

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 23/2019

1 September 2019

My Dear Confreres,

Greetings with love from Don Bosco Provincial House, Guwahati!

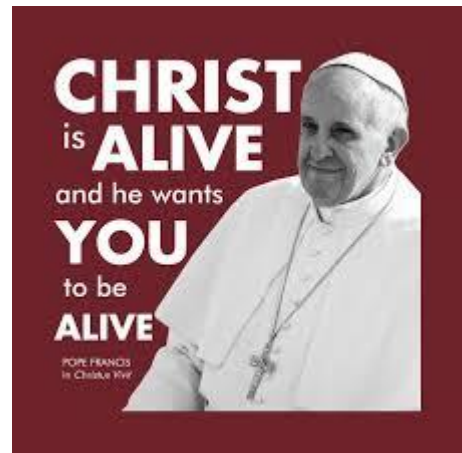
CHRISTUS VIVIT – CHRIST IS ALIVE – CHRIST LIVES

The Synod of Bishops, held in Rome from 3rd to 28th October 2018 was on the theme “Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment.” The post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit* by Pope Francis was signed on 25th March 2019 and published on 2nd April. We Salesians and the sons (and daughters) of the Saint of youth ought to welcome this priceless treasure wholeheartedly and study it carefully in order to deepen the faith of youth by giving them adequate space and time for their vocational discernment. May the young become “the compass for our journey.”

Many of you might have read the document, at least partially. Still I am writing on a few salient points of this spiritual treasure to reflect on them together. Let us open our minds to what the Spirit speaks to us through the Pope at this moment of time and history.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

Pope Francis commences the Apostolic Exhortation by addressing every young Christian and saying, “Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!”. He then enumerates more than a dozen of young characters from the Bible who made an effort to live truthfully and excelled in life. Most of them encountered God powerfully. He also presents Jesus as ever young and who attains fullness of life through relentless service especially to the needy. Mary pronounced her *fiat* (yes) as a young girl. Looking around in history, he invites us to see saintly young boys and girls of our times who could spur today’s youth on to the path of holiness. He calls the young as the “Now” of God. **“You are the ‘now’ of God”, he writes.**



The Pope then dwells at length listing the crises that young people face today. Many youth live in war zones and experience violence in countless forms - kidnapping, extortion, organized crime, human trafficking, slavery, sexual exploitation, wartime rape, etc. The young in many parts of the world are subjected to marginalization and exclusion. Many

seek transitory solace in drugs, substance, pornography and gambling. There are many who go through life with hurts and failures of the past, with frustrated desires, experiences of discrimination and injustice, felt unloved and unaccepted, face the onslaught of digital world and migrate from rural to urban atmosphere in search of livelihood, having no one to accompany them.

Next, the Pope delivered his message of encouragement and admonition to youth, commencing emphatically that we have “a God who is love”, that “Christ saves you”, that “He is alive” and that “His spirit gives life”. Saying that to be young is a grace and blessing, he exhorts the young to receive it with gratitude and live life to the full. The time of youth is the time to dream DREAMS and make decisions, have a thirst for life and experience friendship with Christ and grow in maturity.

He cautions the young not to fall into the trap of building the future without roots, for “it is impossible for us to grow unless we have strong roots to support us and to keep us firmly grounded”. He speaks about the inherent value of history and the richness of the experience of parents and elders.

Speaking about the youth ministry today, he is convinced of the need for involvement of the entire community in evangelizing the young and the urgent requirement that young people take on a greater role in pastoral outreach. Youth ministry needs to become more flexible: inviting young people to events or occasions that provide an opportunity not only for learning but also for conversing, celebrating, singing, listening to real stories and experiencing a shared encounter with the living God. Youth ministry has to be synodal or a “journeying together”.

The Pope also speaks about the need for solitude and silence to discern one’s vocation well in life since it is a very personal decision and that others cannot make it for us. “The Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways, at work, through others and at every moment. Yet we simply cannot do without the silence of prolonged prayer, which enables us better to perceive God’s language, to interpret the real meaning of the inspirations we believe we have received, to calm our anxieties and to see the whole of our existence afresh in his own light”.

