

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

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

SM-04/2024

1 September 2024

Dear Confreres,

Greetings from Don Bosco Provincial House, Guwahati!

As part of reflection for this month, I would like to share with you all something about our vow of Chastity. Last month we began these series of reflection, beginning with our life of consecration and its meaning and significance. Poverty, chastity, and obedience are three primary vows that we religious make which form the core of our consecration. These vows are also known as the “evangelical counsels” in the Catholic tradition. These vows helps us religious to channelise our energies to follow our soul’s purpose and make God the center of our lives.

THE VOW OF CHASTITY

CHASTITY- A GIFT AND A PROMISE

One of the essential elements of our consecrated life is the vow of chastity. It is a vow that is both a gift and a promise- a gift because it is God who gives it to us freely and who calls us to follow him, and a promise because by our public pronouncement of a vow we pledge to live the evangelical counsel of chastity. The two dimensions so blend to enable us to devote our life to love God with an undivided heart. The two dimensions, as we know, call for a daily pledge of fidelity. The gift of our vocation and celibate life is also a gift that we in turn offer to God, the Church and our Congregation. While we receive our vocation as a gift from God, we also give it back with an undivided heart to him through a life of faithfulness and service.

DON BOSCO’S CHARACTERISTIC VIRTUE

Our former Rector Major and the sixth successor of Don Bosco, Fr Luigi Ricceri called chastity Don Bosco’s characteristic virtue. Fr Ricceri writes: “The more deeply we study Don Bosco’s life, educational method and spirituality, the more keenly do we become aware of the value of chastity in the economy of the Salesian world. Some of his peremptory statements are known to all of us. “Chastity”, our holy founder used to state unequivocally, “must be the outstanding trait of our Society. It is the foundation of all the other virtues and the focal point upon which they converge”.

CELIBACY AS A COUNTER-CULTURAL WITNESS

Sometimes people tend to reduce consecrated life of chastity as merely remaining unmarried. Our decision to live a life of celibacy can be puzzling for many in a society where the chastity of priests and religious is looked upon at best as something unnatural, and at worst as a practice that is repressive and unhealthy. People within and outside the Church have wrong assumptions and misunderstandings about the vow of celibacy. We may not be able to convince them about the way of life a celibate. At a time when many Catholics and secular

people alike, advocate the abolition of religious chastity, it is all the more necessary to openly proclaim the joy of living chastity and the beautiful purpose that it serves in the Body of Christ.

Celibacy requires one to be radically different from others. Celibates must be countercultural witnesses of the Gospel. We are called to reveal Christ's goodness and love by our way of life.

Although we have offered ourselves to God freely for the sake of the Church and the general public, we cannot and need not expect that everyone will understand the deeper implications of vowed life. Living in a society that urges us to curate virtual identities, all of us—especially our youth—confront impossible aesthetic ideals that make us feel ashamed of our bodies and identities. We live at a time when various forms of gender ideologies dominate our world, particularly the media. We are not free from the continuing struggle of the people of our times against forces that assault human sexuality for profit or for power.

Many people view priestly and religious chastity from a merely pragmatic perspective. Not having to take care of a family frees the celibate person to serve others. Though this is a valid approach, it misses the whole point of chastity. The reason for chastity goes beyond the practical advantages it has. A person can stay unmarried for a variety of reasons—family obligations, work, love of power, dedication to a career or profession. None of these are valid reasons for celibacy as far as the Church is concerned. Celibacy makes sense only if Jesus and the Gospel way of life attract a person's heart. Chastity is a reminder that beyond sex, intimacy, marriage, and family, one is directed toward the one Highest Good: God.

ESPOUSED TO GOD TO LIVE IN LOVE AND JOY

Through the vow of chastity, religious give up marriage and strives to imitate Jesus who Himself was chaste and who calls those who are given the grace to live this way to follow Him (Mt. 19:12). It is through this vow that the religious, in a spiritual sense, are espoused to God. In the same way that husband and wife give the total gift of themselves to each other for life, consecrated religious give themselves entirely over to God and are thus a prophetic witness to how every Christian will be united totally to God in heaven, where there will be no human marriage (Mt. 22:30).

