



PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

Salesian Province of St. Joseph, Hyderabad



INH/TVB/CIR 12/2020

OCTOBER 2020

A Home Church

We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel! - Pope Francis

Dear confreres,

Greetings from Don Bosco Provincial House. May our Lady of the Holy Rosary protect us and the world from this pandemic situation as the Covid-19 infections continue to wreak havoc in our lives. We have almost topped the list of the number of positive cases in the world, now standing only second to the US, if the official statistics are to be believed. This has brought about a meteoric rise in unemployment, unprecedented levels of poverty, disparity in access to education and learning, the digital divide, the plight of the migrants, etc. We also see the return of the same migrant workers, who are once again flocking back to the cities where they once worked, thus letting themselves be drawn into a sort of modern-day slavery where they would now settle down for whatever they could get. Anxiety, stress, depression and hopelessness are beginning to take their toll on most people.

Amidst this chaos and crisis, we see a renewed interest and thirst for God, at least among the believers. Due to the lockdown imposed all over the world, including in our own country, Churches, temples, mosques and places of worship have been out of reach of people. There has been a lockdown on community expressions of prayer and liturgy and worship. But there can never be a lockdown on personal prayer. Through personal prayer we can get into a deep intimacy with the Lord, a personal and close relationship with God. At least in this area of our life, we are not bound or fettered by the virus. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in Turin, all the Churches were shut down, but there was no ban on shopping malls (of course, eventually they too were shut down). Some devout Catholics raised their voices against this and expressed that even if everything else was closed down, the Churches should never be kept out of reach of people. Especially in the pandemic of such global proportions as what we have been witnessing, Churches should remain instruments of God's mercy and healing.

We have gone through the process of unlocking the country from 1.0 through 4.0. Even as we are now in the midst of unlock 5.0, the Churches are still empty, not because people do not want to pray, but because of the persisting gravity of the situation. There is the fear of a second wave, which is already spreading like wild fire in Europe and it might not take too long for us to experience the same. This would certainly add to the misery already caused by the staggering number of cases of infections and deaths in India. In this context of global crisis, helplessness, uncertainty and misery, we have turned our attention to the 'better part' and given priority to the moments of prayer in our communities. These moments have become sacred moments and even the reluctant souls have begun to join the main fold, walking with the community to approach the Almighty in worship and pray for our fallen world.

In this circular I invite you to reflect on the responsibility of sustaining the faith of our people. We have 14 parishes and 2 places of public worship. Being a missionary Province, over the years, we have carried out a phenomenal work of evangelization. We thank all the pioneers, the parish priests, all our confreres and lay mission partners involved in the parish ministry in the Province. Primarily, we are messengers of Christ, who has come to proclaim the Good News to the poor. Since March 2020, as the Churches were closed for worship, most of us had recourse to the media platforms to provide online Mass, organize online retreats and other spiritual programmes for the faithful. Community worship is an integral part of our faith, but the pandemic has robbed our faithful of their participation in the Eucharist and sacramental life. The parish priest of Don Bosco Shrine, Bandlaguda was sharing with me some time ago that people were calling him and expressing their longing for Holy Communion. We pray and worship together as the body of Christ and as a single family of faith. Sacramental life is replete with signs and symbols that draw us close to God-experience. How do we sustain our people in their faith in this precarious situation? We need to understand that it will take a while for us to resume our normal lives. There will be a lot of fear and apprehension in the minds of people to return to Churches for liturgical celebrations; although we are slowly reopening our Churches, taking the necessary safety precautions. In a situation like this, we cannot be disheartened, but make use of all possible means and creative methods to sustain and strengthen the faith of our people. Just an online mass or a sermon will not suffice. Over time, it can be monotonous and people could just become spectators as if they were watching some TV programme. It could lead to a sort of pre-Vatican II experience of passive participation. Pastoral Creativity that involves some sort of interaction/participation is the need of the hour.

I would like to recommend two proposals. The first proposal is to have an active pastoral concern for each family of the parish community expressed through regular interaction with different families through phone or digital platforms - paying a sort of digital pastoral visit to families. Calling up the faithful personally and speaking to them will be a great act of charity and spiritual closeness. This will give us opportunities to know their struggles, their challenges and encourage them to hold firm to their faith. We could effectively involve our lay mission partners / our catechists in reaching out to the faithful wherever possible. I recommend all the parish communities to ensure that we are in touch with every single family of the parish. Let us have a special concern for the poor.

