

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

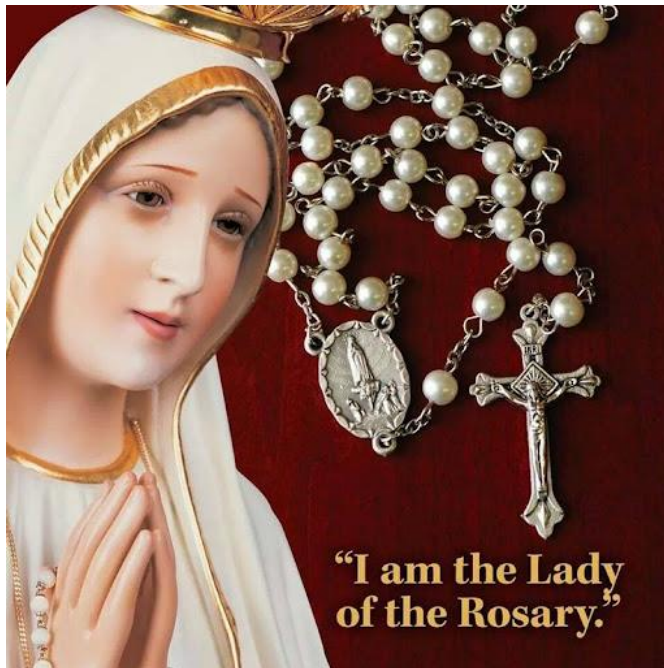
JS – 55/2021

1 October 2021

My Dear Confreres,

Greetings from the Provincial House, Guwahati!

On 7th October, the Church celebrates the feast day of Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary. Devotion to Mary, especially through the Rosary, is one of the most distinguishable features of popular Catholic spirituality. The Rosary inspires us to



meditate on the mysteries of the lives of Jesus and Mary. Meditation is an important spiritual exercise in the life of Catholics. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), “Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the Rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of

the Lord Jesus, to union with him” (CCC 2708).

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen says, “When we pray the Rosary ... our lips say the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be to the Father, but our mind, thinking about the life of our Lord, creates a soundless background symphony of thoughts. The Rosary is psychologically one of the greatest of prayers, because it draws all our scattered human energies, mind, lips, and fingertips, into a single, unifying purpose. [...] In the Rosary, all faculties, mind, will, imagination, memory, desires, hopes and muscles, are directed to the Divine.”

The feast day of the Holy Rosary was established by Pope St Pius V on the anniversary of the victory at Lepanto on 7 October 1571. The naval victory was attributed to the Virgin Mary whose intercession was entreated by Catholics through the recitation of the Holy

Rosary. The Battle of Lepanto saved Rome and Vienna, and thus the Pope and the Emperor, from the Islamic subjugation.

Later, the Church proceeded to dedicate the entire month of October to the Holy Rosary so that individuals, families, and communities would pray the Holy Rosary daily for peace in the world. “Not only do we earnestly exhort all Christians to give themselves to the recital of the pious devotion of the Rosary publicly, or privately in their own house and family, and that too unceasingly, but we also desire that the whole of the month of October be consecrated to the Holy Queen of the Rosary” (Pope Leo XIII, *On Devotion of the Rosary*, 1 September 1883).

Article 92 of our *Constitutions* is a beautiful one, referring to Mary and the Rosary. “Mary, Mother of God, holds a unique place in the history of salvation. She is a model of prayer and pastoral love, the teacher of wisdom and the guide of our Family. We contemplate and imitate her faith, her concern for the needy, her fidelity at the hour of the cross, and her joy at the wonders wrought by the Father. Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians, leads us to the fullness of our offering to the Lord and gives us courage for the service of our brethren. We develop a strong filial devotion to her. We recite the rosary each day and celebrate her feasts to encourage a more convinced and personal imitation.”



BLESSED MICHAEL RUA – DON BOSCO’S DISCIPLE

On 29th October, let us spend some quality time in fervent prayer, remembering Blessed Michael Rua. One of the intentions that we may keep in mind is to ask the Almighty God to raise him to the order of Sainthood early and for that, we need to pray for our special needs through the intercession of this disciple of Don Bosco.

