

# PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 30/2020

1 February 2020

*My Dear Confreres,*

Greetings from Provincial House, Guwahati!

I begin the circular of February with a paragraph taken from my circular of the month of January. For me, these lines are very precious and significant for every confrere and I know that quite many of you from different communities have missed it as you might have been at home or elsewhere for the winter holidays. Let them be a motto for us as a Province for the year 2020. At the end of the year, we must be able to say that indeed, with God's help, we have grown much in all these areas and be happy.

***“This new year, I request every community especially the Rectors and the Leaders to focus on the following goals:***

- ***To build a happy and inclusive/accommodative community, strongly centred on God.***
- ***To ensure growth in quality of all our works especially education, evangelization and catechesis.***
- ***To competently listen to and accompany all the young who are with us, giving preference to the poorest of them all.***
- ***To identify and promote good vocations throughout the year, beginning from the start of the year.***
- ***To keep growing as a good human being and as a faithful religious”.***

**THE CORE QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED SINCERELY BY EVERY SALESIAN AND THROUGH IT BE RE-NEWED AND TRANSFORMED**

Fr Angel Fernandez Arttime SDB, Rector Major, and the General Councillors who are in the helm of affairs in animation of the Salesian world including the Salesian family, did come up with a startling and challenging theme of the 28th General Chapter **“What kind of Salesians for the youth of today”?** With this theme, the Salesians all over the world would like to delve deep down, study and deepen *the profile of today's Salesian*, and of the Salesian of tomorrow, so that he will be able to offer the *best possible answer to today's young people*, especially the poorer and the ones most in need of help. Obviously it is a mission we do not carry on by ourselves, but *a mission shared between Salesians and lay people*. The Chapter will also focus our attention on several juridical issues, very relevant for *the Salesian mission that we are called to live today*.



The venue will be **Valdocco (Turin)**, as in the early General Chapters of the Congregation. Valdocco is a place so meaningful and rich of symbolism for all of us, ideal and inspiring for responding to the challenges we face as Salesians, willing to stay in the midst of today's young people. The Chapter will begin on **Sunday 16th February 2020**, with the solemn Eucharistic Concelebration in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco. The closing session will take place on **Saturday 4th of April 2020**, before the beginning of the Holy Week. Therefore, the General Chapter will last altogether seven weeks. The Rector Major in consultation with his council had earlier appointed **Fr Stefano Vanoli, General Secretary of the General Council** as **Moderator** of the General Chapter.

I invite you, my dear Confreres, and the members of the Salesian Family in the

Province of Guwahati, to pray to the Lord, asking for the grace of *fidelity* and also for the gift of *freedom in the Spirit*, to lead us in our common desire to dream how we should be today, how we should live and operate, in order to respond in fidelity to what the Lord is expecting from us. We have received from Don Bosco's hands the mission he begun, constantly inspired by the Holy Spirit and guided by the motherly presence of our Mother Mary, to whom we entrust this new important process just started.

As a province, we got the opportunity to study, reflect and internalize the theme of the Chapter as individuals and as a community. To really reap the fruits of this gratuitous gift and grace which the Lord provides through the Chapters, we need good will, seriousness, focus, shedding of the ego, prayer, openness of mind and proper animation. In many ways, there is a feeling that there are some Salesians who are already experiencing the loss of identity, not clear about our profile or who we are to be for the most needy youth, etc., and so the theme, which the Rector Major and his council have given us is truly relevant and a challenge. We need to be what we are called to be.

Working in the educational institutions and youth related institutions where we are surrounded by hundreds and thousands of young people does not make us truly Salesians.

There are many more very important elements which go to make us what we are. The manner in which we accompany the young, the preferential option we give to the poorest of the poor young people, our educative and sanctifying presense in their midst, our own relevance and competency to the needs and the problems of youth, the way we prepare them to face the challenges of the world today, our deep rootedness in God through prayers which are a real communication with the One who called us, our relatedness to one another in the community no matter what tends to divide us, our relentless spirit of hard work and sacrifice, our total fidelity to the vows, transparency in relationships and finances are some of the areas which I thought should find prominent place in the Salesian profile of the Salesian of the Guwahati Province. The theme should make us reflect seriously as to whether or not we have a proper profile of what we profess ourselves to be. In our own Province, I feel the urgency to reflect and study deeper this fundamental question and become faithful Salesians.

