

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 52/2021

1 July 2021

My Dear Confreres,

Greetings from the Provincial House, Guwahati!

Humanity still wages its war against Covid-19. It is baffling to think that despite the collective scientific progress and wisdom of humanity, the discovery of an undisputed vaccine still evades us, at least in India. The origin of the virus is also still in the dark. The UNO as the apex world body seems toothless, and the powerful nations today, as before have their way. The poor suffer in ways that cannot be easily described. The rich too, this time, realised that no wealth, no prestige, no money, no power could prevent the equalising effect of death. The virus seemed to have exposed that the sturdy immune system of majority human beings is waning. The need to return to nature was strongly felt during the pandemic. Death too became too normal.

The Church lost many of her valiant sons and daughters. Bishops, priests and religious – male and female laid down their lives, most of them while shepherding the flock. While, retreating within the four walls was quite natural, it looked paradoxical for the priests and religious to remain inside while the sheep out there suffered the onslaught. Certainly most priests and religious lost their lives due to their mission in pandemic.

The “search for meaning” and a “right attitude” to face this ever evolving scenario are the tools we have in hand. Both call for courage to pick up the pieces, and to walk on with changed perceptions and changed selves, one day at a time, navigating through the challenges and the pitfalls, battling the lethargy and the listlessness, recognising and confronting the inevitable bouts of despondency and depression... THAT is the continuing search for meaning in the bits and pieces of life (no more a cocooned existence now ... at least for a while). Moved by hope, as the Strenna says, we have the faith to believe that God truly will make all things new.

APOSTOLIC ASSIGNMENTS: GIVING THE BEST OF OURSELVES FOR THE MISSION

The new apostolic assignments, 2021-22 are known to everyone. I presume that by now, those who got the new assignments have moved to the new community and responsibility. I owe my sincere gratitude to everyone who accepted the new responsibility in the spirit of faith and obedience.

Our initial formation is planned well. The Congregation insists strongly on the on-going formation too which unfortunately is mostly neglected in our province. The intial

formation pays attention to all aspects of life, encompassing the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, moral, communitarian, aesthetics and physical. The financial investment especially in the initial formation is also huge. If the formation opportunities are taken seriously and with focus by each confrere, they do shape us up well for the ministry. That is why our institutions are among the best. Keeping up the quality of service is the legacy that needs to be upheld. Individually and collectively we have to be responsible. The question that we humbly ask ourselves is whether or not, we are giving our very best or are satisfied with the minimum and falling short of quality in the assignments that are entrusted.

Today's times invite us to be more focused, to be of higher quality, have a better planning at the provincial, regional, local, communitarian and individual levels, apply ourselves relentlessly to hard work, have a mind to listen and consult, make sacrifices, move out of our comfort zones, give the best for the mission and produce results. Our mission is, first of all for the poorest youth and it is about accompanying them daily. Without improving the condition of youth who are with us, to pay attention to peripherals is highly regrettable. If the focus is missing and if ego plays high, we will do everything for personal gains except the right activity that is expected of us.

Another important point regarding the apostolic assignments that needs to be kept in mind is that in the religious congregation, there is no assignment which is high or low, plumb or small. Every assignment is noble and is loaded with lots of trust and responsibility. I feel convinced that the more the Provincial is actively present in the Province, the Province becomes better. In the same way, the more the Rector, the Vice Rector, the Parish Priest, the Assistant Parish Priest, the Principal, the Vice Principal, the Practical Trainee, et al., are present in loco, the more the community/the institution/the mission progresses and grows.

Everyone needs to generate one's own vision, plan and have a detailed road map to one's assigned apostolate within the broader vision of the Congregation. He cannot but take adequate time to set goals and objectives, taking into consideration the conditions and the collaborators which are available for him. Planning has to be consultative and communitarian. It is an arduous task but has lots of positive advantages. Individualism has ruined some of our institutions. Without proper and visionary planning, we will sail without radar and without any destination in mind. The progress or the regress of our institutions depends on you! Leave no stone unturned to achieve the best and take the mission to new heights.

The Provincial and the Council have supported, appreciated and encouraged everyone. Quality improvement, professionalism and bringing out the best results however depend on those who are in the loco. Growth begins by looking inside, accepting others'

opinions, making collective decisions, building a strong team and by a relentless pursuit of our goals every day.