Born in Turin on 9 June 1837, the youngest of nine children, Michael came to the Oratory in 1852. One day, Don Bosco told him: “We will go halves in everything.” He was among the first group to whom Don Bosco suggested the formation of the Salesian Society. For 36 years, Michael was Don Bosco’s closest collaborator in all stages of the development of the Congregation. He professed in 1855, was first spiritual director of the Congregation at 22 (1859) and was ordained in 1860. He became the first director of the Mirabello College at 26 (1863-1865) and, later, was Vicar of Valdocco, with its 700 pupils and of the Society. He was administrator of the Letture Cattoliche (Catholic Readings), responsible for formation (1869) and for personnel. In 1875, he became Director General of the Salesian Sisters and he accompanied Don Bosco on his journeys.

At the explicit request of the Founder, in 1884, Pope Leo XIII named him to succeed Don Bosco and confirmed him as Rector Major in 1888. Fr Michael was seen as the 'Living Rule' because of his austere fidelity, yet he also displayed a fatherly spirit that was capable of great thoughtfulness, so much so that he was known as 'a king of kindness.'

With the growth in the numbers of confreres and the development of the works, he sent Salesians all over the world, giving special attention to missionary expeditions. In his long journeys in Europe and the Middle East, he consoled and encouraged, always looking to the Founder: "Don Bosco said... Don Bosco did... Don Bosco wanted..." When he died on April 6 1910, at 73, the Society had grown from 773 Salesians to 4,000; from 57 houses to 345; from 6 provinces to 34; in 33 countries around the world.



When beatifying him, Pope Paul VI stated: "The Salesian Family owes its origin to Don Bosco, and to Don Rua its continuation... he developed the Saint's example into a school, his Rule into a spirit, his holiness into a model. He turned the spring into a river."

SPCSA MEETING IN TIRUCHY

The SPCSA Council meeting was held at Don Bosco Provincial House, Tiruchy from 1-3 September 2021. Fr Biju Michael Pulianmackal, Regional Councilor, South Asia chaired the meeting. In his inaugural talk, he shared a reflection on the need for transformation/metamorphosis at all levels, starting from the leaders. He referred to Margaret Silf's book, *Hidden Wings: Emerging from Troubled Times with New Hope and Deeper Wisdom* and invited us to be guided by the imaginal wisdom latent in each of us to bring about change.

The Council discussed various aspects of the life and mission of different Provinces and the SPCSA structures and networks. Each Provincial shared about various initiatives and processes set in motion regarding the implementation of GC28. Reports from different commissions and updates of various networks were presented. Bosconet, the mission procure of South Asia was appreciated for mobilizing a significant amount of resources both in cash and in kind towards Covid relief, reaching out to people in need through different Provinces. The meeting was meticulously planned by Fr Jose Mathew,

the SPCSA secretary and generously hosted by Fr Agilan Sarprasadam, the Provincial and the Province of Tiruchy.

The up-coming programmes of the SPCSA:

- Rector Major Fr Angel Fernandez Arttime will preach the retreat of all the Provincials and the Provincial Councillors - South Asia from 8-13 September 2022 at St Joseph Vaz Renewal Centre, Goa.
- The Team Visit of the Rector Major and the General Council to our region will be from 28 February to 4 March 2023. The venue is yet to be finalized.
- The Centenary of the arrival of the Salesians in North East India will be celebrated from 12 January 2022 to 12 January 2023 and various programmes will be organized throughout the year.
- There will be a joint meeting of the SPCSA Council and Major Superiors of the Salesian Family on 14 September 2022 in Goa.
- The Boscoree will be organized from 29 December 2022 to 3 January 2023 at Assam Don Bosco University, Tapesia, Guwahati.

