



PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

Salesian Province of St. Joseph, Hyderabad



INH/TVB/CIR 04/2020

April, 2020

A Historic General Chapter 28

Dear Confreres,

I hope and pray that you are all safe and strong physically, mentally and spiritually as we are forced to adopt a different rhythm of life due to Covid-19. Fr Prathap and I are in an extended quarantine period of 21 days. The administration is following up well with regular phone calls and visits to know our situation. In this circular I wish to share some news and views about the General Chapter 28 that was historic on many counts.

It was the 6th Successor of Don Bosco, Fr Luis Ricceri (RM 1965-77) in response to the call of the Second Vatican Council, who moved the Salesian Headquarters from Turin to Rome. Since then all the General Chapters were held at Pisana, Rome. After over 50 years, the General Chapter has come back to Valdocco, the Mother House. The theme of the Chapter "What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?" was ideally reflected at Valdocco. Going back to our origins, we had the opportunity to re-look at the profile of Don Bosco that was formed in response to the needs of the young people of his time. Pope Francis underlined this in his message: "The Valdocco option of your 28th General Chapter is a good opportunity to confront the sources and ask the Lord: Da mihi animas, cetera tolle. This requires, on our part, to overcome the fears and apprehensions that may arise. Faithful living of the charism is something richer and more stimulating than the simple abandonment, retreat or readjustment of houses or activities; it involves a change of mentality in the face of the mission to be accomplished." The Valdocco option for us was truly providential.

Valdocco - The Mother House

Though the General Chapter at Valdocco was providential, the preparation for it was a Herculean task. Everything had to be modified to suit the needs of the Chapter. The rooms were renovated to accommodate about 100 Chapter members within the campus at Valdocco and the others had to be put up in different hotels of Turin. The Chapter Hall (aula magna) had to be renovated for the same purpose. Big space right under the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians was renovated to create a dining hall for the Chapter members. Several halls were re-designed for meetings of the commissions and regions. The Chapter Moderator Fr Stefano Vanoli (Secretary General) and his team of collaborators have planned the Chapter with admirable efficiency.

The Chapter Members

The total members who participated in the GC28 were 243, of which 222 were endowed with the right to vote. All the 90 Provinces were represented in the Chapter. All the Chapter members managed to arrive at Valdocco in spite of the Corona virus pandemic. There were about 15 young people who were special invitees of the Chapter from different countries. They were present for a week and contributed to our reflection on the situation of young people and their expectations of the Salesians of today. These youth came from Brazil, the Philippines, Spain, Italy, Chile, India, the USA, Africa, Vietnam, Mexico, Uruguay and Syria.

Use of technology

In our commitment to ecology, a decision was taken to minimize the use of paper and to say no to plastic during the Chapter. All the Chapter members were connected digitally through their smart phones or tablets or laptops. All the material of the Chapter and the documents were available on these devices. A special software programme was created for the purpose. It provided the list of the Chapter members with their profile and the location of each member in the Chapter Hall. This facilitated easy roll call and immediate access to information about any Chapter member and the data-base gave the possibility of having a quick look at the profile of every confrere of the entire Congregation. The software was designed also to facilitate different translations. One of the important aspects of this technology was the electronic voting system. In contrast to the paper ballot, this system ensured a super-fast election process. Under the circumstances of the Corona virus pandemic and the constraints of time to conclude the Chapter prematurely, this system proved to be a great blessing.

Here I will limit myself to present an overview of the Four Weeks of the General Chapter 28. I shall make use of different moments of animation to share more reflections on and of the Chapter. I would like to also send out a special word of thanks and appreciation to all our Communities for reaching out to the poor and needy as part of our collective effort to alleviate the pain of those most affected by the lockdown, if not by the Corona virus pandemic. Let us continue with these efforts and I request you to send in your reports of the same to the Provincial Office as well as to the Province Publishing House for documentation and for submission to Home Ministry.

GC28 - Week One

The first week of the Chapter began on 16 February with the inaugural conference in the Chapter Hall at 4 pm. The moderator of the Chapter, Fr Stefano Vanoli and the president of the Chapter, Fr Angel Fernandez Arttime welcomed the Chapter members. He reminded us that we had gathered there at Valdocco not as a company to discuss strategies for the future, but as consecrated Salesians to discuss the mission of God handed on to Don Bosco for the world and for the world of the young and that we were there to be guided by the Spirit. There was the

inaugural Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr Angel Fernandez who invited all the Chapter members to pray for the gift of the Spirit. He recalled the beginnings of the Charism at Valdocco and 'so everything that we see today at Valdocco speaks to us of the marvels of God.'

