



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Salesiane di Don Bosco
S. Thomas Apostle Province - INM
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PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

Mazzarello Convent, Kodambakkam, Chennai - 600 024

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Viva Gesù!

"My eyes have seen your salvation" (Lk 2:30)

My Dearest Sisters,

Affectionate greetings to you from Kodambakkam!

On 2 February we celebrate the XXV **World Day of Consecrated Life**. It is a day to thank the Lord for the precious gift of our vocation that makes God's love for all men and women and the entire universe shine forth in various ways. The encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, written in a historical moment that Pope Francis himself has called "the hour of truth," is a unique gift for every form of life, which, without denying the many wounds to fraternity can find in it the roots of prophecy. Just as Pope St. John Paul II urged consecrated persons to "**be true experts of communion and to practice the spirituality of communion**" (*Vita consacrata*, n. 46), Pope Francis drawing inspiration from St Francis of Assisi, founder and inspirer of so many institutes of consecrated life, broadens the perspective and invites us to be architects of universal brotherhood and custodians of the common home: of the earth and every creature (cf. Encyclical *Laudato Si'*).

The Holy Father exhorts us, consecrated persons: "*Let us dream then as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her voice, brothers and sisters all*" (FT n. 8). In light of this dream that is entrusted to us, may the feast of the Presentation of the Lord be a beautiful moment to praise and thank God once again for the gift of our vocation and mission! As we joyfully celebrate this great feast let us ask our Lord for a new way of looking that knows how to see grace, how to look for one's neighbour, and how to hope so that like Simeon and Anna **our eyes too may be enabled to see the salvation of the Lord**.

Soon we will begin the important season of Lent. According to Pope Francis, fasting must never become superficial. He often quotes the early Christian mystic John Chrysostom who said: "No act of virtue can be great if it is not followed by advantage for others. So, no matter how much time you spend fasting, no matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually if you do no good to others you do nothing great." Lent is a good time for penance and self-denial. But once again, Pope Francis reminds us that these activities must truly enrich others: "I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt." So, if we are going to fast from anything during this Lent, he suggests that even more than candy or food, we fast from indifference towards others. "Indifference to our neighbour and God represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience."

When we fast from this indifference we can begin to feast on love. Lent is the perfect time to learn once again how to love. Jesus, the great protagonist of this holy season has shown us the way. In him, God

descends to bring everyone up. In his life and his ministry, no one is excluded. The best fast we can observe during this Lent is the change of heart. Love everyone with a genuine heart including everyone in the circle of our life. This narrow road is gritty but not sterile. It will make room in our hearts to experience a love that can make us whole and set us free.

IN PREPARATION FOR THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

As we are preparing for the FMA India Centenary Celebrations we continue to ‘journey with Mary the course of the Centenary (1922-2022) and Beyond` with the objective: **“Accept the mandate: I entrust them to you, Reviving the Family Spirit and Strengthening Community Communion”**. During the past two months, we reflected on the **‘Family Spirit’** lived at the origins of both Valdocco and Mornese by Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, and transmitted to the Institute as our spiritual heritage. This month we will consider the Constitution Articles on ‘our fraternal life’, in the light of this perspective. **The FMA community “finds the deepest reason for its existence in the mystery of the Trinitarian communion. Among the people of God it is a particular sign of a new way of living together”.** (C 36)

The elements that constitute the proximate foundation of the fraternal life of the FMA and therefore of their 'family spirit' are gathered in article 49. However, the remote foundation is expressed in article 36 which introduces the theme of community life: “united in the community in the name of the Lord”. It states: "Our community of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a specific expression of the ecclesial community, finds the deepest reason for its existence in the mystery of Trinitarian communion". Human communion is reflected in it. In Christ and through the Spirit, it becomes intimate participation in the ecclesial communion. This order of considerations justifies the statement that defines the community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as "a **specific expression** of the ecclesial community".

