

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 77/2023

1 July 2023

My dear Confreres,

Greetings from Don Bosco - Provincial House, Guwahati.

OUR INWARD JOURNEY ACCOMPANIED BY THE LORD

Our annual spiritual retreat is fast approaching and it is good that we pray and prepare ourselves well for the fruitfulness of this important spiritual event in our lives especially as consecrated and religious people. “Come away with me. Let us go all by ourselves to a quiet place ... for a while” invites Jesus. (Mk 6: 31).



One spiritual mystic taught “Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, man cannot live without a spiritual life.” Yes indeed, without a firm spiritual foundation, all edifices - human or otherwise, will face the danger of gradual collapse. Over its history, humanity has witnessed such examples and today, such collapse is happening before our eyes. Our human world has to be built on values, virtues and on spiritual and human principles.

Besides, any human who has not dealt with his/her foundation cannot deal with another's foundation. Before we help others, we need to be sure of who we are.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s words are insightful. “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience” he wrote, ”We are spiritual beings having a human experience”.

A Harvard study found that people who practice spirituality have better relationships and are more satisfied with their lives. Research by the University of California, Berkeley,

found that spiritual practices can improve cognitive functioning and increase feelings of mental clarity.

Henri J.M Nouwen said that “the spiritual life does not remove us from the world but leads us deeper into it”. And finally, Dolores del Rio said “Take care of your inner, spiritual beauty. That will reflect in your face”.

The spiritual retreat of our Clerics and Brothers was animated by Rev Fr George Malieckal, former Provincial of Shillong Province, from 17 to 23 May 2023 at St Francis Eco-Spirituality Centre, Orlong Hada. It was commendable that the young Salesians spent time in silence, in deep reflection, listening and reading the Word of God, receiving the Sacrament of God’s love and finally renewing their vows or making the Perpetual profession.

July is the month of holidays for most of our educational institutions. We Salesians make a good use of this time to make our spiritual retreat. Let no one in the province miss this opportunity towards greater fidelity and renewal of life. The Rectors/leaders are to ensure that everyone under his care make this journey generously, seriously and willingly. There will be two retreats in the month of July, as given in the monthly calendar. Once again, we shall have our retreat at St Francis Eco-Sprituality Centre, Orlong Hada, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya. I request Confreres to register the names with Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial.

The **Constitutions** in article 91 says: “Our will for conversion is strengthened in the monthly recollection and in the annual retreat. These are occasions of spiritual renewal which Don Bosco considered the fundamental part and the synthesis of all the practices of piety.

For the community and for every salesian these are privileged moments for listening to the Word of God, discerning his will and purifying our hearts.

These times of grace restore to our spirit a deep unity in the Lord Jesus and keep alive in us the expectation of his return.”

The **General Regulations** 72 says : “... Every year the members will make a retreat of six days in the manner laid down by the Provincial chapter, which they will conclude with the renewal of the commitments assumed at religious profession...”

During my visitation of Communities, I have insisted without failure that everyone, not only the Rector and the Parish Priest, but also those who are in the school, college and university make the monthly recollection without fail. I am happy to note that such reminders help the confreres. I request the Rectors/leaders to continue to remind the confreres on a monthly basis and in this way, we help one another to grow closer to God and to one another.

Fr Lourdswamy (INM) will preach the first retreat from 10 - 16 July and Fr Maria Louis (INM) will animate the second one from 17 - 23 July. I request the communities to pray for the success of the retreat, pray for the preachers and that all those who come for the retreat may willingly "come away for a while" and spend time in serious introspection in front of the Lord. There will be one more retreat for the confreres in the month of December.

BLEEDING MANIPUR - LET US CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR PEACE

On 3 May 2023, the beautiful state of Manipur witnessed the genesis of a large scale violence, arson and destruction. It is nearly two months now and this inter tribe rivalry and fight continue to haunt the state and the region, mostly the innocent citizens. Many precious and innocent lives have been lost, houses and property have been set ablazed and destroyed, people had to be sheltered in the relief camps and uncertainty and fear are the uppermost in the minds of people.