MEETING OF THE SALESIAN BROTHERS

On 2nd October 2021, on the birthday of one of the veteran Salesian Brothers, Br Raphael Kerketta, all the ING Salesian Brothers who are in the Province will assemble at Maligaon, not only for the birthday celebration but also for the animation, recollection, confessions and Holy Mass. I request all the Salesian Brothers from all parts of the Province to attend this programme. I too shall animate them on the need to return to the roots especially the sanctity and the holiness of Salesian Brothers in our society. Article 4 of our *Constitutions* says that “Our society is made up of clerics and lay men who compliment each other as brothers in living out the same vocation.” Article 45 says, “The salesian brother brings to every field of education and pastoral activity the specific qualities of his lay status, which make him in a particular way a witness to God’s kingdom in the world, close as he is to the young and to the realities of working life.”

PROVINCIAL COMMUNITY DAY AND JUBILEE OF CONFRERES

On 8th October, we shall joyfully and fraternally celebrate our Provincial Community Day and the Jubilees of our dear Confreres in Provincial House, Guwahati. *General Regulations* 42 exhorts us, “Once a year let both the local and provincial communities, gathered around the rector and provincial respectively, celebrate the community Feast-Day as a sign of its fraternal communion and an expression of its gratitude.”

At 3.00 pm, I will do a brief animation for the confreres in the Mamma Margaret Hall, which will be followed by the felicitation of the Provincial Council Members and the

Jubilarians. After tea at 6.00 pm, we shall have the solemn Eucharistic celebration in the Co-Cathedral. Our twin celebration will end at 7.30 pm with dinner in the Provincial House lawn. I request as many of you as possible to participate in these events and make the celebrations meaningful, encouraging and happy one.

TOGETHER WITH LAY PEOPLE IN THE MISSION AND IN FORMATION – SYMPOSIUM IN PREPARATION FOR THE CENTENARY

Preparations are afoot for a fruitful and relevant symposium on the theme of sharing our charism with the laity, entitled **“Co-responsibility with Lay People in Building the Church in North East India: Formation and Collaboration.”** One focus area for the congregation in the next six years is **“Together with lay people in the mission and in formation. The charismatic strength that the Laity and the Salesian Family offer us.”** Information and invitation to the Rectors and Leaders, as well as the centres of Amguri, Sashipur and Satgaon, Salesian Brother Representatives and Provincial Councillors have been sent. The centres are kindly asked to bring along a Catholic lay person—one who will be able to understand English, as the Symposium will be in English.

The same invitation has also been sent to the lay people and priests of selected dioceses to participate in it. Fr Maria Anthuvan is the convener. He will be assisted by a team. Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati will host the programme on 9th and 10th October 2021, and will take care of all the responsibilities entrusted to them. Let us pray for the success of this exercise of reflection and discernment so as to foster greater lay collaboration and ensure that after the symposium we launch some concrete lines of action in this regard.

RETREAT OF THE YEAR – THEME: SALESIAN SPIRITUALITY

Through this note, I wish to earnestly invite the communities to pray for the success of our spiritual retreats which will be held in the Provincial House in October (17 – 23) and (24 – 30).

These retreats and symposium offer us golden opportunities for renewal and transformation of our consecrated life especially as we celebrate the Centenary of the arrival of Salesians in the North East. As the Provincial, knowing the Province and the confreres quite well now, I feel we need to return to the Lord more radically and sincerely and to the original zeal and authenticity of religious life in many aspects, like missionary creativity, zeal and sacrifice, authenticity of life, non-compromising fidelity to our vows, transparent financial management, fraternal and prayerful community life, promotion of vocations through our life’s example and appeal, simplicity of life while being very effective, quality education, empowerment of youth through our vocational training centres, accepting the laity, etc. The constant invitation of the Church and the congregation is to return to the roots and live the radicality of the original charism.

I request everyone to make the retreat as quietly and as seriously as possible. It is sad for me to notice that there are a few who take such constitutional requirements lightly, get easily distracted and consequently may not derive the desired spiritual blessings from the Lord.

The theme of the retreats will be Salesian Spirituality and the preacher is Fr Nirmol Gomes, former Provincial of Kolkata. I request you all to enroll your names with Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial.

