education of girls.

¹⁸ The letter carries a postscript by Sr. Emilia Mosca who adds a personal greeting and repeats her availability for missionary work in America (cf. *Cronistoria II* p. 232).

10. To Mr. Francesco Bosco

Maria Mazzarello sends Christmas greetings and gives him news of his daughters who are boarders at Mornese.

Mornese, December 21, 1877
Viva Gesù Bambino!

Most Esteemed Sir,¹

- 1 I do not want to let this happy occasion pass without giving you news of your daughters.
- 2 Clementina² did not suffer at all during her journey. She is really well and pleased to be here; she is cheerful and it seems, in short, as if she has always been here. Tell her mother not to worry about her; we will take good care of her and help her to grow up healthy and holy. The same goes for Maria and Eulalia,³ who are both well. They are working, studying, and praying for their parents and they are cheerful and looking forward to a visit from you. If the three of them continue like this, they will surely be your consolation some day.

¹ A nephew of Don Bosco, son of his brother Giuseppe, who had three daughters boarding in Mornese. Francesco was born in Castlenuovo d'Asti on March 25, 1841 and died in Turin, March 8, 1911.

² Clementina was only seven years old. She became an FMA in 1889.

³ Eulalia was eleven years old. She too became an FMA in 1884 and in 1917 a General Councillor in the Institute. L 13 is addressed to Maria Bosco. The letters written by these two to their family are preserved and published in the *Cronistoria* of the Institute. This simple but genuine testimony helps us to understand certain aspects of the educational environment created in the house of Mornese (cf. II pp. 157-158, 266-267).

- 3 Meanwhile, I wish you a Happy Christmas, a happy conclusion to the year and the very best start to the new year. May our dear Baby Jesus bless you and all your family,⁴ and after a very long life, may He give you all a splendid throne of glory in Heaven.
Pray for me during these beautiful days, and believe me to be,

Your most humble servant,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello,
Superior

[GAFMA Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

⁴ In addition to the children named in this letter, there were Giuseppe, Giuseppina, and Rosina. The last named became an FMA in 1885 and left for Argentina where she died at a very young age on January 21, 1892.

11. To the Rector of the House of Mornese, Fr. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne

Maria Mazzarello offers Christmas wishes and expresses her desire to fulfil her own mission faithfully.

Mornese, December 24, 1877
Viva Gesù Bambino!

My Rev. and Good Father,¹

- 1 Allow me to add my greetings to the many which you will receive during these beautiful days. Although poorly expressed, they are sincere and are offered with my whole heart. I wish that you, with God's help, may be able to make saints of all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, present and future, and after having sanctified many thousands, may you go to direct them in Heaven. You will certainly have a lot of work to do, but our good Jesus will console you and give you strength. I pray to him every day for this grace. Tonight and tomorrow I will ask Him in a special way to hear me by blessing you, my dear Father, and granting you all the help you need.
- 2 On my part, I promise with the help of our good Jesus, to do everything possible to assist you and to ease your burden. And you, Rev. Father, do not spare me in anything; use me as you see fit, correct me freely. In short treat me

¹ Fr. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne (1839-1916) arrived in Mornese, as spiritual director, October 25, 1877, in place of Fr. Costamagna who had left for the missions. He also directed the FMA at Nizza Monferrato until 1883. After that, Don Bosco called him back to Turin as secretary of the General Council and editor of the *Bollettino Salesiano*. Until his death, he worked full time collecting, organising and passing on the "Memoirs" of the Founder.

as a father treats his eldest daughter.² What I recommend most of all is that you pray for me; I need it so much! If I always give good example to my Sisters, things will always go well. If I love Jesus with my whole heart, I will know how to lead others to love Him. Pray much to Baby Jesus for me, especially on this Blessed Night. Say one of those little words to Him that can obtain all things.

- 3 I would like to say much more to you, but what can I do? When the heart is full, the hand cannot write.³ Like a good Father, interpret what I want to say and accept my wishes. Be so kind as to give me your fatherly blessing. While kissing your consecrated hand respectfully, I dare to call myself, my Reverend and good father,

Your most humble daughter in J.[esus],
the poor Sr. Mary Mazzarello

[ASC Transcribed in the Italian *Cronistoria dell'Istituto FMA*, II pp 519-520 (typed, unpublished version)]

² This expression shows not only her balanced sense of dependence but also her awareness of her responsibility and her commitment to conversion.

³ We can deduce from this that it was in her own writing. This becomes even clearer when Maccono, in his revision of the second edition of her biography, transcribes it with the note: "This letter was completely written by Mother Mazzarello" (cf. posthumous reprint: Maccono, F. (1934), *Santa Maria D. Mazzarello*, I p. 414 [this appendix is not in the English edition]). The unpublished, typed edition of the *Cronistoria [dell'Istituto delle FMA]* reports it with the fn: "The Original is in the ASC". Unfortunately it has not been possible to trace and consult the Original in that Archive.

12. To Mr. Francesco Bosco

Maria Mazzarello sends Easter greetings and gives news of his daughters who are boarders.

Mornese, April 17, 1878

Most Esteemed Sir,¹

- 1 It has been a long time since you have had news of your daughters and I imagine you would like to hear something, so I am making it my duty to write to you.²
- 2 Maria was in bed for eight or ten days. She is better now but her complete recovery is slow. She [has] no appetite, and, all in all, she continues to be a bit sickly. A few weeks ago Eulalia had erysipelas. She is better now, but not completely well. They are both up, however, and continue their studies and work. Clementina is well and cheerful, working and studying.
- 3 Rest assured that we are taking every possible care³ of them both with regard to food and to treatment. They join

¹ Cf., L 10 which is addressed to the same person.

² According to the programme of the school, the community animator, Sr. Maria Mazzarello was to keep periodic contact with the families of the pupils, to inform them of the health, conduct and scholastic progress of their daughters. This exchange of news helped to build up the trust and confidence of the parents in the educators.

³ This statement, so rich in human and educational significance, highlights the availability of Maria Mazzarello and the first FMA with regard to the integral education of young people. "Caring" evokes a holistic attitude that demands dedication, respect, wisdom and untiring loving presence towards those entrusted to the care of the educator.

me in wishing you and your wife a Happy Easter and all
the choicest blessings of the Lord.

Believe me, in the Heart of Jesus,

Your most humble servant,

Sr. Maria Mazzarello,

Sup.[erior] of the Daughters of Mary Help of C.[hristians]

[GAFMA Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

13. To the Young Maria Bosco

Maria Mazzarello thanks her for her letter and gives brief advice on the Christian life.

Mornese, May 23, 1878
Viva Maria!

Dearest Maria,¹

- 1 Oh, how pleased I was to receive your letter! Let us thank Our Lady for giving you back your health! Isn't Our Lady a really good mother? Continue to pray to her with all your heart, especially during these beautiful days. We, too, will pray for you. I hope she will give you the grace of soon being able to return to the nest in Mornese. Eulalia and Clementina are very well and cheerful. Tell your parents, won't you? They are looking forward to your return and, in the meantime, they go to look for you every day in the Heart of Jesus. Make sure that you can be found there. All the boarders are shouting a heartfelt *Viva Maria!* to you. Shout back so they can hear you.
- 2 Your classmates thank you for remembering them and are waiting for you to solve their problems with fractions. At present, the boarders are all busy studying poems, etc., for

¹ This is Don Bosco's grandniece named in L 10, L 12. Maria was born January 26, 1865 and came to Mornese as a boarder in October 1874. She was very frail in health and died at home on August 29, 1881 (cf. Mainetti Giuseppina, *Madre Eulalia Bosco, pronipote del Santo: Memorie Biografiche*, (1952), Colle don Bosco, Istituto salesiano arti grafiche, Asti, pp. 16-17).

the Feast of Mary Help of Christians. I don't know yet when we will celebrate it.²

- 3 Always be good, Maria, be good to all, your parents, [and] your sisters and brothers. Give good example to all who see you and pray from your heart. Do you receive Holy Communion? Receive Jesus with love since He loves you very much.
- 4 Have great courage, take care of your health, get well soon, so that you can return to us. There is still one thing that I want to recommend to you and that is to be cheerful. If you are cheerful you will get better sooner, so have courage.³
- 5 Please greet your good parents for me. Tell them not to worry because Eulalia and Clementina are well. Both send their greetings and entrust you with passing on to them [parents] many, many wishes for every possible good.
- 6 Sr. Enrichetta and Sr. Emilia send you cordial greetings and they ask you to say a Hail Mary for them. Say three for me. It is almost ten in the evening, so good night.⁴ I leave you in the Heart of Jesus, where I will always be,

Yours most affectionately in the Lord,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello S.[uperior] G.[eneral]

[GAFMA Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

² In that year the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, which was usually celebrated towards the end of May, was postponed because of Mother's visit to France. The *Cronistoria* notes that it was celebrated on June 19, after a long period of preparation during which the rector commented on an invocation of the Litany of Loreto each evening (cf. II p. 314).

³ This short letter contains, in synthesis, the principal values on which the Saint's educational approach was founded, a commitment that aimed at forming Christian women who were open to God and to others.

⁴ This is not just a greeting, but a reminder of a characteristic moment in the "Salesian" day, which concludes with an informal meeting of the animator with the community. Don Bosco introduced the "Good Night" in the earliest days of the oratory in Valdocco to help the young people to reflect on the happenings of every day and to interpret them from a Christian point of view so as to encourage them to be faithful to their duty in daily life.

**14. To the Rector of the House of Mornese,
Fr. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne**

[Maria Mazzarello writes] name-day greetings to the local Rector.

Mornese, June 17, 1878
Viva S. Giovanni!

Very Reverend and Good Father,¹

- 1 On this special day each Sister would like, if possible, to manifest her feelings and express what is in her heart.
- 2 We, as members of the Chapter, are closer to you than others, so we know better than anyone else the good that you do for our community, and what sacrifices and sufferings we cause you. Therefore, we would like to find some way to show our gratitude and filial affection. Oh, if only you could read our hearts! You would see that no words can express what they contain. When we say that we love you as our kind father, and we would like to find some way to recompense you for all the sacrifices you have to make for us, our expressions are sincere. They come

¹ This letter could not have been written to Don Bosco, as was stated in the previous edition of the *Letters* (cf. L 12 in *Lettere* 1980, op. cit.), but to the local rector, Fr. Lemoyne. Analysing the content carefully we notice references to “our house” or “this house” where the local rector lived. The greeting “our deepest desire is that you may live happily in this house” leaves no doubt to whom Mother Mazzarello is speaking. The Cronistoria confirms this. “On the 18th, the whole house was jubilantly ringing with festal songs for the Director, as he had already announced that he had to be in Turin for the actual feast-day, June 24, on which day Don Bosco’s feast was kept there. Mother too had been invited” (II p. 314). This explains the date of 17 June on this letter.

- from our hearts and are not mere compliments but are only a very small part of what our hearts would like to say.
- 3 It is our deepest desire that you should live happily in this house, that there might be nothing that would upset you. Instead, sometimes we are the first to cause you displeasure! Forgive us, and know that this happens out of ignorance, even though we are resolved to correspond fully to your loving and fatherly care.
 - 4 May the Lord preserve you for many, many years to come and give you the consolation of seeing us all become holy and one day, may we all be united around you up in Heaven! This is the wish we offer to you with all our hearts. During these days our Holy Communions will be offered to obtain this grace and the others which your Reverence desires, along with Heaven's choicest blessings.
 - 5 In your fatherly goodness accept these, our wishes, which are fervent and sincere even though poorly expressed.
 - 6 Allow us to ask a favour of you, that is, to pray very much for us that we may be of good example to everyone in the house. Therefore, scold [*pruca*]² us and don't spare us, whenever the need arises.
 - 7 Bless us as a father blesses his children, since that is what we are, and as such we kiss your consecrated hands

² The word used comes from the Piedmontese dialect *pruca* or *fé na pruca* meaning to scold, reprimand or give a dressing down. Don Bosco also uses the term on various occasions. For example, in his letter to the boys at Mirabello he writes: "I would like to give you a solemn *parrucca*..." and he picks out some boys in particular (Ceria Eugenio (ed.), *Epistolario di Don Bosco* (1954), I SEI Torino, L 382). He also uses it in writing to Fr. Giovanni Tamietti, director of the Latin Writers Series, who was late in handing in some material for the printing of the first volume. Don Bosco says: "I would need to *parruccarti*, scold you and encourage you to finish that blessed work" (ibid., II L 1307).

respectfully. Allow us to say, good Father, that we are,
Your most humble daughters in Jesus,

the Sisters of the Chapter,³
Sr. Maria Mazzarello
Sr. Petronilla Mazzarello
Sr. Giovanna Ferrettino
Sr. Enrichetta Sorbone
Sr. Emilia Mosca

[ASC Transcribed in the Italian Cronistoria dell'Istituto FMA, II pp. 516-17 (typed, unpublished version)]

³ The letter is signed by all the members of the General Council, then called the Chapter: the Superior General, Vicar, Bursar and two Assistants. Note that up to 1890 the General Council of the Institute was also the House Council.

15. To the Director General, Fr. Giovanni Cagliero

Maria Mazzarello expresses her opinion on some issues and asks advice of her guide.

Mornese, September 27, 1878

Viva Gesù!

My Reverend and Good Father,¹

- 1 I received a letter from Lu [Monferrato] yesterday evening in which Sr. Orsola² said that your Reverence had gone to visit them and that she told you of the needs of their house, saying that they would need another Sister, at least temporarily, and suggesting Sr. Teresa Laurantoni. She said that you, good Father, not only approved, but said that she would be the most suitable person.
- 2 Now I shall tell you the difficulties I have with sending this Sister to Lu. However, if you still want me to send her, then I will send her.
- 3 First of all, I want to tell you that Sr. Teresa does not know anything about the distribution of prizes or about exams.³ Then, her heart too easily becomes attached and what happened in Turin could easily happen again in Lu. Besides, she is very good-looking and vivacious. I would

¹ Fr. Giovanni Cagliero was in Turin at the time. He had come back from America the previous year, on the occasion of the first General Chapter of the Salesian Congregation. He remained in Italy until 1884, the year in which he was made Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia.

² Sr. Orsola Camisassa, because of her prudence and serene adaptability, was called upon to lead various communities in a short space of time.

³ In Lu Monferrato the FMA had a kindergarten and a primary school. Sr. Laurentoni had neither the competence nor the experience needed in this area.

not feel at ease in sending her to a house where she would always be dealing with lay people, without having a superior who could follow her well, and this she would not have in Lu. Then again, I would not like to give her too much importance. Believe me, it can be harmful for young Sisters when they are given too much importance. If, instead, we move more slowly, in a few years' time we will have people who can be trusted enough to be sent anywhere with anyone.

- 4 Forgive me for saying this, I am speaking as I would to a father. I foresee that if Sr. Teresa goes to Lu, it will take me a long time to set her right again. At present she is getting on very well.⁴
- 5 Yesterday evening Emanuella Bonora⁵ went home. Her uncle wrote to her from the Oratory⁶ saying that everything was arranged with Fr. Cagliari regarding her sister, Carolina. I don't know if he expects her to be accepted in Nizza without payment. However, I would like to point out something. It would not be convenient to accept both girls without payment (you could say without payment since Em.[manuella] only pays 10 lire). It is true that we are accepting them in the hope that they will become nuns, but they are young and nature might play a trick on us and produce some illness and then we would be left with empty hands. If they don't pay there is also another problem. They haven't even brought sufficient clothing, and therefore they cannot keep themselves clean. Neither can we give the boarders the kind of food we would be able to give if all paid. In this way we will never have real boarders.⁷
- 6 I am only making an observation here. However, if you

⁴ This wise reflection of Mother Mazzarello is based on her personal knowledge of the Sister and on the fact that she had constantly followed up her human and religious formation.

⁵ This young woman, who was then a boarder, later became an FMA.

⁶ This refers to the Salesian, Fr. Luigi Nai, who was living at the Oratory of St. Frances of Sales in Turin.

⁷ To give the minimum of economic security to this educational work, the parents of the pupils were asked to contribute a fee of 20 lire per month. Agreements were reached with poorer families to pay less or even to

believe that we should accept them, I will be happy to do so, but I want to hear it from you.

- 7 Please write and let me know if I am to send Giuseppina Vergniaud to Turin to study Spanish. I spoke to her and found her ready to go to America and I think she is promising. If she were to go to Turin now, she could come here for her admission to the novitiate.⁸
- 8 I recommend her particularly to you that you may keep her in her place. I say this because if she had not been given so much importance during the time she spent in Turin, perhaps she would be a novice by now.⁹
- 9 If you have any postulants, by all means, send them since there is room here. There are, I think, twenty-five postulants. Some went home because they did not have sufficient health. The rest, thank God, seem to be getting on well both with regard to health and good will.
- 10 The boarders are waiting for you to come to take them to Nizza. You will come, won't you?
- 11 Fr. Rector asks me to greet you. Pray for me as I have great need of it, especially at present. Pray, too, for all your Daughters. Give my respects to Don Bosco, and believe me to be, in the Heart of Jesus,

Your most humble daughter,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[ASC Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

accept the children without payment. In this case the family was financially comfortable. This explains why *la Madre* is so direct in her request that they pay what the regulations asked.

⁸ Sr. Vergniaud received the religious habit and was professed on the same day, December 8, 1878, because she was about to leave for Uruguay on January 1, 1879.

⁹ She returns to the idea expressed earlier regarding the young Sisters. Her experience in formation had taught Mother Mazzarello the value of introducing the young person gradually to the fulfilment of a role or responsibility. It was necessary to show trust, but at the same time educate to submission and religious obedience. It was necessary to delay admission to the novitiate when, as in this case, the candidate was not sufficiently formed.

16. To the Sisters of the House of Borgo San Martino

Maria Mazzarello invites the Sisters to prepare seriously for the Feast of the Immaculate and to renew the commitments they have made.

[Mornese, December] 1878¹

Viva Maria Immacolata!

- 1 We are nearing the beautiful feast of our Most Holy Mother, Mary Immaculate. I know that you really want a letter from me and here I [am] ready to obey you immediately by encouraging you to make a good novena, with all possible fervour and to observe the Holy Rule well.
- 2 We must, therefore, commit ourselves, especially during these beautiful days, to the sincere practice of true humility, to crush our self-love at any cost, to bear with each other's defects with charity.
- 3 We must make our practices of piety with enthusiasm and fervour, especially Holy Communion and try to be exact [in the observance] of our Holy Rule, by practising our Holy Vows of poverty, chastity and obedience better. If we do this, Our Lady will be pleased with us and will obtain for us from the Lord all the graces we need to become holy.²

¹ There is a copy of this letter in the handwriting of Sr. Maria Sampietro, which was sent to the GAFMA from Liège (Belgium). The letter finishes with the note "Year 1878" in French and does not say to whom it was addressed. So it is uncertain if the letter is complete. It is difficult to ascertain who brought it to Belgium. It may have been Sr. Maria Gastaldi, who was in Borgo San Martino in 1878 and was sent to Belgium for the opening of the house in Liège in 1891.

² It is worth noting that when proposing an explicit programme for

- 4 During these days let us remember to renew the good resolutions we made during our retreat. Let us pray much for our dear superiors, for the needs of our dear Congregation and let us not forget our dear deceased Sisters.
- 5 Take courage, work willingly for Jesus and be certain that whatever you do and suffer will be repaid in Heaven.
- 6 Always be cheerful in the Lord. I am,
Your most affectionate Mother,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Copy in someone else's handwriting, lacking name of recipient]

greater commitment in preparation for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, *la Madre* returns to the fundamental themes of her spirituality, without adding any extraordinary devotional practices. In order to honour Mary, the FMA are encouraged to "do better" what they must already do every day.

17. To the Community Animator of the House of Montevideo-Villa Colón (Uruguay), Sr. Angela Vallese

Maria Mazzarello exhorts and counsels the missionaries and presents the first regional delegate for the houses in America.

[Mornese, December, 1878]
Viva Gesù e Maria!

My Very Dear Sr. Angiolina,¹

- 1 It has already been a year since we last saw each other.² How time passes! We really must make good use of it to gain much merit and so be ready when the Lord calls. I am happy that the Sisters there are good and work hard. It is up to us to help them to grow always in virtue, first of all by example, because what is taught by example remains deeply impressed on the heart and does much more good, and then by words. Always encourage them to be humble and obedient, to love work, to act with the right intention and always to be open and sincere with everyone. Always keep them cheerful, always correct them with charity but never overlook any defect. A defect that is corrected

¹ Sr. Angela Vallese was the pioneer of the FMA missionaries in America. She was a strong woman, with great faith and intense apostolic ardour. At first she was community animator in Montevideo-Villa Colón, Uruguay, and later in Argentina and Chile. For 25 years she was the regional delegate of all the houses in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego (cf. Capetti Giselda, (1947), *Apprendo il solco: Madre Angela Vallese, prima tra le prime missionarie di S. Giovanni Bosco*, LICE-Berruti, Torino).

² She had left with the First Missionary Expedition, November 14, 1877. A few days earlier, November 9, she had the good fortune of receiving the blessing of the Holy Father in Rome, where she had gone with Mother Mazzarello and Sr. Giovanna Borgna and a group of Salesian missionaries, led by Fr. Giovanni Cagliero (cf. *Cronistoria II* pp. 273-277).

immediately is nothing, but if it is allowed to take root, it is very difficult to uproot.

- 2 Now you will have Sr. Maddalena as provincial.³ Always let her know what you are doing and how the Sisters are. Ask her advice often, either in person or in writing. I too, want to hear from you often. Write to me always and pray for me always. Enter often into the Heart of Jesus. I will go there also, so we can meet often and tell each other many things.
- 3 Your relatives are well; pray for them always. Mariin's⁴ mother has died; pray for her good soul too. Your sister is well and is always good. She is in Alassio as cook now; pray much for her also.⁵ Pray always for everyone.
- 4 Be cheerful⁶ and don't be so afraid of your defects and of not being able to correct them all at once. Little by little, with the good will to fight them, never making peace with them once the Lord makes them known to you, do your part to correct yourself. You will see that sooner or later you will overcome them all. Courage then, have great confidence in God and a good sense of self-contempt and you will see that all will go well. Give my respectful greetings to your good rector; tell him that although I do

³ Sr. Maddalena Martini was the first regional delegate of the FMA houses in America.

⁴ This is a diminutive of the name Maria in the Piedmontese dialect. Mother Mazzarello is referring to Mrs. Maria Rota, a benefactress of Don Bosco from the same place as Sr. Angela Vallese (cf. L 9, fn 9). Angela had particular ties of gratitude to this lady who had introduced her to Don Bosco and so helped her to discern her FMA vocation.

⁵ This was Sr. Luigia, then a novice. She was professed at Alassio March 9, 1879 (cf. L 20, fn 4).

⁶ In almost all her letters, Mother Mazzarello returns insistently to the theme of cheerfulness that was one of her favourites. For her, [the expression] "be cheerful" was not just a wish, but a sign of the deep joy that has its source in the love of God and is nourished by trust and hope (cf. Garrone Gabriel-Marie (1987), 'La gioia, frutto dello Spirito: Un tema che caratterizza la spiritualità di S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello', in Posada Maria Esther (ed.), *Attuale perché vera: Contributi su S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello*, LAS, Roma, pp. 19-36).

not know him well, I thank him for all the good he is doing for each of you and I pray that the Lord may reward him with many graces and blessings. Recommend me very much to his fervent prayers.⁷

- 5 I leave you in the Heart of Jesus and I pray that He may bless you, make you totally His and keep you always united and cheerful. Pray much for me who never forget you in my poor prayers and believe me to be, in the Heart of Baby Jesus,

Your most affectionate Mother,
the poor Sr. Maria Mazzarello

- 6 The Sisters⁸ will give you news of this house. Get them to tell you many things. I want you to keep them all cheerful,⁹ and give them lots of encouragement.

Viva Gesù Bambino!

Viva Maria!

Viva S. Giuseppe and all the Saints in Heaven!

And *Viva* all the good Daughters of Mary Help of Christians!

Courage, courage, my good Daughters!

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁷ Fr. Luigi Lasagna was rector of the Salesian boarding school in Montevideo-Villa Colón. Both as rector and provincial he worked assiduously in the areas of education, culture and social action. In 1893 he was appointed titular bishop of Tripoli and entrusted with the evangelisation of Mato Grosso, Brazil. He died tragically in a train crash at Juiz de Fora, November 6, 1895 (cf. Albera, Paolo (1906), *Mons. Luigi Lasagna*, Tip. Salesiana, Torino).

⁸ There were ten missionaries on the second expedition, led by Sr. Maddalena Martini. They left Genoa-Sampierdarena, January 1, 1879 and it was they who brought to the missionaries this letter from *la Madre*, together with the two that follow.

⁹ Here as in many other places, especially when speaking of joy, Maria Mazzarello uses a reflexive form of the verb that would translate literally "keep them happy for me" or, as the case may be, "be joyful for me". This form expresses a certain closeness and affection and emphasises how much she has the gift of joy at heart. In the translation it seems best rendered by "I want you to keep them all cheerful" or "I want you to be cheerful". (ETG)

18. To the Novice, Sr. Laura Rodríguez

Maria Mazzarello expresses her thanks for the note she had received and gives some suggestions regarding the spiritual life.

[Mornese, December, 1878]

Viva Gesù e Maria e S. Giuseppe!

My Good Sr. Laura,¹

- 1 I understood your note even though it was written in Spanish, and it gave me great pleasure. My dear Sr. Laura, although I do not know you personally, I love you very much and pray for you. I hope to meet you one day in Heaven. Oh, what a great celebration we will have then!
- 2 Meanwhile, since you are the first Daughter of Mary Help of Christians from America, you must become a great saint so that many young American women can follow your example. Although such a great distance separates us from one another, we form one heart to love our beloved Jesus and Mary Most Holy, and we can always meet [there] and pray for one another.
- 3 I believe that it would be unnecessary for me to recommend that you be obedient, humble, charitable and that you love work. It has only been a few months since you became a novice,² so you must still be full of fervour. I

¹ Sr. Laura Rodriguez was the first American vocation, a tangible sign of God's blessing on the Institute. She came to know the FMA through her brother who was attending the Salesian boarding school in Montevideo-Villa Colón. Laura entered the Institute May 14, 1878 and was formed by some of the first group of missionaries, prominent among whom was Sr. Angela Vallese.

