

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 51/2021

1 May 2021

My Dear Confreres,

Greetings from the Provincial House, Guwahati!

The month of May is the month of Mary, our blessed Mother. Pope Francis declared the year 2021 as the year of St Joseph. Meanwhile, the world still battles the onslaught of the newer variants (mutations) of Covid-19. Human beings especially the poor, all over the world especially in India witness haplessly untold tragedies and loss of life. As we take maximum care of ourselves through our faith in God and prayers, wearing of masks, maintaining social distance, cleanliness and hygiene of hands, receiving vaccination as early as possible and refraining from unnecessary travel, let us entrust ourselves to Mary and Joseph, the guardians of the Holy Family who protected and nurtured the infant Jesus soon after his birth.

MAY: THE SALESIAN MONTH

The month of May is truly a Salesian month too. On **6th May**, we celebrate the feast of a teenage saint, St Dominic Savio. He is truly the fruit of the educational system and pedagogy of St John Bosco. Don Bosco's invitation at the sermon that "God wants us to be Saints and it is easy to be a Saint" was enough for the young Dominic to set a goal in life, saying that "If I do not become a Saint, my life is wasted". He did not keep his God-centredness only to himself. He was renowned for being a missionary among his friends in the Oratory.

On **13th May**, the Church presents to us St Mary Domenica Mazzarello, who under the guidance and assistance of St John Bosco, co-founded the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. We are simply impressed and awe-struck by her spirit of availability and volunteerism to serve the victims of typhoid epidemic in Mornese. While they all recovered, she fell victim to the dreaded disease and was maimed for the rest of her life. May her example inspire us also to be daring in these days of dreaded pandemic to care for others, whenever it is possible.

On **24th May**, we celebrate the feast of Mary Help of Christians, devotion to whom by Don Bosco and his sons and daughters is proverbial. The feast of Mary, Help of Christians was instituted by Pope Pius VII. He attributed to the Blessed Virgin the victory of the Church after so much agony and distress during the exile.

Many of us made our first religious profession on 24th May on the feast of our heavenly Mother, under the title, Help of Christians.

The other Salesian memorials in this month include: *St Louis Orione*, priest, Founder of the Little Work of Divine Providence, on 16th May; *St Leonard Murialdo*, priest, Founder of the Congregation of St Joseph, on 18th May; and *Blessed Joseph Kowalski*, priest, martyr, on 29th May.

I take this opportunity to wish everyone of you a very happy feast of all the saints whose feast we celebrate this month and also a very happy celebration of the day of our profession. Be assured of my prayers for all of you on these days.



BE INSPIRED BY MARY’S FIAT AND LIVE INSPIRED BY IT: “LET IT BE TO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD”

We, Salesians, first of all, are consecrated religious. Our life is professedly centred on God. If we fail in this, we have failed in everything. Centering our lives on God is advantageous, as God is faithful even if we are not faithful; and He will never fail us. Fr Angel Fernandez Artime, Rector Major says very convincingly that without Jesus Christ, at the centre of our life and being, we cannot offer to the world and to youth, anything that is significant; and without him, we have no future.

Without God too, no doubt, we may be reputed, well known, and powerful, but they will merely be transitory and will not be lasting and permanent. Without deep spirituality, we may even be fulfilling our self-will and not God’s will. The “**Post Chapter Reflection**” (PCR) has the following beautiful expression: “the vocational challenge for all of consecrated life and for us in particular as Salesians of Don Bosco, is that of always returning to Jesus and renouncing everything that is not Him or that distances us from Him”.

“We can live by wrongly believing that everything makes sense when we are doing things and not living out what we are called for” (PCR).

As we go through this month and beyond, let Mary be our model of consecration, contemplation, sanctity and God-centredness. The *fiat* that we pronounced on the day of our profession could be re-examined and could be compared with the *fiat* of Mary. Just as Jesus and Mary said yes to God’s will, we should also say yes to God’s will and not to

our own will, and that too every day, and especially when certain letting-go's, detachments and challenges are asked of us. We have left our homes and families to be missionaries after the heart of Jesus and Mary, who both distinguished themselves doing the will of the Father.

We live at a time when wanting to do one's own will seems high and becoming our style of life, both in the Church and in the religious domain. Many of the problems in the Church and in the Religious Congregations seem to be the offshoot of doing one's own will, individualism, clandestine relationships, lack of accountability and transparency, spiritual worldliness, love of money, egoism, and not living up to our religious commitment.

