



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

2020-21



## PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

Mazzarello Convent, Kodambakkam, Chennai - 600 024

INM FMA/Pro.Cir.45

March 2021

*Viva Gesù!*

*"And now these three remain: Faith, Hope and love.*

*But the greatest of these is Love." (1 Cor. 13:13)*

**My Dearest Sisters,**

*Affectionate greetings to you from Kodambakkam!*

We are at the heart of the holy season of Lent. It is not just a 'time' of forty days that separate us from the Easter celebrations, but an itinerary for all Christians with the goal and indications for arriving in Jerusalem with Jesus and "not being the same as before". Pope Francis, in his Message for Lent 2021, on the theme "**Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem...**"(Mt. 20:18) describes Lent as a time for **renewing Faith, Hope, and Love** and proposes a concrete path, based on the theological virtues combined with the conditions of Christian conversion. **FAITH calls us to welcome the Truth and to become its witnesses before God and before our brothers and sisters.** One of the most used images to represent Lent is the desert, where there is no water and thirst is felt. **HOPE is the 'living water' that allows you to continue the journey.** Holy Father invites us especially during Lent to kindness, to have greater attention to "*speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation, and encouragement and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn*" (FT 223). The highest expression of faith and hope is **LOVE, lived in the footsteps of Christ in attention and compassion towards each one:** "*Love is a leap of the heart; it brings us out of ourselves and creates bonds of sharing and communion*".

The invitation to spread hope is also expressed by our beloved Mother General and by the Sisters of the Council, who in the Choral Circular 1005 wish all of us a fervent Lenten journey: "*May it be a fruitful Lenten journey for everyone accompanied by the Lord Jesus who continues to give His life for the FMA and the world. May Mary Help of Christians sustain us in the commitment to spread hope, particularly among young people and the people whom the Lord places on our path*"!

### IN PREPARATION FOR THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

As we are preparing for the FMA India Centenary Celebrations, we continue to '*Journey with Mary in 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*". This month we will reflect on the *family Spirit within the Community*.

Relationships with the Sisters are dealt within a specific and widespread way in article 50 of our Constitutions, entirely dedicated to the '**family spirit**'. The article begins with an important affirmation of the principle: "The family spirit, creative outpouring of Don Bosco's heart, must

characterize each of our communities and it requires the commitment of everyone". We underline two points of this declaration. First, the expression: 'family spirit' '**...must characterize...**', since this is a fundamental element of our spirit in the function of our specific mission and the lack of it would compromise our religious life, our apostolic and vocational fruitfulness. The article highlights the realization of this 'family spirit': "**...requires the commitment of everyone**". Without detracting from the decisive role that the animator can play in this regard as a '**visible sign of unity and communion**' (Art.108), it is evident that this alone is not enough to create it, just as the commitment of only some is not enough. The article first emphasizes that it presupposes **an attitude of 'welcome'** i.e. an unconditional acceptance of all the Sisters precisely because in the light of faith they can never be considered as extraneous. Thus, the preliminary attitude of 'welcoming' leads to 'respect' of their person, 'esteem' for the values they bear, and 'understanding' for their possible limitations.

Later, the article states that the 'family spirit' is expressed in "**...an attitude of open, family-like dialogue...**" This is an '**attitude**', a habitual willingness to communicate and to be in a relationship with all the Sisters. The 'family spirit', being a spirit at the service of the person requires delicate attention to value each Sister's contribution to the community so that each one feels appreciated, esteemed, and loved, even when **by age and illness** there is the risk of feeling useless and therefore of being a burden to the community. This is what is highlighted in article 59 in which each Sister is asked to recognize in the elderly Sister: "...a special presence of fidelity and offering" and seek to "express her gratitude practically by valuing the experience of the older members". It is a 'growing old' that is serene and joyous, accepted with the patience of Christ and with Him and in Him is offered lovingly to the Father and can become the animating centre of an entire community.

Between the **Sisters and the Superior** there must be a constant disposition of reciprocal acceptance, of "respect, esteem, and understanding, in an attitude of open, family-like dialogue, of goodwill, and true sisterly friendship". The 'personal encounter' is the time in which this relationship becomes more intimate and profound. The fulfilment of this need for reciprocity is the very condition for its success. This is why it is said that this encounter must take place "in an atmosphere of faith and charity, mutual trust, loyalty, and secrecy". Article 34 concludes by saying: "Thus practised, it will become, as Don Bosco desired, **an irreplaceable** means of personal and community growth in our identity as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians".

