

# PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 25/2019

1 October 2019

*My Dear Confreres,*

Greetings with love from Don Bosco Provincial House, Guwahati!

## WELCOME TO REV. FR FRANCESCO CEREDA AND FR SAIMY JOSEPH

In the name of every Confrere, the members of the Salesian family, the novices, pre-novices, the aspirants and the faithful in all our settings, it is my honour and privilege to welcome to Rev. Fr Francesco Cereda SDB, Vicar General of the Congregation and Rev. Fr Saimy Joseph Ezhanikkatt SDB, Secretary of Fr Francesco Cereda, to our Province as they arrive here on 14th October 2019. We warmly welcome them and wish them a very pleasant stay with us. We thank them sincerely for accepting our invitation to be with us during the Diamond jubilee celebration. The visit of a Major Superior is an occasion to rejoice and is a moment of grace and blessing to the province. It is indeed **“Don Bosco with us”**.



## THE PROVINCE OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, GUWAHATI TURNS DIAMOND THIS YEAR

On 15th, 16th and 17th October 2019, we will celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the Province. Preparations are on in full swing to celebrate it and it will indeed be a meaningful event, spiritual or otherwise. May we take the occasion to be grateful to our Lord who chose and sent the missionaries to our land.

On 11th, 12th and 13th October, all the communities will celebrate the Triduum in preparation for the Jubilee. The Triduum materials have been prepared with much care and have already been dispatched to the Rectors/Leaders of communities, with a note to organize the Triduum as devoutly as possible. I am confident that this triduum will serve as an immediate preparation for a spiritual and meaningful celebration of the milestone that the Province has achieved.

On 15th and 16th October, there will be a Symposium on the theme of **Missionary Evangelisation and Catechesis** at Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati which will be inaugurated by Rev. Fr Francesco Cereda SDB. Every Rector/Leader along with a lay leader and a religious (Sister or a confrere, if no religious available) will participate in it. So we are expecting three persons from every centre, besides other invitees and speakers.

On 17th October, we shall all assemble at Don Bosco School premises to celebrate the grand finale of the Diamond Jubilee of the Province, with Fr Francesco Cereda as our Chief Guest. In the morning hours, starting at 9.30 am, we will begin the day with confessions and the recitation of the Holy Rosary. At 10.30 am, there will be a solemn Eucharistic celebration. At 2.00 pm, we shall give glory, praise, honour and worship to God for our Diamond years through cultural extravaganza, during which we shall remember with gratitude the pioneers, the past and the present Salesians who facilitated the monumental growth of our province during these past years.

### **ERECTION OF OUR PROVINCE IN A NUTSHELL**

In the paragraphs that follow, I am presenting to you a short history of the events that led to the Erection of the Province of Guwahati on 17th October 1959. The history is intertwined with so many events that it is necessary to bring to mind the various details of such a history, though only briefly.

The history of the Salesians in India begins with the 1886 missionary dream of Don Bosco, in which he is asked to draw a line starting from Santiago in Chile to Peking in China, cutting across Africa and India, passing through the city of Kolkata. Twenty years later, on 6th January 1906, the first group of six Salesians, with Fr George Tomatis as leader, landed in Bombay to begin work in India, starting from Thanjavur.

Initially, Salesian works in India (Tanjore and Mylapore) were under the jurisdiction of the Province of Portugal (1906-1912) and then of the Roman Province of St Peter (1912-1922). However, after the first group of the Salesian missionaries to Assam, led by Fr Louis Mathias, arrived in the North East in January 1922, Salesian works both in the South and the North East were for a year placed directly under the General Council, and then in 1923 India was made a visitatoria (Vice Province) with Fr Louis Mathias as its Superior.

Three years later, on 28th May 1926, the Vice Province was raised to the status of a full-fledged Province – the Province of India – with St Thomas the Apostle as its patron and Msgr Louis Mathias as its Provincial. Shillong was chosen as the headquarters of the Province since the Provincial Msgr Mathias, being also the Prefect Apostolic of Assam, Bhutan and Manipur, had his sede at Shillong, the capital of Assam (the whole of North East).

