

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 78/2023

1 August 2023

My dear Confreres,

Greetings from Don Bosco - Provincial House, Guwahati.

On 15 August, we celebrate twin liberations - one spiritual and the other political.

MARY'S ASSUMPTION VIS-A-VIS INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

Our Mother Mary was assumed into heaven at the completion of her earthly sojourn. Crowned queen of angels and saints, she is fully with her children on earth, most tangibly seen in her apparitions at Lourdes, Fatima and others. Don Bosco was taught in her school the loveliness of virtue (love, prayerfulness, relentless dedication to mission/duty, forgiveness) and the ugliness of sin (negativity, lack of forgiveness, lack of transparency, relationship etc). Don Bosco emphatically said in his dying moments that Mary had done everything.



Another historic liberation that we celebrate is the end of British rule and the start of self-governance. Colonial rule was oppressive in so many ways. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation and other renowned freedom fighters resolved to fight against the oppressive regime in a non-violent and non-co-operative way. Looking around and assessing today's national scenario, we feel the rendition of the novel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, "Into the heaven of freedom, My Father, let my country, awake" is still far from reality. His insights and vision for India, "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high ... where knowledge is free" etc, are still a distant dream and reality for majority in our country.

My fraternal wishes to everyone for the celebration of the solemnity of the assumption and the independence day of our country. As sons of Don Bosco, reputed to moulding the youth, we strive to influence the youth greatly, for "The youth are the architects of a nation's future, with each dream they build, and each endeavor they undertake, they lay the foundation for greatness."

INDIA - FREE BUT NOT FOR THE MAJORITY AND THE MARGINALISED

India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule in mid-20th century marked a significant milestone in the country's history. However, the path to independence was not without its hurdles and, unfortunately, some of the challenges continue to persist even today. One such issue is the problem of ethnic violence in the north eastern state of Manipur, which has posed a serious threat to India's ideals of unity and diversity.

India's fight for independence was characterized by a **collective spirit of unity and resilience**. Led by visionaries such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and many others, the country united against colonial oppression and pursued the goal of self-governance. After years of non-violent resistance, civil disobedience movements, and countless sacrifices, India finally achieved independence on August 15, 1947.



Despite the euphoria of independence, India has faced numerous internal challenges that continue to test the strength of its democratic values and pluralistic society. Manipur, a state in northeastern India, has grappled with the issue of ethnic confrontation, a grave violation of human rights, a threat to communal harmony and a stoic silence of leaders that matter much.

The consequences of ethnic violence in Manipur are devastating. Innocent lives are lost, families are uprooted from their ancestral lands, properties destroyed, places of worship especially of Christians razed to the ground and communities are torn apart. Moreover, such violence perpetuates a cycle of animosity, hindering the development and progress of the region. India's journey towards a more inclusive and harmonious society requires concerted efforts to address the issue of ethnic rivalry in Manipur. The government, civil society organizations, and citizens alike must work hand in hand to find long-lasting solutions.

Open and respectful dialogue between different communities is essential to foster understanding and address deep-rooted grievances. Reconciliation efforts can help build trust and heal the wounds caused by ethnic violence. The enactment and implementation of comprehensive laws that protect the rights of minority groups are crucial. Stringent measures must be put in place to ensure justice for victims and deter acts of violence.

Socio-economic disparities often contribute to the tensions that lead to ethnic cleansing. Focusing on inclusive development, job creation, and equitable resource allocation can help uplift marginalized communities and reduce the factors that fuel conflict. Promoting

education that emphasizes diversity, tolerance, and empathy is vital to cultivate a culture of inclusivity. Educating the younger generation about the historical and cultural diversity of Manipur can foster respect and appreciation for different communities.

India's struggle for independence was driven by the ideals of freedom, justice, and unity. However, the challenges of ethnic cleansing in Manipur remind us that the journey towards a truly inclusive and harmonious society is ongoing. By fostering dialogue, strengthening legal frameworks, promoting economic empowerment, and prioritizing education and awareness, India can strive to overcome these challenges and uphold the values upon which it was founded. Only through collective efforts can India achieve true independence for all its citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity or background.