² She had been clothed in the religious habit on September 8, Feast of the

recommend that you never allow the fervour that the Lord has enkindled in your heart to die. Remember that only one thing is necessary, to save your soul. For us religious, it is not enough simply to save our own soul. We must become holy and, through our good works, help many other souls who are waiting for our help to become holy too. Take courage then, after a few days of struggle we will have Heaven forever.

- 4 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.
- 5 Pray for me and for all the Sisters. Everyone, Sisters and postulants, thank you for the greetings you sent and they reciprocate them wholeheartedly in the Heart of Jesus.
- 6 May the Lord bless you and grant you holy perseverance and all the graces necessary for you to become a good religious and a true Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. Good-bye, my good Sister, believe me to be in the Lord,

Your most affectionate Mother,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

Nativity of Mary. This letter probably reached Sr. Laura in Argentina where she made her novitiate under the guidance of Mother Maddalena Martini. After her religious profession, May 24, 1880, she returned to Uruguay.

19. To the Missionary, Sr. Giovanna Borgna

Maria Mazzarello expresses her affectionate interest in the young Sister and gives her advice and practical suggestions.

[Genoa-Sampierdarena,¹ January 1, 1879]
Viva Gesù Maria! S. G.[iuseppe]!

My Dear Sr. Giovanna,²

- 1 Your note gave me great pleasure. I am happy to hear that you have the good will to become holy. Remember that it is not enough simply to begin, we must continue. We need to keep struggling every day. Our self-love is so subtle that when we think we have already advanced a bit in something, it makes us [bump our] nose on the ground. But, this life is a continual warfare. We must never tire if we want to win Heaven. Take heart then, my good Sr. Giovanna, act in such a way as to always be a model of virtue, of humility, charity and obedience. Since the Lord sees the heart, it is necessary to practice these virtues more from your heart than with external acts. Then, if obedience seems a bit difficult for you, look to Heaven and think of the reward that awaits you there.

¹ *La Madre* wrote this letter at Sampierdarena, where she had gone together with Mother Petronilla, to accompany the missionaries who were leaving for America (cf. *Cronistoria* II p. 367).

² Sr. Giovanna Borgna went to Mornese as a boarder in 1874. She became an FMA at 17 and left with the first missionary expedition on November 14, 1877. When this letter was written she was vicar in the house of Montevideo-Villa Colón. In later years she was regional delegate in northern Patagonia and in Ecuador.

- 2 Are you glad that you will now have your sister³ closer to you? Giacinta⁴ is well; pray that she may become good and rest assured that I will take good care of her. Is it true that you are not well [*muffita*]?⁵ Get better soon because you have work to do. Tell the Lord to grant you the time to become holy and to win many souls for Him. Always be cheerful, be very good, work wholeheartedly, do everything for Jesus and pray so that one day we may all meet in Heaven.
- 3 Courage, pray for me and for all your Sisters. May God bless you and make you totally His.
I am, in the Heart of Jesus,

Your most affectionate Mother,
the poor Sr. Maria Mazzarelo

Viva Maria! Do answer!

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

³ Her sister, Sr. Emilia, was a member of the Second Missionary Expedition and was the youngest of the group. After spending some time in Argentina, she worked as community animator and provincial in Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil. Everywhere, she left evident signs of the spirituality she had imbibed in Mornese.

⁴ She was the youngest of the family (cf. L 6, fn 8).

⁵ From the Piedmontese dialect the word *müfi* means spoiled or gone bad; in this case it means wasted, run down, sickly.

20. To the Rector of the House of Mornese, Fr. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne

Maria Mazzarello forwards to Fr. Lemoyne some letters which had come from America. She informs him of her stay in Alassio and communicates other news.

Alassio, March 17, 1879¹
Viva Gesù!

Rev. Fr. Rector,²

- 1 I am in Alassio again.³ I was asked by Rev. Fr. Cerruti to stay for the religious profession of the three novices that will take place this very morning.⁴

¹ *La Madre* writes on the fourth page of a letter sent by Fr. Costamagna from Buenos Aires on December 30, 1878, to the rector of Mornese, Fr. Lemoyne. The letter, entrusted to a man returning to Italy, reached Fr. Francesco Cerutti rector of the house in Alassio, who passed it on to Mother Mazzarello to send it [to Fr. Lemoyne].

² Fr. Lemoyne was still living in Mornese, where there were a few Sisters, postulants and a group of girls. Mother Mazzarello, along with the greater part of the community, had already moved to Nizza Monferrato in February.

³ Mother Mazzarello had spent a few days in Alassio on her way to Bordighera, Nice and La Navarre. On her return from her visit to the houses in Liguria and France, Fr. Cerruti who invited her to the religious profession of the three novices, delayed her at Alassio. The *Cronistoria* notes that "none of them had completed their novitiate, but the Director had already been delegated by Don Bosco to receive their vows. Therefore, even though Mother would have delayed rather than anticipate the date, especially in the case of Sr. Catherine Lucca, there was no going back on the decision." (ibid. III pp.13-14). Sr. Catherine actually left for the missions in Argentina, February 3, 1881, and left the Institute that same year to return to her family.

⁴ The novices were Sr. Domenica Barbero, Sr. Catherina Lucca and Sr. Luigia Vallese.

- 2 He gave me these letters from Fr. Costamagna which were brought by a man coming from America, who waited until now to hand them in. Well, better late than never, right?
- 3 Tomorrow morning I will leave for Nizza and after a few days there, I hope to go to Biella. If your Reverence could come too, I would be delighted. I will wait for you at Nizza, then we can travel together. Do come, please.⁵
- 4 Has the T.[eachers] Maccagno's house been sold yet? If you could only bring me some money! It would really be a work of mercy.
- 5 These novices will pray for you in a special way when they make their religious profession. Are you pleased? The rest will pray also and want me to wish you every possible good and to ask for your blessing. Please tell Sr. Santina⁶ to make a note of the profession of these Sisters today.
- 6 Please greet Mother Vicar, Mother Mistress,⁷ and all the Sisters, postulants and girls for me. Fr. Rector sends greetings, Sr. Emilia⁸ recommends herself to your prayers and I ask you once again to accompany me to Biella. Asking for your blessing, I remain,

Your most humble daughter,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

⁵ The change of the community animator, Sr. Maddalena Martini, had a negative effect on the community. *La Madre* wanted to go there in person to see the situation, to comfort or admonish those who needed it (cf. *Cronistoria* III pp. 16-17). Perhaps it was for this reason that Mother Mazzarello wanted Fr. Lemoyne to come. Perhaps it was also to meet the Bishop, Mons. Basilio Leto, who was going through a difficult moment because of unfounded calumnies against him (cf. MB XVII pp. 546-551 [Italian, not yet translated into English] and *Cronistoria* V pp. 108-109).

⁶ Sr. Santina Piscoli was in charge of registering those who became full juridical members of the Institute by religious profession.

⁷ Sr. Petronilla Mazzarello and Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto.

⁸ Sr. Emilia Mosca who was with *la Madre* on her journey to Alassio.

- 7 If you come to Nizza don't tell Fr. Chicco that I invited your Reverence to come to Biella.⁹

[ASC Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

⁹ The post-script shows the filial confidence in Fr. Lemoyne and at the same time sensitivity and prudence towards Fr. Stefano Chicco, acting rector in the house of Nizza Monferrato.

21. To the Rector of the House of Mornese, Fr. Giovanni Battista Lemoyne

Maria Mazzarello thanks him for his letter, sends Easter greetings and gives some news of the community.

Nizza [Monferrato], April 9, 1879
Viva Gesù!

Reverend Fr. Rector,¹

- 1 Thank you very much for the letters from America that you so kindly sent me. Oh, how much happier I would have been to see you instead of getting a letter! Patience! A letter is better than nothing. I hope to be able to speak to you soon, meanwhile pray for me always because I really need it.
- 2 I am happy that your mother² is better. I am confident that the Lord will hear our prayers and restore her to strong and lasting health.
- 3 The Sisters of all the houses join with me in wishing you a Happy Easter, with all the choicest blessings that spring from the Heart of the Risen Jesus.
- 4 Will you, Rev. Fr. Rector, offer my festive greetings to Fr. Giuseppe³ and the schoolmaster and recommend me to

¹ Sr. Emilia Mosca wrote this under dictation from *la Madre*. She speaks with familiar confidence to the director of the house in Mornese, as we can see from the postscript in her own writing.

² Countess Angela Prasca was a woman of great refinement and deep religious spirit.

³ The Salesian, Fr. Giuseppe Campi from Mornese. It is from him that we get much reliable information on the early years of the history of the Institute and on the life of Maria Mazzarello.

their prayers. Fr. Cagliero is in Turin. I hope he will soon come here or to Mornese.

- 5 Sr. Maria⁴ is getting closer to Heaven all the time. The doctor said she won't last the week, so I strongly recommend her to your prayers.
- 6 The others, thank God, are all physically well. With regard to the spirit, there are always a few scatterbrains who give some cause for concern, but there is nothing serious. I will tell you the rest in person. We are having a very poor Holy Week here, without ceremonies or anything.⁵ From time to time the Sisters exclaim: "Ah, Mornese! Ah, Mornese!" The Lord accepts the heart, right? Therefore we will console ourselves with that thought. Again I wish you a happy feast, and, asking your fatherly blessing, I remain,

Your most humble daughter in J.,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello.

- 7 My good Father, have courage, be cheerful. I always remember you!⁶

[GAFMA Original. Dictated with the last two lines in her handwriting]

⁴ Actually, Sr. Maria Gariglio was already dead when Mother Mazzarello wrote this letter. The young Sister had died at La Navarre, France on April 1, 1879.

⁵ During that first year of their stay at Nizza Monferrato, the liturgical ceremonies for Holy Week were not celebrated in the house. Therefore, we can understand the nostalgia of the Sisters for the solemnity with which feast-days used to be celebrated in Mornese.

⁶ This postscript, in *la Madre's* handwriting, shows her sensitive understanding of the state of mind of Fr. Lemoyne who had remained behind in the house of Mornese which was about to be closed.

**22. To the Community Animator of the House
of Montevideo-Villa Colón (Uruguay),
Sr. Angela Vallese**

Maria Mazzarello sends a collective letter to the missionaries of the first and second expeditions. She gives news of the community and of the transfer of the Mother House to Nizza.

Nizza [Monferrato], April 9, 1879
Viva Gesù!

Dearest Sr. Angiolina,¹

- 1 I can imagine the consolation and joy you felt on seeing the Sisters the Lord sent you.² Certainly, It must have been wonderful and made you think of the great celebration we will have when we are all reunited in Heaven. It is true that now a vast distance separates us, but we can console ourselves with the thought that this life is very short, and the day will soon come when we will meet again in Eternity, if we have observed our Holy Rule exactly. Although an immense sea separates us, we can meet and be close to one another at every moment in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. We can always pray for each other and so our hearts will always be united.
- 2 I have lots of news for you, but not to be too long, I will just tell you that our poor Sr. Lucrezia³ died on March 11, at 8 in the morning. I had been in Mornese a few days before and I assure you that her patience and resignation

¹ Although addressed to Sr. Angela Vallese, the letter is destined for all the missionaries who were in the first house in Uruguay.

² This refers to the Sisters who had recently arrived from Italy. They had left Sampierdarena January 1, 1879.

³ Sr. Lucrezia Becchio was 29 years old and two years professed. She fell ill in Turin and was sent to Mornese on the advice of the doctor.

edified me. They wrote from Mornese to tell me that she had an enviable death, but it must be said that she always was patient and resigned, which is why she had such a beautiful death. If we wish our death to be sweet let us prepare for it now.

- 3 Some of you knew the cobbler in Mornese (Carlo Merlo). He, too, died on the 20th of this month. We now have Sr. Maria Cappelletti here in Nizza who, you could say, is in her last agony. The same could be said of Sr. Maria Garioglio, who is in La Navarre, France. By the time you receive this letter they will almost certainly have gone to join Sr. Lucrezia and the other Sisters who await them in Heaven. You will pray for all of them, won't you?
- 4 You must know by now that I am no longer in Mornese, but here in Nizza. We must always make sacrifices while we are on this earth. Let us make them willingly and cheerfully and the Lord will take note of everything and in His own time will give us a beautiful reward.⁴
- 5 I was in Alassio and saw your sister⁵ who is in excellent health and who is also very good. She asked me to greet you for her and wish you all that is good. Now, I would like to say a word to each Sister, but I don't know whether I should start by writing to the new ones or to those who arrived first. What do you say? I will begin with the new ones.
- 6 I began this letter in Nizza and now I must finish it in Turin.⁶ I found all the Sisters here well and they ask me to

⁴ Mother Mazzarello suffered greatly in the transfer of the Mother House from Mornese to Nizza. It was particularly painful for her because it meant uprooting herself from her native place, leaving persons who were very dear to her and places that had played an unforgettable part in her apostolate. These few sober words show her determination to face the new situation with courage and serene abandonment.

⁵ Sr. Luigia Vallese.

⁶ Some of her letters give us an insight into the intense activity as Leader of the FMA Institute who visited the various houses of the Institute to meet and comfort her Daughters in their mission. She begins this letter in Nizza Monferrato, continues it in Turin and concludes it in Nizza Monferrato.

send you their most affectionate greetings. Sr. Mariuccia Mazzarello is not well at all. In Chieri I found Sr. Carmela⁷ a bit run down, but the others are all well and cheerful. The same goes for the Sisters of Lanzo and Biella. They all ask me to wish you every possible good. Sr. Rosina sends very special greetings to her sister.⁸

- 7 Now I am back in Nizza and I am finishing the letter here. I won't write anything to Sr. Virginia⁹ since I will reply to her letter separately.
- 8 I will begin with Sr. Filomena.¹⁰ Are you cheerful? Be that way always! Unite yourself closely to Jesus, work only to please Him, try to become more holy each day. In this way you will always be cheerful. *Viva Gesù!* Don't forget to pray for me.
- 9 Sr. Vittoria, they wrote telling me you are always in good spirits,¹¹ and I am very pleased. Work hard to win Heaven; never be discouraged, never say "but". You are a professed Sister, but remember that you must also be a novice. You must unite the fervour of a novice with the solid virtue that a professed Sister should have. Pray for me and be sure that I never forget you in my poor prayers.

⁷ Sr. Carmela Arata had very delicate health. As a novice, she was put in charge of a sewing class because she was so competent and active. After profession she was sent to Chieri as sewing teacher.

⁸ Sr. Teresa Mazzarello, who left for Uruguay in 1877. The two Sisters, Rosina and Teresa, were called Barone to distinguish them from the many Mazzarello families in their native Mornese.

⁹ Sr. Virginia Magone had written Mother Mazzarello a long letter, dated February 2, 1879, which after the death of this young Sister was published in the *Bollettino Salesiano*, 5 (1881), 3, pp. 7-8 and later reported in the *Cronistoria* (cf. III pp. 18-20).

¹⁰ Sr. Filomena Balduzzi arrived in Uruguay a few months earlier, with the Second Missionary Expedition. That same year she was transferred to Las Piedras and in 1884 she left the FMA Institute (cf. L 23, 5).

¹¹ This reference is to Sr. Vittoria Cantù who had a cheerful and expansive personality. She was very sensitive and big-hearted. The term, "in good spirits" is used by *la Madre* to describe her constant tendency to cheer up the community.

- 10 And you, Sr. Giuseppina,¹² do you still remember the promises you made on the day of the Immaculate? Never forget them; begin anew each day to be truly humble, to pray with all your heart and to work with right intention. Speak little, very little to creatures. Instead, speak much with the Lord. He will make you truly wise. Pray for me.
- 11 Sr. Angela Cassulo, are you still the cook? Since you are always close to the fire you must be on fire with the love of God by now, right? And do you always observe poverty? Your sister is very good. She is the cook at Torrione and prays all the time in the kitchen. I hope she will make her religious profession this summer.¹³ Pray for her and for me.
- 12 Sr. Denegri,¹⁴ do you already know French well? While studying the languages of this world, study also the language of the soul with God. He will teach you the science of becoming holy which is the only true science. Your relatives are well. They gave me a salami to send to you but, since you are so far away I thought it better to keep it for ourselves. You will thank them for it, right? Write to them soon. Become a good Sister of Mary Help of Christians and pray for me, for your Sisters, for your parents and for all your relatives.

¹² Sr. Giuseppina Vergniaud was admitted to the novitiate and made her profession on the Feast of the Immaculate the previous year. As soon as she arrived in Argentina, she wrote a long, newsy letter to *la Madre*, in a lively, flowing style (cf. letter of March 9, 1879, published in *Cronistoria* III pp. 32-34) [attributed to Sr. Virginia in the English edition].

¹³ Her younger sister, Sr. Maria, was then a novice in the house of Bordighera-Torrione. She made her religious profession on August 15, 1879.

¹⁴ Sr. Angela Denegri was studying French, which was needed for teaching in Uruguay. She was native of Mornese and from her early years she had shown an ardent desire for holiness and great missionary zeal. Consequently, following Don Bosco's suggestion, she was admitted to religious profession at a very young age and sent to America with the First Missionary Expedition. *La Madre*, who knew her and her family personally, treats her with refined affection and familiarity.

- 13 Sr. Teresina Mazzarello,¹⁵ are you already holy? I hope that you are at halfway there. Always work to please Jesus alone, think of Heaven and give good example in everything. I have already told you that your sister is well and sends her greetings.
- 14 Sr. Gedda,¹⁶ how are you? I hope that you continue to be in good health in order to work hard and to become holy. Keep all the Sisters cheerful for me and pray for me.
- 15 Sr. Giovanna,¹⁷ you're still studying, aren't you? I am sure you are also studying how to become holy. Remember that to become holy and wise, you must speak little and reflect much. Speak little with creatures, very little of creatures and nothing of self. We must be recollected in our hearts if we want to hear the voice of Jesus. So, be recollected and humble and you will become a great saint. Don't forget me in your prayers.

¹⁵ This Sister entered the house of Mornese at the express invitation of Fr. Cagliero. She received the religious habit on August 28, 1875 and became an FMA the following year. She spent a year teaching in the kindergarten in Lu Monferrato. In 1877 she left for America with the first group of missionaries, of whom she was the youngest. She was first sent to Montevideo-Villa Colón (cf. L 41, L 61). She spent many years as community animator and Directress of Postulants and Novices.

¹⁶ Sr. Teresa Gedda belonged to the first group of FMA who went to the missions. After working generously in Uruguay for 24 years she was transferred to Mexico as community animator and later went to Nicaragua. Mons. Cagliero considered her one of the humblest and most virtuous missionaries, so much so that he proposed her as a model of religious life.

¹⁷ Sr. Giovanna Borgna. *La Madre* recommends to her, as she had above to Sr. Vergniaud, an attitude of listening and silence as the way to holiness and wisdom. To understand the true significance of silence in the first community we must turn to one of its most qualified interpreters, Fr. Giacomo Costamagna. In his conferences, he recalled the characteristics of the "spirit of Mornese" among which silence could not be left out. He says: "The silence of the Sisters in Mornese was anything but sullen or melancholic, as sometimes happens with some people. It was always characterised by sincere cheerfulness, so much so, that one could have written on those blessed walls: 'The House of Holy Joy!'" (Costamagna, G., *Conferenze*, op. cit. p. 261).

- 16 Now there only remains my dear Sr. Laura.¹⁸ What should I say to her? I will tell her that being the first American Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, through her prayers she must obtain for many Americans the same grace that the Lord gave her. If we cannot meet in this world, we will meet in Heaven. Meanwhile let us live united in the Heart of Jesus and let us always pray for each other.
- 17 How many boarders do you have? Greet them all for me. Tell them that although I don't know them, I love them very much and pray that they may grow up good, docile, obedient, etc., etc. In other words, such that they may be a consolation to the Heart of Jesus, to their relatives and to their teachers.
- 18 When I got back from Turin, I received the news that poor Sr. Gariglio¹⁹ had died on April 1. She too, had a most resigned death.
- 19 Each of the Sisters would like me to say a word for them, but since that would take too long, I will leave it to their Guardian Angels to bring you all their messages and you can reply in the same way.
- 20 I want you to be cheerful always, love one other in the Lord and always pray for all your Sisters. I am sorry for not writing this myself, but for this time I really was not able to do so. I have written to Sr. Virginia,²⁰ and another time I will write to the others, but won't each of you write to me sometimes? When the superior writes, include a note with her letter.²¹

¹⁸ This refers to Sr. Laura Rodriguez to whom she had written a personal letter some months earlier (cf. L 18).

¹⁹ Sr. Maria Gariglio died at La Navarre, France.

²⁰ Sr. Virginia Magone. Unfortunately the letter that Mother Mazzarello wrote to this Sister has not been preserved.

²¹ Up to this point Sr. Emilia Mosca writes it. The passage that follows, along with the signature and post-script are in the handwriting of *la Madre*.

21 Take courage, my good Sisters; Jesus must be your whole strength. With Jesus, burdens become light, fatigue becomes easy, thorns are turned into sweetness ... But you must overcome yourselves, if you do not, everything becomes unbearable and malice will keep springing up in our hearts like boils. Pray for me. I am, in the Heart of Jesus,

Yours most affectionately in Jesus, *la Madre*,²²
Sister Maria

22 Give my regards to your Rev. Rector and recommend me to Father.

[GAFMA Original. Dictated with the last part in her handwriting]

²² This is the first known letter in which Maria Mazzarello attributes the title *la Madre* to herself. (ETG)

23. To the Missionaries of the House of Las Piedras (Uruguay)

Maria Mazzarello exhorts and counsels the community and individual Sisters.

Mornese, April 30, 1879
Viva Gesù e Maria e S. Giuseppe!

My Dearest Sisters,

- 1 You are on your own in Las Piedras,¹ aren't you? How are you? Are you cheerful? Have you many girls? Do you love the Lord? But really with your whole heart? Do you work for Him alone? I hope you will all answer with a resounding "yes". Continue to be always cheerful, to love the Lord. (Act in such a way as to trample on self-love, fry it very well, and try to practise humility and patience.)
- 2 Have great charity and love one another.
- 3 Have great confidence in Our Lady; she will help you in everything. (Observe the Holy Rule even in the smallest things. It is the way that leads to Heaven.) As far as you can, always preserve a spirit of union with God, remain always in His presence.
- 4 You, Sr. Giovanna, who are the acting vicar, be very careful to give good example and to do things with great prudence and with the sole aim of pleasing God. In this way, we will one day be happy.

¹ The house of Las Piedras was opened on April 13, with a school, an oratory and catechism classes. The very young Sr. Giovanna Borgna was responsible for the new house with the title of vicar. This explains the expression "on your own" addressed to the three Sisters who made up the community and were waiting for a community animator.

- 5 And you, Sr. Filomena,² are you always as cheerful as you were here? Do you love the Lord very much? Do you get annoyed when the fire won't light? (Have patience and try to set yourself afire with Divine Love. Be cheerful and pray for me.)
- 6 And you Sr. Vittoria,³ do you know Spanish now? Are you still having problems learning it? Take courage, you will learn it little by little. (Try to learn to love the Lord and to overcome yourself.) Then everything else will be easily learned. Always be humble and cheerful and pray much for me.
- 7 Courage my good Sisters. I want you to be cheerful and to become holy and rich in merits soon, (because death is like a thief.) In a short time 4 Sisters have died. They are: Sr. Lucrezia,⁴ Sr. Maria Gariglio, Sr. Maria Cappelletti, and Sr. Margherita Ricci. They are probably already in Heaven, but let us pray in case they are not there yet.
- 8 Always remember all your Sisters and me too, especially those who will be admitted to the novitiate on [the Feast of] Mary H.[elp of Christians]. There will be 10 or 12. I never forget you. I want you to be good.
- 9 Sr. Giovanna, your sister⁵ is well and greets you. Pray for her. Greetings from all, especially from,

Yours most affectionately,
la Madre Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

² Sr. Filomena Balduzzi.

³ Sr. Vittoria Cantù.

⁴ Sr. Lucrezia Becchio (cf. L 22, 2).

⁵ She refers to the youngest sister, Giacinta, who was a boarder.

24. To Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto

Maria Mazzarello gives guidelines for the formation of the postulants, and exhortations and counsels for the assistant.

[Nizza Monferrato, May, 1879]
Viva Gesù e Maria e S. Giuseppe!

My Most Beloved Sr. Giuseppina,¹

- 1 First of all, I must tell you that I have always [received] your notes, etc. but forgive me for taking so long to send you a few lines in response. My dear, I don't have a minute of time. I have so much to do, so be patient if even now I write a rather short letter. At another [time] I will write a longer one.
- 2 So, tell me, are your postulants² good? Do they have a great desire to become holy and do they want to spend their whole lives for Jesus? Always remind them to think about why they became religious or rather, why they entered religious life. Tell them not just to think about putting on a black habit. Rather, they must clothe themselves in a habit of all the virtues necessary for a religious who wants to call herself a spouse of Jesus. Let them acquire a spirit

¹ Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto returned to Mornese on February 11 (cf. *Cronistoria* III p. 2), as Directress of Postulants, to work with Mother Petronilla Mazzarello. From the tone of this letter we can deduce that Sr. Pacotto was rather sad and worried about her new role in formation.

² A small group of postulants had remained in Mornese. Most probably the novices were already in Nizza or helping in other communities. *La Madre* recalls the essential elements of formation for the candidates to the Institute, criteria that could also be used in the discernment process by the assistant.

of mortification, sacrifice, obedience, humility, and detachment from all that is not God. Enough for now. Encourage them on my behalf and ask them to pray for me and for all.

- 3 And you Sr. Giuseppina, be thankful that I am far away, otherwise I would really pull your ears.³ Don't you know that melancholy is the cause of many evils?
- 4 To be cheerful we must go ahead in simplicity, not looking for satisfaction, either from people or from the things of this world. Think only of doing your duty well for the love of Jesus and don't think of anything else. If you are humble, you will have confidence in Him. He will do the rest. So don't keep crying for nothing. Remember the time for acting like a child has passed. You must be sensible and give good example.⁴ Regarding M.[other] Vicar,⁵ you can be sure that she is able to understand you. Have complete confidence in her and tell her everything. If at times it seems that she does not believe you, it does not matter. Accept the humiliation in good faith. It will be good for your soul. So be cheerful, have courage, help Mother Vicar and between the two of you, instil a good spirit into the new postulants and make them all holy.
- 5 I will not write any more because I really don't have time. Greet all the Sisters, postulants and girls for me, and all of you pray much and be cheerful for me. Viva Gesù to all. Many blessings from Jesus and believe me to be,

Yours most affectionately, *la Madre* Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

³ This witty and familiar expression means to scold or correct. *La Madre* uses it concerning the state of mind of which the Sister had spoken in her letters.