What this ‘specificity’ consists of is explained by the rest of the article which states that "among the people of God it is a particular sign of a new way of living together". This 'novelty' is highlighted by the Council in **Lumen Gentium** where it is stated that the religious "give themselves totally to the supremely beloved God, to be with a new and special title destined for the service and honour of God". It has its expression in the commitment to free oneself from all "the obstacles that could delay the fervour of charity and the perfection of divine worship", and through the profession of the evangelical counsels to be consecrated "more intimately to the service of God".

Applying the conciliar doctrine to the community life, the text of the Constitutions emphasize that religious life is “not founded on ties of flesh and blood, but the power of faith and Sisterhood in Christ”. It affirms that every FMA community commits itself to live “in the spirituality of the Preventive system, creating a family atmosphere in which young people can experience what it proclaims, celebrates, and bears witness to by its way of life” in such a significant and tangible way. Article 49 begins by saying that "living and working together in the name of the Lord is an essential element of our vocation". 'Living and working together' does not mean to say, 'next to one another', but urges to ‘live the communion of life’ of a body, of the Body of Christ. This is **living and operating 'in communion'**. Each works according to the gift received from God, according to her specific mandate, to realize the common mission in intimate communion with others. This is a very important element of our specific Salesian Religious vocation, a logical consequence of the family spirit that characterizes it.

The article continues to explain how the FMA community is one “gathered by the Father, founded on the presence of the Risen Christ and nourished by Him, Word and Body. It is called to serve the Lord in gladness in a deeply rooted Family Spirit and to work with optimism and solicitude for the Kingdom of God, confident that the Spirit is already at work in our world”. The action of the Father, in turn, is oriented to Christ, whose presence is the foundation of this community nourished by the sacrament of His Word of truth and Bread of life. It is not a question of a generic presence but that of Christ. It is “the maturing of the whole person in a gradual progressive configuration to Christ, Apostle of the Father, according to the plan of life outlined in the Constitutions”.

“To serve the Lord with gladness” is a matter of “working for the Kingdom of God with optimism and solicitude” in the certainty that the Spirit is already at work in our world. In these expressions, we see both the anxiety of the *'da mihi animas'* that explains the sovereign calm and the optimism of Don Bosco when he is certain that he is moving in the Spirit's direction. These are the two profound convictions that are the foundation of his untiring industriousness and his unperturbed serenity, of his "doing everything possible" and of his "surrendering to God, as if he had nothing to do on his part". It is in this emphasis of the presence and action of the Spirit and bond of communion within the Trinity and our communities that we can find the theological foundation closest to our "Family Spirit". In fact, through His interior action, God responds to our prayer: “Heal our wounds, our strength renew; On our dryness pour thy dew, Wash the stains of guilt away; Bend the stubborn heart and will; Melt the frozen, warm the chill; guide the steps that go astray”. In this way, the **“sisterly communion is strengthened and apostolic zeal renewed,”** “thus fulfilling the new commandment by which we will be known as Jesus’ disciples”.

This **‘communion’ is the ideal of life.** ‘Serving the Lord with gladness in a deep family spirit’ can in a very special way also become “an answer to the deepest needs of the human heart and makes it ready for apostolic self-giving”. Dear Sisters, let us spend some quiet moments to reflect and to share our answers and insights on the following aspects:

- ✚ *Does our community proclaim, celebrate, and bear witness to the Spirituality of the Preventive System by its way of life? What are the signs that make this evident?*
- ✚ *What can we do to make our way of life significant and tangible to make the young experience the family spirit?*
- ✚ *How can we live the Spirituality of the Preventive System today in our community and with the young people?*

CELEBRATIONS DURING THE MONTH

- 02 - Presentation of the Lord / World day of Consecrated Life
- 04 - St John de Britto
- 08 - St Josephine Bakhita
- 09 - Blessed Eusebia Palomino
- 11 - Our Lady of Lourdes / World Day of the Sick
- 17 - Ash Wednesday
- 22 - Chair of St Peter
- 25 - Sts Versiglia and Caravario SDB

