



JNM FMA / Pro. Cir. 06

December 2017

My Dearest Sisters,

Affectionate Greetings to you!

“O Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for indeed, all that we have done, you have done for us.” (Is 26:12)

The fresh memory of the Celebration of **Triennial Verification** Province Assembly still lingers on in our minds. These days had been a rich experience of the family spirit, being together, deep reflection and renewal of our mind and heart. I am certain that as we glanced through the journey undertaken so far with realism and optimism we are empowered to see the past with gratitude and to look at the future with great hope in order to be missionaries of hope and joy. We are indeed grateful to *Rev. Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukayil*, the Visiting General Councillor, Rome, who enlightened and encouraged us with her maternal presence and inspiring words. *“The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land” (2 Kings 17:14)*, are the words of prophet Elijah to the widow of Zarephath. Like the widow, if we do what we can with what we have, if we give ourselves fully to the transformative action of the Holy Spirit in our lives we will find that we have enough and more for the future. This celebration is for each of us an opportunity and an invitation to enter the transformative space and to open ourselves to the mystery of God unfolding in our lives individually, as a community and as a Province. We can walk through this path with the attitude of Mary our model. *“Courage my dear sisters, get up, The Lord is calling you...!”*

I invite you to reflect this month on the fourth chapter of the **Initial Proclamation Today** by Alfred Maravilla, **“Initial Proclamation in Christian Context.”**

The Initial Proclamation to Christians who had received it inadequately could be called the second initial proclamation or simply **“Second Proclamation”** to distinguish it from the initial proclamation that targets those who do not know Christ.

This second proclamation implies four challenges for every individual Christian and for the entire Christian Community. The first is to undertake a second listening to the Word of God to promote *“an encounter with Christ, the living Word of God”*. The second challenge is for us to become a reflection of this Word for others. The third is to promote the dynamics of accompaniment so that the availability and openness of people may lead to a new act of faith through the Spirit. Finally, the fourth challenge is the pastoral care of families.

Pope Francis, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, writes: “In and among families, the Gospel message should always resound; the core of that message, the kerygma, is what is *“most beautiful, most excellent, most appealing and at the same time most necessary”* (58). *“Our teaching on marriage and family cannot fail to be inspired and transformed by this message of love and tenderness; otherwise, it becomes nothing more than the defense of a dry and lifeless doctrine”* (no.59).

In the light of what the Pope suggests and also following the indications of the Rector Major presented in *Strenna 2017, “We are family! Every home, a school of Life and Love”!* From the Book of Ruth we can surely take precious inspiration on how to make the initial proclamation in the family context, but above all in the family spirit.

Ruth *“attaches herself to Noemi”* (1, 14) with sincere friendship. It is through this intensity of human relationships that God works marvels. He does not let Himself be found only in great theophanies and in awesome victories, but also in the domestic sector, in the history of a family marked by suffering: famine, sickness, death, poverty, insecurity. Here the face of God is reflected in two little women, widows, without children: one a foreigner and the other an immigrant.

God, who lives in the intra-Trinitarian relationship, loves to reveal Himself in the intra-human communion. He, who sends His Son to become the brother and friend of humans, loves to make Himself discovered in the solidarity of friends. He makes Himself be found in the purity and depth of human love: *“Where there are charity and love, there is God”*.

Don Bosco understood this dynamic very well, and chose to make the Preventive System be based on charity. It is in this sense that he exhorts us to earn the heart of the young, *“to make ourselves loved more than feared”*, to *“make ourselves love what the young love”*.

In a missionary encounter, a group of young people created this slogan: *“Is your God dead? Take mine: He is alive!”* It is a beautiful expression of the initial proclamation. God loves to go from ‘yours’ to ‘mine’ across the bridge of friendship.

The story of Noemi and Ruth has a happy ending. The two women, in their reciprocal acceptance, unknowingly accomplish a mysterious plan of God. Ruth married Boaz and from this happy marriage Obed was born, and from him David was born a century later. And a thousand years later, the Son of God, Jesus, became the Son of David, thus the Son of Ruth, the Son of Noemi. Human relationships thus become the ground of miracles, the space in which God manifests His provident tenderness, and the occasion in which He surprises the world.