A FEW LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

Lead by Example

Leading by example sounds easy, but few leaders are consistent with this one. Successful leaders practise what they preach and are mindful of their actions. They know everyone is watching them and therefore are incredibly intuitive about detecting those who are observing their every move,

waiting to detect a performance shortfall.



Solve Problems and Avoid Procrastination

Successful leaders tackle issues head-on and know how to discover the heart of the matter at hand. They do not procrastinate and thus become incredibly proficient at problem solving; they learn from uncomfortable

circumstances and don't avoid them (they, in fact, welcome them).

Create Positive Energy and Attitude

Successful leaders create a positive and inspiring workplace culture. They know how to set the tone and bring an attitude that motivates their colleagues to take action. As such, they are likeable, respected and strong willed. They do not allow failures to disrupt momentum.

Invest in Relationships

Successful leaders do not focus on protecting their domain – instead they expand it by investing in mutually beneficial relationships. Successful leaders associate themselves with other leaders – the type of people who can broaden their sphere of influence. It is not only for their own advancement but that of others. Such leaders share the harvest of their success to help build momentum for those around them.

Genuinely Enjoy Responsibilities

Successful leaders love being leaders – not for the sake of power but for the meaningful and purposeful impact they can create. When you have reached a senior level of leadership, it's about your ability to serve others and this cannot be accomplished unless you genuinely enjoy what you do.

11 ING NOVICES AT SUNNYSIDE MAKE THEIR FIRST PROFESSION

While our novices who completed their novitiate at Dhajea and Zubza made their first profession on 24th May 2021, eleven (11) of our novices along with the eighteen (18) novices of the INS made their first profession one month later on 24th June, at Sunnyside, Shillong. The delay of course was due to Covid-19 restrictions of inter-state travel and the compulsory quarantine which consequently resulted in the late initiation into the novitiate.



We really thank God for the gift of these new and young members into the Province and we congratulate them for the great step that they have taken. It is very encouraging now to see the Rectors and other confreres of the communities who love and follow up the young clerics and brothers. Everyone is responsible for his own ongoing formation and we need to ensure that the young confreres receive the necessary appreciation, encouragement, accompaniment and good example so that they keep on growing in appreciation of the life that they have chosen.

I take this opportunity to thank the Novice Masters of Sunnyside, Zubza and Dhajea for accepting our novices every year and laying a good and solid foundation for their religious commitment. I request the communities to pray for them daily, so that they may continue to carry out this great service to the Church and the Congregation, assisted by the Holy Spirit and our Blessed Mother.

JULY – THE MONTH OF RETREATS

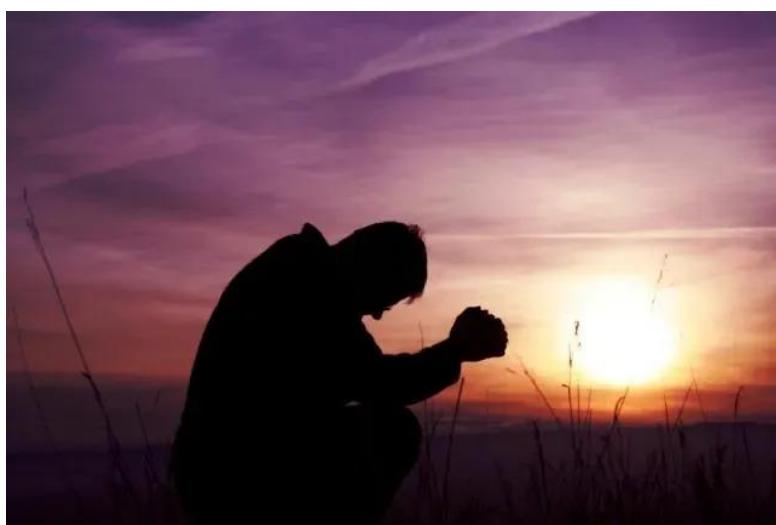
Moses encountered Yahweh in the silence and solitude of Mount Sinai. He, who accidentally murdered an Egyptian and was a stammerer, became an undisputed leader to lead the enslaved Israelites to freedom after he spent time dialoguing with Yahweh in the wilderness.

Jesus often withdrew to the lonely place in the morning and evening hours, leaving the crowds and his ministry behind for a while. Soon after his baptism, he spent forty days and nights, fasting and praying in the silent desert to prepare himself to begin his public ministry. Indeed, it was remarked by the people rightly that “He has done all things well.”



