



PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

Salesian Province of St. Joseph, Hyderabad



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SEPTEMBER 2020

Like Jesus Christ, forced to flee

Dear confreres,

Greetings from Don Bosco Provincial House, Hyderabad. By the grace of God and the protection of our Blessed Mother Mary, all our confreres are kept safe from the Corona virus and are healthy. Let us continue to follow the safety precautions and pray for our staff members and the families of our beneficiaries who have contracted the virus that they may be healed soon.

Considering the enormous amount of challenge ahead of us under the stifling circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to draw our attention to our social responsibility as religious and as Salesians. Friedrich Nietzsche, an existentialist philosopher, has famously said that anyone who believes in the liberation of the oppressed, the helping of the weak, and the basic dignity of all humanity must be a Christian. Though he disagreed with such an ideology, the statement itself is true. On 27th of this month, we will be celebrating the world day of migrants and refugees. Reflecting on this theme, Pope Francis has invited the entire Church and the world to welcome, protect and integrate internally displaced persons. The nation-wide lockdown due to COVID has brought to the fore the disproportionate suffering of the poor and especially the migrants and those living on the fringes of the society. In the recently concluded SPCSA meeting, we have deliberated on a well coordinated and a more systematic pan India intervention for the migrants. The Green Commandment of this month invites us to 'listen to the cry of the poor' and reach out to them in solidarity. Due to the disproportionate share and distribution of the common resources of the earth, the poor are left with nothing and this pandemic has pushed them further into extreme hunger and suffering.

In our preoccupation to stay safe and healthy, there is a risk of closing the doors of our hearts and our dwellings to the poor. While we take care of ourselves, let us not forget the poor, the migrants and those on the peripheries. Dreaming of a common journey as a Congregation in the next six years after the General Chapter 28, our Rector Major, Fr Angel Fernandez, has invited us to be 'crazy about the poor' and reach out to them. He insists that we give "absolute priority for the poorest, the most abandoned and defenseless."

Recently I met a Catholic nurse working in one of the government hospitals in Hyderabad. She was sharing about her hectic schedule in dealing with and helping the COVID patients in the over-crowded hospital. I asked her if she was afraid of the work and the possible contagion. I was dumbfounded by her response. She said, "Father, I have the opportunity to give full meaning to my work. My service is most needed now and even if there is risk involved, I have to save lives." If she, a married woman with two daughters, can have such commitment and selfless attitude in this moment of extreme crisis, what will be our response to the plight of the poor as Salesians who seemingly have left everything to serve the poor?

Sharing a reflection on the crisis of the migrants, Pope Francis affirmed, “in each of these people, forced to flee to safety, Jesus is present as he was at the time of Herod. In the faces of the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, strangers and prisoners, we are called to see the face of Christ who pleads with us to help (cf. Mt 25:31-46). If we can recognize him in those faces, we will be the ones to thank him for having been able to meet, love and serve him in them.” It is in the poor and the migrants that we have an opportunity to meet the Lord. In their tattered clothes, with dirty feet, in disfigured faces, in wounded bodies, and in language that is not ours, we need to find Jesus in them. Every migrant is ‘Like Jesus Christ, forced to flee.’

The scripture reveals that we are all created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). Every human person, regardless of age or stage of development, gender, caste, ethnicity, country of origin, religion or any other qualifier, possesses inherent human dignity. ‘Human Dignity’ and ‘Human Rights’ cannot be just buzzwords of our modern times, but they are principles on which we need to live and act as people of God. If we are created in the image and likeness of God, then every life is sacred and hence, deserves to be respected and protected.

The Old Testament recounts the stories of migration and the challenges that came with it. Abram (Abraham) commences his faith journey as a migrant in search of a promised land. Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt. David flees the violence of King Saul and seeks asylum among the Philistines. Daniel and his friends were exiled from their homeland. The people of Israel crossed several borders in their journey to the Promised Land. Jesus was forced to flee to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. The Lord invites us to be always sympathetic and integrate the poor and the migrants. “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:33-34). The New Testament is a groundbreaking promise of Jesus to protect the poor and the oppressed. “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me...” (Mathew 25:35).