On 17 and 18 February, we had the presentation of the report of the Rector Major on the status of the Congregation. Different sector councilors and the regional councilors presented a report of the progress made in the past six years and the actual situation of the Congregation. Fr Francesco Cereda, the vicar of the Rector Major presented the interprovincial collaboration in sharing the Salesian personnel for various needs of the Congregation, the disciplinary matters and the resolving of many particular situations of confreres. Fr Ivo Coelho presented the journey of the formation sector. He acknowledged that a great emphasis was laid on the formation of formators and that a lot still needs to be done in this regard. He has presented the Rector's Manual, which will be a great help to rectors in animating our communities. Fr Fabio Attard had presented the situation of the Youth Ministry sector - many processes were initiated and the Congregation has moved from a top down approach to that of collaboration and understanding the youth ministry in different contexts; the Frame of Reference was disseminated across the Salesian world and the process is on to put it to practical use; there was renewed interest and emphasis on the revival of the Salesian voluntary movement, family ministry and training of youth ministry delegates. Fr Filiberto Gonzalez affirmed the need for social communications and for our presence in the digital world of the young. He emphasized the need for a greater presence in the IOT. Fr Guillermo Basanes reiterated that we should keep alive the missionary dimension of our Congregation. He cited the example of two Salesian martyrs in Africa and considered it a blessing to have young missionaries from different Provinces offering themselves as missionaries *ad gentes*, *ad exteros* and *ad vitam*. Fr Eusebio Munos, the delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family presented the journey of growth and collaboration between the different groups of the Salesian Family. Br Jean Paul Muller the economist general placed before the Chapter members the efforts made in creating systems for better planning and management of our resources. He has reminded us about the absolute need for credibility, the need to have a global response to the wider issues that are affecting our society such as ecological crisis, violation of rights of children, etc. The seven regional councilors also presented the status of each region in the past six years. Fr Maria Arokiam, the regional for South Asia presented the growing reality and the inexhaustible vitality of the Salesian life and mission in our region. Br Marco Bay has presented a scientific, detailed and graphic description of the statistics of the Congregation - there are 14,464 Salesians in the world in 90 Provinces; the average age of the confreres in Africa and Madagascar region is the lowest in the Congregation at 41. The average age of the South Asian region is 43; the average age of the Mediterranean region being the highest at 66. Each of these regions has different challenges. While in Africa and South Asian regions we have the challenge of the accompaniment

of younger confreres and the need for ongoing formation, in the other regions where the average age is high, we have the challenge of taking care of and accompanying senior confreres.

After the presentation of the sector and regional councilors, Fr Angel Fernandez has presented a synthesis of his report of the Congregation. He has reiterated that the visibility and credibility of our consecrated life continues to be a permanent challenge for us as a Congregation and that the fragility of community life is on the increase owing to the culture of individualism. On the other hand, he shares, we are on a journey with and for the young. We are moving ahead in the Church with Pope Francis. Looking at the future it is imperative that we create deeper and profound relationships with young people and accompany them. We have to be positively engaged in the digital world. We have to be a Congregation of the poor and for the poor. Our mission has to be shared with laity, involving them as our co-partners.

From 19 to 21 February we participated in a three-day retreat. On the first day of the retreat, Fr Rossano Sala shared his reflections on the first nucleus of the theme: The priority of the mission among the young. Fr Eunan McDonnell the Provincial of the Irish Province has shared his reflections on the second nucleus: The profile of the Salesian. On the third day of the retreat Fr Louis (Koldo) Gutierrez, the national delegate of youth ministry in Spain has reflected on the importance of the lay mission partners in the Salesian mission.

On 22 February the GC28 was officially inaugurated with the Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Card. Joao Braz de Aviz, the prefect for the institutes of consecrated life and apostolic life. After the Eucharist the official inaugural session was conducted in the Chapter Hall in the presence of Cardinals, bishops, Mother Yvonne Reungoat, Chiara Appendino, the mayor of Turin and other dignitaries.

GC28 - Week Two

After the Sunday break the Chapter progressed into its second week. The Chapter members were invited to join in their respective language groups for morning liturgy. The English language group was the largest of the Chapter with nearly 90 to 100 confreres celebrating the liturgy in English. On 24 February, the Chapter members were invited to choose places in the Chapter Hall and were directed to maintain the same places till the end of the Chapter. Regulations of the Chapter were presented and the confreres were invited to choose their commissions. There were four commissions to discuss the theme of the General Chapter and the fifth commission was the juridical commission that looked into the juridical matters. On 25 February the working document was presented. The whole process that was involved in arriving at the document was made known to the Chapter members. The three stages of each of the themes - recognizing, interpreting and choosing - were explained. In the evening time was allotted for clarifications on the Rector Major's report of the status of the Congregation.

