

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 48/2021

1 March 2021

My Dear Confreres,

Greetings from Provincial House, Bengaluru. Under the Presidentship/leadership of Rev. Fr Biju Michael Pulianmackal, Regional Councillor for South Asia, all the Provincials of South Asia and their Delegates have assembled here for the SPCSA Council and Assembly (25th Feb – 1st March). Fr Joseph Teron Langne, Vice Provincial, is the delegate from our Province. The meeting is truly animating, informative, enriching and uplifting.



LENT – BECKONING US TO NEWNESS AND FULLNESS OF LIFE

On 17th February, we observed the Ash Wednesday and stepped into the season of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. The liturgy of Lent invites us, human beings, to return to our original state of innocence and live a free and liberated life. Jean Paul Sartre rightly said that human beings are free but are everywhere in chains. The intense forty days of Lenten journey in imitation of Jesus who, in solitude prayed, fasted and confronted the evil one, is truly providential. Through our own prayer, fasting, almsgiving and through our rootedness in the Word of God, we could identify the invisible chains that enslave us and thus make ourselves free from the fetters, with the help of Him, who invites us to be close to His love.

Conversion and change of life are always possible, as is evident in the life of St Paul, St Augustine and even St Mary Magdalene. To God, any day can be a turning point to anyone.

Prophet Joel spoke the mind of God in the reading of the Ash Wednesday, “Yet even now, come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning. Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn” (Joel 2:12).

“Yet even now” is a very encouraging expression, telling everyone that returning to God is always possible, not matter how far one might have gone away from the merciful God. He accepts and welcomes the repentant when he/she returns. Here lies the difference between the attitude of God and human beings. Human beings often deny conversion to the so-called “sinner” but in God, not matter how deep one might have fallen, there is always a chance to begin anew.



On the first day of Lent, the ash is put on the forehead with a reminder that all human beings “are dust and into dust you shall return.” While the ashes are imposed with the words, the sign of the cross is marked on the forehead. This speaks to us of both humility and exaltation, of death and new life. The ashes signify our inner fragility and poverty, and the cross our salvation in the mercy of God.

The expression “with all your heart” is very significant. It asks for doing everything wholeheartedly, with strong determination and with deep interiority. Our heart is often the source – for good as well as for evil. “For out of the heart come evil thoughts - murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (Mt 15:19). Lenten grace could elude us if our Lenten journey is half hearted, superficial and shallow.

DON BOSCO ON PENANCE AND MORTIFICATION

Article 71 of our *Constitutions* says: “Substitute acts of penance,” Don Bosco tells us, “with acts of obedience.” Lent is the time of penance, fasting and mortification. They are indications of our austerity with ourselves to discipline the body, mind and will.

Don Bosco however preferred penances which address the soul. I cannot but find deep meaning in the saying, “Conquering the tongue is better than fasting on bread and water.”

Fr Angel Fernandez Artime, Rector Major, and his Council in the Post-Chapter Reflection suggested one panacea for the spiritual sickness of religious, when he said that “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 ... Without Jesus Christ at the centre of our thinking, feeling, living,

dreaming, working ... there is no future and we cannot offer anything significant".

"Always returning to Jesus" and "renouncing everything that is not Him or that distances us from Him" entail obedience to the very first commandment and centre our life on God. "I am the Lord, Your God, you shall not have other gods besides me". "Yet even now", we could still have a close look at our union with God in our daily prayer and its animating effect on us when we find ourselves hectic and at times, tired, frustrated and annoying in our demanding ministry. God-centred life and the lenten liturgy could facilitate conversion in us and prevent us from turning our position, our success, our money, our pleasure, our infidelity to religious discipline, our individualism, etc., into gods. Avoid everything that dissipate our positive energy and take us away from God. This is our penance.

I liked the following story with the moral attached.

A scientist put a frog into a hot water. It jumped out immediately for obvious reasons. It was not his usual environment. The scientist then put the frog into a cold water and it immediately started swimming around. He then gradually heated the water. The frog continued to remain inside the vessel till it died due to water temperature. It gradually got used to the rise in water temperature. It could happen that while we as priests, religious and leaders exhort our people to come out of environment, killing them gradually, spiritually or otherwise, we ourselves can get used to our own unhealthy, sinful and unreligious environment or way of life which may ultimately put an end to the human, Christian and religious life within us.

