



JNM FMA / Pro. Cir. 22

April 2019

Viva Gesù!

My dearest Sisters,

***“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone;
but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (Jn. 12:24)***

We are halfway through the Lenten journey so significant for our spiritual renewal and growth. The season of Lent invites us to reflect on transformational change: the season of Winter gradually gives way to Spring which is filled with new beginnings, new birth and new growth; the Lenten season of 40 days of prayer, penance, almsgiving, and reflection on the mystery of the Passion and Death of Jesus leads us toward the triumphant and glorious Easter Sunday. Lent provides us with an opportunity to enter deep into our spirituality by submitting ourselves to voluntary mortifications, fasting and discipline. The wilderness, the desert days of Lent, is the true path toward spiritual transformation.

Most of us will be making our annual spiritual retreat during this month. It is our Lord who gives us a second chance to take a long, loving look at Jesus and our lives to see if our values, options, priorities and our way of life are in line with God’s designs for us. We find that we’ve wandered away from God’s path. Hence this season becomes a second chance, or a do-over, to “return to God with our whole heart”.

Lent is a good time to concentrate on fighting the urge to gossip about others and try instead to correct one's own faults and defects, says Pope Francis. This is truly a clarion call to attain holiness through our constant **SPIRITUAL COMBAT AND VIGILANCE**.

Pope Francis reminds us that Christian life is a constant fight against evil. We need strength and courage to withstand the temptation of the devil and proclaim the Gospel. Each one of us is called to win over the devil, the prince of evil through *combat and vigilance*. We need to be vigilant so as not to be affected by the worldly mentality that would deceive us and leave us dull and mediocre, deprived of joy and enthusiasm. Pope Francis reiterates that we do undergo inner struggle to overcome our weaknesses and natural inclinations such as laziness, lust, envy, jealousy and many other expressions of our lower self, but, more than all these, the *spiritual combat* is a constant struggle against the devil, the prince of evil.

The Supreme Pontiff invites us to acquire supernatural understanding and a conviction that the **malign power** is present in our midst and that it enables us to understand how evil can at times have so much **destructive force**. The devil is present in the very first pages of the Scriptures which end with God’s victory over the devil. In teaching us to pray the Our Father, Jesus wanted us to conclude it by asking the Father to “deliver us from evil”. There is no evil in the abstract. The evil one exists in reality. It indicates a **personal being - devil in person**, who assails us. That’s why Jesus taught us to ask daily for deliverance from the evil one lest

his power overcome us. The Vicar of Christ exhorts us not to think of the devil as a myth or a mere speech or an idea, for then, it will lead us to let down our guard, to grow careless and end up more vulnerable. It is interesting to note that the devil does not need to possess us, but he poisons us with the **venom of hatred, desolation, envy and vice**. If we are not careful, he will destroy our lives, our communities and our society. (Cf. GE.158 - 161)

St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (6:11, 16) urges us to *stand against the wiles of the devil* and to *quench all the flaming darts of the evil one* because our path toward holiness is a constant battle. The moment we fail to realize this we will become prey to failure or mediocrity. For this spiritual combat, our Supreme Pastor envisages the powerful weapons which the Lord has given us: **faith-filled prayer, meditation on the Word of God, celebration of Mass, Eucharistic adoration, Sacrament of Reconciliation, works of charity, community life, and missionary outreach**.

The Pope then goes on to speak about *Spiritual Corruption*. The path of holiness is a source of peace and joy given to us by the Spirit. At the same time, it demands that we keep “our lamps lit” (*Lk. 12:35*) and be attentive (Cf GE 162). In our FMA prayer of consecration, daily we seek the help of Mary ‘**to overcome every form of evil and sin** so that, with Mary and like Mary we may glorify the Lord now and forever’. St. Mary Mazzarello in writing to the Sisters of the House of Carmen de Patagones says that Jesus must be their strength and that they be on their guard to **overcome themselves or evil will spring up in their hearts like boils** (Cf. L.37).