The Pope discusses candidly the problem of sexual abuse and other abuses, committed by “some bishops, priests, religious and laypersons” and asks the young to participate in keeping priests true to their vows and vocations. He writes: “If you see a priest at risk because he has lost the joy of his ministry or seeks affective compensation or is taking the wrong path, remind him of his commitment to God and his people, remind him of the Gospel and urge him to hold to his course. In this way, you will contribute greatly to something fundamental: preventing these atrocities from being *repeated*.”

The exhortation concludes with the most affectionate words, “Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running, “attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us”.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE WHOM GOD ACCOMPANIED

In the first Chapter of the document, Pope Francis speaks about the great qualities of youth in the Old Testament. “In an age when young people were not highly regarded, some texts show that God sees them differently”.

- Joseph was the youngest of his family, yet God showed him great things in dreams and when he was about twenty years old, he outshone all his brothers in important affairs.
- Gideon represents the frankness of young people who talked to God without any sugar-coating, “But if the Lord is with us, why then have all these things happened to us?” God was not offended by that reproach but went on to order him, “Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel!”.
- Samuel was a young boy when God called him by name. He opened his heart to hear God’s call on the advice and guidance of an adult, to say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”.
- David was chosen while still a boy. When prophet Samuel was seeking the future king of Israel, a man offered as candidates his sons who were older and more experienced. Yet the prophet said that the chosen one was the young David who was out tending the flock, for “man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart”. The glory of youth is in the heart, more than in physical strength or the impression given to others.
- Solomon, when he had to succeed his father, felt lost and told God “I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act”. Yet the audacity of youth moved him to ask God for wisdom and he devoted himself to his mission.
- Something similar happened to the prophet Jeremiah, called despite his youth to rouse his people. In his fear, he said “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth”. But the Lord told him not to say that and added “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you”. The devotion of the prophet Jeremiah to his mission shows what can happen when the brashness (boldness) of youth is joined to the power of God.
- The young Ruth was a model of generosity in remaining beside her mother-in-law who had fallen on hard times yet she also showed boldness in getting ahead in life.
- One of Jesus’ parables relates that a “younger” son wanted to leave his father’s home for a distant land. Yet his thoughts of independence turned into dissolution and excess and he came to experience the bitterness of loneliness and poverty.

Nonetheless, he found the strength to make a new start and determined to get up and return home.

- The word of God says that young people should be treated “as brothers” and warns parents not to “provoke your children, lest they become discouraged”. Young people meant to dream great things, to seek vast horizons, to aim higher, to take on the world, to accept challenges and to offer the best of themselves to the building of something better. To each youth, it repeats,: “Let no one despise your youth”.
- The young people are urged “to accept the authority of those who are older”. The Bible never ceases to insist that profound respect be shown to the elderly, since they have a wealth of experience; they have known success and failure, life’s joys and afflictions, its dreams and disappointments. In the silence of their heart, they have a store of experiences that can teach us not to make mistakes or be taken in by false promises.
- The Gospel also speaks about a group of wise young women, who were ready and waiting, while others were distracted and slumbering. We can, in fact, spend our youth being distracted, skimming the surface of life, half-asleep, incapable of cultivating meaningful relationships or experiencing the deeper things in life. In this way, we can store up a paltry and unsubstantial future. Or we can spend our youth aspiring to beautiful and great things, and thus store up a future full of life and interior richness.

The Pope exhorts the young, “If you have lost your inner vitality, your dreams, your enthusiasm, your optimism and your generosity, Jesus stands before you as once he stood before the dead son of the widow, and with all the power of his resurrection he urges you: “Young man, I say to you, arise!”.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND HOLINESS OF LIFE

In Chapter 2 of the document, the Pope speaks about Jesus, who is ever young, saying that He is “young among the young in order to be an example for the young and to consecrate them to the Lord”.

The Pope says that Jesus does not teach the young from afar. He is truly one of the young and shares many features of young hearts, like his unconditional trust in the Father, maintaining friendship with his disciples and even in moments of crisis he remains faithful to them. He shows profound compassion for the weakest, especially the poor, the sick, sinners and the excluded. He has the courage to confront the religious and political authorities of his time; he knows what it was to feel misunderstood and rejected; he experiences the fear of suffering and he knows the frailty of the Passion. He turns his gaze to the future, entrusting himself into the Father’s safe hands in the strength of the Spirit. In Jesus, all the young can see themselves.

