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# ING NEWSLINE

SALESIAN PROVINCE OF GUWAHATI



Participants of the 29<sup>th</sup> General Chapter  
in front of the Basilica in Colle Don Bosco



# Contents

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- 3 Editorial
- 5 Message from the Provincial
- 7 News from GC 29
- 10 Higher Education Section: Don Bosco College, Tura
- 14 Parish Section: St Michael's Church, Damra
- 16 Formation Sector: Hubert D'Rosario Institute, Sirajuli
- 19 Social Developmental Ministry in the Province
- 24 All in the Family
- 26 Our New Priests 2025
- 30 Seeds of Renewal - Tracing Our General Chapters
- 35 Book Section: Autobiography of Pope Francis
- 39 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Missionary Expedition
- 42 Remembering Fr Augustine Edasserithottathil (EP)



This is the first issue of the *ING Newslines* for 2025, the year of the great Jubilee and the momentous event of our General Chapter. As the Church enters the Jubilee year 2025 and the Congregation is celebrating the 29<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, we in the Salesian Province of Guwahati find ourselves at a crucial moment for reflection and renewal. The theme “Pilgrims of Hope” invites us to examine our religious commitment and vocational ministry with fresh eyes.

While many regions face declining vocations amid growing secularisation, our Northeast continues to be blessed with young people drawn to religious life. However, this blessing comes with its challenges. Today’s youth navigate a world transformed by digital culture and materialism, requiring us to re-image how we present religious life as a meaningful choice.

Our Salesian presence in the region has always been marked by dynamic youth ministry and education. However, we must adapt our approach while remaining true to Don Bosco’s charism. This means developing formation programmes that embrace traditional values and contemporary needs, combining spiritual depth with cultural adaptability and digital literacy.

This renewal should manifest across multiple dimensions of Salesian life and ministry. Community life has experienced a renaissance through regular dialogue sessions and strengthened common activities, while educational institutions have successfully integrated traditional Salesian values with modern pedagogical approaches. Formation houses have adapted to contemporary needs by enhancing personal accompaniment and practical pastoral experiences, while youth ministry has embraced both digital platforms and revitalised traditional programs.

Social outreach and parish ministry have also significantly transformed. New initiatives for marginalised communities focus on sustainable development and environmental protection, while parishes have become vibrant centres of faith formation through enhanced lay participation and youth-centred approaches. Professional development has also gained importance, with confreres receiving specialised training to ensure effective ministry in today’s complex world.

The path forward calls for three key actions. First, we must strengthen vocational accompaniment, training Salesians who can guide young people through meaningful discernment. Second, our formation programmes need updating to address modern challenges while preserving essential Salesian elements. Third, our communities must become visible witnesses of joy and authentic brotherhood, embodying Don Bosco’s preventive system of reason, religion, and loving kindness.

This Jubilee year, which coincides with our General Chapter, offers us a precious opportunity to revitalise our mission. Through our educational institutions, youth centres, and parishes, we are called to be signs of hope and catalysts of transformation. As we navigate through these changes, we seek the guidance of Mary Help of Christians, our patroness, in forming authentic witnesses who can speak to young hearts while remaining rooted in our rich Salesian heritage.

This edition of *ING Newsline* is a testament to our province's vibrant life and mission, weaving together numerous threads that form the tapestry of our shared journey. From the Provincial's message that guides our path forward to the joyous celebrations of our newly ordained priests of 2025, we see the continuing story of Don Bosco's charism unfolding across our institutions. The highlights from General Chapter 29, updates from Don Bosco College in Tura, parish activities at St Michael's Church in Damra, and formation initiatives at the Hubert D'Rosario Institute in Sirajuli all speak to the diverse yet unified mission that animates our province.

As we commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Missionary Expedition, we are invited to reflect on our roots and reimagine our future through the "Seeds of Renewal" feature that traces our General Chapters. The social developmental works across the province demonstrate our commitment to service and progress, while our "All in the Family" section reminds us of the communal bonds that sustain us. This issue also offers intellectual nourishment through the review of Pope Francis's Autobiography, inviting us to draw inspiration from his journey as we continue to write our own story of faith, service, and community in the tradition of Don Bosco.

Fr Joy Kachappilly



**Chapter Members in the Crypt of the Basilica in Colle Don Bosco**

# Message from the Provincial



My Dear Confreres,

Greetings from Valdocco, the cradle of our Salesian life!

As the 29<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of our Congregation is celebrated in Valdocco, Turin, I reflect on its theme: “Passionate for Jesus Christ, Dedicated to the Young.” This theme embodies the two fundamental dimensions of our Salesian identity, perfectly exemplified in Don Bosco’s life, where his deep love for Christ is expressed in tireless dedication to young people.

With its rich cultural diversity, our Province of Guwahati faces unique opportunities and challenges in living this dual commitment. We must incarnate our passion for Christ within Northeast India’s cultural and religious context, developing an authentically Christian and genuinely inculturated spirituality. Our youth navigate traditional values and modern lifestyles in today’s digital age, requiring our understanding and creative pastoral responses.

Throughout our Province, we see this dual commitment manifested in our various works. Our educational institutions form academically competent and spiritually grounded young people, while our social outreach programmes serve marginalised youth, reflecting Christ’s preferential love for the poor. Our youth ministry creates spaces for young people to encounter Christ while developing their talents.

Let us examine how our passion for Christ manifests daily and how our dedication to the young reflects this love. Today’s youth seek authentic witnesses – Salesians who genuinely live their consecration and demonstrate true love for them. This witness must be visible in our prayer life, fraternal relationships, and commitment to young people’s growth.

The challenges we face—poverty, unemployment, social unrest, and cultural upheaval—require Salesians who are deeply rooted in Christ and genuinely committed to youth. Let us be involved with the young. Their insights can enrich our understanding of living the Salesian vocation authentically in today’s context.

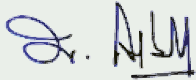
The celebration of GC29 is a divine moment that allows us to strengthen our spiritual life and educational-pastoral service. While visiting some communities, I have witnessed examples of this dual commitment: confreres whose love for Christ radiates in their service and communities where prayer and ministry form a harmonious whole. However, this may not be seen in all our communities. Hence, we must refocus and commit to genuinely living our Salesian charism, which will bring about quality change in our communities.

The articles in this issue of *ING Newslines* centre on evangelising mission in the province through various ministries. The issue also highlights and appreciates our new priests ordained this year. Reading its contents should help us better understand and appreciate our Confreres and communities! Let us journey together with the optimism and trust that characterised Don Bosco, supporting one another in our vocation to be signs and bearers of God’s love for the young.



May Mary Help of Christians, who shared a passionate love for her son Jesus Christ and maternal dedication to the young, guide us in this significant moment! Let us approach GC29 with hope and enthusiasm, confident in the Holy Spirit's guidance toward a deeper living of our Salesian vocation!

With prayers and best wishes,



**Fr Sebastian Kuricheal**  
Provincial



Chapter Members in front of the House of Don Bosco at Becchi



## News from GC 29

Fr Nicodim Aind

**Abstract:** *The 29<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Salesian Society commenced on 16 February 2025 in Turin, with 230 members gathering under the theme “Passionate about Jesus Christ, dedicated to the young.” The Chapter identified key challenges, including weakening spiritual life, increasing departures from the order, and insufficient attention to poor youth, viewing these as symptoms of a need to strengthen the Congregation’s charismatic identity. Spiritual exercises emphasised that true passion for Christ emerges from a deep experience of God’s love, transforming Christian life from a series of obligations into a joyful response and focusing on the mystical dimensions of mission, fraternal communion, and prayer.*

The 29<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Salesian Society began on 16 February 2025 at the Mother House in Valdocco, Turin, with 230 provincials and delegates gathering under the theme “Passionate about Jesus Christ, dedicated to the young.” Fr Alphonse Owoudou, Chapter Moderator, welcomed the gathering, while Fr Stefano Martoglio, as Chapter President, underlined the need to redesign the Congregation at all levels. The opening included significant contributions from Cardinal Roberto Repole, Archbishop of Turin, who, while presiding over the inaugural Holy Eucharist, stressed that their mission goes beyond organisational tasks to bringing Christ’s perspective to the world and addressing social injustices.

The messages from Mr Stefano Lo Russo, Mayor of Turin, Sr Simona Brambilla, Prefect of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life, Sr Chiara Cazzuola, Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and Mr Antonio Boccia, World Coordinator of the Salesian Cooperators, emphasised the importance of resilience in facing challenges and the crucial role of the Chapter in shaping the future of young generations.

The Chapter identified several challenges facing the Congregation, including weakening spiritual life, increasing members leaving the order, functional but not prophetic communities,





and insufficient attention to the poorest young people. These challenges were viewed as symptoms of a need to strengthen the Congregation's charismatic identity and return to Christ-centeredness. The theological foundation of the Chapter centred on God's 'pathos' - His passionate love and willingness to suffer for humanity - as exemplified in Christ's crucifixion.

The spiritual exercises that Rev. Fr Pascual Chavez, former Rector Major, animated emphasised that true passion for Christ can only emerge from a deep experience of God that fills one's life with enthusiasm and joy. The concept of mysticism was addressed not in its extreme forms but as it relates to the personal experience of God as Love - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The exercises challenged the perception of Christianity as merely a set of obligations, instead emphasising that Christian mysticism is rooted in knowing and feeling personally loved by God unconditionally.

In one of his meditations, Fr Chavez explored the relationship between faith and love, drawing from Benedict XVI's final Lenten Message (2013). While charity has primacy in Christian life, faith has priority - meaning Christian life begins with accepting God's love through faith, which naturally leads to responding with love. This understanding transforms Christian life from a series of obligations into a joyful response to God's love.

The exercises then delved into 'The Mysticism of Mission,' examining the Salesian Society's foundational principles through Article 1 of the Constitutions. The phrase "da mihi animas" ("give me souls") was explained as encompassing the whole person, not just spiritual salvation. The Salesian mission was distinguished from merely a service provider or NGO, emphasising its role as a sign and bearer of God's love for young people.

The focus shifted to "The Mysticism of Fraternal Communion," exploring how religious community life reflects God's Trinitarian nature. The evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity, and obedience) were presented as finding their deepest meaning in the community rather than individually. The







document addressed contemporary challenges in religious community life, highlighting the evolution from “life in common” to “fraternal life in community” and the prophetic witness of multicultural religious communities in today’s divided world.

The spiritual exercises also surveyed the mystical dimension of Christian and Salesian life through prayer

and encounter with God. While prayer life was emphasised as essential for maintaining a charismatic identity, it was noted that it is not the exclusive way to experience God. The filial-Christological dimension of Christian prayer was highlighted, with Jesus as the primary teacher and model. The concept of “life as prayer” in the Salesian tradition was explored, where prayer and action are unified, creating an “ecstasy of action” where work, prayer, and contemplation become one integrated experience.

