

# PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 40/2020

1 July 2020

*My Dear Confreres,*

Greetings from Provincial House, Guwahati!

After four months and four days of absence from the Province, most of which were spent in “happy lockdown” and as “stranded” in the Casa Madre at Valdocco, I am very happy, along with Br Joby Mani, to be back here where I belong, on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Deep inside, I felt that the lockdown was God-sent and a moment of grace for me. The call to duty however made me and others eager to fly back home.

I cannot but be grateful to everyone of you for your prayerful support, for keeping in touch with me all through this period, and also for the welcome that you accorded me. Personally I feel that one of the best places where we Salesians can truly be absorbed in prayer is Valdocco. And there I remembered and prayed for you. The Basilica, guarding zealously the holy remains of St John Bosco, St Mary Mazzarello, St Dominic Savio, and the Rectors Major, and also the campus, keeping safe historical places like the Pinardi Shed, the Basilica itself and the Chapel of St Francis de Sales offered us the opportunity to re-visit the spirit of Valdocco.

## **FROM THE DEPTHS OF MY HEART ‘THANK YOU VERY MUCH’**

A special note of gratitude is due to Rev. Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial, who during the days of my absence animated and administered the Province as the Acting Provincial. Thanks to the social network media of communication which facilitated our regular and timely discussion and consultation especially as regards the new apostolic assignments. We were able to keep in touch regularly. As I congratulate Fr Benny P. Basil, Economer, once again, on his reappointment to the office, I wish to



express my heartfelt gratitude to him particularly for completing the tedious work of Budget preparation, assisted by Fr Teron and Mr Netra.

I owe a debt of gratitude to all the Council members who showed a great sense of responsibility and collaboration especially during these pandemic times.

Special note of appreciation and gratitude to all our confreres who accepted the new apostolic assignments in a spirit of faith. I did give everyone the opportunity to express their own views, and changes in the apostolic assignments were made in consultation with the Council members. I understand the difficulty in travelling these days due to the lockdown, however I request the confreres to move to the new places, as soon as possible and plan ahead, in order to resume our works, as and when the situations improve.

### **THE VISIT OF ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS THOMAS MENAMPARAMPIL**

Archbishop Emeritus Thomas Menamparampil SDB celebrated the Holy Eucharist for the Council members and the community of Provincial House on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2020 when we had the Council meeting. He emphasised the need to deepen our faith like that of the Centurion during this fragile situation, think pro-poor and initiate/offer concrete activities for them as the way forward, work unitedly as a team, be open to accept creative ideas and responses to the crisis coming from any source, remain ever generous with our institutions as quarantine centres despite the Government's anti-Christian propaganda and attitude before and even now in the country, and remain optimistic and engage proactively in fighting the plague, like Don Bosco. He also made mention of how the lockdown and social distancing are actually bringing the people together. He made special mention of the Missionaries of Charity Sisters who despite pandemic reached out to the poorest of the poor. Their relief work and those of other Catholics brought people who were against Christianity closer to the Church in India.

### **COME AWAY FOR A WHILE TO STOP, LOOK AND GO**

The month of July is annually the time for summer holidays for our youth and teachers, and for the SDBs it is a time for the annual retreat. Fr Glen Lowe of the Province of Mumbai will animate the two retreats dwelling on the theme of "Salesian Youth Spirituality," one at DBI Guwahati and the other one at DBCTE, Tura. We shifted the venue from Siloam to DBI and Tura for evident reasons. The retreat in Tura is to facilitate the confreres from Garo Hills and Shallang to participate in the retreat, as still there are inter-state travelling restrictions.



I appeal to every confrere – young and old – to mentally create a strong eagerness to set aside six full days generously to be with the Lord. “Come away for a while,” said Jesus to his apostles battered by weather, loads of work, fatigued and in need of recuperation. Involving in apostolate with a serene mind and knowing that our life is truly founded on God will bring in a re-focus, a re-energising and, above all, a conversion of heart.

“Come away for a while” needs to be total. Coming away from your community, from all your works, from all your contacts and being alone with the Master, in silence and without being distracted by the contacts around is important; and for some of us, the need of the hour is to end the race of “running well but outside the tract.”

Unfortunately, the external environment both at DBI and DBCTE may not be as silent as in Siloam, but what is crucial is the silence within, to listen, to hear and to talk to God who speaks to us in the silence of the heart and despite all external noise, He has given us power to create that silence that is needed to attune to him. Retreat gives us the most precious time to look closely at our hearts - to repair the damages to the heart, to once again listen to “Son, give me your heart” and be His totally.