Pope Francis feels that youth is more than simply a period of time; it is a state of mind. The young must dare to be different, to point to ideals other than those of this world, testifying to the beauty of generosity, service, purity, perseverance, forgiveness,

fidelity to our personal vocation, prayer, the pursuit of justice and the common good, love for the poor, and social friendship.

Young people can help keep the Church young. They can stop her from becoming corrupt, enable her to move forward, prevent from being proud and sectarian, help her to be poorer and to bear better witness, to take the side of the poor and the outcast, to fight for justice and humbly to let herself be challenged. Young people can offer the Church the beauty of youth by renewing her ability to “rejoice with new beginnings, to give unreservedly of herself, to be renewed and to set out for ever greater accomplishments”.

The Pope makes mention about a substantial number of young people who for all sorts of reasons, do not ask the Church for anything because they do not see her as significant for their lives. Some even ask expressly to be left alone, as they find the presence of the Church a nuisance, even an irritant. This request does not always stem from uncritical or impulsive contempt. It can also have serious and understandable reasons: sexual and financial scandals; a clergy ill-prepared to engage effectively with the sensitivities of the young; lack of care in homily preparation and the presentation of the word of God; the passive role assigned to the young within the Christian community; the Church’s difficulty in explaining her doctrine and ethical positions to contemporary society.

To be credible to young people, the Church needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what others say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel.

The heart of the Church is full of young saints. They are precious reflections of the young Christ.

- Saint Sebastian was a young captain of the Praetorian Guard who tried to convert his companions. He was ordered to renounce his faith and since he refused, he was shot with arrows, yet he survived and continued to proclaim Christ fearlessly. In the end, Sebastian was flogged to death.
- Saint Francis of Assisi heard Jesus’ call to become poor like him and to rebuild the Church by his witness. He joyfully renounced everything he had and is now the saint of universal fraternity, the brother of all.
- Saint Joan of Arc was a young peasant girl who, despite her tender years, fought to defend France from invaders. Misunderstood for her demeanour, her actions and her way of living the faith, Joan was burned at the stake.
- Saint Dominic Savio offered all his sufferings to Mary. When Saint John Bosco taught him that holiness involves being constantly joyful, he opened his heart to a contagious joy. He wanted to be close to the most abandoned and infirm of his fellow young people.
- Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus at fifteen years of age, having overcome many difficulties succeeded in entering the Carmelite convent. Thérèse lived the little

way of complete trust in the Lord's love and determined to fan with her prayers the fire of love burning in the heart of the Church.

- Blessed Ceferino Namuncurá was a young Argentinian, the son of the chief of a remote tribe of indigenous peoples. He became a Salesian seminarian, filled with the desire to return to his tribe, bringing Jesus Christ to them.
- Blessed Marcel Callo was a young French man who was imprisoned in a concentration camp in Austria, where he strengthened his fellow prisoners in faith amid harsh labours.

The best gift we can give the young is holiness. Their holiness is what can renew and rejuvenate our Church and society. Through the holiness of the young, the Church can renew her spiritual ardour and her apostolic vigour. Holiness would mean that God is our centre. Holiness is an enlargement of our heart, our values, and thus putting God as our focus.

Self-worth comes from God. Not from achievements, studies, or material possessions. And not from appearances or physical strength or from external beauty or impressions. The more I discover God, the more I discover myself—my true self. The more I am present to the transcendent, the more I am present to my humanity and my reality in this world. The more I love God, the more I am able to love myself and others. The closer I go to God, the freer I become. He gives me freedom—deeper and deeper, and He never enslaves me.

Pope Francis' desire and passion to see the young people of the Church become fully alive could be understood from this passionate invitation: "Dear young people, make the most of these years of your youth. Don't observe life from a balcony. Don't confuse happiness with an armchair, or live your life behind a screen... take risks... make a ruckus!... live! give yourselves over to the best of life!.. please, don't take an early retirement".

