



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



## Provincial Circular

Mazzarello Convent, Kodambakkam, Chennai - 600 024

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*Viva Gesù!*

*"Send forth your Spirit O Lord and renew the face of the earth" - Psalm 104:30*

*My Dearest Sisters,*

**Affectionate greetings to you from Kodambakkam!**

We are still in the *joyous climate of Easter* living in solidarity with the whole human family so painfully tried by the *coronavirus*. Mother General rightly says "we are living the experience of *'remaining' in the heart of contemporaneity*, as the theme of GC XXIV emphasizes, within our possibilities, accepting the *'present darkness'* that covers the whole world, but at the same time, *glimpsing the light of the Resurrection*... We are convinced that a bud of new life is about to bloom." (Cir. 996).

The month of May called as *'month of Mary'* is a very significant one for the Catholics all over the world and in particular for us the members of the Salesian family as we celebrate the feasts of several of our Saints: St Dominic Savio, St Maria Domenica Mazzarello and other Blesseds, and above all the solemnity of Mary Help of Christians. It is an invitation to assume her attitudes, imitate her virtues in our personal lives, to turn to her with great hope for consolation and courage with the resolute belief that she accompanies us on the journey and helps us to be enterprising in looking 'beyond' and witnessing to an unwavering trust in God's fidelity.

### WITH MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS IN THIS DIFFICULT TIMES

Mother General has gifted us with a precious treasure of her circular No.996 entitled "*With Mary Help of Christians, our Lady of difficult times*". It is truly an invitation from the heart of a Mother who feels with us and the entire world and accompanies us to read these troubled times with the eyes of God and with eyes of faith. She encourages us to stay with Mary to contemplate her solicitous and motherly presence alongside the suffering people and to be witnesses of hope like her. With the faith of Don Bosco and that of Mother Mazzarello, we are certain that Mary's presence is constant, attentive and considerate, above all during this time of emergency. She sustains us, comforts us, and gives us hope! Mary of Nazareth knew how to give a *proactive response in times of trouble and helplessness*. At the wedding feast of Cana when the wine gave out and there was an unpleasant situation, she acted promptly with wisdom turning her gaze to Jesus her son. At the most dramatic and sorrowful moment of the passion and death of Jesus her only son, she knew how to contemplate the divine will of the Father and to bow her head in humble surrender. Mary faced her life's journey with great realism, humanity and practicality.

Today, she is here with us in these months when we are living the lock-down in our houses and she inspires us and helps us to remain open, to be *creative in reaching out in various ways, to the young people*, the staff and the educating community members who walk with us in the mission. How consoling it is to feel the close presence of Mary with us today!

I would like to reflect along with you a few points based on Mother General's faith-filled reading of the reality today. (Cf. Cir. 996)

The first one is regarding our **Prayer Life**. Mother General writes, "The haste that dominated our days has given way to a time in which we can pray more calmly, to listen to God who speaks to us, to share his Word that feeds fraternity and transforms the isolation into communion with God and with community Sisters". I am certain you are spending more time in prayer, Eucharistic adoration and in sharing the Word of God and faith experience. We are grateful to God for the divine providence we experience in our lives and at the same time pray incessantly for the people who suffer due to illness, isolation, poverty especially hunger. *Are we willing to renounce something to help the poor and practice moderation that helps us to live with a sense of right measure in all we do and consume?*

Regarding **Community Communion**, she says, "the unheard-of situation ... is an invitation to a different way with better quality to relate among ourselves, to take joy in little things, to make our best selves emerge, spreading gestures of real humanity in gratuity". I hope you spend sufficient time for community sharing and working together in a climate of serenity and hope while dedicating yourself either to update the documents or reaching out to common works of the community. *How do we contribute generously to the community communion? What do we do to rediscover the beauty of sisterly affection, tenderness, care, concern, acceptance of one another and forgiveness?*