After he encountered Christ powerfully on the way to Damascus, Paul went on his own to the desert in Arabia for three years (Gal 1:11-20) as an immediate response, not to consult any human being but the One “who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace.”

Very soon, the majority of you will leave your busy life and choose the silent wilderness to listen to the gentle voice of the Lord and speak to Him from the depths of your heart. Preparations are important and so prepare yourselves mentally and spiritually, to set aside completely only six days to be with the Master. We all need to pray for the success



of the retreat and attend the retreat with lots of good will and generosity. It will bring down lots of spiritual and heavenly blessings in our life and in mission.

This is the last year of preparation for our Centenary. In the past two years, opportunities were given to all of us to prepare ourselves for the centenary through

symposiums, retreats, the Provincial Chapter on the Salesian identity, animation at the community, regional and provincial levels, etc. Our centenary celebrations are to bring about renewal and greater love and zeal for the missions, the souls, the young especially the poorest, evangelisation, catechesis and through formation keep ourselves in sync with the times and empower our people through education – formal and vocational. I wish and pray that these retreats bring back the same apostolic, missionary and religious fire with which pioneers and generation of missionaries displayed in their lives.

The venue of the retreat is the Franciscan Eco-spirituality centre, Orlong Hada in Karbi Anglong. Fr Nirmal Gomes, former Provincial (INC) and present Socius, Dhajea Novitiate, will animate the retreat on the Salesian spirituality. I request you all to kindly register your names with Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial. Even though, you are allowed to attend the retreats in IND and INS, this year too it may not be possible for you to travel to these Provinces and participate in the retreat there. The Province may organize one more retreat either in the month of October and December.

A FEW IMPORTANT INFORMATIONS FROM THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL DELIBERATIONS

FR MARCUS LAKRA, DELEGATE OF THE YOUTH PASTORAL DIMENSION IN THE PROVINCE

The Provincial Council, on the advice of the Rector Major and his Council, in its meeting on 19th June 2021 appointed Fr Marcus Lakra as the Delegate for Youth Pastoral Dimension in the Province. The Youth Pastoral Dimension was hitherto looked after by Fr Joseph Teron Langne, Vice Provincial, to whom the Province owes a huge debt of gratitude. We thank Fr Marcus, former Director of the North Eastern Regional Youth Co-ordinator (NERYC), for accepting this additional responsibility. We assure him of our help and support.

Congratulations to Fr Marcus Lakra!

Some changes have also been made in the Provincial dimensions. Information in this regard will be sent to the old and the new delegates and members of commissions later, but we already would like to acknowledge and thank all the delegates and the members of various dimension for their service that they have rendered for the Province.

SYMPOSIUM OF THE YEAR

The theme of this year's symposium will be on the Laity. One of the six-year objectives of the Congregation is "Together with lay people in the mission and in formation. The charismatic strength that the laity and the Salesian family offer us." The convenor of the Symposium is Fr Maria Arul Anthuvan Tharsis. The dates, the venue and other modalities of the symposium will be made known to you later.

FORMATION OF ASSOCIATIONS AND MOVEMENTS IN OUR HOUSES

As per the decisions taken during our meetings (Rectors, Principals, Parish Priests), let me remind the communities about the formation of the Associations, namely, the Salesian Co-operators, the Past Pupils and the ADMA (The Association of Mary Help of Christians), and the Scouts and Guides Movement. Nothing much could be done during the pandemic but I request that planning to start them be already done at the community level. I request the Rectors, the Principals and the Parish priests to initiate the steps early.

CHARISMATIC RETREAT FOR YOUTH

Deo volente, the Province will organize a charismatic retreat for the youth at the Province level. Proclaiming the Word of God to youth and the youth getting spiritual healings and blessings is one of the best gifts that we can give to the young. Fr Thadeus Kujur will animate the retreat. The dates, the venue and the modalities will be announced to you later. I request prayers for the success of the retreat and ask the communities to kindly identify the youth especially the leaders (at least ten of them) who could avail themselves this wonderful opportunity.

CENTENARY MONUMENTS

In the spirit of solidarity with everyone who is suffering due to Covid, including ourselves, and to be of witness value, we agree that our Centenary celebrations will be of low budget. However such historical celebration requires the commemorative monuments. At the provincial level, the monument will be in the Provincial House campus. It will be blessed and inaugurated by the Rector Major on his visit to the Province, 24th to 26th October 2022. The regional provincial councillors, along with a committee, will plan in advance for centenary monuments in their respective regions, and ensure that they are implemented properly and on time.

