



## *Con Maria Donna Credente*

Dear Friends,

for a start, a heartfelt thanks for welcoming us and for the richness of this experience of faith, life and church that we are living here in Buenos Aires with all of you. This evening, with pleasure and emotion, we bring our little story, our simple family experience on the way “Con Maria Donna credente”.

In truth we hope - with our words- to make you know not only our experience. We would like to bring you life, joy, effort, prayer, faith, emotion, friendship of so many families who, like us, have had the grace to begin a journey. Families who discovered that that small preposition “with” has the power to change life, because when we live “with” Jesus and with Mary life is transformed and we are no longer alone. We are Renato and Barbara, we have 4 children - Matthew, Catherine, Sara and Margaret – who are here with us - and in Turin there is Simone, who for so many years spends so much time with us and is part of our family.

To tell the story of our experience we chose some words, which like pearls of a rosary are joined by a thread that followed our history until today

### **CALL**

God always calls us, Mary invites us to listen to what God has in store for us. We were in the heart of Mary when Mary was not yet in our hearts: solid values inspired our first years of engagement, we were already in search of God, but in the end we were focusing so much and only on our strength, on our will and our complicity, a little “enough to ourselves”

The first years of marriage were not easy. We got married before all our friends and Matteo, our first son, arrived after a few months of marriage. We were faced first and alone with the small difficulties of family life, of being parents, of education. Looking at us from a distance today, we realize how we lived everything according to patterns, expectations and objectives somewhat rigid. We felt that happiness was only in the perfect success of our projects. Moreover that complicity that was before everything, began to not be enough anymore, we prayed little and we relied too much on our forces

We then responded to an invitation that some dear friends made us to participate in a week of spiritual exercises for families. It was 2005 and today we are here, after 6 years of engagement and 19 years of marriage, deeply and intimately transformed by that “call” by the silent and maternal presence of Mary and with the awareness that the Lord still has so much to do in us.

In 2013 we joined Adma. The day of our accession, the priest who celebrated the Mass was the same one who held that first week of spiritual exercises! When we saw him coming in, we realized with great emotion that Mary had already marked our way eight years before, when we still did not know.

## **ALLIANCE**

At that point we were no longer alone!

Friends, families who had already experienced situations similar to ours - young people who provoked us with their questions - children, who called us to make truth at all times - priests who helped us to look up - consecrated persons, who demonstrated with their lives that it is possible to decide for Jesus— spouses who lived the cross of a separation, but deeply anchored to Jesus. Each one enriched in his identity, in communion of faith.

We have savoured the sweetness of walking together with other families in the company of Jesus and Mary, in a simple way, each with his own step. In our experience, “ADMA” is precisely the name we gave to this meeting and to this relationship

## **LIGHT**

The first surprise of our walk WITH Jesus and with Mary was the light, light on us, light that flooded our lives making us see ourselves, our behaviour, the couple, our children, our friends, all under a new perspective.

On the day of the wedding a priest friend, an old man, had left us a note that we had not given much weight to. There was written “Always look at life through God’s lens”. After a few years we began to understand that really “if you put God’s lenses the light illuminates your life”.

After Matthew came Catherine, Sara and in a moment of great energy we launched into the experience of the foster care with Simone— a boy with many family and personal difficulties. Immediately after, Margherita, our fourth child, came. Carry out the education of the children, work for the successful integration of Simone in our family, look for adolescence, two full-time jobs... Everything put us to the test and without realizing it we went through new moments of confusion and uncertainty, we had so much difficulty in entrusting ourselves, but we remained stable in the couple and above all we no longer took away God’s lenses.

## **EUCHARIST**

With Mary we learned to stand before Jesus, silent or in a river of words and tears, to abandon ourselves to him and to feed on him asking us to instill his own feelings, to change ourselves and to become new creatures.

In the meantime, the children were growing up, it became clear that by loving you can make mistakes unintentionally you can hurt, that the roads are not those we draw. Thus only in the Eucharist, in that being silent in front of Jesus, we find the answers: we began to understand that love has no pattern, that from the falls we get up again, that love also passes in mistakes and our look has begun to transform before the difficulties of life. We saw ourselves fragile and human, with so many faults to forgive, but that silence and that putting everything back in Jesus, gave us peace.

