

## PROVINCIAL DON BOSCO PROVINCIAL HOUSE

Don Bosco Nagar Post, Bandlaguda Jagir, Himayathsagar Road Hyderabad - 500 086, Telangana State, INDIA.

April 30, 2021

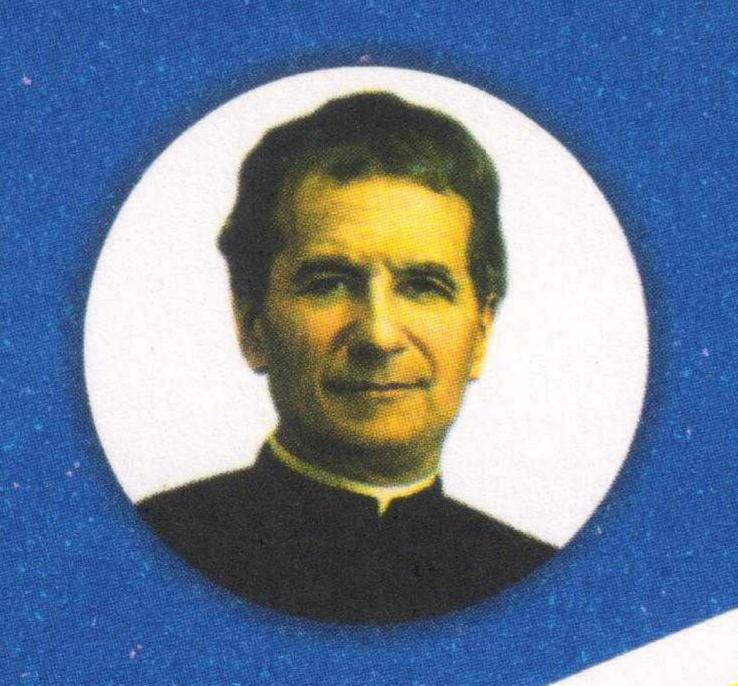
Dear Confreres,

After a very strenuous year-long battle against the first wave of Covid-19, the life was slowly returning to normal and the virus itself seemed to have been ebbing away. But all of a sudden, we are caught up in the vagaries of the second wave that is proving to be deadlier than the first. We in our country are going through the worst surge of Covid pandemic with its second wave bringing death and gloom everywhere.

The second wave of Covid-19 has hit hard many sections of our Society. According to the Pew Research Center, about 32 million people in India fall into the category of poverty due to the pandemic in 2020. The pandemic is destroying decades of economic and social progress for the country that was struggling to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. An economist shares the point that the pandemic has hugely slowed India's growth trajectory and created much greater inequality than in the past. Those living below the poverty line, including day laborers and migrant workers, face unprecedented challenges. The second wave of Covid-19 shows once again the deep economic and social gap that exists in India, with the poorest people in the country being the most affected by the restrictions. Kindly reach out to the poorest of the poor to the extent possible considering the resources available in our local communities.

As we are struggling through the catastrophic second wave, I would like to give a few directions and precautions for our safety and well-being.