In 1931 the Indian Province was divided into two – the North Indian Province of St John Bosco which continued with headquarters in Shillong, and the South Indian Province of St Thomas the Apostle, with headquarters in Vellore. Fr Vincent Scuderi and Fr Eligio Cinato were appointed Provincials of the North and the South, respectively. In 1937, the Provincial House of the Northern Province was shifted to Kolkata and that of the Southern Province to Chennai.

In October 1959, the Province of North India was bifurcated to form a new Province in North East India, with headquarters in Guwahati and Mary Help of Christians as Patroness. Fr Anthony Alessi, who was the Provincial of the Mother Province, was nominated Provincial of the new Province of Guwahati, while Fr Orestes Paviotti was appointed Provincial of the North Indian Province which continued to have its headquarters in Kolkata.

The birth of the Province of Guwahati in 1959 from the Mother Province of North India was both timely and momentous. It was the tangible sign from above of the divine sanction that accompanied at every step the heroic accomplishments of the Salesian pioneers who engendered the Assam Mission miracle. On 21st July 1921, Fr Paul Albera, Rector Major of the Salesians, acceding to the repeated request of Propaganda Fide, accepted the Assam Mission, reiterating St Peter's words to Christ, *In verbo autem tuo laxabo rete* (at your words I will let down the net, Lk 5:5). It was the beginning of a glorious chapter in the history of the Indian Missions, that is replete with missionary adventures and achievements. True to the prophetic words of the Rector Major, his missionary sons braved innumerable obstacles and dangers to "launch into the deep."

Although the Province of Guwahati as such was only established in 1959, its history as was seen above is

India - Guwahati  
Reg. minor Hyderabad

(446/59)  
Prot. N° 2492/59

SACRA CONGREGATIO  
DE RELIGIOSIS

BEATISSIMO PADRE,

Il Rettore Maggiore della Società Salesiana di San Giovanni Bosco, prostrato al bacio del S. Piede, umilmente domanda la facoltà di dividere e di erigere con la parte del territorio e con la Casa separata dalla Ispettorìa "San Giovanni Bosco" dell'INDIA NORD, una nuova Ispettorìa con sede a GAUHATI ed intitolata a "aria Ausiliatrice".

A questa nuova Ispettorìa dell'INDIA NORD-EST resterebbero assegnate le seguenti Case:

GAUHATI - SHILLONG: Don Bosco; Mawlai, S. Cuore; S. Antonio; S. Domenico Savio.

Inoltre le Residenze o Stazioni Missionarie della Diocesi di DIBRUGARH, e precisamente:

DIBRUGARH - DIGBOI - DOOH DOOMA - GOLAGHAT - HUNDUNG - IMPHAL - KOHIMA - FAHARKATIYA - NORTH LAKHIMPUR; e le Residenze o Stazioni Missionarie della Diocesi di Shillong, e cioè:

Bagrama - BARPETA ROAD - CHERRAPUNJEE - CHOTAPUKRI - DAMRA - JOWAI - MARIJU - NANGPON - PYNURSULA - RALIANG - SHILLONG, Cattedrale - SHILLONG-MAWKHAR, S. Giuseppe - TANGLA - TEZPUR - TURA.

Che della grazia, eccq.

Vigore facultatum a S.mo Domino Nostro concessarum, Sacra Congregatio Negotiis Religiosorum Sodalium praeposita, attentis expositis, benigne adnuit pro gratia juxta preces, servatis servandis.

Contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Datum Romae, die 7 Octobris 1959.  
(L. + S.) VALERIUS C. VALERI, Praefectus  
B. Verde'li, Subsecr.

D E C R E T U M

Vigore specialis facultatis per supra relatum Rescriptum Nobis concessae, Nos, Sac. Rerum Sacramentorum, Societatis a Sancto Francisco Salesio nuncupatae Rector Major, omnibus mature perpensis et de consensu Capituli Superioris, Provinciam S. Joannis Bosco in India Septentrionali dividimus, et novam Provinciam canonice erigimus assignati ei Domibus et territorio supra recensitis.

In quorum fidem, etc.

Datum Augustae Taurinorum, die 17 Octobris 1959.