Mary is the symbol of contemplation and deep spirituality. Today, despite all reminders from the Rector Major and the Council, nay even from the Province, to be radically faithful to the community practices of piety, some of us have proved ourselves to be superficial, negligent, sarcastic and even trespass the constitutional norms. The Rector Major is deeply emphatic in his writing, "Without Jesus Christ, at the centre...", yet, some of us seem to wilfully ignore it, as if it is meant for others, not themselves.

Mary said yes to the humiliation of the Cross, to suffering and to closeness to Jesus and the people. It looks to me that often we chase easy success and are not willing to bear cheerfully the inconveniences and difficulties, that are connected with our mission, apostolate and ministry. The centenary reflections on the adventures of the early Salesians showed us how they faced cheerfully the manifold challenges of the missions for the sake of saving souls. Some of us seem to be very happy, if our self-will is respected, even if it goes against religious norms, and are entrusted with money and power.

Mary is known for simplicity, and yet being very powerful in helping the poor and needy. She certainly remained poor in word and in deed. She was obedient. She said, "Behold, your servant, and let it be unto me according to your word". She was chaste and holy. That is why the angel called her "full of grace." She was sinless, that is why, God assumed her body and soul into heaven.

Let us look at Mary and re-visit our **VOWS** of **POVERTY, CHASTITY AND OBEDIENCE**, not only before the Superiors, mere human beings, but before God who sees **EVERYTHING** – prayer life, dealing with money, accountability, transparency, relationship with people of the opposite sex, personal continence, etc. Our poverty in general, may need in-depth scrutiny. So also our loyalty to the *Constitutions and Regulations* to ensure obedience to God. Today, our challenge is to be chaste in words, in deeds, in chats, in messages and in relationships.

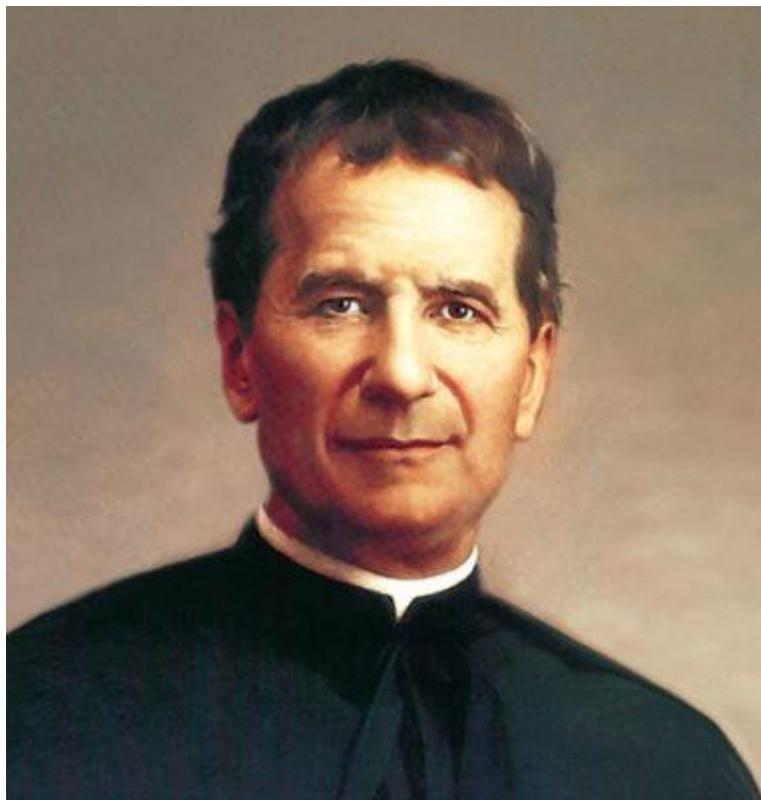
The month of May offers us a great possibility of turning over a new leaf. On 24th May, most of us made our first and final profession. When we pray the daily prayer of

consecration after the Meditation, it should help us to renew our first and final profession. But how can we do it, if some of us are regularly absent from morning prayer and meditation? When we are asked to read one or two articles of the *Constitutions* daily, as a community or as individuals, it is precisely to remind us that we need to go back to the roots and pitch our religious life on the *Constitutions* on which we have professed.

May the celebration of the feast of Mary Help of Christians and the celebration of our anniversary of profession be an occasion to deepen our love for God, Our Blessed Mother and St John Bosco who said, “If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions”. Our vocation is good, noble and adventurous and so let us cultivate and make it grow daily, particularly in view of our mission to the poorest and marginalised youth.

