



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice  
Salesiane di Don Bosco  
S. Thomas Apostle Province - INM  
Madras - India



## Provincial Circular

Mazzarello Convent, Kodambakkam, Chennai - 600 024

**INM FMA / Pro. Cir. 34**

**April 2020**

*Viva Gesù!*

*"For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, declares the Lord"*

*(Jer. 30:17)*

*My Dearest Sisters,*

**Affectionate greetings to you from Kodambakkam!**

When the whole world is terrified with the coronavirus we turn to the Lord with hope and trust in Him who is the great healer and who alone has the power to deliver us from this pandemic. We draw inspiration from the Vicar of Christ, Pope Francis, who in solidarity with the suffering humanity invited the people to join him in the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing (to the city and the world) on 27 March at 10.30 p.m., extending the extraordinary blessing of God and offering the Plenary indulgence to the people especially to Catholics who are away from the possibility of physically receiving the Sacraments.

I would like to recall the words of the Roman Pontiff, the great leader who is exemplary in his indomitable courage and faith, addressed to all people on this memorable day, "Faith begins when we realise that we need salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves, we founder: we need the Lord like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples we will experience that with him on board, there will be no shipwreck because this is God's strength: ...He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies".

Amid our tempest, the Lord invites us to reawaken and put into practice solidarity, and a hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to those who are in despair. Let us continue to storm heaven that we may face this difficult moment with greater serenity, responsibility and faith in God. Let us also feel responsible towards ourselves and to collaborate with our civil authorities and health organizations to reach out to the people affected due to the 'lockdown' in the country. Let us also join hands with them in whichever way possible for each of our communities to reach out to the people in need. Concerning the solidarity towards the people who suffer and the responsible use of time during this 'lock down' days I request you to refer once again to my letter sent to you on 25 March. I appreciate and congratulate the Animators who made the communities move with courageous charitable activities to the needy in your neighbourhood.

It is a great blessing and a grace that most of our Sisters participated in the annual Spiritual Retreat -1 in the communities with the materials and videos sent to you from the Province. It would have certainly been a different experience of the retreat, but a unique one, to experience the immense love of God and a special moment to reflect on the essentials of life and to intercede intensely for the suffering humanity that is affected and infected by the dreadful COVID -19. I congratulate and thank you dear Superiors and Sisters for creating a conducive

atmosphere for the retreat of your community Sisters by preparing an ambient for the talks and prayer moments that facilitated prayer and reflection. I wish to place on record my thanks to dear Fr Suresh Felix SDB for his strenuous efforts, promptness and zeal to animate the Sisters through his creative and profound video talks. Please remain in the spirit of the retreat with the full day adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and praying as many rosaries as possible and at least one entire rosary of all the four mysteries of our salvation, as a community.

This period of suffering and crisis leads us spontaneously to reflect on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus our Lord, and to look at this historical event in the light of faith. As we enter into the most significant moment of our liturgical cycle, the Holy Week and Easter, let us contemplate Jesus who is present in our many brothers and sisters who today endure sufferings like His own: they suffer from slave labour, from family tragedies, from diseases especially now as the entire humanity is suffering due to coronavirus pandemic. May He bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort to our hearts! May we hear His tender voice again and again “*Do not be afraid*” (Mt. 28:5). Let us, together with Peter, cast all our anxieties onto Him for He cares about us” (cf. *1 Pet. 5:7*).

### CELEBRATIONS OF THE MONTH

- 05 - Palm Sunday
- 09 - Maundy Thursday
- 10 - Good Friday
- 11 - Holy Saturday
- 12 - Easter Sunday
- 19 - Divine Mercy Sunday
- 22 - Earth Day
- 25 - St Mark the evangelist
- 26 - World Feast of Gratitude

### ALL IN THE FAMILY

#### HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW SDB GENERAL COUNCIL

As you are already aware, the SDB 28<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (GC 28) at Valdocco had to be concluded 14 March, three weeks earlier than scheduled, due to the COVID-19 in Italy and elsewhere in the world. But the Chapter members succeeded to do the essential works like the election of the Rector Major, the Vicar and the General Councillors, voting on some essential juridical issues and the preparation of the drafts on two nuclei (out of three) of the main theme of the GC28. We congratulate our Rector Major Fr Ángel Fernández Artime SDB who is re-elected for another term of six-years; Fr Stefano Martoglio his Vicar, and all the general councillors, in particular the two General Councillors from India: Fr Ivo Coelho (INB) who is re-elected for a second term as the Councillor for Formation and Fr Biju Michal Pulianmackal (ING) who is elected as the Regional Councillor for South Asia in place of Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga who completed two terms as Regional. We extend our prayerful wishes to the Rector Major and his Councillors and implore God’s blessings upon them. We pray that guided by the Holy Spirit, they may animate and govern the Congregation, after the mind and heart of Don Bosco and with the maternal assistance of Mary Help of Christians.