A Secretis

Rector Major

inseparably linked with the beginning and growth of the Catholic Church and the Salesian Mission in North East India or “Assam,” as it was known earlier. Assam was established as a new Prefecture in 1889 and it was entrusted to the Society of Divine Saviour (Salvatorians). In 1915 the Salvatorians were expelled from Assam due to World War I, following which the Belgian Jesuits from Calcutta assumed temporary care of the Mission at the departure of the German Salvatorians.

When it became evident that the Salvatorians could not return to Assam after the war, Propaganda Fide approached several religious Congregations to take up the Assam Mission. But none of them responded positively. From 1918, Propaganda Fide turned its attention to the Salesian congregation for the care of the Assam Mission. On 6th July 1920, Fr Albera wrote to the Prefect of Propaganda Fide conveying the inability of the Salesians to oblige them for several valid reasons. In spite of the refusal from the part of the Rector Major of the Salesians, the Prefect of Propaganda Fide subsequently made the same request not less than five times. It was on 21st July 1921, that Fr Albera officially responded to them conveying his willingness to accept the Assam Mission.

The Rector Major presented to Fr Louis Mathias, the leader of the pioneering team, the list of Salesians who would form the pioneer group to Assam. The list consisted only of six priests. At the request of Fr Mathias, five brothers were added to the group. At the solemn ceremony of the departure of the missionaries on 23rd October 1921, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin, Fr Mathias described the new mission land as a New Patagonia and the New Promised Land where he said that the Salesians will speak the language of the Lord and will repeat the prodigy of the first Pentecost. On 20th December 1921, the group celebrated Holy Mass in the little room of Don Bosco at Valdocco and started their long journey to Assam.

On 6th January 1922, the pioneering team reached Bombay, and 9th January reached Calcutta. On 11th January they left Calcutta and boarded the train to Guwahati. And finally on 13th January 1922, they reached Shillong.

The leader of the pioneering group, Fr Louis Mathias, with his motto “Dare and Hope” and his ten valiant companions, have initiated an unprecedented missionary activity in the North East which continues even today. Here are the names of the eleven Salesians who formed the first group (six priests and five brothers) belonging to three European countries: Fr Louis Mathias, Fr Joseph Gil, Fr Joseph Hauber, Fr Emmanuel Bars, Br Peter Aprile, Br Laureano Santana, Br Augustine Conti, Fr John Deponti, Fr Paul Bonardi, Br Mario Calzi and Br Gumersindo Cid.

At present there are three Provinces in the North East: Guwahati (1959), Dimapur (1981), and Shillong (2012): all of them equally missionary. Thanks to the early missionaries who dared and hoped, and it is their enthusiasm and inspiration that we have been able to emulate in our own limited ways.

## DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS – THE PROGRAMME

I am sure that the invitation card for the Jubilee and the detailed programme of the celebration are already in your hands. As the Salesians and the Salesian family members, based in Guwahati gear themselves up to host this mega event, I would like to invite everyone of you to take note of the following few points and render absolute co-operation to the organizers to make the celebrations flow smoothly and end successfully.



- The Rectors/Leaders of Communities are to ensure that the Triduum is organized well. The triduum materials have been sent to you, in case you would like to have these ready-made animation materials. The days for the triduum have been fixed for uniformity.
- The symposium on the theme, **Missionary Evangelization and Catechesis**, on 15th and 16th October at DBI, is meant for the Rectors and Leaders of communities. They will participate in it both the days, along with one lay leader and a religious (Sister) or a confrere (if no religious is available)
- On the 17th October, when there will be a grand finale of the celebrations, all the communities are requested to bring a total of 75 persons maximum: boys, girls, past pupils, co-operators and sodalities of various associations.
- As most of these 75 participants will be Catholics, kindly instruct them to participate in the celebrations, particularly in the morning Holy Mass devoutly. There will be facility for preparing for the Mass through confessions and Rosary in and around the venue, which they could be encouraged to make a good use.
- The Institutions to which the cultural programmes have been asked to present are kindly requested to make the presentations as good and flawless as possible, within the timeframe allotted.
- Please plan your journey and other related programmes well in advance. Avoid last minute planning and arrangement. I request the Rectors/leaders to take maximum care of the safety and security of the boys and girls and make their participation as memorable as possible. To make the programme a grand success, it is important for us to be always on time or punctual and disciplined.