I along with Fr Biju Michael and Br Joby Mani will attend the Chapter. We assure you of our prayers when we are there and especially when we visit historical places. We are very fortunate that one of our youth, Ms Pinky Sarkar of Don Bosco Institute, Kharguli was invited by the Rector Major to attend some sessions of the chapter along with many youth from around the Salesian world.

#### **DELEGATION OF FR JOSEPH TERON TILL APRIL**

**Fr Joseph Teron Langne, Vice Provincial**, will see to the animation and ordinary governance of the Province during my absence from the Province for the General Chapter in Turin. I express my gratitude to him for his ever-available attitude and untiring dynamism to carry out any task assigned to him by the Province and implore God's blessings and assistance to him in the discharge of his duties as the Acting Provincial. I request all the confreres to kindly co-operate with him in order to ensure the smooth and effective animation and governance of the province.

After the Chapter, I will be visiting the benefactors of Fr Busolin, the Salesian Missions Office at Bonn, the Provincial of Germany and Mr Martin Kasper.

#### **VISIT OF FR MARIA AROKIAM KANAGA, REGIONAL OF SOUTH ASIA**

Fr Maria Arokiam, our Regional made a brief stopover in the Province on his way to Shillong and Dimpaur and animated the community and the Provincial Council members on two occasions. On the first day, he addressed the SDBs present for the Triduum, giving extensive information about the GC 28 and some of the pressing concerns of the Church and the congregation, such as the need for deepening prayer life, fidelity to consecrated life and prevent all forms of abuse and live a holy life.

On the second day, he spared his precious time and spent some quality time with the Provincial Council members.

To the council members, he spoke about the three pillars of our consecrated life, saying that just as the three legs of the tripod are needed to stand strong and erect, we need to ensure to keep the three fundamental elements of Consecration, Fraternity in community, and Mission healthy and balanced. Often, mission is equated to works and given top priority. We think that we are good salesians if we work hard. He spoke about the desire to be heroes of work and not men of God. Instead we need to lay more emphasis on our consecration, union with God, fraternal life and strive to be signs of God's love for the young, he said.

Ego can subtly push God away; though God is not absent in our lives, the ego could take the upper hand. We need to guard ourselves against laxity in prayer and spiritual practices due to work. Give to God what belongs to Him and to Caesar what belongs to him.

He also spoke about the danger of how the Church can be more engaged in worshipping Jesus rather than following Him. He encouraged us to revive the traditional practices, such as praying the ejaculatory prayers, burning of the letters, asking permission from superiors (not merely informing), the exercise for a happy death or recollection, dealing firmly with cases of major indiscipline, saying that the Church wants that canonical sanctions be there in the Church for abuse and major indiscipline such as serious offences against the three vows, abuse of money, illegitimate absence, abuse of minors, pedophilia, etc. He emphasised the importance of giving corrections to the confreres. He said that lack of willingness to correct was noticed in many cases. It might be because we might be in the same boat as the offenders and so had no moral authority to correct.



### **“PRIESTS FOREVER”: TO BEGIN TO SAY MASS IS TO BE LIKE CHRIST, THE SUFFERING SERVANT AND NOT LORDING OVER THE REST**

The Province in 2020 cannot but be grateful to the Lord of the Harvest for the six newly ordained priests of the province. We congratulate the newly ordained priests – Fr John Paul Tirkey, Fr Antony Dhason, Fr Amit Tete, Fr Kishor Mushahary, Fr Francis Xavier Kujur and Fr Klisterwel Songthiang on their priestly ordinations and we wish them a life of joy and fidelity in the service of God and the mission, that is the youth.



The ordination is not the end, rather it is the beginning of a journey of witness – witness to holiness, devout, effective and ever willing celebration and administration of sacraments, effective and relevant breaking of the Word of God, a life of joy and contentment, serene and cordial dealing with everyone especially with the parish and religious community members, willingness to make untold sacrifices and not looking for one's comfort, position and power in the church and society, remaining humble despite great performance and achievements and as John the Baptist would say, let others increase. I too however need to keep growing into Christ and remain relevant for the needs of the people especially the youth.

