As members of the Salesian Family, we eagerly anticipate the joyous celebration of the Feast of Mary Help of Christians on May 24th. This occasion holds immense significance for us, as it provides an opportunity to reflect upon and honor the beautiful dedication to Mary that is deeply ingrained within our Salesian tradition. In this article, we will embark on a brief journey through the biblical, historical, and Salesian dimensions of this devotion. Additionally, we will explore how we, as the Salesian Family, can embrace the spirit of Mary Help of Christians in our lives and celebrate this feast with fervor.

To understand the presence of Mary as Help of Christians, we turn to the biblical account of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). In this remarkable event, people sought Jesus' assistance, and Mary was present, exhibiting one of the essential features of Salesian pedagogy—her maternal concern and intercession to prevent misfortune. Her presence at the wedding serves as a reminder of the importance of vigilance and our role as guardians and guides for the young people entrusted to us.

Delving into history, we discover that the invocation of Mary Help of Christians dates back centuries. In Constantinople, in the year 345, Saint John Chrysostom, through prayer, acknowledged Mary as the powerful help of God. Saint John of Damascene further elaborated the invocation "Mary Help of Christians, Pray for us" in 749. Notably, in 1030, a Russian city was saved from a barbarian invasion through prayer to Mary Help of Christians. In 1571, Pope Saint Pius V prescribed the inclusion of the invocation in the litanies throughout the Catholic world due to the miraculous victory achieved at the Battle of Lepanto. This historical context demonstrates the power and efficacy attributed to Mary's intercession as Help of Christians.

The connection between Don Bosco, the founder of the Salesian Family, and Mary Help of Christians is profound and enduring. At the tender age of nine, Don Bosco experienced a visionary dream where Mary appeared as a majestic lady, guiding and revealing his future mission. Her words, "In time you will understand," left an indelible mark on his life. Don Bosco's mother, "Mamá Margarita," played a pivotal role in shaping his devotion to Mary and nurturing his understanding of the preventive approach, which combines firmness and gentleness.

Inspired by the Virgin, Don Bosco decided to promote the dedication of "Mary Help of Christians" in the 1860s and initiated the construction of the Basilica. His devotion to Mary Help
of Christians extended beyond words; he personally witnessed and believed in her miracles. In 1872, he founded the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a living testament to his gratitude and commitment to Mary.

Now, let us consider how we, as the Salesian Family, can embody the spirit of Mary Help of Christians in our lives and celebrate this feast in a meaningful way.

Firstly, let us be present with the children and young people entrusted to our care. As Mary was present at the wedding in Cana, let us anticipate their needs and prevent challenges whenever possible. And when the need arises, let us offer our assistance and support, just as Mary interceded to prevent misfortune.

Secondly, let us emulate Mary's simplicity and fidelity. Throughout her life, Mary remained a constant and significant presence in the life of Jesus. Similarly, we are called to be a consistent presence for the young people, guiding them with love and devotion.

Thirdly, let us attentively listen to the needs of children and young people, offering them the support they require rather than imposing our preconceived notions upon them. Just as Mary listened to the needs of others and acted accordingly, let us follow her example.

Finally, let us extend our hands with kindness, embracing the youth and children whom God has placed in our lives. By doing so, we demonstrate the essence of the Salesian spirit and the maternal care exemplified by Mary Help of Christians.

As we eagerly anticipate the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, let us approach this occasion with joy and gratitude. May we, as the Salesian Family, honor and celebrate Mary's guidance and intercession in our lives. Let us embrace her virtues, be present to those in need, and emulate her loving and gentle spirit. Through our collective efforts, we can ensure that the devotion to Mary Help of Christians continues to shine brightly within the Salesian tradition, guiding and inspiring us on our journey of faith and service.