



JNM FMA / Pro. Cir. 07

January 2018

My Dearest Sisters,

Affectionate Greetings to you!

May the Lord bless you and watch over you!

May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you!

May the Lord look kindly upon you and give you his peace!

(Numbers 6: 24- 26)

These are the blissful words of Yahweh to Moses to bless Aaron and his sons. At the threshold of 2018, with the same Word of God, I extend my warm and prayerful wishes to all of you for every good in the **New Year!**

We begin the New Year celebrating the Solemnity of the Holy Mother of God. This singular Salvific event was the foretaste and the cause of extraordinary glory for Our Blessed Mother Mary. For us it is a source of grace and salvation because “through Mary we have received the Author of life. On this day we rejoice and celebrate Mary as the Mother of God *Theotokos*: God-bearer. In bearing Christ, Mary bore the fullness of the Godhead within her.

Let us now reflect on “**Mary, teacher of the Initial Proclamation.**” Mary becomes the Mother of God because she believed that the Lord’s words would be fulfilled. “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord”. This is the interpretation of Mary’s ‘**fiat**’ made by Elizabeth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Completely abandoned to God and committed to constant advancement in the ‘pilgrimage of faith’, Mary slowly and profoundly brought herself into synergy with God: “Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart”. She reached a strong understanding with Him and to an acclimatization of her whole being with the divine sphere so that she had an intuition of God’s thought. She knew how to spontaneously discern His will and to feel the heart of God palpating within her.

At Cana of Galilee we find Mary: “*simple, discrete, trustful beside her Son, and sure of being heard because she is in intimate synergy with Him*”. St. John Paul II has a concise expression in speaking of the evangelizing mission, “*Faith is strengthened by giving!*” (R.M.2). Our mission is similar to that of Mary: to bring the young to Jesus so that they can be attracted by Him. However, it is necessary that we ourselves are attracted, happy, impassioned and live in the divine sphere and are in synergy with the heart of God.

The word that she addresses to the servants and to the disciples of Jesus, “Do whatever He tells you” (Jn.2:5), reveals the depths to which penetration of the mystery of Jesus and Mary had reached. This word, according to what is told in the Gospels, is the only one Mary addressed to

men. Rightfully this is considered the “commandment of the Virgin”. It is also the last word, almost a ‘spiritual testament handed on to her children. After this, Mary will not speak again; she has said what is essential in opening hearts to Jesus, who alone has the “words of eternal life” (Jn.6:68). In this word of Mary, we perceive the echoes of the formula of the Covenant on Sinai. At the conclusion of the Covenant the people promised: “What the Lord has said, we will do” (Ex.19:8).

Mary, therefore, leads us to follow Jesus, to obey His word, and to consider Him as our absolute reference point. Mary helps us to form the new community of Jesus, rather, helps Jesus to make friends according to what He Himself said “You are my friends if you do what I command you”(Jn.15:14).

For us members of the Salesian Family called to be among the young the signs and expressions of God’s foreseeing love, the image of Mary at Cana is particularly illuminating. Only a deep understanding with God and a wise comprehension of the world and its needs can give efficacy to our educative action. The exhortation to our young people must be preceded by the trustful prayer, “they have no more wine” and must always flow from our personal fiat in adhesion to God.

Adieu dear Sr. Vittoria Devasahayam

Just as it happened on the first ‘silent night’ of the Lord’s Nativity, on the early morning of December 30, 2017, when everything was calm and quiet, along with the holy infant so tender and mild our dearest Sr. Vittoria Devasahayam slept in heavenly peace in the arms of the Father of Light. We are deeply saddened by her sudden departure. Yet we console ourselves in the certainty that we now have a powerful intercessor in heaven. She has hastened to celebrate the New Year with the Lord of life in the glory of the saints. As many of us have witnessed to her Salesian Sanctity, she is a model to us of profound piety, strong faith, tender devotion to our Blessed Mother, prompt obedience to the Superiors, and sisterly care towards everyone. She was indeed a messenger of hope to many young people and reached out to the poor and the abandoned and gave them dignity and worth.