Fr Cereda, the Bishops of North East India and beyond, the past and present Provincials of the North East Provinces, priests and religious around and Government officials will

grace the occasion. Seizing the opportunity, let us look back into the past with gratitude and amazement at the wonders and miracles that have been wrought, and let this occasion make us aware that the legacy is now on our shoulders and so passionately let us carry forward the huge patrimony we are privileged to have inherited.

### **CONVOCATION OF DON BOSCO UNIVERSITY**

The 8th Convocation of Assam Don Bosco University was held on 7th September 2019 at the Tapesia campus of the University, during which a total of 816 degrees were conferred. Prof. Jagdish Mukhi, the Honourable Governor of Assam, presided over the function and delivered the Presidential Address. A host of dignitaries from civil, Church and Academic institutions of the region also attended the occasion.

The Governor appreciated the University for creating and disseminating knowledge and skills in the frontier areas of education, developing reservoir of youth power, which effectively participate in nation building.

As the Chancellor of the University, I addressed the students, saying “Universities should contribute concretely to upholding democratic values; foster respect, fraternity, dignity of labour, non-violence, standing for truth and principles, upholding the dignity of life ... This is how we build a nation; this is how we build humanity.”

Giving a report about the University, the Vice Chancellor Fr (Dr) Stephen Mavelly, said, “Assam Don Bosco University is becoming a nerve centre for the development of the North Eastern Region. The University has taken up development initiatives in 42 villages that surround the University. It is an ideal location for the packed extension and social commitment programmes of the University. It’s in our plans to ensure that every graduate of our University will have committed themselves to several months of meaningful social work during the course of their study at the University.”

### **LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OF DON BOSCO COLLEGE, DIPHU**

On 8th September 2019, when the Church celebrated the Birthday of Mary, our Blessed Mother, we laid the foundation stone of Don Bosco College Diphu. The Foundation Stone for the new construction was laid by me, and blessed by Most Rev. Paul Mattekatt, Bishop of Diphu in the presence of all the Provincial Council Members and other Salesians together with college staff and students. The project is sponsored by the Italian Bishops’ Conference (CEI). Before the blessing and laying the foundation stone ceremony, the 400 strong hostel boys and girls presented a few but well prepared items to welcome everyone who came for the occasion.

### **KARBI ANGLONG REGIONAL MEETING, DIPHU**

On 8th September 2019, we also had the Karbi Anglong Regional Meeting at Diphu. The main focus was on vocation promotion. Other animations centred on the nature of

Salesian parishes, revival of catechesis in our parishes, training of catechists, youth animation programmes, etc. The confreres actively participated in the meeting. At the end of the meeting, all the confreres went to Bishop's House, Diphu for the monthly recollection.

### **ASSAM PLAINS REGIONAL MEETING, SASHIPUR**

The Assam Plains Regional Meeting was held at Sashipur on 13th September 2019. The Rectors of all the communities of the region presented a brief report about their communities. Though it took time, it was enriching. The assembly then spent some time discussing about the girls hostel at DBSTI Tezpur and the proposed plan of the province to purchase a small plot of land with the RCC building on it. The gathering noted with happiness about the youth catechesis programme that was organized in the region (at DBSTI) during the summer holidays. The confreres attended the meeting well and went across to Bhutan for their late lunch after the meeting.

### **INAUGURATIONS OF NEW BLOCK AT DOOMNI & NEW SCHOOL AT BONGAON**

The new block of Doomni Don Bosco School was blessed and inaugurated on 21st September 2019. The New School at Bongaon was also blessed and inaugurated on the same. While the school at Doomni was sponsored by the province, Shri Biswajit Daimary, MP donated Rs. 30 lakhs towards the Bongaon school. Present on the occasion were also Shri Thaneswar Basumatary, MLA of Chapaguri constituency, the Provincial Team and many other confreres especially from the BTAD Region. The school children both at Doomni and Bongaon participated in the blessing ceremony and put a beautiful cultural and other items on the occasion.