I present another analogy which is meaningful and relevant here.

A surgeon, specialist in treatment of cancer once explained one of his procedures while treating the patients. He said that he identifies first the cancerous spot and then he ensures the safety and strengthening of the surroundings to arrest the spread of malignancy. In order to remove the shortcomings and pitfalls into which we fall in the long term, it may be important not only to treat the malady but strengthen the environment, so that we not only spread its spread but also limit its operation or remove it fully.

OUR CONSTITUTIONS HELP OUR CONVERSION ESPECIALLY IN LIVING TOGETHER

Together with the Word of God (the Bible), our *Constitutions* are the resource for the perennial values for grooming the spiritual life and for all the seasons of the liturgical year. The *Constitutions* do help us in making Lenten reflections and mortifications a reality, and thus make us more liberated.

Our father St John Bosco in his Spiritual Testament told us, "I do not recommend any

special penances or mortifications to you; you will gain great merit and give glory to the Congregation if you are able to bear the sufferings and annoyances of life with Christian resignation”.

We certainly become the channel of grace for our people in all the settings in which we work. However we ourselves need that grace too for ourselves and for our sanctification. While we work to heal the brokenness in the larger parish, school, village and such communities, our own religious community must be a place where healing and newness of life are continuously experienced and promoted. Our *Constitutions* are clear about our need for living in communities and promoting one another’s welfare.

“To live and work together is for us Salesians a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling our vocation. This is why we come together in communion, where our love for each other leads us to share all we have in a family spirit, and so create communion between person and person” (Art 49).

“God calls us to live in community and entrusts us with brothers to love. Brotherly love, our apostolic mission and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the bonds which form us into one and constantly reinforce our communion. We thus become one heart and one soul to love and serve God, and to help one another” (Art 50).

“St Paul exhorts us: ‘Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other’ ” (Art 51).

“The community receives each confrere with an open heart. It accepts him as he is and fosters his growth to maturity. It offers him the opportunity to use and develop his gifts of nature and of grace. It provides for his needs and sustains him in moments of doubt and difficulty, weariness and ill health” (Art 52).

The confrere pledges himself to build up the community in which he lives. He loves it, despite its imperfections, and knows that in it he finds the presence of Christ.

“He accepts fraternal correction, fights whatever he discovers in himself which militates against the community, and gives his own generous contribution to the community life and work. He thanks God that he is among brothers who encourage him and help him.” (Art 52).

From the Spiritual Testament of Saint John Bosco, we read the following beautiful insights.

“All Salesians living in the same house must be one in heart and soul with their rector”.

“But let them keep well in mind that grumbling is a plague to be avoided at all costs. Let

every possible sacrifice be made, but never tolerate criticism of superiors”.

“Rather than make remarks about what others do, let each one take the greatest care to fulfil the duties entrusted to him”.

“All are enjoined and recommended before God to pay particular attention to morality amongst Salesians themselves and amongst those who for any reason at all have been confided by divine providence to our care”.

“Woe to us if those from whom we seek alms are able to say that we live an easier life than they do”.

“The world will always welcome us as long as all our concern is for the under-developed peoples, for poor children, for those members of society most in danger. This is our real wealth which no one will envy and no one will take from us”.

During these days of Lent, I invite everyone to examine closely about your own contribution to building the community life. In the Province, I have come across communities which despite all challenges have remained and worked together, thus ensuring the growth of our charism. While on the other hand, there are communities which stand in need of healing and forgiveness.

FINAL YEAR OF PREPARATION FOR THE CENTENARY: THE SYMPOSIUM

We are in the final year of the preparation for the Centenary celebrations in 2022. We thank God who have assisted thus far in all our preparations. I thank everyone of you for the good will and the co-operation that you have shown in all the works of preparation that we have been doing. H. Jackson Brown, Jr says that “The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today”.

The theme of the symposium was “What Kind of Salesians do the Salesian Family Members and Collaborators envisage for the Youth of Today?” The Chief Guest for the opening ceremony was Fr Melvil Pereira SJ, Provincial, Kohima Region. He beautifully spoke about the importance of spirituality, and returning to Christ who is our Master and Lord.

