



## INM FMA/Pro.Cir.53

December 2021

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”. John 3:16*

### My Dearest Sisters,

*Viva Gesu`!*

*Affectionate greetings to you from the Provincial House, Kodambakkam!*

The season of Advent we have just begun calls on us to **"be vigilant" and to persevere in prayer**, which "reawakens the soul from sleep" and helps to focus on what is most important in life. Vigilance is a key aspect of Christian life and it is to keep our hearts on guard from becoming lazy or "sleepy Christians" lacking spiritual dynamism and intensity in prayer and not letting our daily life become just a routine or becoming preoccupied only with worldly concerns.

Pope Francis points out two kinds of sleep and their remedies. The first one is ***the slumber of mediocrity*** which is a dangerous kind of sleep. It comes when we forget our first love and grow satisfied with an indifference concerned only for an undisturbed existence without making an effort to love God daily, awaiting the newness He constantly brings. We become mediocre, lukewarm, and worldly. This kind of slumber can be overcome with ***the vigilance of prayer***. When we pray we light a candle in the darkness. It rouses us from the tepidity of a purely horizontal existence and makes us lift our gaze to higher things and makes us attuned to the Lord. There is also another kind of interior slumber: ***the slumber of indifference***. When everything revolves around us and our needs and we are indifferent to the needs of others, night descends in our hearts. We immediately begin to complain about everything and start to feel victimized by everyone and end up brooding about nothing. We can rouse ourselves from the slumber of indifference with ***the watchfulness of charity***. Charity is the heartbeat of the Christian. Just as one cannot live without the heartbeat one cannot be a Christian without charity. These are the only things that bring us victory since they are already aiming towards the future, the day of the Lord, when all else will pass away and love alone will remain.

Let us beseech our Immaculate Mother Mary who "awaited the Lord with a vigilant heart" to accompany us especially through the Advent and prepare ourselves worthily to celebrate the birth of Christ our Lord. The hope, peace, joy, and love that Christ Child brought to the world be in our hearts, homes, and communities.

### IN PREPARATION FOR THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

On 24 November 2021, FMA India stepped into the third year in preparation for the Centenary of the arrival of our pioneering missionaries to our motherland. When the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians reached the milestone of 50 years in 1922, the call from India beckoned to an altogether new and mysterious experience of the east. The then bishop of Madras Mgr Theotonius de Castro, pleased with the work of the Salesians under the pioneering efforts of Fr George Tomatis was inspired to invite the FMA to offer a feminine touch to the Salesian Charism in India.

The nod of assent from Mother Catherine Daghero, the Superior General of the Institute and the winning of the lottery of Rs.24,000/- by Fr Eugene Mederlet SDB in Tanjore to buy a villa for the Sisters were no mere coincidences.

The mission of the Salesian Sisters in India had its humble beginning but with the blessings of the Lord and the committed work of the missionaries, it had a marvellous growth. As FMA India steps into the 100<sup>th</sup> year and marches with pride towards the centenary we take stock of the prodigious growth of our presence in our motherland. We have grown to be seven provinces with 214 communities of almost 1500 FMA reaching out to numerous young people, women and children in all the corners of India, extending the Salesian Charism also to the neighbouring countries of Sri Lanka and Nepal.

This third year of preparation beckons us to journey with our Institute and the main **theme is: *Plan the future boldly. "Courage! Let us go ahead with a great and generous heart"*** (L 47, 12) as prophets and witnesses for a transformed society in the ***style of synodality***, keeping in mind the **objective**: “To accompany the young towards integral formation making them agents of social change”.

We can plan our future boldly assured by the encouraging words of our Mother and Co-foundress, St Maria Domenica Mazzarello, "*Courage! Let us go ahead with a great and generous heart*" (L 47, 12). Walking in the footsteps of our saintly mother and our valiant missionaries who crossed the oceans and reached out to the poor and the marginalized without having any human security, **we are called to be women prophets of hope.**

Today more than ever it is necessary to guarantee a future for humanity. The people must know how to dare into the future which is made possible by the hope that knows how to go beyond the always provisional and partial forecasts of which humanity is capable of and open the way towards the future, beyond its possible and inevitable partial achievements and anticipations in history. It is the task of the Christians and young people in general, to identify and bring out all those signs of hope that the present time is pregnant with for the whole world and all people. “For believers, Jesus Christ is the hope of every person because He gives eternal life. He is the Word of life (1Jn 1:1), who came into the world so that we “may have life and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10). He shows us that it is God in whom we hope and He alone can give us the certainty to embrace the future with serenity.