Rediscover the Eucharist thanks to Mary! This is the other great gift we have received by living the experience of our families. Here are the two columns of Don Bosco in all their strength.

## **TRUTH**

In the light of the Eucharist, truth is made. The important questions are no longer something to fear, but something to provoke in order to move towards the awareness of who we really are and what we seek.

In truth, find out who you are, your being a husband, a wife, a father, a mother, a friend, a colleague. Many things that filled our lives have gradually lost their meaning.

I had studied to do a job that satisfied me, I worked in a big company with great professionals and with continuous challenges every day. In truth, I began to question myself and to leave room for that voice that told me: where your treasure is, there is your heart. And so, ... where was my heart? More and more I realized that I was not where I wanted to be, that the children’s commitments had become something to be managed and not to be enjoyed.

## **NEWS**

If you make truth then God can also change your life and what you did not see before, what was not there before, you see and find a space; what was not possible before, becomes.

The Lord has changed the order of our lives, we have discovered the sweetness of praying in the family, of

entrusting ourselves to one another, of smiling in the face of so many rigidities that gave us fleeting security, of accepting children for what they are, to value them in their diversity, to forgive us in the couple.

In 2016 I joined the board of the Adma and in 2017 I assumed the role of president. Until then we had actively participated in the association, but it was more than we had received. The desire to return was great, but we also had many fears and uncertainties.

We started asking ourselves real questions, feeling really small in front of something big, thinking that all this would have stolen energy to the couple and to the family. In prayer, however, the thought that God does not abandon you and that He sees much ahead of us. So we entrusted everything, we asked for strength, energy, time: in the uncertainty and awareness of our humanity and fragility, in entrusting everything in greater hands, the Lord was already giving us a hundred times as much...

And then in this news, after 20 years of work and racing I decided to quit my job, to radically change my life. For what? To create space and leave room for what God would have asked of me, to be where I wanted to be and to fully live my vocation as a wife and as a mother

### **JOURNEY**

Thus we continue our journey, a simple journey, made of falls, fragility - continuous acceptance of self and others and above all acceptance of one's own limits. A path entrusted, where the light of Jesus is the strength to always get up and not to look back and the goal of joy is too beautiful and clear to let go or to throw in the towel.

And how much we struggle every day, how much we must constantly reorient ourselves to the goods of heaven, what appears unspeakable and incomprehensible sometimes this thought... then we recognize Mary as a strong and concrete presence in our lives, the way to Jesus.

And fidelity to the journey of Adma, the presence of constant appointments such as the 24 of the month , the monthly meetings, the spiritual exercises for families, are the occasion to maintain the centrality in Jesus and Mary

### **HOPE**

What we most need today when we look to the future is hope, which our young people in particular need. Young people who have gradually become part of this journey and renew it with their freshness, their joy, their courage and their transparency. Adma has also become Adma of young people.

Hope for young people is to read through our eyes the sweet gaze of God on them, to feel loved children, to feel that they are fine as they are, without ifs and buts. Often even with our children we have made and we make the mistake of passing the message of "I would love you if..." instead we discover - first of all by living it on us - that God loves us as we are and we too must pass in our eyes towards the children this reflection of eternity

### **THANKS**

As we heard one day in a testimony of Sister Luigina , here at the Congress with us, GRACE "IS' when God comes in our life". One day, Tullio and Simonetta told us "...don't worry, just grace". And so is, a river of grace in which we feel immersed.

Grace to live and grace to share. It's the motive that young people have chosen for the 150° of 'Adma "Share the grace". Share with all that God does not make us lack his grace. Also living this congress with all of you is a huge grace, being here as a family is a huge grace and for this we conclude with the last word.

### **MAGNIFICAT**

Magnificat to thank all those who have been God's instruments in these years in supporting our family, protecting it and helping it to grow: our parents, our families of origin, our friends whose faces we see and hear the words. And then to sing our THANKS to Jesus, to Mary, to Don Bosco for the good experienced in these 150° years, for all those who kept the association alive, but above all kept the FAITH alive.