26 February was Ash Wednesday. A recollection at Colle Don Bosco/Chieri was envisaged, but due to the lockdown caused by the Corona virus, the Chapter members were confined to Valdocco where they made their recollection thus spending the entire day in prayer. All liturgical celebrations in Northern Italy were suspended due to the Corona virus pandemic. Our recollection was preached by Fr Pascual Chavez, Rector Major Emeritus who celebrated the Eucharist in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians behind closed doors. On 27 and 28 February the various commissions discussed the theme of the Chapter. Each commission was divided into two or three sub commissions to discuss and deepen the theme. On 29 February the Archbishop of Turin, Mons. Cesare Nosiglia celebrated the Eucharist.

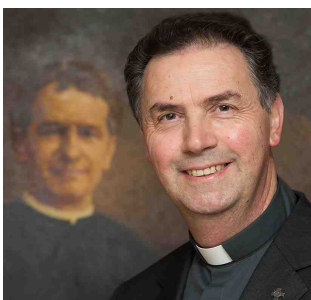
GC28 - Week Three

On 2 March, we had the presentation of all the four commission reports of the first nucleus in the assembly. The redaction committee was set up to form a synthesis of the presentations of the four commissions. Up to 6 March, the commissions continued their work on the second nucleus of the Chapter theme. Due to the anticipated elections, the four commissions could not present the reports of the second nucleus in the assembly. The Juridical commission presented the proposals for various modifications, which were then voted upon by the assembly. On 5 March, Fr Angel Fernandez has shared the message of Pope Francis with the Chapter members. Pope Francis wished to be present at Valdocco on 6 March to spend an entire afternoon with us. But due to ill health and the Corona virus pandemic, he expressed his inability to be present.

On 6 March, it was decided by the Chapter members to anticipate the elections of the General Council. On 7 March there was an interaction with the 15 young people, who were invited to the Chapter. All of them have expressed the need for Salesians to be in their midst as fathers and guides. Some of them shared how they were transformed by their personal encounters with Salesians.

GC28 - Week Four

After a day of break (Sunday), the Chapter resumed its work on 9 March to continue to reflect on the theme in different commissions. They have offered their comments and suggestions after going through the draft of the first nucleus prepared by the redaction team. On 10 March we had the entire day at our disposal for the process of discernment for the election of Rector Major. After some orientations, prayer and moments of silence, the commissions met to discern the future leader of the Congregation. The names that emerged were submitted to the guide. On 11 March Fr Angel Fernandez Artime was re-elected as the Rector Major in the very first voting.



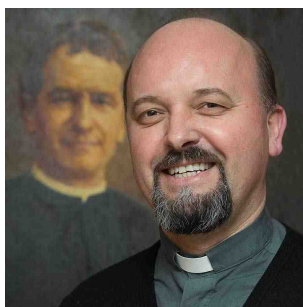
Fr Ángel Fernández Artime - Rector Major

Though we know sufficiently about Fr Angel Fernandez's background, I would like to refresh our minds with a brief presentation. He was born on 21 August 1960 at Gozón-Luanco, Asturias, Spain; he made his first

profession on 3 September 1978, his perpetual vows on 17 June 1984 in Santiago de Compostela, and was ordained priest on 4 July 1987 in León. He was a member of the technical commission that prepared the General Chapter 26. In 2009, he was appointed Provincial of South Argentina, and thanks to this position he also got to know and collaborated personally with the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires, card. Jorge Mario Bergoglio, today Pope Francis. On 23 December 2013, he was appointed Provincial of the new Province of Mary Help of Christians in Spain, an office he couldn't take on, since the 27th General Chapter had elected him as tenth Successor of Don Bosco on 25 March 2014.

This was followed by discernment for the election of the Vicar of the Rector Major. The rest of the day was spent in prayer. After meeting in the commissions the names that emerged as probable candidates were submitted to the guide. On 12 March, Fr Stefano Martoglio was elected as the vicar of the Rector Major.

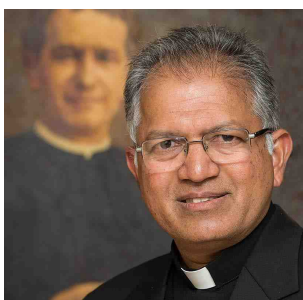
Fr Stefano Martoglio - Rector Major's Vicar



Fr Stefano Martoglio served as the regional of the Mediterranean region. He was born in Turin on 30 November 1965. He made his first profession in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin on 8 September 1985 and his perpetual profession on 27 September 1992 in Castelnuovo Don Bosco. He was ordained priest in Turin on 11 June 1994. In 2008 he was appointed as the Superior of the Special Circumscription of Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta. He participated in the 25th General Chapter and was part of the pre-chapter commission for GC27. The 27th General Chapter elected him as the regional councilor for the Mediterranean region.