In the Christian experience, hope is an indispensable dimension **founded in the encounter with the Lord Jesus himself**. It is He who rose from the dead that illumines our present and opens our gaze towards a reliable and beautiful future. The authentic content of Christian hope animates and inspires the responsible behaviour of the believer in the world with the awareness that men and women are not ***“living beings whose horizon is death, but mortal beings whose horizon is life”***. The words and much more, the concrete action of the Christian and the religious should continually remind this to the present generation. This hope we are called to give a reason for is not a generic and unspecified expectation of the future. It is the expectation of a face, the face of Christ that has taken the shape of what humanity awaits and hopes for. We do not hope for something we do not wait for: a paradise that will reward our sufferings and sacrifices. What we hope for is not something but SOMEONE. Hope not only in Christ but for Christ whom Paul calls “our hope” (1Tim1:1). In Him hope has taken shape, has incarnated, has made Himself visible and we have seen Him. Hence our hope is the hope of humanity and for humanity; it is hope for the world. Human beings can hope, can continue to hope and wait, can set out and continue walking. Despite frailties, we can commit ourselves and toil, because God has set out and continues to walk towards us.

Secondly, **hope supports charity** because once the limits of selfishness and human frailty have been overcome it matures towards that fullness which has its total realization in Christ since there is no greater love than to give one’s life not only for one’s friends but also for one’s enemies (1Ts 1:2-3). Ghislain Lafont at the end of one of his books asks himself the usual question: “What can we hope for?” His response is clear and predictable. Especially in the frantic times that we are living what we must ardently hope for is not only peace but also justice. It is the safeguarding of creation through

communion among people from various communities. A communion that is not static but a constant dialectic between death and resurrection.

True communion among people is possible only with the **synodal style of life and relationship**. The XVI ordinary General assembly of the Synod of Bishops 2021-2023 inaugurated on 10 October 2021 by Pope Francis is a significant event and a process to bring about the synodality. The theme for the synod is: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission”. Its objective is to listen to the entire People of God as to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. We do so by *listening together* to the Word of God in Scripture and the living tradition of the Church and then by listening to one another especially to those at the margins and discerning the signs of the times. The whole Synodal Process aims at fostering a lived experience of discernment, participation, and co-responsibility where diversity of gifts is brought together for the Church’s mission in the world.

The spirit of hope and synodality lived to the full can express itself and proclaim the advent of the kingdom in which justice permanently dwells and does not close itself in a complicit silence of the world’s evil. It does not cancel or eliminate differences but reconciles and celebrates them just as it does not cancel distances but allows us to walk the entire path that leads to the goal: A transformed society in the style of synodality. I am happy to recall the significant experience of **synodality during the General Chapter XXIV**, “*a laboratory of communion marked by the richness of the interculturality of the Institute: 172 Chapter members coming from the five continents and citizens of 97 Countries where the Institute is currently present*”.

In the Circular n. 1012, Mother General, Chiara Cazzuola and the General Council has sent a choral message inviting us onto a journey: “*Now is the time to go down from Cana to Capernaum with Jesus and Mary and to share our life and mission with the young people and the laity, to let God breathe in our existence and courageously face the challenges we will encounter*”.

Let the lamp of hope lit by our pioneers keep burning bright in our heart, community, family, society and illumine the whole world as we step into the 100<sup>th</sup> year of their arrival in India.

**Let us reflect and share:**

- ✚ How can I be a prophet of hope today in my community and among the young people and laity?
- ✚ What can I do to nurture the synodal style of life and relationship in the context in which I live?

## CELEBRATIONS OF THE MONTH

### DECEMBER

- 03 - St Francis Xavier
- 05 - Bl. Philip Rinaldi
- 08 - Feast of the Immaculate Conception
- 10 - International Day of Human Rights
- 25 - Christmas
- 26 - The Holy Family
- 27 - St John the Apostle & Evangelist
- 28 - Holy Innocents

## ALL IN THE FAMILY

### NOTE OF THANKS

- ✚ Hearty thanks to Sr Gaspar Mary Celine, the animator, and the community of Kodambakkam for their hospitality to the provincial councillors on 12 and 13 November.