LET US PLACE OUR TRUST IN THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND NOT ON MONEY

Don Bosco was warned strongly by his dear mother about the treachery of being controlled by wealth and riches. Money is good, but to be controlled and guided by the motives of money impoverishes the soul from being rich and holy. Our efforts should be always to remain rich spiritually and be detached from worldly riches. Don Bosco trusted in the Divine Providence, knowing that when we want to do our apostolate for His glory, God will not fail us. Divine Providence never failed him.



Despite the fact that huge amounts of money passed through his hands, he did not store them for himself, remained uncontrolled by it and used it for the transformation of the poorest of the young.

The Budget preparation is an exercise, undertaken by the community, on how to use the finances of the community in the most productive manner. It is an annual exercise and so every Rector and Administrator are expected to be in the know of it and lead the community to plan for the financial year. So they need to take charge of the budgeting in the community

level, invite collaboration from the other confreres.

The exercise of Budget preparation has just concluded. We thank the Rectors and the communities for the great exercise and for the solidarity shown, which is very encouraging. Greater scrutiny of poverty, accountability, transparency and timely fulfilment of the requirements of the law, such as income tax returns, auditing, etc., are needed. Let us ensure to implement the budget. Kindly do not improvise, which means, do not carry out anything which is out of the budget, without proper permission.

REGIONAL MEETINGS: MOMENTS FOR CONTEXTUAL REFLECTION AND PLANNING

The five regions of the Province, namely the Garo Hills, the Bodoland, the Assam Plains, Karbi Anglong and the Kamrup regions came together as regions at Mendal, Bengtol, Dimakuchi, Satgaon and the Provincial House respectively and had fruitful and interactive Regional meetings. In most of the regions, the attendance was very encouraging which showed the solidarity of the regions with the Provincial administration. In the Karbi Anglong region, we happily took note of the fact that all but two confreres were present.



Usually the dates and the venues for such meetings are fixed very much in advance and it is expected that the personal, community and school programmes are fixed in such a way that they enable you to take part in these important events of the province. The fact that we came together in a family spirit and share the positive aspects, along with the concerns and needs of the Province was good enough. It would be good to give top priority to such kind of Province events.

In all the meetings we studied once again the Six year plan of the Rector Major and that of South Asia. We studied in some detail the first area of the six year plan of South Asia,

that is, Salesians of Don Bosco forever with absolute priority for the poor, the marginalised and the defenceless.

We also listened to the Vice Provincial, wherever he attended, about the Salesian Youth Movement in the Province and in the regions, the preparations for the Boscoree, the vocation scenario in the province, the national youth policy and the Migrant policy of the Salesians of South Asia.

Fr Economer revised with the assembly some of the decisions taken at the Provincial level in which the participation and collaboration of the regions were indispensable. Regrettably he pointed out that the Budget preparation of some communities did not meet the expectation, neither in quality preparation nor in keeping the allotted time. He spoke strongly about the need to have completed the FCRA registration, renewal of 12A in all the communities and the installation and use of the ACME for accounting and auditing. He reminded the confreres about the health insurance, solidarity contribution, the legacy project and the collection for the Centenary and the Boscoree celebrations.

The final agenda usually was the discussion and deliberations on the needs and concerns of the regions, such as the land issues, the need for infrastructure, the monthly recollection of clerics, vocation promotions, etc.

The Provincial team, along with the regional councillors would like to express our gratitude to everyone of the participants in the regional meetings for their encouraging presence and for the active and lively participation and thus making the meetings a success. We are grateful to all the communities of different regions for hosting the events and being generous with accommodation and food. May God bless you all!

SIX YEAR PLAN OF THE CONGREGATION (in gist) :

1. **SALESIAN OF DON BOSCO FOREVER.** Six years for growth in Salesian Identity (To grow more visibly in our Salesian identity).
2. In a Congregation where we are invited by the “**DA MIHI ANIMAS, COETERA TOLLE**” (To understand the aspect of the soul and giving it top attention in all our service to youth).
3. To live the “Salesian Sacrament of Presence” (The great significance of the Salesian presence among the young).
4. Formation of being **SALESIAN PASTORS TODAY** (The need to form Salesians as pastors (Shepherds) of youth today).
5. **ABSOLUTE PRIORITY** for the young, the poorest, the most abandoned and defenceless.
6. Together with lay people in the mission and in Formation. The charismatic strength that the laity and the Salesian family offer us (Conscious sharing of our charism with the lay collaborators).

