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Sharing the Good News

Dear Confreres,

Greetings from Don Bosco Provincial House. Pope Francis has declared October 2019 as an extraordinary missionary month. These days the word ‘missionary’ seems to evoke mixed responses in our society. It is wrongly understood and interpreted as proselytizing, forced conversion, imposing personal convictions on other people, etc. The missionary mandate of Jesus was to proclaim the good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind and to set the oppressed free (ref. Lk 4:18). In essence a missionary is the one who brings good news, who becomes the good news and who transforms the situation of oppression into that of freedom and love. The timing of the proclamation of the extraordinary missionary month for us couldn’t have come at a better time. While we experience undercurrents of hostility, the present situation is an opportunity for us to introspect and renew our commitment to be true agents of Good News of Jesus in our society.

The theme of the extraordinary month of October is - ‘**Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on a Mission in the World**’. It is an invitation by Pope Francis to awaken the awareness of the *missio ad gentes*, and to reinvigorate the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel with new enthusiasm in our present times. This call comes in the context of the centenary year of the proclamation of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* by Pope Benedict XV in 1919 who is also known as the ‘Missionary Pope’.

Pope Francis writes, “Its farsighted and prophetic vision of the apostolate has made me realize once again the importance of renewing the Church’s missionary commitment and giving fresh evangelical impulse to her work of preaching and bringing to the world the salvation of Jesus Christ...” After the catastrophic World War I, Pope Benedict XV wrote the missionary encyclical ‘Maximum Illud’. He encouraged the Church to re-engage in the

universal mission of the Church to bring Good News of Jesus amidst pain, agony and despair left by the War. In 1919, in the wake of a tragic global conflict that he himself called a “useless slaughter,” the Pope recognized the need for a more evangelical approach to missionary work in the world, so that it would be purified of any colonial overtones and kept far away from the nationalistic and expansionistic aims that had proved so disastrous. Today we are afflicted not so much by a political war but by a spiritual one. We live in a time when our faith is challenged by a secular culture that results in practical atheism, moral disintegration and social oppression.

We can live this call to bring the good news and become the good news through our personal encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist, Word of God and in personal and community prayer. Pope Benedict XV affirms in *Maximum Illud*, “The man who preaches God must be a man of God.” When we chose to live without God (god-less), we deprive ourselves and others of the deepest experience of love. Our longing is truly fulfilled when we encounter Jesus Christ, the incarnate love of God, a love that is stronger than death. Those who are touched by the love of Christ and entrust themselves to the guidance of his Spirit are enabled to break out of the prison of an egoistic self-love (sin), experience something of the joy and freedom of the children of God, and then feel the great desire to pass on this great gift to others. Baptism is the sign of our union with Christ the Lord in the community of the disciples of Jesus, the Church. Through our baptism we are sent on a mission into the world to proclaim the love of God and give witness through the example of a holy life.

Secondly we can become good news when we are able to bear witness to Jesus. The missionary dynamism of the early Church rested on the fearless proclamation of the apostles and the heroic courage of the martyrs. It was the testimony of the life of individual Christians that drew people to Jesus and his message. Tertullian was right when he affirmed, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity.” The only antidote to hostility is a life of witness.

Thirdly we can become good news to the poor through our selfless love and service, especially to those who are on the fringes of our society. A faith that does not go beyond pious words and theological thoughts is dead. Jesus warns the disciples who cry “Lord, Lord,” but do not do His Father’s will” (Mt 7: 21-23). The letter of St. James condemns Christians who “dishonor the poor” and refuse to give them what they need to live. “Faith

without works is dead" (Jm 2). The mission of the Church has always been the well-being of the whole person. Innumerable schools, health centers, YaR centers and other social services are all expressions of the will to follow the example of Jesus. Pope Francis warns us of the danger of words without concrete actions. Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down, however much it may talk about social issues or criticize governments. It will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings and empty talk (EG 207).

Today, science and technology, globalization and secularization have radically and rapidly changed our culture and our ways of speaking, thinking and living. How can we bring the Good News of Jesus to this ever-changing world? Pope Francis gives us a few guidelines in *Evangelii Gaudium*. He invites us to live a deep relationship with Jesus and be ready to face the radical challenge of his Word, to live close to the realities of the life of ordinary people and share their worries and hopes, to show in preaching and catechesis the relevance of the Gospel in the context of life today, to build a Synodal Church where bishops, priests and laity seek new answers to new developments and challenges in the Spirit of Jesus. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world (EG 11).