The deeper significance of vowed life is love. At the heart of one's vocation to religious life is a joyful and loving life. In the words of Pope Francis, "A joyless community is one that is dying. The people of our time are waiting for words of consolation, the availability of forgiveness and true joy. We, consecrated men and women, are called to share this joy with a mother's tenderness as facilitators and not as controllers of grace. The Church is not a refuge for sad people, but a house of joy."

Living a vow of chastity is by no means easy. but the truly joyful things in life are those that are difficult and require our persistent cooperation with the grace of God, those that require us to daily die to ourselves and to be nailed to the cross with Christ so that we may rise with Him in glory. It is not a vow made once and for all, but a promise renewed freely each and every day.

The lives of saints and holy founders show how they lived and witnessed to chastity through a life of joy and grace. Their chastity gave them tremendous power to love God and his people. St Therese of Lisieux described her vocation as love. The vow of chastity frees the heart of the consecrated person to be freely and fully available for any ministry and even to die for others. However, the reason for choosing celibacy is not work, but the inner awareness of being called by God to a particular way of living and loving.

LIVING IN INTIMACY WITH GOD

Though we make public vows and live our consecrated life in community, celibacy is a deeply personal and individual experience of a relationship with God, one's community and the people one is called to serve. Our commitment is grounded in the deep love and intimacy we share with Christ. In this sacred tension, celibacy intersects with the purity and emptiness of poverty; we detach and let go and remain free from clinging to possessions, all so that more of the mystery of Christ can be shared.

Ultimately our vow of celibacy is a faith offering, one that embraces the tensions of living this vocation. In the midst of the tensions that coexist with this choice, we continue to choose our vocation because we are given to God. Each one of us must recognise and grow in the realisation that we belong to God, that our identity is in him.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS AND THE EVANGELICAL WAY

We see in Jesus, a person who relates to others, both male and female, in a way that integrates human touch with a gift of total self-gift. Jesus heals and animates both body and spirit. In order to do so, he touches the untouchable, gathers children into his arms, dines with sinners and associates with those considered outcasts and strangers. He washes the feet of his disciples. In the intimate moments between Jesus and those in need of healing, we see him offer true freedom, forgiveness and the gift of salvation.

Human sexuality holds tremendous potential for good and also for violence, domination, and division. Jesus restores sexuality its original purpose of building bonds, affirming dignity, and creating new life in abundance. The vow of celibacy is a call to experience freedom, to live the gospel as embodied and revealed in Christ. Father Ron Rolheiser, O.M.I. talks about sexuality as, "a beautiful, good, extremely powerful sacred energy given us by God and experienced in every cell of our being as an irrepressible urge to overcome our incompleteness, to move toward unity and consummation with that which is beyond us."

SUSTAINED BY THE GRACE OF WORD AND SACRAMENTS

God's grace and the power to live a chaste life come from our daily encounter with Christ in the Word of God and the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Through them Christ unites us to himself and with one another. The sacramental life binds us as the Body of Christ as the lived ideal of gospel sexuality.

We need to humbly and earnestly pray that God may sustain us in our vow of celibacy, giving us the courage and the wisdom to cultivate the necessary discipline and spirit of denial, to follow the example of Jesus Christ in embracing the healing and empowering potential of gospel sexuality.

By the vow of celibacy, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us and our communities to become living witnesses of life rooted in genuine love for God and his people. For us Salesians such a

witness is a priceless gift we offer to the young who are often victims of the dehumanizing forces of sexual manipulation. We need God’s grace to see the power of God at work even in the most abject forms of deprivation and sinfulness. We need to believe that no one is beyond the orbit of God’s love and mercy.