LET'S CELEBRATE THE CENTENARY OF SOLEMN CEREMONY OF THE DEPARTURE OF MISSIONARIES ON 23 OCTOBER 1921

The Province celebrated 21st July this year to commemorate the day when Fr Paul Albera, the then Rector Major accepted the Assam Missions on 21st July 1921 at the insistence of Propaganda Fide. In the same way, we shall celebrate, with a special programme the 23rd October to commemorate the day when 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 – the Assam Missions, as 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.

Our Centenary celebration of gratitude, thanksgiving and renewal have commenced through these programmes. Even then, intense spiritual preparations especially renewing our missionary zeal and reflection on our life of sacrifice for the mission in evangelizing the young must take place now. I earnestly request you to read the lives of early missionaries, pray fervently and in gratitude for the souls of the missionaries, right from the time of the pioneers, the lay collaborators especially the Catechists down through the decades and especially the generous benefactors who made untold sacrifice to build up the mission in the North east. These are the most meaningful ways of celebrating the centenary.

Prepared animation materials will once again be sent to all the communities and those of you who will not be in the retreat on this day, will kindly organise it as devoutly as possible.

A GENTLE REMINDER TO CARE FOR AND PROMOTE VOCATIONS

The months of December and January are fast approaching. These months keep us busy, not only for the closing of the academic year, Christmas and New Year celebrations but also for the *Sobhas* (Conventions) and the vocation camps. We have worked hard collectively under the Delegate of Formation and Vocation to invite many young boys to join us; and today, from my assessment, the formation houses are brimming, not only with numbers but the quality seems to be evidently visible. My only request to the formators is to keep giving their time, energy, good will and make all sacrifice to accompany them, not only in words but especially through our life of

holiness, deep prayer, dedication, fraternity, efficiency, quality and promoting high intellectual formation, which I am confident that everyone of you can do. I do appreciate them for whatever they do.

As I thank the confreres of institutions and communities for the great work of collaboration, allow me to remind you all that it is still never enough. North East is a gold mine for quality vocations and we need to tap the resources. The faith among our people has taken deep roots and has matured and so if we follow up our families and keep our eyes open to take notice of the young, many more good and quality vocations will be born. The communities and institutions, nay even the confreres who might not have done much in this regard could kindly know that if we love our vocation, we would certainly do all we can to invite the young to embrace the life that we ourselves have found meaningful and noble.

ACCOMPANY THE YOUNG TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

It is wonderful to know that the Catholic Church under Pope Francis spearheaded the ecological movement to protect the Mother earth and ensure that the future generations enjoy green, productive and safe environment. He has been the voice of the voiceless in different world fora (forums) raising awareness about the destructive human interventions into nature. His apostolic exhortation *Laudato Si'* is an acclaimed contribution on the reflection and proposed lines of action to promote safe environment particularly to the poor and the defenceless.



Don Bosco Green Alliance, an initiative for Green movement, originated among the Salesian Provinces of South Asia, is also on the vanguard to raise consciousness to love and care for creation. Care for the creation shows love for its Creator. The entire congregation has been exhorted strongly by the Rector Major and the General Council to work hard in the next six years. In our regional meetings, relevant and practical lines of actions have been shared and I mention about them here so that they

could really be put into practice immediately.

1. Creating Green compound for each community and school
2. Fruit trees plantation by 2021
3. Tree plantation by 2022
4. Promotion of organic and traditional farming. Avoid artificial fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides, etc)
5. Propagate Kitchen Garden
6. Forming of Eco-Clubs in all the schools
7. Go Solar in all our institutions (latest by 2030)
8. Go for smokeless choolahs
9. Training / awareness programmes on waste management
10. Training / awareness on recycling of materials
11. Creating friendly ecology and creating awareness and animation of *Laudato Si'* and Don Bosco Green Alliance among students and communities through leaflets, seminars' webinars, social media etc. (Reduce the use of non-recyclable plastics cups, plates, etc)
12. Inclusion of Environmental Studies as a subject in UP / High Schools (Classes IV – X) as a compulsory subject.

