

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

SALESIAN PROVINCE OF HYDERABAD



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December 2016

A Call for Transformation - Visit of the Rector Major

Dear Confreres,

Greetings from Rome. Our Salesian work began with a 'Hail Mary' 175 years ago when Don Bosco encountered Bartholomew Garelli on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. It is 25 years since the birth of our Province. We joyfully celebrated the growth of our apostolate during these years. We also had the added joy of the meeting with the 10th successor of Don Bosco, Rev. Fr Angel Fernandez. It was indeed a historical moment for each one of us. It was an opportunity to look back at our origins and thank God for all the accomplishments as a Province. The presence of Fr Angel Fernandez was certainly a stimulus for us to look ahead with greater enthusiasm and hope.

In this circular I wish to share with you some of the impressions and exhortations of the Rector Major. He appreciated most, our preferential option for the poor. *"I have been especially touched by the choice that this province has made for the poorest of the poor. This is the health and the charismatic strength of your Province,"* he said on more than one occasion. He was also impressed by our simple and poor life style. He expressed a great hope for our Province as we are blessed with many young confreres. We have a bright future, provided we nurture and support the young Salesians with proper formative ambiance and spiritual direction.

In resonance with his vision for the congregation during this sesennium and looking at the needs of our Province, he offered us some guidelines. He averred that we are at an important juncture, at the crossroads where we have to make important and courageous choices as a Province. The growth or the decline of the Province will depend on these

choices. This transformation should take place at the personal as well as the community level.

Personal Transformation: The personal transformation which Fr Angel Fernandez spoke about centered around our maturity and identity as Salesians. There is a need to grow in human and Salesian maturity that should lead us to be happy in our vocation. One of the first and foremost signs of maturity is to be able to put up with the difficulties and problems of day to day life. It can be observed that most often our problems are small and insignificant compared to the problems of the poor and abandoned. It is we who blow them up out of proportion. Lack of maturity makes life difficult for ourselves and for others in the community. It blurs our vision of our Salesian identity and we easily fall prey to the temptation of leaving in search of something different. The loss of so many confreres in the past few years is a worrying phenomenon in our Province. A way forward will be to insist on on-going formation. Our province is young and many confreres are in the initial stages of formation. Nearly 37 percent of the Province is composed of confreres at this stage. Greater attention has to be given to spiritual direction and accompaniment of these confreres, states the Rector Major.

Communitarian Transformation: This second transformation like the first one, ensues from a challenge. Fraternal and community life is a big challenge in the congregation and in this Province too. We need to understand that activity is not the scope of our coming together as a community. We do not live together for work. Rather we come together to give witness to the Gospel. Most of the communities in the Province have only two or three confreres, which is far too insufficient for good community life. Primarily we need to have numerically consistent communities. It does not mean that having six confreres will set everything right. But it definitely creates a community with more opportunities to grow and mature. The focus here is on our community bonding and witness. Sometimes in our communities confreres meet only twice a day or even less. This is not the way to go ahead in a religious congregation. To open more houses and multiply works under the pretext of doing more good to the poor was a rather impetuous decision. This way we put ourselves at a greater risk. We are also putting the province and the congregation at risk. It is a sad thing to see confreres struggling to carry on doing what they are doing, with three or four responsibilities, sacrificing their community life and prayer. The way ahead is to ensure more stable communities.

Let these recommendations of our Rector Major be the guiding principles that influence our choices and decisions. We have a rich potential as a Province. We should be daring enough to make the right choices that will define our future.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank you dear confreres for your participation and for all the efforts that you have put in to make the Jubilee celebrations meaningful and fruitful. We have lived these days of grace with serenity along with the whole Salesian family, the youth, our collaborators and benefactors. We march on with great passion and commitment.

Gratitude

Dear confreres, we have lived the days of the Jubilee and the visit of our beloved Rector Major with joy and gratitude. I would like to thank Fr Joji the Vice Provincial for coordinating these events very efficiently. I express my thanks to Fr Androth the Economer and the organizing committee for their hard work, coordination and execution of various events. I would like to thank in a special manner the Rectors and community members of Don Bosco Provincial House, BIRDY, Don Bosco Navajeevan - Ramanthapur, Don Bosco School - Guntupalli and St. Michael's Boys Home - Guntur for hosting and organizing the visit of the Rector Major and the Province Jubilee so meaningfully and efficiently. You have gone out of your way and spared no efforts in making these events historical and memorable. Fr Angel Fernandez himself expressed his gratitude for the meaningful way in which the visit was organized and for the opportunity for meeting and interacting with the confreres and the Salesian family.

Upcoming Events

Ordinations to Priesthood

This year we are blessed with four ordinations to priesthood. The following are the dates and venues of their ordinations.

23 December - Dc. Mallavarapu Anil at Guntur

27 December - Dc. Aduri Chinnababu at Kurnavelli, Thallada, KhammamDt.

29 December - Dc. Salibindla Sandeep Innareddy at Rentachintala, GunturDt.

29 January 2017 - Dc. Gorumuchu Christuraj at Don Bosco, Ravulapalem.

As we give thanks to God for these precious gifts that he gives to our Province and the Church, let us accompany them with our fraternal support and prayers that they may become true witnesses to the Gospel in the way of Don Bosco.

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.

Administrators' Meet / Leaders' Meet / Provincial Community Day

On 2 and 3 February there will be a meeting for all the administrators of our Province. On 3 February, there will be a meeting for all the Leaders of our Province and in the evening there will be a simple celebration of the Provincial Community Day. The Programme will conclude with supper on 3 February. Hence make your travel arrangements accordingly.

Condolences

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Fr Nirmol Gomes, the provincial and the confreres of the Kolkata Province at the loss of two of their confreres. Br James Mampilly passed away to eternal life on 22 November 2016 and Br Mani Theruvil, entered his eternal rest on 27 November, 2016. May their souls rest in the peaceful embrace of the Heavenly Father.

Merry Christmas

This Christmas I will still be in Rome. During this trip, I have witnessed first hand the challenge of immigration that Europe is facing. Scores of refugees have entered Europe seeking safety, security and a better future. A vast majority of the people here are open to welcome immigrants and refugees. However some of the refugees still need a place, a home and someone who can accept them. It occurred to me that the Gospels speak of the birth of Jesus and the desperate situation of Joseph and Mary finding a place for the Saviour to be born. Looking at the present situation, even after 2000 years, Jesus is still a refugee searching for a place in the hearts of people. Drawing inspiration from this context, I pray dear Confreres that this Christmas be a moment of grace for us, to truly open the doors of our hearts to welcome Him, so that He may be born in our hearts and make His home with us. Let our hearts be open to receive our young people, the poor and needy, our collaborators and staff members, and don't forget our confreres.

Wish you all a very happy and meaningful Christmas and a grace filled New Year 2017.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar
Provincial