ASSUMPTION - A SOLEMNITY TO BE CELEBRATED

The feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven is a solemnity which all the faithful are bound to celebrate as they celebrate Sunday, the day of the Lord. The community needs to announce and encourage the faithful to participate in the Holy Mass on this day of solemnity. It is one of the central beliefs in the Catholic faith. It is a belief that at the completion of her earthly pilgrimage, Mary, immaculately conceived and one who remained sinless was taken up body and soul into Heaven. This dogma was officially defined by Pope Pius XII in the Apostolic Constitution "Munificentissimus Deus," which was promulgated on November 1, 1950.

The document "Munificentissimus Deus" translates to "The Most Bountiful God" in English, and it proclaims the dogma of the Assumption. In this Apostolic Constitution, Pope Pius XII clarifies and reinforces the belief that Mary was assumed into Heaven by God, not by her own power, but solely by the grace of God.

Pope Pius XII presents the historical and theological arguments for the Assumption, pointing to the consistent belief of the Church throughout the ages and the unanimous agreement of the Church Fathers on this matter. The document reaffirms that this belief is rooted in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The central passage of "Munificentissimus Deus" reads:

"Hence, the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus Christ in one and the same decree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine motherhood, the noble associate of the divine Redeemer, who has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, finally obtained, as the supreme culmination of her privileges, that she should be preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and that, like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of Heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages."

The declaration of the Assumption of Mary as a dogma of faith was met with great joy and acceptance by the Catholic faithful worldwide. It further solidified Mary's special role as

the Mother of God and her intimate connection with the salvific work of her Son, Jesus Christ.

TRULY A PROUD AND GLORIOUS MOMENT FOR THE CONGREGATION

Pope Francis gave the Salesians and the Salesian family worldwide, the most delightful news when he announced on Sunday, 9 July 2023 the name of our Rector Major as one among the 21 persons he had chosen to be created Cardinals of the Church at the next Consistory on 30 September 2023.

The Rector Major in his circular of 12 July 2023 informed that the Pope has allowed that after the Consistory of 30 September 2023, he can continue to be in office until 31 July, 2024. After that he will present his resignation as Rector Major and will take up the service that the Holy Father will entrust to him. After the Rector Major presents his resignation as Rector Major, the Vicar, Fr Stefano Martoglio will assume the government of the Congregation until the celebration of GC 29.



Fr Artimo will convoke the 29th General Chapter at least one year before it takes place in February 2025. It will be presided over by Fr Stefano, the Vicar. The extraordinary visitations of all the provinces will be completed before GC 29. Our province too will have to celebrate the Provincial Chapter, the details of which I and my council will intimate you as and when the time comes

TEAM VISIT OF SOUTH ASIA REGION BY THE RECTOR MAJOR AND GENERAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Team Visit of the Rector Major and General Councillors took place from 01 - 03 March 2023 in Hyderabad. It was attended by all the Provincials, their Councils, heads of various regional level animating bodies/networks, moderators of all Provincial Chapters, representatives of Major formation houses and special invitees of the South Asia Region.

The South Asia region felt listened to by the successor of Don Bosco as a father. Everyone felt accompanied by him and the General Councillors. The discussions and sharing highlighted the present situation of the provinces of the South Asia Region where we are having a vibrant way of living our Salesian Charism and also have several challenges to overcome. We are glad that Fr Rector Major has given to our South Asia region some lines of actions that emerged from the Team Visit "for the present and the future that should not be overlooked and that require of the individual provincials with their Councils and all confreres to implement in their own provinces"

I am attaching the report of the Team Visit for your personal and community study. I shall take it up also in the various meetings that are coming up, like the Regional meetings, Rectors' meeting and Parish priests' meeting. I request the Rectors and the leaders to study the recommendations and suggestions. You will get the opportunity to share your insights in the province meetings. Let us take the observations and suggestions as coming from the heart of Don Bosco towards being faithful to the charism that God has given to the congregation.

DEACONS OF THE PROVINCE 2023 AND THEIR MINISTRIES

We are overjoyed to have eight deacons in the Province this year, for which we need to be thankful to God, the Lord of the harvest and the one who calls. The presence of eight deacons is a testament to the vitality and vibrancy of the province. It signifies that our province continues to nurture and foster vocations to religious life, and that our efforts in encouraging young men to discern their calling are bearing fruit. Let us not take this gift for granted, but rather, let it motivate us to intensify our dedication to promoting vocations within our midst.