⁴ *La Madre* energetically urges this Sister to overcome melancholy and sadness and to act as a mature woman, overcoming childish attitudes.

⁵ Mother Petronilla Mazzarello, with whom Sr. Giuseppina had to collaborate despite difficulties in relating to her.

25. To the Community Animator of the House of Montevideo-Villa Colón (Uruguay), Sr. Angela Vallese

Maria Mazzarello gives some practical norms for the formation of the Sisters and passes on news of the Mother House.



Nizza [Monferrato], July 22, 1879 *
Viva Gesù e Maria e S. G.[iuseppe]!

My Beloved Sr. Angiolina,

- 1 Don't be afraid that your letters annoy me, anything but! Rather, I am happy that you give me detailed news of all that regards you and the Sisters. Please send me long, long letters often. Your letters are always pleasing to me.
- 2 I am sorry that the new house in Las Piedras is not going too well. Sr. Giovanna is too young and not mature enough to take the place of a superior.¹ However, you have no need to be afraid. You can be sure that there will always be defects. We must calmly correct and remedy what we can and leave the rest in the hands of the Lord. Then, there is no need to pay too much attention to trifles. Sometimes important things are ignored in focusing on non-essentials. By saying this I don't mean that you should ignore small failures; that is not what I want to say. Correct, remind always, but in your heart understand and practice charity with everyone. Look, in order for you to succeed, you have to study individual characters and know how to deal with them. You need to inspire confidence.
- 3 You must have patience with Sr. Vittoria and little by little inspire her with the spirit of our Congregation. She cannot

¹ Sr. Giovanna Borgna, "a good and generous Sister", was just nineteen and therefore lacked experience in animating a community (cf. L 23, 4).

have grasped it yet because she didn't spend enough time in Mornese.² It seems to me that if you know how to take her, she will turn out well. So it is with the others; each one has her defects. It is necessary to correct them with charity, but don't expect them to be without defects nor should you expect that they will correct themselves all at once. Not at all! But with prayer, patience, vigilance and perseverance, little by little they will succeed. Trust in Jesus, put all your worries in His Heart, leave it to Him. He will put everything right. Be always cheerful, always of good heart.

- 4 When you don't know what to do turn to Sr. Maddalena.³ Do whatever she tells you and be at peace. Then, too, you have a good rector and you should not have any worries.⁴ Make sure that you obey him, won't you Sr. Angiolina?
- 5 You tell me that you have a lot to do, and I'm happy, because work is the father of virtue. When we work, whims [*grilli*]⁵ disappear and we are always cheerful. While I recommend you to work, I also recommend that you take care of your health, and I also recommend that you all work without ambition and only to please Jesus. I would like you to instil into the hearts of all those dear Sisters a love for sacrifice, self-contempt, and absolute detachment from their own will.⁶ We became Sisters to assure ourselves

² Sr. Vittoria Cantù did not go through the normal period of initial formation. Because of her ardent desire to be a missionary, she was allowed to become a novice and make religious profession on the same day (December 8, 1878) in order to leave with the group of FMA who were going to Argentina.

³ Sr. Maddalena Martini had general responsibility for the first FMA houses in Uruguay and Argentina.

⁴ Fr. Luigi Lasagna (cf. L 17, fn 7).

⁵ Maria Mazzarello used the term *grilli* to mean to follow one's fancy. To rid the person of such an orientation, Maria counsels that she work, which according to her frees the person from fanciful ideas, restoring balance and serenity.

⁶ The terms working "without ambition", a love for "self-contempt" and "absolute detachment from our own wills" cannot be read in the light of

of Heaven, but sacrifices are needed to win it. Let us carry the cross with courage, and one day we will be happy.

- 6 I would like to write a word to each Sister, but I really have no time just now. I will write to them another time. If you could only see the house here! Everything is upside-down. We are preparing for the retreat that will begin on August 6. Immediately after that, there will be the women's retreat.⁷ The house of Mornese is being transferred to Nizza, etc. ... so you can imagine how much work there is to be done. Have patience for this time. I will write a longer letter after the retreats.
- 7 Say a word to each of my dear Sisters for me. Encourage them much and [tell them] that they should love one other like good sisters, have great charity with everyone, giving them a foretaste of Heaven, where we will all be reunited one day.
- 8 Give my regards to our good Rev. Rector and to the one of Las Piedras who is, I believe, Fr. Beauvoir.⁸ Greet each Sister individually, especially the new ones. For yourself, I once more recommend that you be always cheerful and the same goes for Sr. Giovanna, Sr. Vittoria, the mischievous Sr. Filomena, Sr. Teresina, Sr. Onorina, Sr. Cassulo, etc.
- 9 Never forget your Sisters in Italy and France in your

current psycho-spiritual thought. They are indicative of nineteenth century asceticism where emphasis was placed on abnegation in order to "reach perfection". (ETG)

⁷ The retreat for young women and co-operators was held for the first time in Nizza Monferrato from August 18-27. The preachers were Fr. Giovanni Cagliari and Mons. Antonio Maria Belasio. The *Cronistoria* notes that there were about ninety participants. (cf. III pp. 56-57).

⁸ Fr. Giuseppe Beauvoir left for the missions in 1878. After a short stay in Uruguay and Buenos Aires, he was sent to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. He was the missionary who worked longest for the promotion and evangelisation of the indigenous peoples. He collaborated directly with Mons. Fagnano for many years and, like him, was distinguished for his courage, and for the bravery of his undertakings.

prayers. None of us forget you, you can be sure. Everyone, from the first to the last, sends you thousands of greetings.

- 10 Your parents and relatives are all well, and so are all of us, except Sr. Maria Mazzarello who is ill.⁹
God bless you all, together with

Yours most affectionately in J.,
la Madre, Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁹ The Saint's namesake. She came from the same place, and was known also as *Mariuccia* (cf. L 22, 6). She died in Turin, on August 6, 1879, after only four years of religious life.

26. To the Sisters of the House of Montevideo-Villa Colón (Uruguay)

Maria Mazzarello expresses thanks for the news received. [According to her] she explains in what genuine religious spirit consists and gives news of the community.

Nizza [Monferrato], September 11, 1879

Viva Gesù!

My Dearest Sisters!

- 1 Angiolina, my desire now would be to write to each of you individually, to comfort and encourage you, but be patient. I really cannot do it at this time. You will have to be satisfied with these few words which really come from my heart.
- 2 We made our H.[oly] Retreat and, thanks to our good Jesus, it left us all with a firm will to become holy. Poor souls! How often we thought of you and prayed for you, that not only we, but you too, might have this desire, as I hope you have, so that one day we will all be united in that beautiful place, Heaven. *Be perfect*
- 3 Courage then, my dears, courage. Every day that passes brings us closer to Eternity. Everything passes, isn't it true? ... But merits never pass away.
- 4 My good Sisters, do you love one another? ... Oh, how consoled I am when I receive news from the houses and hear that you practice charity, that you obey willingly, that you are attached to the Holy Rule! Oh, then my heart weeps for joy! I pray continually for blessings on all of you, that you may really clothe yourselves in the Spirit of our good Jesus,¹ and so do great good to yourselves and to

¹ Beginning with this brief reminder on the importance of charity, Mother

your dear neighbour who is so much in need of help. Yes, but what was the Spirit of the Lord like? ... (I'll tell you what Fr. Cagliero so often told us from his heart.) It was that humble, patient spirit, full of charity, that charity characteristic of Jesus who could never suffer enough for us, and to what extent did He choose to suffer ... ? Courage then, let us truly imitate our dearest Jesus in everything, especially in humility and charity... Pray also for me that I too, may do the same.

- 5 Be cheerful then! ... Always cheerful. Never take offence. Rather, as soon as you notice that someone needs some comfort, give it to her immediately; console and help one another! ...
- 6 Sr. Filomena, be cheerful! Both you and Sr. Denegri² wrote a letter to me and now you would like a reply, wouldn't you?... I will do it at another time. Meanwhile, always try to be good, to give good example and the day will come when not only will you be happy, but you will also be rewarded for the little things you did and suffered for our dearest Jesus ... Therefore, let us really work at becoming holy; let us pray for one another that we may all persevere in the service of our Spouse Jesus and [of] our dear Mother Mary.
- 7 Tell your good rector I wish him every possible good and recommend me much to his prayers. The Sisters all send you loving greetings and are longing for the time when they will meet you and embrace you in the beauty of Heaven. Courage then, my dearest [Sisters] in Jesus, let us remember that everything passes, so let nothing disturb us, since everything serves to acquire true happiness. Be sure that we will never, never forget you, and that I will always be, in Jesus and Mary,

Your most affectionate Mother,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

Mazzarello starts a reflection with an exquisite Pauline flavour. Her recommendation to the Sisters centred on clothing themselves with the same sentiments as those of Christ Jesus (cf. *Philippians*, 2:5).

² Sr. Filomena Balduzzi and Sr. Angela Denegri.

- 8 Do you want to hear a bit of news that will really console you? ... Do you know how many took part in the Ladies' Retreat? ... More than 90! It was something that really consoled the heart.
- 9 At the Sisters' Retreat we were even more, and from time to time we went in spirit to visit you. So you see that you are not among the forgotten. Oh no, anything but! Be cheerful always ...
- 10 Virginia,³ Courage! Become a real saint, but one of those saints who is really humble, cheerful with everyone, full of charity towards self and your neighbour. Won't you pray for me always? ... Look, we have a beautiful statue of M.[ary] Immaculate here and I often go to her feet to implore graces for you all and especially for those who remember me...
- 11 Therefore, I want you to be always cheerful. *Evviva Maria!*...
- 12 Fr. Rector, Fr. Lemoyne, who is rector here in Nizza Monf.[errato] now, sends cordial greetings to you all, and recommends himself to your prayers. You can be sure he never forgets you in his fervent prayers, and the same goes for all of us.
P.S. Send the enclosed letter to the Sisters of Las Piedras. Remember p.[oor] Sr. Rosalia.⁴

[GAFMA Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

³ Sr. Virginia Magone had arrived in Montevideo-Villa Colón a few months earlier.

⁴ Sr. Rosalia Pestarino was the writer of this letter.

**27. To the Community Animator
Sr. Angela Vallese
and the Sisters of the Houses
of Montevideo-Villa Colón
and Las Piedras (Uruguay)**

Maria Mazzarello gives news of the houses of Nizza and Mornese. She urges the Sisters to celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate fervently.

Nizza [Monferrato], October 20, 1879
Viva Gesù, Maria, S. Giuseppe!

My Good Sr. Angiolina and All the Sisters,¹

- 1 The news you gave me in the letters you wrote in September really consoled my heart. Above all, I am happy that you made your Holy Retreat, but remember it is not enough to make it, it is necessary to put the good resolutions that the Lord inspired us to make at that time, into practice with courage and perseverance. I am happy that Fr. Costamagna, our good former rector, visits you sometimes. Poor Daughters, it must be like seeing someone from Mornese, isn't it true?
- 2 My good Sr. Angiolina, take courage, be cheerful and keep all those dear Sisters of mine cheerful. The Lord loves you very much; it is up to you to love Him in return, isn't it true?
- 3 Now I will tell you about us. Thanks be to our good Jesus, we are all well, except the two poor Sisters, Sr. Giustina and Sr. Albina who could be said to be in their last agony. Sr. Albina is here in Nizza; Sr. Giustina is in Mornese.²

¹ Sr. Angela Vallese was responsible for the first two houses opened in Uruguay. These were situated within a short distance of each other. This is why the letter is addressed to the FMA of the two communities.

² Sr. Giustina (Agostina) Calcagno and Sr. Albina Frascarolo. The latter in fact died on October 28.

The others are all cheerful and [have] the good will to do much good. They envy your good fortune.

- 4 We have thirty-two postulants, fifty Sisters and thirty boarders here. The house of Mornese is here in Nizza. There are only five Sisters and Fr. Giuseppe³ left in Mornese, but we hope to have them all here with us soon, because that house will now be sold. We are very happy with this change from Mornese to Nizza.⁴
- 5 Therefore, my good Sisters, when you want to come to visit me, don't go to Mornese any more, but come here to Nizza. Poor Daughters! We are too far away to do this! It is better for us to go into the Heart of Jesus and we can tell each other everything there.
- 6 I assure you that every morning I speak to you in this adorable Heart and I speak to Him in H.[oly] Communion and tell him many things for each of you. Are you happy that we meet in this way? You, too, do the same, won't you? I am pleased with all of you, with the good will of all the Sisters. Try to persevere more and more. I recommend great confidence in the confessor and the superior. If this confidence exists all will go well.
- 7 We are approaching the Feast of the Immaculate. Our H.[oly] Rule asks that we celebrate it with great solemnity, and besides, it must be one of the most beautiful feasts for us, who are Daughters of Mary.⁵ Therefore let us prepare ourselves really well for it. We must plant beautiful flowers in our hearts so as to make a beautiful bouquet to offer to our dearest Mother, Mary Most Holy. During these remaining days, we must really practice all the virtues but, in a special way, obedience and mortification. Let us not

³ The Salesian, Fr. Giuseppe Campi from Mornese.

⁴ In these simple words we can see how *la Madre* had generously overcome her suffering at leaving the place she loved so dearly.

⁵ Maria Mazzarello's love for Our Lady, the Immaculate Virgin, dates back to her adolescent years when she had consecrated her life to Our Lady as a member of the *Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate*.

miss any opportunity to mortify ourselves in some way; above all let us mortify our will, and let us be exact in the observance of our Holy Rule. Let us receive Holy Communion fervently every morning.

- 8 During the retreat we lit the fire in our hearts, but if we don't rake the ashes from time to time and put on some wood, it will go out. Now is the best time to rekindle that fire. During [these] feasts of the Immaculate and Christmas we must stir up our fervour so that we will remain fervent until death. So let us all get down to work with courage and good will. It could happen that for some of us, this will be the last time we celebrate this beautiful feast.
- 9 Time is passing for all of us, and at the point of death we will be very happy to have celebrated [it] well and fervently. Then we will remember all the little mortifications we made and oh, [what] consolation we will experience! We must hammer and crush self-love and then, at that moment our hearts will be at peace. Are we all ready to get going with commitment and true, good will? All answer "Yes!", Sr. Virginia, Sr. Angela Cassulo, Sr. Gedda, Sr. Denegri, Sr. Teresina Mazzarello. Is Sr. Laura, the novice there? And Sr. Vittoria who never wrote to me? And the mischievous Sr. Filomena, is she always cheerful? And Sr. Giovanna? Are you all in Las Piedras?⁶ Listen, everyone! What I recommend most of all is that you all be exact in the observance of the H.[oly] Rule. You already know that this is enough to make us holy. Jesus does not ask anything more of us. If we truly love Him, let us give Him this pleasure and give joy to His Heart since He loves us so much.
- 10 Tell me, do you all love one another? Do you practice charity towards each other? I hope so, but even in these things there is always room for improvement. Therefore, to please our dear Mother, Mary Most Holy, practise all the

⁶ Mother Mazzarello was still unsure which Sisters were destined for the new house of Las Piedras, opened on April 13.

charity you can towards one another, help each other in work, counsel one another with kindness and always take advice willingly no matter from whom it comes. Courage my Daughters, this life passes quickly and only our works will remain at the moment of death. The important thing is that they be well done. Caprice, pride, the vanity of wanting to know and not wanting to submit to those who are not talented, will cause us great confusion at the moment of death.

- 11 Poor Sisters! I have bored you enough. Just one thing more. I recommend again that you have great confidence in your superior and give good example among yourselves. With the girls practise endless patience and unlimited gentleness. I recommend one more thing, and that is, be always cheerful, never be sad, because sadness is the mother of tepidity.
- 12 Now I would like to ask an act of charity from you, and that is to pray for the repose of the soul of my dear father who departed this world for the next on September 23, at half-past seven in the morning. I had the good fortune, almost miraculously, of being there to assist him. I hope he is already in Heaven, however, won't you all say a prayer for him?⁷
- 13 Sr. Angiolina, Sr. Teresina and Sr. Cassulo, I have news of your relatives and they are all well. So are those of Sr. Virginia and Sr. Denegri. I hope that the same is true for the parents of Sr. V.[ittoria] and Sr. Filomena.
- 14 Now, Angiolina my dear, it only remains for me to tell you to have great courage and don't have such a small heart, but a big, generous heart. Don't be so fearful, understand?

⁷ Giuseppe Mazzarello had been one of the first benefactors of the poor community in Mornese and was known to and esteemed by all the Sisters. Mother Mazzarello arrived in Mornese on September 22 when her father was already critically ill. She assisted him up to his last moments and prepared him to receive the sacraments. She returned to Nizza Monferrato on the 26th (cf. *Cronistoria* III pp. 79-80).

Greet all those dear Sisters of mine. Be cheerful, all of you.

- 15 Give my regards to Fr. Rector and ask him to pray for me. I leave you in the company of Jesus and Mary, and I am,

Yours most affectionately in Jesus, *la Madre*,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

- 16 You want me to come and see you, but if the superiors don't send me, I can't give orders. It's up to you to make the superiors obey you.

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

28. To the Missionary, Sr. Giovanna Borgna

Maria Mazzarello exhorts the young vicar to commit herself personally to virtue and fidelity to the Rule and to be a witness to the Sisters and girls.

Nizza [Monferrato], October 20, 1879
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. Giuseppe!

My Dearest Sr. Giovanna,¹

- 1 I received your dear letter with pleasure and I am happy with the good news you wrote to me. I heard that you made your Holy Retreat, may God be praised for giving you such a beautiful grace. It consoled me greatly to hear that so many girls went to Confession and received Holy Communion; that is very good. You must never be discouraged when the world speaks evil of you or of your teachers, or schools, or nuns, or priests, or whatever ... If the world speaks in this way, it is a sign that we are on God's side, the devil is angry with us and that should make us even more courageous.²

¹ She was vicar of the house of Las Piedras and was, in practice, responsible for the community.

² During the 1880s, laws were passed suppressing religious congregations in Uruguay. Initially, the Salesians, too, were targeted (cf. Ceria Eugenio, *Annali della Società Salesiana. Dalle origini alla morte di S. Giovanni Bosco*, (1961), I, SEI Torino, p. 441). On October 15, 1879, Sr. Borgna wrote to Don Bosco about her worries telling him that the inspector from the Department for Public Schools wanted to interfere in private schools and impose his authority upon them also. Sr. Borgna continues saying: "Since we want to do good for young people, we hope the Lord will defend our cause and we are tranquil" (cf. letter published in *Bollettino Salesiano*, 4 [1880], I pp. 7-9).

- 2 I won't stop to give you news of this house; Sr. Angiolina, your superior will give it to you, since I wrote her a long letter. Ask her rather to read it to you or to give it to you. Actually, I forgot to recommend something to her, will you tell her? Tell her that you must take good care of everyone's health. If we do not have this, we can do nothing, either for ourselves or for others.³
- 3 Tell me, Sr. Giovanna, my dear, are you always cheerful? Are you humble? How do you treat the Sisters? With gentleness and charity?
- 4 My dear, I strongly recommend that you be a good example to your Sisters. You must be a model of virtue in everything, especially in the exact observance of the H.[oly] Rule if you want the ship to go forward smoothly and if you want your Daughters to respect you and have confidence in you.
- 5 I am not saying this to reproach you. Indeed, I know you are doing all you can to make things go well. Rather, I recommend this because I have it so much at heart. Courage, Sr. Giovanna, my dear Daughter, let us do some good while we still have time. This life passes quickly and at the moment of death we will be glad because of our mortifications, struggles, our fight against self-love and against self. I recommend that you don't ever get discouraged if you see that you are full of weaknesses. Let us set to work with good will, but let it be true and resolute, and Jesus will do the rest. Our defects, if we fight against them with good will, are what will help us to move forward on the way of perfection, as long as we have true humility.
- 6 Have you many girls? Remember to give them good example by practising refinement. Say *Viva Gesù* to [them] from me and ask them to [say] a Hail Mary for me. I pray for them at Holy Communion every morning.
- 7 Tell the Sisters, too, to pray much for me, for our whole

³ As has been noted, Sr. Angela Vallese and Sr. Giovanna were collaborating in the leadership of this community.

Congregation and for the superiors who work so hard for us.

- 8 Your sister is well and cheerful and it seems as though she wants to be good. She sends many good wishes and recommends herself to your prayers. Be assured that I will take very good care of her.⁴
- 9 I want you to be cheerful, to encourage all the others and to take care of your health. Be humble.
- 10 Give my regards to your good Rev. Rector and ask him to remember me in his fervent prayers. Write to me when you get a chance. May God bless you and make you totally His. In the most Sacred Heart, believe me always to be, in Jesus,

Yours most affectionately,
the poor Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁴ *La Madre* gives her news of her sister Giacinta, stating that she is following her growth and development with loving care and interest (cf. L 6, fn 8).

29. To the Missionaries of the House of Buenos Aires-Almagro (Argentina)

Maria Mazzarello encourages her Sisters who live far away, and recommends that they work for God alone and preserve unity of spirit.

[Nizza Monferrato, October-November 1879]¹

- 1 Courage, my dear Daughters, this life passes quickly. At the hour of death we will be happy with the mortifications we have made. Never get discouraged if you find defects in yourselves; let us do our part with good will, true, resolute good will, and Jesus will do the rest.
- 2 Have great confidence in your confessor and in your superior.
- 3 Give good example to the postulants and girls whom the Lord sends you. Always work for God alone if you want to succeed and gain much merit. Are you still all together? When you separate [into two communities], be careful not to divide the spirit; always be one in heart. That which is done in one house should also be done in the other, if you always want to preserve the unity of spirit of our dear Congregation.² Above all I recommend that you pray, pray

¹ Only this extract from the letter has survived. It is in Sr. Emilia Mosca's writing. It has neither heading nor date, nor Mother Mazzarello's signature. Most probably it was a page included with another letter.

² The missionaries of the second expedition stayed together for only a few months. Some left for the new foundations in Argentina: Buenos Aires-Boca (November 2, 1879) and Carmen de Patagones (January 19, 1880). *La Madre* recommends to the Sisters to remain united even though they were dispersed in various communities. There was truly a great desire among the Sisters to keep intact the spirit of communion and missionary ardour that they had absorbed in the Mother House. We see this in what

much and from your heart, pray for me, for the superiors and for all your Sisters. I often ask everyone to receive Holy Communion for you, and your Sisters do so willingly and with all their hearts. Do you do the same for us? Oh, how many things I would still like to write, but I am running out of paper. Go into the Heart of Jesus, and there you will hear all I want to say to you.

- 4 You want my picture, don't you? I would willingly send it, but it was never printed. Ferrero finally told me that he had not done them because no superior gave him the order. If he does so, I will send it with the first Sisters who go there.³
- 5 May the Lord bless you all, my dear Daughters, and make you all as holy as I wish you to be. Pray for me.

[GAFMA Original. Dictated and lacking heading and signature]

Sr. Vergniaud wrote to Mother Mazzarello as soon as she arrived in Buenos Aires: "In this house the missionaries of the first and second groups speak of nothing but Mornese, Nizza, Italy" (letter of March 9, 1879, in *Cronistoria* III p. 18).

³ Note the exquisite humanity of the Saint, the simplicity and detachment shown in her desire to please her Sisters who live far away.

30. To Mr. Carlo Buzzetti

Maria Mazzarello gives news of his daughter who had entered as a postulant in Nizza.

Nizza Monf.[errato], Nov.[ember] 10, 1879
Viva Maria Ausiliatrice!

Honourable Sir,¹

- 1 I enclose the list of the trousseau that you gave your daughter Sr. Angiolina so that it may serve as a guide, if you so wish, in providing for that of Clotilde.² As you will see, what she already has with her is marked on the list.
- 2 You also want to know on what day your daughters entered, true? If I am not mistaken, [they] entered on July 6 and Marietta returned home a month later, that is on August 4. Therefore, Clotilde has been here four months.
- 3 You can rest assured, Sir, that your daughter is always cheerful, settled and happy to be in this holy house where she hopes to consecrate herself to the Lord. As far as I can see, with the help of God and from experience, it seems to me that she is really called to follow the example of her

¹ Carlo Buzzetti was closely linked to Don Bosco and to his work. He first met the Saint in 1841 when, as a young bricklayer, he attended the newly founded oratory and became one of its most assiduous members. As an adult he was Don Bosco's main support in the building of churches and educational institutions. His daughter, Sr. Angiolina, then a newly professed Sister, was destined to become the Bursar General of the Institute of the FMA.

² Clotilde was then 18 years old and also wanted to be an FMA. She was in fact professed on August 20, 1881. She was one of the first FMA to receive a Teaching Diploma in Literature for secondary schools at the University of Genoa on December 31, 1892.

sister, Sr. Ang.[iolina].³ She is in good health and is studying and working. She never forgets to pray for her parents to whom she owes so much gratitude for the sacrifices they make for her.

- 4 You can be at peace in this regard and believe that God will reward you for your sacrifices and for the gift of your daughters to Him.
- 5 Best wishes to your wife and a thousand affectionate greetings to Maria also from Sr. Angiolina who is in Genoa for a few days.
Please accept the regards of Fr. Rector along with my own and believe me to be,

Your most devoted servant,
Sr. M. Mazzarello

[ASC Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

³ Mother Mazzarello shows acute wisdom in discerning vocations and, at the same time, she reveals a humble and discrete attitude in her dealings with families.

31. To the Missionary, Sr. Vittoria Cantù

Maria Mazzarello recommends cheerfulness and the right intention in work, obedience and confidence.

[Nizza Monferrato, November-December, 1879]
Viva Gesù e Maria!

Don't I have anything to say to my good Sr. Vittoria?¹

- 1 Oh yes! I want to recommend to her cheerfulness, obedience, working without being intimidated [*gena*],² and great confidence in the superior and the confessor. Never be sad because sadness is the mother of tepidity. Have courage in everything and keep all those dear Sisters of mine cheerful. Take care of your health and work always to please Jesus, and with this thought in mind, everything will be light and easy to do, agreed, my good Sr. Vittoria?
- 2 I recommend myself very much to your prayers. Pray also for everyone! May Jesus make you totally His, together with,

Yours most affectionately in Jesus, *la Madre*,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

¹ Sr. Vittoria Cantù left for Uruguay with the second group of missionaries at the beginning of 1879. At the time she was in the house of Las Piedras. The Original of this note was found in November, 1980.