While reflecting on **our Mission among the young people** *La Madre* challenges us to be messengers of hope and illumine the future of our young people and the world using the 'therapy of hope'. We need to be courageous to look ahead. It is not easy to think about 'after' the world crisis provoked by COVID -19. She quotes Pope Francis who tells the young people "**Have the courage to look ahead and be prophets. Your prophecy is reflected in the dream of the elderly**". *Do our young people and laity feel the closeness of our presence with them especially during these days? What can we do to make them messengers of hope?*

## MARIA DOMENICA, AN ICON OF FAITH DURING CRISIS

On 9 May we celebrate the birthday and on 13 the feast day of our beloved Mother and co-foundress St Maria Domenica Mazzarello. She stands out as an icon of **courageous faith and trust in God** in the event of a crisis when Mornese was ravaged by typhoid fever in the year 1860. Fr Dominic Pestarino, the Parish Priest, was much troubled and asked her parents to allow her to help the uncle's family which was struck by the illness. Despite the resolute refusal of her family members, Maria Domenica obliged to the request of Fr Pestarino with these words, "*If you wish me to go I will go, although I am certain I shall catch the infection*". (Cronistoria, vol. 1, pg. 80). Maria Domenica carried out the service of assisting typhoid stricken family of the uncle with serenity, seriousness, dedication and discretion but herself became the victim when she came to their assistance. She faced the sickness with such great resignation to the will of God that she felt called to a new way of life and discerned her life mission. She gave up heavy field labour and started dressmaking to educate and help the young girls with a trade for their livelihood and to save their souls and that is being continued till today.

As the first Mother General of the newly born congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Mother Mazzarello guided the institute with wisdom and directed the communities, Sisters and young girls with her feminine intuition, power of prayer and capacity to listen. Mother's interventions in the life of the independent and rebellious Maria Bellatti, the critical and scornful Emma Ferrero, vain and stubborn Corinna Arrigotti and many other young girls

that transformed their life completely testify to her ability to deal with difficult characters. Through her simple but heart-touching letters Mother Mazzarello encouraged the Sisters to face difficult situations, trials and sufferings in their life. One such example is the **letter to the Sisters of the house of Saint Cyr-Sur-Mer (France)** where there was a crisis of not being able to accept the newly appointed Superior. Mother persuades the Sisters, gently and firmly, to overcome the community problem. She writes, “*Give me this consolation soon, my dear Daughters, love one another with true charity, love your superior; look upon her as though she were our Lady and treat her with all respect.*” (MM Lr 49). Her delicate motherly tenderness knows how to help her daughters to overcome the challenging situations and crisis in the community. Let us ask ourselves, how can we contextualize our spirituality in today’s context and share the same with the young? What are the new challenges / opportunities that we envisage due to COVID 19 in relation to our ministry? What choices are we called to make during the post-lockdown period in various ministries to be effective educators?

Let us be active, creative, productive and proactive to live these days fruitfully. Let us also try to engage our lay collaborators and members of the Salesian Family in our creative pastoral initiatives.

### ACCOMPANYING YOUNG PEOPLE DURING LOCK-DOWN DAYS

I appreciate your courage and concern for the poor to reach out in various ways to the people in peripheries who are affected according to your possibility. I am sure many of the young people of our institutions too are inspired and educated to act in solidarity with the people who suffer. Just to quote a few examples: One of our students of Fatima Matriculation School, Kodambakkam, offered to Chief Minister ₹ 20,000/- for the COVID-19 relief work, by selling her bottle paintings; the students of Auxilium College of Arts and Science, and of Education conduct Webinars on various topics and present short videos about Covid-19 and ways to protect ourselves from it. Their contribution may be little but the attitude of sharing and creating awareness through social media is great. In this time of the pandemic, says our Mother General, our young people are called not to stay on the sofa, resigned to the situation but to be daring, to communicate through the means of communication, messages of resurrection, of life and to render their service to the needy around them. What new signs of hope do we foresee in our mission among the young? ***Let us find creative ways of reaching out to our young people through social media. Let us look for real heroes who can serve, encourage them to undertake voluntary service and social responsibility, of course obeying the norms and rules indicated, avoiding possible risks of contagion.***