The Church continues to live this prophetic responsibility towards the poor. The social teaching of the Church is a rich treasure inviting it incessantly to be engaged in building a just society. The COVID-19 pandemic gives us an opportunity to reinvigorate our commitment to the poor and the vulnerable. We need to take an active part in the seven fold social action of the Church that consists in upholding the life and dignity of the human person; that calls to build communities and invites for participation; that promotes human rights and upholds responsibilities; that demands the option for the poor and vulnerable; that fights for the dignity of work and rights of workers; that reaches out in solidarity and that is concerned about God’s creation.

The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations reiterate this commitment of the Church. They comprehensively cover social, economic and environmental dimensions of development and focus on ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions. The present pandemic situation invites us to act urgently: End poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), good health and well being (SDG 3), and clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) are immediate concerns for us today. We have to step out of our comfort zones on to the streets and reach out to the suffering humanity. Let us roll up our sleeves and offer help to the people in need in our neighborhoods. Immediate solidarity is the need of the hour. Quality education (SDG 4) beckons us to improve the quality of our educational institutions and to strive to give the best

to the poor. How can we engage the poor and the rural children in a continuous learning process during the time of lockdown? What is the alternative to online learning? Can we have creative solutions to respond to this challenge?

We have initiated the process of home learning with the help of volunteers/teachers in some villages. Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) is another challenge that is staring us in the face as the unemployment rate is on the rise every single day. Let us revisit the Province priorities and help the unemployed youth of our localities to find suitable jobs through DHISHA, the Province career guidance and job placement centre. Due to an enormous amount of struggle and suffering, our young people are too weak to take the first step in this process. We need to approach our young people and help them find jobs. Reduced inequalities (SDG 10), peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), gender equality (SDG 5) and climate action (SDG 13) invite us to create movements and advocacy. Our work for the poor can never be complete merely through our welfare activity. If our work has to have lasting effect and impact, and if we dream of a transformed world, then we need to promote rights-based approach and engage in movements and advocacy for a better society. This calls for a personal conversion and a change of mentality. Here I present six pairs of verbs suggested by Pope Francis that go a long way in helping us respond to the cry of the poor.

1. You have to Know in order to Understand. Knowledge is a necessary step towards understanding others. Jesus himself teaches this in the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus: "While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (Lk 24:15-16). When we talk about migrants and displaced persons, all too often we stop at statistics. But it is not about statistics, it is about real people! If we encounter them, we will get to know more about them. And knowing their stories, we will be able to understand them. We will be able to understand, for example, that the precariousness that we have come to experience as a result of this pandemic is a constant in the lives of displaced people.

2. It is necessary to Be close in order to Serve. It may seem obvious, yet often it is the contrary. "But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where the man was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Lk 10:33-34). Fears and prejudices - all too many prejudices - keep us distant from others and often prevent us from "becoming neighbors" to them and serving them with love. Drawing close to others often means, willing to take risks, as so many doctors and nurses have taught us in recent months. This readiness to draw near and serve goes beyond a mere sense of duty.

3. In order to Be reconciled, we need to Listen. God himself taught us this by sending his Son into the world. He wanted to listen to the plea of suffering humanity with human ears: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son... that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3:16-17). A love that reconciles and saves begins with listening. In today's world, messages multiply but the practice of listening is being lost. Yet it is only through humble and attentive listening that we can truly be reconciled. In 2020, silence has reigned for weeks in our streets and homes. It is a dramatic and troubling silence, but one that has given us the opportunity to listen to the plea of the vulnerable, the displaced and our seriously ill planet.

Listening gives us an opportunity to be reconciled with our neighbor, with all those who have been “discarded”, with ourselves and with God, who never tires of offering us his mercy.

4. In order to Grow, it is necessary to Share. Sharing was an essential element of the first Christian community: “Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common” (Acts 4:32). God did not want the resources of our planet to benefit only a few. This was not the Lord’s will! We have to learn to share in order to grow together, leaving no one behind. The pandemic has reminded us how we are all in the same boat. Realizing that we have the same concerns and fears has shown us once more that no one can be saved alone. To grow truly, we must grow together, sharing what we have, like the boy who offered Jesus five barley loaves and two fish... yet they proved enough for five thousand people (cf. Jn 6:1-15)!

5. We need to Be involved in order to Promote. The Lord approaches the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:1-30), listens to her, speaks to her heart, and then leads her to the truth and makes her a herald of the Good News: “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did! Can this be the Christ?” (v.29). Sometimes the impulse to serve others prevents us from seeing their real riches. If we really want to promote those whom we assist, we must involve them and make them agents in their own redemption. The pandemic has reminded us of how essential co-responsibility is, and that only with the contribution of everyone - even of those groups so often underestimated - can we face this crisis. We must find “the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity.”