ALL IN THE FAMILY

GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

It was indeed an intimate feast and a magnificent celebration in the closeness of the family ties that bind us together as FMA of the Province of Chennai. Braving the uncertainties and fear of the dreadful 'coronavirus' we had this joyful celebration of the golden jubilee of our eight beloved Sisters on 16 January 2021 at Auxilium College, Katpadi. We can proudly exclaim that it was a *unique celebration with our Sisters, by our Sisters and for our Sisters*. It was a significant tribute paid to our jubilarians: Sr Irudayanathan Agatha, Sr Muniswamy Dolores, Sr Doss Rosalia, Sr Antony Teresa, Sr Pathi Margaret, Sr Francis Giovanna, Sr Barnabas Sabina, and Sr Stanislaus Paolina. It reminds us of the commitment they made fifty years ago and kept alive and active and fruitful and faithful, through every thick and thin, ecstasy and agony, and joy and pain all along these fifty years. Hearty congratulations to you dear jubilarians for your fidelity to God and your dedicated service to His people. May your selfless and remarkable service to the numerous poor and the marginalized continue to bear abundant fruit!

In the morning prayer Arni community facilitated the Sisters to thank the Lord for His wonderful deeds in the lives of our jubilarians. It was followed by cutting the cake and the offering of gifts and greetings by the communities. At 9.00 am the golden brides of Christ were solemnly accompanied to the auditorium by the vibrant band of the young Sisters of Auxilium College. The cultural items that followed were truly amazing, thanks to all the Sisters who prepared and performed them: Candidates of Sacred Heart Home for their melodious prayer Song, Sisters of Auxilium College for the poetic song of jubilation, Sr Victor Juliana for a colourful video presentation on the lives of jubilarians, Juniors and young Seniors for their dynamic dance, and Sr Antonyraj Christina for coordinating. At 11.30 am Fr Raphael Jayapalan SDB celebrated the Eucharistic in the Chapel. He enumerated many reasons to validate the celebration of the golden jubilee for our Sisters and appreciated them for their unique contribution to the growth of the mission in the province. It is my bounden duty to thank him for his gracious presence. I record gratitude and appreciation to the communities of Arni and Mary Immaculate Convent for the fervent Morning Prayer and Holy Eucharist; to Auxilium Home community for the liturgy and singing guided by Sr Francis Irudaya Mary; to Sacred Heart Home community, the young Sisters of Vellore zone, and above all the community of Auxilium College for their active collaboration in the cultural items making the day truly joyous. A special note of thanks to dear Sr Gaspar Mary Celine, Vice Provincial, for her patient and meticulous planning, amiable coordination and excellent execution of the day's events.

NOTE OF THANKS

- ✚ Million thanks to Sr Mariadoss Amala Mary and the community of Auxilium Home, Katpadi for hosting the Provincial Team Meet on 3 January and praise and appreciation to Sr Alexander Amali, General Coordinator for organizing the meet.

- ✚ Sincere thanks to Sr Pathi Margaret and the community of Mannivakkam and Sr Doss Rosalia, the Directress of SEARCH Ashram, for accommodating and animating the Postulants during their Ashram Experience from 6 to 14 January 2021.
- ✚ Genuine appreciation to Sr Mariadoss Amala Mary and Sr Salas Silvia, the Province Educating Community Coordinators, the resource persons and the local Educating Community Coordinators for the creative animation of the online Educating Community Meet at the Province level and physical meet at local levels on 9 January 2021.
- ✚ Hearty congratulations and thanks to dear Sr Kunnathu Anna and the community of Auxilium College, Katpadi, for graciously hosting the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of our eight jubilarians on 16 January 2021 and for the gracious hospitality extended to the Provincial Councillors and Animators for the Finance Policy meet in the afternoon.
- ✚ A sincere note of thanks to Sr Gaspar Mary Celine and the community of Kodambakkam for the hospitality extended to the ecomers during the days of submission of house accounts on 10 and 11 January 2021.
- ✚ Congratulations to Sr Kanikairaj Shermila, Social Development Coordinator and her team, for the webinar on “Human Rights and the Constitution of India” conducted on 23 January for the local coordinators and teachers of the evening tuition Centres; Sr Maria Louis Isabel Sirumalar and Sr Mahimai Doss Sunitha, the VIDES Coordinators of the Province for animating the online VIDES General Body Meet on 24 January 2021.
- ✚ Hearty Congratulations to Sr Kanickaraj Mary Tamizharasi, National Coordinator, Formation, for effectively organizing the online meet from 25 to 27 January 2021, from 5.00 to 6.30 pm with the objective of inculturating the document: ‘Guidelines for the formation period of temporary vows’ in which two formators from each of the seven FMA Provinces of India participated with much enthusiasm and shared their enriching reflections.