### CELEBRATIONS OF THE MONTH

- 01 - St Joseph the Worker
- 06 - St Dominic Savio
- 09 - Birthday of St Maria Domenica Mazzarello
- 13 - St Maria Domenica Mazzarello/ Our Lady of Fatima
- 16 - St Louis Orione
- 18 - St Leonard Murialdo
- 24 - Ascension of the Lord
- 25 - Mary Help of Christians
- 31 - Pentecost

## ALL IN THE FAMILY

### FIRST PROFESSIONS

As per the indications of our Secretary-General, it is not appropriate to change the date of the first professions even if we live in a period of crisis. We thank and praise the Lord of the harvest that the following nine novices: Sr Belavendiran Sudha Violet, Sr Kabriel Gracy Marthal, Sr Premkumar Josephine Keerthana, Sr Ravi Johnes Sorna Rani, Sr Santhiagu Mary Theresa and Sr Susainathan Ayesha Bindhu will be making their first profession on 24 May 2020 at Sacred Heart Novitiate, Trichy; Sr Koduthor Swingle Jerida and Sr Perera Alanrina at Sacred Heart Novitiate Negombo on 31 May, and on the same day Sr Rodrigo Kaushalya at Canlubang, Philippines. On this special occasion, we congratulate our young Sisters for their decisive 'fiat' to the Lord to be with Him and in the service of young people. Hearty congratulations and prayerful wishes also to their companions at Trichy as well as at Canlubang in the Philippines!

With our fervent prayers let us continue to accompany the postulants who are waiting to enter the Novitiate and our three Junior Sisters who are eagerly preparing themselves to make their final commitment. The date of entry into Novitiate and Final commitment will depend on the situation of the lockdown days in our State and in the country.

### PROVINCIAL COUNCILLORS

I am happy to communicate to you that our Mother General with the consent of her council has appointed the following provincial councilors for the second consecutive term (2020 - 2023): Sr Stanislaus Mary Dora, Sr Anthony Raj Christina, Sr Gaspar Mary Celine, Sr Devadoss Margaret and Sr Samala Rayappan Elisa. She has also confirmed the appointment of Sr Puliyani Lucy as the Provincial Economer and Sr Kanickaraj Mary Tamizharasi as the Provincial Secretary for the second consecutive term (2020 - 2023).

May the Lord bless them abundantly for their generosity in accepting this responsibility and their willingness to collaborate with me for the growth of the Province!

### TRANSFERS

I thank you for your generous availability to 'Do whatever He tells you'. The new apostolic assignments and the transfers of Animators and Sisters will be made known to you as and when the situation permits and in obedience to all the rules and norms of the State and Central government. The transfers will take place only after the lockdown period is over.

### VOCATION PROMOTION

Even though it is impossible to conduct the vocation camps in the current situation, I recommend you to contact the girls who have shown signs of a vocation to religious life and help them that they may make the right decision to follow the Lord in the Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello way. Once you make sure with the young girls and their parents, kindly send the names of the candidates to Sr Samala Rayappan Elisa.

### JUNIORS' SUMMER COURSE AND RENEWALS

Our Junior Sisters will be having their summer course in two places. Three Sisters at Kodambakkam and ten Sisters at Auxilium College Katpadi will be participating in the course from 14-22 May 2020. Sr Devadoss Margaret and Sr Alexander Amali will be the facilitators of the programme in Kodambakkam and Katpadi respectively. On the 23 they will make their recollection. On 24 May they will be renewing their vows. The junior Sisters in Sri Lanka will make their recollection on 29 May and renew their vows on 30 May in their respective communities. Let us pray with joy thanking the Lord for the gift of these our young Sisters that

they may grow up to be ardent disciples of Jesus, courageous apostles of young people, and authentic Salesian Sisters in the footsteps of our founders and saints.