6. It is necessary to Cooperate in order to Build. That is what the Apostle Paul tells the community of Corinth: “I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgement” (1 Cor 1:10). Building the Kingdom of God is a duty common to all Christians, and for this reason it is necessary that we learn to cooperate, without yielding to the temptation to jealousy, discord and division. In the present context it should be reiterated: “This is not a time for self-centeredness, because the challenge we are facing is shared by all, without distinguishing between persons.” To preserve our common home and make it conform more and more to God’s original plan, we must commit ourselves to ensuring international cooperation, global solidarity and local commitment, leaving no one excluded.

LAUDATO SI’ THIS MONTH - SEPTEMBER

TEN GREEN COMMANDMENTS OF LAUDATO SI’ - Green Commandment II -Listen to the Cry of the Poor

As we continue to pursue the program prepared by the Laudato Si’ sub-commission of the Province ranging from July 2020 to May 2021, let us now focus our attention on the Second Green Commandment, its implications and challenges for us. This commandment invites us to hear the cry of the poor who are the disproportionate victims of the degradation of our common home. The contemporary ecological crisis is not just a physical problem but is also a profoundly ‘moral’ crisis. The cry of the earth thus becomes also a cry of the poor and calls out for eco-justice. This commandment leads us to understand how members of our human family are the main victims of the deterioration of our common home. The disproportionate effect of ecological degradation on the poor and on the developing world is highlighted in almost every section of Laudato Si’ .

Pope Francis looks at the crisis of our common home from the vantage point of the poor who are its worst victims. Secondly, this commandment will enable us to discuss how the encyclical links the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. The Pope is particularly attentive to the vulnerable victims of the ecological crisis like women, indigenous communities, future generations, etc. The discussion on the question of eco-justice raised by the encyclical is also shown to be relevant by this commandment. At the heart of the contemporary ecological crisis is a profound ethical dilemma for the fact that the harm to our common home is caused largely by the rich, but its early and disproportionate victims are the poor and vulnerable members of our common human family. The Pope speaks in this regard of the ecological debt that the developed world owes to the poorer nations and communities around the world. The Pope also invites us to pray for the grace to become responsible stewards of the earth and of the poor. He shares the following prayer with us:

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty,
not pollution and destruction.

SEASON OF CREATION

The Season of Creation is celebrated every year as an ecumenical event from 1 September to 4 October. Pope Francis had this to say inaugurating the Season last year, "This is the season for letting our prayer be inspired anew by closeness to nature, which spontaneously leads us to give thanks to God the Creator. It is also a season to reflect on our lifestyles, and how our daily decisions about food, consumption, transportation, use of water, energy and many other material goods, can often be thoughtless and harmful. Too many of us act like tyrants with regard to creation. Let us make an effort to change and to adopt more simple and respectful lifestyles. This too is a season for undertaking prophetic actions. Many young people all over the world are making their voices heard and calling for courageous decisions. They feel let down by too many unfulfilled promises, by commitments made and then ignored for selfish interests or out of expediency. The young remind us that the earth is not a possession to be squandered, but an inheritance to be handed down. They remind us that hope for tomorrow is not a noble sentiment, but a task calling for concrete actions here and now. We owe them real answers, not empty words, actions not illusions."

This year's Season of Creation is a time to heal and renew our relationship with our common home through prayer and action. The theme for 2020 is Jubilee for the Earth: New Rhythms, New Hope. According to the Holy Father, "The annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation offers to individual believers and to the community a precious opportunity to renew our personal participation in our vocation as stewards of creation, raising to God our thanks for the marvelous works that He has entrusted to our care, invoking His help for the protection of creation and his mercy for the sins committed against the world in which we live." I have attached an e-booklet consisting of reflections for each day of the Season of Creation. I encourage you to make use of it for prayer and action in your respective communities.

POST-CHAPTER REFLECTION OF THE SOCIETY OF ST FRANCIS SALES

"What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?"