### **BTAD REGIONAL MEETING, DOOMNI**

The BTAD Regional Meeting was held on the same day when we blessed and inaugurated the school buildings at Doomni and Bongaon. We congratulated Fr Ethelbert and the community for the successful completion of the school buildings and the programmes of the day. Fr Vice Provincial animated the confreres on the urgent need to promote good vocations. I briefed them about some of the developments and concerns of the province, with particular reference to the BTAD region. I invited them to visit the prenovitiate at Dotma, the only formation house of the province. I spoke about the need for regular House Council meetings and the need for greater accountability, transparency and proper budgeting. I also informed the confreres to be present in large numbers at Tangla on 16<sup>th</sup> October when Fr Cereda makes his visit there.

### **REGIONAL VOCATION PROMOTERS APPOINTED**

During the formation and vocation commissions meeting that were held on different occasions, we were able to synergise ourselves and take decisions that were relevant and appropriate. I thank Fr Vice Provincial in a special way for facilitating all these meetings

and we would do well to work perseveringly towards the implementation of the decisions and resolutions.

During the Vocation Commission meeting, we made the following new appointments of the Regional Vocation promoters. They will work in close collaboration with Fr Vice Provincial.

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Names of confreres</i>	<i>Regions</i>
1.	Fr Ignatius K Sangma and Fr Jogesh B Sangma	West Garo Hills, South Garo Hills and South West Garo Hills
2.	Fr Barnabas Mardi and Fr John Mathias Marak	East Garo Hills and Shallang
3.	Br Benedict B Sangma and Fr Ajay Xaxa	Boko, Damra, Gojapara, Mendal and Goalpara
4.	Fr Francis Basumatary and Fr Damian Basumatary	BTAD
5.	Fr Marcus Lakra and Fr Sebastian Edathumparambil	Assam Plains
6.	Fr Lucas Ch Marak	Sojong, Satgaon, Baithalangso, Haflong and Diphu
7.	Fr Denis Solomon	Umswai and Amkachi
8.	Fr Vincent Xalxo and Br Joby Mani	Kamrup Metro

### ALL COMMISSIONS MEETING

On 27th September 2019, the Meeting of the Members of All Commissions was held at Provincial House, Guwahati. It was a fruitful meeting chaired by Fr Provincial, and animated by Fr Vice Provincial with the theme “Commissions for Synergy.” The participants shared their experiences, and also gave a short report on the functioning of their respective commissions. The meeting concluded with a few lines of action.

### CONDOLENCES

*Fr Robert Faustin Lalfakzuala* lost his mother **Ms Agathi Rosangi**, on 6 September 2019. She was 77. She got a stroke on 4 July 2019, and was in the ICU for a long time. May God grant her eternal rest and peace. We offer our heartfelt sympathies to Fr Robert, Sr Teresa Salemi MSMHC, Sr Ann Goretti MC and all the family members, and pray for God’s consolation for the family.

**Fr Ignas Macwan**, belonging to the Province of Mumbai, suddenly passed away on 9th September 2019 at Baroda, Gujarat. He was 62. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the Provincial and confreres of the Province of Mumbai. May God grant eternal rest to Fr Ignas.

In the early morning of 11th September 2019 we received the shocking news of the passing away of **Fr Antony Joseph**, the Provincial of Tiruchy, fondly known as 'Anna' (the elder brother). He was 55. We offer our deepest sympathies to the confreres of the Province of Tiruchy and all his family members, who are grappling with deep sorrow at the sudden death of their dear Provincial or relative. He had problems of vomiting blood and giddiness, and later Fr Antony Joseph himself told the doctor and the confreres of the community that he was a carrier of non-treatable Hepatitis B virus for almost ten years. Though the doctors tried their best, they could not avoid the inevitable. As the confreres of Tiruchy will be missing him, so too Salesian India will miss him. He was an able administrator but at the same time a kind and down to earth person. We pray that the Lord may grant him eternal bliss in His kingdom.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