### **SIGN OF GOD'S LOVE SEEN IN VOCATION CAMPS TOO – GENEROSITY OF THE LORD OF THE HARVEST**

Together with the six newly ordained priests, we have witnessed a happy upsurge of good and quality vocations. There was a great team work and collaboration between the Province team and the team at the local and regional levels. We cannot but be grateful to God. I acknowledge the great involvement of Fr Vice Provincial and his team particularly the Rectors and the Regional vocation promoters who are following up the candidates closely throughout the year.

The numbers and the type of boys who attended the camps go to show that the field is still rich with vocations and it is upto us to tap the resources present. Our witness of cheerfulness, cordiality, welcoming heart towards the youth, holiness of life and accompaniment will certainly bring such great fruits.

In the first camp that was held at Tangla we welcomed 45 boys, in Tura the attendants were 65, while in Sojong 23 attended, and in the last camp in Bengtol the number was 33.

Human beings like glass are fragile and so we need to treat them especially those who come to our formation houses knowing well that it is the Lord who sent each one of them to us. We in the Province and in the formation houses, must really feel that everyone of these boys are truly sent by God, just as Bartholomew Garelli, the rugged, orphaned, ignorant of religion and sacraments was sent to Don Bosco by God. I invite you and me that we need to focus on bringing out the best in them. Such activity will not be possible without great love for whoever the individual boy is. Indeed they may be poor financially, intellectually, in good manners, emotionally and some of them might come to us with some bad habits of the media world, etc.

The challenge for us is how to transform them and make them good instruments in the hands of the Lord. And it is possible and that should bring the greatest satisfaction and joy for us. With all the good will and effort, today it may not be possible to get candidates from the rich, the intelligent, the well formed, etc., to come forward to follow the Lord. The ones who come to us come with lots of good will and those who come with ulterior

motives, we are able to censure them and make them change their motivations during the course of formation.

### **YET ANOTHER MOMENT OF GRACE TO REPENT AND BE A NEW PERSON**

On 26th February, Wednesday, the whole Church will enter into one of the most significant moments in the life and journey of the Church and her children. The season of Lent during which we contemplate the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus begins with the Ash Wednesday during which we remind ourselves about who we are. When the ashes are imposed on the forehead, often in the form of the cross, the priest says : “Remember, O man, that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.” “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel” or “Repent, and hear the good news.”

The imposition of ashes is universal within the Catholic Church and the practice was made official in a 1091 decree of the Council of Benevento.



Let us once again make use of this moment of grace, to look deeply within. Often we look at others and at external appearance and forget to look within. Yes indeed there is the image of God inside and all that make us truly human. However over the years, we could make many compromises and we may need to return before it is too late, as we are dust and into dust we shall certainly return.

The Church recommends deep repentance, much prayer, fasting, penance, abstinence and good works. It is important for everyone to take all these recommendations of the Mother Church as seriously as possible. All these must lead us to become better human beings who are reborn.

Don Bosco used to advise his sons, “Substitute acts of penance with the acts of obedience”. It means to say that all our physical penance and mortification must lead us to greater submission to the will of God and the Superiors.

## **PRINCIPALS' MEETING – DON BOSCO SCHOOLS EXCELLENCE MISSION**

On 13th January, all except six Principals of Schools assembled at Mario Hall for sharing of ideas and also to plan ahead for the year that is before us. I too attended the meeting. I found the meeting very cordial, the atmosphere serene and the Principals living up to the expectations of discussing the issues with cool head and intelligence.

In my welcome address and sharing of ideas, I impressed upon each of us that we need to be trend setters. As in the bygone years, when other institutions looked up to us and try to emulate our style of school administration, we need to continue to be leaders in quality and relevant education today. However the challenge is that today some of our institutions may be lagging behind.

There is a great need to follow up the teachers very closely. They should be made accountable for far too many failures in their subjects. The Principals must take the trouble to sign the weekly, monthly and other test papers of students, so that he comes to know the performance of students and could gently ask the teachers why there are many failures, if any. He could call the students too who regularly were underperforming, one by one and give them guidance.

There is a need to have more frequent parents meeting, to discuss many issues that the students face in the life. One of the issues could be about the destructive and rampant and negative use of mobile, the choice of friends, the lack of follow up of daily studies of students at home.