CENTENARY AWARD

During the Centenary celebration, we will remember the Salesians and other missionaries who brought the Good News to the North East. We will remember and appreciate the Church in general, other religious congregations, particularly lay men and women who assisted the spread of Salesian charism in the region. We would like to honour them with appreciative citations and gifts. We therefore request each community to kindly make a study of the history of the institution and identify those who truly deserve to be appreciated and acknowledged – alive or dead. The information then can be sent to the Secretary. A committee will study each case and take the final decision.



21st JULY 1921: A GREAT DAY TO REMEMBER AND THANK GOD

It was on 21st July 1921, that Fr Paul Albera, Rector Major officially responded to the Propaganda Fide conveying his willingness to accept the Assam Mission. From the history of the Congregation we read that the Propaganda Fide approached the Salesians several times to take up the Assam Missions. It was only after five requests that the Salesians finally decided to accept the Assam Missions. Had the Propaganda Fide gone to other congregations and had they accepted, then the North east would have missed the Salesians. So 21st July 1921 is indeed a special date and year for us and we are very fortunate to celebrate the centenary of that inspired decision.

I request the communities of the Province to observe this day with due solemnity. Let us spend the entire day in sincere gratitude to God for inspiring our Congregation to opt to come to us and make all the difference. The provincial office will prepare and send some animation materials for the day. However, each community can also prepare its own animation materials.



PROMOTION OF VOCATION TO SALESIAN LIFE IS OUR IMPORTANT DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITY

I still feel that the North East India is a fertile nursery and a huge reservoir of good and quality apostolic vocations to the Church and the Congregation. I still remember the beautiful words of Fr Guillermo Basanes who during the new Priests day celebration in the Provincial House, said referring to the newly ordained priests that they were the product of our work. The higher the quality of our accompaniment, the higher is their conviction of their vocation and the quality.

Christianity and Catholicism in the North East have taken deep roots and despite some shortcomings, the faith of the people has matured. There are innumerable good Catholic families in every parish and in many families, there are boys or girls who still feel attracted to religious and priestly life. Let us make our hostels, schools, youth centres, colleges and university, nurseries for vocations. We need to talk about the beauty of our vocation oftener and invite them to join us. We need to give special attention to those who express their desire to discern their vocation.

Due to pandemic, our usual vocation camps have been halted. We are now getting vocations through personal contacts and through some known people. All of you have also been assisting us in this and we request you to continue groom vocations on a

priority or on an emergency basis. Jesus told us that “the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. Pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” Let us pray, and let us also act —through our words and actions.

PRO-POOR AND PRO-ENVIRONMENT ACTIVITIES

Thankfully, I noticed that all the regions of the Province have risen to the occasion and have gone in a big way to put the legacy money into gainful use. I am always appreciative of the donors of the legacy money and pray for them often for coming out in a big way to assist us to help the poor. Helping the poor to come up well need not be done in a hurry but each community must plan how to accompany the poor in its area by properly planning and working consistently. It is expected that the wish and the intention of the donor are respected and so we cannot but help the poor using the legacy money. Let us also remember that our absolute priority is for the poor. Just as the donors have been generous, we are expected to be generous and make sure that the big or little assistance that we provide through the legacy money, help at least some people/youngsters to come up well in life. The assistance could be through scholarships, plantation of cash crops, animal husbandry, entrepreneurship, etc. The donation is huge and so let the results also be tangibly high. I request everyone to maintain the records properly, so as to submit the reports as and when I and the Economer may have to share them at the SPCSA level.



11TH OF EVERY MONTH TO BE THE MISSIONARY DAY IN EVERY COMMUNITY

Here is a reminder that as part of the preparation for the Centenary celebrations, the Province have agreed to keep every 11th of the month as the **MISSIONARY DAY**. We have left it to the discretion and creativity of each community how to keep this commemoration. Some of the suggestions that were put forward were the Holy Mass for the Missionaries, notice board on the missionaries, “good night” on the missions, etc.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW PROVINCIAL OF THE VICE PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA

The Rector Major, with the consent of the General Council has, on 11 June 2021, nominated Rev. Fr Angelo Sylvester MIRANDA, SDB (known as Roshan) as the 4th

Superior of the Salesian Vice Province of St Joseph, Sri Lanka (LKC) for the six year period of 2021 – 2027.