SPIRITUALITY DAYS OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY

The 39th **Spirituality Days of the Salesian Family (SFSD)** was organized online, from 15 to 17 January 2021, on the Strenna: “*Moved by hope: ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ (Ap 21: 5)* ”. The purpose is to revive Salesian Spirituality in its fundamental dimensions as suggested by the Strenna of the Rector Major, in communion with the 32 Groups of the Salesian Family. The province delegates of Salesian Cooperators and Past Pupils were privileged to participate in SFSD. The event took place in two stages: a live streaming time in common all over the world, and a regional or zonal moment, during which the various Coordination Centres animated the members. The events were followed in live streaming by more than 5,000 people from all over the world on the Facebook page of ANS and ANS Channel.

It was very interesting to participate in the various activities coordinated by the linguistic and regional centers, especially the virtual tour of the ‘Don Bosco House Museum’ in Valdocco, Turin. Hearty congratulations to Fr Joan Lluís Playa, World Delegate for the Salesian Family, Fr Albert Johnson, the South Asian Delegate and Fr Gladstone Jeffrey, the Province Delegate who organized the Spirituality days meaningfully and efficiently.

HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS TO LA MADRE!

The special edition of the Official Gazette of the French Republic of 1 January 2021, reported, “*The appointment of Officier of the Légion d’Honneur is conferred on the Mother General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Sister Yvonne Reungoat.*” We are happy and proud about

this eminent honour conferred on our beloved Mother General, for the services rendered to the nation, that will have its positive effects not only in France but throughout the Salesian world committed to transmitting the values of the Gospel to young people. **Hearty congratulations to you dear Mother Yvonne!**

VIDES MEET FOR THE DELEGATES OF ASIA

Sr Maria Louis Isabel Sirumalar and Sr Mahimai Doss Sunitha took part in the zoom meet organised by Sr Annice VIDES General Coordinator, Rome, on 16 January 2021, on the theme: “Walking together, we go far”. Our Sisters were asked to report the relief services rendered by the VIDES units of the province to the people affected by COVID-19 and also the expectations of the VIDES members from the recently formed council. We are grateful to Sr Annice, and Sr Borja Runita, General Councillor for Youth Ministry, for their zeal and pastoral concern to animate the Asian delegates.

INAUGURATION OF BUILDING AT THORAIPAKKAM

It was a happy moment to bless and inaugurate the newly built Sisters’ residence and vocational training centre at Thoraipakkam on 24 January 2021. The blessing of God was earnestly invoked during the Holy Eucharist concelebrated by Fr Sudhakar, Parish Priest, Thoraipakkam, with the inspiring homily of Fr Amirtharaj SDB, followed by installing the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel and consecration of the house to Sacred Heart of Jesus by Fr Edel, Parish Priest, Kannagi Nagar. After the fellowship meal, I had the joy of installing Sr Mudiappaswamy Nirmala officially as the animator of the community. The community will soon be moving to the new residence. We thank the Lord for his abundant graces on us to realize this endeavour. Our sincere appreciations to Sr Puliyani Lucy, Provincial Economist, and Sr Mudiappaswamy Nirmala, animator of the community, for their creative and strenuous efforts to complete the building.