The family is the seedbed where faith is planted and nourished in the hearts of children. But the ideal family does not exist; so the pastoral ministry of accompaniment of families is important in order to follow them up gradually and with pastoral mercy through reflection and discernment. This is particularly needed by families in situations of fragility and imperfection. In this way, each family is helped to become the privileged place to support, accompany and guide the human, social, sexual, ethical and religious education of children. Thus the family becomes a place for the transmission of faith to all those it comes in contact with, as well as a true missionary family!

Feast of St. Francis Xavier - 3rd December

St. Francis Xavier was born in the Kingdom of Navarre on April 7, 1506. St Ignatius of Loyola made him realize the emptiness of the world by repeating: “What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” On August 15, 1534, Francis Xavier became a Jesuit and left for India in 1541, and arrived in the region of Goa on May 6, 1542, his thirty-fifth birthday. He accomplished his missionary mandate effectively with the simple catechism, caring for the sick and the needy. Today his life itself is a message. St. Francis' Xavier died on December 3, 1552, and his body is still incorrupt and remains buried in a silver casket enclosed in a glass case, Goa. He is the patron of Catholic missions. People should recognize that we are Christians by the way we live and love, and be Christ's disciples and missionaries of hope and joy today, here and now.

Feast of Bl. Philip Rinaldi - 5th December

Bl. Phillip Rinaldi was born on May 28, 1856, in Piedmont, Italy. He met Don Bosco when he was just five years old and intuitively recognized that he was a man with a great mission. At the age of 22, he was ordained a priest in 1882. He was the Salesian Provincial Superior in Spain, and Vicar-General of the Salesians before becoming the Rector Major in 1922, Don Bosco's third successor. He gave great encouragement to the Salesian Co-operators and set up the World Federations of Past-Pupils (male and female) and founded the "*Volunteers of Don Bosco*". He died on December 5, 1931, in Turin, and was beatified on April 29, 1990, by Pope John Paul II. "*What must you do to have a life? Before all else, the first thing you have to do is to pray for courage every day to carry the cross the Lord has assigned you. Then let each of you do your own work really well, the work proper to your state, as God wants it, and according to your condition.*" - *Blessed Philip Rinaldi*.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception - 8th December

Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: **The most Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, was preserved immune from all stain of original sin (CCC. 491)**. By giving Mary this grace from the first moment of her conception, God showed us an image of our own destiny. The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is a time to celebrate the great joy of God's gift to humanity in Mary and to recognize with greater clarity the truth that each and every human being has been created by God to fulfill a particular mission that he and only he can fulfill. Festal wishes and prayers to Mary Immaculate Convent, Thirupattur, Amala Anjali-Yellagiri Hills and all our Sisters who celebrate their feast on this great day.

Human Rights day - 10th December

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which stands as a beacon for the international community on the standards it should set for the defense and promotion of human rights. Our efforts for the development of our country will have to be premised on the objective of securing human dignity and guaranteeing fundamental human rights to all. No police station, commission, or court can monitor every nook

and corner of the country to prevent human rights abuses. It is ultimately up to the citizens of our country to treat each other as equals. Each one of us needs to inculcate a human rights culture in his/her neighborhood.

The Meaning of Advent

The word “**Advent**” is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “**coming**,” which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. During Advent, the Church in celebration looks back upon Christ’s coming while at the same time looks forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ’s Kingdom. While Advent is certainly a time of celebration and anticipation of Christ’s birth, it is more than that. It is only in the shadow of Advent that the miracle of Christmas can be fully understood and appreciated, and it is only in the light of Christmas that the Christian life makes any sense. The promise for Israel and the promise for the Church is Jesus Christ; he has come, and he will come again. This is the essence of Advent. During Advent, we are asked *to prepare ourselves worthily to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord's coming into the world as the incarnate God of love and thus to make us fitting abodes for the Redeemer, coming in Holy Communion and through grace, and thereby make ourselves ready for His final coming as judge, at death and at the end of the world.*