### **BUDGET IN SOLIDARITY**

In his message for World Youth Day 2020, Pope Francis says, *“if you know how to cry with those who cry, you will be truly happy, you will be bearers of hope in this world. You can say to your brother and sister: **“Get up, you are not alone”**”*. As the whole world is facing a financial crisis due to the pandemic COVID-19 and as the people face a lot of problems without any work and income, I invite you, my dear Sisters, to plan as a community the fee structure for our Educational Institutions and the budget for the coming academic year. Put down concrete ways and means of minimizing the personal and community needs and the construction and maintenance expenditures to pay our teaching and non-teaching staff, workers, and house staff. Also plan how you would celebrate the various events of the community and mission keeping in mind the financial crisis of the world today.

### **ADIEU DEAR SR PHILO SOLOMON**

With a heavy heart and a deep sigh, we bid farewell to our dearest Sr Solomon Philomena whose death came like a thief at an hour we least expected. She breathed her last on 28 April at 7.50 a.m. as the provincial house community gathered at the Eucharistic celebration was singing the response *“Into your hands O Lord, I commend my spirit”*.

From 2017 she had been suffering from major cardiac problems for which she was undergoing treatment in St Isabel’s Hospital, Chennai. From 9 March 2020, she was in the provincial house for intensive medical treatment and hospitalization. Sr Philo seemed to be improving very much but on 27 April she was feeling very weak and sick. The consulting doctor advised a slight change in the drugs and assured that she would improve within days. But around 7.00 pm I found her to be very pale and drowning. Immediately after receiving the anointing of the sick and conscious and fervent reception of holy communion, she was shifted to Apollo Hospital. All the medical attempts to revive her to life proved futile and in the following morning, our dear Sr Philo swiftly winged her flight to heaven.

Sr Philomena Solomon was born on 28 February 1941 at Settipatty in Salem district to Mr A. Solomon and Mrs. Antoniammal as the second of eight children, four boys, and four girls. As the first girl baby in the family, she was very much petted by the grandparents and grew up with the affection of all the family members. Being part of a large family, she imbibed the values of sharing, hard work, and friendship. Philo was notable for her cheerfulness, loving-kindness, friendly nature, and constant availability. The seed of vocation took root and bloomed in Philo while studying at Mary Immaculate, Tirupattur where she completed her SSLC in 1959 and TSLC in 1961. She worked as a teacher for two years in Auxilium High School, Katpadi and entered the congregation as an aspirant on 31 January 1963 in Broadway, Madras. She made her first profession on 5 August 1966 at Katpadi.

Soon after her profession she was placed as headmistress in various schools for twelve years and continued as a secondary grade teacher for another two decades. She worked in different houses of the province as a teacher, headmistress, sacristan, catechism teacher, in charge of the boarding, hostel, playschool, shelter home, supervision of the construction work, assistant in the school and oratory and a host of other such assignments.

She liked to be with young people and teach them. She always had a soft corner for the poor, especially the orphans, and reached out to fulfill their every need. Her love for them was personal and each of them felt being loved by her. For Sr Philo, devotion to Holy Eucharist and

participation in the daily sacrifice of the Mass was like the breathing in of the life-giving oxygen. The rosary beads constantly on the move between her fingers tell eloquently of her devotion to Mother Mary and her confidence in entrusting everyone and everything to her maternal embrace.

Her love for priests especially the Salesians is legendary. Her delicate attention in caring for them, giving them hospitality and remembering them with a memento on their special days, speaks volumes of her genuine affection. She was characteristically known for her caring for the sick and suffering people. She would always be there as the first arrival at any funeral in the FMA and SDB provinces to see to the minutest details of the funeral rites. Fr K. M. Jose, the Provincial, Chennai, and other Salesian Priests sent their condolence messages. I would like to quote Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga, the former Regional Superior of South Asia who writes, “Sr Philo was an indispensable presence whenever people were sick. She attended as many funerals as possible and helped physically in loving service, preparation of the body, dignified send-off, etc. It is paradoxical that at her funeral there will be hardly anybody present. But we are all with her in spirit and with you all in this moment of sorrow”. Despite the lock-down days, the funeral Mass was con-celebrated by nine priests and a deacon and presided by Fr Xavier Packiam, the Provincial Economer and Provincial in charge of SDB Chennai Province in the presence of around 50 FMA. We are grateful to God for her 54 precious years of consecrated life as FMA, for her commitment and eagerness to do as much good as possible. She has always been a model of Salesian joy and simplicity and an example of “I will go and I will do”. In true Christian faith, we believe that she is already enjoying the glory of the Risen Christ at the right hand of the Father. May she intercede for many generous vocations for our Institute, FMA India, and in particular for our dearly beloved province. ***May her soul rest in the peace of the Lord!***