Many Churches (400+) have been burnt down. Temples (75) too have been razed to the ground. The Diocese of Imphal and religious congregations have also suffered huge losses and had to live in constant vigilance to protect lives and property.

It is well known that the attitude of the Central Government has left much to be desired. The mute silence of the Prime Minister is truly intriguing and the visit of the Home Minister did nothing or little to bring back normalcy and confidence in the minds of the affected people. The leadership of the State's Chief Minister has been subject of debate and question.

Ownership of land and the Scheduled Tribe status seem to be the core issues. Besides there may be other issues and problems, long un-resolved which surfaced now. It may not be possible for everyone to understand the real issues, quite easily.

The army and other law and order machinery were unable to restore normalcy, as expected and in some cases, failed to contain miscreants. It has taken long time to restore normalcy and prevent attacks. While some favoured separation, there were others who felt the need to remain together. Many leaders and intellectuals have given their own view points in various interviews. However at the ground, the affected people have no longer homes and property, and despite the promise of security, these are mere

words and that there is need for healing of trauma and the bitterness they have experienced.

Throughout the country especially in the north east, Christians have come out in a big way to appeal to the Government to deal effectively with the volatile situation and bring back peace. Prayer services and assistance to the people in relief camps have been organized. Our Province too has been in touch with the Provincial and the Development office of Dimapur province to assist the affected people in whatever way possible.

CONCLUSION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY VISITATION 2023

Rev Fr George Chalissery SDB concluded his Extra Ordinary visitation of the Province with the presentation of the report in the Provincial House on 29 May 2023. Large number of Rectors/leaders, Parish Priests, Principals and other confreres listened to his findings, assessment and recommendation during the concluding ceremony. He was very factual and presented the report on a very positive note.

By now, he might have presented his assessment to the Rector Major. The Rector Major will examine the report and send back it to the province.

The Province will diligently study the report and implement the recommendations as faithfully as possible. We are often accustomed to say that the visit of the superiors is the moment of grace. Yes, indeed it is, especially when the recommendations are implemented well. During the two meetings that would be held soon after the retreats in July, we shall study diligently the report and the way forward towards implementation will be devised.

We are grateful to the Rector Major for making a study and assessment of our province and for sending Fr George to do the visitation in his name. I am so happy that no major hurdles and challenges came during the days of the visitation. Fr George enjoyed good health throughout the days of the visitation and it is a great blessing from God. All the communities prepared themselves well for the occasion, for which I owe my gratitude to them. Let us continue to live our consecrated and religious live as faithfully as possible.

DIACONATE ORDINATION AND DEACONS OF THE PROVINCE 2023

On 1 July 2023, five of our clerics, studying theology at Sacred Heart Theological College Mawlai will be ordained Deacons by His Lordship Wilbert Marwein, Bishop of Nongstoin. It is a moment to be grateful to God for His bountiful blessings.

I feel that there will never be a moment in history, when priests and religious, both men and women will be enough to carry out the work of evangelisation, catechesis, health care, family apostolate, education - formal and vocational, counseling and guidance, etc.

Thus it is important for us to keep grooming vocations in season and out of season in all our institutions. We also need to be missionaries who are zealous about our mission and wherever we are sent, give the best that we are.



On this auspicious occasion, we pray for these young salesians and their families. They are Cl Sachin Kujur, Cl Anthony M Sangma, Cl Bipin Lakra, Cl Bromio Ch Marak and Cl Dominic Mardi. We pray for them and we assure them of our fraternal love and assistance in their life as priests and religious.

Besides these five deacons, the Province is blessed with another three confreres who are already deacons, namely Dn John Chandra Rabha from KJC, Bangalore, Dn Somesh Tudu from Ratisborne, Jerusalem and Dn Hopna Tudu from SHTC Shillong, of 2022 batch. Hence in all we are blessed with 8 Deacons this year. Our apostolic school and the aspirantate have good number of candidates. We need to make more efforts to accompany our candidates at various stages of formation to ensure greater perseverance.

