



PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

Salesian Province of St. Joseph, Hyderabad



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DECEMBER 2020

‘Wuhan to Bethlehem’

Dear confreres,

Greetings from Don Bosco Provincial House. We are in the month of December ready and eager to bid farewell to the year 2020, which will go down in our human history as a horrendous year. We are also preparing ourselves for Christmas, the birthday of Jesus that brings back our lost hopes in these turbulent times.

The Corona virus that was born in Wuhan has spread across the world at a lightning speed and has disrupted every sphere of life. It has affected every human being on the planet with the result that some succumbed to the virus, some were infected and then eventually recovered, while all the others are forced into extreme caution. Wearing masks and following social distancing norms are just some of the precautions that have become inevitable to prevent any contagion in the future. This pandemic has brought about a drastic change in our lifestyle.

The virus has caused unimaginable disruption to social relationships, economy, health, work and general well-being. Millions of enterprises have been shut forcing hundreds of millions into unemployment. United Nations estimates that nearly 1.7 billion people worldwide will be directly affected by job losses due to the pandemic. We have seen the plight of the migrant workers, who suffered abandonment, hunger, and death. Millions of people have been pushed into extreme poverty. We notice a general despair and hopelessness everywhere.

From Wuhan, let us now turn our attention to Bethlehem. It is amidst these dark times, that we are about to celebrate Christmas. For most, it would be a Christmas devoid of fanfare, colourful decorations, parties, cakes and extravagant celebrations. In and through this insurmountable pain, loss and sadness, we have the reassurance of God and His ever-abiding presence amidst us. Christmas cannot be more relevant anytime than now. It is into this world of wide ranging feelings of stress, worry and despair that the Lord is being born to assure us that He is the Lord of history, that He the Creator God has the power to subjugate every evil and every virus.

Over the centuries, humanity has been in a rat race for power, wealth and fame. Thanks to Covid-19, we have been ripped off these notions of success and our materialistic and worldly way of living to understand what is essential for living. Sarah Afker captures these sentiments in the following poem:

I hope the pandemic has taught you
the priceless value of time;
The moments to pause and reflect
to reshape your mind sublime.

I hope the pandemic has taught you
the value of a human touch;
For every moment you ran too fast
missing a peck or a warm hug.

I hope the pandemic has taught you
the value of everyone's job;
The ones you thought were insignificant
were actually the ones who meant a lot.

I hope the pandemic has taught you
the value of God's provision;
All along you were piling money
ignoring health, family and obligation.

And once the dust has settled
I'll see you there with your dreams;
May they be painted with all your passion
and be filled with happiness in streams.

This experience impels us to consider the essentials of Christmas: Jesus, the humble manger, the shepherds, the star, the angels, etc. The babe born in a manger in Bethlehem is truly God becoming man, the Saviour who has come to destroy sin and death and save humanity from all forms of slavery. He brings the good news to the poor, the downtrodden, the hungry, the migrants, those without friends, etc.

Vulnerable as we are and shallow in faith and seeking answers to the unfathomable suffering, death, fear and uncertainty, we might ask where God is in all this. Is God upset with the world and hence allowed this suffering to descend upon us? Is God not in control of the virus and its devastating effect on human life? Why is God silent? But our deeper faith dictates that God can write straight on crooked lines. In His wisdom and love, He makes sure that something good still comes out of every human experience, no matter how unfortunate, tragic and painful it may be.

It certainly has been a long wait - a time of healing for nature as it was for each of us to rid ourselves of our ego, our pride and the false pretense that we are in control of our lives. If we have not seized this opportunity for our inner transformation, then we have missed the bus. The essence of life consists in pure love, happiness, faith and simplicity. As disciples of Christ and as Salesians, we have received the mandate of communicating this good news that Jesus is 'Emmanuel', God-with-us and that we are not alone or abandoned. If we are convinced of this truth of faith, then we will also own up the responsibility of bringing hope and joy to those whom we meet and serve.