7. **IT IS TIME FOR GREATER GENEROSITY IN THE CONGREGATION.** A universal and missionary Congregation (Promote Ad gentes missionaries from the province), and
8. Accompanying the young towards a **SUSTAINABLE FUTURE** (Work towards sustainable development of the young in the future).

PROJECT OF ANIMATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE RECTOR MAJOR AND HIS COUNCIL (2020-2026) Six Year Plan of the SOUTH ASIA

THE FOUR AREAS:

- AREA 1.** Salesians of Don Bosco Forever with Absolute Priority for the Young, the Poorest, most Abandoned, and Defenceless
- AREA 2.** Time for Greater Generosity in the Congregation
- AREA 3.** Together with Lay People in the Mission and in Formation
- AREA 4.** Salesian Charism and Mission in the Region

SOME RESOLUTIONS TO IMPLEMENT IN THE SIX YEAR PLANS:

1. Each community will read/continue to read one or two articles of the constitution daily before the Spiritual reading and live according to it.
2. Each community will study, discuss and draw up the lines of action to implement the CG28 **Post Chapter Reflection and Six year plan of South Asia** during the lectio divina, the day of the community and the assembly of confreres.
3. Each community will maintain a register to record the list of students who are being helped through concessions and scholarships.
4. Each community will make a maximum use of the services of DBI, DBSTI, DB Tech School Maligaon, DB Mendal, DB Bhooteachang or any other Vocational Training centre by sending some boys and girls from the poorest families in our area or parish for short term training, job placement and follow up.
5. The Rectors will print out the Six year plan of South Asia and will make the copies available to all the Salesians of the community.

ADVANCED SCOUT MASTERS TRAINING COMPLETED SUCCESSFULLY AT AMKACHI

Under the leadership of Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial, Fr Solomon Denis and Mr R.A. Lazar, a five-day advanced training of Scout Masters was held successfully at Don Bosco,

Amkachi, West Karbi Anglong, 10th - 16th April 2021. There were 14 participants for the training. It was organized in close collaboration with the Assam State's Head Quarter of Bharat Scouts and Guides movement. Earlier, the Province organised a training of Scout Masters and Guide Captains at Boko which was participated by many including the VSDB and MSMHC sisters. Another advance training programme is on the cards in the month of July at Don Bosco School, Pan Bazar. These are all indications of the serious preparations on the part of the Province to host the National Boscoree which will be held at the Assam Don Bosco University, Tapesia in 2022-23.

NEW UNIT OF SALESIAN CO-OPERATORS INAUGURATED AT AMKACHI

It is a matter of great joy and happiness that the Province, even as it is preparing itself seriously for a meaningful celebration of the Centenary through the symposium, the retreats and other events, managed to start a unit of Salesian Cooperators at Amkachi Parish. Altogether 27 candidates, carefully selected from among the faithful, were given a good training on 18th April 2021 and their formation initiated by the Vice Provincial. It has been repeated again and again that as we prepare ourselves for the centenary celebrations, let us pay greater attention to the revival, establishment and accompaniment of such movements and pious associations like the Past Pupils, the Salesian Co-operators and the ADMA.



ADMA CANDIDATES IN THE PROVINCE UNDERGOING FORMATION

The first round of enrollment and animation of the prospective candidates who wish to join the Association of Mary Help of Christians, (abbreviated in Italian as the ADMA), took place at Satgaon on 16th March 2021. ADMA which stands for the “**Associazione di Maria Ausiliatrice**” is one of the associations founded by Don Bosco himself to popularize and spread devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians.

The members consisted of lay pious men and women who collaborate with the Salesians through prayers and exemplary life and work for the salvation of the young.

Fr Joseph Teron animated the 32 candidates at Satgaon on the origin, aims and objectives and the rules and regulations of the movement. He was assisted by Mrs Sarmilla M. Marak, Mr Nitendra Sangma and Mrs Glorina Maslai. Those who attended were mainly from the parishes of Mendal and Satgaon.

CATECHISTS' TRAINING AT BENGTOLE, SOJONG AND TANGLA

The final phase of the training of Catechists in the province, on linguistic lines took place at Bengtol for the Bodo speaking catechists and at Sojong for the Karbi speaking catechists. At Bengtol, 36 catechists participated while at Sojong, 22 catechists, including the head catechist participated actively, from 19th to 23rd April 2021. Catechists' training for the Rabha and Garo catechists had taken place earlier successfully. To train them annually in the Province was the decision that we took after the Symposium on Evangelisation and Catechesis, that was held at DBI, Guwahati. The training at Tangla was postponed. It would be held later. We are grateful to the Salesian Bonn office for supporting us financially this year but we need to continue to have such trainings every year with our own resources.