Significance of Christmas - 25th December

It is true that Christmas is celebrated as the day of the Birth of Christ into this world. It also symbolizes a very deeply significant truth of the spiritual life: “The spiritual awakening comes to the seeker, who is perfectly humble and “**meek**” and “**poor in spirit**”. God humbled himself and became a human person, “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth*” (John 1). At Christmas God reveals his heart of love. For us in Christ, God is forever “**Immanuel**” - God with us. Christmas shows us exactly this: that everyone’s life has great value in and of itself, totally apart from what the world thinks of him. God loves us in our littleness. Jesus set aside the glory of heaven and took on human weakness. Each year Christmas reminds us that our weaknesses are unimportant in God’s eyes. We do not have to earn His love, only return it.

Thanksgiving Day - 31st December

“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (Psalm 100:4). In the Gregorian calendar, the New Year's Eve, the last day of the year, is on December 31 which is the seventh day of the Christmas season. It is a day of thanksgiving to God. On this day we ought to thank God for the gift of our life and love, our vision, and mission, our hope, and joy of the year 2017. It is an occasion that we need to count God’s many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise us what the Lord hath done!

COMMUNICATIONS

Juniors Animation and Retreat – Tiruchy

On November 4, and 5, 2017, the Temporary Professed Sisters of our Province along with the Juniors of INT had their day of animation and reflection at Sacred Heart Novitiate, Tiruchirapalli. The goal of the meeting was to keep alive the flame of missionary ardour among the Temporary Professed. The animation of the day helped the participants to review, revive, and renew their life as consecrated missionaries today.

The second Novitiate I Phase

Our young Sisters Sr. Gabriel Mariamma, Sr. Lourdusamy Jebamani, Sr. Maria Dass Bridget and Sr. Savari Fatima are doing the first phase of their Second Novitiate at Manikandam, Trichy from November 15 to December 15, 2017, along with the Sisters of other Indian Provinces. Let us accompany them with our prayers.

I thank Rev. Sr. Amalanathan Mary Margaret, the Provincial of Tiruchy and the Novitiate Community for facilitating and accompanying the young sisters in their formative journey.

FMA India Provincials' Retreat

My annual retreat with the Provincials of India at Vaduvanchal-Kerala last month had been a time of spiritual renewal during which I was able to experience God's love, mercy, and Providence. I remembered each and every one of you and prayed to the Lord for you and for your needs. The preacher Fr. Ithira SDB guided us with his inspiring talks full of historical examples touching the essentials of spiritual and religious life. I bring you the loving regards of all the Provincials. I sincerely thank Rev. Sr. Jacob Celine, Provincial, Bangalore, Sr. Jose Lissy, Animator and the Sisters of the Community of Vaduvanchal, for creating an ideal ambient for prayer and reflection during the days of our retreat.

Congrats and thanks!

The glorious twin celebrations at the Provincial level: 140th anniversary of the first FMA Missionary expedition and the 95th anniversary of the arrival of first Missionaries to India, on November 22, 2017, at Auxilium College, Katpadi was indeed a great milestone in the annals of our Province. It was momentous coming together of 161 young girls from all our institutions to mark this special event as the **'Youth Fest' and 'Vocation Day'**. These young girls are eagerly nurturing the seed of vocation to the consecrated life. Let us continue to pray and accompany them to make a decisive choice to follow Christ more closely. The various events of the day gave a fresh impetus to the participants and the Sisters to spend themselves and to be spent so as to be with the young missionaries of hope and joy. The grand finale was the oath taking and procession with the candles lit, toward our Blessed Mother, gradually leading to the entrance procession for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the climax of the day. The homily was an invitation to reach out in love to those in need. The presentation of the New Testament to every participant, carried with it a definitive mandate to *'go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation'* (Mk. 16: 15).

Congratulations and my deepest sentiments of gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of this event: Sr. Samala Amalorpavam and the Community of Auxilium College, Sr. Mariadoss Amala and the Community of Auxilium Home Katpadi, Sr. Antonyraj Christina, the Provincial Councillor, Sr. Alexandar Amali, the General Coordinator and the Team Members whose organizational skills and assiduous hard work were remarkable.