- ✚ Thanks a million to Sr Kunnathu Anna and the community of Auxilium College, Katpadi, for making all the arrangements to host the Dissemination of GC XXIV for the two batches of Sisters from 16 to 18 and 19 to 21 November respectively.
- ✚ Our appreciation and gratitude to the Team Members of different areas of animation for organizing the following meetings:
  - ✓ Sr Sebastian Elizabeth, General Coordinator and Sr Rajendiran Selvarani, Youth Pastoral Coordinator for the Youth Pastoral Coordinators' meeting on 14 November at Mary Immaculate Convent, Tirupattur.
  - ✓ Sr Kanikairaj Shermila, Social Development Coordinator, for organizing the Orange day at Kodambakkam on 25 November with the participation of the Women of Self Help Groups.
  - ✓ Sr Mahimainathan Sathiyavani, the Coordinator for Youth at Risk, Migrants and Non-Formal Sector, for the Webinar on 'Psychoeducation of children and building resilience during the pandemic Covid-19' on 27 November to the Sisters in charge of Boarding & Non-Formal Sector.

### **ADIEU DEAR SR. CELINE ANTHONY!**

On 24 November 2021 as the sun was setting and the curtains were being drawn down over the nationwide inaugural celebrations of the launching of the Centenary Year of the FMA Presence in India, our dear Sr ANTHONIAPPAN Celine, slowly, silently, and serenely breathed her last into the arms of the Lord of Life. Sr Celine was born on 5 December 1938 at Settipatty, Salem District, to Mr Anthoniappan and Mrs Kulandaimmal as the third child with two sisters and four brothers. She was baptised on 8 December with the name *Amalorpavam* in honour of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. With a childlike love for Mother Mary, Sr Celine Antony was particular that she celebrated her feast on 8 December solemnly and with due spiritual preparation. After her High School and Teacher Training Course in Mary Immaculate Institute, Tirupattur, she worked as the Secondary Grade Teacher in Mary Immaculate Elementary School for four years and after her profession, she rendered her service as a teacher and headmistress in Katpadi-Auxilium School, St Mary's, Vellore, Pallikonda, Thanjavur and Arni.

We greatly admire her deep love and strong devotion to Mother Mary to the extent of being called "*Mariye Vazhga Sister*" and our blessed mother rewarded her by taking her into her loving embrace on the day of commemoration of Mary Help of Christians. We are amazed at her strong will to endure pain and suffering especially after being struck by 'cerebral haemorrhage' in 1987 when she recovered miraculously after almost reaching death's door. During these years she was an apostle of hope and courage to the young and old alike visiting the families, counselling, guiding, and encouraging. With her kindness, she touched the lives of all those who came in contact with her. She was sensitive to the Salesian System of Education and her characteristically cheerful disposition naturally endeared her to the children making her educative interventions bear much fruit. Her only desire was to live as an authentic Salesian Sister in joyous fidelity to God among the young Sisters and the young people. She had a great sense of belonging to the Church, Institute, Province, and the Community and carried out all her assignments with a great sense of responsibility. As a physical education teacher, she was a strict disciplinarian but her educative method was a combination of goodness and firmness. She was a teacher in the classroom and the playground as well as a boarding assistant for most of the years of her religious life. With her mere presence, movements of her eye-balls, and the two fingers, she taught the children how to behave and what they must do at any given time and place.

Let us thank and praise the Lord for her 83 years of life, 55 years of consecrated life in the Salesian Family, and 34 years of painful journey in convalescence, cheerful service and prayer ministry. As we bid goodbye to dear Sr Celine we commend to her powerful intercession the onward journey of the

FMA India towards the Centenary and beyond! I am grateful to dear Sr Rathinaswamy Regina and the present community as well as the past animators and Sisters of St Mary's, Vellore, for taking good care of dear Sr Celine during all these years and in particular during her final moments and for making all the arrangements for a solemn funeral service worthy of a dear spouse of Jesus.

### **LAUNCH OF THE THIRD YEAR IN PREPARATION FOR THE CENTENARY**

On 24 November the FMA India had a solemn launch of the third year in preparation for the Centenary of the arrival of the pioneering missionaries to India. At the zoom meet that began at 6.30 p.m. after the significant prayer moment, there was a spectacular display of the one-minute videos of the hoisting of the centenary flag in the seven FMA Indian provinces. The panel discussion on '*Journeying together today*', moderated by Sr Teresa Joseph, participated by Mrs Apurbaa Deb Choudhury, Teacher, Auxilium, Baroda, Mrs Lilly Florence, Parent, in charge of COVID-Ward, Ms Mercy Sanjana, III B.A. English, Auxilium College, Katpadi and Sr Nirmala Mummadi FMA INK, was very enlightening. One momentous event of the meet was the release of the book authored by Sr Alice Chacko FMA INK: ***Come, Let us Journey Together into Our Common Home***. Also, the short video clipping on Joy in the life of Don Bosco by dear Sr Alice Chacko helped all present to recall the characteristic note of the Salesian style of living. Finally in the spirit of joy and gratitude all were enlivened by the Centenary Anthem composed and displayed by Shillong Province.

