

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 73/2023

1 February 2023

My dear Confreres,

Greetings from the Provincial House, Guwahati.

SALESIANS, BE DREAMERS AND DREAM BIG IN THE NEW CENTURY

I sincerely hope that every community in the Province celebrated the feast of St John Bosco with due solemnity through the novena, the triduum, the exercise for a happy death and other preparations. Busy as we are, such traditional spiritual practices could fade into oblivion for some of us especially in the face of different interpretation of piety and spiritual practices.

Stephen R Covey wrote, “One thing is for sure. If we keep doing what we are doing, we are going to keep getting what we are getting. One definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing and expect different results.” If one is desirous of reaping better and more tangible fruits (results) from such spiritual celebrations or even from one’s daily chores, the way of celebration or doing them may need closer scrutiny.



We have solemnly concluded the three yearlong celebrations of the centenary of the arrival of Salesians to the northeast India. The 14th Boscoree held at Tapesia’s exotic beauty and bounty of nature and the solemn closing ceremony of the centenary marked the blessed conclusion of our celebrations. Let us thank God, our Blessed Mother, St John Bosco and one another for the memorable celebrations.

The Province organised retreats on Scriptural and Salesian themes and had seminars/symposium on evangelization, catechesis, the profile of Salesians for today’s youth and lay co-responsibility. Apart from regular animation programmes for youth, we animated them in four regions of the province during the centenary year, erected the milestone monuments and celebrated the historical event through cultural extravaganza. The people and the cultures of the northeast India owe much to the tireless missionary adventures of the Salesians for their enrichment, preservation and growth. Hence it is only right and just that we use our cultural richness to praise and

thank the Lord and the missionaries down the decades. Rev Fr Angel Fernandez Artime, Rector Major animated the province during the Provincial level Centenary celebrations and was accompanied by Fr Alfred Maravilla, Mission Councillor and Fr Biju Michael, Councillor for South Asia.

While certifying our Province as healthy, he challenged us to remain humble and celebrate such miraculous growth in humility. "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness" (Ps 115:1). He exhorted us to dream and dream big, saying that visions are crucial. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverb 29: 18). He exhorted us to promote quality vocations and prevent fragility through care and support to one another especially those who are in initial formation. He finds qualitative and quantitative formation of communities as a must for a healthy religious life in future.

As we move into the second century, I find the 11 November 1875 recommendations of St John Bosco to the Salesian missionaries, destined for the Argentine Republic still relevant. He did it in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Valdocco, Turin. As we reflect and act on the recommendations of the Rector Major, let us revise those which came from the heart of the father.(interpreted and modified slightly).

1. Seek souls and not money, honours and dignities. (Evangelisation, Catechesis, Sacraments and self mortification. "Give me souls, take away the rest).
2. Be charitable and most courteous towards all, but avoid conversations and familiarity with persons of the other sex or with persons whose conduct is open to suspicion. (Do all through love. Nothing through constraint. Prudence in relationships)
3. Take special care of the sick, of the young, of the old and of the poor and you will win the blessing of God and the goodwill of men. (focus on the needy, the vulnerable, the young at risk, the marginalised and those in the peripheries).
4. Shun idleness and disputes and observe great moderation in eating, drinking and sleeping. (Tireless work, planning mentality, fraternity in community and moderation).
5. Let the world know that you are poor in clothing, food and abode, and you will be rich in the sight of God, and will win the hearts of men. (Practice of poverty in word and in deed)
6. Observe your rules, and never forget the monthly Exercise for a Happy Death.(No compromises, absolute fidelity. Know the Constitutions well).
7. Every morning commend to God the occupations of the day, especially confessions, lessons, religious instructions and sermons. (Fidelity to the practices of piety and exemplary celebration of the Sacraments especially the Holy Eucharist).
8. Constantly promote devotion to Mary Help of Christians, and to the Blessed Sacrament.

9. Recommend to the boys frequent confession and communion.
10. In order to cultivate ecclesiastical vocations, constantly inculcate: (a) love of chastity; (b) horror of the opposite vice; (c) avoidance of bad companions; and (d) frequent communion. Always be charitable, gentle and kind. (Promotion of vocations, make hostels and educational institutions nurseries for vocations, practice the preventive system and exemplary life)
11. Hear both sides before making up your mind regarding reports and matters in dispute.
12. In time of fatigue and suffering do not forget that we have a great reward prepared for us in heaven. Amen.