The role of the Holy Spirit received particular attention, especially within the Salesian Charism and its Constitutions. Three key attitudes were emphasised: listening, attentiveness, and docility. The Spirit’s action in Don Bosco’s life and the Salesian community was described as the source of grace, guidance, and sanctification. Mary’s relationship with the Holy Spirit was a model example of these essential attitudes.

The spiritual exercises concluded with a pilgrimage on the fourth day. Participants visited sacred sites connected to Don Bosco, including Chieri, Colle Don Bosco, and Don Bosco’s house. The day included celebrating the Holy Eucharist at Colle Don Bosco, providing a tangible connection to the Congregation’s founding spirit and mission. The day culminated with a prayer by chapter members in front of the statue of the Madonna of Grazie in the Church in Chieri, where Don Bosco, during his formative years from 1831 to 1841, used to pray morning and evening every day. The approval of the regulations for conducting the Chapter and its Working Document followed this.

The main Chapter work spans from 24 February 2025 to 12 April 2025, beginning with comprehensive reports on the state of the Congregation from various sectors and regions. Throughout March, the Chapter members will engage in commission work focused on identifying challenges and priorities for the 2025-2031 sexennium, alongside the discernment and election process for the members of the General Council. The schedule also incorporates regular cultural animations on Sundays, allowing Chapter members to visit historically significant Salesian locations.

The final phase of the Chapter includes regional work sessions in early April, culminating in a journey to Rome on 10 April. On 11 April, the chapter delegates will participate in a Jubilee Pilgrimage at the Vatican, and on 12 April, the official closing ceremony of CG29 will take place at the Sacred Heart Basilica. Throughout the two-month gathering, the calendar balances spiritual reflection, administrative work, cultural experiences, and the important task of electing the members of the General Council that will guide the Salesian Congregation for the next six years.

**Abstract:** *Established in 1987, Don Bosco College, Tura, is a premier higher education institution in the Garo Hills, Meghalaya. It offers diverse academic programs in the arts, sciences, and teacher education. Initially founded to serve the region's educational needs, the College has expanded its infrastructure, introduced new courses, and achieved notable academic milestones, including NAAC accreditation. With a commitment to excellence, holistic development, and community engagement, the institution continues to foster intellectual and ethical growth among its students.*



Don Bosco College, Tura, is the Salesian response to the higher educational needs of the young people of Garo Hills in particular and northeast India in general. With the mandate from the Salesian Provincial and his Council of Guwahati, Rev. Fr Antony Buccieri purchased a plot of land meant for the College. Preparatory works for establishing a College were entrusted to Rev. Fr. George Karipaparampil. In 1986, Fr George came to stay in the community of Don Bosco School, Tura, for the purpose.

As a result of the meticulous work of Fr George Karipaparampil, the Northeastern Hill University (NEHU) granted permission to begin Don Bosco College, Tura, on 5 November 1986. Rev. Fr John Kalapura, the then Provincial, constituted the first Governing Board of the College on 3 January 1987. Rev. Fr Cyriac Vettickathadam was appointed the first Principal of the College. The classes began on 21 April 1987. The official inauguration of the College took place on 22 May 1987. Most Rev. George Mamalassery, the then Bishop of Tura, blessed the College, and Mr Purno A. Sangma, the then Union Minister for Labour, officially inaugurated it.





Initially, the College offered Pre-University and Degree courses in Arts. The classes were held in the Boys' Hostel building of the Sacred Heart Parish, Tura. Some boys were also taken into the hostel in 1987. The following year, after prolonged discussions and discernment, the College was opened to girls. The Salesian Sisters agreed to look after the hostel for the girls.

In 1993, classes were shifted to the hostel buildings constructed at Sampalgre. The college began offering other science courses at the pre-university and degree levels in successive years. Honours courses in B.A. and B.Sc. were also added. Later, degree courses in commerce, Business Administration (BBA), and Computer Applications (BCA) were introduced.

In 2001, the College moved from the hostel to its permanent campus. Its infrastructure consists of the Academic complex, hostels, and staff quarters. The College has an impressive amphitheatre, a multipurpose facility comprising a state-of-the-art basketball court and canteens. The construction of an annexe to house classrooms, a library, and an auditorium is in progress.

The Salesian presence at the College was formally recognised as a Salesian community in 2002, with Fr Cyriac Vettickathadam as its first Rector. During the tenure of Fr Cyriac, a large plot of land was purchased where rubber trees were planted. Besides offering the students research facilities, the rubber garden supports the College financially. When Fr Cyriac was transferred in 2011, Fr Alex Kattakayam was appointed Principal of the College. Fr Joseph Pazhekadavan, Fr Francis Fernandez Maliekal, Fr John Parankimalil, Fr George Plathottam and Fr Bivan Rodrigues Mukhim served as Rectors in successive years.

In 2005, a College for teacher education, named Don Bosco College of Teacher Education, was established on the same campus. Initially, Sr Rose Ann Antony, a retired Principal of a B.Ed. College from Thiruvanthapuram, Kerala, belonging to the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was officially appointed Principal. At the same time, Fr. Zachary Varickasseril directed the day-to-day running of the College. A hostel to accommodate B.Ed. students (boys) was constructed adjacent to the boys' hostel in 2009. Similarly, a girls' hostel was built to accommodate B.Ed., degree and higher secondary students. Named Margaret Bosco Girls' Hostel, it was entrusted to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) to run. In 2010, Fr John Parankamalil was appointed Principal of Don Bosco College of Teacher Education. In 2017, Fr Zachary Varickasseril returned to the College



as its Principal. Initially, the College admitted 100 students for the one-year course, but when the University introduced a two-year B.Ed. course in 2014, the College had a strength of 200 students. However, starting in 2022, the college could take only 50 students.

Fr Zachary Varickasseril left the College on 17 July 2023, and Fr Pius Tharakunnel was appointed its principal. Over the years, the College has achieved excellent results in university examinations, and in 2011, it achieved all ten ranks.

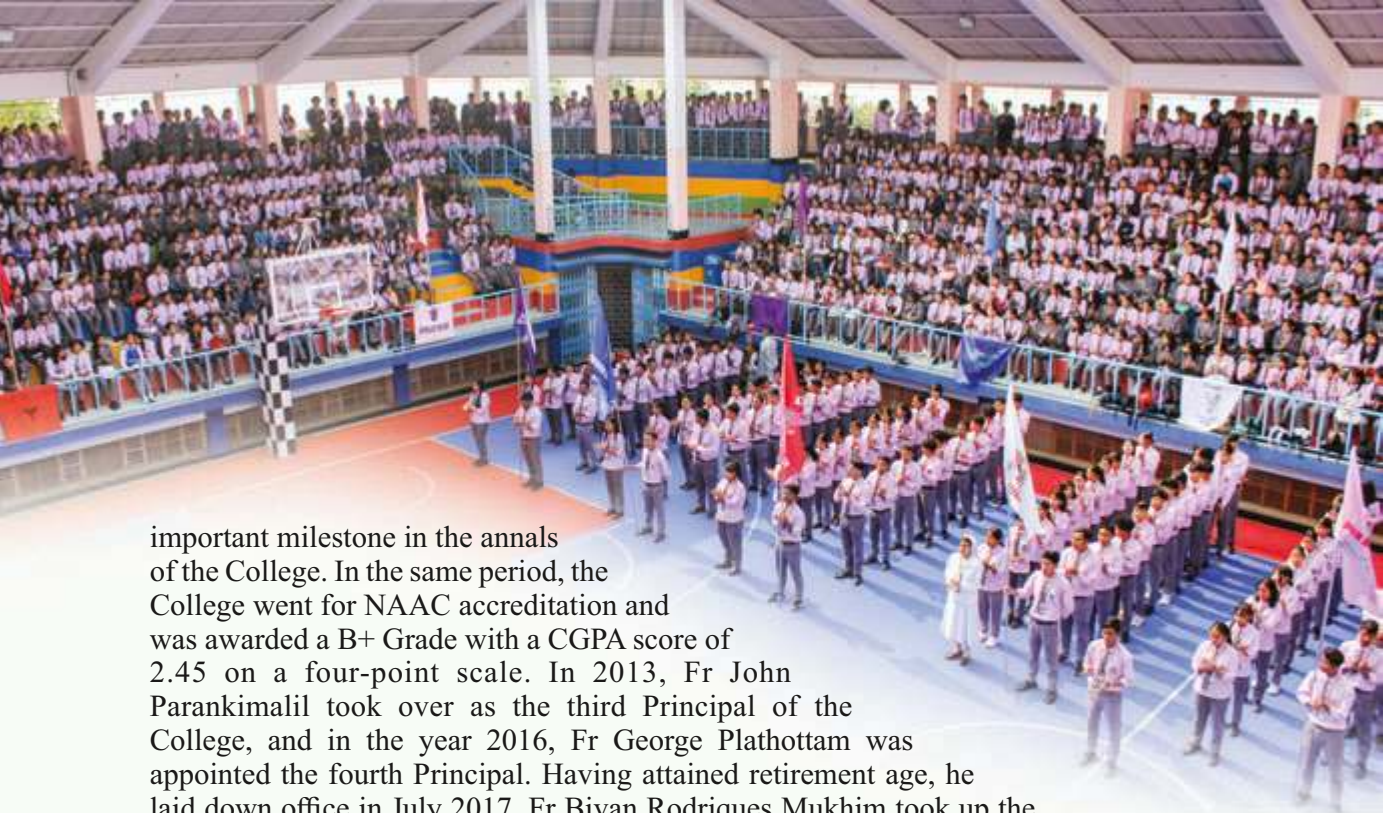
In 2014, the higher secondary section of the College was shifted to the hostel campus and established as the Don Bosco College Junior section. Rev. Fr Jogesh Sangma was appointed to look after it. In the initial period, when it functioned as hostels and later as the Don Bosco College Junior Section, the community was attached to the College Community. However, in 2017, it was made an independent community with Rev. Fr Thomas Chenginiyadan as its first Director. In 2022, it became a canonically established community.

The College functions through a collaborative venture in which various College Committees and the Students' Welfare Association participate. The Counselling Centre at the College provides personal counselling and imparts career counselling and value education. The college has NCC and NSS units. It promotes academic excellence by offering scholarships to meritorious students. The College has an I.A.S. Study Circle where coaching is given for Central and State civil service examinations and entrance examinations in Management, Engineering, Medicine, etc. The state government supports the Study Circle, and it is open to the public. The Campus Ministry at the College cares for the spiritual welfare of the students by organising Mass for the Catholic students on first Fridays, holding conferences and conducting Bible classes for hostel students, etc. The College choir makes the religious services more attractive and prayerful.

The College emphasises a participatory, intellectually competent, multi-skill oriented, value-based, and socially committed education. True to its Motto, 'Pursuit of Excellence,' the College is passionate about excellence in every sphere: academic, professional, social, and personal.