² The Piedmontese term *gena* means to be overawed. Therefore, the recommendation to the Sister means to work without sparing one's self, and not being conditioned by external influences; in other words, to work with generosity and simplicity.

32. To Mrs. Francesca Pastore

Maria Mazzarello sends Christmas wishes and thanks this benefactress for the help she gives to the community.

Nizza, [Monferrato, December] 1879
Viva Gesù Bambino!

Dearest Madam,¹

- 1 How beautiful these days are! They fill our poor hearts with an extraordinary joy, because Baby Jesus comes to us with His hands full of graces. He is all love and all goodness so as to give us the confidence to approach Him.²
- 2 How many graces I want to ask of Him for you, my dear lady, who always do so much for the good of our poor Congregation. I will pray and get others to pray to that same Jesus, who promised not to leave unrewarded even a glass of water given for love of Him. May He reward you a hundredfold, even in this life, for your charity. May He bless you in all your work, keep all harm far away from you and give you many, many more years of good health.

¹ Mrs. Francesca Pastore from Valenza, Alessandria, was a benefactress of the house as well as of Don Bosco's works.

² Christmas was a very well loved feast in the popular piety of the time, so the first FMA also celebrated it with great solemnity and with intense spiritual participation. Fr. Costamagna, speaking to Fr. Ferdinando Maccono, biographer of St. Maria Mazzarello, testified: "I still have a letter from Mother Assistant, Sister Emilia Mosca. Among other things, she expresses her sweet memories of those novenas. Oh, Christmas of 1874, 1875, 1876, where have you gone? Why can we not see you lived again? You allowed us to taste the sweetness of Heaven. Only there will we know joy so pure!" (Maccono F. (1980) [1934], op. cit. I p. 258).

- 3 Please pray also for my soul. Let us pray for one another at the feet of Baby Jesus, so that He may keep us always united in His Heart here on earth. May He deign to reunite us in Heaven for all eternity.
- 4 All the Sisters, especially those whom you know, want me to give their most affectionate greetings to you and to all the good ladies who came to make the retreat last summer. I wish you all choicest blessings and, in the Heart of Jesus I will always be,

Your most affectionate sister,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

33. To the Community Animator of the House of Bordighera, Sr. Adele David

Maria Mazzarello exhorts her Sisters to practice virtue and has affectionate words for each one.

Nizza Monferrato, December 27, 1879¹
Viva Gesù Bambino!

My Dearest and Good Sr. David and Sisters,

- 1 I received your letter. Thank you for the wishes and prayers for me which I appreciate with all my heart. May Jesus repay you with many wounds of love.² In return, I have prayed to this loving Baby Jesus for you. Are you happy? I mentioned each one by name. I said: Sr. David, Sr. Carlotta, Sr. Giuseppina and Sr. Marietta.³ I told Him to give you His humility, self-detachment, love of suffering and that prompt, blind, submissive obedience He had to His Eternal Father, to St. Joseph and to Mary, and which he practiced up to His death on the Cross. I told Him to give you charity and total detachment from all that is not God, to give you patience and perfect resignation to God's Will.
- 2 Oh, my dear Sisters, what examples of great virtue we can learn from the presence of Jesus in the Crib! Meditate on

¹ This letter, in her writing, was found in Buenos Aires in 1981. It was probably brought there by one of the missionaries. Up to that time we only had a transcribed copy.

² *Many wounds of love*, was a characteristic expression of the spirituality of the time that means an ardent love for Jesus.

³ The community consisted of three professed Sisters (Sr. Adele David, community animator, Sr. Maria [Marietta] Cassulo and Sr. Carlotta Negri) and a novice (Sr. Giuseppina Armelonghi).

this and you will see what fruit you will gain from it; the fruit will be great if you meditate with humility.

- 3 I wish you a happy year filled with all the blessings of Heaven. My dear Sisters, begin this year well. Remember that for some of us it might be the last year we will begin, and who knows if we will see the end of it? We must always be prepared and keep our accounts in order, in this way we will not fear death.
- 4 Have courage in waging war on self-love. Let us defeat this ugly enemy that makes us lose the fruit of our good works.
- 5 Take all necessary care of yourselves. I want you to be always cheerful, healthy in soul and body. Pray fervently for me, too, and for your Sisters. Do not forget those who have gone to the next life and also those who are in America.
- 6 Sr. Carlotta, thank you for the note you wrote me. I am very happy that you are cheerful and at peace. God bless you. Continue always to be good and to give good example to your Sisters.
- 7 Your sister⁴ is cheerful. She is in good health and greets you. Pray for her and for me, won't you? Courage, I will come and see you soon.
- 8 And you, Sr. Giuseppina, are you still mischievous? You know, I am pleased that you are always cheerful. Continue to be obedient and humble always if you want to make your religious profession soon.⁵ I give you the job of

⁴ Sr. Carlotta's sister, Emilia, was a novice. She was professed on September 2, 1880, at Nizza Monferrato. After having worked as a kindergarten teacher in Piedmont, she was sent to Sicily in 1894 for the opening of the house of Vizzini. She died in Cesarò, Messina, August 6, 1909.

⁵ Giuseppina was the daughter of Doctor Giovanni Armelonghi of Lugagnano, Piacenza, whose mother had died. She was a boarder in Mornese and entered the Institute of the FMA in 1878. She made her religious profession at Nizza Monferrato on September 2, 1880 and died in 1886 at just 24 years of age. Her sisters Clelia and Marietta also became FMA and her only brother Eugenio became a Salesian priest.

keeping Sr. Marietta cheerful. Pray for me and for everyone.

- 9 Sr. Marietta, are you pouting because I left you to the end? But be cheerful anyway, because you know that I love you and never forget you. Do you pray for me? Do you obey your superior? I hope so. Your sister, Angiolina is well.⁶
- 10 Sr. Maddalena Martini wrote to tell me that now they are sending her to Patagonia. Pray for her and for everyone. May God make you totally His.
- 11 Courage everyone, especially you, Sr. Adele. Take care of your health. Greet your Fr. Rector⁷ for me and recommend me to his fervent prayers. Tell the girls that I wish them every possible good and [tell] Miss Letizia⁸ to take courage. I am praying and getting others to pray for her.
- 12 We are all well here except Sr. Angiolina Delodi and Sr. Maria Stardero who have smallpox.⁹ Pray for them and for me too. I really need it.
Thanks again and believe me to be, at the feet of Baby Jesus,

Your most affectionate Mother,
the poor Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁶ Sr. Angela Cassulo was one of the first group of missionaries who left for Uruguay and was one of the pioneers in Patagonia.

⁷ Fr. Nicolao Cibrario, rector of the Salesian boarding school of Bordighera.

⁸ This was Miss Letizia Lavagnino (cf. L 7, fn 11).

⁹ That year at Nizza Monferrato not only were they suffering from the intense cold, but there was also a smallpox epidemic which claimed the lives of many people. Despite the fact that everyone was vaccinated, some of the Sisters and a postulant contracted the disease (cf. *Cronistoria* III pp. 106-107, 123).

34. To Sr. Virginia Piccono

Maria Mazzarello encourages and counsels her Sisters who are beginning a new educational work in Sicily.

Nizza [Monferrato], March 24, 1880
Viva G.[esù,] Maria e S. G.[iuseppe]!

My Good Sr. Virginia,¹

- 1 Are you cheerful? Are you well? Poor thing, did you suffer a lot during the journey? I hope you will have recovered by now. Take courage and be always cheerful. Keep Mother² and Sr. Rita cheerful, too. What are you doing? Are you teaching sewing or working in the primary school?³ Well, whatever work you are doing I will not be mistaken if I tell you to be humble, patient, charitable, obedient and most exact in the observance of our Holy Rule.
- 2 I was in Ivrea and I met your teacher, M.[other] Vicar, who inquired about you, and asked me to wish you every

¹ Sr. Virginia Piccono left for Catania on February 18, along with Sr. Orsola Camisassa, community animator, and Sr. Rita Cevennini. *La Madre* answered the Sister's letter showing her loving concern.

² This refers to the community animator, Sr. Orsola Camisassa. Following the suggestion of Fr. Cagliari the title "Mother" was given to the community animators at the time (cf. *Cronistoria* III p. 273, fn 26).

³ The Duchess, Fernanda Grifes di Càrcaci, who intended to entrust to their care the girls' orphanage she had founded, had invited the FMA to Catania. The house was opened on February 26. It is understandable that Mother Mazzarello did not yet know what responsibilities each Sister would have.

possible good. She showed me the place where she taught you to sew.⁴ Some of your friends were there, too, and they were all asking for news of you and recommend themselves to your prayers. You told me in your letter that you saw so many beautiful things in Rome,⁵ but, my dear Sr. Virginia, will we not see even more beautiful things in Heaven? Courage, this life is short and [during] this short time let us try to win treasures for Heaven. Never get discouraged, no matter what difficulties you may meet. Always confide in Jesus, our dear Spouse and in Mary Most Holy, who is always our dearest Mother, then we need fear nothing. Tell the girls I wish them every possible good and get them to say some prayers for my intentions.

- 3 The Sisters in Chieri⁶ greet you. We have sent Sr. Rosa Daghero there. Always remember to pray for your Sisters and especially for me. I never forget you in my poor prayers. Courage, and I want you to be cheerful. God bless you together with,

Yours most affectionately in Jesus,
la Madre,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

Write to me soon.

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁴ Most probably this refers to the *Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception* at Ivrea. They had educated Sr. Virginia.

⁵ The FMA were accompanied from Turin to Rome by Fr. Antonio Sala and from Rome to Catania by the Procurator General of the Salesians, Fr. Francesco Dalmazzo (cf. *Cronistoria III* pp. 127-128).

⁶ Previously Sr. Piccono had been a teacher and assistant at Chieri.

**35. To the Community Animator
of the House in Turin,
Sr. Pierina Marassi**

Maria Mazzarello advises a new community animator and addresses a word to each of the Sisters in the community.

Nizza [Monferrato], March 31, 1880
Viva Gesù!

My Dearest Sr. Pierina¹ and All the Sisters,

- 1 Are you cheerful? I am sure that you suffered because of the departure of your superior.² Take courage, my dears, you know well that life is not made for us to be always together; we will have this in Heaven.
- 2 Now, Sr. Pierina, it is up to you to give good example, to be vigilant that the Daughters observe the H.[oly] Rule, that they love one another and that particular affections [exclusive friendships] do not creep in because they lead us very far from the Lord and from the religious spirit. Try to make sure that there is no jealousy. You must give good example to everyone so that no one can say: "She likes her more, she talks more to her, she makes more allowances for her, etc." Speak with everyone, love them all, show as much confidence as you can, but always be careful that our heart does not become attached to anyone [except] the Lord.
- 3 Always ask advice from our good superiors, never neglect to do good out of human respect, always point out yet be

¹ Sr. Pierina Marassi had recently been appointed animator of the community in Turin.

² Sr. Caterina Daghero had to go to open the new house in Saint-Cyr, France.

understanding of the defects of your Sisters, freely do all that charity requires.³

- 4 I recommend one more thing: never worry if sometimes the superiors [SDB] need one person more than another, for example Sr. Maritano or Sr. Laurantoni,⁴ etc. Don't ever judge their orders saying that you are the superior [of the house] and that they should refer to you. The superiors are always superiors for us and what they do is always well done.⁵ So if you should find yourself in one of these situations, let things be and let us remember that we don't gain Heaven with satisfactions and by being given preference, but we gain it by virtue and suffering.
- 5 My good Sr. Pierina, there was no need for me to say this to you, I know that you are sufficiently aware of it, I am only advising you.
- 6 Take courage then, send me news of yourself and the house soon. Be cheerful and keep all the Sisters cheerful for me.
- 7 And you, Sr. Teresa, are you cheerful? I should hope you are! In fact, you must keep the others cheerful too, by your good example.
- 8 Courage, and like good sisters, help each other to work for the Lord; encourage one another in doing both spiritual

³ This formula, in all its simplicity, sums up the Christian message regarding the freedom of the Children of God who walk in love. Therefore, *la Madre* shows her broadmindedness in directing the Sisters to live and act in true freedom; to have the capacity to judge every action on the basis of the fundamental value of the Christian life, that is, charity.

⁴ Sr. Teresa Maritano (cf. L 48, fn 2) and Sr. Teresa Laurantoni. The latter was in charge of the oratory and was outstanding for her educative ability and spirit of apostolic enterprise.

⁵ We must remember that the Institute of the FMA, up to the time of the decree *Normae secundum quas*, promulgated by the H.[oly] See in 1901, was totally dependent on the Salesian Congregation. The term "Superiors" used here, referred to those who were dealing directly with the Sisters: Don Bosco, his vicar Fr. Michele Rua, the founder's *alter ego*, and the spiritual director of the FMA. These SDB directed the FMA with paternal care and wisdom. So we can understand why Mother Mazzarello showed filial gratitude and respect towards these SDB and inculcated the same attitude in the Sisters.

and temporal good. Pray much for me, you can be sure that I never forget anyone.

- 9 I would like to say a personal word to each one, but be patient because I really can't. Some other time perhaps, or if not, I will come to see you soon.
- 10 I want you all to be cheerful even Sr. Adele,⁶ who must be good! Vie to see who can be the first to become holy especially in humility and charity ... When I come to see you, you can tell me who has become the holiest. Sr. Pierina, send the trousseau of the new postulant⁷ who is coming here with Sr. Caterina.
Good bye, then, my dear Sisters. Let us pray and love one another in the Lord and believe me to be, always,

Your most affectionate Mother in the L.[ord],
the poor Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁶ Sr. Adele Ayra had recently been transferred from Borgo S. Martino to Turin. She entered the Institute [of the FMA] in Mornese in 1874, after having worked as a dressmaker. She was professed August 15, 1877 and, because of her liveliness, patience and the gift of intuition, she was given the responsibility for educating the kindergarten children. She spent her whole life in this apostolate and died in 1918 as a result of the Spanish Flu.

⁷ The expression "new postulant" probably refers to Caterina Quassolo who had entered the Institute the previous day on March 30. This young woman was born in Turin on May 7, 1861 and had been a boarder in the *Institute of the Holy Family* in Turin. She made her religious profession at Nizza Monferrato on August 23, 1881.

36. To Sr. Maria Sampietro

Maria Mazzarello writes a short exhortation to help the young Sister to overcome the difficulties she was experiencing in settling into a new community.

[Nizza Monferrato], April, 1880
Viva Gesù e Maria!

My Mischievous Sr. Sampietro,¹

- 1 Are you cheerful? No more tears? “Oh no, I am cheerful and have a great desire to become holy.”
- 2 Very good, try to continue like this; be humble. It will soon be time for the retreat and you will be able to meet everyone then. I want you to be cheerful and have courage. Pray for me and for M.[other] Bursar.² We are really afraid the Lord will take her from us, and how I would regret that, patience!
- 3 I have run out of time and so I will stop. Courage, pray

¹ Sr. Maria Sampietro, who had made her religious profession a few months before (September 4, 1879), had not yet settled in well in the new community of Saint-Cyr. *La Madre* had accompanied her to Alassio. She now communicates with her “mischievous Daughter” through a letter expressing her affectionate, maternal sensitivity.

² Sr. Giovanna Ferrettino, compatriot of Mother Mazzarello, and like her, a member of the *Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate*. She became an FMA on August 5, 1872. As the first bursar of the Institute she showed herself to be generous, active and cheerful. She was a great help to Mother Mazzarello who frequently names her in her letters, expressing her esteem and affection and asking prayers for her recovery.

with your heart. May Jesus bless you, make you totally
His, together with,

Yours most affectionately, *la Madre*

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

37. To the Sisters of the House of Carmen de Patagones (Argentina)

Maria Mazzarello comforts and encourages her Sisters who live far away and gives them news of the Institute.

Nizza [Monferrato], May 4, 1880
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. Giuseppe!

My Dearest Sisters Angiolina, Cassulo, Giovanna, Caterina,¹

- 1 Oh, how far you are from me, my poor Daughters, but take courage, we are very close in spirit. Yes, I assure you that I have you always present in my heart, indeed I could say that you are always first in my prayers.
- 2 I hear that you are very happy to be there and that you already have a boarder and twelve girls who come to you. I also hear that on Sundays you have a lot to do for the girls who come for catechism. I am really happy that you have much work to do for the glory of God and for the good of souls. May you correspond to the great grace the Lord has given you, and try, through your good example and activity, to attract many young souls to the Lord.
- 3 My beloved Daughters, I exhort you to love one another, always to practise charity towards one another, be

¹ Carmen de Patagones was the first FMA house to be opened in Patagonia. Those chosen for this perilous frontier work were Sr. Angela Vallese, Sr. Angela Cassulo, Sr. Giovanna Borgna and Sr. Caterina Fina, all of whom had already been in America for a few years. The Buenos Aires newspaper *L'America del Sud* of January 31, 1880 announced the expedition as follows: "This is the first time, since the world began, that Sisters have gone to those southern regions" (reported in the Italian MB XIV p. 620).

understanding of each other's defects, pointing them out to one another, but always with charity and gentleness. Take care of your health, too. Let us remember that our life is no longer our own. We have given it to the community, so we must care for it and use it for the glory of God.

- 4 Sr. Angela Cassulo, are you cheerful? Your sister² is well and greets you. She is very good, pray for her and for me. Courage.
- 5 And you, Sr. Giovanna, are you already a saint? Have you performed any miracles yet?³ Do you pray for me? Be cheerful! Your sister is beginning to be good and is well. Take courage and be always humble, have confidence in your superior and help her in everything.
- 6 Sr. Caterina, are you cheerful, humble, obedient? Always confide in your superior and always be cheerful. Never give in to whims, right Sr. Caterina?⁴
- 7 Sr. Angiolina V.[allese], won't you keep some grapes for me because I will come to eat them soon, but will you prepare only grapes for me? Prepare some peaches too. Your sister, Sr. Luigia,⁵ will soon go to America. She will leave at the first opportunity.
- 8 You would also like to have some general news of our

² Sr. Maria Cassulo made her profession in Turin, August 15, 1879 and was in the house of Nizza Monferrato. Except for four years spent in France, Sr. Marietta spent her whole life in charge of the laundry in Valdocco, Turin. She edified everyone by her tireless and self-sacrificing work, humility and union with God.

³ This humorous and affectionate greeting is addressed to the young Sr. Giovanna Borgna (cf. L 25, 2; L 28).

⁴ Sr. Caterina Fina had been professed for two years. As can be seen from other letters, *la Madre* recommends that she overcome every form of introversion and melancholy. Sr. Caterina left the Institute in 1893.

⁵ Sr. Luigia Vallese left for Argentina on February 3, 1881, with the Third Missionary Expedition. She had to sacrifice her ardent desire to evangelise the native people in order to dedicate herself to the formation of the novices in the house of Buenos Aires-Almagro.

Congregation, wouldn't you? I very willingly send it to you.

- 9 The house of Mornese is no longer ours. Only Fr. Giuseppe is there to see if he can sell it. Poor House! We can't think about it without feeling a thorn in our heart ...⁶ Now we are all at Nizza Monf.[errato] where there is a fine group of us. Counting boarders, postulants and Sisters, we number one hundred and fifty. I won't stop to describe the house because it would take too long. We have a beautiful, big, devotional and well-decorated church. They are building a wing for the boarders now, and we hope it will be finished soon.
- 10 For the rest, the number of our houses in Europe is constantly growing. A few months ago three Sisters left for the island of Sicily,⁷ then four more went to open another house in France and one in Ivrea.⁸ The last three who left, went to open schools and kindergartens. They all go willingly and work with all their hearts for the glory of God and for the good of souls. Let us really thank the Lord who gives us so many graces and makes use of us, who are so poor, to do some good.
- 11 Take courage all of you, dear, good Sisters. Let us do good while there is still time. Never get discouraged, no matter what difficulties you may meet. Always say: "Jesus must be our whole strength." With Jesus burdens become light, fatigue becomes easy, thorns are changed into sweetness. But be on your guard to overcome yourselves, or everything

⁶ *La Madre's* sorrow at the thought of this house, soon to be abandoned, is very understandable. Only Fr. Giuseppe Campi had remained to oversee the sale of the property. The house was finally sold to the Marquis Doria. The FMA community had been already transferred to Nizza by April 12, when Mother Mazzarello had gone to "close the house" and bring the last four infirm Sisters to Nizza (cf. *Cronistoria* III pp. 146-149).

⁷ Cf. L 34 to Sr. Virginia Piccono.

⁸ These were the houses of Saint-Cyr, opened on April 4, 1880, and Cascinette d'Ivrea. The latter was opened on August 20, 1879 and had a kindergarten, sewing classes and Festive Oratory. Due to economic difficulties, the house was closed in 1882.

will become heavy, and unbearable and evil will spring up in our hearts like boils.

- 12 Tell me, do you pray for me, for all your Sisters? We never, never forget you here; you do the same. We are all in good health, thank God.
- 13 Tell those dear girls that I wish them every blessing. Tell them to be good.
- 14 All the Sisters, postulants, and boarders, want me to wish you every possible good. Fr. Rector greets you too.
- 15 Be cheerful, pray for me and write to me soon. May God bless you and make you totally His, together with

Yours most affectionately in Jesus, *la Madre*,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

Viva Gesù e Maria!

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

38. To the Prefect General, Fr. Michele Rua

Maria Mazzarello forwards a request for copies of the Bollettino Salesiano that had not been sent to some subscribers.

Nizza Monf.[errato], May 24, [1880]
Viva Maria Ausiliatrice!

Reverend Fr. Rua,¹

- 1 Just a few hurried lines to let you know that we received 58.50 lire from Mrs. Teresa Malfatto. I believe it is to cover one term's fees her son Giuseppe. So I intend to send her a receipt and this amount will be debited to us at the Oratory.
- 2 The two Monsignors, Verri the Archpriest of Borgo Madonna and the other, Mons. Giuseppe Onesti, parish priest, both from Incisa Belbo and both very zealous Salesian Cooperators, are complaining that they have not received the Salesian Bulletin all year. They regret this all the more because, besides all the other beautiful and holy things, it contains very interesting articles on the history of the Oratory.²
- 3 I beg your Reverence to ask the honourable director of the

¹ This letter shows the direct, simple and familiar relationship that existed [between Mother Mazzarello and] Fr. Michele Rua, Prefect General of the Salesian Congregation. He had particular administrative duties also with regard to the FMA (cf. *Cronistoria* II p. 133 that speaks of his first visit to Mornese as Perfect General).

² She is referring to the *Storia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*, written by Fr. Giovanni Bonetti and published in instalments in the Italian *Salesian Bulletin* between 1878 and 1886.

Salesian Bulletin to send it [to them] every month, especially since they have always paid for it ... They have jokingly said that they will try not paying and see if it is sent to them. I enclose their addresses so that you can give them to whoever is responsible ... It would be good to send them all the 1880 issues.

- 4 Forgive me for disturbing you in this way and for my boldness. Allow me to offer my humble respects to you and to all our good sup[eriors]. I warmly recommend myself to your prayers and theirs and I sign myself,
Your Reverence's

Most devoted servant,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

Addresses for the Bulletin:

*Mons. Onesti Teologo Cav. Giuseppe
Cameriere di Sua Santità. Prevosto
Incisa Belbo.*

*Mons. Verri Carlo, Arciprete
Borgo Madonna,
Incisa Belbo.*

Signora Maestra [The Teacher] di Castiglione d'Asti.

[ASC Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

39. To the Community Animator of the House of Catania, Sr. Orsola Camisassa

Maria Mazzarello comforts and encourages the Sisters who are facing many difficulties in the new house.

Nizza [Monferrato], June 24, 1880
Viva Gesù e Maria!

My Good Sr. Orsola and Dear Sisters,¹

- 1 I received your letter and thank you from my heart for the lovely greetings you sent me. I am even more grateful for your prayers for me. I pray with all my heart that the Lord may reward you and shower you with His choicest blessings.
- 2 Oh yes, my good and dear Sisters, if you only knew how much I think of you! Not a moment passes without my mind turning to you, and how often I feel a pain in my heart at not seeing you right here! But patience, that blessed day is coming when we will be together forever in spirit and in body. For the present, let us content ourselves with being together in spirit only, and let us always speak to one another in the Heart of Jesus. When you are united to this adorable Heart, tell Him many beautiful things for me, especially when you go to receive Him in Holy Communion.
- 3 I assure you that I always pray to Him for each of you in particular, especially during those blessed moments when I receive Him into my heart. I always pray to Him to give

¹ Sr. Orsola Camisassa was community animator at Catania where the sisters were educating orphan girls (cf. L 34, fn 3).

you the virtues that we need so much: humility, charity, patience, etc ...

- 4 Yes, my good Daughters in J.[esus], take courage, Jesus loves you. It is true that you have many troubles and sufferings at times,² but the Lord wants us to carry a bit of the cross in this world. He was the first to give us the good example in suffering, so let us follow him with courage by suffering with resignation. You can be sure that those to whom Jesus gives most to suffer are those closest to Him; but we must do everything with purity of intention to please Him alone, if we want the reward.
- 5 I am really sorry that your health is not good. Take care of yourselves and see to it that you have everything you need. I hear that it is really hot there; shelter from the heat as much as you can.
- 6 I am very sorry that the Duchess was a bit annoyed with you. Poor Sisters, but it does not matter. Roses flower when the time comes, but they put out their thorns first, isn't that what has happened to you? Oh, be cheerful, the things of this world all pass.
- 7 I forgot to thank you for the 100 lire you sent me. It really gave me great pleasure because I needed it so much for all the expenses of the builders. Thanks, and thanks again.³
- 8 Now I will give you our news. Thank God we are all well, except poor M.[other] Bursar,⁴ who [has been] very ill for about twenty days. The doctor [told me] that she has an

² The orphanage depended on the Duchess of Cárcaci and the administrators of the Conservatorio, and this caused great problems for the Sisters. The FMA had to withdraw after seven years because outside interference was creating difficulties for their educational work.

³ Among the conditions stipulated in the contract with the Duchess, it was written that she would pay the FMA an annual stipend of 1,000 lire (cf. letter of the Duchess to Fr. Giovanni Bonetti September 28, 1879, in *Cronistoria* III p. 272). Although the Sisters were living in extreme poverty, they tried to show solidarity with the Sisters in the Mother House.