Later, the Chapter members met in their respective regions to make proposals for the sector councilors. This was followed by elections. The following councilors were elected:

Fr Ivo Coelho for Formation Sector



Fr Ivo was confirmed for a second six-year term as the General Councilor of the formation sector. Ivo Nicholas Coelho was born on 15 October 1958 in Mumbai, India. Entering the Salesian novitiate at Yercaud in 1976, he made his first profession on 24 May 1977 and his perpetual profession 7 years later in Mumbai. He was ordained priest on 27 December 1987 in Panjim. He was the Provincial of the Province of Mumbai (2002-2008) and later served as Rector at the International Studentate of Theology at Ratisbon from 2011-2017.

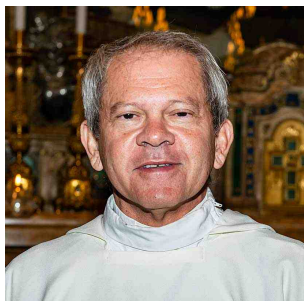
Fr Miguel Angel García Morcuende for Youth Ministry Sector

Fr Miguel Angel was elected as Councilor for Youth Ministry. He served in the same Department between 2010 and 2017. Miguel Angel was born on



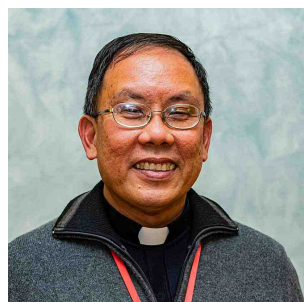
29 September 1967 in Madrid, Spain; he entered the Salesian novitiate in Mohernando, where he made his first profession on 16 August 1986. He made his perpetual profession in Arevalo on 11 June 1994, and was ordained priest on 5 April 1997 in Madrid. Before his period of service in Rome he had already served in the Youth Ministry department of his home Province (2003-2010).

Fr Gildásio Mendes dos Santos for Social Communications Sector



Fr Mendes dos Santos was elected to the Social Communications Sector. He took charge as the Provincial of the Salesian Province of Brazil-Belo Horizonte (BBH) in February 2020, and was previously Provincial of Brazil-Campo Grande (BCG). Born on 18 March 1963 in Conceição do Barra, Fr Gildásio Mendes dos Santos entered the Salesian novitiate in São Carlos, where he made his first profession on 6 January 1984. He made his perpetual profession on 11 February 1990 in Campo Grande. On December 12 two years later, in Rondonopolis, he received priestly ordination. He gained his experience in the sector as Provincial Delegate for Social Communications from 2004-2005 and then from 2009-2015.

Fr Alfred Maravilla for Missions Sector



Fr Alfred Maravilla was elected to head the Missions sector. He was the Superior of the Vice Province of Papua New Guinea-Solomon Islands (PGS). Alfred Maravilla was born in Silay City, Philippines on 31 July 1962. After completing his novitiate in Canlubang, he left for Papua New Guinea as a missionary, where he made perpetual profession on 24 March 1988 in Gabutu. After studying Theology in Cremisan, Israel, he was ordained priest in his hometown on August 15, 1992. Fr Alfred worked in the mission department in Rome from 2008-2017.

Bro Jean Paul Muller for Economy Sector



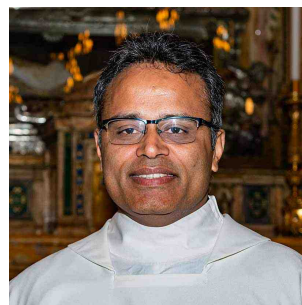
Finally Br Jean Paul Muller was re-elected as Economer General. He first served in this office from 27 January 2011 when he was appointed by the then Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez, and was elected as the Economer General by the 27th General Chapter. He was born on October 13, 1957 in Grevenmacher, Luxembourg. He entered the novitiate in Jünkerath on August 16, 1978 where he made his first profession on August 15 of the following year and made his perpetual profession on August 15, 1984. He participated in 23, 24 and 26 General Chapters and was part of the pre-capitular commission for the GC27.

On 13 March all the regions participated in prayer and discernment to elect their regional councilors.

The following members were elected:

Our New Regional - Fr Michael Biju Pulianmackal

We heartily welcome our new Regional Fr Biju Michael who he has taken up this service as the regional of South Asia. Fr Biju originally belongs to the Province of Guwahati. He was born on 20 May 1970 in Idukki (India). After his novitiate in Shillong he made his first profession on March 20, 1988. After his perpetual profession on May 24, 1996 he pursued his theological studies in Shillong and was ordained priest on July 30, 2000 in Moolamattam. He holds a Doctorate in Moral Theology and a Master's degree in Philosophy. From 2011 to 2017, he was the Dean of the Salesian Theological Studentate at Ratisbone, Jerusalem. Till his election as the regional, Fr Biju was working as the Registrar of the Assam Don Bosco University in Guwahati. We congratulate him and pray that God may bless him with wisdom and understanding to guide and animate our region.