I also spoke about the number of working or class days in the school. All the Principals and schools must ensure that the students get sufficient number of class days and the classes taken in our institutions must be of quality. There is an issue of some schools which close the school for winter holiday early and open the school late. It looks to me that we are eager for more holidays. It is evident that some teachers would like to close the school early and open late, but we should take decisions in favour of student welfare.

Fr Sebastian Kuricheal, the Commission Head of Schools, chaired the entire meeting well. Some prominent decisions centred on common text books, which should become much better than this year, the induction of Mr Samuel, a retired teacher of Don Bosco School, Guwahati into DBSEM office, the professional way of setting and despatching of examination routine, timetable, question papers, the break up of syllabus, etc.

Once again, I request all the communities to ensure that our school, college and university keep rising higher and higher in quality and standard and for that, I request everyone to give one's all and I hope that this will be one of the best contributions that we can give to our youth who come to us with lots of hope and expectations. I appreciate all that the School team is doing till today but at the same time I cannot close my eyes to those

institutions which may need to introspect seriously and make quality education truly happen.

### **ARCHBISHOP THOMAS MENAMPARAMPIL BAGS ICPA JOURNALISM AWARD 2020**

Indian Catholic Press Association will honour noted peace activist Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil, conferring its prestigious annual 'Louis Careno Award for Excellence in journalism' for his bold writings against communalism and fundamentalism that is gaining ground globally. The Award will be conferred on the Archbishop by former Supreme judge Justice Kurien Joseph, during the 25th National Convention of Christian Journalists, organized by the ICPA, scheduled to be held in Delhi, on 29 February, this year. Archbishop Menamparampil's name is synonymous with peace, inter-community dialogue and social harmony. His incisive, thought-provoking writings on these subjects have broken new grounds. His razor-sharp analysis of socio-cultural and political issues, especially relating to North-East, have led to soul-searching debates and concrete peace initiatives, for which he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011.

Having spent a lion's share of his life in the North-East, the Kerala-born 84 year old Archbishop's writings reflect his deep understanding of the region's cultural values and ethnic diversity. He minces no words in raising his voice against irrational, biased and unfair policies and decisions of the governments of all times. His articles are marked by scholarly insights, adding to their relevance. Archbishop Thomas was asked by Pope Benedict XVI to prepare the meditation prayers for Way of the Cross in 2009, which the Pope himself lead on Good Friday at the Roman Colosseum. He is the only Indian and second Asian to prepare the meditation prayers for the 'Way of the Cross' lead by the Holy Father. Conferred annually on deserving individuals or institutions, Louis Careno Award for excellence in journalism is a joint venture of the Mumbai Province of the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Indian Catholic Association (ICPA), a Premier Organisation of Catholic journalists, Dailies and Periodicals in India founded in 1964 by Fr John Barrett, an American Jesuit, belonging to the Patna Province. ICPA also annually awards best journalism in Hindi and journalism for SC/ST rights. These will be announced by next month.

### **FR PAPPI REDDY ON HOLIDAYS VISITS THE PROVINCE AND HOME**

Our dear missionary confrere from Juba – Sudan, Fr Pappi Reddy visited the Province for a few days during his holidays home. He celebrated the Holy Mass in the Provincial House once during which he shared with those present about the joys and the challenges that the missionaries faced in Sudan.

### **NSS FESTIVAL HELD AT DON BOSCO COLLEGE TURA**

After the stunning success of the North East National Service Scheme Youth festival at Assam Don Bosco University in 2019, the organizers, based in Guwahati insisted on



having this year's camp at another Don Bosco institution in Tura. About 300 NSS volunteers from different colleges of North east India and also from Tura itself attended the camp which was beautifully organised at Don Bosco College Tura. I offered them the opportunity for cultural exchange, meaningful interaction among themselves, sessions on personality development, volunteering, on becoming conscious of society and the little or big that we can do to better the society around, etc. Besides having music, fun and cultural extravaganza, the volunteers also created awareness among the citizens of Tura about their own movement and about the need to care and preserve the purity and the beauty of nature and environment. Hosts of dignitaries attended the camp during the inaugural and closing ceremonies of the programme and gave encouraging messages.