LIVING WITH SERENITY AND PRAYER

Living a healthy vow of celibacy means embracing and seeking deep, intimate connections with God and one another in the community. In loving others and living fully our life, we ought to be firmly rooted and grounded in God so that we proceed with discernment, honesty, and compassion. We balance the tensions of life to live as loving people, fully embracing life and reaching out to others. We need to be reminded that our relationships are held and wrapped in God, who alone fulfils our deepest desires for intimacy. The practices of self-work, cultivation of real friendships and accountability in community, and the discipline of prayer enable us to live this vow faithfully each day and season of my life.

RETURNING TO THE CENTRE

There is freedom in embracing religious life, though it is not immune to loneliness. When we live celibacy in an integrated way, we can move into a more inclusive love. Even during the inevitable moments of loneliness, we can seek to learn how better to give and accept love.

There is an incredible energy and freedom that we receive when we give ourselves fully to God. This energy becomes formidable in service to our mission—to give ourselves totally to the salvation of the young as Don Bosco did and wanted us to do, when we stand with those on the margins, when we fight against injustice, when we show compassion to the broken.

Celibate living has always been about finding our way back to the centre. Returning to the centre means finding intimacy, joy and beauty in God in regular, everyday things, such as a beautiful sunset or a cool breeze on a morning walk. It is soaking in a feeling of profound love and contentment. When we return to the centre, we can recognize the love with which God loves us and makes us capable of loving him and others in return. The vow of celibacy is about God’s infinite love for us translated into love and acceptance of ourselves and overflowing to love for others.

In the end, the vow of celibacy is a way to live Jesus’ vision of a full life: “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Let us make our vow of chastity into a beautiful tapestry of friendship, grace, and commitment which bring us under the sheltering wings of God’s abiding love.

REDUCTION OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY IN SOUTH ASIA

The SPCSA during its 48th Council meeting held from 5 to 7 August 2024 at the Provincial House of Trichy province, launched the project “With the Youth, to Eradicate Poverty” with the aim to reduce multidimensional poverty



in South Asia through a comprehensive approach for the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDBs). This initiative encourages a shift in how SDBs serve the poor, promoting a culture of assessment and outcome evaluation to enhance effectiveness. The project focuses on:

1. **Leveraging Existing Programmes:** Reviewing and refining current SDB initiatives to better target and reduce extreme poverty.
2. **Initiating Targeted Programmes:** Identifying areas of severe poverty and developing specific interventions to address these contexts.

The goal is to help 300,000 families rise above extreme poverty or multidimensional poverty by the end of the project. The first year (September 2024 to September 2025) focuses on forming project teams, creating strategies, setting benchmarks, and collecting baseline data.

Launched by Fr. Martoglio Stefano on August 5, 2024, the project aligns with core SDB values and aims to ensure sustained impact across the region.

NEWS AND EVENTS

CARDINAL ANGEL FERNANDEZ ARTIME RESIGNS AS THE RECTOR MAJOR AND FR STEFANO MARTOGLIO TAKES OVER AD INTERIM



Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime resigned as Rector Major of the Salesian Society on Don Bosco's birthday, August 16, 2024. In his farewell, he expressed gratitude to his Salesian confreres for their support and collaboration during his ten and a half years of service. Cardinal Artime praised his Vicar

Fr. Stefano Martoglio, for his dedication and leadership and entrusted the future of the Salesian Congregation to Don Bosco and the Help of Christians.



Fr. Stefano Martoglio, the Vicar of the Salesian Congregation, will serve as interim Rector Major until a new leader is elected during the 29th General Chapter in Turin from February 16 to April 12, 2025.

REGIONAL PASTORAL COUNCIL OF NORTH EAST BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

The Catholic Church in Northeast India began preparations for the Jubilee Year 2025 by revisiting *Ecclesia in Asia*, an apostolic exhortation by Saint Pope John Paul II from 1999. This took place during the annual regional pastoral conference at the Jubilee Memorial Hall in Guwahati.

Archbishop John Moolachira of Guwahati, president of the North East India Regional Bishops' Council (NEIRBC), highlighted the significance of revisiting *Ecclesia in Asia* on its 25th anniversary, aligning with the Jubilee of Hope 2025 proclaimed by Pope Francis. He



emphasized understanding Jesus' mission from both an Asian and a Northeast Indian perspective.