Article 17 of our Constitution reminds us of Optimism and Joy: "The Salesian does not give way to discouragement in face of difficulties, because he has complete trust in the father. 'Let nothing upset you', Don Bosco used to say. Inspired by the optimistic humanism of St Francis de Sales, he believes in man's natural and supernatural resources without losing sight of his weakness. He is able to make his own what is good in the world and does not bewail his own times; he accepts all that is good, especially if it appeals to the young. Because he is a herald of the Good News, he is

always cheerful. He radiates this joy and is able to educate to a Christian and festive way of life: 'Let us serve the lord in holy joy.'"

As Salesians, we cannot bewail our times, rather we are called to be heralds of the Good News of Jesus. Let us be guided by the optimistic humanism of our father St. John Bosco and bring hope to the suffering and the excluded, who end up bearing the brunt of this pandemic. Let us give hope to our young people too. Let our thoughts be focussed on Christ the Saviour. He gives comfort and consolation. Henri Nouwen affirms this closeness of God "The God of love gave us life in sending his only son to be with us at all times and in all places, so that we never have to feel lost in our struggles, pains and sickness but always can trust as he walks with us." If Corona virus brought pain, fear and death, Christ brings joy, hope and life. His light will never stop shining even in the all pervading gloom of the pandemic. Let us welcome the New Year 2021 with renewed hope and optimism and let it be a year filled with Christ.

LAUDATO SI' THIS MONTH - DECEMBER

TEN GREEN COMMANDMENTS OF LAUDATO SI' - Green Commandment V - Acknowledge the Human Roots of the Crisis of our Common Home

We have been regularly attending the webinars being organized by the Province Laudato Si' Sub-commission. In this month of December, we are called upon to reflect on the 5th Green Commandment, which is about the deeper human roots of the degradation of our common home as presented in Laudato Si'. In fact, assuming responsibility for a problem we have caused, is the very first step in solving the same problem. In this regard, Pope Francis invites us to own up to our responsibility for the precarious state of our common home. What stands out about the contemporary ecological crisis is its conspicuously anthropogenic character. The word 'anthropogenic' is increasingly used in scientific parlance to emphasize that the precarious state of our common home is caused by 'humans' themselves. It is precisely the anthropogenic origin of the ecological crisis which motivates the search for the deeper causes of the malaise. However, this fact is denied by some people despite overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary. It is particularly evident in the case of the so-called skeptics of human-induced climate change. There are others who do not deny the crisis of our common home but remain largely indifferent to it. Pope Francis considers both of those positions as grossly irresponsible. "Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions."

Today we need to heal our relationship with the natural world, with our fellow human beings, and with the Creator. A holistic and integral perspective is vital in this regard. The Pope writes: "A correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken this social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the 'Thou' of God. Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God."

ONLINE MEETINGS AND DECISIONS

We have participated in online meetings held for perpetually professed confreres in two groups and for Rectors/In-Charges and Parish Priests from November 23-25, 2020. These meetings have given us an opportunity to reflect together on the Action Program of the Rector Major for the next 6-year period and subsequently on the priorities of the Province for the academic year 2021-22. This action program of the Rector Major has been supplemented with the recommendations of the Regional Formation Commission as well as DBYA. I invite you to have a look once again at the 8 priorities that our Rector Major has proposed for the entire Congregation.

1. Salesian of Don Bosco forever
Six years for growth in Salesian identity
2. In a Congregation where the DA MIHI ANIMAS CETERA TOLLE is urgent
3. To live the SALESIAN SACRAMENT OF PRESENCE
4. Formation for being Salesian Pastors today
5. Absolute priority for the young, the poorest, the most abandoned and defenseless
6. Together with lay people in the mission and in formation
7. It is time for greater generosity in the Congregation
A universal and missionary congregation
8. Accompanying the young towards a sustainable future

As I thank you for your active participation and valuable contribution to our discussions and deliberations on the priorities that would be most relevant to our Province within the framework of the Action Program of the Rector Major, I would like to urge you to read and reflect on the entire document of the Rector Major as this process of reading and reflection will immensely help us in preparing the SEPP of our Communities for the next academic year.