The year 2011-12 was the Silver Jubilee year of the College. The presence of Dr Mukul Sangma, the then Chief Minister of Meghalaya, at the Silver Jubilee celebrations was an





important milestone in the annals of the College. In the same period, the College went for NAAC accreditation and was awarded a B+ Grade with a CGPA score of 2.45 on a four-point scale. In 2013, Fr John Parankimalil took over as the third Principal of the College, and in the year 2016, Fr George Plathottam was appointed the fourth Principal. Having attained retirement age, he laid down office in July 2017. Fr Bivan Rodriques Mukhim took up the mantle as the fifth Principal of the College. Upon his appointment as the vice provincial of the province in 2024, Fr Januarius S Sangma was appointed its principal.

The degree courses in Business Administration (BBA) and Computer Applications (BCA) were discontinued during Fr John Parankimalil's tenure as Principal. However, two new departments, BA Sociology and BA Geography, were introduced in 2017. With the introduction of the New Education Policy, the college added additional courses in Mushroom cultivation, music, beekeeping, DTP, vocal, bakery and confectionary, event management, web designing, electrical, computing, accounting, guitar and photography. During the second cycle of NAAC re-accreditation, the College was awarded a B grade.

The confreres who have worked in Don Bosco College, Tura include Fr Battista Busolin, Fr Cyriac Vettickathadam, Fr Thomas Manoorampampil, Fr Thomas Kunnappallil, Fr Joy Kachappilly, Fr Roland Halge, Fr Joby Manjakattil, Fr Henry Warbah, Fr John Parankimalil, Fr Alex Mathew Kattakayam, Fr Francis Fernandez Maliekal, Fr Pius Tharakunnel, Fr Januarius S. Sangma, Fr Joseph Pazhekadavan, Br Joby Mani, Fr Pradeep Ekka, Fr Robert Faustin Lalfakzuala, Fr Albert K. Sangma, Fr Jogesh Sangma, Fr George Plathottam, Fr Jimmy T. Sangma, Fr Bivan Rodriques Mukhim and Fr Albinus Dhanwar.

In 2025, the Salesian community consists of Rev. Fr Pius Tharakunnel (Rector and Principal, B.Ed. College), Fr Januarius S Sangma (Principal, Degree College), Fr Louis Arimboor (Administrator) and Fr John Paul Tirkey (Vice Principal).

In the last 38 years, Don Bosco College has distinguished itself as one of the premier higher educational institutions in the Garo Hills. Everyone at Don Bosco College endeavours to keep the flag aloft and continue its tradition of pursuing excellence and quality of service.

# Catholic Church – Damra

Fr Francis Kalariparampil

**Abstract:** *The Damra Catholic Mission, established in the 1940s in Northeast India, has evolved from its initial outreach to the Garo community into a significant mother parish that has given birth to numerous parishes across the Guwahati Archdiocese and Tura Diocese. Beginning with the pioneering work of Fr Hubert Colzani in 1946 and strengthened by successive missionaries, the mission expanded its educational outreach through the establishment of multiple schools, with Don Bosco M.E. School (1951) and Don Bosco Colzani School (2000) now serving over 1,400 students combined. Currently ministering to approximately 5,291 Catholics from 33 villages across three main ethnic groups (Garos, Rabhas, and Bodos), the mission continues its legacy of education, catechesis, and health care through both the Salesian community and the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, who joined the mission in 1975.*



**T**he earliest contact of the Salesian missionaries with the Damra region dates back to the 1930s. As the number of Catholics increased, the need was felt to start a Mission centre for the Garos of the area. Karkutta was chosen as a possible centre, and Fr Hubert Colzani reached there on 8 May 1946. However, having found Damra a more convenient place for the mission centre, Fr Colzani began the work there. Fr George Stadler soon joined. In 1951, Fr Battista Busolin replaced Fr Stadler.

Fr Willy Schoofs took charge of the Mission in 1951. Don Bosco M.E. School (Garo Medium) was started in the same year. In 1957, it was upgraded to a High School. During his tenure, much of the parish and Convent's infrastructure was built. An Assamese-medium M.E. School was opened in 1956, and in 1971, it was upgraded to a High School. Today, 593 students attend the school.

The Mission was further boosted when Fr Dominic Curto was the parish priest (1956-1969). In 1964, many Garo Catholics migrated from Bangladesh and settled there. New villages were contacted, and the number of Catholics steadily increased. Unfortunately, Fr Curto had to leave the Mission in 1969 following a quit order served by the government on foreign missionaries. Fr George Elavumkunnel, a diocesan priest, looked after the Mission from 1969 to 1971. He began to contact the Rabha community.

In successive years, Fr Victor Ampanattuvila, Fr Thomas Kochupurackal, Fr Paul Panachickal, Fr Jose Valiaveetil, Fr Barnabas Mardi, Fr John Chellanthara, Fr Milon Narjary and Fr





Augustine Karottupuram served as parish priests. Others who worked in the parish include Fr Martin Caligaris Martin, Fr Alexander M.P. (diocesan priest), Fr Humbert Marocchino, Fr George Pooppalli MSFS, Fr Maria Selvam, Fr John Vadakkekuzhikattil, Fr Thomas Kunnamkudath, Fr George Ollickal MST, and Fr Jose Thattil Umbavu.

The schools at the Mission made great progress despite occasional difficulties. The pioneers were followed by equally committed missionaries like Fr Joseph Maliekal, Fr Kuriala Chittatukulam, Fr Augustine Karottupuram, Fr Cornelius Panna, Fr Augustine Edasserithottathil, Fr Michael Bengra, Br Barnabas Haw, Fr Andreas Panna, Fr Johnson Parackal, Br Benjamin Kujur, Fr Christopher Warlarpih, Fr Victor Tigga, Br Solomon Swer, Fr Nicodem Aind, Br Benedict Sangma, Fr Albert T Sangma and Br Nirmal Ekka.

In 1992, the Mission became a canonically established Salesian Community under the patronage of St Michael the Archangel. At present, the Salesian community at Damra consists of Fr Francis Kalariparampil (rector and parish priest), Fr Francis Xavier Lakra (assistant parish priest and headmaster, provincialised school), Fr Richard Barla (assistant parish priest and vice principal) and Fr Anthony Dhason (assistant parish priest and principal, Don Bosco Colzani School). The parish statistics for 2024-2025 count about 5291 Catholics who live in 33 villages. The main ethnic groups are the Garos, Rabhas and Bodos. The parish originally belonged to the Shillong Archdiocese, then to the diocese of Tura, and now it is part of the Guwahati Archdiocese.

Damra Mission can be rightly called the Mother Mission in the region, as it has given birth to numerous Parishes and Centres. Boko (1993), Mariampur (1995), Panishali (1995), Gojapara (1997), Goalpara (1998), Rangjuli (1998), Chhaygaon (2004), Matia (2005), Mallangkona (2007), Tillapara (2009), Loharghat (2010), Majerburi (2011) and Hahim (2013) in the Archdiocese of Guwahati were carved out from the territory of Damra. Similarly, in the diocese of Tura, the Parishes of Rongjeng (1971), Resubelpara (1971), William Nagar (1977), Mendal (1977), Mangsang (1979), Chima-Impel (1984), Nongalbibra (1989), Songsak (1992), Mendipathar (1995), Samanda (2000), Kharkutta (2004), Chidimit (2004), Dawagre (2005), Damas (2011), Bajengdoba (2014) and Reking (2024) were once part of Damra Parish.

The Nirmala Convent of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC) was officially set up on 10 December 1975. The Sisters are actively involved in the Parish ministry, education, catechesis and health care.



On 24 January 2000, Rev. Fr Victor Ampanattuvila, the then parish priest, opened the Don Bosco Colzani School to educate the poor Catholics of the area. The school has grown in number over the years, and a new school building was constructed. It was blessed on 13 May 2017. The school has progressed to Class X, and the first batch of students wrote their High School Leaving Examination in February 2020. Today, there are 888 students enrolled in the school.

Given the visit of the Rector Major in November 2017, the Church and the provincialised school building were renovated. The living rooms of the Salesians were reconditioned, and the entire surrounding area was given a face-lift to receive the successor of Don Bosco to the Centre.

## HUBERT D'ROSARIO INSTITUTE, SIRAJULI

Fr Ethelbert Minj

**Abstract:** *The Hubert D'Rosario Institute in Sirajuli was established in 2011 as a Missionary Aspirantate to form Salesian missionaries for mission ad gentes, following a proposal by the then Rector Major, Rev. Fr Pascual Chavez. The Institute, located in Sirajuli (45 kilometres from Sonitpur district headquarters), includes an Aspirantate for missionary formation and a school from nursery to class XII with 911 students as of February 2025. Throughout its history, the Institute has produced 68 Salesians from 339 candidates, with some opting for international missions while maintaining financial sustainability through the school and farm operations.*

**O**n 5 February 2006, during the centenary celebrations of the first Salesian presence in India at Thanjavur, the then Rector Major Rev. Fr Pascual Chavez invited the Salesians of India to provide missionary vocations to the congregation. During the meeting with all the provincials of South Asia, he proposed to set up a missionary aspirantate in the north and another one in the south of India. In 2007, during the SPCSA meeting with the Rector Major at Sacred Heart College, Tiruppattur, it was decided to set up the missionary aspirantates at Sirajuli (ING) and Perambur (INM).





The Missionary Aspirantate is situated at Sikaribasti, Sirajuli, 45 kilometres from the District headquarters of Sonitpur on NH 15. In 2011, Rev. Fr Pascual Chavez, the then Rector Major, canonically erected the Missionary Aspirantate and the Pre-Novitiate at Sirajuli. The Pre-Novitiate functioned from 2011 to 2016, but in 2017, it was merged with the existing Pre-Novitiate at Dotma. Fr Paul Olphindro Lyngkot was appointed the first Rector in 2011. The others who took over from him as Rectors in the past were Fr Joseph Almeida, Fr Thomas Lakra and Fr Sebastian Ishorary. The other perpetually professed confreres who worked in the community in the past were Fr Michael Makri, Fr Anugrah Tete, Fr Pascal Dungdung, Br Raphael Kerketta, Fr Louis Arimboor, Fr Pojit Philip Marak, Fr Francis Hembrom and Fr Augustine Edasserithottathil, Fr Francis Kalariparampil, Fr Cornelius Myrthong Br Angelus Tete, Fr Francis Cheeramben, Fr Peter Pazhayamkottil, Fr Klisterwel Songthiang and Fr Anil Jerome Conpan.

At present (February 2025), the Salesian community at Hubert D’Rosario Institute, Sirajuli, consists of Fr Ethelbert Minj (Rector), Fr Solomon Dennis (Principal), Fr Kolombiya Rabha (Dean), Fr Hubert Uttam Molsom (Administrator), Fr Rajib Lakra (Catechist and Vice Principal), Cl. Jeevan Chandra Kerketta (Practical Trainee), Cl. Henry Langngaihkama (Practical Trainee) and Fr Yacub Lakra (Practical Trainee).

