

They reveal to
us her
interiority





CRITERIA FOR READING THE LETTERS

*Anna Costa and
Piera Cavaglià*

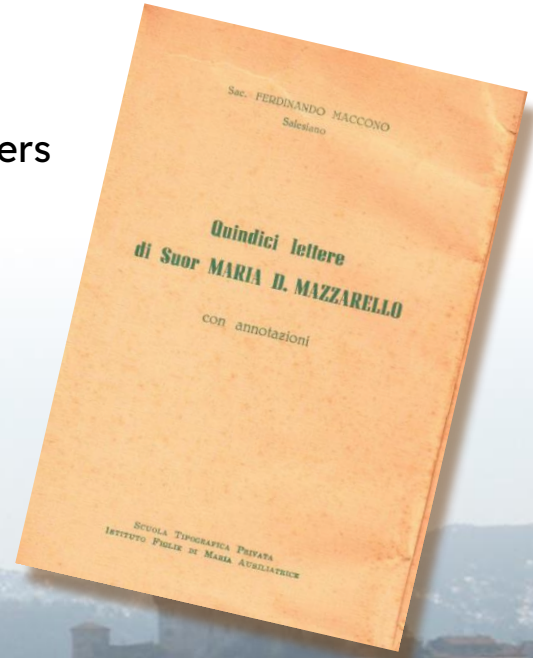
1. THE PUBLICATION OF THE LETTERS

1911

The first compilation was when the cause of beatification was introduced. Thirty-four letters were collected, all addressed to F.M.A.

1932

Fr. Fernando Maccono publishes 15 letters by selecting them and making some corrections.



1935

Three more original letters are inserted for the printing for the process of beatification. They are directed to lay people (Bosco Family)

1960

New edition of the biography in which other letters are transcribed.

1972

On the centenary of the foundation, there are other letters addressed to Don Bosco, Fr. Cagliero, and other Salesians.



1975

Publication of Sister Maria Esther Posada. Five years later, the second edition was made.





1994

They are given the title:
"WISDOM OF LIFE"



2004

It is the same as the previous one, except that a text written by the Benedictine monk Anselm Grün is added to the introduction entitled: "Simplicity of life"



The correspondence increasingly emerges as a primary source to get closer to the image of Maria Mazzarello.

"The letters are precious fragments of history, spirituality and life".

2. NUMBER AND TYPOLOGY

Number

The correspondence consists of 68 letters. The new edition contains one more letter than the previous edition (1st letter) addressed to Dr. Pablo Parodi, discovered in 1972.

The letter of 22 December 1879 is omitted because it is a collective writing.

In the first 33 letters, the numbering has undergone variations.



Communicate to Don
Bosco or to other Salesian
superiors news of the first
community