I express my gratitude to our dear Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga who during these two terms as Regional has been always at our side as an affectionate brother to guide, enlighten and support us personally and in our mission.

Let us continue to pray for our dear Provincials and the Delegates of Chennai and Trichy and all the other Indian Provinces who are held up in Italy that they may soon return to our motherland and resume their mission.

### HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES

We are deeply saddened at the demise of our beloved Bishop of Vellore, Most Rev. Dr. Soundararaju Periyamayagam SDB, who swiftly winged his flight to heaven due to a massive heart attack on 21 March 2020. The Funeral Services took place on 24 in the Assumption Cathedral, Vellore. It was very heart-rending to see the many laity who came to pay homage to the mortal remains of their dear bishop with tears in their eyes, and many clergy of the diocese and the Salesians who had gathered in mournful silence for the holy mass despite the strict order of the civil authorities against the social gathering. The concelebrated Holy Eucharist was presided by Most Rev. Dr George Antonysamy D.D., archbishop of Madras-Mylapore, and seven other bishops and priests. His mortal remains were interred within the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of the Cathedral in a dignified manner. His death is a great loss to the diocese of Vellore and our Province as thirteen of our houses come under his diocese. He had been a very good and able pastor supporting our educational mission for the poor young people and above all an affectionate brother who stood by us at all moments, protecting, inspiring, directing and guiding.

He was a priest for 36 years and a Bishop for 13 years. He was well known for his administrative skills. He was a very much outspoken and straight forward like a daring prophet of the times. He was simple and kind and related to the poor and young people with great compassion and love. On 8 February 2020, when he had been to St Mary's Vellore, for the 90<sup>th</sup> year of its foundation, he was repeatedly expressing his deep concern for the poorest by recommending us to take care of them and make our institutions more and more accessible to them. Though I found him very much down in health at that time, I hoped that he would soon recover and resume his mission. But God had a different plan and found him well-prepared to meet him and so we humbly bow before the divine will, committing the soul of our dear Bishop into the merciful hands of our creator, our life and resurrection. May his soul rest in peace!

### WORLD YOUTH DAY (WYD) 2020

On April 5, Palm Sunday, we celebrate the World Youth Day. The theme proposed by Pope Francis for this day is ***“Young man, I say to you, arise!”*** (Lk. 7:14). The circular of Sr.Runita Borja, General Councillor for Youth Ministry regarding the role of youth in Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) and the message of Holy Father for the WYD 2020 will be sent to you. Though we will not be able to celebrate this day with our young people, I invite you to read the above-mentioned messages and reflect on them personally and as a community, since they are very timely for the historical moments we are living, where more than ever we experience the interconnectedness of everything. Enlightened by faith, let us continue to act in these days of world emergency, bringing life and hope wherever we are.

## WORLD FEAST OF GRATITUDE 2020

Though the health emergency caused by the COVID-19 calls us to "stay home", it cannot break the chain of "THANKS" that bears witness to the closeness and solidarity of the FMA and the educating communities around the world in the intense celebration of the **WORLD FEAST OF GRATITUDE 2020**. The Roman Province of *San Giovanni Bosco* (IRO), unable to carry out all the planned events due to the anti-contagion restrictions and the serious situation that has affected the whole world, continues to accompany the preparations for *the World Thanksgiving Festival 2020 of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, urging all to reflect on the sense of Gratitude pointing out to the small steps to be taken in everyday life.