Article 51 presents the **apostolic dimension of the community**. From this point of view, one can understand how the 'family spirit', the inspiring principle of 'fraternal communion' totally consecrated to the salvation of youth, also becomes the interpretative key to the style of its apostolic action, the secret of its fruitfulness. Article 51 begins with this statement: "Each of our communities is an apostolic community where the concerns, hopes, prayers, aims of our apostolic work, the work itself, and material goods are all shared in view of the mission of the Institute". The conclusion we have reached is strengthened by the follow-up of the article which states that "this (total sharing) requires of everyone a willing participation, co-responsibility, and mutual communication in a calm, honest exchange of ideas and a harmonious integration of personal values". It means **overcoming the individualism in the apostolate to enter into communion**, the only one that guarantees fruitfulness.

The bond of special fraternity given by God to the Institute, the family spirit, permeates relationships not only within each community, Province and Institute, but extends especially to all those who, in

the large Salesian Family and in varying degrees and different ways, share the same spiritual heritage. This is highlighted in article 61 that affirms: ***“Let each Sister cultivate a strong sense of belonging to the province community.*** Each community is then exhorted to collaborate with ***‘the local Church’, also with “other groups of the Salesian Family”***, those groups with whom (as stated in article 3) the FMA “share the spiritual heritage of the Founder”.

Article 60 affirms: “The communion that has united us in life continues and is strengthened when we reach the moment of passing from this life to the Father’s house... encourage us to offer for them the prescribed suffrages and those suggested by charity and to live more generously giving ourselves to God”.

**Let us reflect and share:**

- ✚ ***How can we enhance the family spirit in our communities?***
- ✚ ***What is my contribution to creating a “Genuine educational environment”?***
- ✚ ***What are the new possibilities to network with the Salesian Family and the Local Church?***

## **CELEBRATIONS DURING THE MONTH**

- 08 - International Women’s Day
- 19 - St Joseph
- 24 - Sts Mark and Timothy
- 25 - Annunciation of the Lord
- 28 - Palm Sunday

## **ALL IN THE FAMILY**

### **PROVINCE COMMUNITY DAY 2021**

The Province Community Day at Kodambakkam on 13 February was indeed a unique experience of being together as members of the FMA Province of St Thomas, the Apostle, Chennai, in an atmosphere of joy and gratitude. It was a concrete sign and expression of the uniting, integrating, stretching out, and celebrating the love that we experience in our day to day life especially during the preceding month as you faithfully carried out the commitments assigned to you: to read, reflect, share, and live the well-chosen theme: ***‘Love that Unites, Integrates, Stretches Out and Celebrates’***. There was a breath of fresh air! Covid-19 seemed to have lost its way! Though the physical presence of our dear young people and laity were missing, the presence of more than 100 Sisters of Province including the animators, represented all the Sisters, young people, the members of the educating communities and the Salesian Family in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. It was a momentous event when as one body united in Spirit we were able to cherish the presence of one another and celebrate the family feast.

The joyous day began with the meaningful Morning Prayer followed by the felicitations with the cutting of the cake and melodious festal song. The Eucharist celebrated by Fr. K. M. Jose, SDB INM Provincial, with the creative liturgical animation and the angelic choir was the crowning moment of expressing our gratitude to God for each member in the Province. I am grateful to Fr Provincial for his amiable presence

amidst us and for enlightening us with his deep insights apt for the occasion of Province Community Day. Felicitations and the colourful cultural items performed artistically by our Sisters were indeed spectacular! Guard of honour by all the Sisters in an array with colourful balloons, the song with the symphony of various musical instruments by Auxilium College Sisters, vibrant rhythmic dance of young Sisters, and the magnificent theme presentation by Tirupattur Zone Sisters were a true delight to the heart and the eyes. The family circle animated by the Provincial Team members was so enriching and relaxing! Thanks to Sr Alexander Amali, General Coordinator, and all the team members for coordinating the event. Your Spiritual bouquet was a priceless gift offered to me and I feel strengthened by this campaign of prayer.

I express the gratitude welling up from my heart: to the communities of Chetpet and Auxilium Home for their creative animation of Morning prayer and Eucharist; to the community of Vyasarpadi for the floral arrangement; to Sr Ambrose Arokia Jeyaceli and the communities of Tirupattur zone for the creative presentation of the theme; and all the communities involved in the cultural items. My special thanks to the animator and Sisters of Kodambakkam, the host community, for seeing to every detail to create the festive environment on the campus, all the arrangements made for delicious food and accommodation of Sisters, the felicitation song and above all for their spirituality of hospitality and their constant accompaniment of me throughout the year. A special note of thanks to dear Sr Gaspar Mary Celine, Vice Provincial, for her meticulous planning, excellent execution of the day's events and precious words of felicitation, and to all the Provincial Councillors for their Sisterly collaboration and amiable coordination!

