



# PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

*Salesian Province of St. Joseph, Hyderabad*



INH/TVB/CIR 09/2020

JULY 2020

## LAUDATO SI' & COVID YEAR - PRIORITIES OF THE PROVINCE

Dear Confreres,

Greetings from Don Bosco Provincial House, Hyderabad. The Covid-19 pandemic has given a chance for humanity to bring out the latent goodness and concern for one another. While we see the extreme suffering and pain of the poor, we also notice the silver lining of solidarity across regions, countries and continents. As consecrated Salesian religious, we need to be at the forefront through our selfless service and radical commitment to the poor and the most vulnerable at this tragic time of the history of the world.

The pandemic has caused disruption to our normal lives. Though we could not come together physically to plan and deliberate upon our priorities for the year, the digital epiphany has given us the opportunity to think together and plan for this unique year online, on a virtual platform. We have had a series of online meetings with different groups of confreres throughout the month of June. I extend my sincere appreciation to each one of you for taking these meetings seriously and for actively participating in these meetings, which in fact proved to be effective and fruitful in planning for the new academic year 2020-21 both in terms of the priorities of the Province in these unprecedented times and also in terms of coordinating and taking forward our ministries across the Province. As a fruit of these online meetings and discussions, we have been able to finalize the priorities of the Province for the year 2020-21, which I share here with you. All the commissions, sectors and centers of the Province have been requested to submit the SEPP based on the Province priorities, which in turn will provide a concrete direction for the local communities to carry out the same exercise in formulating the SEPP and the Budget of their respective communities. I entreat every one of you to get into this planning mentality without which we will find ourselves unprepared and depleted by way of both our human and material resources, which are important in fulfilling our mission and in reaching out to those entrusted to us especially the least and the lost. I request all the communities to send in their SEPP and BUDGET by the end of July 2020. I thank Fr Rajesh Salagala our secretary for facilitating these online meetings efficiently. I extend my gratitude to Fr Thomas Santiagu the vice provincial, Fr Androth Jose the economist and Fr Sudhakar Bellamkonda the executive director of BSK for presenting information and direction concerning their respective departments. I also would like to thank all the provincial councilors for being part of these meetings and for offering their valuable suggestions and guidance.

We have taken up two priorities for this year. The first priority is to address the larger crisis that we are facing as humanity - the Ecological Crisis, succinctly presented by the papal encyclical, Laudato Si'. Pope Francis has declared this year as the Laudato Si' Year. The Encyclical takes its

name from the invocation of Saint Francis, "Praise be to you, my Lord", in his Canticum of the Creatures. It reminds everyone that the earth, our common home "is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us" (LS1). People have forgotten that "we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters." (LS2). We have formed the Laudato Si' sub-commission. Fr Jose Maliekal will be the head of this sub-commission. He will be coordinating the activities of the Laudato Si' year along with Fr Nireekshan Dasari. The second priority is to intervene altruistically on behalf of the poor during the current Covid/post-Covid pandemic.

## PRIORITY I

### CELEBRATING THE LAUDATO SI' YEAR THROUGH OUR COMMITMENT TO CARE FOR THE EARTH, OUR COMMON HOME AND ITS INHABITANTS.

1. Membership of all our communities in the DB Green Alliance and implementation of its recommendations.

Don Bosco Green Alliance is a novel idea of Fr Savio Silveira SDB the present Provincial of the Province of Mumbai. Launched in 2018, as the international collective of youth from Salesian institutions and organizations that contribute to global environmental action, thought and policy, it has spread to 56 countries and is making a great impact on the world stage through the collective of young people across the planet. Let us play our part in the care and protection of our common home through following the simple but effective actions involving the youth of our institutions and our neighbourhood.

1. Promoting Eco-clubs in our institutions - to organize workshops on eco-practices and environmental issues.
2. Zero litter - to ensure totally litter free campuses with waste-bins system.
3. Waste management - to reduce waste to a minimum and to recycle the dry waste, and organic waste to be utilized on land for cultivation.
4. Energy efficiency - to meet the energy requirement from renewable sources and plan energy usage to avoid wastage.
5. Water conservation - to monitor the water usage on the campus and reduce wastage from leakages or improper usage.
6. Sustainable travel - use less private transport and switch to public transport, and cycle/walk to proximate destinations.
7. Avoiding plastic pollution - to avoid strictly all single-use plastic items like plastic bags, cups, plates, straws, soda and water bottles, flex banners and other such disposable items.
8. Healthy food - to avoid junk food and make healthy diet choices.
9. Enriched bio-diversity - to work towards enriching the biodiversity on the campus by planting trees.
10. Green procurement - purchase all products and services that have minimal adverse environmental impacts.