Letters to greet
various people

News to the families



Letters to her
daughters

Unofficial

Confidential

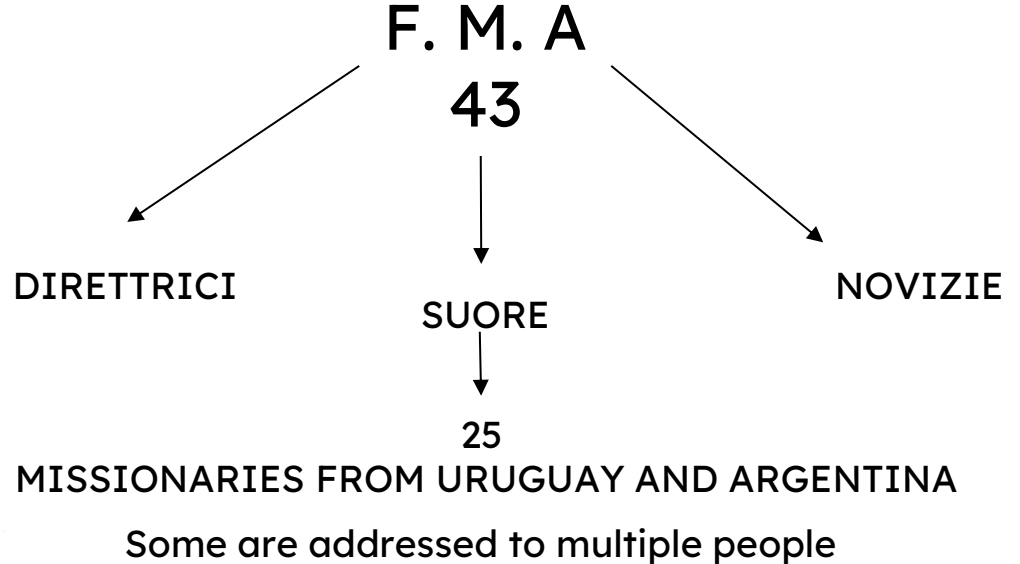
3. EDITORIAL CRITERIA

- The number respects chronological order
- Recipient's name and position
- Brief summary: theme of the letter
- Other data: archive, number of pages
- There are only three letters of which the original could not be consulted.
- Critical structure: Notes with historical, biographical or content clarifications.



4. THE RECIPIENTS

Most of the people belonging to the Institute of the F.M.A. or the Salesian congregation



2
Don
Bosco

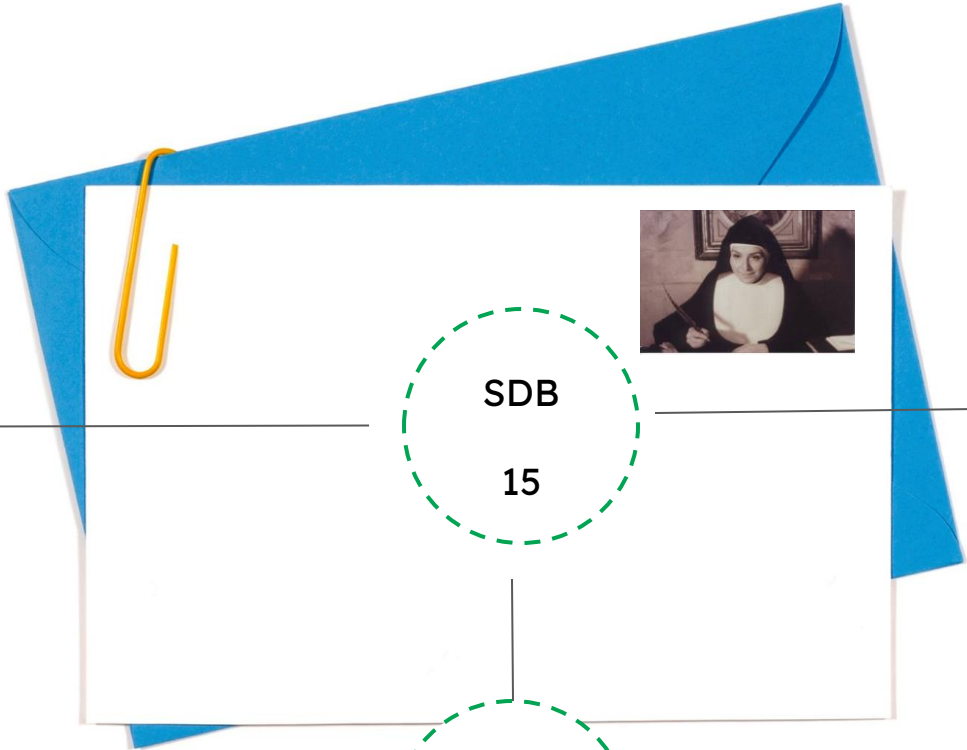
SDB
15

7
Other
salesians

1
Diocesan
Priest

6
Don
Cagliero

9
Lay
people





5. *Style and Structure*

Style

- Dialogic in a familiar, confidential way, without concern for grammar.
- There is a greater concern for style only when addressing the authorities.
- Verbal expression denotes the immediacy of spoken language (repetitions, grammatical incorrectness...)



