

The words of the Congress

CONGRESS

Grazia Loparco introduces us to the understanding of the Congress: the purpose and the three sessions, the recipients and the methodology adopted. With this first “word” we kick off a series of interviews that, every month, will facilitate the understanding of the event which celebrates 150 years of Salesian education

The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) was born 150 years ago, today present in 97 countries around the world.

An International Congress will be held in Rome, from 25th to 30th of September 2022, on the *contribution to education by the FMA from the beginning of the Institute until today.*

What is this congress and why?

In the current pandemic situation and in an ecclesial time marked by a call to synodal conversion, it seems very interesting to us to live a “convocation” of the FMA and the educating communities around the mission that was given to us from the very beginning.

It is an opportunity rather a process that is already involving many religious and lay people in a reflection on how to live the Preventive system today; on the way of collecting the legacy of many FMA who have made an incisive and significant contribution to society and to the Church for the education of young people and young women, especially from the popular groups.

This process will reach its “climax” with the Congress, which will be held in the presence of - we hope - as consistent as possible, but also online to give the opportunity to many to be able to participate.

The Congress is structured in three sessions. The first is of a more historical trend, with an exhibition of the many data that are being collected on the FMA and on the works from 1872 to today. Data that show a varied expansion, unimaginable in some respects in any part of the world and adapted to local situations and circumstances.

The Congress intends to be the beginning of a more in-depth reflection on the way in which the FMA over time and geography have responded to the mission of evangelizing, of bringing the Gospel through an integral education of the person. In particular, of young people, for many decades, but today for children, and young people.

If the first session will look at the historical path, the second tries to answer the question how to “be there” today as educators, as educating communities, and together with many others who are interested in the education of the new generations? It is about having the development of a country and a local church at heart.

How can we be educators in a world that presents many challenges and that have repercussions on the world of young people? We will also face these challenges at an international level. The Congress, in fact, wants to “resonate” with the lived experience, but also with the intentions, with the planning of the FMA where they are present in the five continents.

Finally, the third session looks to the future: from the past, to the confrontation with the challenges of the present in which one wishes to be Salesian educators, marked by the charisma of St John Bosco and St. Mary Mazzarello, to look forward to the years that are opening up in front of us.

This session will focus on what is already being worked on in recent months, on the many international focus groups that are involving many FMA, lay educators, young people to take stock of what is meant by the “Preventive System” and how it is lived. Today, in many cultures very distant from the Piedmont of the nineteenth century where it all began.

In addition to this reflection, the resources of women for education will be explored. We are a female religious institute, within a Salesian Family, which expresses itself with a double face of the charism: male and female.

For this reason, we want to ask ourselves what are the paths to take in the future, to be at the side of the young people of today?

The more we delve into the reflection that the preparation of this Congress entails, the more we feel the richness and vitality of the charism, the more we feel that the gift of preventive education is for everyone and that in this particular moment of history lived at all latitudes, it is a great opportunity for many countries.

It is therefore an engaging preparation, for which we thank all the people who are collaborating.

Finally, we invite you to keep in touch to continue the collaboration with a view to experiencing a Congress, which can be a starting point for an in-depth reflection on education, and on the sciences of education, which will continue in the future. So that our Institute can continue to live up to its vocation, its mission; because young people have the right to educators who have their life and future at heart.

We want to be there in this change of era. We feel the beauty, the responsibility of being present. And therefore for this desire to collaborate in a more humane, more just society.