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SALESIAN PROVINCE OF HYDERABAD



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"WE ARE A FAMILY! Every home, a school of Life and Love".

Dear Confreres,

Greetings from Don Bosco Provincial House. I wish you a grace filled and a happy New Year 2017. As we thank the Lord for the gift of yet another year, let us resolve to give the best of our energies to the mission entrusted to us and live our lives with greater communion as brothers. I am back after a very enriching experience of the new Provincials' Course in Italy. We were ten provincials from Africa, South Asia, Europe and America. I took this opportunity also to visit some agencies that are supporting us in our mission to thank them for their support and collaboration. I wish to thank Fr Yeruva Joji, the vice provincial who took charge of the Province during my absence. I thank him especially for being present for the three ordinations. His tireless action and humble life style is surely a blessing to the province.

Strenna 2017 - "WE ARE A FAMILY! Every home, a school of Life and Love".

In the strenna of this year, Fr Angel Fernandez Artime, wishes to focus on the Family. The choice of the theme of the Strenna of 2017 is in response to the synod on the Family and the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, '*Amoris Laetitia*'. In the light of these reflections by the Church, the Council of the Salesian Family has asked for an elaboration of the topic of the family. It is also our mission as a Salesian Family in the light of the Preventive System of Don Bosco: "to make the world a home, like a big family playground of friends, of apprenticeship of life, of encounter with God."

All of us have a strong personal experience of being born in a family. We learnt there the beauty as well as the limitations of a family. It is in a family that we are given a name, an identity and dignity. It is our first school. At the same time the family is not just an anthropological and sociological reality, but transcends these human sciences as a spiritual reality. Family for us is a *signum* and *sacramentum* of the Triune God, who is love.

We are also bound together by the concept of family as a religious group called the Salesian Family. In fact many of the religious groups which form part of our great Salesian Family have taken the family spirit as a constitutive part of their identity. We are called as a Family to give a Salesian reading of the theme of the Family.

As part of the Strenna we are invited to acquaint ourselves in a more profound manner with the apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, a realistic, direct, profound and suggestive text. It is beautiful to note that this exhortation starts with the cultural and human experiences of families, rather than with the theological and scriptural *apriori*.

We are also called to reflect on our pastoral and educational contribution towards the family. We are exhorted to be close to the families to help, construct and repair the bonds, which unite a family. We are called towards a decisive and incisive pastoral accompaniment. To this end some of the guidelines proposed are:

- a) Accompany parents, spouses and heads of families
- b) Accompany children, especially those who are part of our works.
- c) Accompany our youth, who are oriented towards Matrimony and forming Family.

In order to accompany the present day family, one needs to avoid a canonical approach, which at times tends to be judgmental and adopt an approach that is pastoral. Pope Francis affirms this attitude when he says, *“At times we have proposed a far too abstract and almost artificial theological ideal of marriage, far removed from the concrete situations and practical possibilities of real families. This excessive idealization, especially when we have failed to inspire trust in God’s grace, has not helped to make marriage more desirable and attractive, but quite the opposite.”* (AL 36) As educators, we are called to commit ourselves towards a family ministry that seeks to understand and help to establish a deeper significance of family and marriage which is a school of life and love.

Fr Jacob MD: A man who epitomized faith and hope

On 15 January 2017, we will commemorate the first death anniversary of Fr Jacob Monnanapallil. We will have the Holy Eucharist at Don Bosco Philosophate Karunapuram at 11.00 am.

Two words which summarise the life of Fr Jacob, are Faith and Hope. He spent 22 years of his Salesian Life on a wheelchair and 28 in active apostolate, but all the fifty years in humble submission to the Divine Will and with a heart full of love for the poor, weak and downtrodden. During his years before the accident he was known for his untiring and zealous work in rural areas. On that ill-fated 22 August 1994, he was paralyzed due to a bus accident (*a journey he undertook to arrange non-formal training for a poor boy*) and his words were, *'I don't consider this as an accident but as God's will for me.'*

Hope: It is not pretending that troubles don't exist. It is an understanding that they won't last forever.

Any ordinary man would lose hope when he doesn't see the light of day. But where others saw the end of the road, Fr Jacob saw the beginning of a new journey. People who met him for the first time, often looked at him with pity and felt sad for his helpless condition. A few moments spent with him, would leave them soul searching. He was a man who allowed his light to shine, and time spent with him, would allow you automatically to look towards the future with hope. His very presence would inspire others to let their light shine. In spite of his condition of complete dependence, he had the assurance that what was happening to him was the Lord's will and he always sought to make Christ known through his words and actions. Even if we want to, we cannot forget his days as an itinerant paralyzed preacher, preaching from his ambulance and from his stretcher. Touring villages in spite of his condition just to make Christ known. But his greatest pulpit was his wheel-chair, from where he spoke of God's plan and unconditional love, not through words but by the joyful acceptance of God's will. His very life today challenges us Salesians, we who have all our physical capacities intact, to do our best to make Christ known: to look at the silver lining around the dark clouds, to look at the future with indomitable courage and unfaltering hope, however bleak it may seem.