Looking around, we witness pandemic, despair, poverty, ecological degradation, uncertainty, tension, etc., not only due to Covid-19 but also of other kinds of evil, egoism, undue pride, enslavement to power, pleasure, money, hatred, loss of faith, loss of fidelity, lukewarm attitude, etc. The retreat experience will certainly help us to bounce back.



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

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

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

Article 72 of our *Regulations* reads that “Every year the members will make a retreat of six days in the manner laid down by the provincial chapter, which they will conclude with the renewal of the commitments, assumed at religious profession.”



## LAUDATO SI' YEAR: 24 May 2020 – 24 May 2021

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has declared a SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY YEAR on the fifth anniversary of his encyclical *Laudato si'*, from 24th May 2020 to 24th May 2021. *Laudato si'* (Praise Be to You!) was the second encyclical of Pope Francis, “On care for our common home.” In it, the Pope critiques consumerism and irresponsible development, laments environmental degradation and global warming, and calls all people of the world to take “swift and unified global action.”

This encyclical is considered to be a breakthrough that called world’s attention to the increasingly precarious state of the earth, our common home. The fifth anniversary of the encyclical too is something very remarkable, as we living an equally precarious situation of Covid-19 all over the world. Let us re-visit this encyclical for a few salient features.

Among other things, Pope Francis discusses pollution, climate change, a lack of clean water, loss of biodiversity, and an overall decline in human life and a breakdown of society. “Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years,” he states.

He describes a relentless exploitation and destruction of the environment, for which he blames apathy, the reckless pursuit of profits, excessive faith in technology and political shortsightedness. *Laudato si'* “unambiguously accepts the scientific consensus that changes in the climate are largely man-made” and states that “climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It

represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” and warns of

# LAUDATO SI'

## ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME



# POPE FRANCIS



ENCYCLICAL LETTER

“unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequence for all of us” if prompt climate change mitigation efforts are not undertaken.

The encyclical highlights the role of fossil fuels in causing climate change. “We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay,” says the Holy Father. “Until greater progress is made in developing widely accessible sources of renewable energy, it is legitimate to choose the less harmful alternative or to find short-term solutions.” The encyclical’s comments on climate change are consistent with the scientific consensus on climate change.

Dear confreres, it would be a worthwhile exercise to read some parts of the encyclical, and see in what way we could contribute to the celebration of the *Laudato si’* Year in our various settings. Let us embark on an action plan for our communities and our centres, that the message of the gospel through the lens of *Laudato si’* may reach many more people.

### **SOME REFLECTIONS FROM THE MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE GC 28 MEMBERS**

*I invite everyone to a deeper reading, reflection and assimilation of Pope Francis’ message to the Chapter members. He was scheduled to visit Valdocco and address the Chapter members but had to cancel it due to lockdown. He however was gracious enough to send his message to the Chapter members. I had shared the complete message with you earlier. After having read it, I have picked up a few of the most striking ones for our reflection today.*



“I am sure that the youthful noise and the chattering of the Oratories will be the best music, the most effective one for the working of the Spirit who is going to rejuvenate the charismatic gift of your Founder. Do not close the windows to this background noise... Let it be your companion and let it keep you alert, perhaps uneasy, and courageous in your discernment; allow these voices and songs, in turn, to recall within you the faces of many other young people who, for various reasons, find themselves like sheep without a shepherd.”

“Reflecting about the profile of the Salesian for today’s young people implies accepting that we are immersed in a moment of changes, with all the uncertainty coming along with that. No one can confidently and precisely say what is going to happen in the near future, at a social, economic, educational and cultural level ... This calls for a double docility: docility to young people and their needs and docility to the Spirit and to what he intends to transform.”

“The Salesian of the XXI century is a man full of hope because he knows that his centre is in the Lord, able to make all things new.”

“Living faithfully the charism is something richer and more stimulating than simply abandoning, restructuring or redesigning houses or works; it involves a change of mentality in the face of the mission to be accomplished.”

“The Salesian Oratory and everything that shot up from it, as *the biography of the Oratory* narrates, was born as a response to the life of young people, each one with a face and a life story, who set in motion that young priest unable to remain neutral or inert before what was going on. It was much more than a gesture of goodwill or kindness, and even much more that the outcome of a study plan on ‘numeric-charismatic feasibility.’ I see it as an act of continual conversion and a response to the Lord, who, ‘tired of knocking’ on our doorstep, is now waiting for us to go and seek him and to meet him.”

“The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself ... This means that she has a constant need of being evangelized, if she wishes to retain freshness, vigour and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel.”