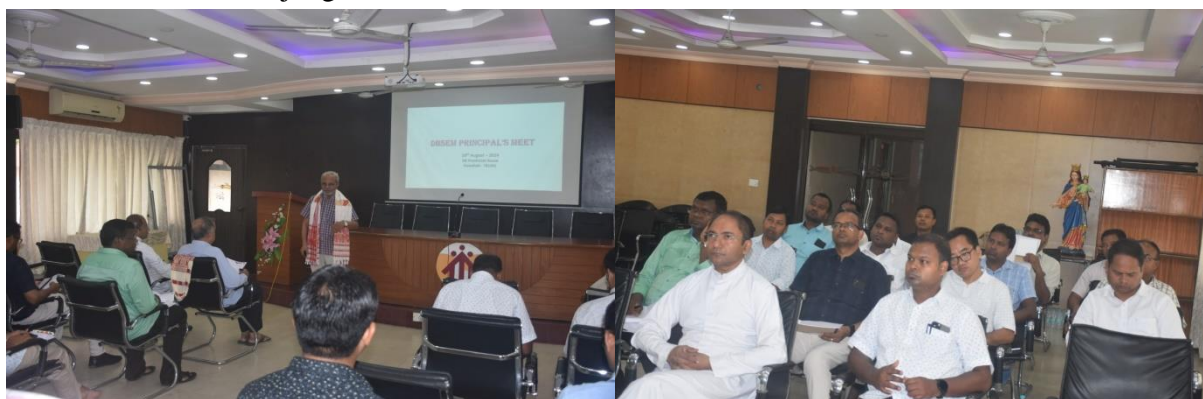
The event, held from August 26-28, was attended by 150 delegates from 15 dioceses, including archbishops, bishops, and other leaders. Keynote speakers, including Salesian Bishop George

Pallippambil and Father Kuriakose Poovathumkudy, discussed the importance of reclaiming the Asian identity in the context of evangelization.

The conference also reviewed two other papal documents—*Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Pope Paul VI and *Evangelii Gaudium* by Pope Francis—focusing on the joy and mandate of evangelization. Discussions covered various topics, including the role of evangelization in a post-COVID world, the use of AI in ministry, and preparations for the Jubilee 2033, marking the 2000th anniversary of key events in Christianity.

PRINCIPALS' MEETING.

The Meeting of the Principals of different Don Bosco Schools of the Salesian Province of Guwahati took place on 10 August 2024 at Mario Hall, Provincial House, Panbazar, Guwahati. The gathering began with a prayer led by Fr. Zacharias Minj, Principal of Don Bosco School, Barpeta Road, followed by a warm felicitation of the guests by Fr. Pradeep Ekka, Principal of Don Bosco School, Sojong.



In his keynote address, Fr. Sebastian Kuricheal, SDB, Provincial, emphasized the importance of education as a vital mission in the Province. He outlined that the Don Bosco School Excellence Mission (DBSEM), which aims to advance the schools by implementing common textbooks, syllabi etc. He stressed that DBSEM's role is to animate, guide and support the schools, focusing on two key objectives: eradicating poverty among the youth and supporting young people in the Salesian centres.

The meeting also featured an enlightening session by Fr. Joseph Thelekkatt, SDB, and Mr. Zenith Joseph, who highlighted the growing need for counseling services in schools. The Principals later under the leadership of Fr Alex Mathew engaged in discussions about the future direction of Don

Bosco Schools in the Province, setting the stage for continued progress, growth and innovation in education.

ADMINISTRATORS' MEETING

On 17 August 2024, the Don Bosco Provincial House, Panbazar, Guwahati hosted the meeting of the Administrators of the various communities of our Province. Apart from the Administrators, the said meeting was also attended by lay Accountants from various communities who assist the Administrators. The meeting was animated by Rev. Fr. Amaladoss Samson, SDB, Economer of the Salesian Province of Trichy.