Let the memories of this day linger on as we continue with the building up of the province community and each local community on the firm foundation of God's Word and the Salesian Charism, supported by the pillars of the educational method of Don Bosco, centred around the Eucharist and the all-pervasive presence of Mary, dedicating our lives for and with the young people, in joy and simplicity.

## NOTE OF THANKS

- ✚ A note of thanks to Sr Pathi Margaret and the Community of Mannivakkam for the Ashram Experience of our first-year novices and to Sr Doss Rosalia, the Directress of SEARCH Ashram for animating them from 4 to 14 February 2021.
- ✚ Million thanks to Sr Fernando Mary Ann for organizing the Tri-monthly Recollection and Animation for Junior Sisters of Sri Lanka on 5 and 6 February and the community of Negombo for their hospitality.
- ✚ Hearty congratulations to Sr Susairaj Mary Sheila, Delegate of the Association of Salesian Cooperators (ASC), who along with Fr Edwin George SDB, and Mr Asirvatham, the Coordinator of ASC gave formation to 21 Aspirants at Chennai zone and 6 Aspirants at Vellore zone and organized their Promise Day on 6 February at St Mary's Co-cathedral, Chennai and on 7 February at St Mary's Convent, Vellore. As we congratulate and welcome these newly promised Salesian Cooperators to the Salesian family let us pray that their lights may shine bright in the world by living the Salesian charism in their lay state of life. Thanks to Sr Antonyraj Christina and the Community for hosting the Promise Day on the 6 February at St Mary's, Vellore.
- ✚ A sincere note of thanks to Sr Gaspar Mary Celine and the Community of Kodambakkam for the hospitality extended to the Juniors and Seniors of Chennai Zone, during the Trimonthly Recollection on 6 February, and animation of Juniors on 7 February; the Provincial Community Day on 13 February, and the Animators and Team Meet on 14 and 15 February.

- ✦ Hearty thanks and congratulations to Sr Ambrose Arokia Jeyaceli and Sr Joseph Jackulen Anthony, Past Pupils Delegates, for hosting and animating the Past Pupils Office Bearers' Meet at Mary Immaculate Convent, Tirupattur on 7 February.
- ✦ Sincere thanks to Sr Anthony Raj Christina for accommodating and animating the Principals of Nursery and Primary Schools at St Mary's Vellore on 8 February.
- ✦ Congratulations to Sr Kanikairaj Shermila, Social Development Coordinator and her team, for the Webinar on Child Protection Policy to the Evening Coaching Class teachers of our Province on 20 February.

## OPENING THE CAUSE OF BEATIFICATION - MOTHER ROSETTA

We rejoice with the FMA world that on 13 January 2021, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints communicated the *Nulla Osta* from the Holy See for the opening of the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God, Mother Rosetta Marchese (1922-1984). She served the Congregation as a Visiting Councillor from 1975, for 6 years, and as Superior General from 1981 to 1984. On 8 March 1984, after long-suffering, Mother Rosetta Marchese concluded her earthly life, offering it for the holiness of her Sisters. Her profound interiority and her educational passion in the footsteps of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello are generative sources of life and hope for the Institute. Let us invoke her assistance for our sanctity and many holy vocations.

## WORLD ANIMATOR OF ADMA

Our Mother General shares the joy of the appointment of Sr Carmen Lucrecia Uribe FMA, of Colombian Nationality, as the World Animator of the **Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA)** for our Institute by our Rector Major. Sr Lucrecia is a collaborator of the Salesian Family Sector, Rome, and World Delegate of the Salesian Cooperators Association (ASSCC) for the FMA Institute. May Mary Help of Christians, with her maternal presence, support Sr Lucrezia in this mission, so that she can follow and spiritually accompany ADMA groups spread all over the world.

I am also happy to communicate to you that Sr Mathew Alice, animator of the Jaffna community, is appointed as the Province delegate for ADMA. She has already started this association in the parish of Jaffna. We wish her all the best and I recommend other communities too to start the same.

Our Mother General assures her prayers and gratitude for the mission: *"I thank all the Sisters who are accompanying the ADMA groups in the Provinces and I hope that the Institute, a living Monument of gratitude to Mary Help of Christians, will always be more qualified in this animation in which Mary the Mother of Jesus and our Mother is the main protagonist."*

## NEW PROVINCIAL FMA INB

Mother General has appointed Sr Meenakshi D'Silva as the 8<sup>th</sup> Provincial of St Mary Mazarello, Bombay for the next six-year term of office (2021 – 2022). We congratulate dear Sr. Meena, the Provincial elect and assure her of our prayerful wishes and God's choicest blessings!

