

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

Salesian Province of Mary Help of Christians, Guwahati, Assam, India

JS – 59/2022

1 February 2022

My dear Confreres,

HAPPY FEAST OF DON BOSCO

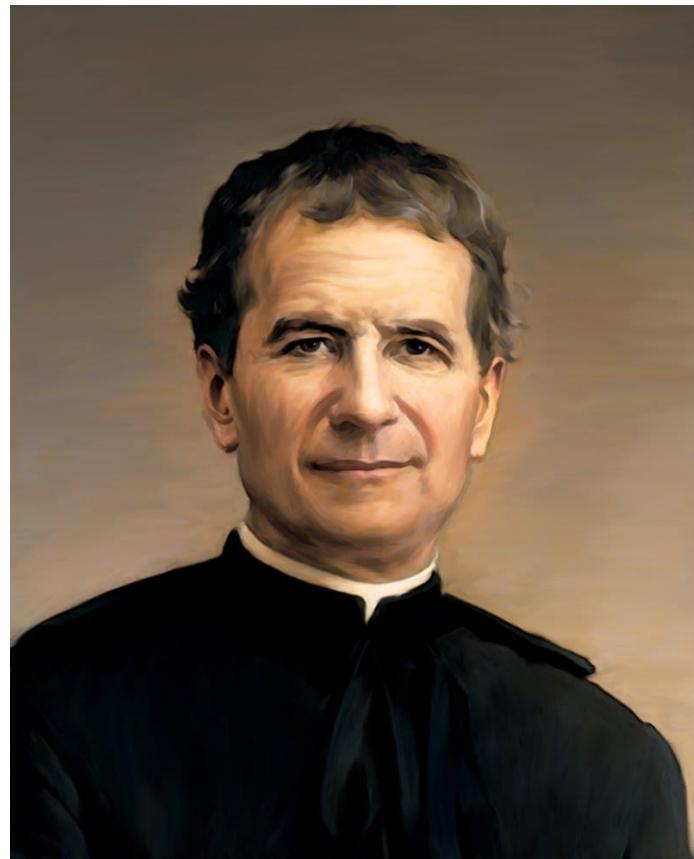
First and foremost, I would like to wish you all a very happy feast of Don Bosco! Don Bosco remains our enduring model and inspiration. We thank God for the gift of St John Bosco to the Church and the society. In him we see the wonders that nature and grace can achieve!

It would be good to recall a part of Our Father and Founder's life, in order to encourage ourselves on our journey of religious life. Immediately after his priestly ordination, Don Bosco received three offers for his first priestly job.

The first was the job of a tutor for the children of a family of the Genoa nobility. Many such families, rather than sending their children to the public schools preferred to educate them at home. They always wanted a priest as teacher and educator, for he gave a guarantee of seriousness. The offer carried a salary of 1,000 lire per annum, an excellent proposal.

Secondly, his own people urged him to accept the vacant post of chaplain at Morialdo. They offered him double the usual salary.

And, thirdly, Fr Cinzano, parish priest of Castelnuovo, offered him the job of assistant parish priest. He too guaranteed a good salary. It is funny that all should have mentioned money, as if being a priest meant to settle in a comfortable job. The only discordant voice was Mamma Margaret's, the woman who



was struggling daily to make ends meet: "If you ever become rich, I won't set foot in your house."

It was at this time that Don Bosco went to seek advice from Fr Cafasso in Turin. Fr Cafasso asked him to stay at *Convitto Ecclesiastico* and complete his priestly formation. During his three years of this experiential study and formation, Don Bosco learnt how to be a priest. He also met a great number of youngsters of every age who roamed about the streets and squares of Turin, especially on the outskirts of the city, gambling, brawling, cursing and blaspheming. Don Bosco saw the plight of those boys coming from needy families, and who were often unemployed and were on the lookout for any job. They were the first products of the immigrants crowding into the slums that would soon surround every city.