This missionary mandate invites us for personal conversion to be a true missionary - to be Good News. Every baptized man and woman is a mission (Good News). We know that people in love never stand still. They are drawn out of themselves. Each of us is a mission to the world, because each of us is the fruit of God's love. Mary our Mother was the Good News. In union with her Son, from the moment of the Incarnation the Blessed Virgin set out on her pilgrim way. She was fully involved in the mission of Jesus, a mission that became her own at the foot of the Cross: the mission of cooperating, as Mother of the Church, in bringing the Good News to the peoples of all nations. Let us revive, renew and revitalize our call to be and to bring Good News to the world.

Extraordinary Missionary Month

I recommend the communities and confreres to organize special prayer moments, events, programs, recitation of the missionary rosary, etc., that will help us, our communities and faithful to renew and revitalize our missionary call TO BE and TO BRING the GOOD NEWS OF JESUS to our brothers and sisters. Sometimes we are afraid of revealing our identity as Christians in public. We need to be proud of our FAITH and fearless in living and sharing our faith with others. I suggest our communities to organize prayer processions in collaboration with the local parish and pray for various needs of the Church and of the World.

Information

Missionary Formation Course - Shillong

Bro Gregory and Fr Nali Anthaiah have already left for Shillong to attend the annual Missionary Formation Course from September 1-30, 2019. This course also includes the Trip to the Holy Land. We wish them a very fruitful experience. May this trip to the Holy Land strengthen them in their personal attachment to Jesus so as to become an embodiment of His love for everyone, especially the young.

Welcome Back - Fr Gaddam Carlo

In the name of our confreres I whole-heartedly welcome Fr Gaddam Carlo back to our Province. Fr Carlo has been part of the German Province for the past 11 years. After the completion of his Theological Studies in Germany, he continued to render his services as a priest. He was much appreciated for his contribution and work in Germany. I thank Fr Reinhard Giesing the Provincial of German Province and the confreres for this wonderful exchange and accompaniment of Fr Carlo. He will be joining St. John's Regional Seminary, Kondadaba as the dean and professor. We wish Fr Carlo a fruitful experience as he contributes to the formation of the diocesan clergy.

Mid-term Salesian Provincials' Meeting

I will be traveling to Europe on September 12, 2019 to attend the mid-term Salesian Provincials' Meeting. In my absence, which will be about a month, Fr Santiago Thomas our Vice provincial will be in charge of the Province (Const. 168). I will also be visiting our confreres in Europe and some of our funding agencies. Kindly keep me in your prayers.

Periodic Assessment of Salesians in Temporary Vows

The Local Community shares the responsibility for the development of each confrere (Regulations 81). A form of this responsibility is explicitly exercised by periodic moments of personal assessment, by which the Council of the community helps the confrere in temporary profession to assess the situation of his personal formation; guides him and gives him practical encouragement. Hence I request the Rector and his council to faithfully fulfill this responsibility towards our young confreres and send the duly filled assessment forms latest by September 30, 2019 to the Provincial Office.

Welcome back - Fr Parry Rayulu (Sarath)

Fr Sarath has returned to the Province on August 30, 2019 after his visit to Europe. We welcome him back and congratulate him on his successful and fruitful visit to the agencies, benefactors and our own Salesian Houses in Europe in mobilizing resources for our different interventions and ministries. I thank him for this service as the assistant director of BSK. I wish him all the best as he continues to render his service to the province.

Request for Prayers

I request your fervent prayers for the sick confreres of our Province. In a special manner, I invite you to remember Fr Thottiyil Thomas, Fr Thattil Chacko, Fr Yeddanapalli Selvaraj, Bro Soosai Dennis, Fr Joseph Abraham in your ardent prayers. May the good Lord touch them and grant them a speedy recovery from their illnesses as well as the strength to bear their sufferings.

Administrator's Meet

We had the meeting of the administrators on August 17, 2019 at Don Bosco Provincial House. I thank Fr Androth our Economer for organizing the meeting and for arranging wonderful resource persons for the day. All have appreciated their presence and their sharing pertaining to our financial management, accounting, new regulations in FCRA and income tax, nature and functioning of religious societies, charitable societies, maintenance of vehicles, TDS and its implications, receiving donations, giving donations, P.F. of employees, registration under GST and many other administrative matters. I encourage all the administrators to continue to strive for greater clarity and transparency in the overall financial management of our institutions.