I express my thanks to Sr Joseph Jackulen Anthony and the community of Mazzarello Home for accompanying our Sr Philo with love for the past two years; Sr Stanislaus Mary Dora and the community of Kodambakkam for taking care of her during the last days of her earthly life and organizing the funeral proceedings; to Sr Perianayagam Auxilia and Ms Sankari for their delicate care and attention.

### 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 Fr Thathireddy Vijaya Bhaskar and the Salesians of INH Province at the passing away of Fr Yeddanapalli Anthony Selvaraj SDB on 9 April.
- ✠ To Fr Savio Silveira and the Salesians of INB Province at the demise Br Michael Condillac on 12 April.
- ✠ To Sr S. T. Philo at the demise of her Sister Mrs. Jacintha (71) on 15 April.
- ✠ To the Novice Sr Don Bosco Jerida in Negombo, Sri Lanka at the passing away of her beloved father Mr Don Bosco (65) on 20 April.
- ✠ To our Sisters Sr Perianayagam Martina and Sr Auxilia at the sudden demise of their youngest brother Mr Anthony Cruz (41) on 23 April.

### LIVING IN OUR MEMORY: MAY 2020

- 01 † Sr Colussi Rina (1966), Sr Merlo Teresa Pierina (1993)
- 02 † Sr Appiano Luigia (1970)
- 05 † Sr Gomes Anna (2000), Sr Battigelli Genevieve (2014)

- 06 † Sr D’Gama Bertha (2008), Sr Dias Lydia (2014)
- 07 † Sr Pereira Anne (1996)
- 12 † Sr Mascarenhas Josephine (1988)
- 18 † Sr Cogliolo Clotilde (1939), Sr Gallina Cesira (1987)
- 19 † Sr De Bernadinis Tullia (1957), **Sr Perez Mary Magdalene** (2019)
- 20 † Sr Mathews Maddalena (2015), Sr D’Souza Gladys (2017)
- 21 † Sr Susai Pillai Saveria (1996)
- 22 † Sr Vallino Innocensa (1946)
- 29 † Sr De Silva Muriel (1991)

The month of May concludes with the solemnity of Pentecost, the mysterious event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Mary and the Apostles marking the birth of the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is compared to **“the rush of a violent wind”** (Acts 2:2). Holy Father Pope Francis says that the Holy Spirit is *the divine force that changes the world*. He changes hearts and he change *situations*. The disciples, at first fearful, huddled behind closed doors even after the Master’s resurrection, are transformed by the Spirit and “they bear witness to him” (cf. *Jn 15:27*). Let us never tire of welcoming the Spirit into our lives, of invoking him before everything we do: **“Come, Holy Spirit!”** Let the Holy Spirit, violent wind of God, blow upon us, blow into our hearts, and make us breathe forth the tenderness of the Father! Blow upon our world and drive away all-pervading evil of our time, the *coronavirus*, and bring hope and health to his people. To this effect as the Holy Father invites us, I recommend you to join the entire Church to fast and pray on 14 May.

*Come Holy Spirit, change us and our world, and renew the face of the earth.*

*I wish you all very Happy Feasts of St Dominic Savio, St Mary Mazzarello, Mary Help of Christians, and Pentecost!*

*Yours affectionately,  
Sr. Nirmala Lazar*

**Sr Nirmala Lazar FMA  
Provincial**



**Happy Feast!**