2. To organize webinars on Laudato Si' for all the confreres of the Province to bring about greater awareness of the cry of the earth and the poor.

The Earth, 'our common home' is mistreated and abused, is lamenting, and its groans join those of all the forsaken of the world. Awareness of this reality is the first step towards change. The Laudato Si' sub-commission will organize webinars on the theme. Fr Joshtrom Kureethadam SDB,

our confrere will also help us in this process of understanding the encyclical and the ecological crisis that is staring us in the face. These summary presentations cannot substitute personal/community reading of the entire document. Cardinal Louis Antonio Tagle says that the entire encyclical which is the longest encyclical ever written can be summarized into one sentence: "Please read the entire encyclical." In fact, there cannot be a reasonable summary of *Laudato Si'*, since every paragraph of it is dense, insightful and illuminating, leading one to action. Let us faithfully read the entire encyclical. We shall reflect on the Ten Green Commandments of *Laudato Si'*, which is a book calling for urgent action on our part, written by Fr Joshtrom SDB, eliciting these commandments from the encyclical. We will be reflecting on a commandment each in the coming 10 successive months, starting from August 2020. We will be taking the theme of *Laudato Si'* (Praise be to you my Lord) and Ecology for all our retreats this year.

Webinars: 10 Green Commandments: Starting from the month of August 2020, on the first Monday of every month, there will be a webinar on each of the 10 commandments from 6 pm to 7 pm. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August (Monday) I will be presenting the First Green Commandment.

*Laudato Si'*: On every second Thursday of the month there will be a webinar on *Laudato Si'*/ Ecological issues from 6 pm to 7 pm. There will be a webinar on 9<sup>th</sup> July (Thursday) from 6 pm to 7 pm on *Laudato Si'*. This summary will be presented by Fr Nireekshan Dasari.

The links of the webinars will be created and sent by Fr Rajesh Salagala, the Secretary of the Province.

3. To commit ourselves to setting up and using renewable/solar energy in all our centers.

One of the greatest threats to our very existence is the use of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas. They contaminate the air, water and earth. In order to reduce the carbon print on earth, we need to have recourse to alternative sources of energy. Pope Francis affirms this need and commends those who have initiated action in this regard. "In some places, cooperatives are being developed to exploit renewable sources of energy which ensure local self-sufficiency and even the sale of surplus energy. This simple example shows that, while the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land." (LS179) As a Province, we have been using the solar energy in 21 of our communities. Let us commit ourselves to exploring the possibilities of using renewable energy in all our communities by the end of the '*Laudato Si'* Year (24 May 2021) and act judiciously in our daily use of energy.

4. To engage in watershed programs and work towards better water management and utilization of waste water.

Water is a precious commodity. Due to deforestation, increased pollution caused by unbridled industrialization, there is a massive disruption in the eco-system. This has led to minimum rainfall. As a consequence the rivers are drying up and there is depletion of the ground water. *Laudato Si'* states that "access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights". To deprive the poor of access to water means to deny "the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity." (LS30) We have to take action to save water. Some initiatives have been taken in the Vizag region through DBNJ and Bosconet to deepen the ponds, create awareness and encourage action to save and manage water through the formation of water wise clubs. DBNJ,

Vizag will share their knowledge and experience with the other communities. This could be a model to be followed in helping the village communities of our neighbourhood to respond to this need. BSK, the PDO of the Province will get actively involved in this process.

5. To organize a Laudato Si' Rally at a suitable time at each of our centers involving our neighbourhood and create online Laudato Si' movement using digital platforms.

We need to create greater awareness about the current ecological crisis and the importance of immediate action in our neighbourhood. Every community will organize a Laudato Si' rally when possible with the purpose of raising the level of awareness of the ecological crisis and the action required to overcome the crisis. We could play an active role in bringing about ecological awareness making use of digital platforms by inviting young people for online webinars and discussions on the theme.

6. To adopt and help a village that is willing to take up the urgent environmental issues for a greener and cleaner future.

Pope Francis in Laudato Si' reminds us that "each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever" (LS33). We can work towards creating clean and green villages. Every community will adopt one village in the neighbourhood and help it become integral eco-village. It consists in helping the village to save/conservate water, to deepen the existing ponds, to harvest the rainwater ensuring clean drinking water for everyone in the village and to preserve bio-diversity. We need to work towards clearing the mounting 'ecological debt' (LS51).