Fr Pascual Chavez wanted the Aspirantate to be oriented to foster and form Salesian missionaries for mission ad gentes. The candidate should be gradually helped to discover and nurture his missionary vocation so that he can respond to it with generosity. Fr Chavez wrote: “Missionary Aspirantates should aim at forming missionary disciples of Christ, who are called to live the two major imperatives of the Lord: ‘Come, and go out,’ which means, to become disciples (come) and be missionaries (go out to the last corner of the earth).”

The missionary orientation is imparted to the candidates through moments such as the Holy Eucharist, homilies, prayer services, conferences, missionary exhibitions, missionary quizzes, monthly celebration of missionary day, goodnight talks, classes, etc. The intercultural nature of the community creates a missionary ambience. Visuals and posters of missionaries, dissemination of missionary news, daily prayer for the missionaries, reading of the biographies of Salesian missionaries, display of missionary maps of the world, etc., also help the candidates to imbibe missionary enthusiasm. Some candidates who became Salesians have opted for mission ad gentes: Cl. Godwin Sapphire Kharkongor (Tunisia), Cl. John Ngouning (Ukraine), Cl. Patric Kujur (Brazil), Cl. Petrus Nanwar (Venezuela), Br



Christopher Thaimai (Peru) and Cl. John Ngouning (Ukraine). Among them, Cl. Godwin Saphire Kharkongor and Cl. John Ngouning are back in the province and pursuing their studies.

For the financial sustainability of the Missionary Aspirantate at Sirajuli (ING), the General Council proposed to set up a school from Nursery to XII. This proposal was taken seriously, and the construction of the building for the same was initiated. Classes from nursery to class II (with a student strength of 134) commenced in January 2016. In July 2016, class XI (arts and commerce) was added. The Aspirants and the day scholars began attending the Higher Secondary classes in the Aspirantate building. Fr Thomas Vattathara, the then Provincial, inaugurated and blessed the school building on 31 January 2017. From then on, all the classes were shifted to the new building. The strength of the school is increasing year after year. Presently (February 2025), we have a student strength of 911 (Nursery to class XII).



There is a farm with livestock, fruit trees, vegetables and paddy, which also financially supports the upkeep of the Aspirantate.

Till 2024, a total of 339 candidates studied in the Aspirantate at Sirajuli. Of these, 271 discontinued their Salesian formation, while 68 are Salesians.

In a meeting held from 12-13 December 2017 together with Fr Nestor Guria, the then Delegate Provincial for the SPCSA and Fr George Thanickal, the then Regional Delegate for Missionary Animation, the formation personnel of both the missionary Aspirantates of Sirajuli and Perambur drew up the profile of a missionary aspirant as well as of the missionary Aspirantate. As part of the Inter-Provincial collaboration, it was suggested that the SPCSA take over the responsibility for the Aspirantate and conduct periodical evaluation and planning. It was also mooted that a curatorium be set up to monitor the flow of personnel (staff and candidates) and finances so that the Institute can function smoothly. After all, the missionary Institutes have the future only in a participatory mode.

When Rev. Fr Ivo Coelho, the General Councillor for Formation, came to Sirajuli in 2022 with Fr Jose Kuthianimathathil from the Formation Sector, Rome, he informed the Salesians working there that Sirajuli is no longer considered a Missionary Aspirantate. So is Perumbur in Chennai. We should encourage young confreres to go to the missions only after their post-novitiate period.



# Social Developmental Ministry in the Province

Fr Bivan Rodrigues Mukhim

**Abstract:** *The Salesian Province of Guwahati, established in 1959, has undertaken comprehensive social developmental initiatives in Northeast India through education, healthcare, agriculture, and relief services. Since the formation of Bosco Reach Out (BRO) in 1983, these efforts have become more systematic, impacting thousands of families through programmes like Integrated Tribal Development, skill training, and disaster response. These initiatives have created a sustainable impact by empowering local communities through Self-Help Groups, agricultural innovations, and infrastructure development while remaining faithful to Don Bosco's mission of caring for the poor and abandoned youth.*

The Salesian Province of Guwahati, established in 1959, is engaged in the region's social development. Before its establishment, the Salesians had worked in this region since 1922, when the first groups of Salesians came from Europe. The socioeconomic and political situation of the area was quite different from today's. The region was under British colonial rule, and the entire region had only one administrative unit. However, sensing the precarious situation of the time, besides other forms of ministries, the Salesians began to carry out a slew of developmental works.

Faithful to Don Bosco's words that in the missions, they must take special care of the young, particularly the poor and abandoned, the Salesians first turned their attention to the young. Besides offering academic education aimed at improving the literacy rate of the people, the Salesians opened technical schools and non-formal Centres at Shillong and Guwahati already in 1922 to skill young people so that they are empowered to become eligible for employment. In later years, they opened non-formal centres in various locations of the region.

Before the founding of Bosco Reach Out, to coordinate the developmental works of the Salesians of the Guwahati Province, the Salesians in their respective Institutions carried out several developmental activities to eradicate the poverty of the people and alleviate their sufferings. An important area of concern was health care. People suffering from various diseases did not have the wherewithal to arrest them as the Government facilities were very negligible. Occasionally, a whole village can be struck in the region by epidemics. People normally approach some witch doctors who, making sacrifices of cocks and goats, pretend to chase away the evil spirits that had entered the body of the sick or invaded the entire village. Most of these rituals are expensive and often do not produce the desired cure for the disease. Hence, in most of the mission centres, dispensaries were set up. The people, irrespective of their religious affiliations, are welcomed in these Centres whenever they fall ill. Besides these centres, every touring Salesian always carried medicines to treat the suffering in remote villages. Sickness makes people vulnerable; it is important to make oneself a doctor to them during those moments.

From the beginning, the Salesians have offered education and health care and carried out developmental activities such as constructing roads and bridges in rural areas for easy transport. Fr Manuel Albizuri, Fr Michael Balavoine, Fr Vittorio Mauri, Fr Joseph Arminana,

Fr George Desideri Vanni, Fr Mario Porcu, Fr Jose Maria Zubizaretta, Fr Alfred Marzo, and other Salesians have procured basic amenities for the people to improve their living conditions.

The Salesians, over the years, have entered into the field of agriculture – taught the people how to cultivate crops economically, provided the required seeds, introduced new forms of cash crops such as rubber, coconut, etc., taught people to preserve food items, offered financial support for cultivation, familiarised the people with scientific methods of farming, etc. Commenting on the missionary work of Fr Thomas Kochupurackal, for example, it is said that during his visits to the people’s homes, he would teach them how to preserve food, especially for lean seasons. He taught the people how to make chips out of tapioca. He managed to make tapioca chips on a big scale. For some time, some packets were going around the market with the description, “Tapioca chips, Made in Garobadha.” Similarly, banana chips and fried groundnuts are all packed and sold. He gathered women in the Centre and taught them how to do those businesses.

Relief work among the displaced people was another form of social work in which the Salesians were engaged. The Centre at Mendal was opened for carrying out relief among the rehabilitated Garos, who were displaced due to the civil unrest in East Pakistan in the Garo Hills. This prompted Fr Julius Costa to volunteer to commence relief work among these displaced Garos. In the beginning, he started his relief work in Tura. However, in 1968, Fr Costa selected Mendal as his headquarters and continued his social work, reaching out to various villages where the displaced people were settled.

Recognising the poverty and starvation of the people, especially in the villages, the early Salesian missionaries, under the aegis of Catholic Relief Service (CRS), were involved in distributing food, clothing, and medicines. During natural calamities such as floods, earthquakes, landslides, etc., frequently in the region, the Salesian missionaries have come to the succour of the suffering people by distributing essential articles for their survival. Ethnic clashes occur quite often in the region owing to the differences among the various groups. When such clashes took place, such as the 2012 clashes between the Boros and the Bengali-speaking Muslims in Kokrajhar, the Nellie massacre that took place in 1983, the Khasi-

Nepali clashes, etc., the Salesians rushed in relief materials to lighten the sufferings of the people.

However, with the establishment of an NGO, the social activities of the Salesians in the Province became more organised and systematic. The Bosco Reach Out (BRO) is the Salesian NGO established in 1983. It undertakes and coordinates all the developmental activities of the





Saleians in the region. It is committed to the integral and holistic development of the human person and is rooted in the Charism of Don Bosco. Bosco Reach Out functions within the Church to advance society. Over the years, it has promoted sustainable development in various parts of the Northeast, thereby soothing the region's imbroglios.



Bosco Reach Out has been engaged in developing the region through relief works, the formation of Self-Help Groups that empower women, interventions in agriculture, and other economically productive activities. It has built an agricultural centre at Jorapara in the Garo Hills.

Over the years, Bosco Reach Out has been engaged in various activities to uplift the quality of life of the people of the region.

### **Agricultural Activities**

Bosco Reach Out has implemented the Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) across multiple districts in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The programme introduced the 'Wadi' (small orchard) model for tribal development, focusing on optimum resource utilisation and asset creation for tribal families. BRO has completed five ITDPs, benefiting over 2,400 families. These families have improved living standards through one-acre cultivation plots with crops suitable to their regions. The programme actively promotes intercropping, kitchen gardening, and women's empowerment as key components of tribal development.

### **Community Development**

The organisation has executed the Integrated Sustainable Community Development Project (ISCDP) in eight districts across Assam and Meghalaya, covering 177 villages. Through this initiative, BRO has formed and supported 604 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with 6,585 members, 37 Cluster Level Federations, and 13 Block Level Federations. The project has established specialised clusters for turmeric, goatery, dairy, piggery, food processing, handloom, and bamboo crafts, enabling collective production and marketing. BRO has also conducted awareness programmes for Tea Tribes communities on trafficking, health, and legal issues, promoted Joint Liability Groups with 242 farmers forming 51 groups that received ₹53,20,000 in loans, and implemented the Jal Jeevan Mission to provide functional household tap connections to over 93,400 households. Additional initiatives include livelihood enhancement programmes for migrant workers, constructing low-cost homes for the poorest people (especially flood-affected families), and providing care and support for potential migrants in tea garden areas.

## **Skill Development**

BRO has established the Balijana Dress Making and Handicraft Cluster for 250 weavers and artisans from the Scheduled Tribe Rabha Community. The organisation conducts horticultural training for unemployed youth in North Garo Hills and provides skill development in carpentry, food processing, plumbing, and driving for returned migrant workers. BRO has also implemented skill upgradation programmes for weavers through specialised training, arranged exposure visits for farmers to learn new agricultural technologies, and offered computer training for at-risk youth in Umrangso and Joropara. These initiatives have equipped participants with marketable skills, increasing their employability and income-generating potential in their local communities.