PERPETUAL PROFESSION: I MAKE THE VOWS – I PLEDGE MYSELF

Cl. Sangma Cherak M., Cl. Dungdung Birendra, Cl. Kujur Jonas, Cl. Uwora Moses Paul (AFW) and Cl. Jeremiah Jacob (INN) will make a complete donation of themselves to the Lord as religious through the perpetual profession on 6th May. While Cl. Cherak, Cl. Birendra and Cl. Jonas will pronounce the vows at DBCTE Tura and Cl. Moses and Cl. Jeremiah will do so in the Provincial House. We are edified by their generosity and courage in taking this step. We congratulate and welcome them to the Congregation as the perpetually professed members and assure them of our prayers and brotherly support. We are very grateful to their families for grooming and offering them to the Lord. We shall pray for them in a special way on 6th May.

The retreat in preparation for this will start on 1st May (evening) and will conclude on 6th May (morning) at DBCTE Tura and the Provincial House. Fr Zacharias George (Tura) and Fr Thadeus Kujur (PH) will preach the retreats.

The spiritual retreat for Brothers and Clerics in initial formation will be, as usual at Don Bosco Institute, from 17th to 23rd May. I encourage all the Clerics and Brothers to kindly attend this retreat which is meant specifically for you. The animator and the retreat fee will be announced later.

FIRST PROFESSIONS AT DHAJEA AND ZUBZA

Five (5) of our novices at Zubza (Kohima) and four (4) of them at Dhajea (Siliguri) will make their first profession on 24th May, 2021. Eleven (11) ING novices at Sunnyside will

make their first profession in June. I will officiate at the first profession at Dhajea while Fr Benny Basil (Economer) and Br Joby Mani will represent the Province at Zubza. Fr Damian Basumatary will accompany me to Dhajea.

Fourteen (14) of our prenovices, out of sixteen, are admitted to the Novitiate. A few of them did not apply to go ahead, while two of them who had applied to join the novitiate are advised by the Provincial Council and the House Council to remain one more year in the prenovitiate.

We cannot but raise our minds and hearts in gratefulness to God for the gift of these newly professed members to the Congregation and the prenovices who will join the novitiate.

While speaking of vocations, I observed that there are communities and individuals who show no or little interest neither in promoting nor in grooming vocations. They seemed more focussed and spend more energy on matters secular. In 2020-21, it was repeatedly announced that each parish community and other communities too wherever possible, will organise its own vocation camp. While many did it, there are some who just ignored it. Besides, love, care and accompaniment of young confreres with the desire to make them experience the beauty and joy of religious life is just not seen in some confreres. All these are very unfortunate.

PRAYERS REQUESTED

Several of our confreres have not been well these days. All of them, however, are recovering well. Let us continue to support them with our prayers. Fr MC George in Excel Care Hospital, Fr TM Joseph in the Provincial House, Fr CV Raphael of BRO at Kerala and Fr KJ Francis, Fr Sebastian Ishorary and Fr Klisterwel Songthiang at Sirajuli. Quite many of our aspirants at Sirajuli were sick but now they are all almost recovered. Many theology students at SHTC, Mawlai too were infected with Covid-19; we pray for them and others who are sick at this moment in the various Provinces and in our own families. May the Lord grant them speedy recovery!

WELCOME BACK

We welcome back Cl. Godwin Kharkongor to the Province. He had worked in Tunisia and Malta for a few years. We thank him for the invaluable services he had rendered in the Provinces where he had worked. As we welcome him back to the Province, we assure him of our prayerful love and support in all his endeavours. Cl. Ngouning John too will be returning to the Province soon; he had worked in Ukraine.

CONDOLENCES

We offer our heartfelt condolences to...

- the Provincial and confreres of Calcutta (INC) on the passing away of **Fr Agapit Minj** (60) on 15th April 2021.