- Characteristic greeting according to religious use.
- Initial greeting
- Date
- Body of the letter: to the F.M.A. gives news of the community or other houses visited.
- She addresses her daughters with sober and ascetic-educational recommendations.
- Conclusion: Concise and essential
- Signature: generally autograph and accompanied by expressions that denote deep affection for her daughters.

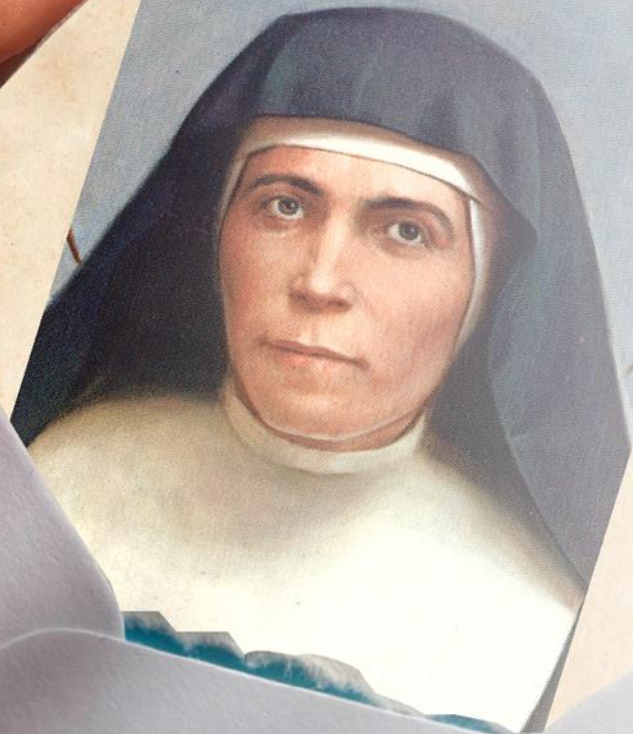
Each letter presents a broad horizon that opens not only on the life of Maria Mazzarello but also on the first FMA communities, including a radius of action that expands to the ends of the world.



The letters are a response to **LIFE**

Maria Mazzarello in her letters...

- She doesn't use formulas, but touches the heart
- Demonstrates firmness of character and authentic faith that translates into every affirmation.
- She doesn't get lost in "chatting", but communicates what she experiences.
- Humility and cheerfulness are her characteristics.
- Her faith becomes operative in her love as a mother and in her gift of self.



THE DISCOVERY OF A FACE

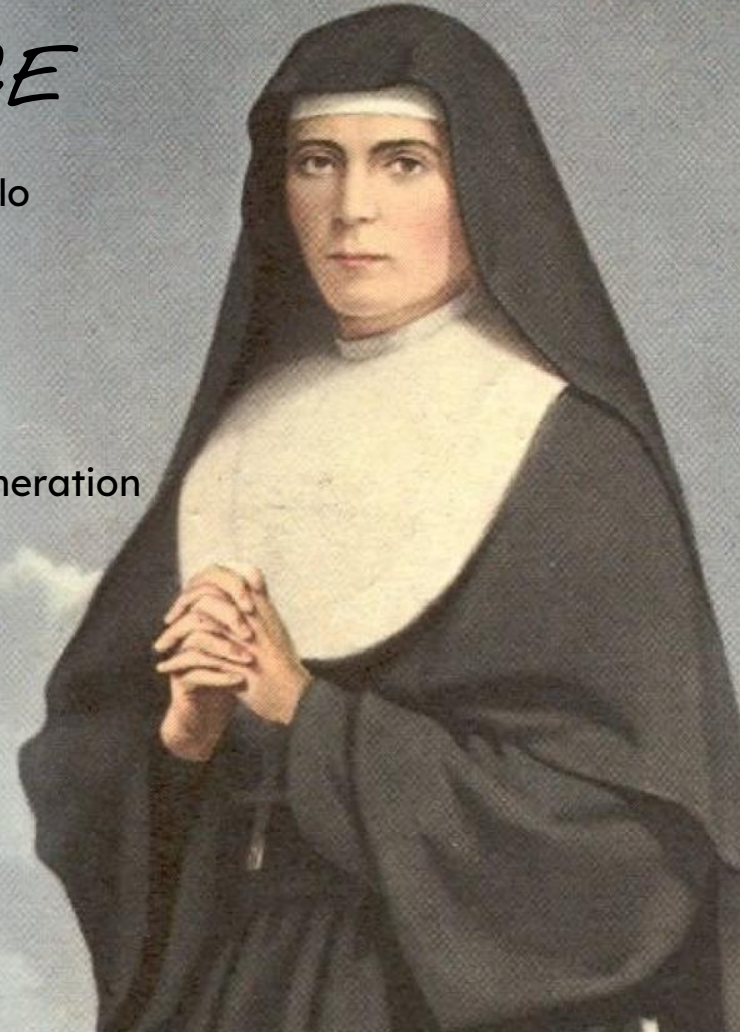
The desire to contemplate the face of Maria Mazzarello accompanies the history of the Institute.