## **Education**

Since 1999, BRO has sponsored over 5,000 vulnerable children from Assam and Meghalaya, supporting their integral growth and educational pursuits. The organisation provides after-school coaching in core subjects at multiple centres and implements the Children at Risk Education (CARE) project to promote the Right to Education. BRO has helped in channelling the funds as a project implementor to construct the Don Bosco Degree College in Diphu, Karbi Anglong, which offers bachelor's degree programmes in arts, commerce, and science to approximately 550 students. The organisation awards educational scholarships to marginalised children, with special emphasis on girls, and has established computer labs in rural schools with 20-22 computers per lab. Additionally, BRO has set up remedial education centres equipped with computers, projectors, screens, and internet connectivity, ensuring digital literacy for underprivileged children.

## **Health Activities**

BRO has conducted comprehensive eye care programmes across 13 districts of Assam, completing 302 camps that performed 6,411 cataract surgeries and provided 3,356 spectacles to school children and patients. The organisation implements community-based rehabilitation for persons with disabilities in Boko Block of Kamrup Rural District and operates a Don Bosco Eye Care Ambulance for free eye screening. BRO has executed the HIV/AIDS Link Workers Scheme in the Cachar district, which addresses the growth of STI and HIV infection among high-risk communities through a rights-based approach. The organisation has also established Kshamta Kendra to build capacity for health workers across five Northeastern states, strengthening their abilities to perform effectively at the grassroots level.

## **Ecology and Environment Activities**

BRO contributes to greenhouse gas emission reduction through various solar initiatives, having trained 1,629 beneficiaries on village electrification and provided 1,500 solar lanterns. The organisation has educated 3,064 participants on mitigation measures for reducing emissions, with 1,002 farmers now practising organic farming and 2,809 farmers implementing emissions control methods in their farms. BRO has implemented climate change and disaster preparedness programmes in 177 villages, forming and training 30 task forces for disaster response and installing 144 rainwater harvesting systems. The organisation conducts biodiversity preservation programmes in Nagaland and Meghalaya and has trained





eight women as “Solar Mamas,” who have installed solar systems for 204 families in non-electrified villages of the Umrango area.

### Relief Services

In response to the devastating floods in Assam in July 2023, BRO provided emergency relief in seven of the hardest-hit districts. The organisation distributed essential kits containing rice, sugar, salt, soybeans, lentils, and spices to vulnerable and marginalised households affected by the disaster. BRO collaborated with Nestle and Bosco Net South Asia to facilitate this relief effort and engaged local volunteers to identify affected households and ensure the efficient distribution of supplies. The organisation’s timely intervention helped many families who had suffered severe losses of crops, livestock, and essential household items to recover from the immediate impacts of the flooding.

Through all these initiatives, the province of Guwahati plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life of the people.



## All in the Family

Fr Louis Kerketta was a colourful personality. He was one of the first Adivasis to join the Salesians in Assam. Hit by Alzheimer's, he forgot many things, except the art of fishing, which he learned as a boy on the backwaters of the mighty Brahmaputra River. But on occasions, his old brilliant mind came to the fore. Once, Fr Busolin, who was sent to Garo Hills on a temporary assignment for six months but stayed on for over three decades, went for his confession at the end of a retreat to Fr Louis. After the confession, since Fr Louis forgot to give him the penance, it reminded him of that. Fr Louis answered: You have been in Garo Hills for thirty years. Is it not enough penance?"



Fr Louis Kerketta wrote a letter and did not know how to end it. So, he came out of his room and asked one of the boys: "What is my name?" The boys started laughing, thinking that Father was playing the fool. But when Fr Louis persisted, they told him his name. Fr Louis returned to his room and ended the letter with a flourish of his name.

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When Fr Archimedes Pianazzi returned to India after he was elected the Prefect of Studies in the General Council, one of the Salesians asked him for permission, which he had to deny. The Salesian insisted, "But when you were here, you said it was all right to do that way." Fr Pianazzi replied, "Don't you see that now I am there and not here?"

Fr Archimedes Pianazzi was the first parish priest of Tura in the latter half of the 1930s. One day, he had an argument with Fr Ernest Zanon over something. It began small but grew into a rather long bickering. Ultimately, Fr Zanon could not argue with Fr Pianazzi and said in exasperation: "Okay, Father! You are right!" "Of course, I am right!" roared Fr Pianazzi triumphantly. "First of all, I am right; secondly, I am the superior. The boss is always right!"

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Fr Julius Costa, the long-time missionary in the Garo Hills, was practically without a neck and was rather sensitive about it. He once boasted in the presence of Fr John Battista Busolin that he had been to every village in the Garo Hills. Fr Busolin, who used to take great delight in ribbing people, challenged him, saying he had not visited all the villages. "You have not been to one village, Fr Busolin asserted. "Which is that village?" Fr Costa demanded to know. Fr Busolin got up and made for the door. From a safe distance, he said: "You have not been to





Gitokgri.” Fr Costa jumped and rushed at Fr Busolin, who was far away. There is a village in the Garo Hills named Gitokgri. In Garo, *Gitok* means ‘neck’, and *gri* means ‘without.’

One Sunday, a boy from Don Bosco hostel went to Fr Costa for confession. The boy had a boil on his neck, which he had well-padded around. Suspecting that the boy was having fun at his expense, Fr Costa charged out of the confessional and was about to administer some blows. Sensing the danger, the boy pleaded with Father: ‘No, Father, I am not teasing you. I have a boil on my neck. Look, Father!’ Though hot-tempered, Fr Costa was also very understanding. He calmed down.



Fr Michael Balavoine was a class by himself and a stalwart missionary in his own right. He was so good at mathematics that he once challenged a professor in class when doing an MSc at Guwahati University. In the end, the professor was found wanting.

Fr Balavoine had a Bengali classmate who aimed to get the gold medal. There was only one insurmountable obstacle between him and the gold medal, Fr Balavoine. The other student knew fully well that he stood no chance with Fr Balavoine around. So, he skipped the final examination that year to do it for the gold next year.



When Br Balavoine was studying for an MSc, he studied while assisting the boys. He was in the midst of boys in Don Bosco, Guwahati, surrounded by them. With the book in front of him, he would not be disturbed in the least by the shouts and the screams of the boys. So good was his concentration.

When Fr Balavoine was told to become the Principal of St Anthony’s College, Shillong, he said he was returning to France because he had come to India to be a missionary, not to become a Principal.

Fr Balavoine was sent to open the mission of Namdong. When commuting between Namdong and Shillong, he generally took the Ummulong-Nartiang road. On one of his journeys, he entered a tea shop and asked for a cup of tea and something to eat. He was in a cassock. A small group of non-Catholics laughed in the same shop and passed unpleasant remarks on Fr Balavoine. One of them took particular delight in being rude and un-Christian, saying things like, “Is that a man or a woman?” Fr Balavoine continued taking his tea unperturbed as though nothing had happened. After paying for his tea, Fr Balavoine went straight for that man, caught him by the scruff, hoisted him in the air and asked him: “Who is nanny, you or I?” he went out to the road with the man dangling and flailing in mid-air. The onlookers applauded and cheered that the man’s ego just evaporated. When Fr Balavoine thought the man had enough, he gently put him down.

It is said that Fr Balavoine never spoke ill of anyone – superiors or confreres. He would remember only good things and good times with them. He could not do one thing at a time. He had to be doing several things. He had an indomitable will. He was never at a loss for an answer or an argument.

## Our New Priests 2025

Fr Pradeep Ekka

*Abstract: The Salesian Province of Guwahati welcomed seven new priests in December 2024 and February 2025, marking a significant expansion of their religious ministry in the region. The ordinations were characterised by strong community participation, spiritual solemnity, and cultural celebrations. These ordinations were particularly significant as they represented several milestone moments for local parishes, with each newly ordained priest selecting a personal scriptural motto to guide their ministry, demonstrating the continuing vitality of religious vocations in the Salesian tradition.*

**T**he Salesian province of Guwahati was blessed with seven new priests this year. They were ordained priests between December 2024 and January- February 2025. The *ING Newsline* congratulates them and wishes them an abundance of God’s blessings as they embark upon their priestly ministry in the province.

### Fr Jonas Kujur



The sacred walls of Christ the King Church in Dimakuchi resonated with jubilation on 5 January 2025 as Most Rev. Michael Akasius Toppo, Bishop of Tezpur Diocese, bestowed the sacred order of priesthood upon Deacon Jonas Kujur. The air was thick with anticipation as the faithful gathered from near and far to witness this transformative moment. Bishop Akasius seized this profound occasion to extol the parish’s blessed role in nurturing vocations, highlighting the irreplaceable role of families as sacred gardens where religious vocations bloom.

In a gesture steeped in tradition, Rev. Fr Sebastian Kuricheal, Provincial of the Salesian Province of Guwahati, presented Deacon Jonas to Bishop Akasius for the sacred rite. The subsequent felicitation became a platform for Fr Sebastian to share words of wisdom, acknowledging the path ahead while instilling confidence in the newly ordained priest. His message vibrated with hope, assuring Fr Jonas that divine joy and unwavering optimism would illuminate his pastoral journey.

Embracing the profound words “Speak Lord, your Servant is Listening” (1 Samuel 3:10), which is the response of young Samuel to the divine call, captures the fundamental posture of spiritual receptivity and readiness that defines the authentic priestly ministry of Fr Jonas -





being first a listener to God's word before becoming its herald. His heartfelt words of gratitude cascaded over his parents, siblings, the Salesian Congregation, benefactors, and countless well-wishers who had illuminated his path to the altar. Fr Anugrah Tete, the Parish Priest of Dimakuchi, wove additional threads of joy into the tapestry of celebration through his warm welcome to all present.

### Fr Jecky G. Sangma



The sacred grounds of St Claret Parish, Ampati, witnessed a divine transformation on 11 January 2025 as Most Rev. Andrew R. Marak DD, Bishop of Tura, ordained Deacon Jecky G. Sangma to the priesthood. The ceremony, bathed in sacred solemnity, drew countless faithful hearts, while Fr Sebastian Kuricheal, Provincial of Guwahati, had the blessed privilege of presenting him for ordination.

The sanctity of the occasion was magnificently enhanced by the presence of the Parish Priest of Ampati and a constellation of priests and religious. Bishop Marak's words flowed like a sacred river, carrying profound insights about priestly responsibilities while weaving prayers of encouragement for Fr Jecky. The atmosphere pulsated with spiritual energy, reflecting the community's embrace of their new shepherd.

The scriptural verse that will shape the priestly ministry of Fr Jecky is "The joy of the Lord is my strength" (Neh 8:10). Just as Nehemiah was encouraging the returned Jewish exiles weeping after hearing the Law read, by reminding them that their strength to rebuild and persevere would come not from sorrow but from finding joy in their covenant relationship with God, Fr Jecky intends to dedicate his life to encourage Catholics who have lost their initial fervour in the Lord.