Faith: It is not a feeling, It's a choice to trust God even when the road ahead seems uncertain.

Three constant companions of Fr Jacob were his Bible, his Breviary and his Rosary. These companions sustained him and supported him during his long and arduous journey of 22 years on the wheel chair. I can in all sincerity and earnestness declare that it was because of his constant and continuous union with God that Fr Jacob lived his years meaningfully and fruitfully. Fr Jacob had a rock solid faith and trust in the heavenly Father. His offering of his suffering together with the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist was a daily source of inspiration

and power. His filial recital of the rosary, showed how devoted he was to the Divine Mother, whose intercession gave him constant support. His recital of the breviary and his constant contemplation on the scriptures were the pillars on which his faith was sustained. It was a meaningful celebration of these common practices that allowed him to live his life fruitfully, in spite of his condition. His life is again a challenge thrown to all of us, to enliven our faith. To be faithful to these basic practices, which I believe will allow us to live our lives meaningfully and fruitfully, in the vineyard of the Lord.

Congratulations

New Provincials

Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime, our Rector Major, has appointed Fr. Antony Joseph as the 4th Provincial of the Salesian Province of Our Lady of Health Velankanni, Tiruchy, and Fr. Kochamkunnel Jose (KM) as the 14th Provincial of the Salesian Province of St. Thomas the Apostle, Chennai for the sessenium 2017-2023. In the name of all the confreres of our province, I extend our hearty Congratulations to the newly appointed Provincials and their respective provinces. We assure them of our prayerful support. I also take this opportunity to thank Fr. Albert Johnson and Fr. Jayapalan Raphael, the outgoing Provincials of Tiruchy and Chennai respectively, for the six years of service that they rendered to the Congregation.

New Priests

I wish to congratulate Fr Mallavarapu Anil, Fr Aduri Chinnababu and Fr Salibindla Sandeep Innareddy, for the gift of the priestly Ordination that they have received. I wish them all the best for their priestly ministry. Let us entrust these new priests to the maternal intercession of Our Lady Help of Christians. I wish to thank the parents and family members of these Salesians for offering their sons to work in the vineyard of the Lord.

Upcoming Events

Brothers/Clerics' Meet

We will be having the Brothers'/Clerics' Meet on 3 and 4 January 2017. I request all the student brothers and those in practical training to be present for this moment of animation. The Provincial Council will be interacting with the brothers on 3 January.

The Third Retreat of the Province

The third retreat of the Province will commence on 9 January at 9.30 am and will end on 14 January by 1 pm. I would like to remind all the confreres who have not yet made their annual retreat to participate in this last retreat of the academic year. Fr Joe Mannath will be the preacher.

Ordination of Deacon Gorumuchu Christuraju

As we give thanks to God for the precious gifts that we have received in December of three young priests, let us also support and pray for Deacon Gorumuchu Christuraju, who will be ordained on 29 January 2017 at Don Bosco Mission, Ravulapalem.

Team Visit

The South Asia Region will have the Team Visit from February 27 to 4 March 2017. The province of Chennai will be hosting this meeting. The provincial council will be participating in this extraordinary and singular event. I request you dear confreres to remember our region during these days, that the team visit may be a time of deep reflection about our life and mission in our region.

Condolences

Fr George Alakulam of Siliguri Nazareth Bhavan, Kolkata passed to his eternal abode on 13 December 2016 and Br Romanus Tirkey of Don Bosco, Hijiguri, Dimapur passed away on 21 December 2016. I extend my heartfelt condolences and prayerful support to Fr Nirmol Gomes, provincial of Kolkata, Fr Nestor Guria, provincial of Dimapur and the confreres of these two provinces. May their souls rest in the peaceful embrace of the Father.

Conclusion: Month of Don Bosco

January is the month dedicated to Don Bosco. We are called by the congregation to rejuvenate and redimension our presences and works. Let us remember that we are not called just to do something as Salesians but to BE Salesians, especially for the young. May our affection and devotion to our father Don Bosco be expressed in the manner in which we are involved in the lives of our young. Let us make a conscious effort to spend more time with the young under our care, especially during recreation, in the playground and in the places of encounter, engaging in meaningful and constructive relationships. As we step into

the New Year 2017, may we make this our priority: to be able to prove to all around us, especially the youngsters in our care, that Don Bosco cares and loves all!