MEETING OF HEADS OF COMMISSIONS

The Meeting of the Heads of all Commissions was held on 12th August 2019 at Don Bosco Provincial House, Guwahati. It was a very fruitful meeting, and I thank all the participants for their availability and contribution. All commissions except the Boarding and Hostel commission participated in it. Every commission Head presented the report of the activities of each commission. The assembly resolved that there was a need to implement reporting on a quarterly basis, and that all the reports needed to be submitted to the Vice Provincial. All commissions would henceforth draw up the Annual plan of activities and submit it to the Provincial and his Council for approval. The Heads of Commission would meet often to review and assess the progress of activities and programmes. In the future, during the meetings, more time could be given for discussion and deliberations. During the meeting there was a proposal to release the Tiwa Bible during the Diamond Jubilee

celebrations, which could be published under the banner of Don Bosco Publications through the Social Communications department of the province.

PARISH PRIESTS' MEETING

The Meeting of Parish Priests of our Province was held on 23rd August 2019 at Don Bosco Provincial House, Guwahati. All the parish priests except one participated in it. The one who was absent sought permission, as he had visitors from Spain. There was a good atmosphere for quality input and discussion during the entire meeting. Dealing on the topic of Catechesis after Evangelisation, Fr Francis Hembrom spoke in great detail about the Small Christian Communities. Fr Denis T. Sangma spoke about how to organize the parish ministry effectively. In the afternoon session, the assembly planned the vocation strategy.



The highlight of the meeting was the animation by Fr Ivo Coelho, Fr Silvio Roggia, Br Raymond Callo, and Fr Jose Kuttianimattathil who addressed the gathering in the evening. Fr Ivo stressed on formation which is to be lifelong. He cautioned us quoting Pope Francis, "Time is greater than space", i.e., the initiation of processes is more important than dominating spaces. It means that the inception of right processes today will bring about healthy and lasting fruits tomorrow. Fr Silvio spoke about family apostolate in order to get youth strongly rooted in faith. Br Mon spoke on the need to integrate Salesian methodology into our pastoral programme of the parish. Fr Jose spoke about the need to do something urgently to prevent fragility in vocations in the province. As per the statistics and data available, the ING has departures which are incredibly high and it is time that we introspect on it.

PROVINCIAL COMMUNITY DAY

The Provincial Community Day was celebrated on 24th August 2019 at Don Bosco Provincial House, Guwahati. It was good to see many confreres participating in the event, which was followed by the Jubilee celebrations of our confreres. It was a meaningful Provincial Community Day celebration, which stressed our unity and brotherhood in the

Province. The day started well with the parish priests taking part in the morning prayer, during which we prayed for all the communities, our collaborators, our sick confreres, for vocations and the people for whom we work, especially the young.



During the morning session, we welcomed Fr Ivo Coelho and his team from the Formation department in Rome. He then animated us on the revised Manual of Rectors which is being printed now. Saying that the Rector Major will sponsor the printing cost which will be printed for every SDB confrere worldwide, he said that the purpose of making copies available for each confrere is that the Rector can animate the community better if the individual confreres collaborate with him. He spoke about the Rector as the guardian of religious life and discipline in the community. He opined that fraternity in communities lands into problems, maybe because the faith aspect is weak. Hence, the more we strengthen the element of faith, the aspects of fraternity and discernment will be better experienced and lived.

Dwelling significantly on the Educative Pastoral community (EPC), he said that if the EPC is healthy, the mission and apostolate will make greater progress and yield better results.

In the afternoon session, I did a brief review and examination of the life of fraternity in the province. Projecting on the screen, the responses to the questionnaires that were given to quite many confreres of the province earlier, on certain basic questions, such as, what makes you happy in the province, what makes you worry about the future of the province, what five urgent lines of action does the province need to take, in what creative way could we promote vocations to the congregation and to give suggestions for the Provincial and his council to do better. I was able to help the confreres see ourselves and the province through our own lens. On the whole, it was a very positive exercise, which kept the confreres awake in the afternoon session. The session gave me the opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who help me daily to animate and govern the province well especially the Vice Provincial, the Economist, the Council members, the Rectors and all the confreres.