### Fr Philemon Pumah



The hallowed sanctuary of Mary Mother of God Church in Umswai, West Karbi Anglong, Assam, became a sacred theatre on 16 January 2025 as Most Rev. Paul Mattekatt, Bishop of Diphu, conferred holy orders upon Deacon Philemon Pumah. The morning sun illuminated a solemn ceremony that commenced at 10.00 am, blessed by the presence of over thirty concelebrating priests and a sea of faithful from Umswai and surrounding parishes, their hearts united in celebration.

Bishop Mattekatt's homily resonated through the church like a divine symphony, weaving together the essential threads of priestly life. His words vividly portrayed the priest as a man of profound prayer, challenging Fr Philemon to preach and embody the sacred values he would teach. The Bishop's message echoed with a clarion call for steadfast dedication to Christ's mission, inspiring unwavering service to God's people.

The celebration reached its crescendo during the grand felicitation programme, where Rev. Fr Sebastian Kuricheal, Provincial of the Salesian Province, illuminated the moment as a "great blessing upon the family." His words celebrated Umswai parish's remarkable legacy of nurturing religious vocations.

Inspired by the institution of the Holy Eucharist, Fr Philemon adopted the scripture verse, "He took bread, blessed, broke, and gave to them" (Mk 14:22). This fourfold action of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving encapsulates the essential mission of the priesthood of Fr Philemon: receiving the gifts of the people, blessing them through consecration, breaking open the mysteries of faith, and distributing spiritual nourishment to the faithful.

## Fr Birendra Dungdung



A divine spectacle unfolded at St Mary's Church, Singarmunda, Odisha, on Saturday, 18 January 2025, as Most Rev. Kishore Kumar Kujur, Bishop of Rourkela, conferred priestly ordination upon Deacon Birendra Dungdung. The early morning air vibrated with sacred hymns and solemn prayers as the ceremony commenced at 8.00 am, drawing together a magnificent assembly of clergy, religious and faithful, their hearts beating in unison with sacred anticipation.

Bishop Kujur's homily soared like a spiritual beacon, illuminating the profound truth that every priest emerges from the collective prayers of God's faithful. He traced the remarkable journey from being a mission territory to becoming a wellspring of missionaries, each ordination standing as a testament to the people's deep-rooted faith. His words carved a path for Fr Birendra, encouraging steadfast holiness in serving God's people.

Under the witnessing eyes of Fr Charles Deepen Lakra, who represented the Provincial and Province of Guwahati, Fr Birendra embraced his calling with the powerful motto "I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). This scriptural verse captures the deeply personal nature of God's call to the priesthood while affirming that the priest belongs completely to God, not merely in service but in their very identity and being. His emotional expression of gratitude flowed like a sacred river, touching the shores of his family's sacrifice, God's grace, and the Salesian Congregation's nurturing presence.

## Fr Kolombiya Rabha

History embraced St Francis of Assisi Parish, Matia Majerburi, on 25 January 2025, as Deacon Kolombiya Rabha emerged as its first priestly son. Most Rev. John Moolachira, Archbishop of Guwahati, presided over this watershed moment, beginning at 10.30 am. The sacred celebration drew together over thirty priests, numerous religious sisters, and a throng of faithful whose prayers had nurtured this historic vocation.





Archbishop Moolachira's homily portrayed Fr Kolombiya as a divine gift, weaving together threads of gratitude for the parents who had nurtured this sacred vocation. His message elevated the significance of this moment beyond individual achievement to a blessing for the entire Christian community, marking a new chapter in the parish's spiritual journey.

The felicitation programme resonated with Rev. Fr Sebastian Kuricheal's profound gratitude as he celebrated this blessing upon the Salesian congregation. Fr Kolombiya's choice of the motto "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20), which is the concluding promise of Matthew's Gospel, powerfully connects Christ's abiding presence with the priestly mission of making that presence tangible through sacramental ministry and pastoral care. Fr Bastin and the Capuchin community received special recognition for organising this sacred celebration with great planning and precision. At the same time, Fr Kuricheal's reminder of Mamma Margaret's wisdom about priestly sacrifice added depth to the occasion.

### **Fr Cherak Callistus M. Sangma**

Sacred Heart Church, Shallang Parish, became a vessel of divine grace on 8 February 2025 when Most Rev. Wilbert Marwein, Bishop of Nongstoin, bestowed holy orders upon Deacon Cherak Callistus M. Sangma. The occasion was doubly significant: It marked the parish's first priestly vocation and coincided with its Silver Jubilee celebrations. The sanctuary overflowed with spiritual joy as sixty-seven priests, numerous religious sisters, and thousands of faithful gathered to witness this historic moment.



Bishop Marwein's homily put together the themes of gratitude and servant leadership. He called the newly ordained priest to embrace his role as a shepherd in Christ's image. His words painted a vision of wholehearted dedication to the Church and God's Kingdom, resonating through the sacred space.

The felicitation programme became a moment of thanksgiving as Rev. Fr Sebastian Kuricheal acknowledged the many hands that had shaped Fr Cherak's journey, with special gratitude to Fr Alfred Marzo for his foundational missionary work. Fr Cherak's chosen motto, "You are precious to me, and I love you" (Isaiah 43:4), a divine declaration from Isaiah, profoundly connects God's tender personal love with Fr Cherak's identity as both beloved of God and a channel of that same divine love to others. Fr Denis Toju Sangma, as Rector and Parish Priest, gave voice to the community's collective joy and gratitude to God for the wonders He wrought during the past twenty-five years of the existence of the parish.

### **Fr Jerbasius Xalxo**



Holy Family Church, Habigaon, became a sanctuary of celestial joy on 9 February 2025 when Most Rev. Michael Akasius Toppo, Bishop of Tezpur, conferred priestly ordination upon Deacon Jerbasius Xalxo. The sacred ceremony drew fifty-five priests, numerous religious sisters, and a sea of faithful from Mazbat and neighbouring parishes. The occasion was significant, as Fr Jerbasius became the seventh priest to emerge from Mazbat Parish's fertile spiritual soil.

Bishop Akasius' homily celebrated Mazbat Parish's extraordinary

legacy of nurturing vocations, casting Fr Jerbasius as brother and son to his community. The Bishop's message illuminated the transformative power of religious vocations, emphasising how a single dedicated priest or sister can catalyse profound change within the Church. His words painted the newly ordained priest as an instrument of divine mission, commissioned to make disciples across nations.

The day culminated in a jubilant felicitation programme, during which Rev. Fr Sebastian Kuicheal, Provincial, emphasised the sacred significance of priesthood within the Church and Salesian Congregation. His heartfelt gratitude encompassed Bishop Michael Akasius, Fr Alphonse of Mazbat Parish, and the faithful, whose year-long preparations had created an unforgettable spiritual celebration. The grand cultural programme that followed became a fitting tribute to Fr Jerbasius, expressing the community's deep faith and joy through cultural expression. It marked the blessed completion of this series of ordinations in early 2025.

“Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5) is the priestly motto of Fr Jerbasius. These words of Mother Mary capture both the priest's personal call to radical obedience and his mission to guide others in discerning and following Christ's will, while also echoing Mary's maternal role in forming both priests and the faithful in attentiveness to her Son.

## SEEDS OF RENEWAL

### Tracing Our Past General Chapters

Fr Joy Kachappilly

**Abstract:** *The General Chapter, as the highest extraordinary governing body of the Salesian Congregation, represents all members and has the power to make major decisions about the organisation's life, mission, and governance. Through twenty-eight general chapters from 1877 to 2020, the congregation has addressed crucial matters ranging from formation and missionary work to constitutional renewal and contemporary challenges, with each chapter building upon the foundation laid by Don Bosco while adapting to changing times. These chapters have consistently focused on maintaining the authentic Salesian spirit while evolving to meet new needs, with recent chapters, particularly emphasising youth evangelisation, lay collaboration, community life, and the congregation's religious identity.*

**T**he General Chapter is the highest extraordinary governing body of our Congregation. It represents all members and has the power to make major decisions about the life, mission, and governance of the Salesians.

According to Article 146 of the Salesian Constitutions, the General Chapter is the principal sign of the Congregation's unity in diversity. It is a fraternal gathering where Salesians collectively reflect on their charismatic identity and make decisions for their religious family's spiritual and apostolic renewal.





Article 147 outlines the main functions of the General Chapter. These include electing the Rector Major and members of the General Council, examining the state of the Congregation, establishing fundamental norms for all members, and handling matters of major importance for the Salesian mission.

Articles 148-150 detail the composition and participation. The Chapter has three categories of members: ex-officio members (Rector Major, General Council, and Provincial Superiors), elected delegates from provinces, and additional members for broader representation.

In the past, twenty-eight general chapters took place. The First General Chapter 1877, held at Lanzo Torinese and presided over by Don Bosco, laid the groundwork for the young congregation. This historic gathering established fundamental rules for the society and created the first set of regulations to guide the Salesians in their mission. The spirit of Don Bosco was particularly evident as he guided the proceedings and shared his vision for the congregation's future.

The Second General Chapter of 1880, also at Lanzo Torinese, concentrated on the crucial aspect of Salesian formation. The assembly addressed the important issues of novitiate training and established comprehensive guidelines for studies. This chapter was particularly significant as it shaped how future Salesians would be formed in the spirit of Don Bosco.

The Third General Chapter of 1883 marked a significant turn toward the missionary dimension of the Salesian charism. The assembly focused on expanding the congregation's missionary work and established protocols for new foundations. The chapter created guidelines for the formation of missionary personnel, reflecting the congregation's growing international presence.

The Fourth General Chapter of 1886 holds special significance as it was the last one attended by Don Bosco. Held in Valsalice, this chapter focused on consolidating previous decisions and addressing practical aspects of daily life. Don Bosco's presence added particular weight to the discussions about educational methods and preserving the Salesian spirit.

The Fifth General Chapter 1889 marked a poignant transition, the first after Don Bosco's death. Led by Don Rua, the chapter focused intensely on preserving Don Bosco's spirit while addressing the organisational challenges of a growing congregation. The assembly ensured that expansion would not compromise the fundamental Salesian charism.

The Sixth General Chapter 1892 delved deep into religious practices and formation issues. Under Don Rua's leadership, the assembly discussed educational methods and administrative matters while emphasising fidelity to Don Bosco's method. This chapter helped solidify the congregation's educational approach during significant growth.



The Seventh General Chapter of 1895 concentrated on studies and the formation of young Salesians. The assembly created new school regulations while addressing the congregation's continued mission expansion. This chapter was particularly important in setting educational priorities that would guide Salesian work for years.

The Eighth General Chapter of 1898 tackled the crucial area of economic administration. As the congregation experienced rapid growth, the assembly created new administrative guidelines while focusing on formation needs. This chapter helped establish sound governance practices for the expanding congregation.

The Ninth General Chapter of 1901 emphasised religious discipline and formation while addressing mission expansion. The assembly created guidelines for new works while emphasising the importance of maintaining the authentic Salesian spirit in all endeavours. This chapter helped balance growth with spiritual authenticity.