⁴ Sr. Giovanna Ferrettino (cf. L 36, 2; L 40, 5; L 47, 4).

illness that is difficult to cure! Poor M.[other] Bursar, really pray for her. How sorry I would be if the Lord were to take her from me, but patience!

- 9 Sr. Orsola, write to me a little more often. I greet you all, recommending cheerfulness and courage. Tell those dear girls that I wish them every possible good, have them say a Hail Mary for my intentions.
- 10 All the Sisters, postulants and boarders greet you and send you a *Viva Gesù*; please answer them.
- 11 I would write on and on, but have run out of paper, so for this time I will stop.
- 12 I don't know if you will be able to understand this letter. I wrote it myself without doing a rough copy. You know that I don't know how to write so you will have to study it a bit to understand it.
God bless you and console you all. Believe me, I am always,

Yours most affectionately in Jesus, *la Madre*,
the poor Sr. Maria Mazzarello

Give my regards to the Duchess.

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

40. To the Sisters of the Houses of Montevideo-Villa Colón and Las Piedras (Uruguay)

Maria Mazzarello thanks her Sisters who live far away for their greetings. She recommends them to live as authentic religious and gives news of the Mother House.

Nizza [Monferrato], July 9, 1880
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. G.[iuseppe]!

My Good Daughters, My Ever Beloved Daughters in Jesus,¹
of Colón and Las Piedras

- 1 It always gives me pleasure to receive letters from the Sisters in the different houses, but the letters I receive from America give me a certain feeling that I cannot explain. It seems to me that time and distance, rather than diminishing the holy and true affection I have for each of you, have made it grow even stronger.
- 2 You can imagine then, how pleasing your affectionate greetings were to me.² Yes, I do hope that the Lord will hear your prayers and give me the virtues I need so much to do my duty well.
- 3 You tell me that from now on you don't want to be Sisters in name only but in reality. Well Done! That is very good! Always go ahead in this way. Remember, time passes in America as it does in Italy and we will soon reach that

¹ The affection with which *la Madre* addresses herself to her Daughters who live far away, is evident.

² Mother Mazzarello thanks the Sisters for their greetings on her name-day which was celebrated on July 6, Feast of St. Domenica (cf. *Cronistoria* II pp. 196-197, 252, 323-324; III p. 185). This Saint, commemorated in the Roman Martyrology on July 6, was martyred in Nicomedia during the persecution of Diocletian.

hour which will decide our fate. How happy we will be if we have been true Sisters; Jesus will receive us as a groom welcomes his bride. But to be true religious we must be humble in everything, not just in words but in deeds as well. We must be exact in the observance of our Holy Rule. We must love all our Sisters with true charity, respect the superior whom God gives us, no matter who she may be...

- 4 But what am I doing?³ Without realising it, I was giving you a sermon instead of thanking you for your beautiful greetings. To thank you, I asked the whole community to offer Holy Communion for you, are you pleased?
- 5 You want to know when I will come to visit you.⁴ I would set out immediately, but I cannot go until I am sent. D. Bosco and Fr. Cagliari promised that they would let me go, but I don't know when this will be. It is up to you to write to the superiors, either to Fr. Cagliari or D. Bosco, and then you can be sure that, if it is God's Will, I will certainly come. However, if the Lord does not permit us to meet again in this world, we will meet in Heaven, true? By the time you receive this letter, we will, perhaps, have begun our retreat. Pray that we may make it well. If you wish to come, we will go as far as Genoa to meet you. Pray too, for the large group of Daughters who will be admitted to the novitiate during that time. Pray very much for M.[other] Bursar; you already know that she is ill. She has not improved in any way and only Our Lady can cure her.

³ This question shows how far she was from claiming to be a spiritual director. Rather she places herself alongside her Sisters and commits herself, like them, to a journey of continual conversion.

⁴ The Sisters in America really longed for a visit from Mother Mazzarello, as can be seen from some of their letters. Sr. Virginia Magone wrote in an affectionately scolding tone: "All the Sisters of Italy and France had the good fortune of seeing you once or twice this year. Is it not true? And the poor Sisters in America were forgotten! How can you refrain from paying us a visit? Have compassion on your Daughters so far away; leave the ninety-nine sheep and come in search of those who so long ago left the beloved fold" (letter to Mother Mazzarello, autumn, 1879 in *Cronistoria* III p. 93; cf. letter of Sr. Maddalena Martini to Don Bosco, March 5, 1880, pp. 175-176).

Pray with all your heart. Everyone else is well, thank God. In general those in the other houses are well too.

- 6 I won't stop to tell you about the beautiful celebrations we had for [the Feast of] Mary, Help of Christians. I will only say in brief that we celebrated it with the greatest solemnity. There were sixteen admissions to the novitiate, a sung Mass and Vespers. It was really like one of the old feasts we used to have when we were in Mornese that some of you would still remember.⁵
- 7 I will stop now, because I want to reply to those Sisters who wrote to me individually. Courage, my dear and beloved Sisters, I recommend that you love one another, have confidence in your superior or whoever takes her place; try to do everything with the sole aim of pleasing God.
- 8 Give my regards to your good Rev. Rector and recommend me to his fervent prayers.
- 9 All the Sisters send you a million greetings and recommend themselves to your prayers. They always pray for all of you. I wish you all heaven's blessings and I declare myself,

Your most affectionate Mother in J.[esus],
the poor Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁵ She recalls the feasts celebrated in Mornese, rich in spirituality, joy and serene fraternal sharing. Aside from the influence of *la Madre*, this was due to the merit of the Salesian rectors who encouraged and prepared liturgical celebrations and singing.

**41. To the Community Animator of the Houses
of Montevideo-Villa Colón
and Las Piedras (Uruguay),
Sr. Teresina Mazzarello**

Maria Mazzarello sends brief recommendations to the missionary who was temporarily in charge of the two communities.

[Nizza Monferrato, July 9, 1880]
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. Giuseppe!

My Dear Sr. Teresina,¹

- 1 Are you cheerful? Are you happy that you went to America? Are you well? Do you still have a fever? Send it away, because you don't have time to be sick. You have to work hard, isn't it true?
- 2 Have you made your retreat? If so, you must be full of fervour, you will be an example of obedience, charity and exactness in everything, right? Be very careful not to let the fire the Lord has enkindled in your heart during those holy days burn out. Remember that it is not enough to make good resolutions, we must put them into practice, if we want the Lord to prepare a beautiful crown for us in Heaven. Courage then, my good Sr. Teresina, always try to be humble and sincere, pray much, but from your heart, be respectful to your superiors and to all, always do every action as if it were the last of your life and then you will be always happy.
- 3 Your parents are well, they greet you and recommend that you pray much for them and the same goes for your sister,

¹ Sr. Teresa Mazzarello left with the first group of missionaries and, at just twenty years of age, she was responsible for the two communities in Uruguay following the departure of Sr. Angela Vallese for Argentina.

Rosina² who is still at Biella. Pray much for me too, as I never forget you.

- 4 Felicin,³ that is the Superior of Borgo S.[an] M.[artino], asks me to wish you every possible good.
- 5 I want you to be cheerful and to keep all your Sisters cheerful too, especially the new novice. I leave you in the Heart of Jesus, that He may bless you along with,

Your most affectionate Mother,
the poor Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her writing]

²Her sister Rosina was ten years older than she was. She belonged to the group of *The Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate* and was one of the first to follow Maria Mazzarello into the new Institute founded by Don Bosco. She became an FMA on August 5, 1873 and spent her whole life, in humility, love and serenity, as cook first at Biella and later, in the large Salesian boarding schools of Sampiedarena, Borgo S. Martino, Alassio and Lanzo.

³ Sr. Felicita Mazzarello, sister of the Saint.

42. To the Missionary, Sr. Vittoria Cantù

Maria Mazzarello replies to the letters she received and thoughtfully offers some spiritual advice.

Nizza [Monferrato], July 9, 1880
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. Giuseppe!

My Dearest Sr. Vittoria,¹

- 1 This is the second time you have written to me, so I really must respond. Do not think I have forgotten you; no, you are always present in my heart, and I love you as much as I did when you were in Mornese with me. How I would love to go and visit you! Although we are far apart we can be close to one another every day in the Heart of Jesus, and we can pray for one another there, isn't that true, Sr. Vittoria?
- 2 You tell me you are happy and I rejoice to hear it!² You are in a place where you can gain much merit if you are the first in exact observance of the H.[oly] Rule, if you show great charity towards your Sisters and if you are truly humble.
- 3 Take courage, it is true that we are not able to do anything,

¹ Sr. Vittoria Cantù was in the house of Montevideo-Villa Colón, having moved there in January of the previous year.

² Note the deep serenity of this Sister and indeed of all the missionaries. There were actually serious difficulties in Montevideo-Villa Colón because of the shortage of personnel. In May, Sr. Maddalena Martini wrote to Don Bosco, "At Villa Colón, we do what we can, since the number of Sisters is small" (letter from Buenos Aires-Almagro, May 5, 1880, in *Cronistoria III* p. 176).

but with humility and prayer we will keep the Lord close to us, and when the Lord is with us everything goes well. Never tire of practising virtue; a little while yet, and then we will be all together in Heaven! Oh, what a great celebration we will have then! Therefore, have the courage to be cheerful and keep all your Sisters and the girls cheerful, too.

- 4 Are you all well? Take care of your health. And is Sr. Gedda cheerful?³ Tell her that the next time I write I will send a note to her as well. Meanwhile, tell her to take courage and to obey, to pray for me and write to me too.
- 5 Sr. Vittoria, remember to pray for our departed Sisters often and never forget the needs of our dear Congregation.
- 6 Greetings from everyone, especially from M.[other] Vicar, and M.[other] Assistant.⁴ Pray for me who am, in the Heart of Jesus,

Yours most affectionately in the Lord,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello, *la Madre*

Viva Maria.

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

³ Sr. Teresa Gedda (cf. L 22, fn 16).

⁴ The vicar was Mother Petronilla Mazzarello and the First Assistant was Mother Emilia Mosca. The latter was always called “Mother Assistant” because she was characterised by her giftedness as a Salesian educator according to the spirit and method of Don Bosco.

43. To Sr. Laura Rodríguez

Maria Mazzarello recommends to this newly-professed Sister some of the essential values of religious life [which according to her are] humility, confidence in community animators, cheerfulness and upright intention.

[Nizza Monferrato, July 9], 1880
Viva Gesù!

My Good Sr. Laura Rodríguez,¹

- 1 Thanks for the note you sent me. I do not know you in person, and perhaps in this miserable valley of tears, we will never have the consolation of knowing each other, but I have a firm hope that we will meet in Heaven. Oh yes, up there we will really have a great celebration the first time we meet!
- 2 Have you made your religious profession? I hope you have, and I rejoice with you for the great gift you have received from Jesus. My good Sr. Laura, take courage and correspond to such a great grace. Try to remain always strong in the holy resolutions you made on the blessed day of your H.[oly] Profession. I recommend that you always be humble, [have] great confidence in your superiors and never lose the cheerfulness which the Lord wants. Try to make yourself dear to Jesus.²

¹ Sr. Laura Rodríguez had made her religious profession a few months earlier, on May 24, 1880 in Buenos Aires (cf. L 18).

² Note how realistic Mother Mazzarello is and how she goes to the essential when encouraging this young Sister in her fidelity to the commitments assumed. She guides the Sister to concentrate on the fundamental values of Salesian spirituality and above all “to make yourself dear to Jesus”.

- 3 Pray for me. Although I do not know you personally, I love you very, very much. I am sending you a holy picture. Keep it in memory of me. Courage then, I want you always to be cheerful and to become holy soon. May God bless you and make you totally His. Believe me, always,

Yours most affectionately in the Lord,
la Madre, Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

44. To the Girls of Las Piedras (Uruguay)

Maria Mazzarello sends simple, affectionate recommendations to the girls, stating the importance of imitating Mary Most Holy.

[Nizza Monferrato, July 9], 1880
Viva Gesù e Maria!

My Dearest [and] Good Girls,

- 1 Oh, what joy your dear and beautiful letter gave me! How good you are to think of me, and to send me greetings.¹ Although I do not know you, I love you very much too, and pray for you all, that the Lord may grant you all the graces and blessings you wished for me. Always pray for me. I, too, pray for you always, that the Lord may make you grow up good, devout and obedient.
- 2 Always go willingly to the Sisters,² tell them to teach you to love the Lord, and [help you] learn your duties as good Christians well. Always avoid bad companions and always go with good ones.
- 3 Be very devoted to the Virgin Mary, our most tender Mother. Imitate her virtues, especially humility, purity and reserve. If you act in this way you will be happy in life and in death.³

¹ The girls had sent greetings for her feast-day.

² In addition to the Festive Oratory and Catechism classes, there was a girls' school at Las Piedras. In the previously quoted letter of Sr. Maddalena Martini to Don Bosco we read, "At Las Piedras we also teach, but the number of girls is not yet as great as we would wish it to be, even though it has increased since last year" (Buenos Aires-Almagro, May 5, 1880, in *Cronistoria* III p. 176).

³ Mary Most Holy is referred to in many letters to the FMA. In this letter

- 4 I really want to come to visit you. Pray, and if it is God's Will, I will come, otherwise we will meet in Heaven, and that will be much better. Be good so that all of you may go to Heaven.
- 5 Write to me sometimes; your letters give me much pleasure. Love your teachers and your assistants, but above all love Jesus and Mary.
- 6 To thank you for your wishes, I would like to send a beautiful holy picture to each one of you, but what can I do? You are [many and] the letter would be too heavy, so for this time I will send one to the person who wrote the letter. Is that all right? When I come to visit you, I will bring one for each of you. Meanwhile, be good and pray for me.

I greet you all and in the Heart of Jesus believe me to be,
Yours most affectionately, Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

Mother Mazzarello presents Our Lady to the girls as "our most tender Mother" and as a model for life especially in humility, purity and reserve.

45. To The Novice, Sr. Ottavia Bussolino

Maria Mazzarello replies to a letter received and reassures the novice about her religious profession.

[Nizza Monferrato, July] 1880
Viva Gesù!

My Good Sr. Ottavia,¹

- 1 Your note gave me great pleasure, I am happy to know that you are well, that you work and study, but I want you to be cheerful always. There is no need to worry about the future. For the present just think of perfecting yourself in virtue, work and study. Then when the time comes to make a sacrifice, rest assured that the Lord will give you the strength you need to do His Holy Will.
- 2 Even though you are in Turin, I never forget you and I always pray for you. Be at peace, because for my part, I am happy that you should make your holy vows and I believe that the others are too. Therefore, prepare yourself to make them well, and to become a true spouse of Jesus Crucified. Take courage, be always cheerful and pray much for M.[other] Bursar too.

¹ The novice, Ottavia Bussolino, was one of the group of student Sisters in the house in Turin, who were preparing, as private students, to take the exam for the Teaching Diploma. She was professed in Turin on August 10, 1880 and left for America the following year. She was not yet 18 years old, but was gifted with extraordinary piety, great apostolic zeal, solid virtue and ardent love for Jesus and others. She had made a vow of charity towards her Sisters. After working in Buenos Aires, she was community animator and later regional delegate in Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Perú and Bolivia. She died in Buenos Aires after 59 years of religious life.

- 3 Greet all the Sisters and your superior for me. Offer a Holy Communion for,
Yours most affectionately in Jesus, *la Madre*
- 4 Greetings from all the Sisters, especially from M.[other] Mistress² and M.[other] Assistant.

² The Directress of Novices was Sr. Petronilla Mazzarello, appointed in 1876 after the death of Sr. Maria Grosso.

46. To a Directress

Maria Mazzarello replies to a request to take part in the Ladies' Retreat that was held in Nizza every year.

Turin, August 7, 1880

V.G.M.G.! [*Viva Gesù Maria Giuseppe!*]

Most Esteemed Madam,¹

- 1 I hasten to inform you, much to my regret, that I cannot fully satisfy your holy desires, because of the many requests I receive for H.[oly] Retreats.²
- 2 However, let me inform you that we will accept the young people Marchisio, Molle, etc... in the hope that they may become postulants some day. However, these should try to pay at least fifteen lire between them...
- 3 You may certainly come with the above mentioned; we will keep you a place.³ Accept my regards, together with those

¹ Research proves that it is difficult to discover to whom this letter was addressed (cf. L 46, in *Lettere*, 1980 edition). It was mainly teachers who took part in the Ladies' Retreats right from the foundation of the Institute. It may be that this letter was to the Head of some school or other educational institution, rather than to a religious. This would seem to be likely given the Italian form of address *Pregiatissima Signora Direttrice*. The term *Direttrice* was commonly used in schools administered by the laity, rather than a term used in religious life.

² There were actually very large numbers of retreatants (about ninety), so much so that the Sisters had to give up their beds and rooms and sleep in the attic (cf. *Cronistoria* III p. 198).

³ The fact that the directress was invited to take part in the retreat seems to confirm the hypothesis that she was a lay person. The *Cronistoria* never mentions religious of other Congregations taking part in the retreats.

of Fr. Cagliero, who asked me to write to you since he could not do so.

Pray for all of us and believe me always to be,

Your most devoted servant,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

- 4 N.B. If you find some people who want to take part in the retreat and cannot pay the 20 lire, as long as they have the genuine, good will to become holy, we will make an exception for them. They need only pay 15 lire as long as many of them come. We'll see you soon, that is, on August 15.⁴

[GAFMA Original. Dictated to and signed by someone else]

⁴ The retreat took place from August 15-22. The preachers were Fr. Giovanni Cagliero and Mons. Antonio Maria Belasio. On August 16 Don Bosco also came and stayed until [August] 25, meeting with the ladies and the Sisters in a friendly manner.

**47. To the Community Animator of the House
of Carmen de Patagones (Argentina),
Sr. Angela Vallese, and Community**

Maria Mazzarello gives news of the Mother House and new foundations. She chats familiarly with each individual missionary.

Nizza [Monferrato], October 21, [1880]
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. G.[iuseppe]!

My Dearest Sr. Angiolina and All the Sisters,¹

- 1 I assure you that your dear letter really consoled me ...² Oh, thank the Lord for keeping you in good health and giving you the good will to continue always along the path of perfection.
- 2 My good Sisters, how is it that you have received only one of my letters since I wrote two others?³ I am sorry about this, my good Daughters, because I would like you to be really convinced that not a day passes without my remembering you before Jesus.
- 3 I am very happy that you have a rector⁴ who cares so much for your souls, and we must thank the Lord very much for this, too, because it is a great grace for us poor souls!

¹ The first four missionary Sisters in Patagonia were Sr. Angela Vallese, Sr. Giovanna Borgna, Sr. Angela Cassulo and Sr. Caterina Fina (cf. L 37). The Sisters administered a school of about thirty girls and a few boarders and held catechism classes in the parish (cf. letter of Sr. Angela Vallese to Don Bosco, Carmen de Patagones, October 6, 1880, in *Cronistoria* III pp. 248-249).

² It was almost nine months since the Sisters' arrival in Patagonia (January 20, 1880) so the news had come after a long period of anxious waiting on Mother's part.

³ We have only managed to trace one, written on May 4, 1880 (cf. L 37).

⁴ Fr. Giuseppe Fagnano. He left for the missions full of enthusiasm on

- 4 Now I want to give you our news. Mother Bursar is still sick, though she gets up and does what she can in her office. The rest are well, except that from time to time, the Lord comes and takes someone to Heaven. During the past few months, for example, our good Sr. Cagliero, Sr. Anna Mora and Sr. Gusmaroli⁵ of the house of Turin left for Heaven. They all had a holy death, and I hope that they are already our protectors in Heaven. However, I recommend [that] you never forget them in your prayers.
- 5 By the grace of God our dear Congregation is constantly making good progress. We continue to have many postulants and many requests to open houses, schools and kindergartens, but we lack trained personnel and there is not enough time to prepare them to carry out these roles well.⁶
- 6 This year four houses have been opened – two in Sicily and two in Piedmont (kindergartens and schools) – and two in Don Bosco's boarding schools.⁷
- 7 On the feast of St. Teresa my sister left for Sicily with four

November 14, 1875 and first worked at San Nicolás de los Arroyos and as Head of a boys' boarding school. In 1879, following a serious illness, he was transferred to Patagonia as parish priest of Carmen de Patagones where he showed ardent apostolic zeal. The Holy See later appointed him Apostolic Prefect for southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. On September 5, 1880 he wrote Don Bosco a newsy letter in which he said, among other things, "The Sisters will also write to you themselves. I must say of them that they work with [...] courage, and are much loved by the people" (*Cronistoria* III p. 149).

⁵ Sr. Rosa Gusmaroli died in Turin, September 6; Sr. Maria Cagliero on the 8th and Sr. Anna Mora on the 12th in Nizza Monferrato.

⁶ Note *la Madre's* preoccupation for the formation of the Sisters in a period of rapid expansion for the Institute. It was important to give the greatest care to the spiritual and educational preparation of the personnel.

⁷ Mother Mazzarello distinguishes the FMA houses which were opened for the purpose of education from those attached to institutions directed by the Salesians. The six houses mentioned are Catania, Bronte, Borgomasino and Melazzo with kindergartens and schools; Penango and Este where the Sisters offered domestic services to the Salesians and ran Festive Oratories for the girls.

Sisters: Buzzetti, Carolina Sorbone and others whom you do not know.⁸

- 8 You too thank Jesus for the graces He gives us and always pray that He may assist us with His Holy Grace.
- 9 And you, my dear Sr. Angiolina, always take courage, pray much. From prayer you will get all the help you need to do your duties well. Always give your Daughters good example by observing the H.[oly] Rule. Always be cheerful; your cheerfulness must always be greater than all your afflictions.
- 10 And you, my good Sr. Giovanna,⁹ are you cheerful? Are you humble and observant of the Holy Rule? If you want to become holy, hurry up, there is no time to lose. Try to win many souls for Jesus through your work, vigilance and efforts, but even more, by your good example. Instil devotion to Our Lady into the girls. Then be always cheerful and when you have worries, put them all into the Heart of Jesus.
- 11 Sr. Ang.[ela] Cassulo, are you good? Do you love Jesus very much? Seek to become holy quickly and to kill self-love and your own will. I want you to be cheerful. Your sister is well. She is here with me and sends greetings to you.¹⁰
- 12 Sr. Caterina,¹¹ are you cheerful? Oh, I hope so, because woe to us if we let melancholy take hold. It is a plague which does great harm to religious souls, because it is a daughter of self-love and ends up by leading us to tepidity in the service of God. So be always cheerful. If we sometimes fall, let us humble ourselves before God and

⁸ The house in Bronte actually opened a primary school on October 18, in the old *Collegio di Maria*. The community animator was Sr. Felecita, Mother Mazzarello's sister. The other Sisters in the community were Sr. Angiolina Buzzetti, Sr. Carolina Sorbone, Sr. Zoe Bianchi and the two novices, Sr. Battistina Camera and Sr. Giacinta Morzoni. This house flourished despite great poverty and misunderstandings.

⁹ Sr. Giovanna Borgna.

¹⁰ Sr. Maria who was at Nizza Monferrato (cf. L 37, fn 2).

¹¹ Sr. Caterina Fina (cf. L 37, fn 4).

our superiors and then go ahead with a big, generous heart. I recommend that you have confidence in your superior and your confessor, which is a great way of becoming holy. Your sister has never [written] to me, so I cannot give you any news, since I don't know where she is.¹² Pray for me and I want you to be always cheerful and to have much courage.

- 13 Therefore, take courage, all of you, my good Sisters. Pray much for me and for all, and all of you become holy. Greet the girls for me and say *Viva Gesù* to everyone.
- 14 Mother Mistress, M.[other] Assistant, M.[other] Bursar, Sr. Elisa, Sr. Enr.[ichetta] and everyone want me to wish you every possible good.¹³ Everyone greets you, even Fr. Rector [sends] greetings. God bless you and all the girls. Always pray for her who signs herself,

Yours most affectionately in the Lord,
la Madre who loves you so much,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

- 15 P.S. I sent your note to our good M.[other] Vicar who is now in Alassio, since Sr. Caterina Daghero has been elected in her place.¹⁴ Pray for her always, write to her¹⁵ and also write to me soon.

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

¹² Her sister was not an FMA. Since Mother Mazzarello knows her, she must have been a boarder in Mornese or Nizza Monferrato.

¹³ She includes the greetings of all the Sisters and names the animators of the house [at that time]. They were Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto, Sr. Emilia Mosca, Sr. Giovanna Ferrettino who was very ill at the time, Sr. Elisa Roncallo and Sr. Enrichetta Sorbone.

¹⁴ In the recent election of the General Council, which had taken place on August 29, Mother Caterina Daghero was elected Vicar General, and therefore Mother Petronilla Mazzarello was sent as community animator to Alassio.

¹⁵ The recommendation to pray for Mother Petronilla and to write to her shows the affection and gratitude which *la Madre* and the Sisters showed towards Maria Mazzarello's childhood friend.

48. To The Founder, Don Bosco

Maria Mazzarello expresses her wise judgement regarding the illness of a Sister and asks advice on the matter. She gives news of the community.

Nizza Monf.[errato], October 30, 1880
Evviva G.[esù] M.[aria] G.[iuseppe]!

Reverend Rector Major,¹

- 1 I am writing a few lines to inform you of how things are going and to ask your advice regarding Sr. Maritano.²
- 2 As you well know, this poor soul has been tormented by spiritual anxieties for a long time. Following a blessing that she received from Fr. Cerruti she tells me that she is now truly at peace. Instead, since that time she has manifested a physical illness, an illness that keeps her in bed with a slight temperature, a burning thirst, a sore throat, and certain organic upsets etc., etc.
- 3 Even more than that, she sleeps almost all the time, is constantly deaf and almost senseless, almost as though she

¹ This letter shows the spiritual relationship which Mother Mazzarello had established with the Founder of the Institute as well as *la Madre's* intuition and wisdom.