Our sincere gratitude to Sr Teresa Joseph, the General Coordinator of Centenary commission and Sr Hilda Braganza, the coordinator of the Souvenir committee for coordinating the event and congratulations to all the panel speakers, all the Provincials and Sisters who contributed to the success of the day's celebration.

I take this opportunity to thank Sr Teresa Joseph for organizing the FMA India Centenary Committee Coordinators Zoom Meet on 10 November 2021 from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m., and to Sr Kanickaraj Mary Tamizharasi, the provincial secretary for hosting all the zoom meetings.

### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

A sincere word of appreciation and gratitude to dear Sr Clara Saminathan INC, the national coordinator and Sr Stella Potteparambil INC, the former national coordinator for education, for their hard work and sustained efforts to obtain from the Government of India the Registry of Trade Mark "AUXILIUM GROUP OF SCHOOLS (SALESIAN SISTERS)". The Certificate of Registration has been issued on 16 October 2021. The certificate has been sent to you via email already. Let us thank the Lord for this great gift on the eve of the centenary year.

### **The FMA PCI PROVINCIALS' MEET**

The FMA India Provincials' meet was held online on 8 November 2021, from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m., to discuss the urgent issues of FMA INDIA. We express our heartfelt gratitude to Sr Amalanathan Mary Margaret, INT Provincial and Sr Thomas Rita Dora INB, the outgoing President and Vice-President of the PCI, and Sr Ambrose Little Flower, the Secretary, for their efficient services of coordination, and to Sr George Elizabeth, the Provincial INS for her guidance and coordination from May 2021 especially during the GC XXIV. I request your fervent prayers and sisterly support as I take up the PCI presidency for the coming two years along with Sr D'Silva Meenakshi, Provincial of INB as Vice President and Sr Kanickaraj Mary Tamizharasi as the PCI Secretary.

### **PLATINUM JUBILEE**

We join the community of Mary Immaculate Convent to thank our Blessed Mother for her accompaniment and guidance for the past 75 years. The valiant missionaries stepped into the soil of Tirupattur on 29 May 1946. The first superior Sr. Cesira Gallina, the headmistress Sr. Helen Fernandez and later Sr. Rafaella Arduini sowed the tiny seed. Today it stands tall, sheltering thousands of young girls, imparting Christian and value based education and giving numerous religious vocations to our

Institute and the Church. Hearty congratulations and prayerful wishes to the community as they celebrate the Platinum Jubilee on 8 December 2021.

## EXPLORATORY RESEARCH PROJECT

The Pontifical Faculty of Education “Auxilium”, Rome is organizing research entitled: “*The conception and experience of the preventive system today between lay / lay educators/educators and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*” in view of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the FMA Institute. For this project, it was decided that Sr D’Silva Meenakshi, Provincial INB will be the referent of PCI. I am happy to inform you that Sr Antony Raj Christina will be a member of the focus group of our Province. The focus group animators and observers will attend the online meetings conducted by Auxilium, Rome, during which they will be guided regarding the process of research on the practice of Preventive System in our reality. I request you to give your full cooperation for this great mission. We wish them fruitful work!

## UPR TRAINING BY IIMA

Sr Sarah Garcia FMA, Director, International Institute of Maria Ausiliatrice, Human Rights Office, Geneva, carries forward the work regarding **Universal Periodical Review (UPR)** training by IIMA in view of India’s 4<sup>th</sup> UPR Cycle to be completed by November 2022. I am happy to communicate to you that Sr Regina Rathinaswamy has been chosen to coordinate this work at the PCI level. From our Province the following persons will collaborate with her to accomplish this mission: Sr. Kanikkairaj Shermila, Coordinator, Development office, Sr Joseph Victoria, Coordinator, Human Rights Education, Sr Alphonse Mary J. Isabella, core group member, Mr Devaneyan and Dr Amudha Arockia Mary, Lay Collaborators. We join hands towards this venture, so that, together, we can give an active voice to the human rights situation in India to build a more humane, just, and peaceful world. It is a way of being a prophetic presence so that our world could be more and more according to God’s heart.

## CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

A State level Consultation cum planning meeting on “Constitutional Rights Education Programme for children in schools and hostels” for TANCEAN and TNCRI Education Commission Secretaries and Co-ordinators was held at TASOSS Training Centre, Trichy on 13 November 2021. From our Province, Sr Joseph Victoria Mary and Sr Rayappan Selvi participated. The meeting was organized by “Vann Muhil” Programme Co-ordinator Mr M.A. Britto and his team.

## HEARTFELT SYMPATHIES

Our loving prayers and condolences to all those who lost their dear ones during November 2021:

- ✠ To Sr Madalaimuthu Lidwin at the demise of her mother Mrs Anthoniammal (76) on 8 November
- ✠ To Sr Pudota Mary Kirubagari at the demise of her elder sister Mrs Fabiola (79) on 18 November
- ✠ To Sr Elizabeth George and the Sisters of Shillong Province at the demise of Sr Kadicheeny Mary (75) on 22 November
- ✠ To the Superior General and the Sisters of the SMA congregation at the passing away of Sr Elsy Thomas (62) on 24 November
- ✠ To Fr Provincial and the confreres of the Province of Bangalore at the passing away of Fr Dominic Veliath SDB (79), on 27 November 2021
- ✠ To Sr Gnana Michael Christina at the demise of her younger sister Mrs. Shantha Mary (68) on 30 November 2021.

## LIVING IN OUR MEMORY-DECEMBER 2021

- 03 †Sr Baptista Giovanna (1982), Sr Griffiths Martha (2008) and Sr Vembenickel Annina (2015)  
04 †Sr Berta Sperrfechter (1991)  
07 †Sr Fernandez Priscilla (2002)  
08 †Sr Fernandez Helen (2012)  
11 †Sr Anthony M. Josephine Rani (2004)  
13 †Sr Lobo Clementina (2002)  
17 †Sr Bout Mary (1994) and Sr Gisbert Rafaela (2006)  
19 †Sr Asirvatham Amalorpavam (2019)  
22 †Sr Maretta Maddalena (1966)  
27 †Sr Fernandes Beda Maria (1967) and Sr Daglio Angela (1996)  
28 †Sr Arduini Raffaella (1970)  
30 †Sr Devasahayam Victoria (2017)

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS - DECEMBER 2021

- 4 & 5 - Dissemination of GC XXIV, Kodambakkam  
6 & 7 - Dissemination of GC XXIV, Sri Lanka, online  
8 & 9 - Provincial Council, Mary Immaculate Convent, Tirupattur  
26 to 2 Jan. 2022 - Annual Spiritual Retreat, ACK  
2 Jan. Provincial Team Meet, Auxilium Home, Katpadi

On 8 December we celebrate the great feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the feast of immense significance in our Salesian family. Even Mary was saved by Christ but extraordinarily because God wanted that the mother of His Son not to be touched by the misery of sin from the moment of her conception. Thus, for the entire course of her earthly life, Mary was free from any stain of sin. She was “full of grace” (Lk 1:28), as the angel called her. St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (cf. 1:3-6, 11-12), makes us understand that every human being is created by God for that fullness of holiness and for that beauty in which Our Lady was clothed from the beginning. The goal to which we are called is also a gift of God for us, for which, the Apostle says, God “chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him” (v. 4); He predestined us (cf. v. 5) in Christ to be free from sin one day. Let us entrust ourselves to her and say “no” to sin and “yes” to Grace once and for all by treading the path of becoming holy and immaculate. Our festal wishes to the communities of Mary Immaculate, Tirupattur and Yellagiri Hills who keep their feast!

*I wish each one of you a very happy feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mother Mary, fervent Season of Advent and Holy Christmas!*

*Yours affectionately,*

*Sr. Nirmala Lazar*

**Sr Nirmala Lazar FMA  
Provincial**



*Merry Christmas*

# Itinerary of the Provincial

DECEMBER 2021

- 01-02 - Provincial Office, Kodambakkam
- 03-05 - Dissemination of GC XXIV, Kodambakkam
- 06 - FMA India National Coordinators' Meet, online
- 06-07 - Dissemination of GC XXIV to Sri Lanka, online
- 08 - Platinum Jubilee, MIC-Tirupattur
- 08 -09 - Provincial Council, MIC-Tirupattur
- 10 - Provincial Office, Kodambakkam
- 11 - Journey to Sri Lanka
- 12 -24 - Provincial Visit - Sri Lanka
- 25 - Journey to Chennai
- 26 – 02 Jan- Annual Retreat 1, ACK
- 02 Jan. - Provincial Team Meet, Auxilium Home, Katpadi