NEW APOSTOLIC ASSIGNMENTS 2023 - THE SACREDNESS OF HANDING OVER EXERCISE

New assignments are announced and I thank everyone for your gracious acceptance of transfers. I wish you all, all joy, fulfillment and competency in the new ministry. As you move to the new destination and apostolate, it is important that the process of handing over is carried out with a great sense of responsibility.

Handing over is a sacred and virtuous exercise, that all need to do with all sincerity and honesty. Transparent handing over is a mark of respect to the successor. Proper and clear handing over reflects the kind of person and religious that you are. In order to assist individual confreres to pass on the responsibility well, the Economer's office has designed an all-inclusive form and the province has made it compulsory that all the details are entered into the form before the actual handing over. Proper continuity of works depends to a large extent, on the proper information passed on, on all the important and relevant information, relating to documents, assets, loans, credits, bank details of all the bank accounts preferably the bank statements of the past three months, information about the community etc.

In some, handing over is shabby. Despite early notice, preparation to hand over is not done as per norms and instructions. Fr George Chalissery spoke about it in his report of the visitation. Some leave huge debts but no information. There is lack of transparency and accountability in some. Mr Basil Koikara in his seminar talk in preparation for the Centenary celebrations clearly said that people today look suspiciously at our financial dealings and he, shockingly told that people wished that we did not send money home, if any. It is a sad reality that in a few, the House council is not aware of some financial transactions. It is not a healthy practice to pay large amounts, soon after the transfer is announced and without the knowledge of the members of the community. We should avoid making too many self-made vouchers. The auditors, it is reported, often manipulate such vouchers in our favour. It is a form of cheating.

No handing over can be done without the facilitation of the Provincial, Vice Provincial, Economer or anyone who is delegated by the Provincial. Whenever confreres informed about the dates of handing over, we have always obliged them. It needs to be done without fail.

Some important responsibilities that each community needs to do strictly, keeping in mind the demands of the Government regulations are settling all land issues, paying the taxes upto date, renewal of the registration of Societies, CPF, EPF, SEPP, EPC, audit reports upto the last financial year etc.

It was pointed out during the conclusion of the visitation that we need to be human and humane in our dealings with our collaborators especially with the religious sisters, pay just and sustainable payment to teachers and support staff and be present more visibly with the hostel boys. While wholesome food is provided, the hostel boys and girls need to be taught the habit of keeping themselves and their surrounding neat and tidy.

THE PROVINCE TO ORGANISE THE KARBI LANGUAGE COURSE

North East India is the home of about 145 tribal communities. Each one has its own language and other traditional practices. More than 100 years ago, the Salesians arrived in the north east. Since then, the contribution of the Salesians to ameliorate the lives of people in all spheres has been miraculous.

Missionaries loved the people and learned their languages and other cultural practices so well. That is why they were able to enter into the heart of the people. Many missionaries learned not only one language but several languages of the people. Without knowing the languages, it would not have been possible for the missionaries to educate and evangelise the people. Today, Bible and other religious books are available in the language of the people and this is one of the best gifts that people could proudly receive. Many missionaries are able to use the language of the people and are able to preach to them about the Word of God, the Sacraments and the Church.

With a view to exposing our confreres - young and old, to different tribes and their languages, the Province has, after much consultation and discussion in the formation and vocation commissions, been teaching the Garo language at Bosco Mount, Hindi and Assamese languages at Hubert D'Rosario Aspirantate, Sirajuli Bodo and Santal languages at the Pre-novitiate at Dotma and Karbi and Tiwa languages to clerics, brothers and priests during the summer holidays in July. To be effective in our ministry, we need to make conscious effort to study and know the language of the people. We need to teach the young upcoming candidates and confreres to know at least one or two languages well.



Under the leadership of Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial, the Province will organise the study of the Karbi language and culture from 3 to 24 July 2023 at the Provincial House. The participants of the course will be our students of theology, Sacred Heart College, Shillong, some clerics in Practical training and a few priests. I thank Fr Joseph Teron and his team for availing themselves for this noble venture and wish them and all the participants all the best and God's choicest blessings.