The second proposal is to encourage and strengthen an active domestic Church - Home Church. What we are going through now reminds us of the days of the early Church. Christians in the early Church practiced their faith in their families and in their small Christian communities. Every family was a domestic Church. In Acts, we read that they were meeting together to break bread in different homes (Acts 2:46). At the time of the persecutions, they were in hiding and yet kept their faith. St Paul presents to us the example of Priscilla and Aquila who were a wonderful example of a Home Church. St Paul speaks of their home as 'domus ecclesiae' the house of the Church where they listened to the Word of God and celebrated the Eucharist (1 Cor 16:19). Pope Francis acknowledges that among the laity we find great faith and apostolic commitment. Our faith takes root through families that nurture it. Pope Benedict says that families become the 'humus' for the growth of faith (Holiness is Always in Season - Pope Benedict XVI). As Salesians and pastors of souls, we need to be convinced of the need to transform every home into a little domestic church. Parents are the first teachers and transmitters of faith to their children. Let us pro-actively encourage and strengthen the domestic church and keep the faith alive in our Christian families.

BOOK ON LATE ARCHBISHOP DOMINIC JALA SDB

The book entitled "An Affable Pastor" was released on 03 September by Fr Paul Olphindro Lyngkot, Provincial of the Province of Shillong. It is a commemorative volume co-edited by Brother MA Abraham and Fr Jose Varickasseril. The sole intention of publishing this book was to keep alive the memory of Late Archbishop Jala who was a versatile person and a pastor who was very human, and who died prematurely in a car accident on 10 October 2019 near Wilbur Springs, in Colusa County, California, United States. The volume is composed of a wide range of articles comprising of Theological, Philosophical, Biblical, Canonical, Kerygmatic, Catechetical and Liturgical themes. This book could be added to your list as you have that extra hour for reading created by Covid-19.

CLOSER TO SALESIAN HISTORY

The "Casa Don Bosco Museum" built at the Salesian complex in Turin-Valdocco was inaugurated on 2 October 2020. The project and design of the new museum followed a philological line that brought to light the original rooms of the second half of the 19th century. To all this was added the exhibition of Marian, liturgical, devotional and artistic collections, while considerable restoration work was applied to furnishings, fabrics, objects of artistic and devotional value. "Our Congregation of the 'Salesians of Don Bosco' has the joy and responsibility of delivering, for the good of the whole Salesian family in the world, for the pilgrims and tourists of the City of Turin, the new, completely renovated museum design of the places of the origins of Don Bosco's educational and spiritual adventure," declared the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime. The rooms located under the courtyard and the Mother House were renovated, but the collection of objects belonging to both Don Bosco and the first Salesian community was also completely restored. It is a heritage to be discovered and enjoyed, to appreciate its cultural, devotional and Salesian identity. From January 2021 the Museum will be included in the Museum Subscription circuit. The opening of the new Museum represents a unique opportunity to get closer to the Salesian history.

STRENNA 2021

'Moved by hope: "See, I am making all things new" (Rev 21: 5)'

This is the title that the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, has chosen for the message of his Strenna for 2021. As every year, his message is accompanied by a poster that graphically translates the insights and orientations that the Father and Center of Unity of the Salesian Family intends to offer to all the followers of Don Bosco. The poster for the Strenna of 2021 is being sent to Salesian houses all over the world in these days. Following on from a path already undertaken some years ago, that of assigning the preparation of the poster of the Strenna to artists from different contexts and geographical origins - so as to grasp each time the different sensitivities present in the Salesian universe - the Department for Social Communication wished to privilege the perceptions of Latin America for this edition.

After speaking with many Provincials, heard their needs, and after consulting members of the General Council, with the leaders of the Salesian Family and the Salesians of the Salesian Central Office, the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, elaborated the theme of the Strenna for 2021, emblem of the Salesian response to the current situation generated by the pandemic: Hope moves us: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21,5). I will soon share with you the complete text of the presentation of the Strenna, which we will begin to use for our reflection and animation in due course of time.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK AND ELDERLY

We have been accompanying Fr Joseph Abraham, who is waiting to undergo a surgery, involving liver transplant. We are very hopeful that this procedure can be carried out within a short time from now. I continue to urge you to keep him in your prayers even as we render our fraternal support and closeness to other sick and elderly confreres, Fr Chacko Thattil, Fr T. V. Thomas, Fr T. D. John and Fr Maddhichetty Michael. As you have been already informed, Fr V. M. George and Fr E.J. Mathew have both undergone a medical procedure through which a stent has been placed in the coronary artery. They both are fine, recuperating and getting back to their daily routine in their respective communities. Fr Thathireddy Michael has undergone a minor surgery and is recovering well in the Provincial House. As we pray for our confreres, let us not lose sight of the entire suffering humanity, which is desperately waiting for God's intervention and a breakthrough in the preparation of the right vaccine that can release us from the clutches of this unprecedented pandemic.