My sincere appreciations and gratitude to dear Sr. Fernando Mary Ann for organizing the celebration of 140th anniversary of the first missionary expedition at Negombo, Sri Lanka from November 9 to 11, 2017, in a solemn and significant manner with Sisters of all the six communities of Sri Lanka. The Sisters along with the Apostolic School Girls, Aspirants and Pre-Aspirants actively participated in these days of animation and celebration. During the Holy Eucharist, six communities of Sri Lanka representing the six First Missionaries to Uruguay

carried six lamps to the altar with an appropriate commentary invoking the Lord for His countless blessings to continue the mission of Love with yet greater enthusiasm. At this memorable moment, the Apostolic school Girls made their promise to be **Little Missionaries** and the Aspirants as **Young missionaries** and the FMA renewed their missionary commitment. The Sisters also had the study of the document "**Initial Proclamation Today**". May we continue to nurture the missionary zeal day by day! Please visit the Province website for the detailed report of the solemn celebrations held at Katpadi and Negombo.

Meeting of Animators and Team members

I would like to inform you that all the Animators and Team Members will be having a planning meeting on December 19 and 20, 2017 at Kodambakkam. Your presence in the meeting is mandatory.

Hearty Thanks

- To dear Sr. Chinnappen Mano Ranjitham and the Community of Yercaud for hosting all the three batch meetings from October 30 to November 7, 2017.
- To dear Sr. Samala J. Amalorpavam and the Community of ACK for hosting the Faith Formation Seminar for Teachers on November 9, 2017.
- To dear Sr. Stanislaus Mary Dora and the Community of Kodambakkam for all the work that had gone in to make the Triennial Evaluation Province Assembly, a fruitful encounter for the life and mission of our Province on November 25 and 26, 2017.

COURSES AND SEMINARS

The 14th National Annual Meet of NDF-FMA, organized by Sr. Alphonse Mary J. Isabella, Coordinator, NDF, will be held at Aluva in Kerala from December 15 to 18, 2017, on the theme: "Child Protection Policy: A review". From our Province, Sr. Kanikairaj Shermila, Coordinator and Mr. Praveen, Project Coordinator of the Development Office, Sr. Mudiappaswamy Nirmala and Sr. Joseph Victoria along with and Mr. Francis, Staff of NDF, will participate in the programme. We wish them fruitful time during the meet.

HEART-FELT CONDOLENCES AND PRAYERS

- To Sr. Michael Teresa Rani at the demise of her nephew Mr. Michael Augustine (29) on November 2, 2017.
- To Sr. Packianathan Rita at the passing away of her beloved mother Mrs. Unnithamary (87) on November 8, 2017.
- To Sr. David Elizabeth at the sudden death of her nephew Mr. Francis Joseph (43) on November 26, 2017.
- To the Mother General and the Sisters of the Congregation MSMHC at the demise of their Former Superior General Rev. Mother Elizabeth Pakumala (79) on November 27, 2017.

PRAYER REQUEST

I thank you for the prayers offered through the intercession of Blessed Sr. Maria Romero for the good health of our Sisters, Sr. Fernandez Crystal and Sr. Arockianathan Mary Josephine in whom we see great and tangible improvement in health. I request you to pray with the same trust and fervor for our dear Sisters, Sr. James Glorina, Sr. Rayappan Antonia, Sr. Gnanaprakasam Victorina and other Sisters as well as all our dear ones for their speedy and complete recovery.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - DECEMBER 2017

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| 19 - 20 | - Animators and Team Meet |
| 28 - 29 | - House Staff Retreat |
| 27 - 3 January, 2018 | - Annual Retreat I, Sacred Heart Home, Katpadi |

May Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians help us to lead a pure life!

Let me conclude with the Christmas Greetings of Pope Francis, "On this day of joy, we are all called to contemplate the Child Jesus, who gives hope once again to every person on the face of the earth. By his grace, let us with our voices and our actions give witness to solidarity and peace." Grace-filled Christmas to each one of you dear Sisters and to all the members of the Educating Community!



Joyous Christmas

Yours affectionately,

Sr. Nirmala Lazar

Sr. Nirmala Lazar FMA
Provincial