We are ever grateful to God for her diamond years of religious life as Salesian Sister, carrying out various responsibilities in willing obedience to the superiors and in total surrender to God’s will. All these years that she lived through the various houses of the Province as designed by holy obedience have been fruitful beyond measure. She made herself available for any work as the need arose, be it a teacher or the community animator, Headmistress or the economer, warden or boarding Sister, in charge of sacred music or amidst the pots and pans in the kitchen. The poetry of St. Paul: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim.4:7), seems fitting to her life and we stand in admiration of her absolute victory! As we continue to pray for the repose of her soul let us thank her for what she had been to each one of us, and ask her to obtain many holy vocations of her calibre to our Institute, our Province and the FMA INDIA. *Rest in Peace dear Sr. Vittoria!*

The united efforts of the three communities in the campus were very much visible in the way the various details of the two days were organised ending in the glorious funeral. I sincerely thank the animators Sr. Samala Amala, Sr. Kulandaisamy Lourdumary and Sr. Mariadoss Amala Mary and the Sisters of the communities as well as the participants of the annual Retreat for the moral and spiritual support and their sisterly solidarity. I thank Sr. Irudayam Nirmal Rose and the community of Sacred Heart Convent, Polur for all the arrangements made so lovingly for the final journey of our dear Sr. Vittoria.

THEMES OF THE YEAR 2018

51st World Day of Peace

Since 1967, January 1, is designated as the 'World Day of Peace'. Just as Christmas honors Jesus as the 'Prince of Peace', the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God honors Mary as the 'Queen of Peace'. Message of his holiness pope **Francis** for the celebration of the peace day 2018 is *Migrants and Refugees: men and women in search of peace*. Our Holy Father recommends us to draw inspiration from the words of Saint John Paul II: "If the 'dream' of a peaceful world is shared by all, if the refugees' and migrants' contribution is properly evaluated, then humanity can become more and more a universal family and our earth a true 'common home'. We pray that peace and serenity, love and joy, may come into our lives and into our world.

Strenna 2018

Our Rector Major Fr. Angel Fernandez Arttime has gifted us, the Salesian Family, the Strenna of this year with a very significant, relevant and interesting theme: "*Let us cultivate the art of listening and accompanying*" based on the Gospel words, "*Lord give me that water*" (John 4:15). He invites us to accompany our young people effectively so that they can discover the project God has for them from all eternity. Let us pay heed to our Mother General's recommendation to study the Strenna so as to put it in dialogue with the Acts of GC XXIII and with the reflections concerning the accompaniment proposed by the Institute in these years and to make it the object of sharing with the young people, with the educating community, with the people involved in the mission of proclaiming the Good News (Cir. N.975).

SIGNIFICANT FEASTS OF THE MONTH

January 18-25: The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Once a year, Christians are reminded of Jesus' prayer for his disciples that "*they may be one so that the world may believe*" (Jn. 17:21). This year we are asked to pray for the unity of Caribbean people. Today Caribbean Christians of many different traditions see the hand of God active in the ending of enslavement. It is a uniting experience of the saving action of God which brings freedom. For this reason the choice of the song of Moses and Miriam (Ex 15:1-21), as the motif of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018, was considered as most appropriate one. It is a song of triumph over oppression. God has restored our dignity in Christ, and made us citizens of his kingdom, not because of anything we did to deserve it but by his own free gift in love. We are called to do likewise, freely, and motivated by love.

January 22: Feast of Bl. Laura Vicuna

We celebrate the feast of Bl. Laura Vicuna, our young saint and heroic model of virtue. We are familiar with the life of Laura and of the courageous offering of her life for the conversion of her mother. By God's providence Laura along with her sister Julia was admitted in a school run by the Salesian Sisters at Junin. It proved to be a true gift as Laura's spiritual life blossomed, her personality mirrored God's love, and she became known as a friend to all. Laura decided to sacrifice her very life for the sake of her mother and vowed to the Lord: "*I offer you my life for that of my mother.*" She was able to reach the heights of sanctity just at the age of 12. Let our communities be '*the spaces*' for our Young people to experience God's love and be challenged to take up the journey towards holiness.