I would like to also share the following information and decisions we have taken during these online meetings:

1. Online retreats. There will be only 2 online retreats in the month of February 2021. The respective communities will be required to attend the retreat as a Community and thus create an ambience of prayer and recollection during the entire period of the retreat. Certain directions will be sent to communities in terms of a general timetable to be followed for the retreat. The first online retreat will be held from February 15-20 and the second online retreat will be held from February 22-27, 2021. Both the retreats will be preached by Fr George Palamattam SDB from INS Province. Kindly send your preference for either of these retreats by 31 December 2020.
2. Fight against covid-19 continues. Every confrere is required to take personal responsibility both in terms of personal hygiene and avoiding unnecessary travel. While every community is encouraged to provide good/nutritious food for confreres, it is also important that we avoid any unnecessary expenditure so that we may have sufficient reserves to face the future financial challenges.
3. Online Courses. All the confreres are encouraged to attend online courses/webinars as and when it is possible. Considering the fact that many confreres are relatively free, it is good to make use of our time to attend online courses being organized by many spirituality centers across the country.
4. Prayers for the Sick. Confreres are exhorted to continue to accompany the sick confreres with their prayers. Special prayers are requested for Fr Joseph Abraham who is waiting to undergo a major medical procedure for liver transplant. Others sick confreres, Fr Chacko, Fr MT Sebastian, Fr TD John and Fr T.V. Thomas need our prayerful support and fraternal closeness.

PERIODIC ASSESSMENT II

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 (Scrutiny II) latest by December 31, 2020 to the Provincial Office. This year, we have taken a decision to review and discuss every assessment

of our young Salesians in the Provincial Council. We have found this practice to be very enriching and useful. I continue to urge you dear confreres to spend time in guiding and accompanying our young Salesians and in animating them towards greater maturity in their Salesian vocation.

PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS

We are profoundly grateful to the Lord of the harvest for blessing our Province with the priestly ordination of 5 of our deacons. Their priestly ordination is scheduled as below.

Name	Place of Ordination	Date of Ordination
Dn Salibindla Praveen	St. Francis Xavier Church, Yadireddipally, Nagarkurnool	December 29, 2020 at 10:00AM
Dn Muthyala Sudhakar	Don Bosco Shrine, Bandlaguda Jagir, Hyderabad	January 07, 2021 at 10:00AM
Dn Pale Justin	Don Bosco Shrine, Bandlaguda Jagir, Hyderabad	January 07, 2021 at 10:00AM
Dn Kakumanu Praveen Kumar	Don Bosco Shrine, Bandlaguda Jagir, Hyderabad	January 07, 2021 at 10:00AM
Dn Thumma Pradeep	Don Bosco Shrine, Bandlaguda Jagir, Hyderabad	January 07, 2021 at 10:00AM

I express my gratitude on behalf of the entire Province to their parents and to all the Salesian formators, who have played a significant role in moulding them and guiding them towards this day of priestly ordination. As they are about to receive this gift of priesthood within the one and the same Salesian vocation, let me share with you a few points from the wonderful teaching of our Congregation.

Pastoral charity is not a new element that comes in after ordination, identified with peculiar 'pastoral activities' reserved to the priest, but is, instead, at the very root of the vocation of Salesians who are priests. Pastoral charity is at the centre of our spirit, the driving force and motivation behind all we are and do: Under the inspiration of God, Don Bosco lived and handed on to us an original style of life and action: the Salesian spirit. It is summed up and centred in pastoral charity, characterized by that youthful dynamism which was revealed so strongly in our Founder and at the beginnings of our Society. It is an apostolic impetus that makes us seek souls and serve God alone. (C 10)

The Salesian Priest is a man who is driven by charity and ordained to serve. We can understand, therefore, why clericalism can have no place in his life. Fr Egidio Viganò anticipates in a surprising way Pope Francis' warning against clericalism:

If in fact there be a real harmful crust to be removed in an ordained ministry, it is that of a 'clericalist' mode of action... which make the priest act like a boss among the People of God; such an attitude has nothing in common with Christ the Good Shepherd, who is the 'Servant of Yahweh.' A priest behaving in this way would show very clearly that he had not understood the priesthood of the New Covenant. (AGC 335 21)

We would do well to accept Pope Francis' beautiful invitation to meditate on "the incomparable grandeur of the gift" of the priesthood and our own littleness: The incomparable grandeur of the gift granted us for the ministry sets us among the least of men. The priest is the poorest of men - yes, the poorest of men - unless Jesus enriches him by his poverty, the most useless of servants, unless Jesus calls him his friend, the most ignorant of men unless Jesus patiently teaches him as he did Peter, the frailest of Christians unless the Good Shepherd strengthens him in the midst of the flock.