The meeting began at 9.30 am in the Mario Hall of Provincial House with prayer led by Fr. Rev. Fr. Sebastian Mathew, the Provincial, welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in financial management across all our communities and presences. The meeting was conducted by Fr. Jayaprakash Anthonimuthu, SDB, Economer of the Province, along with the staff of the Economer's Office.

YOUTH SERVICES (YS) COORDINATORS' MEETING

The Youth Services Coordinators' Meeting was held on 17 August 2024 at Don Bosco Institute, Kharghuli, in preparation for the upcoming SYMFEST 2024-2025. The meeting, centered around the theme "Young People as Agents of Change: Anchored in Hope!", laid the groundwork for the event scheduled in Chennai from 29 December 2024 to 1st January 2025.



The meeting commenced at 10:30am with a prayer led by Fr. Kishor Moshahary, SDB, Youth Services Coordinator at Don Bosco School, Panbazar, Guwahati. A meaningful and uplifting song "Dream Your Dreams" set an inspiring tone for the participants. Fr. Cletus Sebastian, SDB, Executive Director of Don Bosco Institute, warmly welcomed everyone.

The animation session on Youth Services roles and responsibilities was steered by Fr. Bivan Mukhim, SDB, Vice Provincial, who emphasized the pivotal role of Youth Services in ensuring the success of SYMFEST. Following a brief coffee break, Fr. Cletus Sebastian led a discussion on the upcoming event, with Fr. Bivan Mukhim moderating the planning session. The meeting concluded with an open discussion on logistics and organization, facilitated by Fr. Cyriac Vettickathadam, SDB, Youth Services Coordinator at Don Bosco College, Chapaguri.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND VOCATION PROMOTERS' MEETING



The Vocational Guidance and Vocation Promoters' Meeting on the theme "Fostering a Culture of Vocation" was convened on 10 August 2024 in the Board Room of Provincial House, Panbazar, Guwahati. The meeting aimed to discuss the key policies and plans to minimise vocational fragility and to strengthen the

vocation culture in the province. The meeting commenced with a prayer led by Fr. Markus Lakra, setting a reflective tone for the important deliberations that followed.

The meeting was attended by Fr. Bivan Rodrigues Mukhim, Vice Provincial, along with other members of the Formation commission of the Province which includes Fr. Ethelbert Minj, Vocation Commission Coordinator, Fr. Markus Lakra, Province Vocation Promoter, Rev. Fr. Joseph Almeida, Rector of the Pre-novitiate house at Dotma, and Fr. Benjamin Daimary, Rector of the aspirantate house at Bosco Mount, Rongkhon.

Central to the discussions were the Formation Policy, the Child Protection Policy in Formation, and the strategies for enhancing the qualifications of confreres, particularly those involved in the formation sector.

MEETING OF THE SOUTH ASIA FORMATION COMMISSION HELD AT DON BOSCO PROVINCIAL HOUSE, KOLKATA.

The South Asia Formation Commission convened its meeting at Don Bosco Provincial House, Kolkata, from July 31 to August 3, 2024. The event featured the participation of 18 members, mostly Vice Provincials from South Asia and Sri Lanka.



Rev. Fr. Jose Kuttianimattathil SDB and Rev. Bro. Raymond Callo SDB from the Salesian Formation Commission in Rome led the sessions, providing valuable insights and guidance. Rev. Fr. Johnny Parankimalil SDB, SPCSA Secretary, inaugurated the programme and celebrated the Holy Mass on the opening day.

The commission was honored by the presence of Rev. Fr. John Zosiama SDB, Provincial of Shillong and Provincial in-charge of Formation South Asia, who celebrated the Holy Mass on the concluding day.

Throughout the meeting, participants delved into the *RATIO* and discussed the formation criteria for candidates in the Salesian world, with a particular focus on the South Asia Region. The gathering was a significant step forward in strengthening and harmonizing formation processes across the provinces.

INAUGURATION OF BOYS HOSTEL AT JORAPARA

The Green Skills Training Centre Boys' Hostel in Jorapara was officially inaugurated and blessed on 01 August 2024 by Rev. Fr. Sebastian Mathew SDB, the Salesian Provincial of Guwahati. Among the dignitaries present for the ceremony were Fr. Jayaprakash, the Economer, Fr. Sebastian Ishowary, Director of Bosco Reach Out Guwahati, priests from neighbouring communities and several other esteemed guests.