JUBILEE OF CONFRERES

This year we had a big number of Jubilee celebrants, around whom we gathered in the evening of 24th August 2019 at Guwahati: **Golden Jubilee of Ordination:** Fr Edward

D'Souza (13-12-1969), Fr Kuriala Chittattukalam (20-12-1969), **Golden Jubilee of Profession:** Br Aloysius Induar (24-05-1969), Fr Cyriac Vettickathadam (VA) (24-05-1969), Fr John Chellanthara (CA) (24-05-1969), Fr Jose Kadaprayil (KC) (24-05-1969), Fr Stephen Mavely (24-05-1969), Fr Thomas Vattathara (VM) (24-05-1969), **Silver Jubilee of Ordination:** Fr Johnson Parackal (18-04-1995), Fr Milon Narjary (22-01-1995), Fr Sebastian Ishorary (26-02-1995), **Silver Jubilee of Profession:** Fr Albert Thyrniang (23-05-1994), Fr Damian Basumatary (23-05-1994), Fr Gabriel G. Momin (23-05-1994), Fr Thadeus Kujur (23-05-1994). Ten of the 15 jubilarians were present for the celebrations. I congratulate them once again and wish God's blessings on their ministry.



Fr John Chellanthara (CA), one of the jubilarians presided over the solemn Holy Eucharist at St Joseph's Co-Cathedral, Guwahati, and Fr Edward D'Souza, another jubilarian gave the homily. Soon after the Mass, there was a grand and meaningful felicitation programme in the Mamma Margaret Hall of Don Bosco School community in which the youth from Snehalaya and DBI and the FMA Junior sisters participated. They all presented beautiful and well prepared items. The celebration ended with the Jubilee dinner in the Provincial House lawn.

VISIT OF FR IVO AND FR JOSE TO THE PRE-NOVITIATE

Fr Ivo Coelho, General Councillor for Formation, and Fr Jose Kuttianimattathil, SPCSA Delegate for Formation, visited the Pre-Novitiate and Dotma Community on 24th August 2019. Besides interacting with the pre-novices, they also had an opportunity to meet with the Salesian Family members, especially the FMA Sisters, at Dotma.

VISIT OF FR SILVIO AND BR RAYMOND TO SIRAJULI

Fr Silvio Roggia and Br Raymond Callo, both working in the Formation Department at Rome, visited the Missionary Aspirantate at Sirajuli on 24th August 2019. They also visited the communities of DBSTI, Tezpur, Dimakuchi and Tangla on 25th August 2019.

SOUTH ASIA FORMATION COMMISSION MEETING

Don Bosco Provincial House, Guwahati, hosted the South Asian Formation Commission Meeting from 25th to 29th August 2019, for which 21 confreres participated from all the 12 provinces of South Asia. The main animators were Fr Ivo Coelho, General Councillor for Formation, Fr Silvio Roggia, Formation Department, Br Raymond Callo, Formation Department, and Fr Jose Kuttianimattathil, SPCSA Delegate for Formation.



CHRISTOPHER, PETRUS AND PATRICK LEAVE FOR ROME

The young confreres who have opted to serve as missionaries *ad gentes*, Cl. Petrus Nanwar, Cl. Patrick Kujur and Br Christopher Thaimai left for Rome on 26th August 2019. We wish God's choicest blessings on them as they attend the missionary course at Rome, and prepare themselves for their new missions. Next week, Cl. Somesh Tudu will leave for Jerusalem to begin his theological studies at Salesian Monastery, Ratisbonne. We wish him "Bon voyage!" and God's blessings on his studies.