Don Bosco directed his attention to help these kinds of youngsters. He found his calling in such a situation. He quickly assessed the situation and found that those boys needed a school and work which could assure them a better future. They needed to encounter God and discover and realize their own dignity. Don Bosco with his creativity and total commitment touched the lives of these boys. He and his collaborators did whatever little was possible for these poor young people. They would provide them with catechism, bread, professional training, and also jobs protected by labour contracts. Such an intervention grew in a gigantic network of priests, religious and lay people interested in the salvation of the young. Don Bosco taught his first Salesians and all those who worked with him to see the basic goodness of every youngster who comes to us for help. This optimism guides every Salesian enterprise. Let us learn from Don Bosco and other Salesians to be totally committed to our mission, and to face optimistically whatever challenges life throws at us for the sake of our youngsters.

PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

We will be celebrating our 21st Provincial Chapter at Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati, 7-12 February 2022. As we know, "the provincial chapter is the fraternal gathering in which the local communities strengthen their sense of belonging to the provincial community, through their common concern for its general problems. It is also the representative assembly of all the confreres and local communities. It deliberates about matters which regard the province, with the exception of whatever is entrusted by the Constitutions and Regulations to other organs of government" (C. 170).

I request all of you to intensify your prayers for this important event in the life of the Province. I thank Br Joby Mani, Moderator, and the Pre-Capitular Commission, for all their hard work, especially Fr Joy Joseph Kachappilly, Fr Alex Mathew Kattakayam and Fr Maria Arul Anthuvan Tharsis for taking extra pains in preparing the Chapter Working Document along with the Moderator.

Besides the discussion of the three sub-themes, viz., Salesian Charism, Youth Ministry and Lay Collaboration, we will be discussing on the various concerns of the Province, finalizing the Province Directory, Formation Plan, Vocational Plan, the Organic Provincial Plan (OPP), and other important policies, for instance, Child Protection Policy. We will taking up the lines of action proposed to us by Fr Biju Michael, Regional Councillor of South Asia, and other decisions taken during the last three Province Symposiums on Education and Evangelization, Youth Spirituality, and Lay Co-Responsibility and Collaboration.

The tentative timetable of the Provincial Chapter was finalized and approved at the Provincial Council Meeting held at Provincial House, Guwahati on 18 January 2022. The final meeting of the Preparatory Pre-Capitular Commission was held at Don Bosco Technical School, Maligaon, Guwahati on 26 January 2022. Besides the Chapter Members, there will be six invited observers who will be attending the Provincial Chapter (two young Salesian confreres, a Salesian Cooperator, two youngsters and another lay person). I request all the Members to reach DBI by 2.00 pm on 7 February 2022, so that we may start the Chapter in a tranquil and prayerful manner. I request all the communities to prepare for it in a direct manner, especially by way of prayers and offering Eucharist for the intentions of the Chapter.

Let us remember that all our endeavours in the forthcoming Provincial Chapter are summarized in reaffirming our foundation, Jesus Christ. The reason for our existence and for our consecration is Jesus Christ himself. As people who are consecrated, the *sequela Christi*, the following of Christ, shapes our identity, integrating our pastoral formation within it. Our consecration and our mission are both closely tied to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Without him nothing in our life and our work would make sense. He gives meaning to everything that we are, and everything that we do. As consecrated individuals, as Salesians of Don Bosco, God makes of us “a living memorial of His Son Jesus. The vocational challenge for all of consecrated life and for us in particular as Salesians of Don Bosco, is that of “always returning to Jesus”, renouncing everything that is not Him or that distances us from Him.

With much humility and clarity of vision we as a Province need to recognise that the way out of the various problems and difficulties that we face as individuals and as a Province will not be found in new policies or in better projects, but it is always about returning to Jesus Christ, our Master and our Lord. If we find disillusionment, problems, existential fatigue, lack of motivation, dearth of vocations, or fragility in our dedication, it is always a pointer to our disconnectedness to the Lord and lack of fidelity to our Salesian vocation. Because, we can live by wrongly believing that everything makes sense when we are doing things, or trying to do better things. Let us humbly acknowledge that without Jesus Christ at the centre of our thinking, feeling, living, dreaming, and working, there is no future, and we cannot offer anything that is significant to the world. We

should not settle down for a bland and mediocre existence, which is a real temptation in today's world. Don Bosco, our Father and Founder, invites us to give first place to God and His affairs. Like him, we need to put all our talents and abilities in the service of God and of the youth to whom we are sent.