Fr Alphonse Owoudou for the Africa-Madagascar region

Fr Alphonse was the Superior of the Equatorial Tropical Africa Vice Province (ATE). He was born in Ebolowa (Cameroon) on April 30, 1969; he completed his novitiate in Lomé (Togo) between 1989 and 1990; he made his perpetual profession on 9 August 1997 in Yaoundé (Cameroon), where he was ordained priest on 11 July 1999. He was Dean of the Post-Novitiate of Lomé (2011-2015) and Dean of the Salesian Institute of Yaoundé. He obtained a Doctorate in Psychology from the Salesian Pontifical University (UPS) in Rome.



Fr Gabriel Romero for the America South Cone region

Fr Gabriel Romero was the Provincial of North Argentina (ARN). Fr Gabriel Romero was born on 10 September 1971 in San Miguel de Tucumán (Argentina). He attended the novitiate in La Plata, professing as a Salesian on January 31, 1991. He made his perpetual profession on 5 October 1996 and he received his priestly ordination in Cordoba on December 11, 1999. He was a professor of Philosophy and Educational Sciences. He also participated in the 27th General Chapter.



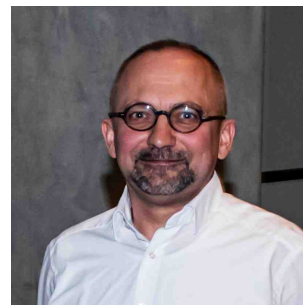
Fr Giuseppe Nguyen Thinh Phuoc for East Asia region

Fr Giuseppe Nguyen Thinh Phuoc was serving at the Mission Department. He was born on 2 November 1955 in Quang Ngai (Vietnam). He made his novitiate in Tram Hanh and professed on August 15, 1974. He made his perpetual vows in Dalat on 15 August 1980 and was ordained priest on 9 September 1995 in Fountain Valley (USA). In his home Province, he was Councilor and Delegate for Formation.



Fr Roman Jachimowicz for the Central and Northern Europe region

Fr Roman Jachimowicz was the Provincial of the Province of Poland-Piła (PLN). Fr Jachimowicz was born on 13 November 1967 in Gorzów Wlkp (Poland), made his novitiate in Swobnica, and first profession on 22 August 1987. He made his perpetual profession on July 31, 1993 in Rumia; he was ordained priest on 25 May 1995 in Lad. He was Delegate for the Past Pupils for the "St. Adalbert" Province of Poland. He also speaks German, Russian, English and Polish.



Fr Hugo Orozco Sánchez for the Interamerica region

Fr Hugo Orozco Sánchez, was the Provincial of Mexico-Guadalajara. Born on June 30, 1968 in San Luis de Potosí (Mexico), he carried out his novitiate in Chula-Vista, made his first profession on 16 August 1989 in Tlaquepaque and perpetual vows on 10 September 1995 again in Tlaquepaque. He received priestly ordination in San Pedro de Tlaquepaque on 15 March 1997. Before being appointed Provincial, he had also served as Delegate for Youth Ministry and Formation for the MEG Province.



Fr Juan Carlos Pérez Godoy for the Mediterranean region

Fr Juan Carlos Pérez Godoy was the outgoing Provincial of the Salesian Province of Spain-St James Major (SSM). He was born on 5 November 1959 in Burguillos, made his first religious profession on September 8, 1978; perpetual profession on 15 August 1984 and was ordained priest on June 5, 1987. Before serving in the SSM Province, in the old Province of Seville, he was Delegate for Youth Ministry, Vicar, and Provincial. Graduated in Ecclesiastical Sciences, he has a Diploma in Magisterium and Catechetics and in Youth Ministry.



On 13 March evening at 5.30 pm Fr Angel Fernandez our Rector Major gave the concluding message to the Chapter members after which the moderator of the Chapter, Fr Stefano Vanoli had officially declared the GC28 closed. After dinner, the confreres enjoyed a short family gathering to felicitate the newly elected General Councilors. On 14 March the concluding Eucharistic celebration was presided over by the Rector Major.

We are ever grateful to the Almighty for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for the maternal accompaniment of our Blessed Mother in this important process of electing leaders for the next six-year period at the 28th General Chapter. We congratulate each one of them and extend our whole-hearted support and cooperation as they embark on this delicate yet important journey of animating and governing our Congregation according to the patrimony of Don Bosco and according

to the mind of the Mother Church in responding to the challenges of today's youth. We also thank all the outgoing General Council members for their unstinted contribution to the growth of our Congregation. Let us extend our thanks to Fr Fancesco Cereda, Fr Fabio Attard, Fr Guillermo Basanes and Fr Filiberto Gonzalez the sector councilors and all the out-going regional councilors for their availability, dedication and leadership.