NEW ARCHBISHOP OF HYDERABAD - Most Rev Anthony Poola

His Holiness Pope Francis has appointed Most Rev. Anthony Poola (59), currently Bishop of Kurnool, as Archbishop of Hyderabad, Telangana on 19 November 2020. Bishop Anthony Poola was born on 15 November 1961 at Chindhukur, Andhra Pradesh. He joined the minor seminary in Kurnool and then studied at St. Peter's Pontifical Major Seminary, Bangalore. He was ordained priest on 20 February 1992. At the age of 46 he was appointed as the Bishop of Kurnool on 8 February 2008 and was ordained Bishop on 19 April 2008. We congratulate him on his appointment and assure him of our prayerful support and apostolic collaboration.

He has served in the following ministries:

1992-1993: Assistant at St. Mary's Cathedral, Maria Puram, Kadapa;

1993-1994: Assistant Parish Priest at Amagampalli;

1994-1995: Parish Priest at Tekurpet, Correspondent RCM Elementary Schools, Chinayarasal and Kappalapalli;

1995-2000: Parish Priest of Our Lady of Fatima Church, Badvel, Director St. Thomas Boarding Home, Badvel;

2000-2001: Parish Priest of Holy Cross Church, Veerapally; Correspondent RCM UP School, Veerapally and Konasamudram,

Director - Vander Valk Boy's Boarding Home;

2001-2002: Resident priest at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, St. Joseph, Kalamazoo Diocese, U.S.A.;

2002-2003: Associate Pastor at St. Genevieve Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Chicago;

2003-: Coordinator for CFCA - Secretary for Education Society, Deputy Manager, RCM Schools, Diocese of Cuddapah, Editor of CFCA SamacharaLekha; 2008-: Bishop of Kurnool;

2008-2015: Chairman for Youth Commission Telugu Region;

2008-2015: Chairman for Scheduled Castes/Backward Classes Commission;

2008-2020: Chairman for Andhra Pradesh Social Service Society; 2014-2020: Secretary General and Treasurer of Telugu Catholic Bishops' Conference; 2014-2020: Chairman of the Sikh Village Campus, Secretariat for TCBC Priests Community;

2014-2020: Chairman for Jeevan in-state Printing Press. He is a priest for 28 years and a Bishop for 12 years.

GRATITUDE TO Most Rev. Dr Thumma Bala

In the name of our Province, I convey my heartfelt gratitude to Archbishop Thumma Bala, for his leadership as the chief shepherd of the Archdiocese and for his guidance and support to us Salesians in a special way. Ordained a priest in December 1970 and appointed Bishop of Warangal in 1986, he served the Archdiocese of Hyderabad for nine years from 2011. Archbishop Bala was a zealous pastor and shepherd, who strove to promote Christian values not only in the Archdiocese but also in public life. In keeping with his motto, 'to work in charity and in unity' he wasted no opportunity and spared no effort in spreading love and peace among the people both by word and by his example. We are grateful to him for helping us to be faithful stewards of God's mysteries and signs and bearers of God's love for everyone in the Archdiocese. We sincerely appreciate all the guidance and inspiration he has given us in ministering to God's people in the Archdiocese.

UPCOMING PROVINCE MEETINGS/EVENTS

07 December	WEBINAR Green Commandment V - Acknowledge the Human Roots of the Crisis of our Common Home by
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	Rev. Fr Thumma Prathap, Principal - Don Bosco Philosophate, Warangal
15 December	Provincial Council, Online Principals' Meet from 11:30 AM
16 December	Provincial Council
17 December	WEBINAR Praxis Orientation: Networking with those in Common Cause against Ecological Degradation by Rev. Br. Varghese Theckanath S.G. Director, Montfort Social Institute (M.S.I.) - Hyderabad
31 December	Scrutiny II Forms to reach Provincial Office

SALESIAN SANCTITY IN DECEMBER

05 December	Bl. Philip Rinaldi, Priest and Founder of the Secular Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco
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Born on May 28, 1856 at Lu Monferrato (Alessandria), Philip was won over by Don Bosco at the age of twenty-two. As a priest, he was entrusted with the formation of the aspirants and novices. In 1899 Fr. Rua sent him as Director of the community of Sarriá, Spain and later as provincial. In this role he contributed greatly to the development of Salesian Spain. Appointed Vicar General of the Congregation, his gifts as father and the wealth of his initiatives became even more evident. He set up formation centers to offer spiritual and social assistance to young working women, planned printing works and guided and supported the Salesian Sisters through a particularly sensitive period in their history. He gave great encouragement to the Cooperators, and set up the World Federations of Past-Pupils (male and female).