Let our celebration of the Provincial Chapter be less of a juridical exercise and more of a spiritual experience.

INAUGURATION OF THE CENTENARY YEAR

The inauguration of the centenary celebrations of the arrival of Salesians in North East was held on 12 January 2022, in all our centres across the Province. The confreres had taken a lot of initiative to celebrate this occasion, and inaugurate the year-long celebrations in the Province.

At Provincial House, Guwahati, Most Rev. John Moolachira, Archbishop of Guwahati, was the Chief Guest for the inaugural function. He hoisted a special centenary flag and declared the centenary celebrations open. The youth of Don Bosco Institute, Kharguli sang the centenary anthem, and danced to its tune too. They gave two other items too. The Scouts and Guides of Don Bosco, Panbazar helped in the flag-hoist, with the help of Mr Lazar. The confreres from the city, Salesian Family Members, especially FMA, MSMHC, SMI, VSDB, Salesian Cooperators, and Past Pupils, and other invited guests from the clergy and religious of Guwahati city participated in this programme. Sr Philomena Mathew MSMHC, Mother General, and Sr Alphonsa Kurisingal FMA, Provincial of Guwahati, were also present for the occasion.



At the end of the inaugural programme, Archbishop John Moolachira presided over a special Holy Eucharist at St Joseph's Co-Cathedral Church in the campus. Don Bosco

Past Pupils organized a Blood Donation Camp on this occasion. In my welcome speech, I gave a brief history of the events leading to the arrival of Salesians in North East India. Archbishop John Moolachira, in his address, said, "Today we congratulate the Don Bosco Society for their presence and contribution for what they have done, and what they are doing in the North East."

The memoirs of the one of the first eleven missionaries, Br Gumersindo Cid, re-written by Fr Kuriala Chittattukalam, was released during this occasion. This book entitled *Journeying with Mary Help of Christians* is a window into the heroic life of the pioneering missionaries, who struggled to establish the various Salesian centres and institutions for the welfare of the people of North East.

I thank all the Rectors, Leaders and confreres who have taken much pain to inaugurate the Centenary Year well and in a fitting way. May God bless all your sacrifices!

SALESIAN FAMILY SPIRITUALITY DAYS 2022

Some of us participated in the Regional (13-14 January 2022) and International Salesian Family Spirituality Days 2022 (13-16 January 2022) that were held/broadcast online. In reference to Strenna 2022, "Do all through love, nothing through constraint," Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major, said: "God draws his creatures to himself without taking away the freedom He has given, because love does this. The Salesian intends to arouse enthusiasm for God, but he always does so with care and full respect for the person he meets. The call to give oneself to others in the educational service and human promotion is nourished by the example of the elders and by the strength of the Spirit; it presupposes a movement of generosity on the part of the person which corresponds to a positive will, not an imposition. This freedom does not mean that I 'do what I want', but it is the discovery of a joyful responsibility."

On 20 January 2022, around 70 Salesian Family Members of Guwahati city celebrated the Salesian Family Day, in which Strenna 2022 was studied in a detailed way. Fr Maria Anthuvan did a PowerPoint presentation to aid the study of Strenna, followed by the video of Strenna. I animated the final discussion and lines of action as inspired by the Strenna.

PRINCIPALS MEETING

The Meeting of School Principals and Vice Principals, organized by DBSEM, was held in Provincial House, Guwahati on 21 January 2022. Fr Kuriala Chittattukalam was the main resource person during this gathering. The training sessions planned for lay teachers/leaders of Schools had to be postponed to March due to the prevailing Covid situation and the inability of the resource persons to travel. I thank Fr Sebastian Kuricheal and other confreres for having organized the Principals Meet for the animation of our confreres involved in school ministry.

PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS OF FR VIVEK LAKRA AND FR JOSEPH BARA

Vivek Lakra was ordained priest at Noadih Parish, Gumla Diocese, Jharkhand on 12 January 2022 by Most Rev. Felix Toppo SJ, Archbishop of Ranchi. And, on 16 January 2022, Joseph Bara was ordained priest at Sikaribangla, Tangla Parish by Most Rev. Michael Akasius Toppo, Bishop of Tezpur. I offer my heartiest congratulations to Fr Vivek Lakra and Fr Joseph Bara, the newly ordained priests and wish them God's abundant blessings and a fruitful and joyful priestly ministry. We thank their parents and dear ones for their generosity and support in their Salesian and priestly vocation. May God bless them abundantly! Fr Vivek Lakra will be Assistant Parish Priest, Vice Principal and Warden at the community of Umswai, and Fr Joseph Bara will be Assistant Parish Priest, Vice Principal and Warden at the community of Amkachi.

NB: The priestly ordination of Romanius Barwa will be on 5 February 2022, and of Paul Minj (Senior) will be on 13 February 2022. We wish them an intensive preparation for this important step in their lives, and accompany them with our personal and community prayers.



INAUGURATION AND BLESSING OF SCIENCE BLOCK AT HAFLONG

On 24 January 2022, the feast of St Francis de Sales, I inaugurated and blessed the newly constructed Science Block – Centenary Annexe at Don Bosco School, Haflong. Congratulations to Fr Emmanuel Marngar, Rector and Principal, and the confreres of Haflong community on this event, and their contribution to the Salesian educative and pastoral mission.



ONLINE MEETING OF RECTORS, LEADERS, AND COMMISSIONS

There was an Online Meeting of Rectors, Leaders and Comission Heads on 28 January 2022. Fr Maria Anthuvan presented the Strenna 2022, "Do all through love, nothing through constraint." Then I presented a reflection on the strengths, challenges and initiatives of the Province under the various areas like fraternal and community life, vocation promotion, initial formation, ongoing formation, governance and animation, etc. I also gave a presentation on the reminders and revisions on the duties of Rectors and Leaders. Fr Joseph Teron Langne, Vice Provincial, gave an update on youth ministry in the Province, with the details of various activities; while Fr Benny P. Basil dealt with the part of financial administration and budget preparations.

INAUGURATION OF THE ADBU CENTENARY BLOCK (ACADEMIC BLOCK-V)

On 30 January 2022, I inaugurated the Centenary Block, the Academic Block V of Assam Don Bosco University at Tapesia Gardens, and dedicated it to all the young men and women of our nation, especially the North East. Most Rev. John Moolachira, Archbishop of Guwahati, blessed the Centenary Block, which will house the School of Professional Studies of Don Bosco University. Most Rev. Thomas Menampampil, Archbishop emeritus too joined us on the occasion. The University students presented a prayerful tribute to Don Bosco, the Dreamer, on this occasion. I congratulate Fr Stephen Mavely, Vice Chancellor, and all other confreres working in Don Bosco University for their hard work and dedication to the University project.

CONDOLENCES

Fr Joseph Teron Langne, Vice Provincial, lost his sister-in-law, **Mrs Rosa** (wife of his eldest brother, Mr Orlando Teron) on 1 January 2022. She had suffered a stroke, and she had a fall one month earlier, from which she did not improve. May God grant her eternal rest. We assure Fr Teron and his family our prayerful remembrance at their loss. May the Lord console and comfort their family especially Mr Orlando and the children.

Mrs Beronika Hereh, mother of Cleric Essak Hereh, 1st year Philosophy, Sonada, passed away on 1 January 2022. She was 68 years old, and was confined to bed for quite many years. We offer our heartfelt condolences to Br Essak and his family and pray for the repose of her soul.

Cl. Laleth Sugan, a Second Year Theologian, of the Province of Madras (INM) met with a fatal bike accident and passed away on 3 January 2022. He was 31. May his soul rest in peace! We offer our condolences to the Provincial and confreres of INM.