The Holy Father rightly says that those who think they do not commit any grievous sin against God’s law can fall into a state of dull lethargy and end up weakened and corrupted. Spiritual corruption is worse than the fall of a sinner, for it is a comfortable and self-satisfied form of blindness. Thus, everything appears acceptable: deception, slander, egotism and other subtle forms of self-centeredness, for “even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light”. (*2 Cor. 11:14*) (Cf. GE.164 - 165)

Dear Sisters, let us reflect and see. Have we become lethargic and blind about our spiritual life and feel that we are righteous and have no need for conversion? In our *Plan of Formation, Rooted in the Covenant (33)* we read that our founders knew how to form communities where confidence and holiness flourished. They were also aware of the **difficulties and dangers that threaten** the community living. It is necessary to journey toward **authentic freedom which is freedom from every form of evil** and become capable of **self-giving, and journey along the Way of the Cross**. My dear Sisters, let us embark on the *joyful yet demanding journey of holiness* and share with the young people and women the *joy of having encountered Jesus* who sustains us in our **spiritual combat** and helps us **triumph over the evil forces** that threaten us, **through prayer, penance, vigilance and trust**. Let us become **signs of a humanity renewed by His Paschal Mystery!**

FEASTS OF THE MONTH

- 14 - Palm Sunday
- 18 - Holy Thursday
- 19 - Good Friday
- 21 - Easter Sunday
- 25 - St. Mark, the Evangelist
- 26 - World Feast of Gratitude, California, USA
- 28 - Divine Mercy Sunday

SINCERE THANKS

- We sincerely thank Sr. Amalanathan Mary Margaret, the Provincial of Tiruchy, and the community of Sacred Heart Novitiate, Manikandam, Tiruchy for hosting the Formation Sector Meet with Junior Sisters on March 4 and 5 and with Novices on March 6, 2019.
- Thanks a lot for the animators Sr. Devadoss Margaret and Sr. Irudayam Nirmal Rose and the community of Chetpet and Polur for conducting the retreat for the workers on March 9, 2019.
- Hearty thanks to Sr. Samala Amalorpavam and the community of Auxilium College, Katpadi for hosting the Education and Finance Commission Meet on 23 March 2019.
- Our sincere appreciation to the communities who organized the Women's Day celebrations in a significant way to empower the women of their locality: The community of Kodambakkam in collaboration with the Anmarudai Women Self-Help groups of nearly 500 women, the community of St. Joseph's Convent, Arni with 130 women from their women groups on March 9 and the community of Nandambakkam at Kannagi Nagar of 100 women from the 5 newly formed Self-Help groups on March 10.

GIFT OF HOLINESS IN OUR INSTITUTE

In her letter dated 8 March 2019, Mother General communicates to the entire Institute the happy news that she along with the General Councillors has decided to introduce the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of our dear Mother Rosetta Marchese. Mother Rosetta served as the Superior General of our Institute from 1981 to 1984 and is said to have offered her life for the Institute. Let us thank God for the gift of holiness in our Institute and through her intercession pray for special graces and favours which, when obtained, could serve as secure documentation and testimony to carry forward the process of Beatification and Canonization of Mother Rosetta.

WORLD FEAST OF GRATITUDE 2019

I am certain that you have started in earnest the month-long preparation (March 26 to April 26) for the World Feast of Gratitude 2019, by reading and reflecting on the resource material sent to you and offering special prayers for our Mother General. It is always beautiful to remember that this feast is a typically Salesian tradition whose origin goes back to 1849 when in the Oratory at Valdocco in Turin, the boys decided to express their affection to Don Bosco by celebrating his name day with great solemnity. As Sr. Chiara Cazzuola, our Vicar General, says that today, this feast is a wonderful opportunity for us to express our gratitude to the Lord for each Sister, the young people, the entire educating community, the Salesian Family and above all to our beloved Mother Yvonne Reungoat, the bond of communion and centre of unity in the Institute (C 116), for her untiring and self-giving service, for being the sign of the Father's love and for being a guide who directs the journey of the Institute with wisdom and courage. Let us be united in heart and mind with the entire FMA world and in particular with our Sisters of the United States, Province of Mary Immaculate (SUO) to celebrate the feast with our educating community on April 26 in a significant manner. Let us commit ourselves to live the proposed Word of God: "*Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me*" (Mt. 25:40), by discovering the unique treasure present in our Sisters and in every person, and by welcoming the poorest and the weakest into our homes. *Grazie Mille e Buona Festa!*

II NOVITIATE - PHASE II

Sr. Perianayagam B. Prema Rani will be doing her Phase II of the Second Novitiate from April 22 to May 25, 2019. Let us accompany our dear Sister with our prayers as she prepares herself to pronounce her irrevocable 'YES' to God in our Institute.