## PRIORITY II

PREPARING THE FUTURE BY RE- DESIGNING/RE-DEFINING OUR STYLE OF LIFE IN THE COVID CONTEXT AND IN THE SPIRIT OF LAUDATO SI'.

1. To instill hope through our radical dependence on God in prayer and adopt simpler and more frugal lifestyles with an awareness of the suffering of the poor.

This pandemic has helped us realize that in spite of all the technological and scientific advancement, we remain fragile. Let us depend on God through prayer. Let us make all our moments of prayer meaningful and personal. Let every member of the community be present for these important moments. Let us pray together as communities and ask God to free the world of this pandemic at the earliest. We have seen the plight of the poor. This is a time of solidarity, not just through our service, but also through our life of witness by adopting a simple and frugal lifestyle. Pope Francis indicates the adaptation of a 'new lifestyle' (LS 203 208), which also opens the possibility of "bringing healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power" (LS 206). This is what happens when consumer choices are able to "change the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production" (LS206). We shall commit ourselves to essential spending only. Our expenditures will strictly be on food, medicine and stationery. We shall refrain ourselves from taking any money from the administrator for incidental expenses. The administrator in turn will depend on the Rector for his personal expenditure. "Sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating" (Evangeli Gaudium 223). This approach will help us through this crisis as our resources are already stretched too thin on several fronts.

2. To ensure that inclusive education reaches every student of our institutions even in the rural areas and engage in advocacy for necessary government policies enabling inclusive education and eliminating the digital divide.

Not speaking of the other challenges, the Covid-19 has exposed once again the stark contrast between the rich and the poor and has shown that it is the poor who are always at a disadvantage. Reopening of the educational institutions might take a while. Some students have the possibility of attending online classes, while most students and especially the poor and those in the rural areas are deprived of even this opportunity. If we do not engage them in some sort of learning, they will further be left behind their peers. It is our responsibility to ensure that these poor students are engaged in learning at home. Each community, especially the school community will ensure that a graduate or a volunteer or a teacher is identified in each of the villages from where our students come, and involve them in helping the poor students in the process of learning. Let us also create awareness on different online platforms about bridging the digital divide and bringing this issue to the notice of the government agencies so that policies may be made and implemented that will ensure inclusive education for all.

3. To start Human Rights Education and form Human Rights Clubs in all our institutions.

We believe that all lives matter and all have equal rights and are entitled to equal opportunities. "Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good" (LS156), but is to be understood in a concrete way: in today's context, in which, "injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable" (LS158), committing oneself to the common good means to make choices in solidarity based on "a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters" (LS158). One of the ways of sowing the seeds of a more just and equal society is through human rights education. All of us will have to ensure that our schools in the Province include human rights education as part of the curriculum and encourage the formation of human rights clubs. This will be an effective way of responding to the cry of the poor.

4. To provide employment and skill training for the young through DISHA in collaboration with the communities of the Province.

Statistics already reveal that unemployment in India is rising at an alarming rate. Many young people have lost their jobs or will lose them in the near future. We can help these unemployed young people in two ways. We have the national office for job-placement. They have developed a website ([donboscojobs.org](http://donboscojobs.org)) and an App (JobsDBI). We need to encourage the young to register themselves on these digital platforms and look for job opportunities pan India. DHISHA, the Province career guidance and job placement office will coordinate this work in collaboration with the local communities. DHISHA will also try to arrange short-term skill training programs for young people with the collaboration of BSK, the PDO of the Province. Keeping in mind the needs of the Covid/post-Covid world and the specific needs of the locality where we are present, the communities will identify the need for relevant short-term skill training programs and seek the collaboration of DHISHA and BSK.

5. To get trained in trauma counseling and offer counseling to youth in the Covid/post-Covid context.

One of the effects of Covid-19 is the trauma that is taking a huge toll on the psychological health of many individuals. Many young and old have been subjected to psychological problems and stress. Young people need human interactions and free spaces to grow. Staying in locked up conditions for several months can lead to depression and dejection. Due to the pandemic, there

could be a sharp surge in the number of those who run away due to domestic violence and of orphans due to the increasing mortality rate of parents and the elderly. We have to be open to receive training in basic counseling skills to help young people come out of their trauma. GC28 too invites the entire Congregation to pay special attention to the needs of the young. Today, the need of the young and especially of the poor is for accompaniment. They want someone to listen to them and understand them. As a Province we will organize a few webinars and online training courses in counseling. We have to actively get involved in person to person counseling and more especially in online counseling availing ourselves of the social media platforms.