Rev. Fr. Mathew expressed his gratitude for the support and efforts that made the project possible, highlighting its significance in fostering youth development through green skills education. The hostel is expected to provide a nurturing environment for boys enrolled in the training program, promoting both academic and personal growth. Thus, helping them to get gainful employment.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

- ❖ SYM – LAY ANIMATORS' FORMATION MEETING - 5 to 7 September at DBI.
- ❖ RECTORS' MEETING – 13 September at DBPH.
- ❖ JUBILEE OF THE CONFRERES – 14 September at DBPH.
- ❖ CONVOCATION AT ADBU - 14 September(Evening) , Tapesia.
- ❖ TRI-MONTHLY RECOLLECTION FOR CLERICS & BROTHERS – 21 & 22 September at DBPH.

CONDOLENCES

Our sincere condolences and assurance of prayers to;

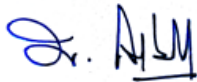
- Fr John Zosiama, all the confreres of Shillong Province and the grief stricken family of Fr. Muct Turkey SDB who passed away on 4 August due to cardiac arrest.
- Fr Savio Silveira and the confreres of Mumbai Province at the sad demise of Rev Fr John Samala SDB on 12 August 2024 in Mumbai.
- Fr Davis Maniparamben and the confreres of Delhi Province at the passing away of Rev Fr Joseph Kezhakkekara SDB on 22 August 2024 at Holy Family Hospital, Delhi

CONCLUSION

September marks the celebration of two important events among others, namely the Teacher's Day on 5 September and the Birthday of Our Blessed Mother on 8 September. These two events beautifully complement each other, as Our Blessed Mother was a teacher to Jesus in His childhood, just as she was a teacher and guide to Don Bosco throughout his life.

We honour and thank the teachers in our institutions who dedicate themselves to imparting knowledge and life skills to the students entrusted to their care. These educators have become vital collaborators in our mission alongside the Salesians. We pray to Mary Help of Christians for their intentions, for their material and spiritual wellbeing. May we too learn to be good guides and teachers, especially to the young, following in the footsteps of Don Bosco, the teacher par excellence.

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco,

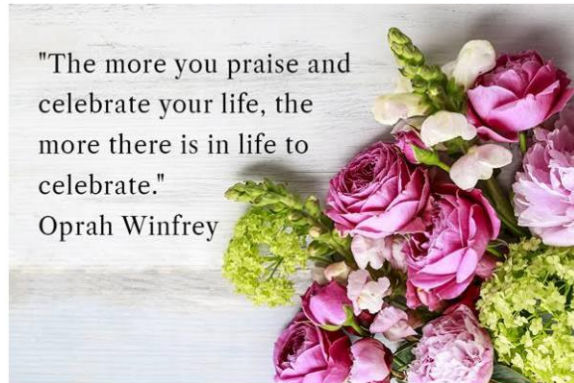


Fr. Sebastian Mathew SDB
Provincial

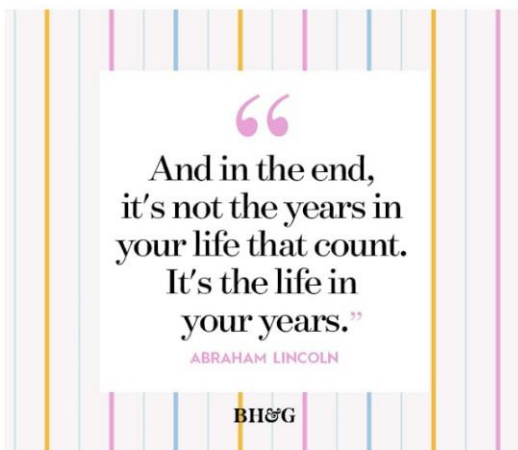


SEPTEMBER Birthday

- Sept 4 Fr. Zacharias Varickasseril
- Sept 4 Br. Michael Kindo
- Sept 4 Br. Firstjoy Felix Sutong
- Sept 5 Fr. Kishor Moshahary
- Sept 10 Fr. Joachim Pumah
- Sept 11 Fr. Threnius N. Sangma
- Sept 12 Fr. Klisterwel Songthiang
- Sept 12 Cl. Rockenjoy Hasda
- Sept 14 Fr. Joseph Teron Langne
- Sept 15 Fr. Johnson Parackal