WELCOME BACK

I am happy to communicate to you that our dear Sr. Cherayath Anna Rani is returning to our Province from Cambodia on the 10 April 2019. We welcome her back home and wish her a fruitful ministry amidst our young people.

PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM

Sr. Stanislaus Mary Dora and Sr. Alexander Amali will be participating in the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem organized by our Institute from April 27 to May 11, 2019. We wish them happy and rich experience in the Holy Land.

HEARTFELT SYMPATHIES

Our loving prayers and condolences to all those who lost their dear ones:

- ✓ To Fr. K. M. Jose SDB and the Confreres of Chennai Province at the sudden demise of Bro. Meril Rodrigo (71) on March 3, 2019.
- ✓ To Sr. Mudiappaswamy Nirmala at the death of her sister-in-law, Mrs. Lourdu Mary (71) on March 6, 2019.
- ✓ To Sr. Ezarath Rose and the Sisters of Kolkata Province at the passing away of Sr. Catherine Das (72) on March 8, 2019.
- ✓ To Fr. Jose Mathew SDB and the confreres of Kolkata Province at the death of Fr. Thaiparambil Anthony (84) on March 19, 2019.
- ✓ To Very Rev. Dr. P. Soundararaju SDB, DD., the Bishop of Vellore and the Clergy of the Diocese at the tragic death of Fr. Maria Dossan (58) on March 23, 2019.
- ✓ To Sr. Amalanathan Mary Margaret and the Sisters of Tiruchy Province at the return of Sr. Gonsalves Dorothy (91) to the Father's House, on March 30, 2019.

UPCOMING EVENTS - APRIL 2019

- 01 - 08 : Annual Retreat for Animators, Wellington
- 08 - 09 : Animation for Animators, Wellington
- 10 - 17 : Annual Retreat II, Yercaud
- 17 : Animation for Retreatants, Yercaud
- 23 - 30 : Annual Retreat III, Kavrapettai, Chennai
- 30 : Animation for Retreatants, Kavrapettai, Chennai

We Christians believe and know that the Resurrection of Christ is the true hope of the world. The Church throughout the world echoes the angel's message to the women: *'Do not be afraid! I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised...'* (Mt. 28:5-6). Jesus, the grain of wheat sowed by God in the furrows of the

earth, died, remained three days in the tomb; but his death that contained God's love in all its power is released and made itself manifest on the third day. It is the power of the grain of wheat, the power of that love which humbles itself and gives itself to the very end, and thus truly renews the world. *"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit"*. (Jn. 12:24) This power continues to bear fruit today in the furrows of our history marked by so many acts of injustice and violence. May the Risen Christ bring forth fruits of new life and hope to millions of our brothers and sisters who suffer deprivation and exclusion, hunger and unemployment, to the migrants and refugees and victims of the drug trade, human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery, to children who as a result of war and hunger grow up without hope; and to those elderly persons who are cast off by a selfish culture that ostracizes those who are not "productive".

This is the message of the angel to the women on Easter morning: *"Go quickly and tell his disciples: He has risen from the dead"*. The women were in a hurry to get to the tomb... the surprises of God put them on the right path, on the journey without waiting. The angel invites us as well to "act quickly" and to "go" to proclaim to the men and women of our time this message of joy and hope. The Virgin Mary, silent witness of the death and resurrection of her son Jesus, helps us to be clear signs of the risen Christ in the events of the world.

May the risen Christ give His Spirit of wisdom and discernment to our beloved country India as we are heading toward General Elections 2019, from April 11 to May 19. Let us pray that the citizens may be enlightened to elect the leaders who are God-fearing and poor-friendly, who will devote themselves actively to the pursuit of the common good and ensure the development, peace and harmony of our country.

Filled with Easter joy, let us live as 'Easter People', women of newness, joy, life and hope.

I greet you all a very Happy and Hope-filled Easter!

Yours affectionately,

Sr. Nirmala Lazar

Sr. Nirmala Lazar FMA
Provincial



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APRIL 2019

- 01 - 08 - Animators' Retreat, Wellington**
- 08 - 09 - Animation to Animators, Wellington**
- 10 - 17 - Annual Retreat II, Yercaud**
- 17 - Animation for Retreatants, Yercaud**
- 18 - 21 - Easter Triduum, Kodambakkam**
- 22 - 23 - Provincial Council, Kodambakkam**
- 23 - 30 - Annual Retreat III, Kavarapettai**
- 30 - Animation to Retreatants, Kavarapettai**