Gratitude to Fr. Maria Arokiam

I would like to extend our warmest gratitude to Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga for his leadership as the Regional of South Asia in the past 12 years (2008-2020). We thank Fr Maria Arokiam for facilitating a greater collaboration and coordination among the Provinces of the Region and for building up and strengthening the regional/national networks. He is a creative thinker who has always brought in fresh and vibrant ideas that have challenged us to be ever relevant to the needs of the young in the ever changing context of our vast region. We pray for him that he may continue to render his valuable services to our Salesian World wherever he may be and that he may enjoy good health and contentment in his future ministry.

Congratulations to our New Deacons

On March 19, 2020 on the feast day of Saint Joseph, two of our clerics Pale Justin and Salibindla Praveen were ordained deacons at Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore. 20 Salesian clerics from various Provinces of India were ordained deacons by the Archbishop of Bangalore, Msgr. Peter Machado. Five deacons from other congregations were ordained together with the Salesians. Fr Jose Koyickal, Vice Provincial of Bangalore Province, Fr James Kadankavil, Rector of Kristu Jyoti College, together with other priests concelebrated the Holy Eucharist. We wish our deacons a fruitful and fulfilling ministry as servants of God's Word.

Applications for Renewals and Professions

I requested all of you dear rectors and house council members to send the assessment, application and admission forms of the young Salesians to the Provincial Office latest by March 31, 2020. In the wake of the country-wide lockdown necessitated by Corona virus pandemic, I have sent a communication to all of you from Secretary's Office to send the scanned copies of the same or snapshots of them through whataspp. I thank those who have already sent them and remind the others to send them at the earliest. Please keep in mind that you will have to send the hard copies of the applications, admission forms and scrutiny forms as soon as the postal service is restored and lockdown is lifted. Let us continue to accompany our young confreres so that they become more mature in their Salesian way of life and in offering themselves totally to the service of the Lord among the young.

Youth Expo 2020

I once again remind you about the Youth Expo 2020. It is the national gathering of the members of the Salesian Youth movement (SYM), India. The SPCSA recommends this as a quadrennial program for young people who are above 18 years of age. It aims to Educate, Evangelize and Engage the participants who come from all over the country, as they collectively live out the Salesian Youth Spirituality during this time. The SPCSA is glad to bring to our notice that the forthcoming YOUTHEXPO will be hosted by the Province of Chennai at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur on October 2-3, 2020. The host province will soon initiate the necessary preparations. I invite all the communities to prepare and participate in this inter-provincial Salesian event for the young. Kindly encourage the youth of our communities and neighbourhood, to avail themselves of this opportunity for their enrichment and personal renewal.

Demise of the Bishop of Vellore - Bp. Soundararaju Periyannayagam SDB

Bishop Soundararaju Periyannayagam SDB of Vellore is no more. He died of a massive heart attack on March 21 2020. The 70-year-old Salesian Prelate was undergoing treatment for cardiac problems at Thomas Hospital, Chetpet, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, when the Lord took him to Himself at 12:15 a.m. Bishop Periyannayagam was born on June 6, 1949, at Kolappalur, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. After his school studies, he joined the Salesians and made his First Profession on May 24, 1970. He was ordained priest on June 25, 1983 at Manchester, England, United Kingdom. He was appointed the sixth Bishop of Vellore Diocese on July 11, 2006. His Episcopal Ordination was on August 24, 2006. He had a B.A. in Economics from Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, M.A. in Economics from Loyola College, Chennai, M.A. in Theology from Ushaw College, Durham University, UK and Doctorate in Economics at St. Joseph's College, Bharadhidassan University, Trichy. He was the Professor and Vice-Principal (1983-1988 and 1991-1994) of Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur; Principal (1994-2000) at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur; Rector and Parish Priest (2001-2004) at St. Lourdes' Shrine, Perambur, Chennai; and Rector (2004-2006) at Don Bosco Gandhinagar, Vellore before becoming the Bishop of Vellore. He was a priest for 36 years and a Bishop for 13 years. Let us implore the Lord to grant him the peace and glory of His heavenly kingdom.

Directions for the celebration of Holy Week and Easter in time of COVID-19

A Decree entitled "In time of Covid-19" (II), has been issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on Wednesday, 25 March 2020. The new document updates an earlier decree, dated 19 March 2020. It contains responses to questions it has received regarding the celebration of the Easter liturgy. Both Decrees are issued "by mandate of the Supreme Pontiff, for the year 2020 only".

Easter is celebrated - Since the Solemnity of Easter cannot be transferred, the Decree states that, "in the countries which have been struck by the disease and where restrictions around the assembly and movement of people have been imposed, Bishops and priests may celebrate the rites of Holy Week without the presence of the people and in a suitable place, avoiding con-celebration and omitting the sign of peace".