HEARTFELT SYMPATHIES

Let us continue to pray for all those who lost their lives due to COVID-19. Our loving prayers and condolences to all those who lost their dear ones during the last month:

- ✠ To Sr Samala Amalorpavam at the passing away of her sister Mrs Veronica (71) on 01 January.
- ✠ To Sr Gomes Dorothy at the demise of her niece Mrs Chereen (60) on 22 January.
- ✠ To Sr Celine Jacob and the Sisters of INK Province and the Province of AES at the demise of the ardent missionary Sr Pereira Josephine (89) on 15 January. She was one of the pioneering missionaries to East Africa who went to the mission land in the year 1983. May the Lord reward her with eternal bliss for her daring and dedicated life of service.

LIVING IN OUR MEMORY: FEBRUARY 2021

- 03 † Sr Jeganathan Clara (2019)
- 05 † Sr Louis Evelyn (2006)
- 08 † Sr Braganza Rose (2000)
- 12 † Sr Domingo Frances (2009)
- 14 † Sr Barbon Arokia Jebamani (2020)
- 18 † Sr DeSantis Rosarie (2018)
- 24 † Sr Bricarello Maria (1925)
- 25 † Sr Rosini Maria (1986)

UPCOMING EVENTS - FEBRUARY 2021

- 03 - 04 : Provincial Council, Kodambakkam
- 04 - 14 : Ashram Experience for Novices, Mannivakkam
- 05 : Headmistress/ Principals of Nursery & Primary Schools, St Mary's Vellore
- 06 : Salesian Cooperators Promise Day at St Marys, Chennai
- 07 : Salesian Cooperators Promise Day at St Marys, Vellore
- 06-07 : Trimonthly Recollection and Animation for Juniors: Kodambakkam and Negombo
- 07 : Past Pupils Office Bearers' Meet, Mary Immaculate, Tirupattur
- 13 : Provincial Community Day, Kodambakkam
- 14-15 : Animators and Team Meet, Kodambakkam
- 20 : CPP online meet for Evening Coaching Class teachers

“You have but one teacher and you are all brothers” (Mt 23:8) is the theme given by our Holy Father Pope Francis for the ***XXIX World Day of the Sick on 11 February 2021***, the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes. It is an opportunity to devote special attention to the sick and to those who assist and care for them both in healthcare institutions and within families and communities, in particular those who have suffered, and continue to suffer, the effects of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. Before the needs of our brothers and sisters, Jesus asks us to respond in a way completely contrary to hypocrisy. He asks us to stop and listen, to establish a direct and personal relationship with others, to feel empathy and compassion, and to let their suffering become our own as we seek to serve them (cf. Lk 10:30-35).

The commandment of love that Jesus left to his disciples is also kept in our relationship with the sick says Francis, the people's Pope. Society is all the more human to the degree that it cares effectively for its most frail and suffering members, in a spirit of fraternal love.

Let us entrust to Mary, Mother of Mercy and Health of the sick, all our Sisters, family members who are sick, in particular, our dear Sr Cyril Elizabeth and our Sisters who are affected with coronavirus in different provinces of our Institute. From the Grotto of Lourdes and her many other shrines throughout the world, may she sustain our faith and hope, and help us care for one another with fraternal love.

I wish you all Very Happy World Day of the Consecrated and the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes!

Yours affectionately,

Sr. Nirmala Lazar

Sr Nirmala Lazar FMA

Provincial



Itinerary of the Provincial February 2021

- 01 - 02 - Province Office, Kodambakkam
- 03 - 04 - Provincial Council, Kodambakkam
- 06 - 07 - Trimonthly Recollection and Animation, Juniors, Kod.
- 08 - 09 - Novitiate (SL) PV, online
- 10 - Meeting with Tech Mahindra
- 11 - 12 - Province Office, Kodambakkam
- 13 - Province Community Day, Kodambakkam
- 14 - 15 - Animators' & Provincial Team Meet, Kodambakkam
- 16 - 24 - Sri Lanka, PV, online
- 25 - 28 - Province Office, Kodambakkam

March

- 02 - 09 - Yercaud, Annual Retreat - II