January 24: Feast of St. Francis de Sales

St. Francis de Sales was born to a noble family at Chateau de Sales in the Kingdom of Savoy near Geneva, Switzerland on August 21, 1567. From a very early age he desired to serve God. After much disagreement from his father, Francis was ordained to the priesthood and elected provost of the Diocese of Geneva in 1593. In 1604, Francis took one of the most important steps in his life - the step toward extraordinary holiness and mystical union with God. For Francis the key to love of God was prayer. He would say, *"By turning your eyes on God in meditation, your whole soul will be filled with God. Begin all your prayers in the presence of God."* He would often say, *"To be an angel in prayer and a beast in one's relations with people is to go lame on both legs."* Francis de Sales died on December 28, 1622, after giving to a nun his last word of advice: **"Humility."** Don Bosco, our father and founder willed St. Francis to be one of the patrons of our congregation and an example of apostolic charity, evangelical kindness and patience. Let us imitate his virtues of humility and meekness in order to be reflections of God's love to our young people.

January 31: Feast of Don Bosco, Our Father and Founder

It is a joyful feast of the Salesian Family. Don Bosco spent his entire life ministering to the needs of the young people on the streets. He developed an educational system the **"preventive system"** based on Christian charity and the double foundation of reason and religion. St. Dominic Savio is Don Bosco's proof to the world that holiness is not a monopoly of the monastery or of the desert. It belongs to everyone, young and old. Don Bosco was **a man of action**. He used to say, "First tell the devil to rest, and then I'll rest too". He was **a man of prayer**. Once while at prayer Don Bosco was interrupted by the visit of a wealthy noble to whom he said *"My dear sir, you are a good friend of mine, but God comes first."* He was **a man of poverty**. Don Bosco was living in personal poverty while spending millions for his children. He would say, "I am poor, penniless Don Bosco. I have lived poor and shall die poor."

Don Bosco has left a legacy. His ideals, his spirit, his constant activity are all still with us in his Salesian family members, who strive to perpetuate his work on earth. He would often say, *"I have been an instrument in the hands of Mary. She has done everything"*. Today Salesian priests, brothers, Sisters, and lay collaborators, bound by one rule, inspired by the same spirit are all dedicated to the double task of self-sanctification and the care of youth.

COMMUNICATIONS

Triennial Evaluation – Welcome to Mother General and Councillors

As you are well aware, along with me Sr. Alexander Amali, Sr. Devadoss Margaret, Mrs. Mary Agnes, Professor, Auxilium College, and Ms. Helen Ruth Maria, Past Pupil, Chetpet, will be participating in the Triennial evaluation from January 24 to 28, 2018 at Kolkata. We are glad to have the gracious presence of our dear Mother General Yvonne Reungoat and the General Councilors, Sr. Alaide Deretti, Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukayil, Sr. Phyllis Neves and Sr. Runita Borja for the FMA PCI Triennial Evaluation. We welcome our dear Mother and her councilors with much affection to our Motherland India and pray that this encounter may bear abundant fruit in our personal life and in the mission.

National Peace Convention

Sr. Antony Raj Christina, Sr. Mariadoss Amala and Sr. Alphonse J. Isabella will participate in the National Peace Convention organized by National Peace Movement at Cochin, Kerala from January 31, to February 2, 2018.

Salesian Co-operators' Regional Conference

Sr. Elizabeth Sebastian and six Salesian Co-operators from SDB and FMA Chennai Provinces will participate in the XIII Southern Zonal Conference of Salesian Co-operators at Don Bosco Nuzvid, Vijayawada on January 13 & 14, 2018, on the theme: Challenges of Salesian Co-operators in their Life and Mission. We wish them fruitful days of reflection and planning for the future.