DON BOSCO SPORTS ACADEMY – SOUTH ASIA

“Love what the young love and they too will love what you love.” Music, sports and excellence are some of what the youth aspire for, besides quality education and character formation. They need authentic and hardworking leaders too. Today in many of the sports events in the national area, there are many students of our institutions who are excelling. The potentiality of our youth is limitless, provided they get the right atmosphere, right opportunities and follow up and discipline. With the objective of tapping the latent talents of youth in the sports arena, the DBYA under the direction of the SPCSA has been motivating and mobilizing the province delegates to venture into providing opportunities to youth of the province to excel in sports through our institutions.

The idea of setting up Don Bosco Sports Academy came from the Salesian Provincial Conference – South Asia via Don Bosco Youth Ministry. Successful models of Sports academy in INK (Vaduthala) and INM (Chennai) inspired the venture. The ING Youth Ministry Commission will initiate domains, such as the football, basketball, volleyball, cricket and hockey, and Indoor Games (table tennis, lawn tennis, badminton) at institutions where facilities already exist.

- FOOTBALL ACADEMY : DB School, Tangla and DB School, Sojong
- BASKETBALL ACADEMY : Don Bosco HS School, Tura
- VOLLEYBALL ACADEMY : St Joseph's High School, Barpeta Road
- HOCKEY ACADEMY : Don Bosco HS School, Boko
- CRICKET ACADEMY : Don Bosco HS School, Kokrajhar
- INDOOR SPORTS : Don Bosco HS School, Panbazar.

While it is a daring and praise-worthy pro-youth venture, its implementation and success will largely depend on focused and collective involvement of all, especially the leaders at the institutional level. A detailed explanation of it has been done to all confreres during the regional meetings. I thank Fr Joseph Teron Langne, Vice Provincial and Fr Marcus Lakra, delegate, Youth Pastoral for taking this initiative forward. The policy that we shall follow has been explained; but more clarity and details will be given to the persons concerned. You may however kindly get in touch with Fr Teron and Fr Marcus for any clarifications and details.

The SPCSA and DBYA have shown their strong commitment by releasing the financial assistance for the promotion of sustainable sports activity in the province. It will be used for preparation of Sports grounds, buying of sports equipment, professional fee to coaches and for the welfare of candidates who undergo training with us, etc.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) FOR ALL CITIZENS

Understanding, appreciating and making a gainful use of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) in our work and study is yet another novelty, being initiated and propagated by the DBYA. The National Education Policy 2020 also acknowledges the importance of Artificial Intelligence and emphasizes on preparing students for an AI driven economy. The policy focuses on making education more experiential and future-oriented, building crucial skills such as data analysis, computational thinking etc. from a young age through teaching of contemporary subjects such as Artificial Intelligence.

AI has a big impact on education by providing simplifying administrative task, smart content, personalized learning, global learning and new efficiencies. It helps to understand the possibilities, concerns, and the principles of responsible AI and AI ethics. The impact of AI across various industries such agriculture, healthcare, transportation, private offices, Government Offices, Art etc. is being felt on a daily basis.

Opportunity is being given to us and the young under our care by DBYA in collaboration with Intel. Let us make maximum use of the same.

PLANNING TOWARDS FRUITFULNESS – MEETING OF THE PRE-CAPITULAR COMMISSION

The Moderator of the Chapter, Br Joby Mani convened the meeting of the Pre-Capitular Commission on 25th September 2021 in the Board room of the Provincial House. It started with a short prayer, slow and meditative reading of the letter of the Vicar General exhorting the Provincial to convoke the Chapter and giving guidelines for the work of the chapter. The members also read all the relevant articles from the *Constitutions* and *Regulations* that give clear directions on the scope and conduct of the Chapter.

The meeting prepared the clear roadmap and the time frame to prepare the province for the chapter.

The grouping of communities for election of the community and provincial delegates for the chapter took place during the meeting.

I feel happy to note that the communities are reading the Post-Chapter reflection of GC28. As you read, confreres could pray and think in what way, we could live out to the full all the recommendations that have been given to us by the Congregation to be more authentic and radical in our life of consecration.

The *Constitutions* describe the Chapter as the fraternal gathering. While we celebrate fraternity during the chapter days, brotherliness and closeness must be our daily way of life in the communities, which today could be a great challenge in our province too.

As you pray daily for the effectiveness of the Chapter, we need to think ahead about the Organic (Overall) Provincial Plan (OPP), the revision and updating of the Province Directory, the drawing up and implementation of the Educative and Pastoral Plan and the formation plan. While some of what we deliberate in the Chapter need the approval of the Rector Major and his council, others could be decided by the Provincial Chapter delegates. Once such deliberations and approvals are carried out, such decisions become binding on all the confreres of the province.

HEALTH CONDITION OF FR JOSEPH ALMEIDA

Fr Joseph Almeida, former Provincial of ING and LKC, underwent a surgery, as you all know, at Dr Kamakshi Memorial Hospital Chennai for the colon cancer. By God's grace, this medical intervention was a success, thanks also to the doctors and the nurses of the hospital. Presently, Fr Almeida is recuperating well, fully cooperating with the doctors in physiotherapy and diet. He has been discharged from the hospital, and is at Provincial House, Chennai.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to the Provincial, the Economer, the Council Members and confreres of LKC who assisted him in all possible ways while he was sick with Covid, his travel to India and his treatment in Chennai.

We are thankful to Fr KM Jose, Provincial (INM), Fr Bosco Lourdswwamy, Vice Provincial cum Rector of the Provincial House, Citadel and the community for their hospitality, prayers and assistance to Fr Joseph Almeida and Fr Mackley Gomes.

I was fortunate to visit him and be with him two days before his surgery. We were able to pray together and encourage him to remain strong and trust in the goodness of the Lord. The Province is indebted to Fr Mackley Gomes for his availability to look after Fr Joe very closely. May the Lord bless him for his generosity!

CONDOLENCES

Fr RK Guangdiat Nicholas, belonging to the Province of Dimapur (IND), sadly passed away in Dimapur on 22 September 2021, at the age of 49. He had been suffering from various health complications, and had been hospitalized several times before he succumbed to Covid (he was infected twice with Covid-19) and other related problems. May the Lord grant him eternal rest and peace in His Kingdom! We offer our heartfelt condolences to the Provincial and confreres of IND and his family members at their loss.

CONCLUSION

Let us resolve to spend the month of October in the company of Mary and her Rosary, to intercede for the youngsters and laity whom we are working with/for, and for our sick confreres. Let us offer all our projects and programmes, headaches and heart-aches, joys and sorrows, anxieties and worries to Mary our Mother, the Lady of the Rosary.

May God bless you!

Yours affectionately in the Lord,



Fr Januarius S Sangma, SDB
Provincial



PROVINCE CALENDAR – OCTOBER 2021

Date	Day	Provincial's Programme / Province Events
01	Fri	Tura: DB College, Junior College
02	Sat	Guwahati: ING Salesian Brothers Meeting, Maligaon
03	Sun	Guwahati
04	Mon	Guwahati
05	Tue	Bengtol: Church Blessing, Indrapur
06	Wed	Guwahati
07	Thu	Guwahati
08	Fri	Provincial Council, Jubilees and Provincial Community Day - PH
09	Sat	Province Symposium at DBI, Guwahati (9-10)
10	Sun	Symposium; Pre-Capitular Commission Meeting, DBI
11	Mon	Guwahati to Delhi and Rome
12	Tue	
13	Wed	
14	Thu	
15	Fri	
16	Sat	
17	Sun	1st Retreat at Provincial House, Guwahati (17-23): Salesian Spirituality, preached by Fr Nirmol Gomes SDB
18	Mon	Retreat
19	Tue	Retreat
20	Wed	Retreat
21	Thu	Retreat
22	Fri	Retreat
23	Sat	Retreat; Assembly of Confreres; PC21 Animation Centenary Commemoration of the Solemn ceremony of the departure of Missionaries from Turin
24	Sun	2nd Retreat at Provincial House, Guwahati (24-30): Salesian Spirituality, preached by Fr Nirmol Gomes SDB
25	Mon	Retreat
26	Tue	Retreat
27	Wed	Retreat
28	Thu	Retreat
29	Fri	Retreat
30	Sat	Retreat; Assembly of Confreres; PC21 Animation
31	Sun	