In "**From the spiritual testament of Saint John Bosco**", he wrote, "Our work, the good and austere behaviour of our confreres will draw and almost compel their pupils to follow their example. Let the preventive system be practised even at the cost of personal and financial sacrifice and we shall have vocations in abundance" "... All salesians living in the same house must be one in heart and soul with the rector".

As we rejoice in these gifts of vocations, I emphasize the need of collective responsibility to guide and support these young men on their journey towards priesthood. Let us be vigilant in nurturing their spiritual growth, guiding them in their formation and ministry and assisting them in fulfilling God's will in their lives. Let us lead by example, showing them the love and selflessness that come with serving the Church. Our own commitment to our vocations can serve as an inspiring model for them to follow.

SI no	Name of Deacons	Places of Ministry
1	Dn Somesh Tudu	DBI - Youth Ministry
2	Dn Hopna Tudu	Kumarikata - Pastoral experience
3	Dn John Chandra Rabha	Amkachi - Now at KJC, Bengaluru
4	Dn Bromio C Marak	DBCL Tura & Rongkhon (weekends)
5	Dn Dominic Mardi	Baithalangso - Pastoral experience
6	Dn Bipin Kumar Lakra	Dimakuchi - Pastoral experience
7	Dn Anthony A Sangma	Dotma - Pastoral experience
8	Dn Sachin Kujur	Rongjeng - Pastoral experience

LANGUAGE - EASIEST WAY TO THE HEART OF THE YOUNG AND THE PEOPLE

The Province organised the Karbi Language Course, the first of its kind from 3 to 24 July in the Provincial House, Guwahati. Twenty one (21) participants included the deacons, theologians and university student Brothers. Most Rev. Thomas Menampampil SDB, archbishop emeritus was the chief guest for the inaugural function. Speaking on the occasion, he spoke on how the local languages play a vital role in the field of education and evangelization, by citing his own life experiences as a missionary.



The eminent teachers were Fr. Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial, Mr. Jeevan Kro and Mr. John Rongpi. The sessions taken were informative and interactive, with focus on the Karbi grammar and composition, essay writing, short stories, folktales, conversation, Bible usage, prayers, rosary and hymns, Karbi Mass, speech in Karbi, translation, Karbi albums and videos, declension, phonetics, kinship, poetry, quiz and vocabularies. The classes truly trained the participants in the basics of Karbi language and culture.

On 22 and 23 July, the participants visited the Salesian parishes of Baithalangso, Satgaon and Sojong to interact with and learn from the people. The field visit further motivated the participants to love local dialects and learn their tongues with the heart. The weeklong course was concluded on 24 July with the valedictory programme, in which Fr Januarius S Sangma, Provincial explained the idea behind the language study in the province - Garo and Rabha at Bosco Mount, Hindi/Assamese at Sirajuli and Bodo and Santal at Dotma. He informed that in the years to come, more of such opportunities would be given to confreres, which in turn, would prepare the confreres, especially the young confreres for the Missions. Learning the local language breaks the barriers of effective communication in the mission and thus such courses open up to the participants wider horizons to love the mission and the people with heart.

(CI Jeniberth A Sangma)

PROVINCIAL CHAPTER OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, PROVINCE OF GUWAHATI

The 3rd Provincial Chapter of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC) Province of Guwahati took place in the Provincial House, Borjhar from 22 - 25 July 2023. As many as 75 Sisters from various regions, including Sr Philomina Mathew, Mother General, and Sr Christine Mynsong, Asst Mother General participated in it to reflect on

"creative fidelity to the charism." This theme embodies the essence of the congregation, founded by the visionary Stephan Ferrando.

Creative fidelity calls to remain faithful to founder's ideals while adapting to the present. It enjoins them to be in the mission with passion and humility, embracing new approaches to address the needs of the time. Committed to God's love and mercy, such approach drives them to be innovative, collaborative, and compassionate in their mission to bring hope to the marginalized. Such Chapters inspire to preserve the core values while actively discerning God's will and creatively translating it into meaningful action.

Many of us accompanied them in our prayers during the chapter days. Now that the chapter has come to an end, let us pray that the Lord may assist them to get re-energised and re-vitalised and that the chapter deliberations may truly bring creative response in the mission.

NEW BISHOPS OF JOWAI AND ITANAGAR

The Church in the north east is blessed with the new Bishops who have been appointed by the Holy Father in recent times. In these turbulent times, despite all the negative propaganda against the Church, much spiritual and other progressive developments are carried out with much devotion by the Church personnel at the cost of great sacrifice.

The Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, priests and religious - both men and women are loved and appreciated by the great majority of people, Christians or otherwise. It is because these have left their home and family, their lands and properties and embraced a missionary call of Jesus - poor, obedient, chaste and humble and who promised everyone who followed Him a hundredfold of parents, brothers and sisters. On the other hand, it is our duty to consider all God's people especially those to whom we are sent as our own people and give our all without reserve for their well being.

We rejoice with the faithful of the dioceses of Nongstoin, Itanagar and Jowai as the appointment of their Bishops by Pope Francis. While the Bishop of Nongstoin had already been consecrated, the other two are yet to be. One of the devotions of Don Bosco our father and teachers was devotion to the Pope. As his loving children, we carry forward this precious gift which builds the Church and the world into a greater unity and force. We pray for these new Shepherds of the dioceses and implore God's manifold blessings on their ministry.

VISIT OF FR STEFANO MARTOGLIO AND FR BIJU MICHAEL

I have been informed by Fr Biju Michael, Regional, that Fr Stefano Martoglio, Vicar General will visit our province from 16 to 22 October 2023. From 23 to 26, he will also pay two days each visit to the provinces of Shillong and Dimapur. This will be his maiden visit to the province during which he will not only have the joy of seeing our province with all its

beauty and richness especially the young but will also carry out the consultation of the confreres to appoint the new Provincial.

Fr Biju Michael, Regional and Fr Patrick, Secretary to Fr Stefano will accompany him. While Fr Biju will proceed to the Province of Shillong to do the consultation, Fr Patrick will be with Fr Stefano in the province throughout his visit. The detail itinerary is being prepared. The finalised itinerary will be sent to you some days before the visit. Let us pray for the success of the visitation especially for the appointment of the new Provincial for the province.

TWO RETREATS CONCLUDED WELL “ALONE WITH NONE BUT THEE MY GOD”

As the Provincial, I was impressed to witness, at least when I was in the retreat place, the confreres making their spiritual retreat devoutly. All the confreres whom I met personally during that sacred moment told me that the animations were deep, appropriate and meaningful which helped them much. The number of confreres who availed this opportunity to renew, re-invigorate and re-start their life was very encouraging. The first retreat was animated by Fr Lourdsamy and the second, by Fr Maria Louis, both from the Province of Chennai. Both of them focussed greatly on the identity of the religious with special reference to our salesian vocation.

St Francis Eco-Spirituality Centre, Orlong Hada provided an ideal place for the retreat with the mini Assisi, to think about St Francis and Jesus' injunction to him to rebuild the dilapidated and abandoned Church.

The final retreat will be in December. Once again, I request everyone to kindly make sure that this spiritual exercise is not neglected. Everyone in the province must make this annual retreat and preferably, the province retreat. The Rectors will kindly remind the confreres of their communities about it and will enroll their names for the same with the Vice Provincial. The dates of the retreat are from 8 to 14 December. We shall let you know about the venue and the preacher in the coming months.

FR CL THOMAS LAID TO REST REVERENTLY IN THE SALESIAN CEMETERY AT BOSCO MOUNT - TURA

Fr Chenginiyaden Thomas, popularly known as Fr CL Thomas breathed his last at 12.55 am on 30 July 2023 at Swagat Hospital, Guwahati. After embalming his body at St John's Hospital, his mortal remains was kept in the Provincial House chapel for public veneration. Fr Kuriala presided over the first requiem Mass at 11.00 am, which was attended well by some confreres, religious sisters and the Salesian co-operators who had gathered in the Provincial House for a two-day animation programme. Besides, there were other faithful from the parish who came to pray for the repose of the soul of Fr CL Thomas.

At 5.30 pm, another requiem Mass was celebrated and was presided over by Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial during which, the confreres who were not free during the day,

attended in large numbers, beside many sisters and the faithful from the parish. Before the final blessing, many confreres shared their appreciation of and experiences with Fr CL Thomas which were truly edifying. His sister-in-law and nephew were present for both the Holy Masses.



Soon after the evening Mass, his mortal remains was then taken to Tura, to be buried in the Salesian Cemetery at Bosco Mount. I along with his sister-in-law and nephew and two clerics accompanied the body. The community of Mendal organised a short prayer service for him when we stopped there for some rest and refreshments.