Dissemination of Strenna 2018

Salesians of Chennai Province have planned to disseminate Strenna 2018 for the Salesian Family at the zonal level: on January 6 for Vellore, January 13 for Tirupattur, January 21 for Chennai and 28 for Pondicherry. I encourage you to participate at your respective zones and grow in the art of listening and accompanying.

English Translation Group

Sr. Yettukuri Alphonsa Maria will join the ETG in Haledon, New Jersey, US, from January 17 to February 27. We accompany her with our prayers and good wishes as they work on the translation of the life of Mother Catherine Daghero.

Congrats and prayerful wishes

I am happy to communicate to you the news from the Centre that our new missionary Sr. Aruldoss Angelina, after a period of missionary formation and discernment in Rome has received her assignment from our Mother General to be a missionary in Africa Ethiopia-Sudan-South Sudan (AES) Pre - Province. Let us accompany her with our prayers that she may be a missionary of hope and joy. She will be leaving for the land of her dreams in June 2018.

MILLION THANKS

Salesian Co-operators' Promise Day

Our appreciation and prayers for the seven aspirant co-operators from FMA centres who took the promise as full pledged Salesian Co-operators on December 10, 2017, at St. Mary's Convent in the presence of SDB and FMA Provincials. A note of thanks to Sr. James Glorina Rita, the Provincial delegate, and the coordinators of Salesian Co-operators, Chennai Province, for their zeal in living and promoting the Salesian Spirituality in the lay apostolic life.

NDF Annual Meet

Our thanks to Sr. Alphonse Mary J. Isabella, the NDF Coordinator, for coordinating the 14th Annual meet at Aluva, Kerala from December 15 to 18, 2017, to Sr. Jacob Celine the Provincial of INK and Sr. Rosy Lopez for making all the arrangements.

Apostolic Planning

On December 19 & 20, the animators and Team members were enabled to dream big, to broaden their vision and to plan effectively, orienting towards new horizons in the mission of the Province. Fr. Joseph Xavier SJ effectively facilitated them to venture into the process of

Apostolic Planning. I thank Sr. Stanislaus Mary Dora and the Sisters of Fatima Convent for hosting this meet and for enabling a purposeful participation of the Sisters.

Annual Retreat and Animation

During the Annual Retreat-I held at Sacred Heart Home Katpadi from December 27, 2017, to January 3, 2018, 53 sisters participated with great fervour and commitment spreading the vibrations of their prayers all around the campus. We are grateful to Sr.Kulandaisamy Loudy Mary, the Animator of Sacred Heart Home, community Sisters, and the postulants for creating an ambient conducive for silent reflection and prayer. We thank Sr. Arockiaswami Maria Kalyani for animating the Sisters with zeal and creativity on January 3, 2018 on the theme: 'Preventive System in Today's Context'.

House Staff Retreat

We thank Sr.Mathew Josephine Siriapushpam and the community of Mazzarello Home Tirupattur for hosting the House Staff Retreat on December 28 & 29, 2017. 60 house staff participated and were spiritually enriched to fill the jars of their life with God's overflowing love.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - January 2018

- 03 - Animation for Participants of Annual Retreat I
- 06 - Provincial Team Meet
- 07 - Past Pupils' Meet
- 10 - 11 - Submission of House Accounts
- 19 - FMA-SDB Joint Council
- 20 - Provincial Community Day
- 24 - Headmistress' Meet (English Primary Schools)
- 27 - Zonal level Educating Community Meet

Let me conclude with the words of Pope Francis on the Solemnity of the Mother of God and the World Day of Peace: *"Let us fix our gaze on Mary, to take up again, under her maternal protection, the journey along the paths of time"*. Together with you I entrust to Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, the year 2018 that has just begun.

As we celebrate the Harvest festival along with the people of our State, May love, affection, joy and hope overflow from our hearts like the milk from the 'Pongal' pot!

Wishing you a very happy Feast of all the Salesian Saints of this month,

Yours affectionately,

Sr. Nirmala Lazar

Sr. Nirmala Lazar FMA
Provincial