The invited speakers for the Symposium were: Dr Basil Koikara (Don Bosco College, Bongaigaon), Dr Barbara S. Sangma (Don Bosco College, Tura), Mr Lucas Basumatary (Salesian Co-operator, Guwahati), Sr Lydia Komuhra (Vice Provincial, FMA Guwahati), Sr Escociana Vaz (Vice Provincial, MSMHC Guwahati), Mr Banajit Changkakati (Don Bosco Past Pupil, Guwahati—he could not be present; he had his paper sent to the Symposium), Ms Ruishumai Islary (Don Bosco College, Bongaigaon) and Master Pangri Teron (Student, Don Bosco College, Diphu). The first day ended with a group discussion according to the five regions of the Province, followed by the Evening Prayer. On the

second day, Br Joby Mani presented the summary of the Post-Chapter Reflection. All the speakers did prepare themselves well and spoke with much love and concern for the betterment of all of us in the Province. The confreres took the opportunity to celebrate the birthday of Fr Januarius S Sangma, Provincial, in anticipation, as part of the conclusion of the Symposium.



I would like to express my gratitude to all the resource persons for their great contribution towards the success of the Symposium. My gratitude to the Provincial House and other neighbouring communities, especially Bosco Reach Out, who, along with the support staff organised the Symposium well. I thank all the community Rectors and Leaders and other confreres from the communities who participated actively in the event. May God bless you all!

Here, I would like to present to you the lines of action that we as a Province have drawn up together on the second day of the Symposium and exhort everyone of you to kindly put them into practice.

LINES OF ACTION:

Personal level: (In charge for implementation: Individual confrere)

1. Holiness & Charismatic identity: Let each Salesian be centred on Jesus Christ. He takes personal responsibility to be strengthened in his life of holiness and Salesian charismatic identity, especially by having recourse to spiritual direction, regular confession and other spiritual means available to him. He lives the Marian dimension of his Salesian vocation and mission.
2. “Salesian Sacrament of Presence”: Every Salesian must increase his quality presence among youngsters. He makes himself available for the accompaniment

of the young.

3. Ongoing Formation: Every Salesian must be committed to be pastors, guides and mentors by undergoing renewal courses and other ordinary means for ongoing formation (spiritual reading, Lectio Divina, personal reading, etc.).
4. Financial transparency: Each Salesian must manifest financial transparency and integrity in his following of Jesus Christ.
5. Prudent socialization: Every one is exhorted to be prudent in his socialization, especially with women.
6. Decorum: Each Salesian takes care of his religious and priestly decorum (in the manner of dressing, speech, behaviour, etc.).

Community level: (In charge for implementation: Rector/Leader)

1. Every community takes care of its sacramental fidelity (preparation, decorum), and other community practices of piety, meditations, adorations, monthly recollections, retreats, Lectio Divina, praying the rosary, etc.
2. Let every community become more aware of the need for lay collaboration, and also share our responsibility with lay people, including finances. For this, we need to train them to take up the responsibilities, and we shall animate them especially on Salesian traditions and values and on Preventive System, without neglecting to give them faith-formation. Each community should be committed to empowerment of women (parish council, etc), where more women and religious women should be involved in decision-making.
3. Each community must strengthen its administrative efficiency and transparency by way of regular council meetings, assembly of confreres, preparing the monthly plans together, sharing information from various sectors and respect confidentiality of the various meetings and gatherings.
4. May every community be committed in revamping the Salesian traditions, especially good-nights, assembly talks, word in the ear, blessing of Mary Help of Christians, monthly commemorations, commemoration of St Joseph on Wednesdays, etc.
5. Every community should encourage groups, associations, clubs, movements in the various sectors of the community, and organize more youth programmes.
6. Women should be involved in the formation of Salesians (both initial and ongoing formation). They could be appointed as teachers, professors or animators in our

centres.