“It is important to believe that we are not trained for the mission, but that we are trained in the mission, around which our whole life rotates, with its choices and priorities.”

“When we isolate ourselves or we turn away from the people we are called to serve, our identity as consecrated becomes disfigured and turns just into a caricature.”

“One of the obstacles we can find out is not coming from an external situation to our communities, but rather touches us squarely and directly, due to a distorted experience

of ministry .... and does to us a lot of harm: Clericalism. It is the personal quest of wanting to occupy, concentrate and control spaces, minimizing and even wiping out the anointing of God's people."

"Clericalism, living out the call in an elitist way, confuses the 'election' with the privilege, service with subservience, unity with uniformity, discrepancies with opposition, formation with indoctrination. The clericalism is a perversion that promotes with the rest of vocations in the Church a kind of ties and bonds that are functional, paternalistic, possessive and even manipulative."

"Those who accompany others in their growth should be people with great horizons, capable of blending together limits and hope, thus helping to always look forwards with a sense of perspective: a saving perspective. An educator "who is not afraid to set limits and, at the same time, trust in the Lord of the processes, it is the image of a strong man, who is guiding what does not belong to him, but to his Lord."

"There is therefore an urgent need to find a way of formation whereby the fact that evangelization implies the full participation of every baptized, with all the 'citizenship rights' is fully embraced."

"I encourage you to continue to try your best in making your houses an 'ecclesial workshop', capable of recognizing, appreciating, stimulating and encouraging the various calls and missions within the Church."

"The Coadjutor Brothers are a living expression of the gratuitousness that the charism invites us to cherish. Your consecration is first and foremost the sign of a gratuitous love of the Lord and for the Lord in his young people, that is not primarily defined by a ministry, a function or a particular service, but through a presence."

"I invite you to promote dynamics in which the woman's voice, her gaze and her actions – appreciated in her singularity – are echoed as well in the decision-making processes; as an actor who is not just auxiliary, but rather constitutive of your presences."

"The universal presence of your Salesian family is a stimulus and an invitation to safeguard and preserve the wealth of many of the cultures in which you are immersed without trying to "standardise" them. On the other hand, strive and do your best to enable Christianity to take on the language and culture of the local people."

"The Salesian is called to speak in the mother tongue of each of the cultures in which he finds himself. The unity and communion of your family is able to take on and welcome all these diversities, which can enrich the whole body in a synergy of communication and interaction where everyone can contribute the best of himself of the good of the whole body."



“The widespread (and necessary) ‘pastoral of the screen’ asks us to live the web in an intelligent way, recognizing it as a mission territory, which requires, in turn to place all the necessary mediations so not to remain prisoners of its circularity and its peculiar – and dichotomic – logic. This trap – even in the name of the mission – can lock us in ourselves and isolate us in a comfortable and superfluous virtual reality, very little or not at all dedicated to and engaged with the life of young people, of the brothers in the community or with apostolic commitments.”

“One of the ‘literary genres’ of Don Bosco have been his dreams... The dreams, far from keeping him asleep, helped him, as it happened as well to St Joseph, to sense and follow another thickness of life, another measure, born out of the depths of God’s compassion.”

“Do dream ... and make others to dream as well.”

### NEWS AND INFORMATION

- The Rector Major and his Council had granted us permission to have the Interim novitiate at Dotma due to Covid-19. The concerted effort of many, however saw our 22 novices reach their designated novitiates already. Let us continue to pray for them.
- We thank Fr Joseph Thelekkatt for accepting to be the Novice Master though for a short duration. We are very grateful to the community of Dotma particularly the prenovitiate community under Fr Lukose Cheruvalel for having accompanied the novices well.
- The new batch of prenovices, 23 of them, have reached Dotma on 24<sup>th</sup> June. On 25<sup>th</sup> June, they were initiated into the prenovitiate course by Fr Damian Basumatari, Provincial Councillor.



*Fr Provincial with the new batch of prenovices at Dotma*



- From this year, Class XI and XII aspirants of the Province will also be housed at Sirajuli. The classes will be conducted in the seminary campus itself. We managed to have only one Post SSLC vocation camp this year but thanks be to God, we are likely to get about 30 new Class XI aspirants. Continue to promote and support good vocations to the Province.
- The newly professed Clerics and a Salesian Brother have reached Dimapur safe and sound and are completing their quarantine.
- The Clerics who will proceed to Nashik for their philosophy studies are lodged at the Provincial House of Shillong and are attending the online classes, being conducted by Divyadaan, Nashik.
- INM Provincial, Fr K.M. Jose and Vice Provincial Fr Don Bosco Lourdusamy were tested positive for Covid-19. They were undergoing treatment in Kaveri Hospital, Chennai; and since they had only mild symptoms they have been shifted to Clarion Hotel, Chennai. We accompany them with our prayers.