On the 205th birth anniversary of our father and founder St John Bosco, on August 16, 2020, our Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, has offered the entire Salesian world the post chapter reflection, which is a summary of the work of GC28. This is what our Rector Major said while presenting this document: "Four months have passed since the closure of the 28th General Chapter. It concluded three weeks earlier than planned due to the pandemic that made our continued stay at Valdocco impossible. Today, I am offering you this presentation with sentiments of profound joy for what we experienced at Valdocco and with satisfaction for what was - I believe - a fruitful work carried out by all of us Chapter members and then completed by the General Council. This is because the Chapter Assembly entrusted the Rector Major and his Council with the task of finishing what had remained unfinished at the time of the early closure."

He goes on to explain that "This is the programmatic text that the Rector Major offers the Congregation for the six-year period from 2020-2026. In this wide-ranging proposal you will find, dear confreres, the reflection that followed on from the General Chapter, a fruit of the Chapter itself and a synthesis of the journey taken within our Congregation over the previous six years. It is a rich and extensive reflection that first of all captures the spirit of what is contained in the Message that the Holy Father, Pope Francis, sent to the General Chapter; it also brings together those elements that the Pope pointed to as essential and that were already part of the reflection developed by the Chapter Assembly on the first two thematic nuclei. The third nucleus - as you know - was drawn up by the General Council. This programmatic proposal should certainly be motive for study, analysis and further exploration both by the Provinces and by each confrere, especially by the Rectors for their service of animation and governance of the local communities."

With these initial reflections of our Rector Major, I introduce the document to you all and encourage you to read and benefit from it in living out the Charism of Don Bosco in our own context. I would like to take up this document for discussion in all our meetings of animation. You may find the document attached with this Circular Letter.

ANNUAL NATIONAL YaR CAMPAGIN

The theme chosen for the annual national YaR campaign from August 31, 2020 to August 30, 2021 is Prevent Trafficking of Children. Today there seem to be more slaves in the world than any time in the world history. An estimate shows that there are 30 million (3 crores) persons in slavery today, out of which half that number is found in our own country. 1 out of every 235 persons in the world is trafficked, trapped in modern slavery. Every 30 seconds 1 person becomes a victim of trafficking in some part of the world. In India, a child goes missing every 8 minutes. Only about a half of them are ever found again. Trafficking is an issue that we cannot imagine as a problem that exists in some remote corner of the world. It is a national, state, community and neighbourhood issue. As guardians, care-givers and shepherds of the young, we are called upon and mandated by the Lord to protect our children, especially those at risk of being trafficked. Let us be aware, alert and knowledgeable in this important issue and let us equip our children to be on their guard. This is the goal of our campaign this year - #BreakMyChains, #ReturnMyDreams. Let us work towards making this campaign a success in our own Province.

COLORS OF LIFE, A SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

The Province Social Communications Department has launched an online short film festival on August 24, 2020, inviting all participants to become creative agents of change and awareness on the most relevant and urgent issues of the world, namely, combating COVID-19 under the title of LIFE IN COVID-19 and protecting our common home under the title of SAVE NATURE-SAVE FUTURE. The themes for the short film festival are relevant and meaningful and the film itself can be made in any language with English subtitles. It is open to everyone, but we hope that many young people will make use of this opportunity to push the limits of their own creativity, explore new territory, and enrich us with a film that becomes a medium of transformation and action for a better and safer world. The film festival christened as COLORS OF LIFE also saw the launching of the website <http://dbpcolorsoflife.com>, Face Book, Twitter and Instagram pages of the same, which can be visited for more information and ideas. As I congratulate Fr Lingampally Ashok, the provincial delegate for Social Communications and the commission, for this wonderful initiative that will certainly bring out the best of what our young people can offer to the world through their short films, I also urge all of you to get the local youth involved in the film festival and enrich themselves by enriching us with their short films. The last date for the submission of short films is October 07, 2020.

INTERNATIONAL SALESIAN COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE

The online meeting held by the General Councilor for Social Communications, Fr Gildasio Dos Mendes on August 26, 2020 saw the launching of the Salesian International Commission for Social Communication. The meeting was attended by the Delegates for Social Communication of the various Regions, namely, Zaida Elisa Navarrete (America), Fr Pierluigi Lanotte (Mediterranean Europe), Fr James Gardner (Central-Northern Europe), Fr Ernest Rosario (South Asia), Fr Lijo Vadakkan (Africa-Madagascar) and Fr Peter P Chinh (East Asia-Oceania). The newly established commission's activities for social communications will be coordinated, in subsequent meetings, by Fr Ernest Rosario and will meet approximately once a year in Rome, so that they will have the opportunity to discuss and deepen various topics, but also to meet with the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime. The commission was also asked to take into account the Rector Major's program for the next six years. The role of each member of the Commission will be to animate and give continuity to the work and ministry of the Communication Department of each Region. We congratulate Fr Gildasio and his newly constituted commission and wish them success and fruitfulness in touching the lives of young people through the powerful means of social communications.

SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL FORMATION COMMISSION MEETING

South Asia Regional Formation Commission Meeting 2020 was held online from August 27 to 30, 2020. The meeting focused attention on 'drafting of a regional formation plan,' as a way to carry forward the vision of the Congregation, worked out in the recent General Chapter 28. Rector Major, in his "Action Programme after GC28," had proposed the revision of the Ratio and of the Criteria and Norms. Hence this meeting also focused on proposals and suggestions about how best the task of revision can be carried out.

The meeting also discussed various concerns of formation pertaining to our region and ways to tackle them. Based on the post chapter documents, the meeting paid particular attention to formation in mission and sharing of our spirit and mission with lay mission partners. The meeting, coordinated by Fr. Jose Kuttianimattathil and presided over by Fr. Ivo Coelho the General Councillor for Formation, was attended by 25 participants.

ASPIRANTATES

Chandur

We will be reopening our Aspirantate at Chandur on 10 September 2020 for the post-Inter and post-Degree candidates. On 21 September, the aspirants who are currently pursuing intermediate studies will be joining the community at Chandur. Until the junior college reopens, they will be engaged in a special formation programme.

Muniguda

The Lord continues to bless us with many vocations from Orissa, the mission land of the Province. There are already 19 professed members in our Province. This year, there are 21 aspirants, who have already joined the Aspirantate at Muniguda. We thank the Rector and all the confreres of the community for making efforts to inspire and invite young men to consider our way of life. Let us continue to pray for vocations for the Salesian way of life, especially for Salesian brotherhood.

UPCOMING PROVINCE MEETINGS

07 September 2020	Provincial Council with Rectors, In-charges and Parish Priests (Online)
07 September 2020	Webinar on LAUDATO SI' (The Second Green Commandment) by Mr P.J. Job and Fr Vattigunta Ignatius SDB
08 September	Provincial Council with Administrators (Online)
17 September 2020	Webinar on Carbon Foot Print Audit by Fr T.D. John SDB
15 September	Provincial Council with DBNJ Vijayawada
16 September	Provincial Council with DBNJ Vijayawada
21 September 2020	Online Clerics/Brothers' Meet
30 September 2020	Scrutiny - I to be submitted to Provincial Office

SALESIAN SANCTITY IN SEPTEMBER

22 September	MEMORIAL - Bl Joseph Calasanz Marques, Enrico Saiz aparicio, Priests and 93 Companions, Martyrs,
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CONDOLENCES

We offer our heartfelt condolences:

- to the Provincial and confreres of the Province of Kolkata at the death of Fr Thomas Kanjirathumkal, who left for his eternal reward on August 02, 2020 at the age of 86 and at the death of Fr Reginald D'Silva, who was called by the Lord on August 16, 2020 at the age of 68.

May the Blessed Lord in his mercy receive them into His heavenly inheritance and grant us the constant support of their intercession!

CONCLUSION

Respect for the planet's resources

Pope Francis has released a video message accompanying his prayer intention for September, which this month is respect for the planet's resources: that we "take care of Creation responsibly". In his prayer intention for September 2020, Pope Francis asks everyone to pray that we learn to respect the planet's resources. It has become the custom of Pope Francis to release a

video message detailing his prayer intention for each month. I share with you the full text of the prayer intention of Pope Francis for September:

We are squeezing out the planet's goods. Squeezing them out, as if the earth were an orange. Countries and businesses from the global north have enriched themselves by exploiting the natural resources of the south, creating an "ecological debt." Who is going to pay this debt? In addition, this "ecological debt" is increased when multinationals do abroad what they would never be allowed to do in their own countries. It's outrageous. Today, not tomorrow; today, we have to take care of Creation responsibly. Let us pray that the planet's resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner. No to plundering; yes to sharing. Each year, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation is observed on September 1. The international celebration marks the beginning of the Season of Creation, which extends to 4 October, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology.

Yours in the Lord,



Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar,
Provincial