Education to Faith and Parish Commission Meeting

On August 12, 2019, we had the meeting of the members of Education to Faith and Parish Commission. The meeting was convened by Fr Joseph Abraham, the delegate for Education to Faith (Evangelization and Catechesis) dimension with the help of Fr Thota Mariadas, the delegate for parish commission. All the members of these commissions were present to discuss and deliberate a pastoral plan for the Province. Fr Basani Mathias, the spiritual director at Nuzvid was the resource person who presented the essentials of a pastoral plan and guided the discussions. A small committee was formed to prepare the draft of the pastoral plan of the Province. I thank Fr Basani Mathias for sharing and guiding the discussions, Fr Joseph Abraham for organizing the meeting, Fr Thota Mariadas for hosting it and all the members for active participation.

Young Priests attend a Training Program in Youth Ministry

Eleven Young Priests from our Province attended a Training Program in Salesian Youth Ministry at Bengaluru, organized by DBYA - SA (Don Bosco Youth Animation - South Asia), at Don Bosco Skill Mission, Bengaluru from August 21-24, 2019. There were 45 priests and a Salesian Brother from Six Provinces. This training was organized with the intention of training young Salesians in Youth Ministry and making them aware of the tenets of the Salesian Youth Spirituality. It was indeed a wonderful experience and opportunity for our young priests to enhance the quality of our youth ministry. This is very much in keeping with one of the priorities of the Province. Let us remind ourselves of this priority for youth ministry and commit ourselves in realizing it.

1. Youth ministry should be an integral part of the SEPP and youth director of the province helps the community in youth animation.
2. Every institution promotes youth groups, youth centre and youth movement and organizes regular activities for them such as sports, skill training, career guidance, etc.
3. Every institution organizes youth animation programs and retreats in collaboration with the dioceses and with other like-minded organizations at the local and regional level.

Annual Provincial Visitation to the Communities

Soon after my return on 14 October from Europe, I will be commencing the Annual Provincial Visitations to the communities. I request the communities to prepare well for the visitation. I have already visited a number of our communities and I thank God for the

general good spirit existing in our communities and the hard work that you are putting in to serve our poor youth. I would like my visitation to be a moment of grace and an opportunity for renewal for every community. It should be a time for us to take stock of our work and our life, reflect together and find out ways to improve our personal, community and apostolic life (R. 146).

Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Father Luigi Bolla, Salesian missionary

On August 1, 2019, the Provincial Vicar of Peru, Fr Humberto Chávez, and Fr Vicente Santilli, officially presented to the Archbishop of Lima, mons. Carlos Gustavo Castillo Mattasoglio, the *Supplex libellus*, that is the official request with which the Salesian Congregation asks the opening of the diocesan inquiry on the virtues, the fame of holiness and signs of Fr Luigi Bolla, SDB: an original witness of consecrated life, evangelization and inculturation of the Gospel and the Salesian charism in 60 years of life shared fully with the indigenous Shuar and Achuar peoples.

The Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, wrote: “The spiritual and cultural heritage of Father Bolla is extraordinary and the start of his Cause of Beatification allows us to preserve, deepen and transmit it. Moreover, the relevance of this Cause is the great breadth it takes in relation to the celebration of the Synod of Bishops on the theme of *Amazonia: new paths for the Church and for an integral ecology*. A Synod that, as Father Bolla did, starts from listening to the indigenous peoples and communities living in the Amazon.” With the Cause of Father Bolla, the number of candidates for sanctity of the Salesian Family rises to 171.

FMA towards the Institute's 150 Years

On August 5, 2019, from the Rooms of Mother Mazzarello in Mornese, Italy, Mother Yvonne Reungoat officially opened the Triennial of preparation for the 150th Foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1872-2022). August 5 is an opportunity to return to the evangelical and charismatic sources, to the motivations that give meaning to Salesian life and mission. It is an event of grace that leads us profoundly into the roots of the Salesian vocation.

New DIAM manual

The Sector for Salesian Missions has recently printed, in the five languages most widely spoken in the Congregation, the renewed Manual of the Provincial Delegate for Missionary

Animation (DIAM). It was presented by Father Martín Lasarte, who curated the publication.

The Revised Rector's Manual

The Formation Department has just finished giving the final touches to the revised Rector's Manual requested by GC27. Like the old one, it will bear the title, The Salesian Rector: A ministry for the animation and governing of the local community. The new Rector's manual tries to embody the changed conception of the Salesian Rector in the context of the new idea of community since GC24.