² Sr. Teresa Maritano, already mentioned in L 7, 8; 35, 4, was introverted in character and much given to scruples and depression. The *Cronistoria* tells how, in 1879, *la Madre* brought Sr. Maritano to the Shrine of Oropa to ask Our Lady to cure her of "such uncalled for sadness" (cf. III p. 16). In the *Cenni Biografici delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice defunte nel 2° decennio dell'Istituto (1883-1892)*, we read that this Sister died on January 15, 1884, in her family home, where she had gone in search of better health (cf. p. 20).

has lost her wits. The doctor comes every day, prescribes something, but seeing that after about 20 days of treatment she is still the same, does not know what to make of it. There is a physical illness, of that I am sure. But I fear that it is caused by her previous moral illness, or that same illness which has taken a different form.³

- 4 Now prudence would suggest, and many have already told me, that I should call another doctor and get his opinion, but what if it were not a real illness and they were to order some remedy that really ruin her health?
- 5 Since I cannot speak of these things with others, I turn to you, who already know this Sister's previous history, and I beg you to tell me whether I should consult another doctor or not, because then I will be more at peace.
- 6 I beg you also to send her your special blessing in which I have great confidence.
- 7 We now also have Sr. Tersilla, about whom we are very worried, but I hope Our Lady will cure her for me.⁴
- 8 Everyone else is well, they are cheerful and full of good will. There are many novices and postulants, but they are very much in need of formation and supervision, since many of them have brought a lot of *piccole passioncelle* from the world. These, if not corrected, are an obstacle to perfec.[tion] and can spread to the others as well.
- 9 The vicar, Sr. Cat.[erina] has gone to visit Saint-Cyr, where there seem to be some small matters to sort out, nothing significant, you know.⁵ I wish they would let her come

³ *La Madre's* diagnosis shows how sharp was her understanding of people. She calls the Sister's psychological problem a "moral illness" and distinguishes it from the physical illness, which, however, she states, does exist. For a deeper study of this letter cf. Stickler Gertrud (1987), "Personalità religiosa e discernimento del vissuto patologico: Sapere 'prescientifico' e scientifico a confronto", in Posada, M.E. (ed.), *Attuale perché vera*, op. cit., pp. 177-195.

⁴ Young Sr. Tersilla Ginepro died the following year in Nizza Monferrato, October 2, 1881.

⁵ Sr. Caterina Daghero paid a short visit to the community of Saint-Cyr

back to me soon. I need her to help me with the Sisters and the schools.

- 10 The news from the other houses is good. In recent days we opened two new kindergartens in Melazzo⁶ and Borgomasino,⁷ and on Tuesday the Sisters will leave for Este.⁸
- 11 We already have about sixty board.[ers], and if their numbers continue to increase, I would have to send the Sisters to other houses to make space, since the other wing is still damp,⁹ but what am I to do? They are still in need of spiritual and professional formation, so we must have patience.¹⁰
- 12 We had a welcome visit from the Count[ess] Corsi who gave me 500 lire and told me she would do even more for your Reverence. I encouraged her really to help you, thinking that she would do even more for you.¹¹
- 13 I will finish by sending you my regards and [those] of the community and recommending myself along with my Sisters, to your fervent prayers.

(France), where she had been community animator, because the Sisters had not accepted the new animator, Sr. Santina Pisciole, very willingly. Note that *la Madre* does not dramatise the situation, nor does she show anxiety when faced with problems that need to be resolved.

⁶ The house of Melazzo, in the diocese of Acqui, was opened October 15 and had a kindergarten, sewing classes and Festive Oratory (cf. L 51; L 52).

⁷ This house, in the diocese of Ivrea, was opened on September 4 and had a kindergarten, Festive Oratory and [the administration of] public schools.

⁸ The house in Este (Padova) was actually opened on October 15, 1880. According to Mother Mazzarello's letter the Sisters would only have left on November 2, to offer domestic services in the Salesian Institute and to run a Festive Oratory.

⁹ This building was just completed and therefore not yet ready to be lived in.

¹⁰ Faced with the problem of finding space for the growing number of boarders, *la Madre* does not take the easy way out by reducing the time of formation for the Sisters, but rather opts for the erection of more spacious buildings.

¹¹ Countess Gabriella Corsi, a well-known and generous benefactress of

- 14 If you reply to this, you will be doing me a great favour, if not, I will take it as being understood that I do not call any other Doc.[tor] for Sr. Marit.[ano] besides the usual one.¹² Bless me, Oh Father in J.[esus], and believe that with all esteem for your Reverence, I am,

Your most humble daughter,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. Dictated to someone else and signed by her. Note from Don Bosco on the upper margin of the first page]

Don Bosco and of his educational and missionary works (cf. *Cronistoria* V pp. 138-9).

¹² The original letter carries a note in Don Bosco's handwriting in the top margin of the first page, "Fr. Bonetti tell her I am happy with the way things are going; ask the doctor to arrange with another if he sees fit". As on other occasions, Don Bosco asks a trusted Salesian to reply to the letter. In this case it is Fr. Giovanni Bonetti who, in 1885, would be appointed Director General of the FMA.

49. To the Sisters of the House of Saint-Cyr-Sur-Mer (France)

Maria Mazzarello encourages them, gently but firmly, to overcome a community problem. She animates the Sisters to live the commitments they have assumed, with a sense of responsibility.

[Nizza Monferrato, October, 1880]
Viva Gesù, Maria, S. G.[iuseppe]!

Dearest Sisters and Daughters,¹

- 1 I would like to ask a favour of you, and that is to let my vicar, Sr. Caterina,² come back to me. I hope that by now you have learned to have every confidence in your superior, Sr. Santina. She is so good, poor soul! Why would you not have confidence in her?³
- 2 Look, at times our imagination shows us everything as being very black, while it is really all white, then such things cause us to be cold in our dealings with our superiors and little by little we lose our confidence in them. Then what happens? We make life miserable for ourselves and for the poor superior. A little bit of humility can put

¹ In the house of Saint-Cyr the FMA had a girls' orphanage joined to an agricultural school, founded by the priest Jacques Vincent who had directed it for some time with the help of five religious of a group founded by himself (cf. *Cronistoria* III pp. 141-142; 150-151; 192-195).

² Mother Caterina Daghero, Vicar General, was sent to Saint-Cyr to help the Sisters overcome the sense of uneasiness caused by the change of community animator.

³ Sr. Santina Piscioi entered in Mornese in 1876 and made her religious profession there on August 15, 1877. After a short spell in the Mother House, she was appointed community animator of the house of Lu Monferrato, then Saint-Cyr and later Borgo Cornalese (Villastellone, Turin), where she died on July 19, 1884 at 30 years of age.

everything right. Give me this consolation soon, my dear Daughters. Love one another with true charity, love your superior, look upon her as though she were Our Lady, and treat her with all respect. I know that she really loves you very much in the Lord. Tell her all you would tell me if I were there. This is the greatest consolation you could give me.

- 3 My good Sisters, remember that where charity reigns there is Heaven. Jesus really loves to stay among Daughters who are humble, obedient and charitable. Act in such a way that Jesus will willingly stay among you.
- 4 Therefore, Sr. Sampietro, Sr. Alessandrina, Sr. Caterina, Sr. Lorenzale,⁴ you must all give good example to one other. Correct one another with charity if anyone falls short of these duties. You must not only be the first in showing confidence in the superior, but must act in such a way that the girls, too, will have confidence in her. Remember that you are obliged to give one other good example.
- 5 Be exact in the observance of the Holy Rule, study carefully what the H.[oly] Rule asks of us. Be careful, my dears, to practice prompt obedience, detachment from self, from your many satisfactions and from everything else. Remember the three vows you made with such longing and think often of how you are observing them.
- 6 Time passes quickly and, if we don't wish to find ourselves empty-handed at the moment of death, we must hurry to build a firm foundation of true, solid virtue. It is not words that get us to Heaven, but deeds. So set to work with courage. Let us practice virtue for Jesus alone and for no other reasons; because after all, they are all just fantasies with which, at times, we fill our minds. A Daughter who

⁴ The Sisters are called by name as if to indicate the closeness of *la Madre* to each one of her Daughters and the need for a personal response from each of them to what she is asking. The Sisters were Sr. Maria Sampietro, Sr. Alessandrina Hugues, Sr. Caterina Pestarino and Sr. Marianna Lorenzale. Sr. Alessandrina had only been an FMA for a few months (August 10, 1880) and the others were just one year professed.

truly loves Jesus gets along with everyone. So, is that understood, then? If you give me this consolation, I will come and visit you soon and I will stay a fairly long time with you, are you happy?

- 7 Send me good news soon. Remember that I want you to be cheerful. Woe to you if you let your imagination run away with you [*fate almanacchi*].⁵
- 8 Give many greetings to those young women who are already postulants and to the girls whom I love very much. But I want them to be good and cheerful, to jump, laugh, sing, etc. and then when I come for a visit, I will bring something beautiful for all of them.
- 9 May Jesus bless you all and make you [holy]. Pray for me and be sure that I always pray for you.
Believe me to be,

Your most affectionate Mother,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁵ The term Mother uses is *fare almanacchi* that means to day-dream, to imagine things, to jump to negative conclusions regarding a person's reality. *La Madre* directs the Sisters to a serene and realistic view of life, which has to be faced with courage.

50. To Sr. Marianna Lorenzale

Maria Mazzarello guides the formation of this young Sister with gentleness and wisdom.

[Nizza Monferrato, October, 1880]
Viva Gesù!

My Good Sr. Marianna Lorenzale,¹

- 1 Is your garden well tended? Does it give real promise of an abundant harvest?²
- 2 There you are. You must compare your heart to a garden. If we cultivate it well, it will yield good fruit. If we don't keep an eye on it and tend it a little every day, [our garden] will be over-run with weeds, true ? Therefore, take courage. We must check every day to see if there is anything obstructing it – some sentiments – and if so, put them out to wither.
- 3 Can you understand my writing, Sr. Marianna?³ I am writing, but I don't even know myself what I am writing, I

¹ Marianna had entered in Mornese at the age of 18 on August 12, 1878 and was formed under the guidance of Mother Mazzarello. She felt the detachment of leaving her very keenly. She was in charge of the garden and the fields. She also had an aptitude for music that she resolutely developed in her spare time and became a competent music teacher.

² This reference to the garden is directed to the responsibility Sister held in the community and to her spiritual commitments both of which demand time and attention every day.

³ Although she did not have much time, *la Madre* does not miss the opportunity of sending Sr. Marianna a personal note, which she encloses in the letter to the community (cf. L 49).

have so much to do. Pray for me and be cheerful, keep the others cheerful too.

- 4 I say good-bye and leave you in the Heart of Jesus. Are you happy that I am leaving you in such a beautiful place? Write and tell me if you are not.
God bless you, together with,

Yours most affectionately in the Lord, *la Madre*,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

51. To the Community Animator of the House of Melazzo, Sr. Giuseppina Torta

Maria Mazzarello gives news of the communities and brief recommendations to each Sister.

Chieri, November 21, 1880
Viva Gesù e Maria!

My Good Sr. Giuseppina,¹

- 1 I am writing a few lines to you from Chieri, where I had to come to visit poor Sr. Innocenza² whom I found to be at the point of death. However, the poor soul still recognised me.
- 2 I arrived here on Saturday afternoon, still [in time]; poor Sr. Innocenza left for Heaven at 1:45 a.m. She had a really enviable death. Do not forget to pray for her however, in case she might be delayed in the antechamber of Heaven.
- 3 My good Daughters, are all four of you cheerful?³ Are you in good health? Do you all still love one another?
- 4 Is the number of girls growing?⁴ Are they good? Greet them

¹ Sr. Giuseppina Torta, native of Chieri, entered in Mornese on July 4, 1879 and made her profession on September 2, 1880. At just 23, she was appointed community animator of Melazzo. Naturally, Mother Mazzarello's affectionate heart felt the need to follow and support her in her service to the Sisters and young people. In 1883 she went as a missionary to Argentina where she showed her generosity and enterprising apostolic spirit for the next 30 years. On her return to Italy she continued in the responsibility of community animator.

² This refers to the very young Sr. Innocenza Gamba who died in Chieri on November 21, after just one year of religious profession.

³ The community consisted of the animator, the professed Sr. Matilde Villata, the novice, Sr. Felicita Bezzato, and the postulant, Rosina Noli.

⁴ The generous parish priest of this small town in the diocese of Acqui,

- all for me, and tell them that I wish them every possible good.
- 5 Sr. Villata, are you really cheerful? Do you pray for me? Take courage. I want you to keep your superior and Sr. Felicina Bezzato and our good Rosina cheerful.
 - 6 My good Sr. Giuseppina, is it true that your mother was there? Here in Chieri, they all say that your mother went to visit you, but you didn't write to tell me. Write to me soon and tell me all about her⁵ and all about your schools.
 - 7 Next Thursday I will go back to Nizza and I would love to have you write to me there.
 - 8 Sr. Rosalia⁶ sends greetings to you along with all our dear Sisters [who] recommend themselves to your prayers. I left everyone in Nizza very well.
 - 9 They wrote to me from Bronte that they had a very good journey, but poor souls, they really need us to pray a lot for them. They are so far away that we really feel sorry for them.
 - 10 I am writing in such a hurry that you may not even be able to understand this, but have a bit of patience. I have little time, but before the [Immaculate] Conception I will write again.⁷
 - 11 Meanwhile, take courage and do not be upset if you have to make some sacrifice, or better some *fioretto*⁸ for those

Fr. Giuseppe Chiabrera and the Marquis Vittorio Emanuele Scati had entrusted the FMA with the running of a kindergarten, an oratory and sewing classes which they had founded (cf. MB XIV p. 526).

⁵ Mother Mazzarello takes a loving interest in the Sister's mother and wants detailed information about the meeting between mother and daughter that she heard about in Chieri. In this simple show of interest we see the cordiality of Mother Mazzarello towards the families of the Sisters whom she considered to be the first benefactors of the Institute.

⁶ Sr. Rosalia Pestarino, animator of the house of Chieri.

⁷ She did indeed keep her promise and wrote another letter before the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (cf. L 52).

⁸ Literally translated, *fioretto* means little flower. In this context the word is used in the realm of Italian Catholic spirituality of the nineteenth

who come to visit your house.⁹ I recommend that you be humble, full of charity and patience. Try to observe the Holy Rule and see that all live it well. Pray always and from the depth of your heart. Always remember that prayer is the key that opens the treasures of Heaven.

- 12 Take courage then, and fight self-love; let us kill this evil beast.
- 13 Often renew your three vows and the resolutions you made during your holy retreat.
- 14 I want you always to be cheerful, my beloved Daughters in J.[esus]. This life passes quickly. Good night, Good night... is that all right?¹⁰ Will you come to Nizza at Christmas to celebrate with us? We'll see.
God bless you, together with,

Yours most affectionately in the L[ord], *la Madre*,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

- 15 Give my regards to the Rev. Archpriest, the Marquis¹¹ and the curate.
Viva Gesù from all the Sisters.

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

century. It depicts a personal willingness to accomplish some ascetical practice for the betterment of one's self and/or of others. (ETG)

⁹ It is not certain who the people were that visited the Sisters' house rather frequently. It is presumed to be either to the local civil administrators or the ecclesiastical authorities. From *la Madre's* greetings in the postscript it would seem to infer a variety of people connected to the community: the parish priest, the curate, the marquis, all outstanding benefactors of the educational work directed by the FMA.

¹⁰ This refers to a rhyme that they had all learned in Mornese (cf. Maccono F. (1934), op. cit., I p.195 in the Italian edition. The rhyme was left out in the English translated edition).

¹¹ The Marquis Scati had contributed generously to the foundation of the Sisters' house and admired their apostolic zeal. That same year he thanked Don Bosco personally for having sent the Sisters and wrote an account of the good they were doing, especially through the Festive Oratory (manuscript account written by the marquis, 24 April 1891, in ASC).

52. To the Community Animator of the House of Melazzo, Sr. Giuseppina Torta

Maria Mazzarello sends greetings and spiritual advice on the approaching Feast of the Immaculate.

Nizza [Monferrato], November 30, [1880]
Viva Gesù e Maria Immacolata!

My Dear Sisters Giuseppina and M.[atilde] and F.[elicitia] and R.[osina],¹

- 1 Thank you for the news you all gave me. You want me to go and pay you a visit, and I would willingly do so immediately, but at the moment [it is not] possible for me to fulfil your wish. Won't you all come for Christmas and bring a fine, fat turkey?² If however, I have a free day, I will come before that. With regard to Rosa's admission to the novitiate, we will see what can be done.³
- 2 The feast of our dear Mother Mary Most Holy Immaculate is drawing closer so I thought I would say a few words to you on how to make the novena well and with as much fervour as possible, as our Holy Rule exhorts us to do.
- 3 Therefore, let us all commit ourselves to practising true humility and charity, bearing with one another's defects,

¹ This letter was written, as promised, to the same community of Melazzo (cf. L 51, fn 3) exactly ten days after the previous one (cf. L 51, 10).

² *La Madre* wants to celebrate Christmas with them and so she asks the Sisters to contribute to the celebration by bringing a turkey. Since Melazzo was not far from Nizza Monferrato the Sisters did indeed return to the Mother House for Christmas (cf. *Cronistoria* III pp. 263-264).

³ The postulant, Rosina Noli, was to be accepted as a novice on December 12 with 21 other young women.

making our practices of piety better, receiving Holy Communion and saying our prayers with fervour and enthusiasm and practising our holy vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. If we do this, believe me, my good Daughters, Our Lady will be pleased with us and will obtain from Jesus all those graces of which we are so much in need in order to become holy. In these days let us also renew the resolutions we made during the retreat and lastly, let us pray for our Rev. Superiors, for our Congregation, for our deceased Sisters and for all our Sisters near and far.⁴

- 4 Yes, this is what I really wanted to tell you, my good Sisters. Take courage, take care of your health and become holy, both yourselves and all those good girls to whom I ask you to give many, many greetings for me. Have them pray for me sometimes. Tell Sr. Felicina to be good, and if she does not make her religious profession now she will make it with the others, meanwhile, tell her to be cheerful.⁵
- 5 Accept best wishes from the Sisters and Fr. Rector and I wish you every blessing, since I always keep you close to my heart and am ready to do anything for your good.
- 6 May Jesus bless you and may Mary Most Holy shower you with her choicest graces, together with,

Yours most affectionately in the Lord,
la Madre, Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁴ These are themes proposed in other letters written for this same feast. This shows the great importance that Mother Mazzarello attributed to the Feast of the Immaculate (cf. L 16, 1-4; L 27, 7).

⁵ Sr. Felicita Bezzato made her profession on August 23, 1881.

53. To the Director of the *Bollettino Salesiano*, Fr. Giovanni Bonetti

Maria Mazzarello sends biographical information about Sr. Virginia Magone along with some letters received from her.

Nizza Monferrato, December 17, 1880

Very Reverend Father,¹

- 1 Your gracious letter gave me great pleasure and I hasten to reply to it.²
- 2 You will find enclosed some letters from our Sr. Virginia.³ I am sorry that I have misplaced the last one that she wrote from her sickbed. In it she told me that she was preparing lilies for her last appearance ... in the coffin.
- 3 You can write without hesitation that Sr. Virginia was always a good, obedient, respectful, devout Daughter. In 1871 she entered our house to live with us with the intention of retiring from the world.⁴

¹ Fr. Giovanni Bonetti, first director and chief-editor of the *Bollettino Salesiano*, was at the time also spiritual director of the girls' Oratory of St. Teresa in Chieri. In 1885, he succeeded Mons. Cagliari as Director General of the FMA. He died in 1891 at 53 years of age and is remembered for his wisdom and ardent zeal.

² As Director of the *Bollettino Salesiano* he had asked the Leader of the FMA Institute to send some biographical information about Sr. Virginia Magone, the first FMA to die in America at Montevideo-Villa Colón on September 25, 1880.

³ The three letters addressed to *la Madre* were published in the *Bollettino Salesiano*, 5 (1881) 2, pp. 6-9; 3, pp. 7-10; 4, pp. 12-14. Later they were copied into the *Cronistoria* III pp. 32-34; 43-46; 93-95.

⁴ Virginia Magone was one of the first girls who attended the sewing classes in Mornese and was one of the group of young people who already

- 4 Although she speaks in one letter of having caused me some displeasure, it was a thing of nothing; a lie she told me, which when found out led her to correct herself forever.⁵
- 5 She was clothed with the religious habit in 1872. On June 14, 1874 she made her triennial vows, and on August 27 of the following year, she made perpetual vows.
- 6 I will not stop to tell you of her virtues, because your Reverence knew her well enough in the house of Borgo S. Martino; but I can assure you that she was always very zealous for the good of the girls.
- 7 She showed a particular aptitude for teaching catechism and educating poor girls, who, as soon as they got to know her came to love her as a most loving sister.
- 8 She also had a very delicate conscience, opened her heart to her superior as a daughter to her mother. She made her request to go to America from Borgo S. Martino, and was accepted some time later, when she no longer expected it. When it came time for her to leave, she suffered immensely because of the separation from her dear ones; but she made the sacrifice generously for love of Jesus.
- 9 From her letters your Reverence will be able to see for yourself what she did in America and her sentiments while there.⁶
- 10 Let me finish by wishing you every blessing at Christmas-tide, for a good end to the year and for a Happy New Year.

lived in community in the House of the Immaculate [*Casa dell'Immacolata*].

⁵ In her letter to Mother Mazzarello Sr. Virginia says, "Would you believe, Mother, that I still remember the first displeasure I caused you when you were still in the Parish of Mornese? And then all the others that I gave you after that, come before me from time to time" (May 1879, in *Cronistoria* III p. 44).

⁶ Fr. Luigi Lasagna and Sr. Maddalena Martini also wrote to Don Bosco telling him of the saintly death of Sr. Virginia and of her extraordinary virtue (cf. *Cronistoria* III pp. 239-241).

Oh yes, may the heavenly Babe console and protect you, as
desired by,

Your poor and most humble servant,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[*Bollettino Salesiano* 5 (1881), 2, pp. 8-9]

54. To Emilia Viarengo

Maria Mazzarello replies to the letter of a lady who wishes to enter the Institute.

Nizza [Monferrato], December 19, 1880
Viva Gesù!

Most Esteemed Madam,¹

- 1 I am very sorry that you did not come to take part in our celebration,² however I would also have regretted it if you had come believing that you would meet Don Bosco here. It was Fr. Cagliari who came to give the religious habit to the new Sisters,³ D. B.[osco] only came for the retreat. If you need advice, you may write to him in Turin.
- 2 I thank the Lord that you continue to nourish your desire to consecrate yourself totally to Him. Remain faithful to Him, pray and have confidence. If the Lord calls you to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians don't worry, He will bring you here, as long as you correspond to His grace. However, you too, must do your part and overcome your fears by being strong.
- 3 Take courage, my dear sister, recommend yourself to the Babe of Bethlehem. I will also pray for you. Abandon

¹ Emilia Viarengo of Agliano d'Asti, a benefactress of Don Bosco, wished to enter with the FMA.

² She is referring to the Sunday after the Feast of the Immaculate (December 12), when the postulants received the religious habit.

³ Twenty-two postulants received the habit and on the same day the African girl, Maria, *la mora*, who had been received into the school at Nizza Monferrato, was baptised (cf. *Cronistoria* III pp. 255-256).

yourself entirely to Him and be sure that He will do what is best for your soul.

- 4 With all my heart I wish you a happy Christmastide and a year filled with graces from Lord. Pray for me who am, in the Sacramental Heart of Jesus,

Your most affectionate sister,
the Superior

[GAFMA. A copy dictated to and written by someone else, authenticated by the Archiepiscopal Curia of Acqui]

55. To the Sisters of the House of Carmen de Patagones (Argentina)

Maria Mazzarello sends recommendations for her Sisters who live far away. She announces the Third Missionary Expedition and shares news.

Nizza [Monferrato], December 20, 1880
Viva Gesù Bambino!

Dearest Sr. Angiolina, Sr. Giovanna, Sr. Cassulo A. and Sr. C.[aterina],

- 1 I received your very dear letter and here I am replying immediately. My poor Daughters so far away,¹ how I long to see you! However, we will have to make this sacrifice together because I do not believe they will ever give me permission for this.² Take courage, although we cannot meet each other in person, we are united and present in spirit. As for myself, I can assure you that not a day passes without [my] remembering you all, my good Daughters!
- 2 I am sorry to hear that Sr. Giovanna and Sr. Caterina are not too well. Poor souls, encourage them for me. Tell Sr. [Caterina] to be good, that this will be the means of [doing more] good and tell Sr. Giovanna to be cheerful. There is no time to be sick. Look, we have a lot of work to do, so encourage them.
- 3 In general, we are all well except for Sr. Luigia Arecco and

¹ The Sisters, to whom Mother Mazzarello wrote a number of letters (cf. L 37, 47, 68), were truly the furthest away. They were in the remote Patagonian territory, a vast region at the southernmost part of [South] America.

² Note *la Madre's* deep suffering in not being able to fulfil the ardent desire she had expressed in her various letters.

Sr. Tersilla.³ It seems as though death is coming to embrace them, but poor souls they don't want to hear of it. However, they would really need to resign themselves, especially Sr. Luigia for whom the end is not far off! Pray for these two Sisters who are so much in need. Pray also for the souls of Sr. Carmela⁴ and Sr. Innocenza Gamba who have gone to God.

- 4 In November Sr. In.[nocenza] died in the Sisters' house in Chieri and Sr. Car.[mela] died on the tenth of December, in the Sisters' house in Turin. My dear Daughters, see how death comes every so often. Madam Death [comes] to greet us!⁵ Let us pray, pray and be prepared.
- 5 On the Feast of the Immaculate, that is last Sunday, Fr. Cagliariero came and gave the religious habit to twenty Sisters and two Coadjutors.⁶ You will say: "They are clothing so many Sisters and they never send us any". Yes, this time we will definitely send some to you. They will leave on January 22 or 26 if things don't change again. But this time I believe they will really go. Pray that they may have a good journey.⁷

³ Sr. Tersilla Ginepro (cf. L 48, fn 4). Sr. Luigia Arecco, native of Mornese, entered the Institute at the age of 16. Because of her great gifts and beautiful voice, Mother Mazzarello followed her in a particular way, for fear that she would give in to pride and lose the merit for what she did. She took ill while still very young and died on January 24, 1881.

⁴ Sr. Carmela Arata died in Turin on December 10, 1880.

⁵ In the figurative language of the time, death was often called "Madam". It was quite common also to attribute it to various situations, moods and vices. For example, in a "Goodnight" for the beginning of the school year, Don Bosco told the boys, "We have started a new school year. Let us guard against two obstacles that keep us from our duties: [Madam] laziness that prevents us from studying, and [Madam] lukewarmness that makes us neglect our practices of piety" (MB IX p. 186, November 2, 1868 [The word Madam is left out in the English translation of the MB (ETG)]).