AWARD TO FR ALBERT THYRNIANG FOR EXCELLENCE IN WRITING

The Rotary club of Shillong, celebrating its 75 years of service, presented excellence in writing award to Fr Albert Thyrniang at Shillong on 16 June 2023 at the Shillong Press Club premises. We congratulate Fr Albert on this achievement. He has been a regular writer to The Shillong Times on pertinent topics. We wish him all the best for his future and pray that his writings may continue to stimulate the mind of the public towards clear and positive thinking.

TIWA CATECHISM BOOK AUTHORED BY FR SILVERIUS AMSONG RELEASED

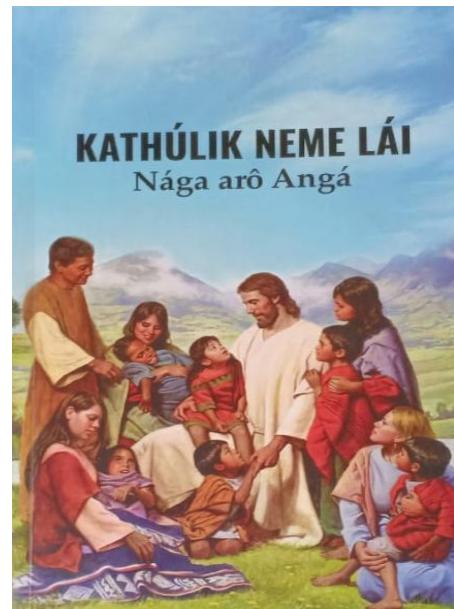
It is a moment of pride, joy and achievement for the Province, particularly to Rev Fr Silverius Amsong SDB who brought out a Catechism book in his mother tongue, the Tiwa recently. Fr Silverius also released one book in English on the day of his ordination.

The Catechism book, entitled **KATHULIK NEME LAI - NAGA ARO ANGA** was released at the annual Tiwa Convention at Umsiang, a few weeks ago. Many copies of the book were sold on that day. Painstakingly, he read and translated into Tiwa, some

relevant chapters from the many good Catechism books that are available today in English. Fr UV Jose (INS), who is well-versed in many languages of the northeast spent lots of time and did the careful editing and proof reading of the book. It was then approved by the Bishop of Diphu, after which Don Bosco Publication printed the book.

It is one of the best gifts that we the Salesians and the Catholic Church could give to the people. To know about God, His greatness, His Church and the Sacraments in our own language is one of the great blessings for the people which will deepen and strengthen their faith.

“God, and God alone, is man’s highest good.” says Herman Bavinck. On behalf of everyone in the Province, I congratulate and thank Fr Silverius on his great achievement on behalf of God’s people.



ADMA MEMBERS ATTENDED ANIMATION COURSE AT SATGAON

On 6 June, ADMA aspirants, numbering about 50 assembled at Mary Help of Christians parish, Satgaon for Holy Mass and animation. The programme was organised by Mr Niten Sangma and his team. I celebrated the Holy Mass and after the Mass, through the powerpoint explained to the members about the statutes of the Association. The group will meet again on 30 July for further study of the statutes and the organisational structure of the association.

AWARENESS MARCH AGAINST CHILD LABOUR AND BLESSING OF THE RENOVATED OFFICE OF THE CHILD FRIENDLY GUWAHATI

On 12 June, the Child Friendly Guwahati (CFG) organised an Awareness March against Child labour, as part of its 10th anniversary celebration. It was participated by a large number of people from all walks of life including 2 Ward Commissioners of Guwahati City, President of the Lion’s Club, some professors and students of Lady Handique College and general public. The march started from the ASTC station in Paltan Bazar and concluded at St Joseph’s Co-Cathedral, Guwahati. The students of the Handique college put up a street play on the challenges of the child labourers.

On 15 June, the beautifully renovated CFG office was blessed and inaugurated by me. It was preceded by a review meeting. Those who spoke on the occasion included the Rotarians, Lion’s club members, Sisters and from the State bank of India, appreciating the works of the CFG and assuring collaboration in the future.

I am grateful to Fr Prasad and his team for organising the beautiful event and also getting the necessary resources to renovate the office.