PROVINCE DIRECTORY 2020-21

You have already received the digital copy of the Province Directory for 2002-21. I thank both the Don Bosco Publishing House and the office of the Secretary for coordinating the work of gathering and correcting information. Hard copies are being prepared for our Communities; however only one hard copy will be dispatched to each Community for the archives, as a small sign of our ecological sensitivity.

UPCOMING PROVINCE MEETINGS/EVENTS

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| 05 October | Webinar on LAUDATO SI' (The Third Green Commandment) By Fr Thomas Santiago |
| 10 October | Provincial Council |
| 15 October | Webinar on "Watershed Management and Community Building," By Bro Alex Gonsalves, BOSCO GRAMIN VIKAS KENDRA, Vanashree Puraskar Awardee by the Govt. of Maharashtra |
| 20 October | Online Clerics/Brothers' Meet |
| 22 October | Commission / Sector / Centre Heads' Meet |
| 23 October | Young priests' Meet |

SALESIAN SANCTITY IN OCTOBER

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| 05 October 2020 | Bl. Albert Marvelli, lay person |
| 13 October 2020 | Bl. AlexandrinaMaria da Costa, virgin |
| 24 October 2020 | St. Luigi Guanella, Priest and Founder of the Servants of Charity |
| 29 October 2020 | Bl. Michael Rua, priest and first successor of Don Bosco |

CONDOLENCES

We offer our heartfelt condolences:

- to Fr Pentareddy Jayapaul, who lost his eldest brother Mr P. Innareddy on 12 September at the age of 68.

- to Fr Goli Suman and to the bereaved family at the death of Mr G. Suresh, the elder brother of Fr Suman. He succumbed to Covid-19 at St. Theresa's Hospital on 14 September. He was only 38 years old.
- to Bro Chinnabathuni Gregory and his loved ones at the death of Mrs. Mariarojamma, the niece of Bro Gregory. She died on 16 September at the age of 55.
- to our Cleric Tekulapally Praveen and family at the death of Mr Tekulapally Jayaraju, the father of CI Praveen. He died on 18 September.
- To the Provincial and confreres of the Province of Kolkata at the sad demise of Fr Mathew Vezhambecherry on 30 September at the age of 75.

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

CONCLUSION

Month of the Holy Rosary

The presence and protection of our Mother Mary has immense power – requested, channeled, and honored through the rosary. Her immaculate intercession has won wars and conquered hearts. After the feast day was established, the entire month of October was dedicated to the rosary in 1884 by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Superiore Anno*:

“Last year, as each of you is aware, We decreed by an Encyclical Letter that, to win the help of Heaven for the Church in her trials, the great Mother of God should be honored by the means of the most holy Rosary during the whole of the month of October. In this We followed both Our own impulse and the example of Our predecessors, who in times of difficulty were wont to have recourse with increased fervor to the Blessed Virgin, and to seek her aid with special prayers.”

Although the commitment to the rosary was formalized in 1571, it was an established prayer long before then. The rosary was first given to Saint Dominic by the Virgin Mary during an apparition in 1214 in Prouilhe of southern France. She presented it as a source of strength and grace to persevere in his efforts to convert Albigensian heretics, saying:

“Wonder not that you have obtained so little fruit by your labors, you have spent them on barren soil, not yet watered with the dew of Divine grace. When God willed to renew the face of the earth, He began by sending down on it the fertilizing rain of the Angelic Salutation. Therefore preach my Psalter composed of 150 Angelic Salutations and 15 Our Fathers, and you will obtain an abundant harvest.”

The image of Our Lady of the Rosary reflects this apparition, with Mary holding the child Jesus in one hand and the other hand extending to give the rosary beads to Saint Dominic. Pope Benedict explained the meaning behind the image in a 2007 *Angelus*:

“This important iconography shows that the Rosary is a means given by the Virgin to contemplate Jesus and, in meditating on his life, to love him and follow him ever more faithfully. It is this message that Our Lady has also bequeathed to us in her various apparitions.”

We know it to be one of the most recited and celebrated Catholic prayers – used to implore our Mother Mary for her intercession and blessings. Saint John Paul II expanded on the rosary's power in his 2002 apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, when he announced the Year of the Rosary and the addition of the Luminous Mysteries:

“With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at the school of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.”

As we live through the month of October, let us renew our devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary – reflecting on its origins saving nations and individuals in times of conflict and despair and disease.

Yours in the Lord,



Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar,
Provincial