While celebrating the Centenary (Provincial and Regional) and the Boscoree, great team work in planning and implementation of all that are planned was visible. It is a matter of great encouragement. Hence we owe gratitude to one another.

I make special mention of Rev Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial, Fr Benny P Basil, Economer, Fr Marcus Lakra, Youth Pastoral Delegate, Fr Sebastian Kuricheal, Council member and Principal, Don Bosco, Pan Bazar, Br Jobi Mani, Council member, Fr Charles C Sangma, Council member, Fr Francis Basumatari, Council member, Fr Charles Deepen Lakra, Rector and Province Secretary and Fr Bartholomew Ch Marak, Administrator, Provincial House.

I owe a great debt of gratitude and appreciation to confreres in the different regions of the Province who shouldered huge responsibilities and led the celebration to a successful ending. I am grateful to all the Rectors, leaders of communities, Principals, Parish priests and all the other confreres and all the members of the Salesian family. Our unknown future is in the hand of the God whom we have known and experienced. If we do our part well, the grace of God is never wanting.

APOSTOLIC LETTER “TOTUM AMORIS EST” (EVERYTHING PERTAINS TO LOVE)

It is evident that Don Bosco loved, imitated and learned much from the virtues and life of St Francis de Sales. His sincere love of God and neighbour, his scholarship, patience and sweetness of life, together with his total offering of himself to God moved countless people. Don Bosco therefore told the first Salesians that they would be called the Salesians. In dealing with youth who often could become un-lovable initially, the style of life and work of St Francis de Sales could reap the desired outcome finally.

On 28 December (Wednesday), 2022, the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis released an Apostolic Letter on St. Francis de Sales, a Saint who teaches us that “devotion to God is meant for everyone, in every situation.” The Pope’s Letter, titled Totum Amoris Est, translated as “Everything Pertains to Love,” was published to mark the 400th anniversary of St. Francis de Sales’ death in 1622. The title comes from the preface of the Swiss Saint’s book “Treatise on the Love of God,” in which he wrote that “In Holy Church, everything pertains to love, lives in love, is done for love and comes from love.”

St. Francis de Sales was born to a noble family at Chateau de Sales in the Kingdom of Savoy near Geneva, Switzerland on August 21, 1567. He was a Bishop and Doctor of the Church.

St. Francis taught against the protestant heresies and laid the groundwork for the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on what is now called the universal call to holiness. It reaffirms the teaching of Jesus and the early Church that every Baptized Christian is called to sanctity, no matter what their career or state in life. In every career and state in life, Christians can become more and more like Jesus Christ. That is, after all, what holiness really means.

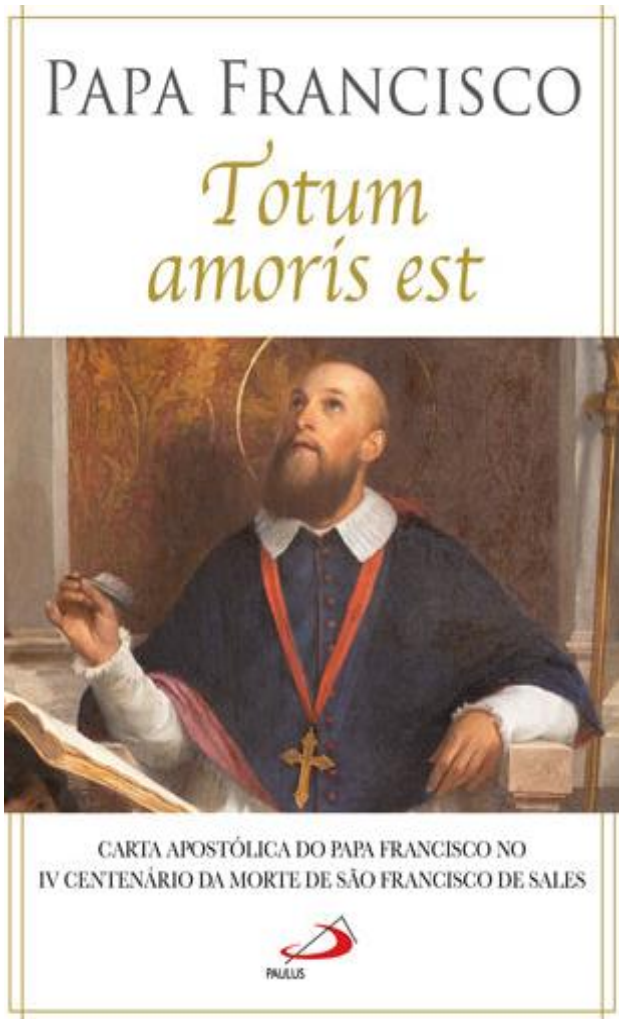
"That same task," says the Pope, "awaits us in our own age of epochal change."

"We are challenged to be a Church that is outward-looking and free of all worldliness, even as we live in this world, share people's lives and journey with them in attentive listening and acceptance. That is what Francis de Sales did when he discerned the events of his times with the help of God's grace. Today he bids us set aside undue concern for ourselves, for our structures and for what society thinks about us, and consider instead the real spiritual needs and expectations of our people."

Not by chance, St. John Paul II called him the "Doctor of Divine Love." Pope Francis recalls, not only for having written "a weighty Treatise on that subject, but first and foremost because he was an outstanding witness to that love."

In the Letter, the Pontiff writes that he wondered about the legacy of St. Francis de Sales for our time and found enlightening "his flexibility and his far-sighted vision." "Partly by God's gift and partly thanks to his own character, but also by his steady cultivation of lived experience, Francis perceived clearly that the times were changing. On his own, he might never have imagined that those changes represented so great an opportunity for the preaching of the Gospel," the Pope wrote.

"The Word he had loved from his youth was capable of making its way, opening up new and unpredictable horizons, in a world in rapid transition." This, for the Pope, is what awaits us as an essential task: "to be a Church that is outward-looking and free from all



worldliness, even as we live in this world, share people's lives and journey with them in attentive of listening and acceptance," having special concern not so much "for ourselves, for our structures, and for what society thinks about us" but rather in considering "what the real spiritual needs and expectations of our people are."

But it is only in the heart and through the heart, Pope Francis continues, that man recognizes God and, at the same time, himself, his own origin and depth, his own fulfillment, in the call to love, because faith is not a passive surrender to a doctrine without flesh and without history" but an attitude of the heart.

Finally, in the second part of the Apostolic Letter, the Pontiff looks at the legacy of St. Francis de Sales for our age through "some of his crucial choices, in order to inhabit change with evangelical wisdom."

FR GEORGE CHALISSERY ARRIVES FOR THE CANONICAL VISITATION

The Province welcomes Fr George Chalissery SDB on 29 January 2023. He comes in the name of the Rector Major to carry out the extraordinary canonical visitation of the province. We thank him for accepting this important task. We have been praying for him



and for the fruitfulness of this exercise. I request all the communities to prepare themselves to their best, so that the visitor knows the province and the confreres well. Such visits are truly moments of grace, as we will feel the closeness of the Superiors to us and that through their intervention, we could still grow in our fidelity to the charism.

BRIEF LIFE SKETCH OF FR GEORGE CHALISSERY

Born on 23 December 1952 at Edathuruthy, Trichur, Kerala, Fr George made his first profession in the Salesian Congregation on 25 May 1970 at Yercaud, Tamilnadu. After his study of philosophy, college studies and practical training, he was sent to Ireland to study theology. After the bachelor's degree in Theology, he went to Rome to do the Licentiate at the Gregorian University

He was ordained a priest on 3 January 1981 in Rome, by Msgr Giovanni Canestri who was vice-gerent of Rome. Nine years after his ordination in June 1990, he opted for the African Mission (East Africa).

In African missions, he served as administrator at the Theologate in Nairobi for 3 years, then as the Rector of the parish and professional school community in Iringa (Tanzania)

for a year, then as Rector in the theologate of Nairobi - Utume in Kenya,(1994-1999). Later as Rector at the aspirantate at Mafinga, Tanzania (2005-2008) and at the Post novitiate house at Moshi in Tanzania (2008-2010).

From 1997 to 1999, he was the Vice Provincial of East Africa, from 1999 to 2005, he was the Provincial of East Africa.

From 2011 to 2017, he was the Provincial of Zambia. From 2017 to 2021, he worked in the Basilica of Mary, Help of Christians, Valdocco.

In 2021 he was transferred to Lusaka (Zambia) as the Vice Rector of the Post Novitiate Community. A man of varied experiences and leadership roles, today Fr George who takes the place of Rector Major is in our midst to help us examine ourselves closely with the objective of greater growth and fidelity.

The itinerary has been sent to you. I request all the Rectors, Vice Rectors, Parish Priests, Asst Parish Priests, Principals, Vice Principals, Administrators and as many young confreres and clerics to attend the Holy Mass and the opening conference on 1 February 2023 in the Provincial house.

As we welcome Fr George to the province for this important responsibility, we assure him of our prayers and support.

REGIONAL CATECHIST TRAINING - 16 to 18 FEBRUARY

I am so glad to note that over these years, the Province had organized the training of the catechists in the local languages every year. Catechists assist us in our ministry of catechesis and instruction, care for the families, animation of prayer, bringing in new converts and in identifying good vocations from the good Catholic families.

This year the regional catechists' training will take place simultaneously in all the regions from 16 to 18 February. Fr Francis Basumatary, Delegate for the Missionary animation will organise the regional delegates. I request all the Parish priests to kindly co-operate and ensure that the catechists participate in it. It is preferable that those who attended the training last year, attend the same this year too. Choosing the theme and the resource persons who are able to animate the catechist well are important. In due course of time, the organisers will send the details including the venue, the theme and the resource persons.

I thank Fr Francis and all those who collaborate with him for taking the initiative to organise the programme every year.

VOCATIONS CAMPS OF THE PROVINCE

Three vocations camps have been completed by the Province this year for the boys studying in Class VII to Class X. I thank Fr Joseph Teron and all the other confreres who organised the camps. I request all the communities to promote vocations from their institutions. In a special way, we need to make our hostels, nurseries of vocations.

We need to avoid sending boys to the camp without knowing him and his family background well in advance. We need to create an awareness among the families that the boys need not be forced to become religious. In the formation houses, we come to

know that there are a sizable number of candidates who come to our apostolic school and aspirantate with addictive habits of smoking, drinking, lack of interest in studies, low discipline, undue desire to use mobile etc. It is important that adequate time be given during the camp for interviewing the candidates. We also need to ensure that we select candidates who are intellectually capable of performing well and become effective educators in future.

The Lord continues to call. We need to accompany the candidates closely so that they get the courage and motivation to answer God's call.

NUMBER OF CAMPERS IN THE CAMPS

1. Tura, Don Bosco Boys' Home - 61
2. Damra, St Michael's Parish - 15
3. Bengtol, Bl Michael Rua's Parish - 20

Two camps at Tangla and Baithalangso for the boys of these regions are yet to take place. The dates have been finalised and will be held as scheduled. As the number of seats at Bosco Mount is limited, the Provincial and the Council, in consultation with the Vocation promoters and the communities concerned have decided to keep some of our candidates in some



communities, like Don Bosco Boys' Home, Tura, Don Bosco, Mendal and Rongkhon for the Garo Hills region. In the Bodoland regions, they will be accommodated at Dotma. In the Assam Plain regions, Dimakuchi community will absorb them while in the Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao regions, Baithalangso will accommodate them.

Every Salesian is a formator, not only in the formation houses but also in all our institutions. Compartmentalisation is against the norms of the society. Everyone needs to give his time and energy to love, nurture and promote vocations. There is a close relationship between love for one's vocation and the interest in promoting vocations. If we love our vocation, we would like to promote vocations and share what we love with others.

The candidates come to us as raw materials. They need to be accompanied well. The process of formation may be long and so we need to be patient and persevering in it. Some have the tendency to blame the candidates as low in quality and motivation while we ourselves may be in greater need to improve ourselves in the quality of our life and capabilities. So it is imperative that we too keep improving ourselves, for the sake of giving better quality formation of the young in all our institutions.

THE NEW PRIESTS AND THE NEW PRIESTS DAY

Three of our deacons are already ordained Priests. We congratulate and assure them our prayers, support and accompaniment to Fr Ravi Prabhat Ekka, Fr Richard Barla and Fr Rajiv Lakra. Soon Dn Silverius Amsong and Dn Jyotish Beck will have the privilege of being “alter Christus” through the sacrament of the Holy Orders.

The new Priests Day will be celebrated on 24 February 2023 in the Provincial House. I invite all the confreres to kindly participate in it to pray for the new priests and assure them of our fraternal support and love in their priestly ministry. The details of the celebration will be sent to you soon by the Vice Provincial.

SNEHALAYA DAY CELEBRATED : LOVE AND BE LOVED. LET THEM KNOW THAT THEY ARE LOVED

The Snehalaya day was celebrated on 29 January 2023 at ILA Snehalaya. Large number of Fathers, Sisters, Staff members and boys and girls from the five Snehalaya Homes participated in it. Some prominent members of the Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) also participated in the celebration. They sponsored the lunch for all.

The celebration began with the Holy Mass presided over by me, which was followed by a cultural get together and family meal. During the cultural programme, the boys and girls put up beautiful items. The former Directors, and the confreres, the sisters and lay staff who worked in the institution earlier were felicitated and were given mementos on the occasion.

All those who spoke on the occasion dwelt on the theme of gratitude and grateful remembrance of all those who contributed their share to make the Snehalaya what it is today. Everyone appreciated the good works that are being done and hoped that the institution continued to become a beacon of hope to the underprivileged section of the society. Fr Thaddeus Kujur, former Director enthralled the gathering with few of his magic tricks. The young boys and girls were exhorted by the speakers to make the best use of the opportunities that were being offered to them, especially take their education seriously.

The words of Don Bosco that “it is not enough to love the young. They must know that they are loved” were printed clearly in the background flex and are true if the educator wanted the best out of the young.



CONSULTATIONS - PARTICIPATION AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The Provincial's office will soon despatch the consultation forms to all the confreres of the communities. Rev. Fr Benny P Basil, Economer and some Rectors are ending their term of office. I request every confreres to participate in the consultation in a very responsible way and send the filled in forms at due time. In one of the evening prayer and spiritual reading, the Rector/leader could assemble all the members of the community and ensure that everyone participates happily.

Article 123 says "Our common vocation requires the responsible and effective participation of all the members in the life and action of the local, provincial and world communities, not only in terms of implementation but also of planning, organizing and evaluating, according to their respective roles and competence.

This shared responsibility requires also the participation of the confreres, in the most suitable way, in the choice of those responsible for government at the different levels, and in the working out of their more important decisions.

It is the duty of those who exercise authority to promote and guide this contribution by means of adequate information, personal dialogue and community study and reflection".

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE

We extend our Heartiest Congratulations to dear and Rev. Fr Don Bosco Lourdusamy, the new Provincial elect of the Salesian Province of Chennai. He will be installed as Provincial for term 2023-2029 on 4th February 2023. We wish him all the very best as he takes up the new office of service as the leader and animator of the Province of Chennai. May God shower on him His blessings in abundance, may the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit accompany him and may Mary's motherly presence and protection help him to fulfil the Mission entrusted to him to the best of his abilities.

CONDOLENCE MESSAGES

Mrs Ruth Soren (aged 71), the mother Cl. Dominic Mardi, a student of theology at Sacred Heart Theological College, shilling, left for her eternal rewards on 20 January 2023. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

Mrs Cecilia G Momin (aged 89), the beloved mother Fr Gabriel G Momin, a missionary to Bangladesh, went to her Father's home on 28 January 2023. We extend our prayerful sympathies and condolences to the grief stricken family.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



Fr Januarius S Sangma, SDB
Provincial



FEBRUARY 2023		
Date	Day	PROGRAMME
1	Wed	Guwahati: Inauguration of the Extraordinary Visitation (Mass and Conference) Provincial Council interacts with Fr George Chalissery (2.00 pm - 4.00 pm)
2	Thu	Ordination: Dn Silverius Amsong, Umswai
3	Fri	Guwahati
4	Sat	Guwahati
5	Sun	Shallang : Annual Sobha - Holy Mass and Confirmation
6	Mon	Shallang >> Guwahati
7	Tue	Mumbai - DBYA Educational and Cultural Dimension meeting (online) - 4.00 pm
8	Wed	Mumbai
9	Thu	Mumbai
10	Fri	Mumbai >> Guwahati
11	Sat	Satgaon : Annual Sobha - Holy Mass
12	Sun	Satgaon
13	Mon	Guwahati
14	Tue	Guwahati
15	Wed	Guwahati
16	Thu	Regional Catechist training
17	Fri	Regional Catechist training
18	Sat	Regional Catechist training
19	Sun	Ordination: Dn Jyotish Beck, Mazbat
20	Mon	Guwahati >> Doomni
21	Tue	Doomni: Chapel and Dispensary Blessing
22	Wed	Doomni
23	Thu	Amguri : Annual Sports Day, CARE Schools. Fr Francisco Santos and Jose Kutiannimattathil (Formation Department, Rome) arrive in Guwahati >> proceed to Dotma
24	Fri	Guwahati : New Priests Day, Provincial House. Fr Francis and Fr Jose visit Sirajuli, Tapesia and Shilong
25	Sat	Fr Francis and Fr Jose visit Shillong >>> Nonglahkiat, Siloam and Guwahati
26	Sun	Fr Francis and Fr Jose leave for Kolkata in the morning.
27	Mon	Guwahati
28	Tue	Team Visit : Hyderabad