- Sept 16 Fr. Barnabas Mardi
- Sept 17 Fr. Kerobin Minj
- Sept 18 Cl. Hritik Roshan Lugun
- Sept 19 Fr. Ignatius Gari
- Sept 25 Fr. Jimmy T. Sangma
- Sept 26 Cl. Phabian Baglari
- Sept 29 Fr. Miguel Ángel García**
- Sept 30 Cl. Sniawshngain Papang (INS)
- Sept 30 Cl. Bhuyan Jerome



IN LOVING MEMORY - SEPTEMBER				
DATE	NAME OF THE CONFRERE	PLACE	YEAR	AGE
3	P George Kariparambil	Kottayam	1999	59
14	P Mario Botto	Tezpur	1965	65
15	P Santosh Minj	Guwahati	2014	55
18	P Benedict Kiro	Guwahati	2002	83
19	L Ignatius Sungmur	Guwahati	1998	77
20	P Devasia Kollenkunnel	Kohima	2004	66
22	L Gumersindo Losada Cid	Shillong	1976	83
30	P Manuel Albizuri	Sonapahar	1982	57

SEPTEMBER - 2024

DATE	DAY	PROVINCIAL	VICE PROVINCIAL	ECONOMER
1	Sun	Guwahati	Shillong	Guwahati
2	Mon	Rongjeng>Damra	Guwahati	Rongjeng>Damra
3	Tue	Guwahati - Recollection	Guwahati	Guwahati
4	Wed	Kumarikatta	Guwahati	Kumarikatta
5	Thu	Guwahati	SYM - LAF Meeting, DBI	Bengtol - Oguri
6	Fri	SYM DBI	SYM - LAF Meeting, DBI	Malivita
7	Sat		SYM - LAF Meeting, DBI	Guwahati
8	Sun	DBSTI	Guwahati - Diphu	Guwahati
9	Mon	Sirajuli	Diphu - Dimapur	Guwahati
10	Tue	Dimakuchi	PP Animation – Dimapur	Tangla & Bhootiacheng
11	Wed	Guwahati	Salesian College, Dimapur	Dimakuchi & Doomni
12	Thu	Guwahati	Guwahati	Barpeta Road
13	Fri	Rectors' Meeting, Ghy	Rectors' Meeting, Ghy	Guwahati
14	Sat	Jubilee of confreres ADBUC Convocation	Jubilee - Guwahati	Jubilee & Convocation – Ghy
15	Sun	Ghy – Maligaon	Guwahati	Guwahati
16	Mon	Guwahati	Kumarikatta	Guwahati
17	Tue	Guwahati	Sashipur	Garobadha
18	Wed	Shillong	Guwahati	DB Junior College Tura
19	Thu	SHTC – Curatorium	Guwahati	DB School, Tura
20	Fri		Guwahati	DB Senior College Tura
21	Sat		Tri-monthly for Brothers	Guwahati
22	Sun	Sonada	Tri-monthly for Brothers	Retreat
23	Mon	Sonada – Curatorium	Damra	Retreat
24	Tue	Bongaigaon	Rongjeng	Retreat
25	Wed	Bengtol	Shallang	Retreat
26	Thu	Malivita – Ouguri	Guwahati	Retreat
27	Fri	Guwahati	Guwahati	Guwahati
28	Sat	Prov. Council Meeting	Prov. Council Meeting	Prov. Council Meeting
29	Sun	Panbazar Parish	Haflong	Guwahati
30	Mon	Guwahati	Haflong	Guwahati