- the Provincial and confreres of Calcutta (INC) on the passing away of **Archbishop Lucas Sirkar** (84) on 18th April 2021. We offer our sincere condolences to the churches of Krishnagar and Kolkata, where he served the most. It is also notable that Archbishop Lucas had founded the Congregations of Adoration Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1986 and of Adoration Brothers of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in 2020.
- the Provincial and confreres of Bangalore (INK) on the passing away of **Fr Thomas Panakezham** (91), former Regional-General Councillor, on 24th April 2021. We thank God for the gift of Fr PC Thomas to our Region and Congregation, especially for his service as General Councillor and Provincial of Madras (INM).
- the Provincial and confreres of Calcutta (INC) on the passing away of **Fr Sanju Mukul Kachhap** (42) on 29th April 2021.
- Fr Pius Tharakunnel on the passing away of his elder sister **Mrs Molly John** (60) on 14th April 2021.
- Fr Thomas Kunnappillil (KJ) on the passing away of his elder sister **Mrs Pennamma** (75) on 21st April 2021.

May the souls of the departed rest in peace! We pray for the bereaved families in a special way. May the good Lord offer strength and consolation to them.

CONCLUSION

Let each confrere make this month of May a special one by way of recommitting ourselves to our Salesian consecration and our mission. Our consecration and mission go hand in hand. “Our apostolic mission, our fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the inseparable elements of our consecration which we live in a single movement of love towards God and towards our brothers” (C. 3). Our commitment to our mission is an expression of our consecration, and our faithfulness in our consecration is the source of all our mission. May the Holy Spirit who consecrates us every day, be the catalyst behind all our endeavours both in our personal and community life. May God himself be the centre and focus of every activity that we undertake—all for His greater glory and for the salvation of souls.

May God bless you!

Yours affectionately in the Lord,



Fr Januarius S Sangma, SDB
Provincial



MONTHLY CALENDAR – MAY 2021
PROVINCIAL TEAM

		PROVINCIAL	VICE PROVINCIAL	ECONOMER
1	Sat	Mendal : Don Bosco School	Rangia: Feast of St Joseph the Worker	DBPH
2	Sun	Boko: Visitation of the community (5.30 pm)	Guwahati	Guwahati
3	Mon	Boko: Visitation of the community	Umswai : Meeting of Trainers for Empowerment	Guwahati
4	Tue	Guwahati	Guwahati	Tezpur
5	Wed	Guwahati	Guwahati	Sirajuli
6	Thu	Guwahati: Perpetual Profession	Tura : Perpetual Profession at 10.30 am / Feast of St Dominic Savio	DBI- Perpetual Profession
7	Fri	Guwahati – Visitation - Bengtol	Garobadha	Guwahati
8	Sat	Visitation – Visitation - Ramfalbil	Mendal	Amguri
9	Sun	Visitation – Visitation - Dotma	Tura - DBJrC	Dotma
10	Mon	Visitation – Visitation - Kokrajhar	Bosco Mount	Guwahati
11	Tue	Visitation – Visitation - Kokrajhar (Amguri)	Bosco Mount	BRO
12	Wed	Guwahati	Mendal : ADMA Animation & Formation	Azara
13	Thu	Guwahati : Holy Mass, FMA Provincial House	Gojapara	Maligaon
14	Fri	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
15	Sat	Guwahati : Provincial Council	Guwahati : Provincial Council Meeting	Provincial Council
16	Sun	Garobada : Parish Day Celebration	Guwahati	Guwahati
17	Mon	Retreat for Clerics & Brothers in initial formation : DBI	DBI : Retreat for Clerics & Brothers in Initial Formation (17-23)	Guwahati
18	Tue	Retreat	DBI : Retreat	Satgaon
19	Wed	Retreat: Visitation: DB School	Sirajuli	Guwahati
20	Thu	Retreat: Visitation: Provincial House	Tangla	DBPH
21	Fri	Retreat	Dimakuchi	Bhooteachang
22	Sat	Retreat	DBI : Retreat	Guwahati
23	Sun	Journey to Dhajea – Siliguri	DBI : Renewal of Vows	Dimapur
24	Mon	First Profession – Dhajea Novitiate; Publication of Apostolic Assignments 2021	Satgaon : Feast of Mary Help of Christians / Parish Feast	First Profession – Zubza
25	Tue	Return to Guwahati	Dongkamokam : Teachers' Training	Diphu
26	Wed	Guwahati	Baithalangso	Guwahati
27	Thu	Guwahati >> Diphu : Don Bosco College	Dibrugarh	Guwahati
28	Fri	Diphu : Don Bosco College – Visitation	Dibrugarh	Tura- DBJC
29	Sat	Guwahati	Dibrugarh	Tura – DB School
30	Sun	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
31	Mon	Guwahati	Shillong	Guwahati