⁶ The FMA Constitutions never contemplated two categories of Sisters. The Sisters who did the shopping and other errands were often called "coadjutors" because of their work. They wore a variation of the religious habit.

⁷ The missionaries left on February 3, 1881.

- 6 Heartfelt thanks for your lovely Christmas greetings. I will ask Baby Jesus to repay you with His choicest blessings; May He give you true humility, charity, obedience and true love of Him. I pray and will always pray that He may give you these virtues or strengthen them within you. May He also give you a spirit of mortification, of sacrifice of your own will, keep you fervent and zealous and [give] you all robust health. Would you be happy if Jesus should give you all these things? I really wish this for you with all my heart, and I will pray for it as long as I have life and the assistance of His grace! And you, my beloved Daughters, do the same for me, the most needy of all.
- 7 Courage, I want you to be cheerful, to love one another, to be understanding of one another. Let us console our dear Jesus and do everything in such a way that He can say to us: "My Daughters, I am pleased with you". What a pleasure it would be to hear such beautiful words from Jesus.
- 8 And you my good Sr. Angiolina, I read your *rendiconto*.⁸ Be at peace and remember that our defects are the weeds in our garden. We must humble ourselves and fight them with courage. We are wretched and cannot be perfect, therefore be humble, confident and cheerful.
- 9 Pray very much for me and give my regards to your Rev. Rector. Recommend me to his fervent prayers and thank him on my behalf [for] the good he does for all of you.
- 10 Thousands of wishes from all the Sisters and especially from me, who love you so much in the Lord and am ready to do anything for your good.
Believe me to be, in the Heart of Jesus,

Your most affectionate Mother,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

⁸ This was the term used for the "private talk" which every Sister should have with her community animator to engage in spiritual direction and offer advice. Don Bosco gave great importance to this familiar and formative meeting which took place in an atmosphere of trust and simplicity. It had very specific goals: searching for the will of God, personal and community growth and as a result, apostolic fruitfulness.

- 11 *Viva [Gesù]* from Mother Mistress.⁹
- 12 My good Sr. Angiolina Cassulo, your sister is well and is in the house of Este. She is there willingly as cook for our Salesians.

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁹ Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto.

56. To the Sisters of the House of Montevideo-Villa Colón (Uruguay)

Maria Mazzarello thanks them for their Christmas wishes and gives them some news. She recommends the characteristic virtues of the Salesian spirit to the missionaries.

Nizza [Monferrato], December 21, [1880]
Viva Gesù Bambino!

Dearest Sr. Vittoria and All the Sisters,¹

- 1 I received your very dear letters. First of all I am happy to hear that you are all in good health, thank God.
- 2 I hear that you have a lot of work and many girls and I am really pleased about this. Try to educate them well, first of all, by your example and then with your words.
- 3 I am rather sorry that you have some difficulties because you are so few and have so much work to do. But take courage, we are sending you help. On January 22 or 26 a group of Sisters will leave to join you there.² Get ready to keep them cheerful for me.
- 4 I thank you with all my heart for the beautiful wishes you sent me and I thank you even more for the prayers you promised me; continue [to] pray for me always.

¹ Sr. Vittoria Cantù was in the house of Montevideo-Villa Colón. *La Madre* addresses the letter to her since she had written but she also speaks to the other Sisters of the community.

² The Third Missionary Expedition took place on February 3, 1881. Ten Sisters left. Six of them, led by Sr. Ottavia Bussolino were destined for Argentina and four for Uruguay under the leadership of the loyal and affectionate Directress of Postulants and Novices, Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto. They were sent in response to the insistent requests for help that came from America where the educational work was growing and being consolidated everywhere.

- 5 I am praying and will continue to pray to Baby Jesus to exchange the wishes you sent me. May He give [you] His choicest blessings, firstly, spiritual health and then great physical strength. May He give you true humility, great charity, obedience, and patience in bearing first of all with yourself. Yes, may Jesus also give you a true spirit of poverty, of mortification of your own will, and may He keep you always zealous and fervent in His service. Yes, my beloved Sisters, I really wish you these beautiful virtues with all my heart. Oh, may Jesus really fill you with all these things and console you. You must thank Him and correspond.
- 6 Dearest Sisters, let us do some good while we have the time and opportunity to do so.
- 7 Look, my dears, this year the Lord called many Sisters to Himself: Sr. Carmela died on the tenth of this month in Turin and Sr. Innocenza in Chieri on the twenty-first of November. You see, death comes to pay us a visit every now and then. Sooner or later it will come to us, and blessed are we if we have a good dowry of virtues.
- 8 Take courage, love one another, be understanding of one another, always advise one another with charity, won't you my good Sr. Vittoria?
- 9 I want you to be cheerful and read everything I have written to the other Sisters too.³
- 10 Animate your Sisters always; do all you can to win the confidence of everyone. When you have this, you will be able to advise them more easily.
- 11 Take courage and pray much for me. I assure you that I do not forget you in my poor prayers. [...]⁴
- 12 Greetings from all the dear Sisters who love you very much

³ Note her lively concern that her teachings should reach the other Sisters as well and be put into practice by all.

⁴ There is something missing at this point since the page is damaged. It is not known how or at what point the damage occurred.

and envy your good fortune. They recommend themselves to your prayers.

- 13 Offer my regards to your Rev. and good Rector and recommend me to his fervent prayers.
God bless you and all your Sisters and believe me to be in the Heart of Baby Jesus,

Yours most affectionately in the
Lord, *la Madre*,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello⁵

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting, second page damaged]

⁵ A postscript follows in Sr. Emilia Mosca's writing, in which she reminds Sr. Vittoria of the time spent together in Mornese and of the beautiful ceremony of the admission to the novitiate that took place on December 8, 1878. She also adds greetings from Sr. Maddalena Morano (cf. *Cronistoria III* p. 263).

57. To Sr. Maria Sampietro

In a simple and lively style Maria Mazzarello recalls the essential and typical virtues of her spirituality.

[Nizza Monferrato, January] 1881
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. G.[iuseppe]!

My Good Sr. Sampietro,¹

- 1 Are you peaceful and cheerful? I don't want you to think any more that you have caused me displeasure; I am not displeased with you in any way. So don't dwell on it any more. Think of becoming holy by giving good example to all your Sisters and to the girls and by having great confidence in your superior.
- 2 Never look at other people's defects, but rather at your own, won't you Sr. Sampietro? Never be discouraged, but always turn to Jesus in humility. He will help you to overcome yourself by giving you grace [and] strength to fight and He will console you.
- 3 Therefore, be cheerful and pray for me who never forget you in my prayers.
- 4 In March, if God gives me life, I will come to visit you. Are you pleased? "Yes, Mother, but it's too long to wait".²

¹ Sr. Maria belonged to the Saint-Cyr community. The letter opens with the same question about cheerfulness that we find in the letter written in April of the previous year (cf. L 36).

² In this letter too, for all its brevity and simplicity, *la Madre* carries on a friendly and formative conversation with this Daughter who is far away and maybe also a bit sad.

- 5 It is true, my dearest Sr. Sampietro, but do what I tell you and you will see how the time will fly. Put all your effort into acquiring many beautiful virtues and becoming holy quickly, and the time will seem short. Yes, do pray, pray for me, be really cheerful. God bless you, together with,

Your most affectionate Mother,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

58. To Sr. Marianna Lorenzale

Maria Mazzarello gives recommendations and suitable advice to the young Sister, some of it in the form of an allegory.

[Nizza Monferrato, January 1881]
Viva Gesù e Maria!

My Good Sr. Lorenzale,¹

- 1 I received your letter and I sense that you are still cheerful and this consoles me. It is not necessary to shed tears to be good-hearted. The Lord does not count our tears, but the heartfelt sacrifices we make for Him. Be cheerful, therefore, even though you cannot cry when something upsets you, because it is even better that way.
- 2 I hear that your garden and field are in need of many things that are impossible to obtain at the present time. Don't worry, because little by little everything will be put right. Meanwhile, do what you can and then you will see that everything will go well.
- 3 The important thing is that you keep the garden of your heart in very good order. From time to time, you need to take a look to see if there are weeds smothering the good plants. Do you understand?²

¹ Sr. Marianna Lorenzale was in the same community of Saint-Cyr. *La Madre* does not miss the opportunity to send her some loving advice, especially since she is just one year professed and 21 years old.

² In this letter as in L 50 to the same Sister, *la Madre* returns to the image of the garden, comparing it to the spiritual life and the care that it requires every day.

- 4 I hope that gradually you will come to understand spoken French and the confessor too. The most important thing for you is to maintain your good will, fervour, humility and charity. You will see that if these virtues are not lacking in you, you will manage to do and to understand everything.
- 5 Courage, my good Sr. Marianna, pray for me, always be cheerful and keep the Sisters and girls cheerful too. Tell them that I wish them every possible good.
- 6 Tell Sr. Pestarino, Sr. Sampietro and Sr. Alessandrina that I don't forget anyone of you, especially in my prayers. Be cheerful all of you, send me good news. Obey your superior.³

May God bless you together with,

Yours most affectionately in the Lord, *la Madre*,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

³ She reminds them again, as in the previous letter (cf. L 57, 1) of the need for confidence in the community animator (Sr. Santina Pisciole). She is concerned that they should overcome their initial problems of accepting and relating to her (cf. L 49, fn 4).

**59. To the Community Animator of the House
of Buenos Aires-Boca (Argentina),
Sr. Giacinta Olivieri**

Maria Mazzarello expresses her desire to receive news from her Sisters who live far away and encourages them in their apostolic work.

[Nizza Monferrato, January, 1881]¹
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. Giuseppe!

My Good Sr. Giacinta,²

- 1 Are you dead or alive? You never write even a line to me. All the others give some sign, either in writing or by other means that they are aware that they are still alive and that they remember my poor, miserable self, but nothing from you.³
- 2 I had hoped to come and visit you, and instead I will have to be content with sending you this piece of paper, patience, may God's Will be done! We will certainly meet again in Heaven. Meanwhile, let us try to earn a beautiful place there by practising all the virtues our H.[oly] Rule asks of us; let us be exact in observing it.
- 3 Let us be courageous in breaking the horns of self-love

¹ This letter, like those which follow (cf. L 60; L 61; L 62; L 63), was written before the missionaries of the Third Missionary Expedition left Nizza on January 20 for Genoa from where they set sail February 3, 1881 (cf. L 56, fn 2).

² Sr. Giacinta Olivieri was animator of the community of Buenos Aires-Boca, founded November 2, 1879.

³ The letter opens with a question that shows *la Madre's* love and anxiety. She draws attention to a distressing fact with a gentle yet strong reproof to this sister who, in her role as guide of the community, should make more frequent contact with the Leader of the FMA Institute.

remembering that with every blow we give it, we add a flower to our crown.

- 4 You are really fortunate since you can do so much good and win so many souls for our dear Jesus. Work, work much in the field the Lord has given you. Never tire, always work with the sole intention of doing everything for the Lord and He [will give] you a beautiful treasure of merits for Heaven.⁴
- 5 Courage, my good Sr. Giacinta, pray for me and for all our dear Congregation.
- 6 I won't stop to write much because I am positive that when our Sisters arrive there, they will give you all the news.
- 7 I am sending you this holy picture and I would not want you to give it away. I leave you in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Greeting you I am,

Your most affectionate Sr. Maria Mazzarello,
la Madre

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁴ Work, especially in the area of the Christian education of the young, was the precious "inheritance" that Don Bosco left to his spiritual sons and daughters. He liked to link work and temperance, work and prayer. This was the virtue of work inspired by apostolic zeal and not just external activity. Mother Mazzarello recommends that the Sisters should work with the right intention and only for the Lord, to whom the field of work entrusted to them belongs.

60. To the Novice, Sr. Rita Barilatti

Maria Mazzarello exhorts her to respond with cheerfulness and fidelity to the Lord's call.

[Nizza Monferrato, January, 1881]

Viva Gesù e Maria!

My Good Sr. Rita,¹

- 1 I would very gladly satisfy you with a visit from me (poor as it would be), but we must be resigned to the Will of the Lord, since it is really He who wants it this way ... and isn't it better that way? How many things my poor heart would like to say to you, my dear, good Sr. Rita. We do not know each other in person, but in the Heart of Jesus we know each other in spirit, right?
- 2 Have the courage to persevere in your vocation; learn to correspond to the good fortune of being chosen by Our Lord as one of His most favoured daughters.
- 3 I believe I can hear you say: "Oh, Mother, I really want to do so, but how?"
- 4 Listen, the surest way² is true, prompt obedience to our

¹ The novice, Sr. Rita Barilatti, was born in Italy. She went with her family to Argentina and there entered the Institute of the FMA. She had received the religious habit on December 25, 1879. She was now preparing for her religious profession.

² *La Madre* outlines for the novice "the surest way", a simple and deep way of corresponding to the grace of her vocation. This is almost a synthesis of her favourite themes, which appear constantly in her letters: true obedience, observance of the Rule, humility, charity and cheerfulness as an expression of true love of God.

Salesians superiors and our superiors, that is, to the Holy Rule, practice of true humility and great charity. If we do this, we will soon become holy.

- 5 We have entered religious life, so courage, courage and always have great cheerfulness which is the sign of a heart that really loves the Lord very much.
- 6 Pray much for me; I never forget you in my prayers. I am sending you this holy picture, won't you keep it to remind you of me.³

May Jesus bless you, and believe me to be,

Yours most affectionately in the Lord,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello, *la Madre*

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

³ Sr. Rita kept this precious memento. The little picture is preserved in the GAFMA depicting the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World. *La Madre* had written the novice's name on the back of the picture.

**61. To the Community Animator of the Houses
of Montevideo-Villa Colón
and Las Piedras (Uruguay),
Sr. Teresina Mazzarello**

Maria Mazzarello writes a short letter advising a community leader who was temporarily in charge of two communities.

[Nizza Monferrato, January, 1881]

Viva Gesù!

My Dear Sr. Teresina Mazzarello,

- 1 Here are your good Sisters who have come to help you, are you happy? Keep them cheerful for me by telling them lots of beautiful things!
- 2 You won't have any more worries, now that you have a superior!¹ I recommend that you show confidence in your new superior and instil this same confidence in the others too.
- 3 I won't stop to give you much news of this house, because the Sisters will tell you everything.
- 4 I will only tell you to be humble, charitable with every one and always cheerful and happy with everything, as the Lord wants.
- 5 Never forget to pray for me who love you very dearly in the Lord. May God bless you and make you holy quickly. Believe me to be, in the Hearts of Jesus and of Mary,

Your most affectionate Mother in Jesus,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

¹ Sr. Teresa Mazzarello was responsible for the two communities in Uruguay for a while. With the arrival of the missionaries, Sr. Teresa would have been relieved and comforted especially by the presence of Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto, who had been appointed community animator of Las Piedras (cf. L 41).

62. To the Novice, Sr. Mercedes Stabler

Maria Mazzarello shows her affectionate interest and encourages the novice in her commitment to holiness in everyday life.

[Nizza Monferrato, January, 1881]

Viva Gesù e Maria!

My Dearest Sr. Mercedes,¹

- 1 I would like to say a few words to you, as well. I too, would like to know you, but what can we do? The Lord wants us to be content with knowing one another only in spirit. Therefore, let us be resigned. The day will come when we will know each other fully.
- 2 Meanwhile, let us try to observe our H.[oly] Rule well and practice true humility and great charity with everyone.
- 3 Always have great confidence in the confessor and in your superior. Respect everyone at all times and put yourself last of all. If you do this wholeheartedly and not just in words, you will soon be holy.
- 4 Courage, my good Mercedes, and pray for me. I assure you that although I do not have the good fortune to know you in person, I always have you here, close to my heart and not a day passes that I do not enclose you in the

¹ The novice Sr. Mercedes Stabler entered the novitiate on May 24, 1880 and was in the house of Buenos Aires-Almagro. She was one of the first Argentinian vocations. After her profession, she worked in various houses and held positions of responsibility in Morón, La Plata and Avellaneda.

Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.² You, too, pray for me
always! Love the Lord very much.
This is also the desire of,
Your most affectionate Mother in Jesus,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

² This affectionate expression shows how close *la Madre* wanted to be to all her Daughters, even without knowing them all personally. She was able to be spiritually present to her Sisters both far and near through her love for Jesus and Mary in whose presence she lived constantly.

63. To the Missionary, Sr. Vittoria Cantù

Maria Mazzarello recommends that she help the missionaries who have just arrived and exhorts her to live in fraternal charity and detachment from self.

[Nizza Monferrato, January, 1881]

Viva Gesù e Maria!

My Beloved Sr. Vittoria,

- 1 Finally, help has arrived. Now will all your worries disappear?¹ No, my good Vittoria, as long as we are in this miserable valley of tears there will always be problems. We will always be fortunate when the Lord gives us something to suffer for His love.
- 2 I recommend that you comfort the new Americans,² poor souls! They must be very homesick, finding themselves in such strange places [*foresti*],³ but you and the other good Sisters keep them cheerful, won't you?
- 3 I do not know whether Mother Mistress, Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto, is destined to be superior of the house of Montevideo or Las Piedras.⁴ Still, wherever they send her, she will do well.

¹ In Montevideo-Villa Colón there was urgent need for extra personnel, as has already been noted. Now the missionaries of the third expedition had arrived and would be assigned to either of the houses in Uruguay.

² The missionaries who had just come from Italy.

³ The word *foresti* in this context means remote places, different in customs and ways from what they were used to.

⁴ Sr. Pacotto was destined for Las Piedras, where she would remain until 1885 (cf. L 64).

- 4 The most important thing is that you all agree among yourselves. No matter which house you are in, always help each other like true Sisters. Keep in contact with the superiors. Let the two superiors keep in contact with one another by writing and everything will always go well.⁵ Try to continue giving good example, living detached from yourself and never seeking to be flattered or favoured, rather you should despise such foolishness. We must be the first to show that our heart is made to love the Lord alone and not seek to win love for ourselves. Courage, my good Sr. Vittoria, never forget to pray for me and for all our deceased Sisters.
- 5 I won't stop to give you news of us, because I am more than sure that the Sisters who have just arrived will tell you everything. It only remains for me to recommend charity, patience and union among all of you. I recommend that you write to me and always give me good news. May Jesus keep you in His Holy Grace and make you holy soon. Pray for yours truly who loves you so much in the Lord,

Yours most affectionately, Sr. Maria Mazzarello,
la Madre

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁵ This insistence on maintaining unity between the communities is understandable when we think that, at the time, the two houses in Uruguay depended on the Regional Delegate, Sr. Maddalena Martini, who lived in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It was necessary to help one another and to keep in contact by mail.

64. To the Missionary, Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto

Maria Mazzarello gives advice to a Sister who is leaving for the missions.

Nizza [Monferrato], January 17, 1881¹
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. G.[iuseppe]!

My Beloved Sr. Giuseppina,²

- 1 Listen to the first memento that I give you: You should never be disheartened or discouraged by your defects, have great humility, great confidence in Jesus and Mary, and believe always that [without] Him you are [not] capable of anything but evil.
- 2 Secondly: Always do everything in the presence of Jesus and Mary by remaining united with the will of your superiors. In all you do think: "If my superiors were here would I say or do this?"
- 3 In your expectations, always try to ensure that your humility is never tainted by self-seeking.³ Be careful to observe our Holy Rule well and make sure that everyone is most exact in this observance. Never allow the least

¹ This letter and those that follow (L 65, 66) were written by *la Madre* for those who were leaving for Argentina and wanted to take her precious advice with them. This is why they are shorter and more schematic in style.

² Sr. Giuseppina Pacotto was going as community animator to one of the two houses in Uruguay. In 1885 she was transferred to Patagonia where she gave of her best in a life of poverty and generosity.

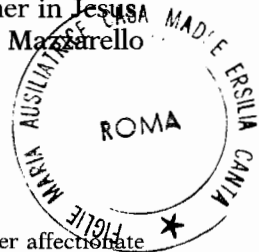
³ *La Madre* exhorts the Sister not to demand anything for egoistic reasons or because of ambition, but to be genuinely humble.

infringement or relaxation of the rule to be introduced for any reason whatsoever.

- 4 Always practice the same great charity towards everyone, no favouritism, understand? If you should ever come across people who, for example, show you certain marks of affection under [the] pretext that they love you because they have confidence in you, and therefore can say anything to you, though in reality it is all nonsense, and who always want to be near you to flatter you; for heaven's sake, despise such foolishness! Overcome human respect, do your duty and correct them always. If you keep these things in mind, we will have a spirit that pleases the Lord and He will bless us, will always enlighten us and will see to it that we will understand His Will. Courage, courage, let us become holy and pray for one another. Let us never forget that our sole aim is to perfect ourselves and become saints for Jesus.⁴
- 5 The final memento I give you is this: when the cross seems heavy, look at the one we wear around our neck and say: "Oh, Jesus, You are my whole strength and with You burdens become light, fatigue becomes easy, thorns are turned into sweetness". But, my dear, you will have to overcome yourself, otherwise everything will become heavy, and unbearable.
- 6 Here, my dear Sr. Giuseppina, is all I have to give you in memory of me.
Always pray for,

Your most affectionate Mother in Jesus
Sr. Maria Maddalena

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]



⁴ With vigilant and foreseeing wisdom, *la Madre* warns her affectionate Daughter about certain forms of immaturity that form an obstacle to community life and prevent communion of hearts. If her counsels are practised, the community will build "a spirit that pleases the Lord" and will experience the efficacy of His divine blessing.

65. To the Missionary, Sr. Ottavia Bussolino

Maria Mazzarello gives mementoes and encouragement to a missionary about to depart.

Nizza [Monferrato], January 18, 1881
Viva Gesù, Maria e S. G.[iuseppe]!

My Dearest, Good Sr. Ottavia,¹

- 1 The memento I leave you is this: always observe the H.[oly] Rule exactly. Secondly, never get discouraged because of any adversity. Take everything from the most holy hands of Jesus, place all your trust in Him and hope for everything from Him.
- 2 I recommend purity of intention and humility of heart in all you do. May your humility never be mixed with self-seeking. Act in such a way that Jesus can say to you: "My Daughter, you are dear to me, I am pleased with what you are doing".
- 3 Courage. When you are tired and troubled go and place all your worries in the Heart of Jesus, and there you will find solace and comfort. Love everyone and all your Sisters. Love them always in the Lord, but don't divide your heart with anyone; let it be totally for Jesus.

¹ Sr. Ottavia Bussolino, to whom *la Madre* had already written letter 45, was destined for the house of Buenos Aires-Almagro. In 1883, after the death of the Regional Delegate, Sr. Maddalena Martini, she was appointed to replace her while still directing the house of Almagro.

- 4 Won't you pray for me, for my intentions? ... Don't worry,
I will never forget you.
May God bless you together with,
Yours most affectionately in the Lord, *la Madre*,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

66. To the Missionary, Sr. Ernesta Farina

Maria Mazzarello gives recommendations to a missionary about to depart.

Turin,¹ January 24, 1881

Viva Gesù, Maria e S. G.[iuseppe]!

My Dearest Sr. Farina,²

- 1 First of all, I recommend that you observe the Holy Rule in every detail and, as far as you can, see to it that the others observe it too.
- 2 Always consider that you are not capable of doing anything and that which you seem to know, is the hand of God working in you. Without Him, we can only do evil.³
- 3 Make friends with humility and learn her lesson. Never listen to the teacher, pride, who is a great enemy of humility.

¹ *La Madre* was passing through Turin. She had been in Chieri a few days earlier to accompany Sr. Francesca Ruggero, who had been transferred to the community as assistant to the oratorians (cf. *Cronistoria* III pp. 295-296).

² Sr. Ernesta Farina had been personally invited to enter the Institute by Don Bosco. He knew her family well. She was professed on December 8, 1879. She was about to leave for Argentina and was assigned to the house of Buenos Aires-Boca. At the port of Genoa Mother Mazzarello gave Sr. Ernesta her own watch (cf. *Cronistoria* III p. 308).

³ This suggestion, in all its simplicity, is reminiscent of the biblical theme of "the power of the hand of God" in the face of human weakness and of what St. John writes about the vine and the branches. "Without me you can do nothing" (*John* 15:5).

- 4 Never be discouraged when you see yourself full of defects, but turn to Jesus and Mary with confidence and humble yourself without discouragement. Then go ahead with courage and without fear.
- 5 Pray always. Let prayer be the weapon that you always keep at hand. It will defend you from all your enemies and will help you in all your needs.
- 6 Always be cheerful and never forget the one who loves you so much in the Lord.⁴ I assure you that I will always accompany you with my poor prayers.
May God bless you and make you totally His,

Your most affectionate Mother in J.[esus],
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA Original. In her handwriting]

⁴ “One who loves you so much in the Lord” could be considered an apt self-description of Mother Mazzarello. It reveals the identity of a woman deeply rooted in genuine Christian love (cf. L 55, 10; L 63, 5; L 67, 8).

67. To the Novice, Sr. Lorenzina Natale

Maria Mazzarello sends brief mementoes to a novice who is leaving for Uruguay.

Turin, January 24, 1881

V. G. M. G.!

My Dearest Sr. Lorenzina,¹

- 1 Always study how to become humble, humble.
- 2 Let humility be the virtue you hold dearest; the same goes for piety and modesty. You must make this shine forth before everyone.
- 3 Let obedience be your friend and never abandon it to do as you like.
- 4 Be a lover of sacrifice and of the mortification of your own will.
- 5 Never make friends with your self-love, but study every way of killing it.

¹ Sr. Lorenzina Natale was still a novice. She would make her profession at Sampierdarena on the day before her departure for Uruguay, (February 2, 1881). The *Cronistoria* tells us of the memorable ceremony at which Don Bosco presided. "In the meantime Don Bosco assembled the missionaries, Salesians and Sisters, near the altar of the semi-private church. The function was private and almost intimate in character. The three novices – Sisters Lorenzina Natale, Juliana Prevosto and Teresa Rinaldi – were admitted to first profession and Sr. Angela Gualfredo made her final vows. Then Don Bosco addressed the assembly with an augury of the success of their apostolate in the new spiritual field that awaited them across the sea" (III p. 305). Sr. Lorenzina was already a teacher when she entered the Institute and would spend her whole life in school. She taught with true Salesian apostolic zeal.