Regional level: (In charge for implementation: Regional Councillor)

1. The Regional Councillor will be responsible for organizing monthly recollections for those confreres who do not attend the diocesan monthly recollection.
2. Let every region become more aware of the need for lay collaboration, and also share our responsibility with lay people, including finances. We are committed to their training and faith-formation. At the regional level, we could animate teachers, collaborators, and others on Salesian values and Preventive system. Each region of the Province should be committed to empowerment of women.
3. The regions will give utmost importance for giving skills support for the poorest of the poor, especially by training the young in entrepreneurial and other necessary skills for employment and growth. More youth programmes could be conducted at the regional and inter-regional levels.
4. Each region should be committed to caring for drop-outs, migrants, youth addicted to drugs, alcohol, other substances, media, etc. Counselling of youth has to be taken up at the regional level by appointing counsellors to go from one centre to another.

Provincial level: (In charge for implementation: Provincial)

1. There should be more ongoing formation programmes for confreres to be pastors, guides, and mentors.
2. Our Province should become more aware of the need for lay collaboration. We need to study ways and means to share our responsibility with lay people, including finances, after having given them sufficient training to take up responsibilities, and animate them on Salesian traditions and Preventive System, without neglecting their faith-formation.
3. As an outcome of the Symposium, the Province will devise policies for the poorest of the poor by giving attention to skills training, especially training the youth on entrepreneurial skills and will also support skill training centres. The Province is committed to ecological and environmental awareness by promoting reduction of waste, plastics, flexes, etc., and opting for Green Alliance, and Alternative or Renewable Sources of energy. The Province is also committed to empowerment of women, by encouraging centres / communities to involve more women in decision-making and to appoint more women as teachers / professors in our formation houses.

4. As a result of Covid pandemic, there is an increase of unemployed youth in the North East. As a Province, we need to go into migrant ministry and job-placement networks/cells in a big way (with priority in the North East).
5. The Province will continue/increase sponsorship for students from the weaker sections of the society, especially for specialized studies.
6. More awareness and training programmes for confreres who are Youth Services Coordinators (YS) could be conducted at the Province level.
7. The Province will take up the ministry for youth who are addicted to drugs, alcohol, media, etc., and conduct programmes; and also prepare and appoint more Counsellors for various needs. More programmes on Education to Love could be conducted for youth. For this senior teachers and others could be chosen.
8. We could network with others (especially the religious and priests) who are doing Prison Ministry in our region.

PROJECT OF ANIMATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE RECTOR MAJOR AND HIS COUNCIL (2020-2026): SOUTH ASIA REGION

Cf. Acts of the General Council, no. 434 (December 2020), pp. 172-187.

Attached herewith you will find the objectives, processes and action guidelines proposed by the Rector Major and his Council, as applied to the South Asian Region. May I request you to go through this file, and integrate them into the lines of action decided in our Province Symposium (given above).

PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS & NEW PRIESTS' DAY 2021

We thank God for the gift of four new priests to our Province this year. Fr Anmol Soreng was ordained in Simdega (Jharkhand) on 19th January 2021; Fr Narendra Lakra was ordained in Haldiharia (Chhattisgarh) on 22nd January 2021; Fr Justin Arul Chinnaparaj was ordained in Rongjeng on 6th February 2021; and George William John was ordained in Guwahati on 20th February 2021.

The New Priests' Day was held at Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati, on 22nd February 2021. It was a meaningful event, as it was held among the DBI youth. At the Holy Eucharist, after an introduction by Fr PD Johny, the new priest Fr George William gave another introduction; Fr Anmol Soreng presided over the Eucharist; Fr George William read the gospel, and Fr Narendra Lakra preached the homily. After Mass, a short felicitation programme was held in which the DBI youth presented a few well prepared items. Fr Johny presented the profiles and mottos of the new priests. Fr Provincial too spoke on the occasion and congratulated the new priests. Fr Justin Arul Chinnaparaj gave the vote of thanks during the felicitation programme. We thank the community, the staff and the