Fr Miguel Ángel Ruiz Espinola SDB, a new member of Vatican Secretariat of State

The Holy See recently appointed Fr Miguel Ángel Ruiz Espínola SDB, as a new member of the Secretariat of State in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican. He will begin his new task from September 2019, in the service of the universal Church.

Salesian Saints of the Month

September 22

Blessed JOSEPH CALASANZ MARQUÉS and HENRY SÁIZ APARICIO, priests and companions martyrs

On numerous occasions the Roman *Martyrology* refers to bishops, priests, religious men and women and lay faithful, who during the Spanish persecution of the Church were crowned by a glorious martyrdom, who deserve to carry the palm of victory before almighty God and to take part in the eternal wedding feast with Christ their Spouse, obtaining the crown of glory for having borne witness to Christ. The expressions which are read on September 22 also introduce the memorial of the Salesian martyrs.

On 18 July 1936 the civil war broke out in Spain, accompanied at times by religious persecution. Laity, religious and priests were imprisoned and killed for their religious faith; among these 95 were members of the Salesian Family: 39 priests, 22 clerics, 24 brothers, 2 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, 4 Salesians-Cooperators, 3 Salesian aspirants and one lay helper. All of them gave their lives for their faith in Christ between July 1936 and April 1938.

There were two Causes which led to the recognition of their martyrdom: that of the group from Valencia - 32 martyrs - led by Fr Joseph Calasanz Marqués († 29 July 1936),

beatified on March 11, 2001 in Rome; and the group from Seville and Madrid - 63 martyrs - led by Fr Henry Sáiz Aparicio, who offered his life in exchange for those of the young people who had been entrusted to him by Divine Providence, beatified in St Peter's Square on Sunday October 28, 2007.

They died giving an example of fidelity to their Christian faith and their Salesian vocation, trusting in God and forgiving their killers. May their witness to Jesus enable us to courageously confess the name of Jesus in every situation of life in which we find ourselves.

Condolences

We offer our sincere condolences:

- To the Provincial and sisters of the FMA Province of Chennai at the demise of Sr Soosai Maria Theresa (71), on August 11, 2019.
- To the Provincial and confreres of the Province of Chennai at the death of Fr Cedric Bout, who passed away on August 17, 2019.
- To the Provincial and sisters of the FMA Province of Chennai at the death of Sr Glorina James (59) whom the Lord called to Himself on August 20, 2019.
- To the Provincial and confreres of the Province of Shillong at the passing away of Fr Kizhakechennadu Joseph (KJ) on August 25, 2019. He was 68 years old. He was a community member of Don Bosco Provincial House, Shillong.
- To the Provincial and sisters of the FMA Province of Bangalore at the sad demise of Sr D'Silva Lorenza whom the Lord called to Himself on August 27, 2019.

Conclusion

Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary

On 8th of September we celebrate the Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Church has celebrated Mary's birth since the sixth century. A September birth was chosen because the Eastern Church begins its Church year with September. The date, September 8th helped determine the date for the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8th. Scripture does not give an account of Mary's birth. However, the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James* fills in the gap. This work has no historical value, but it does reflect the development of Christian piety. According to this account, Anna and Joachim are infertile but pray for a child. They receive the promise of a child who

will advance God's plan of salvation for the world. Such a story, like many biblical counterparts, stresses the special presence of God in Mary's life from the beginning.

St Augustine connects Mary's birth with Jesus' saving work. He tells the earth to rejoice and shine forth in the light of her birth. "She is the flower of the field from whom bloomed the precious Lilly of the valley. Through her birth the nature inherited from our first parents is changed."

We can see every human birth as a call for new hope in the world. The love of two human beings has joined with God in his creative work. The loving parents have shown hope in a world filled with travail. The new child has the potential to be a channel of God's love and peace to the world. This is all true in a magnificent way in Mary. If Jesus is the perfect expression of God's love, Mary is the foreshadowing of that love. If Jesus has brought the fullness of salvation, Mary is its dawning.

Birthday celebrations bring happiness to the celebrant as well as to family and friends. Next to the birth of Jesus, Mary's birth offers the greatest possible happiness to the world. Each time we celebrate her birth, we can confidently hope for an increase of peace in our hearts and in the world at large.

Wish you all a very happy feast of our Blessed Mother.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar SDB
Provincial