- 6 Think often that our Holy Rule is the sure guide that will lead us to Heaven; be exact in its observance.
- 7 Always be full of charity for everyone, but especially for your Sisters.
- 8 Never neglect prayer; in it, you will always find consolation and comfort.²

Your most affectionate Mother who loves you so
much in the Lord,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA. Transcribed in the *Cronistoria dell'Istituto FMA*, III p. 706 (typed unpublished version)]

² Prayer was the very air Mother Mazzarello and the first community breathed, so much so that Fr. Costamagna could write of those early days, recalling the modest and heroic times of the beginnings, "Prayer was fervent, unceasing; ardent aspirations constantly rose like a cloud of fragrant incense to the Most High. There was truly a *laus perennis* in that house" (Costamagna, *Conferenze*, op. cit., pp. 259-260).

68. To the Sisters of the House in Carmen de Patagones (Argentina)

Maria Mazzarello replies to a letter she received, briefly shares some news and gives counsels and recommendations.

Nizza Monferrato, April 10, 1881
Viva Gesù!

Dearest Patagonian Sisters,

- 1 I was very pleased to hear from you. I delayed answering¹ in the hope of recovering from my illness to be able to write in my own hand, as you wanted me to do, But seeing that I will be weak for a long time to come, I will make use of someone else's hand.² You will be satisfied with that, won't you?
- 2 So, Sr. Caterina is sick?³ Poor soul! Give her much encouragement on my behalf, tell her always to be resigned to the Will of the Lord, to suffer always with patience and resignation. Oh, what great merit she will obtain! I believe that she will recover soon; you are too few to let one go to Heaven. Then, too, she has not yet done enough work, so she will have to get better. She must become a great saint and win many souls for the Lord. I will not tell you to look after her because I am sure that you will.

¹ Mother's delay in answering the letter from the missionaries was due to the illness that had forced her to remain in the house of Saint-Cyr for about a month. She had gone there to visit the Sisters. After stopping at La Navarre, Nice and Alassio, *la Madre* returned to Nizza Monferrato on March 28.

² It is not known who the writer was, since it has not been possible to find the original.

³ This refers to Sr. Caterina Fina (cf. L 37, fn 4).

- 3 I would like to say a special word to each Sister, but since I don't have enough space, I will say to each of you that I always remember you and recommend you to our Good Jesus in a special way every day. I highly recommend humility and charity. If you practice these virtues, the Lord will bless you and your work, so that you will be able to do great good.⁴
- 4 All the Sisters in Europe send heartfelt greetings and always remember you. Pray for everyone, pray especially for the sick, among whom are M.[other] Bursar, Sr. Catt.[erina] Massa and Sr. Tersilla.⁵
- 5 The Sisters from Buenos Aires will have given you all the news, so I will finish by recommending myself very much to your prayers. I leave you in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, in which I will always be,

Your most affectionate Mother,
Sr. Maria Mazzarello

[GAFMA. Copy in someone else's handwriting. Authenticated by the
Archiepiscopal Curia of Acqui]

⁴ These last recommendations follow the line marked out from the start and sum up Maria Domenica Mazzarello's solid path to holiness, humility and charity. These two form the basis of a harmonious synthesis: charity is the dynamic foundation of holiness and humility the essential ascetical condition for its development. She believes that together they form the essential requisites of apostolic fruitfulness.

⁵ The sick people for whom she asks prayers, without referring to herself, are Sr. Giovanna Ferrettino, Sr. Tersilla Ginepro and Sr. Caterina Massa. The first two died that same year, a few months after the death of Mother Mazzarello. Sr. Massa died in 1884.

Index of the FMA Named in the Letters

Apro시오 Vitalina

Born: Vallecrosia Torrione (Imperia) 5-20-1861; admission to the novitiate: Mornese (Alessandria) 4-15-1877; left the Institute: 4-11-1878, after a year of novitiate.

L 7

Arata Carmela

Born: Ovada (Alessandria) 9-7-1845; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-29-1876; † Turin 12-10-1880.

L 4, 9, 22, 55, 56

Arecco Felicita

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-9-1830; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-5-1872; left the Institute: 12-27-1875, after three years of religious life.

L 4

Arecco Luigia

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 9-9-1859; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-8-1877; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 1-24-1881.

L 55

Arecco Maria

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 4-11-1828; admission to the novitiate: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-13-1874; left the Institute: 12-21-1875, after a year of novitiate.

L 4

Armelonghi Clelia

Born: Lugagnano d'Arda (Piacenza) 8-23-1866; religious profession: Turin 9-13-1900; † Lugagnano d'Arda (Piacenza) 12-26-1947.

L 33

Armelonghi Giuseppina

Born: Lugagnano d'Arda (Piacenza) 8-12-1862; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-2-1880; † Lugagnano d'Arda (Piacenza) 4 -29-1886.

L 33

Armelonghi Marietta

Born: Lugagnano d'Arda (Piacenza) 12-21-1856; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-2-1880; † Lugagnano d'Arda (Piacenza) 2-13-1933.

L 33

Ayra Adele

Born: Turin 10-29-1851; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-15-1877; † Trino (Vercelli) 9-28-1918.

L 5, 9, 35

Bacchialoni Angela

Born: Villafranca Piemonte (Turin) 7-2-1812; admission to the novitiate: Mornese (Alessandria) 5-23-1875; left the Institute: 12-14-1875, after about 7 months of novitiate.

L 4, 5

Bagliardi Luigia

Born: Montecastello (Alessandria) 6-21-1850; admission to the novitiate: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-12-1875; left the Institute: 1-1-1877, after 13 months of novitiate.

L 4, 5

Balduzzi Filomena

Born: Mezzana Bigli (Pavia) 1-19-1856; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-20-1878; *left for Uruguay with the Second Missionary Expedition (1-1-1879)*; left the Institute: 7-26-1884, after 6 years of religious life.

L 22, 23, 25, 26, 27

Barbero Domenica

Born: Canale d'Alba (Cuneo) 11-16-1848; religious profession: Alassio (Savona) 3-19-1879; *left for Colombia with the Twenty-third Missionary Expedition (12-3-1898)*; † Contratación (Colombia) 12-12-1926.

L 20

Barilatti Rita

Born: Cartasegna (Alessandria) 4 -24-1864; religious profession: Buenos Aires – Almagro 5-24-1881; † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 8-27-1954.

L 60

Becchio Lucrezia

Born: Caramagna (Cuneo) 9-25-1849; religious profession: Turin 9-3-1877; † Mornese (Alessandria) 3-11-1879.

L 4, 22, 23

Belletti Maria

Born: Ovada (Alessandria) 7-21-1858; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-28-1875; † Mornese (Alessandria) 11-11-1876.

L 5, 6, 7, 9

Bezzato Felicita

Born: Incisa Belbo (Alessandria) 9-18-1859; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-23-1881; † Torino Cavourto 8-28-1933.

L 51, 52

Bianchi Zoe

Born: Lugagnano d'Arda (Piacenza) 9-20-1857; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-4-1879; *left for Spain in 1894*; † Barcelona – Sarriá (Spain) 8-1-1913.

L 47

Bonora Emmanuela

Born: Sairano (Pavia) 6-4-1864; religious profession: Sairano (Pavia) 8-14-1880; † Sairano (Pavia) 8-21-1880.

L 15

Borgna Emilia

Born: Buenos Aires (Argentina) 9-7-1862; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-15-1877; *left for Uruguay with the Second Missionary Expedition (1-1-1879)*; regional delegate of Uruguay and Paraguay, Provincial in Brazil (1888-1915); † Lorena (Brazil) 10-21-1939.

L 6, 9, 19

Borgna Giovanna

Born: Buenos Aires (Argentina) 2-20-1860; religious profession: Turin 9-3-1877; *left for Uruguay with the First Missionary Expedition (11-14-77)*; † Lima-Guia (Perú) 12-21-1945.

L 4, 5, 6, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 37, 47, 55

Bosco Clementina

Born: Castelnuovo d'Asti 3-17-1870; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-18-1889; † Chieri (Turin) 5-8-1892.

L 10, 12, 13

Bosco Eulalia

Born: Castelnuovo d'Asti 7-23-1866; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-24-1884; *General Councillor (1917-1938)*; † Turin 2-26-1938.

L 10, 12, 13

Bosco Rosina

Born: Castelnuovo d'Asti 7-23-1868; religious profession: Marseille St. Marguerite (France) 2-13-1885; *left for Argentina with the Fifth Missionary Expedition (2-14-1885)*; † Viedma (Argentina) 1-21-1892.

L 10

Bussolino Ottavia

Born: San Damiano d'Asti 6-3-1863; religious profession: Turin 8-10-1880; *left for Argentina with the Third Missionary Expedition (2-3-1881)*; Provincial in Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Perú (1884-1893; 1903-1928); † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 11-9-1939.

L 45, 56, 65

Buzzetti Angiolina

Born: Caronno Ghiringhello (Varese) 10-29-1856; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-4-1879; *third Bursar General (1892-1917)*; † Turin 7-6-1917.

L 30, 47

Buzzetti Clotilde

Born: Caronno Ghiringhello (Varese) 10-23-1861; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-23-1881; † Turin Sassi 8-6-1919.

L 30

Cagliero Maria

Born: Castelnuovo d'Asti 8-5-1859; religious profession: Turin 9-1-1878; † Turin 9-8-1880.

L 4, 5, 7, 47

Calcagno Agostina (Giustina)

Born: Tramontana (Alessandria) 8-26-1856; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 4-15-1877; † Mornese (Alessandria) 1-28-1880.

L 4, 5, 7, 27

Camera Battistina

Born: Ovada (Alessandria) 8-25-1848; religious profession: Bronte (Catania) 11-1-1881; † Ali Terme (Messina) 2-28-1916.

L 47

Cammisassa Orsola

Born: Caramagna (Cuneo) 7-19-1841; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 2-8-1876; † Mathi (Turin) 12-10-1918.

L 4, 5, 7, 9, 15, 34, 39

Canale Caterina

Born: Cumiana (Turin) 12-16-1848; admission to the novitiate: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-13-1874; left the Institute: 3-8-1876, after 15 months of novitiate.

L 5

Cantù Vittoria

Born: Isolabella (Turin) 12-23-1848; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-8-1878; *left for Uruguay with the Second Missionary Expedition (1-1-1879)*; † Montevideo-Villa Colón (Uruguay) 8-31-1916.

L 22, 23, 25, 27, 31, 42, 56, 63

Cappelletti Maria

Born: Valenza (Alessandria) 8-5-1854; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-8-1877; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 4-14-1879.

L 22, 23

Cassini Antonia

Born: Varengo (Alessandria) 6-3-1859; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 2-7-1876; † Mornese (Alessandria) 2-9-1876.

L 4,5

Cassulo Angela

Born: Castelletto d'Orba (Alessandria) 3-9-1852; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-28-1875; *left for Uruguay with the First Missionary Expedition (11-14-1877)*; † Viedma (Argentina) 3-28-1917.

L 6, 7, 22, 25, 27, 33, 37, 47, 55

Cassulo Maria

Born: Castelletto d'Orba (Alessandria) 9-8-1858; religious profession: Turin 8-15-1879; † Turin 8-7-1926.

L 22, 33, 37

Cevennini Rita

Born: Bologna 11-2-1857; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-4-1879; † Bronte (Catania) 11-21-1882.

L 34

Daghero Caterina

Born: Cumiana (Turin) 5-7-1856; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-28-1875; *second Leader of the Institute (1881-1924)*; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 2-26-1924.

L 5, 35, 47, 48, 49

Daghero Rosa

Born: Cumiana (Turin) 2-16-1856; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-28-1875; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 4-19-1930.

L 34

David Adele

Born: Pecetto Torinese 3-16-1855; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-8-1877; † Alessandria 6-26-1897.

L 5, 7, 9, 33

Deambrogio Angela

Born: Conzano (Alessandria) 2-26-1840; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 6-14-1874; † Penango (Asti) 5-24-1891.

L 7, 9

Delodi Angela

Born: Occimiano (Alessandria) 1-19-1846; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-28-1875; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 1-21-1882.

L 33

Denegri Angela

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 2-2-1860; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 5-24-1876; *left for Uruguay with the First Missionary Expedition (11-14-1877)*; † Montevideo-Villa Colón (Uruguay) 12-13-1881.

L 22, 26, 27

Farina Ernesta

Born: Valle Lomellina (Pavia) 5-10-1850; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 12-8-1879; *left for Argentina with the Third Missionary Expedition (2-3-1881)*; *returned to Italy in 1894*; † Torino Cavoretto 6-24-1926.

L 66

Ferrettino Giovanna

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-27-1832; religious profes-

sion: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-5-1872; *first Bursar General (1874-1881)*; † Alassio (Savona) 7-22-1881.

L 5, 14, 39, 47, 68

Fina Caterina

Born: Sampeyre (Cuneo) 11-1-1856; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-8-1878; *left for Argentina with the Second Missionary Expedition (1-1-1879)*; left the Institute: 10-4-1893, after 15 years of religious life.

L 37, 47, 55, 68

Frascarolo Albina

Born: San Salvatore Monferrato (Alessandria) 6-21-1854; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-4-1879; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 10-28-1879.

L 27

Gallo Lucia

Born: Caramagna (Cuneo) 1-2-1840; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 5-24-1876; † Turin 1-15-1918.

L 4

Gamba Innocenza

Born: Viarigi (Asti) 11-3-1860; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 12-8-1879; † Chieri (Turin) 11-21-1880.

L 51, 55, 56

Gariglio Maria

Born: Piobesi (Turin) 9-19-1858; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-20-1878; *left for France in 1878*; † La Navarre (France) 4-1-1879.

L 21, 22, 23

Gedda Teresa

Born: Pecco (Turin) 1-17-1852; religious profession: Turin 9-3-1877; *left for Uruguay with the First Missionary Expedition (11-14-1877)*; † Granada (Nicaragua) 3-24-1917.

L 22, 27, 42

Ginepro Tersilla

Born: Murisengo (Alessandria) 4-5-1845; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-8-1878; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 10-2-1881.

L 48, 55, 68

Giordano Luigia

Born: Valenza (Alessandria) 8-5-1852; religious professions: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-12-1875; † Mornese (Alessandria) 8-16-1876.

L 4, 7

Grosso Maria

Born: Santo Stefano di Parodi (Alessandria) 5-10-1855; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-5-1873; † Mornese (Alessandria) 4-13-1876.

L 5, 6, 7, 45

Gualfredo Angela

Born: Lu Monferrato (Alessandria) 5-22-1860; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-2-1880; *left for Uruguay with the Third Missionary Expedition (2-3-1881)*; † Viedma (Argentina) 7-31-1923.

L 67

Gusmaroli Rosa

Born: Campo Tartano (Sondrio) 4-25-1853; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-15-1877; † Turin 9-6-1880.

L 47

Hugues Alessandrina

Born: Pragelato (Turin) 9-19-1859; religious profession: Turin 8-10-1880; *left for France in 1880*; † Nice (France) 1-19-1924.

L 49, 58

Jandet Angela

Born: Novara 5-28-1848; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-5-1872; *left the Institute: 3-30-1876, after about 4 years of religious life.*

L 5

Laurantoni Teresa

Born: Massignano (Ascoli Piceno) 7-15-1857; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-29-1874; † Mathi (Turin) 7-15-1920.

L 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 35

Lavagnino Letizia

Born: Bordighera (Imperia) 9-20-1859; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-24-1884; left the Institute: 8-21-1893, after 9 years of religious life.

L 7, 33

Lorenzale Marianna

Born: Turin 1-7-1860; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 12-8-1879; *left for France in 1880, returned to Italy in 1883*; † Asti 6-1-1912.

L 49, 50, 58

Lucca Caterina

Born: Leguio Albese (Cuneo) 4-18-1855; religious profession: Alassio (Savona) 3-19-1879; *left for Argentina with the Third Missionary Expedition (2-3-1881)*; left the Institute: 6-1-1881, after 2 years of religious life.

L 20

Maccagno Maria

Born: Alessandria 3-29-1853; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-29-1876; † Bordighera (Imperia) 1-26-1932.

L 4

Magone Virginia

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 5-30-1858; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 6-14-1874; *left for Uruguay with the Second Missionary Expedition (1-1-1879)*; † Montevideo-Villa Colón (Uruguay) 9-25-1880.

L 22, 25, 26, 27, 53

Marassi Pierina

Born: Alassio (Savona) 6-28-1847; religious profession:

Mornese (Alessandria) 8-15-1877; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 6-25-1911.

L 35

Maritano Teresa

Born: Cumiana (Turin) 1-27-1859; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-15-1877; † Cumiana (Turin) 1-15-1884.

L 7, 35, 48

Martini Maddalena

Born: Beinasco (Turin) 2-26-1849; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 5-24-1876; *left for Argentina with the Second Missionary Expedition (1-1-1879); first Regional Delegate for America (1879-1883); † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 6-27-1883.*

L 5, 7, 9, 17, 18, 20, 25, 33, 42, 44, 53, 63, 65

Massa Caterina

Born: Camogli (Genoa) 9-30-1839; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-8-1878; † Sampierdarena (Genoa) 2-6-1884.

L 68

Mazzarello Felicità

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 1-20-1839; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-5-1872; † Mathi (Turin) 8-1-1886.

L 7, 9, 41, 47

Mazzarello Maria (Mariuccia)

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 3-18-1853; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-28-1875; † Turin 8-6-1879.

L 22, 25

Mazzarello Maria Domenica, Saint, Cofoundress of the Institute FMA

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 5-9-1837; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-5-1872; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 5-14-1881. *Beatified: 11-20-1938; Canonized: 6-24-1951.*

Mazzarello Petronilla

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-10-1838; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-5-1872; *General Councillor (1874-1880)*; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 1-7-1925.

L 5, 7, 14, 19, 20, 24, 42, 45, 47

Mazzarello Rosina

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 9-23-1850; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-5-1873; † Lanzo Torinese 1-31-1928.

L 22, 41

Mazzarello Teresa (Teresina)

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 4-12-1860; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-29-1876; *left for Uruguay with the First Missionary Expedition (11-14-1877)*; † Montevideo (Uruguay) 11-13-1937.

L 9, 22, 25, 27, 41, 61

Mina Domenica

Born: Turin 9-7-1855; religious profession: Turin 9-30-1876; † Turin 10-4-1876.

L 4, 5, 6, 7

Mora Anna

Born: Torino Lingotto 4-2-1852; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-12-1880; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-12-1880.

L 47

Morano Maddalena, Blessed

Born: Chieri (Turin) 11-15-1847; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-4-1879; *first Provincial of Sicily (1893-1908)*; † Catania 3-26-1908. *Beatified: 11-5-1994.*

L 56

Morzoni Giacinta

Born: Vercelli 2-19-1859; religious profession: Bronte (Catania) 11-1-1881; † Acireale (Catania) 5-6-1931.

L 47

Mosca Emilia

Born: Ivrea (Turin) 4-1-1851; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 6-14-1874; *General Councillor (1876-1900)*; † Alassio (Savona) 10-2-1900.

L 5, 7, 9, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 29, 32, 42, 47, 56

Nasi Caterina

Born: Pamparato (Cuneo) 9-2-1852; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-12-1875; † Turin 3-3-1881.

L 4

Natale Lorenzina

Born: Caselette (Turin) 8-25-1857; religious profession: Genoa Sampierdarena 2-2-1881; *left for Uruguay with the Third Missionary Expedition (2-3-1881)*; † Las Piedras (Uruguay) 8-22-1936.

L 67

Negri Carlotta

Born: Grava (Alessandria) 1-13-1853; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-20-1878; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-13-1912.

L 33

Noli Rosina

Born: Genova Nervi 5-22-1859; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-20-1882; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 10-9-1884.

L 51, 52

Oberti Anna

Born: Racconigi (Cuneo) 3-19-1850; religious profession: Bordighera (Imperia) 4-15-1877; *left for Argentina with the Eighth Missionary Expedition (1-24-1889)*; † Carmen de Patagones (Argentina) 9-23-1917.

L 7

Olivieri Giacinta

Born: Ovada (Alessandria) 8-28-1851; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-8-1877; *left for Argentina with the*

Second Missionary Expedition (1-1-1879); left the Institute: 3-27-1883, after about 6 years of religious life.

L 59

Orlandi Paolina

Born: Milan 1-1-1848; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-29-1876; † Torino Cavoretto 7-6-1927.

L 4

Pacotto Giuseppina

Born: Turin 6-2-1850; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-12-1875; *left for Uruguay with the Third Missionary Expedition (2-3-1881)*; † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 4-24-1934.

L 4, 5, 7, 20, 24, 47, 55, 56, 61, 63, 64

Pestarino Carlotta

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 7-17-1857; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 6-14-1874; † Varazze (Savona) 8-18-1925.

L 5

Pestarino Caterina

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 5-17-1846; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-4-1879; *left for France in 1879, returned to Italy in 1890*; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 6-7-1897.

L 49, 58

Pestarino Rosalia

Born: Mornese (Alessandria) 9-3-1849; religious profession: Mornese 12-12-1875; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 3-11-1936.

L 4, 5, 7, 26, 51

Piccono Virginia

Born: Chiaverano (Turin) 3-19-1853; religious profession: Turin 8-15-1879; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-24-1887.

L 34, 37

Piscioli Santina

Born: Peccia (Canton Ticino, Switzerland) 3-12-1854; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-15-1877; *left for France in 1880, returned to Italy in 1884*; † Borgo Cornalese, Villastellone (Turin) 7-19-1884.

L 20, 48, 49, 58

Preda Clara

Born: Pomaro (Alessandria) 7-30-1854; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-12-1875; † Torino Cavoretto 11-19-1924.

L 4

Prevosto Giuliana

Born: Settimo Rottaro (Turin) 8-27-1859; religious profession: Sampierdarena (Genoa) 2-2-1881; *left for Argentina with the Third Missionary Expedition (2-3-1881)*; † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 2-15-1931.

L 67

Quassolo Caterina

Born: Turin 5-7-1861; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-23-1881; † Turin 8-29-1889.

L 35

Razzetti Vincenza

Born: Torino S. Margherita 9-20-1848; religious profession: Lu Monferrato (Alessandria) 10-24-1877; † Turin 1-5-1906.

L 4, 7

Ricci Margherita

Born: Sommariva d'Alba (Cuneo) 3-12-1852; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-28-1875; † Mornese (Alessandria) 4-21-1879.

L 23

Rinaldi Teresa

Born: Dogliani (Cuneo) 10-12-1862; religious profession: Sampierdarena (Genoa) 2-2-1881; *left for Uruguay with the*

Third Missionary Expedition (2-3-1881); Regional Delegate in Brazil (1893-1895); † Juiz de Fora (Brazil) 11-6-1895.

L 67

Riva Celestina

Born: Costigliole di Saluzzo (Cuneo) 3-20-1853; admission to the novitiate: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-12-1875; left the Institute: 10-18-1877, after about 2 years of novitiate.

L 4, 7, 9

Rocco Beatrice

Born: Pocapaglia (Cuneo) 5-5-1858; religious profession: Turin 9-1-1878; † Mathi (Turin) 6-6-1916.

L 4

Rodríguez Laura

Born: Montevideo Villa Colon 6-8-1858; religious profession: Buenos Aires-Almagro (Argentina) 5-24-1880; † Montevideo (Uruguay) 7-18-1924.

L 5, 18, 22, 27, 43

Roletti Domenica

Born: Piobesi d'Alba (Cuneo) 10-4-1843; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-15-1877; *left for Argentina with the Second Missionary Expedition (1-1-1879)*; † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 4-20-1892.

L 4

Roncallo Elisa

Born: Manesseno Sant'Olcese (Genoa) 1-30-1856; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-28-1875; *General Councillor (1881-1902; 1907-1919)*; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 4-19-1919.

L 5, 6, 7, 47

Rubassa Luigia

Born: Lu Monferrato (Alessandria) 10-14-1837; religious profession: Turin 9-1-1878; † Genoa Sampierdarena 3-16-1905.

L 4, 5

Sacco Margherita

Born: Caramagna (Cuneo) 6-22-1854; religious profession: Turin 9-3-1877; † Giaveno (Turin) 2-23-1922.

L 7, 9

Sampietro Maria

Born: Tonco (Asti) 12-11-1854; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-4-1879; *left for France in 1880*; † Grand Bigard (Belgium) 11-9-1924.

L 16, 36, 49, 57, 58

Sorbone Carolina

Born: Rosignano (Alessandria) 12-12-1858; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-29-1876; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 4-30-1943.

L 47

Sorbone Enrichetta

Born: Rosignano (Alessandria) 11-24-1854; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 6-14-1874; *General Councilor (1876-1942)*; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 7-14-1942.

L 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 47

Stabler Mercedes

Born: Buenos Aires (Argentina) 1-12-1865; religious profession: Buenos Aires 5-24-1881; † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 12-24-1948.

L 62

Stardero Maria

Born: Vinovo (Turin) 9-10-1857; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-2-1880; † Turin 11-2-1921.

L 12

Tamietti Anna

Born: Ferrere d'Asti 1-27-1851; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-12-1875; *second Bursar General (1881-1892)*; † Lu Monferrato Alessandria 4-8-1912.

L 4, 7, 9

Torta Giuseppina

Born: Chieri (Turin) 5-8-1857; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-2-1880; *left for Argentina with the Fourth Missionary Expedition (11-14-1883), returned to Italy in 1914*; † Alessandria 7-9-1924.

L 51, 52

Turco Clotilde

Born: Castelnuovo d'Asti 1-6-1853; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 4-15-1877; † Castelnuovo d'Asti 8-15-1881.

L 4, 5, 7, 9

Vallese Angela

Born: Lu Monferrato (Alessandria) 1-8-1854; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 8-29-1876; *left for Uruguay with the First Missionary Expedition (11-14-1877); Regional Delegate Southern Patagonia (1893-1913)*; † Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 8-17-1914.

L 17, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 37, 41, 47, 55

Vallese Luigia

Born: Lu Monferrato (Alessandria) 10-25-1859; religious profession: Alassio (Savona) 3-19-1879; *left for Argentina with the Third Missionary Expedition (2-3-1881)*; † San Isidro (Argentina) 9-3-1893.

L 17, 20, 22, 37

Vergniaud Giuseppina

Born: Turin 6-22-1858; religious profession: Mornese (Alessandria) 12-8-1878; *left for Uruguay with the Second Missionary Expedition (1-1-1879)*; † Buenos Aires (Argentina) 10-1-1944.

L 15, 22, 29

Villata Matilde

Born: Moncalieri (Turin) 3-3-1856; religious profession: Nizza Monferrato (Asti) 9-2-1880; † Turin 5-12-1884.

L 51, 52