6. To help the Migrants in collaboration with Civil Society Organizations.

We have seen the plight of the poor migrants during the period of the national lock down. We have heard, read and seen on TV the horrifying drama of the poor migrants and their desperate attempts to get back to their families hundreds of kilometers away. Many have suffered hunger, fatigue, sun-burn and some have even succumbed to these trying conditions. Having reached their own states after much ordeal they find themselves in abject poverty without any work or resources. Many of them now want to return to cities in search of employment. Under these circumstances, they will be even more vulnerable and can easily become victims of exploitation. All the communities of our Province will have to reach out to the migrants/guest workers. Every community needs to identify one Salesian who will be the contact person for migrant ministry in the respective community and in the immediate neighbourhood. The YaR commission will coordinate the migrant ministry at the Province level.

Let these concluding thoughts of Pope Francis be ours too. "In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God, for if the world has a beginning and if it has been created, we must enquire who gave it this beginning, and who was its Creator. Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope" (LS244). "God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give Him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. Praise be to him!" (LS245)

#### NEW DEACONS AT SHILLONG

We extend our hearty congratulations to our Clerics Kakumanu Praveen, Thumma Pradeep and Muthyala Sudhakar on their diaconate ordination on July 01, 2020 at Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong, Mawlai. As you know they are unable to travel to the Province at the moment for their diaconate ministry. However we wish our deacons a fruitful and fulfilling ministry as servants of God's Word, which challenges them to love the Word, live the Word and proclaim the Word to all in season and out of season. Let us accompany them with our prayerful support and fraternal closeness.

#### INFORMATION/DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

##### Students of Theology

The students of theology managed to reach KJC safely. This year, all the first year students have been sent to Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore for their theological studies. After a week-long quarantine at KJC, they are expected to start the new academic year. We wish them all the best.

### Formation Houses in the Province

This year we are blessed with 14 novices. All of them have reached the novitiate and are fully engaged in the process of intensive formation and preparation for their first religious profession. About 15 pre-novices have already reached Don Bosco, Wyra. A few more pre-novices are in touch with us and as soon as the situation permits, they will travel to the pre-novitiate at Wyra. Due to the restrictions imposed by civil authorities on travel and the continuous rise of infections in various parts of our states, the aspirants have not yet reached Chandur or Muniguda. We will be inviting the aspirants to travel when the situation permits. Similarly, St Paul's Regional Seminary at Nuzvid and the Don Bosco Philosophate at Karunapuram and St John's Regional Seminary at Kondadaba too will be able to invite seminarians/students only as and when the situation becomes normal. However, plans are underway to commence online classes for philosophy students as it is being done by most of the seminaries across India.

### Schools/Technical Schools/Parishes/ Boardings

As there is a huge spike in the number of infections each day, we may not be able to re-start our schools, colleges, technical institutes, boardings, etc., in the near future. Let us pay heed to the instructions being given by the government departments. However, it is important to be in touch with our students and engage them in some form of learning till we are able to reopen our institutions. As indicated in the priorities, each community has to identify volunteers, graduates or teachers in different villages and invite them to collaborate with us in engaging our students in the process of learning in their respective villages.

### Clerics/Brothers in Formation

We are trying our best to help our brothers and clerics reach their respective places of ministry and studies. Fr Vice Provincial is following it up by making necessary travel arrangements for them. Two of our clerics from Nashik are expected to return to the Province on this Sunday (July 05, 2020). The conditions in several states are not favorable for travel and hence some of our clerics and brothers may be held up for a longer time than expected in reaching their respective communities either for practical training or for studies.

### Sick Confreres

Fr Joseph Abraham was admitted to St. Theresa's hospital a few days back due to the unexpected internal bleeding. His condition is stable now. Let us continue to pray for his speedy recovery and for all the confreres who are unwell and who are undergoing treatment. Let us pray for the speedy recovery of Fr K.M Jose, the Provincial and Fr Don Bosco Lourdasamy the Vice Provincial of the Salesian Province of Chennai.