The Tenth General Chapter of 1904 held special significance as it was the first after Don Bosco's beatification. The assembly focused on spiritual renewal while addressing organisational needs and educational methods. This chapter helped the congregation navigate its growing prominence in the Church.

The Eleventh General Chapter of 1910 returned to the crucial themes of formation and mission expansion. The assembly discussed educational priorities and created comprehensive guidelines for schools while emphasising Don Bosco's method. This chapter helped maintain educational excellence during a period of significant growth.

The Twelfth General Chapter of 1922 faced the challenge of addressing post-World War I realities. The assembly focused on reorganisation and mission expansion while creating new guidelines for the congregation's work in a changed world. This chapter helped the Salesians adapt to new social conditions while maintaining their essential character.

The Thirteenth General Chapter of 1929 concentrated on formation and educational methods. The assembly created new regulations while emphasising the Salesian identity in changing times. This chapter was particularly important in maintaining the congregation's educational effectiveness.

The Fourteenth General Chapter of 1932 emphasised spiritual renewal and formation. The assembly discussed mission expansion while creating new guidelines emphasising Don Bosco's spirit. This chapter helped deepen the congregation's spiritual foundations during





new regulations while emphasising the Salesian identity in modern times. This chapter helped maintain the congregation's educational effectiveness in a changing world.

The Eighteenth General Chapter of 1958 addressed modernisation and new challenges. The assembly emphasised adaptation while maintaining fidelity to the Salesian charism. This chapter helped prepare the congregation for the upcoming Second Vatican Council.



The Nineteenth General Chapter of 1965 was a special chapter dedicated to Vatican II renewal. This pivotal assembly undertook a major update of the Constitutions while addressing modern challenges. The chapter created guidelines for renewal that would shape the congregation's future.

The Twentieth General Chapter (1971-72) continued the work of Vatican II renewal. This extended assembly completed a major revision of the Constitutions while addressing contemporary challenges. The chapter created updated guidelines that helped the congregation navigate post-conciliar changes.

The Twenty-first General Chapter of 1978 focused specifically on the Salesian mission. The assembly addressed youth ministry and contemporary challenges while creating new pastoral guidelines. This chapter emphasised the unity of education and evangelisation in Salesian work.

The Twenty-second General Chapter of 1984 marked a milestone by approving the definitive text of the renewed Constitutions. The assembly focused on Salesian identity while addressing contemporary challenges and formation needs. This chapter helped establish the congregation's modern constitutional framework.

The Twenty-third General Chapter of 1990 concentrated on youth evangelisation. The assembly addressed new pastoral challenges while creating comprehensive guidelines for





youth ministry. This chapter helped strengthen the congregation’s focus on its primary mission to young people.

The Twenty-fourth General Chapter of 1996 broke new ground by focusing on a shared mission with the laity. The assembly addressed collaboration challenges and created guidelines for lay involvement. This chapter helped expand the concept of the Salesian Family.

The Twenty-fifth General Chapter of 2002 examined Salesian community life. The assembly addressed community challenges and created guidelines for strengthening fraternal life. This chapter helped reinforce the importance of community in Salesian life and mission.

The Twenty-sixth General Chapter of 2008 called for a “Return to Don Bosco.” The assembly focused on charismatic identity while addressing contemporary challenges. This chapter helped reconnect the congregation with its foundational spirit.

The Twenty-seventh General Chapter of 2014 emphasised “Witnesses to radical Gospel living.” The assembly focused on religious consecration and created guidelines for authentic witness in modern times. This chapter helped strengthen the congregation’s religious identity.

The Twenty-eighth General Chapter of 2020 asked, “What kind of Salesians for today’s youth?” The assembly focused on the Salesian profile while addressing contemporary challenges. This most recent chapter helped chart the congregation’s course for the future while maintaining fidelity to its founding charism.



## Hope: The Autobiography of Pope Francis

— Fr Charles Deepen Lakra

**Abstract:** *The Autobiography of Pope Francis, titled Hope: The Autobiography, chronicles his life journey from his family's Italian roots to his leadership of the Catholic Church. It explores his early influences, spiritual calling, and rise through the Church hierarchy while addressing key global issues such as poverty, climate change, and interreligious dialogue. Blending personal reflections, historical events, and theological insights, the book presents a hopeful vision for a more inclusive and compassionate Church in the modern world.*

# POPE FRANCIS HOPE THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY



The greatly anticipated Autobiography of Pope Francis hit bookshelves in 80 countries globally on Tuesday, 14 January 2025. Written over six years, it starts in the early twentieth century with Pope Francis's Italian roots and his ancestors' courageous migration to Latin America. The text, written firsthand by the Pope but with the collaboration of Italian writer Carlo Musso, was translated into English by Richard Nixon. The 367-page book, with twenty-five chapters, is titled *Hope: The Autobiography*.

Pope Francis begins his Autobiography with these words: "The book of my life is the story of a journey of hope, a journey that I can't imagine separated from that of my family, of my people, of all God's people. In every page, in every passage, it is also the book of those who have travelled with me, of those who came before, of those who will follow."

The book begins with Pope Francis's family history, particularly the dramatic story of his grandparents' immigration to Argentina. In 1927, Giovanni and Rosa Bergoglio were scheduled to sail on the SS Principessa Mafalda but could not sell their belongings in time. This delay

saved their lives, as the ship later sank with a significant loss of life. They eventually immigrated to Argentina in 1929, joining Giovanni's brothers, who had established a successful paving business in Buenos Aires. The family's initial prosperity was short-lived, as the Great Depression devastated their business by 1932. Despite losing everything, they maintained their dignity and rebuilt their lives. Francis's father, Mario, worked as a bookkeeper, and the family, though poor, emphasised education and cultural refinement.

Growing up in the Flores district of Buenos Aires during the 1930s and 40s, young Jorge Mario Bergoglio was immersed in a vibrant immigrant community. His grandmother, Rosa, played a crucial role in his religious formation, teaching him prayers and instilling a deep faith to shape his future. The family's religious practice was integrated naturally into daily life, with regular Mass attendance and participation in parish activities. His parents, Mario and Regina, married in 1935, and Jorge was born in 1936, followed by four siblings. The family lived modestly but maintained strong cultural values, emphasising education, music, and literature.

His mother, Regina, loved opera and classical music, which enriched the home environment. She ensured that all the children learned piano and introduced them to opera through radio broadcasts. Sunday lunches were important family gatherings that could last hours, maintaining Italian traditions while embracing their Argentine identity. The future Pope excelled academically, though he was never at the top of his class, and he developed a love for literature and learning that would stay with him throughout his life.

A defining moment came on 21 September 1953, when the 17-year-old Bergoglio felt a powerful calling to religious life while passing a church. Though his mother initially resisted this vocation, he entered the seminary in 1956. His studies were interrupted by a serious illness requiring the removal of part of his lung, but he recovered and joined the Jesuits in 1958. During his formation, he taught literature and psychology, experiences that helped shape his educational philosophy. He completed his theological training and was ordained a priest in 1969.

The political turbulence in Argentina during the 1970s deeply influenced his ministry. From 1973 to 1979, he was Provincial Superior of the Jesuits, working to protect people during the "Dirty War" period of military dictatorship. He helped many to escape persecution, though his actions were praised and criticised during this period. The book provides his perspective on these challenging years and the difficult decisions he faced.



*With Mamá and my brother Oscar in 1938.*



*With Father Pepe in villa 31 shantytown in Buenos Aires.*

Pope Francis details his progression through Church leadership positions, becoming the Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires in 1992, Archbishop in 1998, and Cardinal in 2001. Throughout these years, he focused on serving the poor and marginalised, regularly visiting the city's slums and advocating for social justice. His election as Pope in 2013 surprised him, and he describes the conclave process and his immediate decisions as pope, including choosing to live in the Vatican's Santa Marta guesthouse rather than the traditional papal apartments.

The book addresses major challenges facing the Church and the world today. Francis is particularly concerned about

climate change, which is inextricably linked to poverty and forced migration. He advocates for urgent action on environmental protection while critiquing economic systems prioritising profit over human dignity. The Pope also discusses the refugee crisis, wars, and the need for interreligious dialogue.

Pope Francis shares his vision for a more inclusive, merciful Church that reaches society's peripheries. He emphasises the importance of synodality - walking together as a Church - and listening to all voices, including those traditionally marginalised. While acknowledging challenges like secularisation, he maintains a hopeful outlook grounded in faith in God's presence in history.

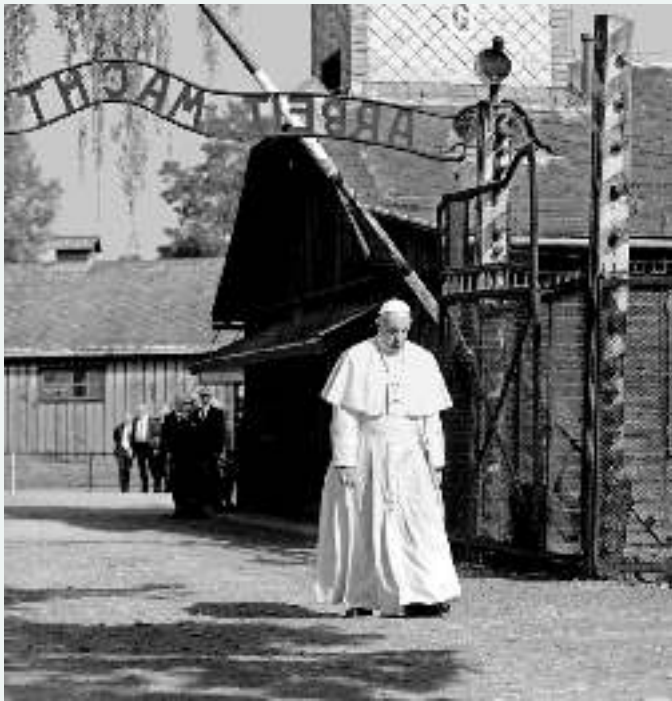


*A happy cardinal, in 2011, with the azulgrana jersey of San Lorenzo.*

Throughout the book, Pope Francis reveals personal aspects that have shaped his pastoral approach. He discusses his love for literature, including works by Dostoevsky and Borges, and how these influenced his theological thinking. His appreciation for popular piety and cultural traditions informs his understanding of faith lived in daily life. The Pope shares humorous anecdotes and personal struggles, presenting himself as a leader and a fellow pilgrim in faith.

The Autobiography concludes with Pope Francis's reflections on the Church's future. He envisions a more synodal Church that embraces





*In silence at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.*

diversity while maintaining unity in essential matters of faith. While acknowledging serious challenges, including scandals and institutional reforms, he remains hopeful about the Church's capacity for renewal. He sees his papacy as "just one step" in the Church's journey through history, emphasising continuity while promoting necessary changes.