CONDOLENCES

Fr Joseph Kizhakechennadu (KJ), SDB, (also known as Fr Kathanar) belonging to the Province of Shillong (INS), suddenly passed away on 25th August 2019 in Don Bosco Provincial House - Mathias Institute, Shillong after he had a massive heart attack. He was 68. May the merciful Lord grant him eternal rest and peace! Our deepest condolences to Fr Paul Olphindro Lyngkot, Provincial, and the confreres of INS. Many of us know him or worked with him, and we gratefully remember his contribution to the communities that fall under our Province after the division of Shillong from our Province. Fr KJ Joseph was Rector of Maligaon, Guwahati, from June 1984 to December 1986. He was Rector of Bosco Mount, Rongkhon, Tura from 1986 to 1990. He was also Vocation Promoter of the Province from 1990 to 1991, during which he was belonging to the community of Don Bosco, Panbazar, Guwahati. He was also Assistant Director of NFT/VT at Mendal for a short time. May the good Lord reward him with His eternal life!

CONCLUSION

On 8th September, we celebrate the birthday of our Blessed Mother. She is our model in spending her life at the service of God and neighbour. We shall lay the foundation stone of Don Bosco College, Diphu on this special occasion, imploring her maternal intercession for guidance and assistance. Bishop Paul Mattekatt of Diphu has kindly consented to do the honours by blessing the foundation stone in the presence of our youth. May Don Bosco who exhorted us to have devotion to Mary to witness miracles, pray and intercede for us and for our mission.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



Fr Januarius S. Sangma SDB
Provincial



PROGRAMME OF THE PROVINCIAL TEAM

SEPTEMBER 2019

	Provincial	Vice Provincial	Economer
1 Sun	Guwahati > Umswai	Guwahati	Guwahati
2 Mon	Umswai	Guwahati	Guwahati
3 Tue	Umswai > Guwahati	Shillong	Guwahati
4 Wed	Guwahati > Shillong: Sunnyside	Umden Parish	Dotma > Ramfalbil
5 Thu	SHTC - Curatorium Meeting	Guwahati	Bongaigaon
6 Fri	Shillong: Sacred Heart College	Guwahati	Guwahati
7 Sat	ADBU Tapesia: Convocation	Tapesia / Jubilee of MSMHCs	ADBU Tapesia: Convocation
8 Sun	Diphu: Foundation Stone - DBC	Diphu: Laying of foundation stone for DBC	Diphu College
9 Mon	Satgaon, Sojong, Baithalangso > Guwahati: Trimonthly Recollection for Clerics, Brothers	Guwahati: Tri-Monthly Recollection for PT / Student Brothers	Guwahati
10 Tue	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
11 Wed	Tripura: Garo Sobha	Guwahati	Bosco Reach Out
12 Thu	Tripura: Chapel Blessing (Garo Village) > Guwahati	Kumarikatta	Guwahati
13 Fri	Sashipur: Regional Meeting (Assam Plains)	Sashipur: Assam Plains Regional Meeting	Snehalaya
14 Sat	Sirajuli: Vocation Commission	Sirajuli: Vocation Commission	Guwahati
15 Sun	Rongkhon: Holy Cross Parish Day > Bosco Mount	Sirajuli	Amkachi
16 Mon	Tura: DB Junior College > Boko	Tangla	Guwahati
17 Tue	Boko	Guwahati	Guwahati
18 Wed	Boko > Guwahati: Junior Priests Meeting on Youth Ministry	Guwahati: Junior Priests Meeting on Youth Ministry	Guwahati: Junior Priests Meeting on Youth Ministry
19 Thu	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
20 Fri	Doomni: BTAD Regional Meet	Doomni: BTAD Regional Meet	Barpeta > Doomni
21 Sat	Doomni: Blessing and Inauguration of School Extension	Doomni: School Extension Blessing	Doomni: School Extension Blessing
22 Sun	Guwahati	Barpeta Road	Guwahati
23 Mon	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
24 Tue	Guwahati > Bongaigaon	Guwahati: Diamond Jub Meeting of Organizing Team	Guwahati
25 Wed	Bengtola and Ramfalbil	Guwahati	Guwahati
26 Thu	Dotma and Kokrajhar	DBPH: Meeting of All Members of All Commissions	Guwahati
27 Fri	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
28 Sat	Guwahati: Provincial Council Meeting > Damra	Provincial Council Meeting	Provincial Council Meeting
29 Sun	Damra: Parish Feast > Gojapara	Satgaon: Jubilee of Fr. Gabriel Momin	Guwahati
30 Mon	Gojapara > Rongjeng	Guwahati	Guwahati