## BLESSING OF A NEW SCHOOL BUILDING

We praise and thank the Lord for the tangible sign of growth in the mission at Sri Lanka, as the newly-built international school was blessed on 31 January 2021 at Columbuthurai near Jaffna. On 1 February,

the school was started with 21 children: 13 Nursery and 8 Grade One with 2 teachers. Our hearty congratulations to Sr Nicholas Susheela for her hard work and dedication in undertaking this strenuous project to spread the Salesian charism through quality education to the children of Sri Lanka.

## **SECOND NOVITIATE - I PHASE**

Sr Shakayanathan Ushanandhini, the first native vocation of Sri Lanka, has started her month-long first phase of the Second Novitiate on 25 February at Negombo. She will be accompanied by Sr Fernando Mary Ann. We wish her a fruitful journey in preparation for her final commitment.

## **FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY**

We commemorate the first death anniversary of our beloved bishop of Vellore Dr Perianayagam Soundararaju SDB, DD on 21 March. As we recall with gratitude the numerous prodigies done by our dear pastor to our Sisters and the mission of the communities in the Vellore diocese, let us continue to pray that our Lord crowns him with eternal bliss.

## **“LET’S ALL CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE” – IWD 2021**

On 8 March along with all the women across the globe, we celebrate International Women’s Day (IWD). “A challenged world is an alert world and from challenge comes change. So, let's all choose to challenge” is the theme of this significant day. For this purpose the IWD sees several MISSIONS: Celebrate tech women and innovation; Applaud equality for women in sport; Educate women on health choice decisions; Build inclusive workplaces for women to thrive; Increase visibility of women creatives and elevate visibility for commercial projects and commissions, and Forge women's empowerment worldwide.

As FMA, the educators of young girls and women, we have ample opportunities to educate and empower women through various means. While I appreciate the communities who with daring innovation commit themselves to the development of the poor and marginalized women of their locality through Vocational Training, Entrepreneur skills and Small-scale production centres, I encourage the other communities too to take up similar initiatives according to your possibilities. I wish you all a very Happy Women’s Day! Let us thank God for the beautiful gift of womanhood that He has given to us.

## **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 the Provincial and the confreres of Dimapur Province at the demise of Fr Pulinthanathumalayil Cyriac (59) who passed away on 4 February.

## **LIVING IN OUR MEMORY: MARCH 2021**

- 10 † Sr Marie Dulla Cardozo (2004)
- 24 † Sr Castelli Giovanna (1995)
- 26 † Sr Cazzuli Eugenia (1973)
- 29 † Sr Anthoni Philomena (2017)
- 30 † Sr Versino Eugenia (1951) † Sr Gonsalves Dorothy (2019)

## UPCOMING EVENTS - MARCH 2021

- 02 - 09 : Annual Retreat II, Yercaud
- 09 : Animation to Retreatants -Preventive System as Spirituality and Method
- 08 - 16 : Annual Retreat I, Fatima Retreat House, Kandy, Sri Lanka
- 10 - 11 : Provincial Council, Yercaud
- 12 - 19 : Annual Retreat III (Animators), Yercaud
- 19 - 20 : Animation to Retreatants and Communications
- 21 - 28 : Annual Retreat IV, Yercaud
- 28 : Animation to Retreatants -Preventive System as Spirituality and Method

On 19 March we celebrate the feast of St Joseph, patron of our congregation and custodian of Spiritual life. Pope Francis puts it very beautifully in the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, “each of us can discover in Joseph, the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence, an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble”. It is interesting to note how at Mornese and then at Nizza, St Joseph was a continuous and constant presence in the daily life of the first communities and how the Sisters had a great devotion to him.

Let us renew our love for this great patron, the icon of tenderness, care, listening, obedience, acceptance, creative courage and protector in this difficult and unprecedented historical time. Festal greetings to our Sisters and our communities at Arni and Mosavadi that bear the name of this dear Saint! Through his powerful intercession let us pray for all the needs of our country, state, province, communities and families and in particular entrust to him the forthcoming State elections on 6 April 2021.

*Happy feast of St Joseph to each one of you!*

*Yours affectionately,*

*Sr. Nirmala Lazar*

**Sr Nirmala Lazar FMA  
Provincial**

**Happy Feast!**



## **Itinerary of the Provincial March 2021**

- 02 - 09 - Annual Retreat II & Animation, Yercaud**
- 10-11 - Provincial Council, Yercaud**
- 12- 20 - Annual Retreat III & Animation, Yercaud**
- 21- 28 - Annual Retreat IV & Animation, Yercaud**
- 29 – 31 - Province Office, Kodambakkam**