### **WELCOME BACK TO FR BENNY**

At the invitation of Cardinal Charles Bo SDB of Myanmar, Fr Benny P. Basil, Economer, represented the Province at the consecration of the new SDB Coadjutor Bishop of Lashio in the person of Lucas Jeimphaung Dau Ze SDB. He was ordained by Cardinal Charles Bo SDB in the presence of Apostolic Nuncio Paul Tschang (Thailand), Cardinal Joseph Zen (Hong Kong), Bishop Mario Yamanouchi SDB (Japan), Archbishop Thomas Menamparambil SDB, and other Bishops of Myanmar, Fr Klement Vaclav SDB (Regional Councillor for East Asia), Fr Nirmal Gomes (Provincial of Kolkata) and many other Salesians from Myanmar and other adjacent countries were present for the occasion. It

was an impressive ceremony and thousands of faithful participated in it. We welcome back Fr Benny and thank him for all the news updates on this happy event.



### **RIP: FR PK MATHEW**

Fr Mathew Ponnattil of the Province of Dimapur (IND) passed away on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020. He was 81. We pray for the eternal repose of his soul. May God grant him the eternal joys of His Kingdom! We offer our condolences to the Provincial and confreres of IND.

### **CONCLUSION**

I wish you all a Happy Consecrated Day, which we shall celebrate on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. May all of us be faithful to our religious consecration, and creative in our interventions for the youngsters entrusted to our care.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



**Fr Januarius S. Sangma SDB**  
Provincial



## PROGRAMME OF THE PROVINCIAL TEAM

**FEBRUARY 2020**

Dt	Events	Provincial	Vice Provincial	Economer
1 S	Commemoration of All Deceased SDBs	Bosco Mount: Inaug. of Scholastic year	Guwahati	Guwahati
2 S	<b>Presentation of the Lord</b>	Rongkhon Parish Holy Mass > Guwahati	Guwahati: Co-Cathedral Parish	Guwahati
3 M		Guwahati	Karbirongsopi	Bosco Reach Out
4 T	<i>St John de Britto</i> . Month's Mind: RIP Fr Milon Narjary; Anticipated Birthday Celebration of Fr Provincial	Guwahati: Month's Mind Mass at Uzan Bazaar Cemetery	Guwahati: Month's Mind Mass at Uzan Bazaar Cemetery	Guwahati: Month's Mind Mass at Uzan Bazaar Cemetery
5 W	<i>St Agatha</i>	Rongjeng: Inaug. of Scholastic year	Guwahati	Guwahati
6 T	<i>Sts Paul Miki and Companions</i>	Shallang > Damra	Nongpoh Parish	Snehalaya
7 F	<i>St Gonsalo Garzia; Blessed Pius IX</i>	Holy Mass: St Joseph Sodality, Jengjal	Chokihola: Sobha	Guwahati
8 S		GB Meeting – ADBU Tapesia, 2.00 pm	Chokihola: Sobha	Guwahati
9 S	<b>5th Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>	Holy Mass at DBI; > New Delhi	Chokihola: Sobha	Guwahati
10 M		New Delhi > Rome	Diphu	Bosco Mount
11 T	<i>Our Lady of Lourdes</i>	Rome	Diphu	DBJRC Tura
12 W		Rome	DBSTI, Tezpur	Mendal
13 T		Rome > Turin	Sirajuli	Guwahati
14 F		Turin	Guwahati	Guwahati
15 S		Turin	Guwahati	DBI
16 S	<b>6th Sunday in Ordinary Time; Birthday of Fr Provincial</b>	GC 28 commences	Guwahati: DBI Mass	Guwahati
17 M		Chapter	Guwahati	Bongaigaon
18 T	<i>St Kuriakose Elias Chavara</i>	-do-	Guwahati	Barpetta
19 W		-do-	Haflong (Asalu)	Guwahati
20 T		-do-	Guwahati	Guwahati
21 F		-do-	Guwahati	Amkachi
22 S	<i>St Peter's Chair</i>	-do-	Amkachi: Centenary	Baithalangso
23 S	<b>7th Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>	-do-	Amkachi: Centenary	Guwahati
24 M		-do-	Guwahati	Guwahati
25 T	<i>Saint Louis Versiglia, bishop, and Callistus Caravario, priest Salesian Protomartyrs; Blessed Rani Maria</i>	-do-	Guwahati	Guwahati
26 W	<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	-do-	Guwahati	Guwahati
27 T		-do-	Guwahati	Guwahati
28 F		-do-	Rongkeri: Sobha	Guwahati
29 S		-do-	Rongkeri: Sobha	Guwahati