### NEW APPOINTMENTS in the Secretariat for the Salesian Family

Fr Ángel Fernández Artime the Rector Major of our Congregation communicated the names of the new Delegates for those groups of the Salesian Family which require a direct spiritual animation by the Salesians of Don Bosco. We congratulate Fr. Joan Lluís Playà, Delegate of the Rector Major for the Secretariat of the Salesian Family. He continues to be the Ecclesiastical Assistant of the VDB (Volunteers of Don Bosco) and CDB (Volunteers with Don Bosco). We thank Fr Eusebio Muños, the former delegate of the Rector Major for his service to the entire Salesian Family. We convey our compliments to Salesian Brother Duc (Dominic) Nam Nguyen, the new Delegate of the Rector Major for the Association of the Salesian Cooperators and the Delegate of the Rector Major for the Past Pupils of Don Bosco. We also congratulate Fr. Alejandro Guevara, the Delegate of the Rector

Major as Spiritual Animator of the Association of Mary Help of Christians, accompanying first of all the ADMA PRIMARIA in Turin and, from there, the whole Association in the Salesian world.

## SALESIAN SANCTITY IN JULY

### July 07 - Blessed Mary Romero, FMA

Maria Romero Meneses was born at Granada di Nicaragua (Central America) on 13 January 1902 into a middle-class family, in which from being a little child she learned a caring sensitivity towards the poor, and in general to other people's sufferings. At twenty-one years of age she made her religious profession in the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. In the name of this her Mother and "her Queen" - as she loved to call the Madonna - she led a tireless apostolic life, creating large-scale social works in Costa Rica, where she was sent after her religious profession.

Her main concerns were for the Christian development and education of girls, women and especially mothers, taking material help and evangelization to poor families on the outskirts of towns and in the villages, afflicted by economic hardship and moral decadence; she provided literacy programmes and catechism for the poorest ones and a broad religious instruction for everyone. Her ceaseless activities did not prevent her from living prayer moments of deep intimacy and intense adoration and true mystical experience as is clear from her many occasional writings, which are a real "diary of the 'soul'". When Sister Maria finally decided to take a period of rest, she unexpectedly died and so passed on to receive her eternal reward from her dear Lord. It was 7 July 1977. The Holy Father Saint John Paul II beatified her on 14 April 2002.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

July 06	Online Meeting of Parish Priests
July 08	Provincial Council (with Formation Personnel)
July 09	Provincial Council (with YaR Communities)
July 09	Webinar on Laudato Si' at 6 pm.
July 17	Online Clerics/Brothers' Meet
July 20	Online Youth Services Coordinators' (YS) Meet
July 22	Death Anniversary of Br Gabriel Fernandez

## CONDOLENCES

We offer our heartfelt condolences:

to the Provincials and confreres of the Provinces of Chennai and the Middle East at the demise of Fr Stephen Kuncherakatt, at the age of 86 on June 02, 2020;

to the Provincials and confreres of the Province of Tiruchy and the Vice Province of Sri Lanka at the passing away of Fr Antony Rajan Thommai at the age of 56 on June 14, 2020;

to Fr Mullasseril Saju and all his family members at the death of Mrs Mary John Mullasseril, the mother of our confrere. She died on June 30, 2020 at the age of 83.

We commend their souls and the souls of all our confreres who succumbed to COVID-19 to the mercy of our Heavenly Father that He may welcome them into his Eternal Joy.

## CONCLUSION

### Have we answers?

We continue to live in a state of emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which now seems to be entering into a second wave in certain parts of the world. We cannot but allow this

pandemic to teach us lessons and hard truths that have always been there but forgotten and sometimes relegated to oblivion. One hard truth staring us in the face is that we do not have all the answers nor the resources to face an emergency of such global proportions.

Hence, we cannot just be satisfied with the good we do. We need to coordinate with others to effectively help more people. Learning from our past mistakes, the pandemic is teaching us above all the power of networking and coordination and that it takes humility to be able to collaborate with others as equal partners. Together we can make a great difference! The pandemic is gradually decreasing in many countries, while in some others it is just reaching its peak. Experts warn of a more deadly second wave. We now realize that face masks, hand sanitizer and social distancing will be with us for a while. Many call this the 'new normal'. The 'new normal' for us would also imply rethinking our goals, structures and journeying together as partners by way of networking and coordination.

Inspired by the Charism of Don Bosco, we have been reaching out to all without any distinction whatsoever. However we know that what we do is a concrete expression of our deep love of our Lord, Jesus Christ who has revealed to our sinful, imperfect and fragile world that life will triumph over death and that His work of redemption would certainly reach its culmination in due course of time wiping away every tear from the face of the earth. May His Kingdom come on earth as in heaven.

Yours in the Lord,



Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar, Provincial