Circular 995: *"Gratitude touches the identity of our Institute, is part of our DNA and it is very nice to have the opportunity to rediscover it on the journey in preparation for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of our religious Family which, in the first stage, has a theme: Give thanks: "We really thank the Lord who gives us many graces" (L 37.10) (cf Circular 989). Cultivating and expressing gratitude is the secret of our happiness, the light that illuminates our communities of trust, sometimes weighed down by personal and pastoral efforts, by doubts and difficulties of various kinds, but sure of always being wrapped in the Love of God. Knowing how to say a sincere thank you manifests the relational quality of our being which recognizes how great the love that makes us live every day. The grace of God penetrates and transforms our life and that of every creature giving new meaning to relationships, which are also a wonderful gift from the Lord "* (Mother Yvonne Reungoat).

To express 'Thanks' for the vocation, for the life and mission of Mother Yvonne, for each Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and each member of the Educating Communities, **the Our Father will be recited every day**, the prayer of the Sons of God, which unites all those who are in harmony with the Creator and with all Creation. It is the prayer that Jesus himself taught to turn to God by calling him Father, asking him for daily bread and begging for mercy for humanity.

We have received the above news from the Institute's website. Let us be united in mind, heart and spirit very closely with *La Madre* and the entire FMA World by our prayers, spiritual practices and by making use of the liturgical prayers and other materials sent from the Provinces through the institute website and other means of the social network. Let us express our sisterly love and gratitude to our Mother General for her committed service and dynamic animation and her governance for the past twelve years by posting emails and above all by our prayers and our authentic living. *Your life is a Fruit Laden Tree. Thank you, Mother!*

### SECOND NOVITIATE - II PHASE

Sr Antonysamy Caroline, Sr Maria Prakash Kanimozhi and Sr Augustine Sagayarani will be participating in the Second Phase of the Second Novitiate in Sacred Heart Provincial House at Bangalore from 15 April to 15 May 2020. We assure them of our prayers as they prepare themselves earnestly for their Final commitment.

### NOTE OF THANKS

- ✚ Sincere thanks to Sr Lourdasamy Eugeni Fatima and the community of Arni, and to Sr Pathi Margaret and the community of Mannivakkam for organizing the retreats for the workers of Vellore and Chennai Zones on 7 and 14 March respectively. The workers participated in

good numbers and benefitted spiritually. Congratulations to you dear Sisters for your great care in the integral well-being of our lay collaborators.

- ✚ A note of thanks to Sr Stanislaus Mary Dora and the community of Kodambakkam, Sr Kanikairaj Shermila and the staff of Social Development Office, Communities of Arni, Anmarudai and Nandambakkam for organizing Women's Day celebration in your locality, in a very significant manner and above all for empowering the women of our society.

### HEARTFELT SYMPATHIES

May God grant peace to all those who lost their lives due to COVID-19, especially the Salesians and our Sisters who died in Italy and Spain in great numbers. Our loving prayers and condolences to all those who lost their dear ones during the last month:

- ✚ To the Provincial and the confreres of the Province of Hyderabad at the passing away of Bro. Soosai Dennis SDB (58) on 14 March 2020.
- ✚ To Sr Ezareth Rose and the Sisters of Kolkotta Province at the demise of Sr Mary George Uzhunnalil (88) on 27 March 2020.
- ✚ To Sr Anthoniappan Celine at the death of her sister Ms Josephine Nathan (85) on 30 March 2020.

### LIVING IN OUR MEMORY: APRIL 2020

- 06 † Sr. Aloysius Antoinette (2014)
- 11 † Sr. Ward Annie (1976)
- 18 † Sr. Albuquerque Alzira (2002)
- 20 † Sr. Tarricone Consiglia (1990)
- 26 † Sr. Bossi Aurelia (1985) and Sr D'Souza Margaret (1954)

### UPCOMING EVENTS: APRIL 2020

- March 30 - 06 April : Annual Retreat - I, Communities
- 13 - 20 April : Annual Retreat - II, Communities

Dear Sisters, let us entrust ourselves and all the people in the world to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, our Lady of Good Health and Star of the stormy Sea. The hopeful words of our Holy Father echo thus, "The Lord awakens to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by His cross, we have been saved. We have a rudder: by His cross, we have been redeemed. We have hope: by His cross, we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. Amid isolation, when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: Christ is risen and is living by our side!"

*I wish you all a very fervent Holy Week and joyous Easter!*

*Yours affectionately,*

*Sr. Nirmala Lazar*

**Sr. Nirmala Lazar FMA  
Provincial**