Pope Francis's Autobiography provides valuable insights into the experiences and thinking that shaped his papacy and vision for the Church's role in today's world. His approach to leadership is characterised by his emphasis on mercy, joy, and hope, along with a realistic view of human failings and the need for constant conversion. The

book reveals a Pope deeply grounded in his family roots and life experiences, committed to reform while maintaining core Catholic teachings, and focused on building bridges across divisions in service of human dignity and care for creation.

The book includes profound reflections on spirituality and the nature of Christian life. Francis emphasises the importance of tenderness, joy, and hope while acknowledging life's struggles and complexities. The concept of servant leadership shapes his understanding of leadership, and he frequently returns to themes of mercy and forgiveness. These personal insights help readers understand the spiritual foundations of his papacy and his vision for the Church's future.

The book is a remarkable autobiography combining personal narrative, historical events, and theological reflection. Pope Francis demonstrates considerable literary skill in connecting his family's immigrant experience to the broader themes of hope, mercy, and social justice that have characterised his papacy. The book is particularly strong in its intimate portrayal of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Argentine life and the formative experiences that shaped his worldview.

The book excels in its storytelling and thematic coherence. Its openness in discussing personal and family matters is praiseworthy. The autobiography succeeds in its primary aim of providing an authentic, accessible account of Francis's journey from Buenos Aires to the Vatican while illuminating the experiences and convictions that drive his papal agenda. The book's greatest strength lies in its ability to humanise the papacy while maintaining its dignity, offering valuable insights into one of the most significant religious leaders of our time.

# The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Salesian Missionary Expedition

Fr Amit Chama Lakra

**Abstract:** *In 1875, Don Bosco launched the first Salesian missionary expedition to Argentina, sending ten missionaries led by Father Giovanni Cagliero to serve Italian immigrants and establish educational institutions. The missionaries successfully founded schools and parishes in San Nicolás and Buenos Aires, combining academic and technical training while focusing on evangelising Patagonia. Their work established foundational principles for Salesian missions. It led to rapid expansion across South America, making the Salesians one of the largest Catholic religious orders with a continuing legacy of education and youth empowerment.*



The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Don Bosco's first missionary expedition to South America marks a pivotal moment in the history of the Salesian congregation. On 11 November 1875, Don Bosco sent his first group of missionaries to Argentina, led by Father Giovanni Cagliero, establishing what would become a vast network of Salesian works across the continent. The

group departed from Genoa, carrying Don Bosco's vision of serving poor and abandoned youth beyond European borders.

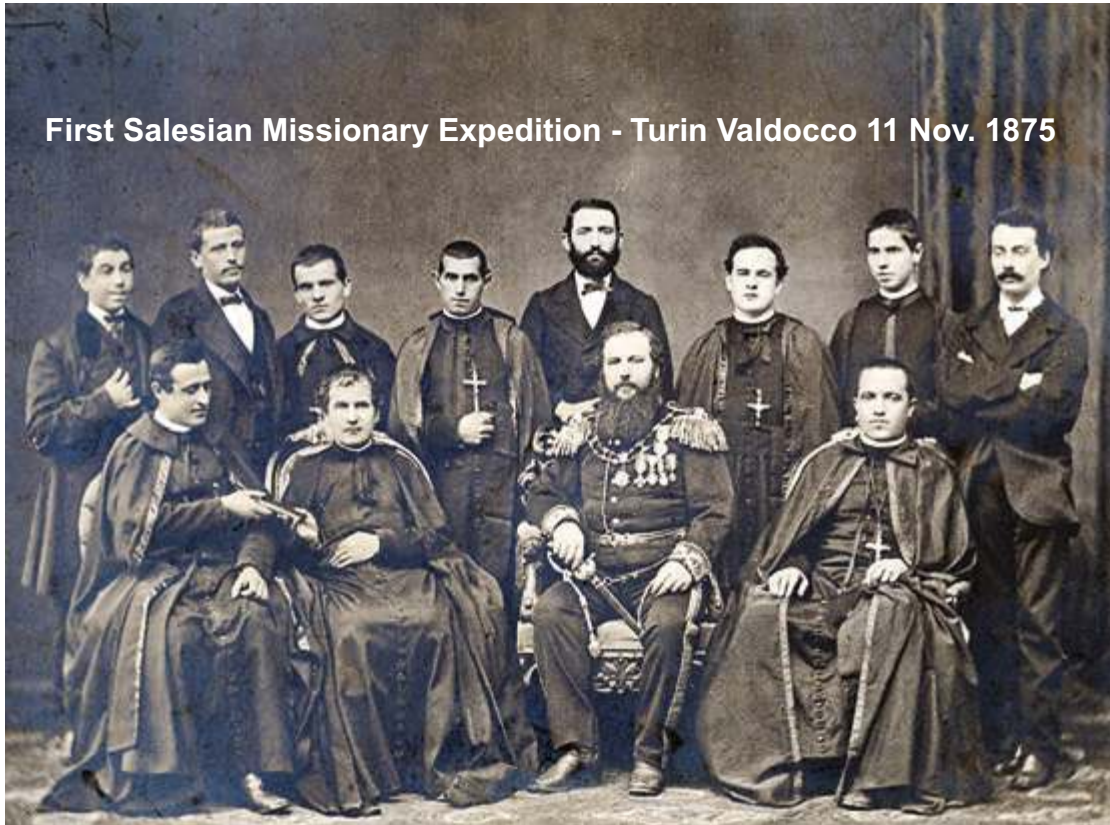
This pioneering group included six priests and four coadjutor brothers. Their primary mission was ministering to Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires and establishing educational institutions following Don Bosco's preventive system. Before their departure, Don Bosco gave them specific instructions about maintaining the Salesian spirit and adapting to local conditions.

The journey lasted 22 days, with the missionaries arriving in Buenos Aires on 14 December 1875. They were welcomed by Father Pietro Ceccarelli, parish priest of San Nicolás de los Arroyos, who had previously requested a Salesian presence in Argentina.

The missionaries quickly established their first work in San Nicolás, opening a school and a parish. Despite initial language, culture, and limited resource challenges, they successfully implemented Don Bosco's educational methods, combining academic instruction with technical training.

A significant focus of this first expedition was the evangelisation of Patagonia, a vast territory largely unexplored by missionaries. Don Bosco had seen this mission in his dreams and considered it a crucial part of the Salesian missionary endeavour.

## First Salesian Missionary Expedition - Turin Valdocco 11 Nov. 1875



The success of the initial foundation led to rapid expansion. Within months, the Salesians established new works in Buenos Aires and other Argentine cities. Their approach to education and youth ministry resonated strongly with local communities.

Father Cagliero proved an effective leader, balancing the demands of establishing new works while maintaining communication with Don Bosco in Turin. His leadership set patterns for Salesian missionary work that would be replicated across South America.

This first expedition established crucial principles for Salesian missionary activity: adaptation to local needs, focus on youth education, care for immigrants, and service to indigenous peoples. These principles continue to guide Salesian missionary work today. This missionary venture represented a significant expansion of Don Bosco's vision beyond Europe. Despite limited resources and numerous challenges, the missionaries quickly established themselves in Argentina, founding schools, technical training centres, and parishes to serve as models for future Salesian institutions throughout South America.

The success of this first mission led to rapid expansion across the continent. Within a few years, Salesian works spread to Uruguay, Brazil, and Chile. The missionaries adapted Don Bosco's educational approach to local contexts while maintaining its core principles of reason, religion, and loving-kindness.

A particularly significant aspect of this missionary expedition was its focus on indigenous populations, especially in Patagonia. The Salesians developed innovative approaches to education and evangelisation that respected local cultures while providing practical skills and education to marginalised communities.

The mission's impact on education in South America cannot be overstated. The Salesians established a network of schools that combined academic instruction with technical training,



preparing young people for higher education and skilled trades. This educational model proved particularly effective in promoting social mobility among poor and working-class youth.

The anniversary also highlights the crucial role of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who arrived shortly after the first expedition. Their education and social services work complemented the male Salesians' efforts and significantly expanded the congregation's influence across the continent.

The legacy of the 1875 expedition continues to shape Salesian work in South America today. The congregation maintains hundreds of schools, technical institutes, parishes, and youth centres across the continent, serving millions of young people through educational and pastoral programmes.

Don Bosco's decision to send missionaries to South America also established a pattern of international expansion that eventually made the Salesians one of the largest Catholic religious orders in the world. The success of the South American missions encouraged similar initiatives on other continents.

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary serves as a reminder of the enduring relevance of Don Bosco's educational philosophy and missionary vision. The original expedition's emphasis on education, youth empowerment, and social transformation inspires Salesian work worldwide, adapting to contemporary challenges while maintaining its foundational principles.



## Remembering

### Fr Augustine Edasserithottathil (EP)

Rev. Fr Augustine Edasserithottathil (EP) passed away suddenly at age 75 on 5 March 2025 (Ash Wednesday) at Don Bosco Technical School, Maligaon. Born on 1 March 1950 in Elanji, Kerala, to Paily and Teresia, he began his Salesian journey in 1970, making his first profession in 1971 and final vows in 1977. He was ordained on 8 December 1979 at Mawlai, Shillong.



Fr Augustine with his knowledge of English, Assamese, Khasi, Hindi, Lalung, Malayalam, and Garo, during his 45-year priesthood, served in numerous roles across Northeast India, including as Principal at Umran and Damra, Parish Priest at Kumarikatta, Rector at Khliehriat, and Confessor at several institutions in his final years. His ministry was characterised by his commitment to education as a transformative force, especially for marginalised communities, and by his pastoral heart that connected deeply with parishioners across cultural divides.

Known for his humility and compassion, Fr Augustine never sought the spotlight but worked diligently behind the scenes. During his time at Sirajuli, he became beloved in the neighbourhood, using his evening walks to connect with locals across cultural and religious divides. As a confessor in his final years, he provided not just absolution but true healing through wise counsel and patient listening.

Fr Augustine's legacy lives on in the institutions he strengthened, the communities he built, and the countless lives he touched. His life embodied the words, "You have lived your life fully for God, following in the footsteps of Don Bosco."

Gentle shepherd in Northeast lands,  
Your languages bridged divides, your smile lit ways.  
No spotlight sought, just steady hands,  
Guiding youth through learning days.

From Kerala to Guwahati's embrace,  
A Salesian heart that burned so true.  
In humble works, we find God's grace,  
Father Augustine, we remember you.

Adieu, Father Augustine!  
Till we meet again in the Father's abode!









# 2025

Santidad en la Familia Salesiana Sanctity in the Salesian Family  
Santità nella Famiglia Salesiana Santidade na Família Salesiana  
La Sainteté dans la Famille Salésienne

10  
Santi  
Saints  
Santos  
Święci



117  
Blessed  
Bienheureux  
Beatos  
Bem-aventurados  
Błogosławieni



20  
Venerabili  
Venerables  
Vénérables  
Veneráveis  
Czcigodni



27  
Servi di Dio  
Servants of God  
Serviteurs de Dieu  
Siervos de Dios  
Servos de Deus  
Słudzy Boży