Participation of the faithful - The Decree encourages pastors to inform the faithful of the times of the liturgical celebrations, "so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes" to the prayer of the Church. In this regard, the Decree continues that the "means of live (not recorded) telematic broadcasts can be of help". It then emphasizes how important it is to dedicate "adequate time for prayer" and the Liturgy of the Hours is especially important.

Palm Sunday - Holy Week begins with the celebration of Palm Sunday. "The Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated within sacred buildings", the Decree says. When celebrated in Cathedral churches, it specifies that the second form from the Roman Missal is to be used, and the third form is to be used when it takes place in parish churches.

The Chrism Mass - The latest Decree says that the Episcopal Conferences "will be able to give indications about a possible transfer to another date" for the Chrism Mass. It is generally celebrated in every diocese on Holy Thursday, or on another day of Holy Week.

Holy Thursday - On Holy Thursday, the "washing of the feet, which is already optional, is to be omitted" the Decree says. The customary procession at the conclusion of the Mass, when the Blessed Sacrament is taken to the Altar of Repose, is to be likewise omitted. The Blessed Sacrament is to be reposed in the tabernacle. The Decree grants special permission to all priests to celebrate Mass "in a suitable place, without the presence of the people".

Good Friday - Wherever the celebration of the Passion of the Lord takes place, the Decree directs Bishops to "arrange to have a special intention prepared for those who find themselves in distress, the sick, the dead". The decree also indicates that "the adoration of the Cross by kissing it shall be limited solely to the celebrant".

Easter - The Easter Vigil "is to be celebrated only in Cathedral and parish churches", the Decree states. The updated Decree clarifies that "in the 'Baptismal Liturgy', only the 'Renewal of Baptismal Promises' is to be maintained".

Wednesday's Vatican Decree notes that "seminaries, houses of clergy, monasteries, and religious communities shall follow the indications of this decree." It also indicates that, unlike the official liturgical celebrations, "expressions of popular piety and processions which enrich the days of Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum can be transferred to other suitable days in the year". An example given is 14 and 15 September (the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows). Determinations about the transfer of such devotions are left to the judgment of the Diocesan Bishop.

Together with these indications given by the Vatican, let us pay attention also to the circular letters issued by our local bishops pertaining to the celebration of the Holy Week and Easter. We shall do all we can to adhere to these indications while at the same time encouraging the faithful and their families to be spiritually united to the Lord in his passion, death and glorious resurrection despite the physical distances that separate us at this time of grave crisis. Let us use this time to grow towards greater intimacy with the Lord and share this intimacy with those who feel alienated, lonely and overwhelmed by the nature of this pandemic.

Upcoming Events

April 05	Death Anniversary of Fr Chinnappa Thomas
April 07	Death Anniversary of Fr Gopu Anand
April 12	Easter
April 16-17	Provincial Council (If conditions permit)
April 24	Province Anniversary
April 26	Headmasters' and Principals' Meet (if conditions do not permit an online meeting is envisaged)

Condolences

We offer our sincere condolences:

- To the Mother Superior of SMI and the sisters at the death of Sr Sophia Pulingathil on March 06, 2020 at the age of 85.
- To the Provincial and the FMA sisters of Kolkata Province at the demise of Sr Mary George Uzhannalil on March 27, 2020 at the age of 88.
- To the Mother Superior of SMI and sisters at the passing away of Sr Julia Narayan Majaw on March 28, 2020 at the age of 91.

We commend their souls and the souls of all our confreres who succumbed to COVID-19 to the mercy of our Heavenly Father so that they may be welcomed to join the ranks of saints and angels at the banquet of the Father.

Conclusion

Resurrection is our faith, resurrection is our hope.

True - these are dark days - a huge, suffocating cloud of fear and anxiety engulfs the whole humanity. Like the 'Dark Night of Soul' experienced by saints like St John of the Cross, the whole humanity's hope is strangled by the darkness of despair that comes in the name of COVID. These are tough times, abnormal times, these are periods of faith in which our certainties, hopes for the future, beliefs about God, and even faith itself are eclipsed. Over a million people are

infected, more than 50,000 people have died and 200 countries are affected. Italy and Spain have seen several priests and doctors dying, most of them in their service to the affected people. The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse seemed to have arrived. Yet we proclaim with joy "Alleluia! Jesus is risen!"

Thousands have been crucified to a cruel death by a viral organism that cannot be seen by our naked eyes. Thousands have been walking an excruciating Way of the Cross in many countries. We pray that thousands afflicted and walking in their way of the Cross, be strengthened by the faith that at the end of the journey of their Cross is the Resurrection. Let us shout with joy - despite all challenges - "Alleluia! Jesus has risen!"