## CONDOLENCES

**Fr Stephen Kuncherakatt**, of the Province of Chennai, working in the international community of Ratisbonne, passed away on 2nd June 2020 in Israel. He was 86. Our prayerful condolences to the Ratisbonne Salesian Community and the Province of Middle East, and the Province of Chennai. May the Lord grant him eternal rest!

The mother of *Fr Sebastian Edathumparambil*, **Mrs Annakutty**, passed away on 7th June 2020. She was 80. She was a diabetic patient, and was sick for some time. May her soul rest in peace! We offer our condolences to Fr Sebastian and the bereaved family, and pray for them too.

**Fr Thommai Antonyrajan**, of the Province of Tiruchy, working in Sri Lanka, tragically passed away in Sri Lanka on 14th June 2020 in a drowning accident in the sea. He was rushed to the hospital where he was declared dead. He was 56. We offer our sincere condolences to the Provincial and confreres of the Province of Tiruchy, and the Provincial and confreres of the Vice Province of Sri Lanka, and also to the family members of Fr Thommai. May his soul rest in peace!

## CONCLUSION

Even as we are experiencing a rise in the Covid-19 cases in our country, we remind ourselves that the worst is not over yet. We need to take care of ourselves, and at the same time try to help out the people who are in a problematic situation at this moment. I am appreciative of the online classes that are being offered by our various institutions. I request the communities (schools/colleges) to plan education for the post Covid-19

phase, the details of which are mentioned in the special circular. We continue to trust in God and in His mercy, as we pray for relief and healing for all the victims all over our country and the world.

God bless you!

Yours affectionately in the Lord,



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



## PROGRAMME OF THE PROVINCIAL TEAM

*JULY 2020*

| Dt   | Events                                      | Provincial   | Vice Provincial          | Economer                 |
|------|---|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 W  |   | Guwahati > Boko  | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 2 T  |   | Mendal > Tura  | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 3 F  | <b>Feast of St Thomas, Apostle of India</b> | Rectors, Leaders and PPs Meeting, DBC Tura; Blessing of the Extension of the BEd College & the Multi-Gym | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 4 S  |   | Episcopal Ordination, Tura   | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 5 S  | <b>14th Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>         | Tura > Shallang  | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 6 M  |   | Shallang > Rongjeng  | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 7 T  |   | Rongjeng   | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 8 W  |   | Baithalangso   | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 9 T  |   | Sojong > Satgaon   | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 10 F |   | Tezpur > Sirajuli  | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 11 S |   | Dimakuchi  | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 12 S | <b>15th Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>         | Tangla > Guwahati  | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 13 M | Annual Retreat (13-19)                      | Retreat begins at 6.00 pm  | Retreat                  | Retreat                  |
| 14 T |   | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Retreat                  |
| 15 W |   | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Retreat                  |
| 16 T |   | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Retreat                  |
| 17 F |   | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Retreat                  |
| 18 S |   | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Retreat                  |
| 19 S | <b>16th Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>         | Retreat ends in the morning, followed by the meeting of Confreres 9.00 – 12.30                           | Retreat; Meeting of SDBs | Retreat; Meeting of SDBs |
| 20 M |   | Guwahati   | Guwahati                 | Guwahati                 |
| 21 T | Annual Retreat, DBC Tura (21-27)            | Retreat, DBC Tura, begins in the evening – 6.00 pm   | Retreat                  | Dotma Prenovitate        |
| 22 W |   | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Kokrajhar                |
| 23 T |   | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Guwahati                 |
| 24 F |   | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Guwahati                 |
| 25 S |   | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Guwahati                 |
| 26 S | <b>17th Sunday in Ordinary Time</b>         | Retreat  | Retreat                  | Tura                     |
| 27 M |   | Retreat ends in the morning, followed by the meeting of Confreres 9.00 – 12.30                           | Retreat; Meeting of SDBs | Tura- Meeting of SDBs    |
| 28 T |   | Don Bosco Junior College and DB Higher Secondary School, Tura  | Tura                     | DBC Tura                 |
| 29 W |   | Garobadha  | Umswai                   | BoscoMount               |
| 30 T |   | Bosco Mount and Rongkhon Parish  | Amkachi                  | Guwahati                 |
| 31 F |   | Guwahati   | Baithalangso             | Guwahati                 |