Fr Kissun Tudu of the Province of Calcutta (INC) passed away at Dharan, Nepal due to a massive heart attack on 10 January 2022. He was 52. He had been suffering from severe lung infection. May the Lord grant eternal rest to him. We offer our condolences to the Provincial and confreres of INC.

After a short illness and due to a fall which resulted in some broken ribs, **Fr Ugo Turco** passed away at La Spezia, Italy, on 30 January 2022. He was 93. We pray for the repose of his soul, that the Lord may grant eternal rest to him. Fr Turco belonged to our Province for many years, and only recently in August 2018, he was incardinated into the Province of Italy - Central (ICC), though he had returned to Italy ten years before that. We offer our heartfelt condolences to his family, well wishers and the Provinces where he worked.

Fr Ugo Turco was born on 15 August 1928 in Soave, Italy. He made his first profession on 16 August 1946 in Chieri, Italy. He made his perpetual profession in Mawlai, Shillong on 14 August 1952, and ordained priest in Shillong on 8 December 1955. He worked in Ulizio (Italy), Bandel, Krishnagar, Sonada, Don Bosco Shillong, North Lakhimpur, Tangla, Dekhiajuli, Mawdyndeng, Bosco Pnar Jowai in various capacities; and then he was asked to return to Italy, where he was appointed to the community of La Spezia. Besides Italian and English, he spoke Hindi, Bengali, Assamese and Khasi. He is still remembered by many people, and just a few days ago he was still in correspondence with Fr Joseph Teron Langne and Br Joby Mani. May his ministry, especially for the people of North East bear abundant fruit for the Lord. May the good Lord grant eternal rest and peace to His faithful servant!



CONCLUSION

The Province and the Salesian Family has enthusiastically inaugurated the centenary year and the yearlong celebrations. This is the year of grace and it has to be a year of holiness and transformation. Blessings from above will descend upon us manifold if we are faithful to our religious calling and to the charism that the Spirit has given to us. Remember however that there will be challenges, trials and difficulties, which if we are not alert, will tarnish the spirit of celebration and the holiness of the year. We need to be alert and keep ourselves close to God, to our Blessed Mother, St John Bosco, to one another and to everyone whom we serve especially the young who are the poorest, the wounded, the marginalised and those facing varied onslaughts of the cruel world, those without shepherds. We need to become shepherds and guides of the young like Don Bosco, who accompanied the lost and the strayed ones back to the fold of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

I earnestly request everyone to be on fire for centenary celebrations, spiritual or otherwise. This is the way we prove ourselves grateful to God and acknowledge the contribution of the pioneers and the Salesian missionaries down through the decades. Everyone needs to pitch in one's share to make the celebrations solemn and deeply spiritual. It is important that those who have been assigned various responsibilities plan and think ahead and never leave the preparations for the last moment.

In the North East, Don Bosco is a household name today and it is a brand name known for turning ordinary into extraordinary; the ordinary youngsters have become excellent and extraordinary builders of society and the Church. People look up to us to keep up the brand quality in our living, in our listening, in our talking, in our ministry especially animation and in our relationship with one another in the community and in our place of mission. Let us ensure that our apostolate is of high quality and has a tinge of professionalism. The years of formation and the accompaniment that we have received in the Congregation have prepared us so well to render services of high calibre, provided we keep our focus, dedication and motivation high, along with relentless work. And this is what everyone wants to see in us and be proud of.

Once again, a very happy feast of our dear Father and Founder St John Bosco. May Don Bosco be with us and watch over us. May he continue to be our model and guide.

I request everyone to consult the booklet *Celebrate 100 years of God's Fidelity* for my monthly calendar. Those who have not received the booklet, kindly ensure to collect your personal copy from the Provincial House or tell someone to collect it for you from the Receptionist's Office, Provincial House, Guwahati.

May God bless you always!

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



Fr Januarius S Sangma, SDB
Provincial