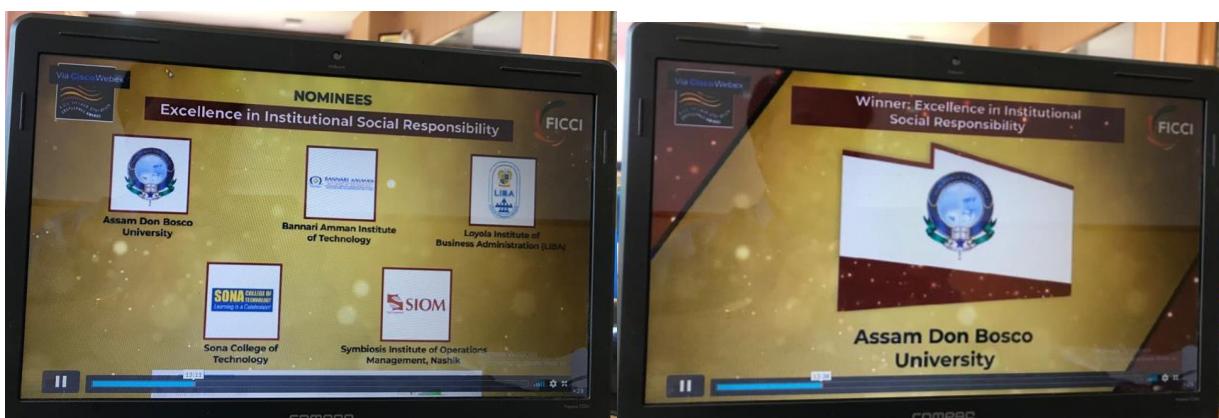
youngsters of DBI for solemnizing the event with their valuable contributions.



APPRECIATION CERTIFICATE FOR ADBU FROM THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Assam Don Bosco University received an Appreciation Certificate and Plaque from the Dept. of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Assam in recognition of the University's contribution during Covid-19 pandemic. The Certificate reads, "The valuable contribution made by your esteemed institution in the fight against Covid-19 in the State of Assam will be remembered for posterity. The Department of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of Assam takes utmost pride in honouring your distinguished institution as a mark of gratitude on behalf of the people of Assam." Besides providing Academic Block II at Tapesia Campus as a 350 bedded Covid-19 Care Center, the University reached out in various ways, especially through distribution of food packages, counselling services, and opting for online classes and examination.

ADBU is also the winner of the Excellence in Institutional Social Responsibility, awarded by FICCI.



MEETING IN PREPARATION FOR BOSCOREE 2022

On 9th February 2020, a Preliminary Meeting for Boscoree 2022 to be hosted by the Salesian Province of Guwahati was held in the Board Room of the Provincial House. The following are the Organising Committee members with their respective roles and responsibilities for various departments of Boscoree 2022:

1. Fr Januarius S Sangma, Provincial – Convenor
2. Fr Joseph Teron – Chief Organizer
3. Fr Benny P. Basil – Finance Advisor
4. Fr Sebastian Kuricheal – Finance Administrator
5. Fr John Parankimalil – Public Relations Officer and Media & Publicity
6. Fr Solomon Dennis – Coordinator and assistant to the Chief Organizer
7. Br Joby Mani – Venue & Accommodation, Light and Sound
8. Fr Cletus Patamkulam – First Aid & Medical Assistance
9. Fr Charles Sangma – Food & Past Pupils
10. Fr Pojit Marak – Scribe
11. Fr Saju Kariyil – Transport and Sight-Seeing
12. Fr Pradeep Ekka
13. Mr A.R. Lazar, Divisional Commission of Assam – Adventure Activity

All the core committee members who were priorly selected were present for the meeting, except Fr Pradeep Ekka. Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial, chaired the meeting. During the meeting, it was decided to include one FMA, one MSMHC and one SMI in the Organising Committee members. Since, it would be difficult to come together for all the 16 core organising team members for various meetings, it was decided to form a smaller core team consisting of Fr Joseph Teron, Fr Sebastian Kuricheal, Br Joby, Fr Pojit and Mr A.R. Lazar. This group would meet regularly to plan and to keep up the preparations.



MEETING OF THE HEADS OF DIMENSIONS & COMMISSIONS

On 10th February 2021, the Meeting of all the Heads of Dimensions and Commissions was held at Provincial House, Guwahati. Every Commission presented a short report on the various activities during the last year. The Meeting also chalked a way forward with regard

to our various services in which all the following four dimensions need to present: Education and Culture, Faith Formation, Vocational Dimension and Social Experience Dimension.