Working with the 'Zelatrici di Maria Ausiliatrice', he saw the possibilities for a new form of consecrated life in the world and made it a reality. This group would later become the "Volunteers of Don Bosco". He was elected Rector Major in 1922. "All that is lacking in Fr. Rinaldi is Don Bosco's voice: he has everything else" said Fr. Francesia.

He used all his energies in adapting Don Bosco's spirit to the times. He did much to develop Salesian studies and was a master of spiritual life. He worked to renew the spiritual life of the Salesians, had absolute confidence in God and unlimited trust in Mary Our Help. He asked Pius XI to grant the "indulgence for sanctified work". He took great interest in the missions, sending many young Salesians to learn languages and customs so that evangelization might be more effective. He died on December 5, 1931. His remains are venerated in the crypt of the Basilica of Mary Our Help. He was beatified on 29 April 1990 by St. John Paul II.

CONDOLENCES

We offer our heartfelt condolences:

- To the Provincial and the Confreres of the Province of Tiruchy at the demise of Fr Louis Kulangara, who died at the age of 76 on 04 November 2020,
- To the Provincial Superior and the Sisters of the FMA Province of Bombay at the passing away of Sr Nicolina Viano, who died at the age of 91 on 11 November 2020,
- To the Provincial Superior and the Sisters of the FMA Province of Shillong at the passing away of Sr Percynia Synnah, who breathed her last at the age of 72 on 20 November 2020,

- To the Provincial and the Confreres of the Province of Kolkata at the demise of Fr Sebastian Alancheril, who died at the age of 90 on 25 November 2020 and of Fr Varghese Kalluvachel, who died at the age of 66 on 26 November 2020,
- To our Novice Jagathap Naveen Kumar at the death of his father, Mr Jagathap Rajaratnam, who died at the age of 57 on 24 November 2020,
- to Fr Mattukoyya Mariadas at the sad demise of his mother, Mattukoyya Tekalamma, who died at the age of 95 on 30 November 2020.

CONCLUSION

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY

On December 08 we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and on December 08, 1841, Don Bosco encountered Bartholomew Garelli, who elicited a response, a choice and a decision from Don Bosco that would change the course of his entire life.

Many people still wrongly assume that the Immaculate Conception refers to the conception of Christ. In fact, it refers to Mary, who by a special divine favor, was without sin from the first moment of her conception. Prepared by God from the very first moment of her life to receive Jesus Christ in her womb. God's grace preserved Mary from sin from the womb to the end of her life - because of her role in the mystery of salvation as the mother of God. Her "yes" to the invitation to be the mother of Jesus was her continuing commitment to doing God's will.

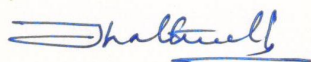
When we honor Mary under the title "Immaculate Conception," we recognize in her a model of purity, innocence, trust, reverence, and respect - living peacefully aware of God's presence in her life even when she didn't understand all that her "yes" would entail. While we were not conceived without sin as was Mary, and do not live our entire lives without sin as did Mary, we can, like Mary, choose to say "yes" to God's will. We say yes to God when we put another's well-being before our own wants; when we take time to hear God's will for us through Scripture, through others, and through prayer and the celebration of the Mass and the sacraments. We say yes to God's will when we let go of our fears and grow in awareness of God's presence to us and within us.

As we celebrate Mary under the title of "Immaculate Conception," let us give thanks to God for the graces, blessings and messages we receive through the instrumentality of Mary. Let us renew our Yes to the Lord after the example of Mary Immaculate and St. John Bosco.

Wish you all a very happy feast of Mary Immaculate.

Wish you all a Blessed and Joyous Christmas.

Yours in the Lord,



Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar SDB,
Provincial