What was Mother Mazzarello like?

It is the question that is repeated from generation to generation

The correspondence allows us to take a symbolic journey into the inner world of the saint and to discover the typical notes of her face.

After the publication of her letters and some studies based on her, Maria Mazzarello's face appears more clearly.



Each letter is like a window that opens directly onto the life of the first F.M.A. and on the first community formed and led by her.

Each letter manifests her inner life.

Each letter is like a piece of a mosaic that reconstructs her face.

**We have 68 letters spread over a relatively short period of time.
From January 1874 to April 1881**





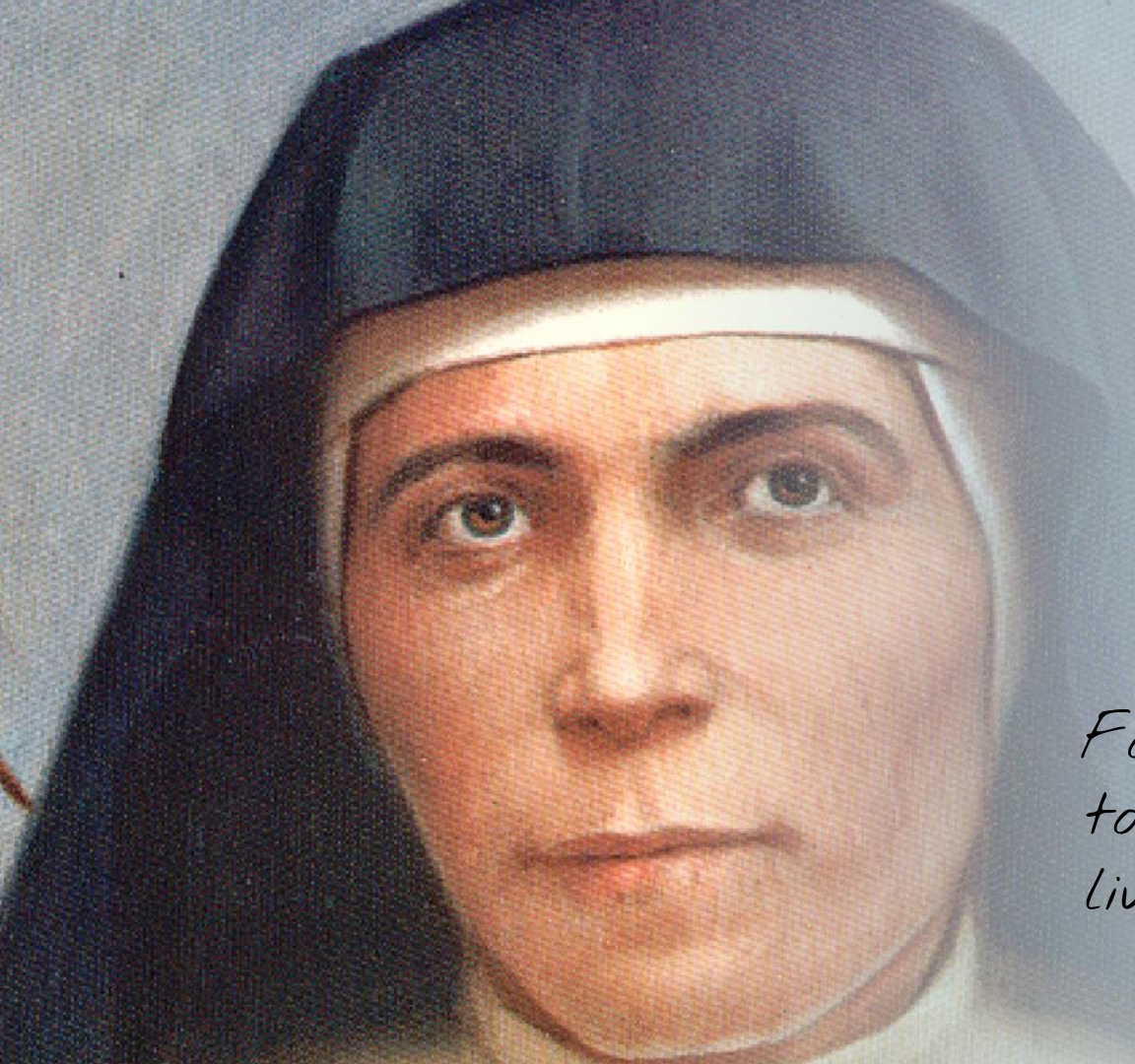
THE FEATURES OF A FACE (1)