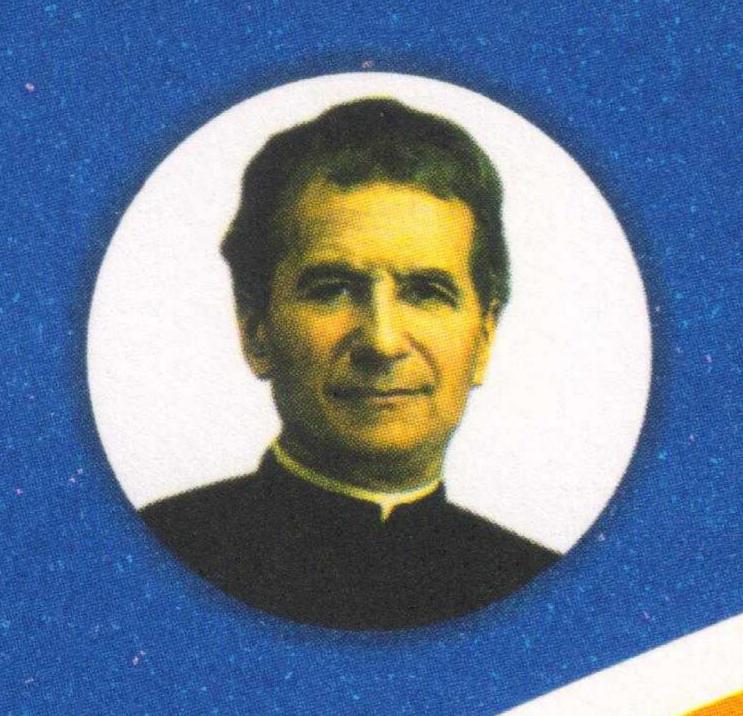
- 1. **Do not have fear.** They say that fear can play a vital role in the virus taking a complete control of our health. Fear suppresses our immunity quotient in the body. When the disciples were terrified, the Lord assures them, "It is I, do not be afraid" (Jn 6:20). The same assurance is given to Isaiah and the people of Israel. "For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you" (Is 41:13)
- 2. **Pray much.** I welcome all the communities to organize special moments of prayer, adoration and the novena to Mary Help of Christians to protect our Country against this deadly pandemic. It is a time for us to grow in deeper intimacy with the Lord personally and as a family and pray for humanity that is increasingly losing its hope. The Lord will take care of us. It is also a great opportunity to revive the habit of personal prayer which is the safest form of prayer under the present circumstances. Please ensure that there is at least a two-meter distance from each other in various moments of prayer and that you follow the norms of social distancing.



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- 3. Postpone your holidays. The scientists are predicting that the virus will reach its peak in the month of May or June. I strongly recommend that we do not travel or venture out except for the most essential necessities of life.
- 4. I strongly recommend that you take care of your health. Please ensure that you have simple but nutritious food. Ensure that the children and young people in our houses too are provided with nutritious food. Enhancing or strengthening our immune system is the only remedy proposed at the moment.
- 5. Protect yourself and others. This virus is a double mutant and hence is a super spreader. It is important to wear a mask even in the Community when we are in contact with other confreres of the Community. When venturing out is necessitated, it is advisable to wear a double mask. Selfdiscipline and personal responsibility are crucial in containing the virus.
- 6. During the moments of togetherness in the house, please maintain safe physical distance but at the same time strive towards deeper communion and understanding.
- 7. Kindly have special regard for the sick and elderly confreres and take care of them. Please ensure that these confreres are not exposed to persons from outside.
- 8. I also recommend that our domestic staff should be afforded the opportunity to stay home both for their own safety and for our protection. Kindly pay the salaries of our staff on time. I recommend that you support them in this period of uncertainty and anxiety, considering the situation in which the entire humanity finds itself.
- 9. I recommend that you dear confreres and especially the administrators remain extremely cautious and judicious in spending money. Except for the essential spending on food and medicine, all the other purchases should be put on hold for the time being. It is possible to live with bare minimum. We can live meaningful lives with minimum. Austerity has greater value and personal meaning under these circumstances.
- 10. Kindly spend time in reading and updating. There will be a lot of time at our disposal. I recommend that you read especially the Salesian literature. Kindly make efforts also to put the house library in order.



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- 11. Kindly use the available electronic media to promote good news, solidarity, support and encouragement. It is not a time to promote negativity, discouragement and criticism that will not be constructive. Please do not misuse the electronic media and the social media networks.
- 12. **Be creative.** If you have any creative and practical ideas about responding to this pandemic, kindly share them. The writers, composers and musicians among us can create and share content that will be uplifting and unifying our efforts in fighting this crisis together.
- 13. As able men of God consecrated for the service of others, we should be able to serve those most in need. Let us not just remain good admirers of the volunteers and people who reach out. We should be willing to step out of our comfort zones and render our service wherever possible. Taking the necessary precautions, we must be able to venture out to help the needy. During the TCBC and CRI joint meeting in February 2021, one bishop asked: "where are the religious martyrs, who have died, working for the poor and those affected by Covid?" I don't wish that anyone of us should die in the process of reaching out. If we take all the precautions, we can certainly keep the virus at bay. I recommend the martyrdom of sacrifice, which consists in moving out of our comfort zones and fears to help the suffering humanity.

Let us pray for healing. Let us reach out to those less fortunate than us. May our Mother, Mary Help of Christians protect us under her mantle and intercede with her Divine Son for healing for our sick and suffering world.

Yours in St. John Bosco,

Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar SDB

Provincial