The Catholic Church is about communion. We celebrate our faith together as people of God. And yet in this time of crisis, we are forced into isolation. Perhaps this is the only time in Christian history that our common celebrations and liturgies are suspended and Churches closed. Pope Francis once said the Church should be like a "field hospital", available where human brokenness and the wounded need the healing touch of Mother Church. Yet under the circumstances, we cannot congregate and we do not have access to this 'field hospital'. This situation reminds us of the Holy Saturday of the Holy week, the 'Long Holy Saturday' when the Church waits amidst all signs of death, abstaining from any common celebration, meditating on the passion and death of the Lord and awaiting his resurrection.

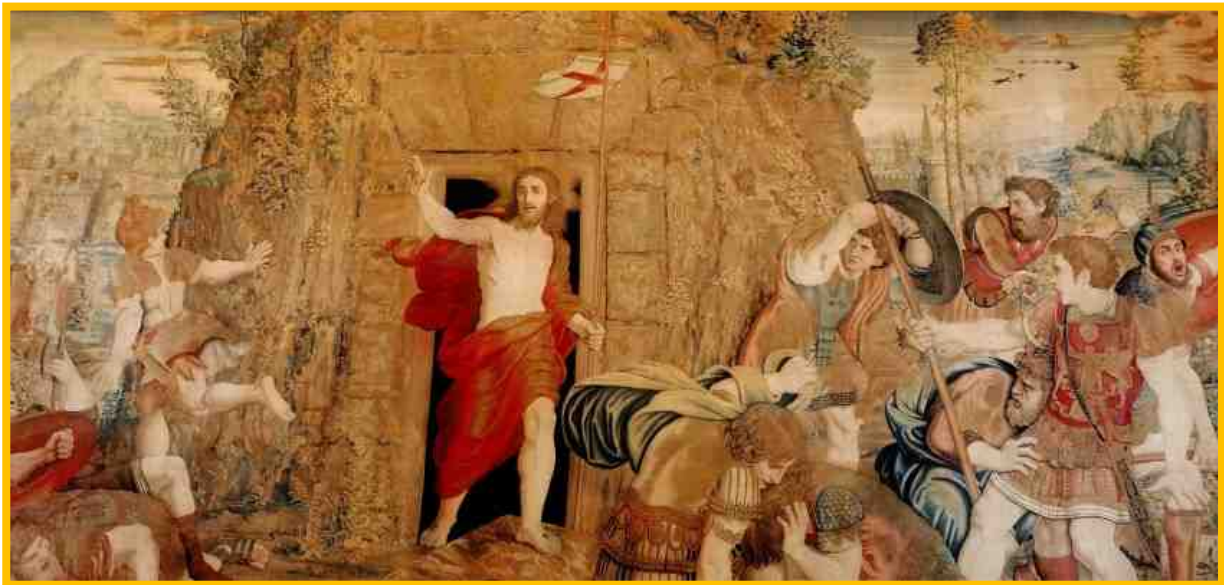
We, Catholics and all humanity, wait with hope that this Holy Saturday will end with a victorious Easter. All long dark nights end with the dawn. Evil has an expiry date. Good has none. The Church is God's hope-generating agency. So with joy and hope let us say: "Alleluia! Jesus is risen! Humanity and the Church have waded through valleys of tears before: the various plagues mentioned in the Bible, the Black Plague of the Middle Ages, when half of European people perished and nearly half of the church personnel sacrificed their lives, the 'Spanish Flu' that took more than 50 million of world population. Humanity rose with a new hope trusting in God. The Lord never abandons his people.

COVID-19 should lead us to the dawn of a new consciousness, a radically fresh approach to our life as the human family in a fragile world. We need to realize that we are not masters of creation. We need to humbly acknowledge the presence of a loving God. Most countries have realized that there are more soldiers in their countries in the business of killing than they have doctors who can save lives. Humanity itself is on the way of the Cross. May this Cross lead all nations to consign enmity and war to fire and, see resurrection in human solidarity. Now is the time for the Church to accompany the world in this resurrection to justice and human solidarity.

Pope Francis, deeply pained by the human suffering and the closing of the churches, diagnosed today's humanity's problem in his Urbi et Orbi exhortation on March 27, 2020: "when evening had come" (Mk 4:35). The Gospel passage begins like this. For weeks now it has been evening. Thick

darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice in people's gestures, their glances give them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm.

Our destiny, the Pope urges, is connected to each other. That is the message of Easter: we have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying "We are perishing" (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this. Into that new world of human solidarity and love let a new Easter be Born! So let us say with hope and proclaim from the rooftops: "Alleluia - Jesus is really Risen!"



Fraternally in St. John Bosco,

Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar SDB
Provincial