(L 29,4)

A face without a halo but with all the characteristics to recognize it as such.

Woman and educator who seeks the good of others with clarity and transparency.

Lively interlocutor: She is acute, understanding, ready to encourage, correct, demanding, respectful, and optimistic towards people and situations.



Great Humility

*Vigorous and
strong personality*

*For her, living is helping
to live, helping others to
live by giving themselves.*



"TO TAKE CARE OF"

Guiding, worrying, entering into the situation of others, and making it your own are some of the things that best define Mother Mazzarello as an educator and mother.

(L 28,8 - L 12, 3)

*A determined spirit
launched towards life.
L 7, 10 - L 9,9 - 18, 3*

A woman in a dark religious habit is shown from the chest up. She is holding a rosary in her right hand and an open book in her left hand. A crucifix is visible on the chest of her habit. The background is dark and textured.

A WOMAN WITH A PRAYERFUL HEART

A heart always inhabited and immersed in love, a mind full of faces and presences.

L 9, 3 - 34, 4 - 4, 2 - 52, 4

She presents herself as one who loves greatly in God and is ready to do everything for the good of her daughters.

L 55, 10 - L 63, 5

Her Gaze

A close-up, high-resolution photograph of a woman's face, focusing on her eyes. The image has a grainy, textured appearance, similar to a halftone print or a high-quality scan of a printed page. The woman's eyes are light-colored and looking directly at the camera with a calm, steady gaze. Her skin is a warm, natural tone. The background is dark and out of focus, making the face the central subject.

She doesn't miss anything. It's
intuitive

L 59, 1

deep, serene, sharp...

L 23, 5

She calls things by their name, she is
clear and frank

L 5, 3.4 - L 24, 3

Her gaze and her presence instill
courage

L 39, 4 - L 42, 3

Her Gaze

She does not exploit; she gives trust and envelops the one talking with benevolence.