CONCLUSION

Dear Confreres, we are time and again reminded to return to our roots, and this entails that we return to Jesus Christ and his loving call. Our effectiveness as Salesians will be true only if we are faithful to God's call in our life. Only God's love can transform us and others; only His love can guide us and others; only His love can work marvels in our lives and others's lives. We are called to be instruments of God's love as Salesians. Nothing can stop God from loving us. May this Lenten time be one of rediscovering God's love for each one of us personally, and let us take seriously our journey to be faithful Salesians and instruments of God's love for the young and all those entrusted to our care.

Every year the Church celebrates the feast of St Joseph on two occasions – 19th March, St Joseph, husband of Mary and 1st May, St Joseph the Worker. While our Lord emphatically tells us “Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5), Pope Francis has declared 2021 as the year of St Joseph. St Joseph continues to protect us and help us to dream. Rich and indepth reflections have been made on his life for our enrichment and edification. St Joseph is closely associated with Mary and Jesus. I entrust everyone of you and all the members of the Salesian Family, our dear collaborators and particularly the young to the care and protection of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

May God bless you all!

Yours affectionately in the Lord,



Fr Januarius S Sangma, SDB
Provincial

MONTHLY CALENDAR – MARCH 2021: PROVINCIAL TEAM

		PROVINCIAL	VICE PROVINCIAL	ECONOMER
1	Mon	SPCSA Council Meeting	Bangalore: SPCSA Assembly	Guwahati
2	Tue	Bangalore >> Guwahati	Guwahati	DBSTI Tezpur
3	Wed	PH: Trimonthly recollection & Meeting of Clerics/Brothers in Formation	Guwahati: Tri-Monthly Animation cum Recollection for PT/ST Bros	Guwahati: Tri-Monthly Animation cum Recollection for PT/ST Bros
4	Thu	Joropara	Guwahati: Tri-Monthly Animation	Guwahati
5	Fri	Joropara >> Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati > Amkachi
6	Sat	Amkachi: Blessing & Inauguration - New School Building >> Haflong	Amkachi: Blessing and Inauguration	Amkachi: Blessing and Inauguration
7	Sun	Haflong: Blessing of Baladhon Village Chapel >> Guwahati	Amkachi: Baptism at Sarendap village	Guwahati
8	Mon	Guwahati: Meeting of Administrators	Meeting of Administrators	Meeting of Administrators
9	Tue	Guwahati: Visitation BRO	Guwahati	Guwahati
10	Wed	Guwahati: Visitation ADBU Azara	Barpeta Road	Shillong: Session for INS Admrs
11	Thu	Guwahati	Dotma	Amguri
12	Fri	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
13	Sat	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
14	Sun	Satgaon: Blessing and Inauguration of the Presbytery	Satgaon: Blessing and Inauguration of Presbytery	Satgaon: Blessing and Inauguration of Presbytery
15	Mon	Satgaon: Visitation	Baithalangso	Baithalangso
16	Tue	Baithalangso: Visitation >> Guwahati	Satgaon: ADMA Meeting Animation	Guwahati
17	Wed	Guwahati	Shillong	Guwahati
18	Thu	Guwahati	Guwahati	Dimakuchi
19	Fri	Tezpur: Visitation of DBSTI >> Sirajuli	Karbirongsopi: Animation on St Joseph (Feast of village Church)	Kumarikatta
20	Sat	Sirajuli: Visitation >> Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
21	Sun	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
22	Mon	Ouguri: Inauguration of the Centre & Welcoming Good Shepherd Sisters	Guwahati: Training of Trainers for Empowerment	Tura: Bosco Mount
23	Tue	Bengtol: Visitation	Guwahati: Training of Trainers	Tura: DB School Tura
24	Wed	Bongaigaon: Visitation	Guwahati: Training of Trainers	Mendal - Joropara
25	Thu	Barpeta Road: Visitation	Guwahati: Training of Trainers	Guwahati
26	Fri	Guwahati	Guwahati: Training of Trainers	Guwahati
27	Sat	Guwahati: Provincial Council Meeting	Provincial Council Meeting	Provincial Council Meeting
28	Sun	Guwahati: Palm Sunday	Guwahati: Palm Sunday	Guwahati
29	Mon	Kokrajhar: Visitation	Guwahati	Guwahati
30	Tue	Kokrajhar, Amguri: Visitation, ends with lunch	Guwahati: Chrism Mass	Guwahati
31	Wed	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati