

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

JS – 75/2023

30 April 2023

My dear Confreres,

Greetings with love from the Provincial House, Guwahati.

In the month of May, we the Salesians celebrate three significant congregational feasts of St Dominic Savio, St Mary Domenica Mazzarello and Mary Help of Christians, the principal patroness of our Society. I wish you a very **Happy feast** and assure of my prayers. In the months of May and October, the Universal Church honours Mary in a special way. In our Congregation and the Province, we usually spend more time to study, know, love, imitate and spread devotion to Mary in these months. It however does not mean that during the other months, our Marian devotion is less.

At **Savio Juniorate, Shillong** many of us had listened and had delivered Marian sermonettes during these months. Back at home, we as children and youth, went around the families in our localities, praying the Rosary from house to house with our friends. In our formation houses and boardings, we organised the Marian nights, drawing and singing competitions on Mary, processions and pilgrimages etc. which promoted greater knowledge and devotion to our Blessed Mother. We need to continue them today and all these will keep Mary strongly alive in our daily life and activity.



Conceived immaculate, the simple girl Mary's answer to the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation was proverbial. Her words, loaded with meaning, sealed her willingness to co-operate with God, saying "**Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to Thy word**" (Lk 1: 27 - 28). It is not easy nor will it be so, to say "LET IT BE" to an unknown future, except with exceptional trust in the Divine.

The **Beatles** got inspired by Mary's "**Let It Be**" and composed the beautiful rendition. The popular song expresses confidence in Mary's assistance.

When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be
And when the broken hearted people living in the world agree
There will be an answer, let it be
For though they may be parted, there is still a chance that they will see
There will be an answer, let it be
And when the night is cloudy there is still a light that shines on me
Shinin' until tomorrow, let it be
I wake up to the sound of music, Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

Another popular song on Mary "Mary Did You Know?" written by Mark Lowry in 1984 is one of the most popular Christmas songs of our times. Though slightly controversial for one or two lines of the song, the lyrics point out Mary's "Yes" to God without knowing the full reality of her consent.

Mary did you know that your baby boy will some day walk on water?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you.

Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand?
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
And when you kiss your little baby, you have kissed the face of God.

Oh, Mary did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the lamb.

Mary did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
This sleeping child you're holding is the great I am.

Down through the centuries, Mary has inspired Christians especially the religious to live a life of deep faith and total surrender to God, her fidelity to family life and nurturing the Holy family, her missionary spirit especially her visit to Elizabeth, the wedding at Cana, her closeness to Jesus during his passion, keeping the apostles united in prayer before the Pentecost, and her humility and simplicity of life.

At the famous battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Christian sailors joined Pope Pius V (a Dominican) in praying the Most Holy Rosary, and defeated a much larger Turkish army. The battle was a turning point in repelling the Turkish invasions of Europe. She indeed was the help of Christians and she continues to assist us even today especially to win spiritual battles.

Like Mary, chosen even before we were born, we too vowed to be signs and bearers of God's love to the young. Pledging ourselves to live poor, obedient and chaste on the day of our profession, we opted to be Christ-like in Don Bosco's way. Leaving our homes, we accept to live the community life. Like Don Bosco we promised to give our life to its last breathe to the young and our mission.

Reading through the pages of newspapers, quite often we read of structures - buildings, houses and bridges that crumbled. Foundations were not laid well and were not sturdy enough. Strong foundations are required if the structures are to go up high and remain standing. It is true with human life and especially our religious life. All of us started off our religious life with great fervour and enthusiasm on the day of our profession. Many remain so till the end despite challenges and hurdles. There are however a sizable number who faltered and quitted. Even those who continue to be religious could turn out to be lukewarm, burnt out, dissipated, bitter, in-authentic, parasitical, compromising and abusive. In today's world, we need to renew our original fervour daily and strengthen the foundation. There were many buildings which stood firm against earthquakes and tsunamies. In our spiritual and religious life, we need to withstand such spiritual onslaughts.

PROFESSIONS – PERPETUAL, RENEWAL AND FIRST PROFESSION

Ten (10) from the Province of Guwahati and three (3) from the Vice Province of Sri Lanka will make their Perpetual profession on 24 May 2023 at St John Bosco's Shrine, Gojapara at 10.00 am. Let us pray for them in a special way that God may bless them for their generosity and that they may find joy and fulfillment in the mission that the Lord is giving to them. May God accompany them and help them to be faithful to Him till the end of their lives. We shall pray for their parents and family members too. They are the first formators and have been generous with the Lord.

Below are the names of those who will make their perpetual vows:

1. Cl Ekka Sunit
2. Cl Gamage Chathuska Sisipriya (LKC)
3. Cl Hillman Christlas (LKC)

4. Cl Kharkongor Godwin Sapphireson
5. Cl Npenme Haisuilube
6. Cl Rabha Kolombiya
7. Cl Sangma Jecky
8. Cl Sangma Jeniberth
9. Cl Soren Dominic
10. Cl Stanislas Anthony Thiyoniaslas (LKC)
11. Cl Tigga Arpan
12. Cl Toppo Anand
13. Cl Xalxo Jerbasius

In a very special way, we warmly welcome the newly professed 11 Salesians of our Province. They will make their first profession at Sunnyside and Zubza on 24 May 2023. We thank God for the gift of each one of them and pray that they become authentic Salesians. We are very grateful to their parents and ask God to bless them for their generosity.

NOVICES AT SUNNYSIDE - SHILLONG :

1. Basumatary Jwakim
2. Hemrom Augustine
3. Lyngdoh Marshilong Shembhalang
4. Marak Nicholas B
5. Sangma Angelus
6. Sangma Tengku M
7. Shira Anthony D
8. Xalxo Ebranius

NOVICES AT ZUBZA - KOHIMA :

1. Bara Jonas
2. Induar Albinus
3. Sangma Tengsua D

Many of our clerics and Brothers are making the renewal of their vows on 23 May, at the end of their spiritual retreat at St Francis Eco-spirituality centre, Orlong Hada. Fr George Maliekal SDB, former Provincial of Shillong will preach the retreat. We assure them of our prayers and fraternal accompaniment especially in the difficult moments of their lives.

BUDGET OF THE LOCAL AND PROVINCIAL COMMUNITIES

Scientific preparation of Budget is a tedious work but is a must for the healthy practice of poverty, transparency and accountability. Community budget is usually prepared by the Administrator taking into consideration all the sectors of the House. All the incomes and expenditures of the community need detail calculation and recording. This requires great discipline. Budget is discussed carefully in the House Council before it is presented to the Provincial team. It makes the exercise a team effort and a collective responsibility, besides making it truly rich.

Marked improvement is seen in the budget preparation of communities this year. Our communities are becoming more and more self sustainable. The communities are in a much better position to improve the facilities on behalf of the young in school, in the hostel, in giving the scholarships etc. In the budget, each community is to set aside scholarship fund. Each community will maintain register of scholarships with relevant details.

It is mandatory to abide by the Government and the Province regulations in financial administration. Collection of fees through the Bank, whenever possible, deposit of money collected in cash in the Bank and payment through the Bank/cheques are healthy and highly recommended. The communities are asked to appoint an efficient lay accountant to help in maintaining financial records on daily basis. It needs to be done.

On behalf of Fr Vice Provincial, Fr Economer and Mr Netra Subha, I wish to thank all the communities for the good budget preparation and especially for the solidarity fund. The Province Budget also has been drawn up and many of our communities will benefit much from it. May God continue to bless our province and help us to be generous to the poor and the marginalised.

MIGRANT MINISTRY

The three Provincials of the North East (IND, INS and IND) and the respective commissions for YAR have started a joint effort to respond concretely to the problems of the boys and girls of the North East who go as migrants to the cities in search of livelihood. The initiative was taken by the Provinces of Panjim, Goa and Mumbai who come face to face with the stark reality of exploitation of these migrant population. Further, the initiative was strongly owned and promoted by Fr Tony Palissery, the SPCSA YAR delegate.

The first meeting to respond to this issue was held at Bosco Reach Out, Guwahati. After the inauguration, Fr Tony animated the participants who came from the three provinces. A part of the meeting was set aside for an online meeting of the participants with the four Provincials of Panjim, Shillong, Dimapur and Guwahati. In the meeting, the participants were able to listen to the Salesian confreres of the Panjim province who shared about the challenges and the exploitation that migrants face especially in Mumbai and Goa in the tourism industry.



The initiative has just began. The Province delegates and the commission members will chalk out the way forward and will work in close association with the Provinces to improve the situation of migrants all over India especially those of North East India.

ADMA ASPIRANTS IN THE HOLY FAMILY PARISH, RONGJENG

On 22 April 2023, after much prayer, study of the Association's statutes, short recollection, confession and Holy Mass, 28 men and women from the Holy Family Parish Rongjeng opted to enrol themselves as the aspirants of the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA). They will be aspirants for a period one year before they are inducted as full fledged members if they still come forward. The group had earlier had a full day session consisting of the study of the aims, objectives and purpose of the Association, as started by St John Bosco.

The Province had earlier sent three well chosen members from the province to Kolkata to attend the animation meeting of the ADMA. Upon their return, they, together with Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial had been making efforts to promote this association, which is a prominent member of the Salesian family.



I am grateful to Fr Hubert C Marak, Rector, Holy Family Rongjeng and the community for taking this initiative. To Mrs Sharmila Marak of Mendal, who was one of those who went to Kolkata for the ADMA meeting, I owe my gratitude for her availability to animate the group.

FR GEORGE CHALISSERY ANIMATES THE MEMBERS OF ALL COMMISSIONS OF THE PROVINCE

On 27 April 2023, Fr George Chalissery, the Extraordinary Visitor of the Province listened to the reports of all the commissions of the Province in the Mario Hall and at the end, gave his valuable observations and suggestions. Most of the members attended the meeting which started at 3.00 pm and ended at 6.00 pm. Earlier the delegates of each commission were asked to prepare the report and present it during the meeting. All except one or two commissions presented the report.

It was observed that almost all the commissions never had meetings on their own this year.

At the end of the report presentation and short moments of interaction and sharing by the participants, Fr George Chalissery began his animation by appreciating such a meeting and observed that, from the reports, he could conclude that lots of works were being done by the commissions in the province.

SALIENT POINTS OF HIS ANIMATION :

- The Salesian Congregation today lays lots of importance to Youth Ministry. Hence it proposes a full-time Youth Ministry delegate in the province.
- Every institution needs to begin the Oratory in the style and manner of Valdocco. Don Bosco's work began in the oratory. We need to open up our institutions to the youth of the locality.
- The Salesian Co-operators and the Past Pupils could help in organizing the Oratory. Besides sports and games and socialization, the youth could be help in education through coaching classes, tuition and other animation programmes.
- Quoting Regulations 74 of our Constitutions, Fr George stressed the need to begin the ADMA in the province wherever it is possible.
- Competent and committed Lay people or members of the Salesian family can be inducted into the commissions as members.
- Today, Media education is essential in all our educational institutions. Confreres must learn to use media creatively and prudently and educate the young also. Media could be used in education and teachers must be trained for this.
- Asserting that Don Bosco has a brand/good name in the North east, we need to promote it by performing well in all spheres of our ministry.
- The Province needs to network with other Provinces for effective migrants ministry especially in the tourism industry and Casinos in Goa and Mumbai.
- In order to address the problem of lack of good Salesian Administrators in the communities, students of theology could be offered a course on Administration. Lay persons can be administrators so that the Salesians are free for the spiritual ministry. We needed to trust the lay persons.
- Media Department of the Province needs revamping. It needs to animate the young regularly. Digital platform can be used for the evangelisation of the young. Teachers need to be trained to use it in the classrooms.
- In most of our communities, the boarding facilities are poor and shabby. They are dirty and dis-organised. The boys and girls are served un-wholesome food. The Salesians need to be there for the boys and girls who are mainly the poorest and the marginalised. We need to be more generous towards them.
- Handing over at the time of transfers is not transparent and not done well often. Some confreres leave behind huge debts which are also not divulged. The official form is not filled up properly. A few do the handing over without informing the Economer/Provincial to hide the anomalies.
- The Agreement with other religious especially Sisters needs to be more human. Some agreements are oppressive and not human. Our agreements need to have more of human face than the legal face. Remember they too are religious like us.
- The atmosphere in our formation houses needs loving and serene ambient, so that values are accepted rather than compelled. There must be spontaneity, family spirit and familiarity. Salesian presence is a must.

- We need to take better care of those who are already with us and accompany the young confreres more closely. The first formation should be the human formation. Difficulties and problems surface due to lack of good human formation.
- Formation of human values should begin from the Pre-novitiate stage.
- Everyone in the community is duty bound to inform the community especially the Rector when he goes out of the community. Even when the mobile is available, some do not inform about his whereabouts and is absent from the community often.
- The qualification of confreres to sustain the mission of the Province needs planning. Formation of Rectors, Principals and Parish Priests is required and all confreres need to plan their ongoing formation. The community is the best place for formation.
- To succeed, any apostolate/mission needs team work. The mission is entrusted to the community. Individuals may succeed externally but will not leave any evangelical mark behind. Our collaborators notice our fights and disunity.
- All the commissions in the province have many members. Only three/four members will be adequate. The commissions need to have meeting at the start of the year.
- Asserting that the communities have sufficient resources, Fr George suggested that we should become more generous towards the poor and looked after them better.

INFORMATION:

- 8 novices at Sunnyside will receive their clerical habit on 30 April 2023 at St John Bosco Shrine, Sohra. Let us pray for them. Fr Joseph Teron, Vice Provincial will attend the ceremony.
- The proposed meeting of the Principals and the Vice Principals on 4 May and the Parish Priests and the Assistant parish priests on 16 May with Fr George Chalissery stand cancelled.
- The Post SSLC Vocation camp held at Garobadha and Sirajuli ended successfully. At Garobadha, 4 boys while at Sirajuli, 26 boys attended the camp. We wish God's blessings on all those who were selected and thank the organisers of the camp. Let us pray and work harder to promote vocations for the Province.
- **The conclusion of the Extraordinary visitation will take place on 29 May 2023 in the Provincial House at 4.00 pm. All the Confreres are invited for this important event. At the end of the presentation of the report, we shall have the Evening Prayer and dinner for all.**

CONDOLENCES :

Our sympathies and heartfelt condolences to Sr. Alphonsa Kurisingal FMA and the Sisters of FMA Guwahati Province on the sad demise of **Sr Chinir Elizabeth Moyon Fma** after immense and prolonged suffering due to cancer. May her soul rest in peace.

Fr. Nangachiveethil Joseph (NJ) of the Province of Dimapur (IND) passed away at Salesian College Dimapur on 28 April at the age of 95. May he rest in peace! Our condolences to Fr Jose Kuruvachira and the confreres of Dimapur Province.

Our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Fr Kuriala Chittattukalam and Fr Thomas John at the sad demise of their brothers - **Varghese Chittattukalam**, 81 years and **Kurian John**, 64 years. May they rest in peace.

CONCLUSION:

To be true Sons of Don Bosco, Mary needs to occupy a special place, love and imitation in our life. This is what the Rectors Major told us. When Don Bosco told us to have devotion to Mary and experience great miracles, it was not a pious exhortation. He experienced it in a tangible manner especially in the difficult moments of his life. He did receive her help of miraculous nature. Let our trust and confidence in Mary be similar to that of our father and founder St John Bosco.

Let us continue to pray for Fr George Chalissery who is completing the extraordinary visitation of the province. Fr George has been unassuming in his manner of life and relationship towards every confrere and all the boys and girls and other people with whom he came into contact with in the province. At the same time he has already pointed out in a fatherly style, the strengths as well as the areas where we collectively need to work harder.

Once again Happy feast of St Dominic Savio, St Domenica Mazzarello and Mary Help of Christians to one and all. Be assured of my prayers. Hearty congratulations to all those who professed on 24 May. We warmly welcome into the congregation those who made the perpetual profession, those who renewed the vows and especially those who made their first profession at Sunnyside and Zubza. May God bless us all and may Mary and Don Bosco intercede for the Province.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



Fr Januarius S Sangma, SDB
Provincial



| MAY 2023 | | |
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| Date | Day | PROGRAMME |
| 1 | Mon | Doomni : Village Chapel Blessing |
| 2 | Tue | Guwahati : Holy Mass (Provincial Chapter) SMI Provincial House |
| 3 | Wed | Guwahati |
| 4 | Thu | Guwahati : Blessing - Casket of Mary Mazzarello - St Mary's (4.30 pm) |
| 5 | Fri | Sirajuli |
| 6 | Sat | Sirajuli - Feast of St Dominic Savio >> Tezpur - Girls Hostel Blessing |
| 7 | Sun | Kumarikata : Village Chapel blessing |
| 8 | Mon | Guwahati |
| 9 | Tue | Guwahati |
| 10 | Wed | Guwahati : Meeting - Technical Commission, Provincial House (10.00 am) |
| 11 | Thu | Guwahati |
| 12 | Fri | Guwahati |
| 13 | Sat | Guwahati - Feast of St Mary Mazzarello |
| 14 | Sun | Guwahati |
| 15 | Mon | Guwahati |
| 16 | Tue | Provincial Council Meeting, Provincial House |
| 17 | Wed | I Retreat (for Renewal of Vows - for Clerics & Brothers) 5.30 pm |
| 18 | Thu | I Retreat |
| 19 | Fri | I Retreat |
| 20 | Sat | I Retreat - Haflong & Catechism Teachers' Training (English) : Guwahati |
| 21 | Sun | I Retreat - Haflong : Village Chapel Blessing |
| 22 | Mon | I Retreat |
| 23 | Tue | I Renewal of the Vows - Initiation of the Novices |
| 24 | Wed | Gojapara : Perpetual Profession (10.00 am) |
| 25 | Thu | Guwahati |
| 26 | Fri | Guwahati |
| 27 | Sat | Guwahati |
| 28 | Sun | Guwahati |
| 29 | Mon | Handing over : Economer (9.00 amd 10.00 am) - Visitor meets Provincial Council (10.30 am – 1.00 pm) - Concluding Conference, PH - 4.00 pm. Evening prayer and Dinner |
| 30 | Tue | Guwahati |
| 31 | Wed | Guwahati |