**Fr Januarius S. Sangma SDB**  
Provincial



## PROGRAMME OF THE PROVINCIAL TEAM: OCTOBER 2019

Date	Provincial	Vice Provincial	Economer
<b>1 Tue</b>	Guwahati: Diamond Jubilee Review Meeting (6.30 pm)	Diphu > Ghy: Diamond Jubilee Review Meeting	Shillong> Ghy: Diamond Jubilee Meeting
<b>2 Wed</b>	Guwahati > Umrangso Visit	Umrangso	Umrangso
<b>3 Thu</b>	Boko: Blessing & Inauguration of Don Bosco HS School	Boko: Blessing and Inauguration	Boko: Blessing and Inauguration
<b>4 Fri</b>	Guwahati: Recollection: FMA Chapter Members, Holy Mass	Guwahati: Course for Novice Masters (4-8)	Guwahati: Course for Novice Masters (4-8)
<b>5 Sat</b>	Guwahati: Inauguration of the Provincial Chapter of the FMA	KA Youth Retreat Khetri > Kolkata	Guwahati
<b>6 Sun</b>	Khetri: SYM Umswai - Animation & Holy Mass	Kolkata: Conference of Salesian Cooperators	Guwahati
<b>7 Mon</b>	Guwahati	Kolkata	Guwahati
<b>8 Tue</b>	Guwahati	Ghy: Course for N Masters	Guwahati: PH
<b>9 Wed</b>	Guwahati	Guwahati: FMA Jubilees	Guwahati
<b>10 Thu</b>	DBI: Training of Young Priests / Brothers on Youth Ministry	DBI: YM Training of Young Priests/Brothers	Guwahati: DBI
<b>11 Fri</b>	Satgaon: Animation of Parents	Amkachi: Past Pupils Meet	Guwahati
<b>12 Sat</b>	Sirajuli: Meeting with Fr Basanes, Mission Councillor	DBI: YM Training > GB, BoM Meeting of ADBU	Baithalangso
<b>13 Sun</b>	Ramfalbil: Jubilee of Fr Edward D'Souza	Ramfalbil Fr Eddie's Jubilee	Guwahati
<b>14 Mon</b>	Guwahati: Fr Francesco Cereda arrives; Prov Council; Salesian Family Gathering	Guwahati: Arrival of Fr Cereda, SF Gathering	Guwahati: Arrival of Fr Cereda, SF Gathering
<b>15 Tue</b>	<b>DBI: Inauguration of Symposium. Fr Cereda visits Snehalaya, ADBU</b>	<b>DBI: Diamond Jubilee Symposium</b>	<b>DBI: Diamond Jubilee Symposium</b>
<b>16 Wed</b>	<b>Fr Cereda visits Tangla, Dimakuchi</b>	<b>DBI: Symposium</b>	<b>DBI: Symposium</b>
<b>17 Thu</b>	<b>Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, Guwahati: Chief Guest Fr Francesco Cereda</b>		
<b>18 Fri</b>	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
<b>19 Sat</b>	Guwahati	Guwahati: Snehalaya	Guwahati
<b>20 Sun</b>	Shillong: Harvest Festival	Guwahati: DBI	Guwahati
<b>21 Mon</b>	Shillong: Provincial Chapter FMA Shillong	Tangla	Guwahati: BRO
<b>22 Tue</b>	Guwahati > Garobadha	Sirajuli	Meetings with Mr Kasper
<b>23 Wed</b>	Garobada	Tezpur DBSTI	Meetings with Mr Kasper
<b>24 Thu</b>	Guwahati : Reception to Board Members and the Hahnen family	Guwahati	Guwahati
<b>25 Fri</b>	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
<b>26 Sat</b>	<b>Guwahati, PH: Provincial Council Meeting, 9.30 am to 4.30 pm</b>		
<b>27 Sun</b>	Guwahati: DBI	Diphu: Marriage Training	Kokrajhar
<b>28 Mon</b>	Visit of Mr Martin Kasper- Amguri Program	Haflong	Bongaigaon – Ursulines
<b>29 Tue</b>	Guwahati	Haflong > Guwahati	Guwahati
<b>30 Wed</b>	Blessing of Bertola Renovation>Dimakuchi	Guwahati	Ghy: Snehalaya Blessing
<b>31 Thu</b>	Parents' Day: Dimakuchi	Guwahati	Guwahati