Fr Roshan Miranda has accepted this responsibility in the spirit of obedience and faith. He will assume office at the end of the mandate of Rev. Fr Joseph Almeida, SDB who served the Province for the last six years.

We offer our hearty congratulations to Fr Roshan and wish him God's guidance and accompaniment in the exercise of animation and governance of the Vice Province.

AWARD TO DON BOSCO COLLEGE TURA

On 9 June 2021, Don Bosco College Tura was declared the winner of the prestigious Green Champion Award by the Central Government under the Swatchh Bharat Mission for its green campaign and cleanliness. We congratulate Fr Bivan Rodrigues Mukhim, Principal, the Salesian community, the staff and the students on this special achievement. May we continue to go green and say that we love Mother Nature.

FR THOMAS PUNNOLIKUNNEL IN PROVINCIAL HOUSE

Fr Thomas Punnolikunnel, lovingly known as “the good Fr PJ”, has been transferred from Azara-DBU to Don Bosco Provincial House, Guwahati, as Confessor and Spiritual Father. He has already started his mission of praying for all the individual communities and centres of the Province and the intentions of the Province during the daily adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. As we welcome him to the community, we pray that the Lord may continue to give him strength and good health of mind and body!

CONDOLENCES

We are continuing to lose quite a number of confreres, also due to Covid-19. I offer my heartfelt condolences to

Fr Joseph Pauria, Provincial and confreres of Calcutta (INC) on the passing away of *Fr John Ekka (51)* on 14 May 2021.

Fr Koyickal Jose, Provincial and confreres of Bangalore (INK) on the passing away of *Fr Antony Mampra (95)* on 16 May 2021.

Fr Jose Kuruvachira, Provincial and confreres of Dimapur (IND) on the passing away of *Fr Stanislaus Kerketta (81)* on 28 May 2021, and *Fr Emmanuel Xalxo (64)* on 11 June 2021.

Fr Jose Kochamkunnel, Provincial and confreres of Madras (INM) on the passing away of *Fr Antony Pottakerry (86, the maternal uncle of Fr George Mudakkampuram)* on 2 June 2021, and *Fr Antonysamy Soosairathnam (62)* on 23 June 2021.

Fr Agilan Sarprasadam, Provincial and confreres of Tiruchy (INT) on the passing away of *Fr Sahayaraj Arulkannu* (61) on 4 June 2021, and *Fr James Theophilus* (68, former Provincial of INT) on 5 June 2021.

Fr Vijaya Bhaskar Thathireddy, Provincial and confreres of Hyderabad (INH) on the passing away of *Fr Joseph Maniyangattuthazhe* (59) on 6 June 2021.

We also offer our prayerful condolences to our confreres and their families who have lost their dear ones recently. May the Lord be their consolation and strength in this time of bereavement.

The younger brother of Fr Paul Rabha, *Mr Kendro Rabha* (40) passed away on 5 May.

The brother-in-law of Fr Zachary Varickasseril, *Mr Tomy* (59) passed away on 7 May.

The elder sister of Fr Cornelius Myrthong, *Mrs Sylbina Myrthong* (39) passed away on 13 May, along with her newly born twin baby boys.

The mother of Cl. Prabhat Bara, *Mrs Ethel Rida Bara* (65) passed away on 19 May.

The mother of Fr Lucas Ch. Marak, *Mrs Nemsi Ch. Marak* (75), passed away on 23 May.

The mother of Fr Joy Kachappilly, *Mrs Rosy Jose* (80), passed away on 25 May.

The eldest sister of Fr Hubert Ch. Marak, *Mrs Presimoni Ch. Marak* (90), passed away on 21 June.

We pray that the Almighty grant eternal rest and peace to all the faithful departed.

CONCLUSION

Let us be reminded that our every activity and work be oriented to the betterment of the young and the poor. By being close to the poor, we will be aided in our efforts to be faithful in our religious commitment to the Lord. Let us never give up on ourselves or on the poor and the youth, especially the poor ones, who are entrusted to us. They are our Mount Tabor! It is through them that our Lord will be revealing Himself and His designs for us. Every plan of His is not to harm us but to give us abundant joy, hope and fulfilment. “*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future*” (*Jer 29:11*).

May God bless you!

Yours affectionately in the Lord,

Fr Januarius S Sangma, SDB
Provincial