Fr Thathireddy Vijay Bhaskar
Provincial



Salesian Saints of the Month

Blessed Louis Variara - January 15: He was born in 1875 in Asti to Pietro Variara and Liva Bussa. He entered the oratory of Turin at the age of 12 and met Don Bosco in 1887 which left a deep imprint on young Louis. He entered the novitiate on 17th August 1891. Variara did his studies in philosophy at Valsalice. In 1894 he was chosen by Fr Unia, the famous missionary to the lepers in Agua de Dios. He arrived in Agua de Dios on 6th August 1894. The mission numbered 2000 people of whom 800 were lepers. As soon as he arrived he became the life and soul of all who lived there, especially the children. He organized a band, and brightened up peoples' lives with unexpected festivity. In 1895 Fr Unia died and Luigi was alone with Fr Crippa. In 1898 he was ordained priest. He was the spiritual director of The Association of the Daughters of Mary, a group of 200 girls. From this group was born his project of a congregation which would accept also those who had leprosy as members of the institute. He founded The Congregation of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which today numbers 600 religious women.

He suffered much at the time of this founding through the lack of understanding of people and certain superiors who thought very many times of removing him from Agua de Dios. Like Don Bosco he was exemplary in obedience. Even in the face of calumny he said nothing. He was credible because he was obedient. Don Rua encouraged him from Turin. He died far from his beloved lepers, as obedience had demanded, in Cúcuta (Colombia) on 1st February 1923 at the age of 48. Now he lies in Agua de Dios, in the chapel where his Sisters are. He was declared Venerable on 2nd April 1993 and beatified by Pope John Paul II on 14th April 2002.

Blessed Laura Vicuña - January 22: Laura Vicuña was born on April 5, 1891, in Santiago, Chile, the first child of José Domingo Vicuña and Mercedes del Pino. Her father died in 1895, two days after the birth of his second child. Laura's mother moved with Laura and her younger sister to the pampas of neighboring Argentina, where she was struggling to make ends meet when she met Manuel Mora. She started living with Manuel Mora at his palce.

Mora even arranged to send the girls to a school run by the Salesian Sisters of María Auxiliadora in Junin.

Laura started attending this school in 1900, when she was nine. At the school, Laura learnt about the sinful state of life that her mother was leading and offered her life to God if he would release her mother from the sinful life she was leading with Mora. On the occasion of her First Communion, Laura tendered her offer.

When the school was flooded with water in winter, Laura braved frigid water for hours to bring younger children to safety. In the process, one of her kidneys became infected, and her health began to deteriorate. Laura was sure that she was going to die, and believed that this stemmed from the pact that she had made with God. On her deathbed, she told her mother about this pact, and pleaded with her to leave Mora, which she promised to do. Laura died happy and smiling on January 22, 1904, at the age of 13. True to her word, her mother changed her name and moved away, never again choosing a life of sin. Laura's remains were buried in a chapel of María Auxiliadora. She is held up as a model for young people. She was beatified on September 3, 1988 by Pope John Paul II

Saint Francis de Sales, January 24: St. Francis of Sales was born in the Savoy region of France in 1567. He studied philosophy and theology in Paris and earned a degree in civil and ecclesiastical law at Padua. After his priestly ordination, he offered his services to the bishop as a missionary to bring the Calvinists of the Chablais region back to the Catholic faith. He was made bishop of Geneva, though he had to reside at Annecy, and was zealous in preaching and putting into effect the reforms of the Council of Trent. Together with St. Jane de Chantal, he founded and directed the Order of the Visitation.

Endowed with a noble, penetrating spirit and well versed in humanism, he was an excellent spiritual director. In writing the Introduction to the Devout Life, he opened up the paths of sanctity and asceticism to everyone by showing that the essence of the spiritual life lies in the love of God. In his Treatise of the Love of God, he developed this thought into a simple spirituality which could be called an “incarnational” spirituality, finding God in the daily ordinary things of every day, and serving God alone even in the smallest, most mundane tasks we must perform.

This ability to bring God into daily life was that which attracted Don Bosco to his spirituality. Don Bosco was also impressed by the tireless efforts of St. Francis de Sales to spread an understanding of the Catholic faith: St. Francis used to stay up late at night writing multiple copies of papers to explain the teachings of the Catholic Church. He then went from house to house, placing these tracts under the doors of the people in his diocese.

Don Bosco took inspiration from St. Francis of Sales' apostolate, from his kindly goodness, from his humanity and wanted him as the patron of the Salesian Society. Don Bosco desired that his Salesians would use this same gentleness in dealing with young people.

St. Francis de Sales died in Lyons on December 28, 1622. His feast day on January 24th marks the anniversary of the transfer of his remains to Annecy on January 24, 1623. St. Francis de Sales was canonized in 1665 and proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1877; he was declared the patron of Catholic journalists and writers in 1923.