L 25, 2

She has positive outlook, capable of encouraging and enhancing capabilities present in every person

L 45, 2



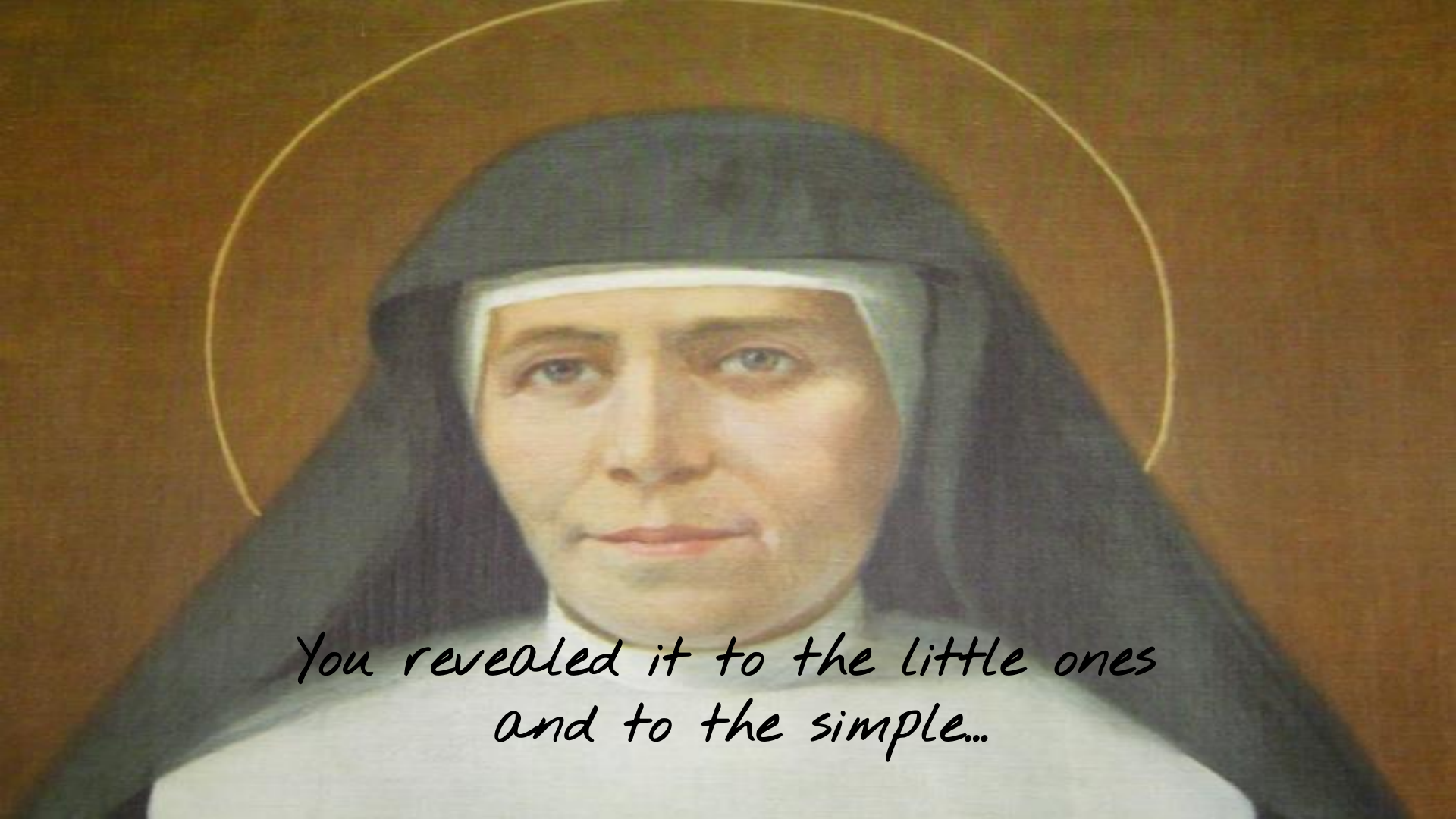


Reading Maria Mazzarello's letters, the most important message for me is this:

Be simple! Trust in her love! It's not as difficult as you think. Love with simplicity and be happy!

Maria Mazzarello's spirituality is free from speculative complications. It is pure, free from the moralistic and petty mentality widespread in the ecclesiastical sphere in the nineteenth century. She inspires a breadth of views, joy, simplicity, and transparency.

Anselm Grun



*You revealed it to the little ones
and to the simple...*