Heartfelt Condolences to :

Mrs. Isabel Artine Garcia: We offer our deepest condolences to Rev Fr Angel Fernandez Artine, Rector Major at the demise of his dear Mother **Mrs. Isabel Artine Garcia** who returned to her heavenly home in the early hours on 24 June, the feast of St John the Baptist and the monthly commemoration of Mary Help of Christians, after long months of silent sufferings. She was 87 years at the time of her departure from this world. We offer our deepest sympathies and assurance of prayers to Fr Rector Major and the bereaved family. May the soul of Mrs. Isabel Artine Garcia rest in heavenly Peace.

Br Mathew Vazhamplackal (VS) SDB and Fr Valiaveettil Jose (VK) SDB of the Province of Shillong (INS), who passed away in Shillong on 5 June 2023 and 20 June 2023. They were 88 and 72 years old respectively. May their souls rest in peace! We offer our condolences to the Provincial and confreres of INS and to all their family members. May their soul enjoy eternal bliss of heaven.

Fr Thomas Polackal SDB: We offer our condolences to Fr Joseph Pauria, Provincial, and the confreres of Calcutta Province on the passing away of **Fr Thomas Polackal** on 12 June 2023 in Kolkata, due to cardio-respiratory failure. He was 86. May the Lord grant him eternal rest in His heavenly abode.

Fr Ittira Mondoth, of the Province of Bangalore (INK), passed on 22 June 2023, at Mamma Margaret Home, Aluva. He was 84 years old. May God grant eternal rest to him. We offer our condolences to the Provincial and confreres of INK.

CONCLUSION

Orlong Hada is a quiet and undisturbed place in the midst of nature. Its beauty and the eco-system beckon us to spend time in isolation, appreciating our life and examine and see how we are at the present moment. Human as we are, we can be fragile and vulnerable. We may not be living the life that we wanted to live and there may be so many compromises and unhealthy habits that might be pulling us down.

God is able to restore the broken and the depressed. He is able to heal the wounds that we carry all along. We are in a helping profession and if there is no healing in ourselves, we may end up injuring others. Unresolved issues can surface in abuses, both of ourselves and other under our care. Retreat and our surrender to God provides such healing and liberation.

Come to retreat leaving all your secular responsibilities. Be generous with the Lord, let not mobile and self talk quiten the voice of God which wants to speak words of love, forgiveness and motivation to everyone.

Allow God to speak to you in silence. Let your edifying behaviour and silence assist others to go deeper into themselves.

Retreats are turning points to many. Let this retreat work the miracle of returning to the original and may it help our days, months and years to live a life of freedom from all unhealthy chains that bind us and enable us to help others who constantly call to us, "Come to us, too".

Be assured of my prayers and pray for the Province and all the confreres too.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



**Fr Januarius S Sangma, SDB
*Provincial***

JULY 2023		
Date	Day	PROGRAMME
1	Sat	Guwahati
2	Sun	Rongkhon : Chapel Blessing: Selbalgre Village
3	Mon	Guwahati : Board meeting, Snehalaya
4	Tue	Doomni : Chapel Blessing : Naoputa Village
5	Wed	Guwahati
6	Thu	Guwahati
7	Fri	Guwahati >> Amkachi
8	Sat	Amkachi >> Umswai >> Guwahati
9	Sun	Guwahati
10	Mon	II Retreat commences at 5.30 pm
11	Tue	II Retreat
12	Wed	II Retreat
13	Thu	II Retreat
14	Fri	II Retreat
15	Sat	II Retreat
16	Sun	II Retreat ends and Meeting of Confreres
17	Mon	III Retreat commences at 5.30 pm
18	Tue	III Retreat
19	Wed	III Retreat
20	Thu	III Retreat
21	Fri	III Retreat
22	Sat	III Retreat
23	Sun	III Retreat ends and Meeting of Confreres
24	Mon	Guwahati : Holy Mass, MSMHC Provincial Chapter, Azara
25	Tue	Guwahati
26	Wed	Guwahati
27	Thu	Guwahati
28	Fri	Guwahati
29	Sat	Guwahati : Provincial Council Meeting, Provincial House
30	Sun	Guwahati
31	Mon	Satgaon : ADMA Meeting