On 31 July, two requiem Masses were offered in the Chapel of Bosco Mount. At 2.00 pm, Most Rev Andrew R Marak, Bishop of Tura presided over the funeral Mass, which was concelebrated by Most Rev Jose Chirackal, Auxiliary Bishop of Tura and 75 priests and religious. A large number of Sisters from different congregations, the Brothers and clerics, the faithful from many parishes of the dioceses, particularly from Garobadha and Rongkhon, the past pupils, the Salesian co-operators, the ADMA members, the aspirants of Bosco Mount, the Salesian school students from around Tura and many Government officials and dignitaries participated in the Holy Mass and prayed for the soul of Fr CL Thomas, as a sign of their love, respect and gratitude for the great missionary work he did for the poor people at the cost of great sacrifice. Several well prepared condolence messages were offered, soon after the prayer after communion. Nine family members of Fr CL Thomas attended the entire funeral service in Tura.

Soon after the Mass, the body was taken in solemn procession to the Salesian cemetery and laid to rest reverently in the tomb.

CONDOLENCES

The Cousin of Fr Marcus Lakra and uncle of Fr Charles Deepen Lakra, **Mr Marius Kispotta**, 63 yrs, passed away on 6th July 2023. He had been hospitalised for over a month due multiple health complications. We pray for the eternal repose of his soul. We offer our condolences to Fr Marcus Lakra and Fr Charles Deepen and the family members.

Mrs Zoram Lahiri, mother of Mrs Sonia Gorthop (Provincial Co-ordinator of Slaesian Co-operators), expired on 22 July 2023 due to heart related issues. She was 64. May her soul rest in peace. We offer our heartfelt condolences to Mrs Sonia and the family members.

Sr Anne John Vellacherry MSMHC, belonging to the Tezpur Province passed away on 26 July 2023 at St Mary's Convent, Barpeta Road. She was 82 years of age. We commend her soul to the loving hands of our Lord. We pray for her bereaved family members and the MSMHC Sisters of Tezpur Province, and ask the Lord to be their consolation and strength.

Sr Joanita Dais MSMHC of Guwahati Province passed away on 27 July 2023. She was 65 of age. May her soul rest in peace! We offer our heartfelt condolences to Sr Provincial, all the Sisters of Guwahati Province and the family members, and pray for strength and courage in this moment of grief and loss.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,

Fr Januarius S Sangma, SDB
Provincial



AUGUST 2023

Date	Day	PROGRAMME
1	Tue	Kumarikata - Meeting (Ordination)
2	Wed	Damra : Installation of Rector >> Tura
3	Thu	DBCTE - Inauguration of B Ed Academic year & GB Meeting, DBCL Tura
4	Fri	Guwahati
5	Sat	Guwahati : Meeting - Divine Providence Sisters
6	Sun	Visit of Fr Andrea Bozzolo and Fr Jarek Rochowiak to DBI & ADBU
7	Mon	Guwahati
8	Tue	Shillong : Curatorium : SHTC Mawlai
9	Wed	Guwahati : Holy Mass for Jubilarians (Organiser : Fr CJ Francis)
10	Thu	Tura : Regional Meeting, DB School Tura (4.00 pm)
11	Fri	Dotma >> Kokrajhar : Regional Meeting : BTR in Kokrajhar (4.00 pm)
12	Sat	Migrant Commission Meeting - Fr Francis Bosco : Provincial House
13	Sun	Guwahati
14	Mon	Sojong : Regional Meeting, Baithalangso (10.30 am - 2.00 pm)
15	Tue	Guwahati
16	Wed	Guwahati
17	Thu	Guwahati : Administrators Meeting - Provincial House (9.30 am)
18	Fri	Guwahati >> Shillong
19	Sat	Holy Cross Sisters, Mairang
20	Sun	Guwahati
21	Mon	Guwahati
22	Tue	Guwahati >> Sirajuli - Regional Meeting at Sirajuli (4.00 pm)
23	Wed	Guwahati
24	Thu	Guwahati : Rectors & Leaders Meeting - Provincial House (9.30 am)
25	Fri	Guwahati
26	Sat	Guwahati : Provincial Council Meeting, Provincial House
27	Sun	Guwahati
28	Mon	Guwahati - Regional Meeting : Kamrup Metro (4.00 pm)
29	Tue	Guwahati
30	Wed	Guwahati >>> Chennai
31	Thu	SPCSA : Sri Lanka