



INM FMA/Pro.Cir.68

March 2023

*“Rend your heart and not your garments.
Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love”. -Joel 2:13*

My Dearest Sisters,

Viva Gesù!

Affectionate greetings to you from the Provincial House, Kodambakkam!

I have just returned from my Annual Spiritual Retreat in the pleasant climate at Mount St. Joseph, Bengaluru from 21 to 27 February. I am grateful to God for these days of my personal encounter with Him, renewing my conviction that God loves me personally and uniquely; I am a loved, forgiven, and graced sinner; called to love radically; and I am an Ambassador of Christ to the world. I remembered each one of you in my prayers. Thank you so much for the precious gift of your prayers too for me.

We have begun the season of Lent with all enthusiasm and fervour. The message of our beloved Holy Father Pope Francis on the theme *‘Lenten Penance and the Synodal Journey’* enlightens and guides our footsteps in our Lenten journey. Drawing on the Gospel passage of the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor (Mt 17: 1-8) proclaimed every year on the 2nd Sunday of Lent, Pope Francis invites us to *“climb a high mountain” together with Jesus, to live with the Holy people of God a particular experience of asceticism.* “The Lenten ascetic journey and, similarly, the synodal one, both have a personal and ecclesial transfiguration as their goal. A transformation which, in both cases, finds its model in that of Jesus and is brought about by the grace of His paschal mystery”.

To reach the goal, the Pope proposes **two paths to follow**. The first is *listening to Jesus* who speaks through the word of God offered by the liturgy and through the brothers and sisters in need of help. Pope Francis adds an aspect, “very important in the synodal process: listening to Christ also passes through listening to the brothers and sisters in the Church, that reciprocal listening which in some phases is the main objective but which in any case always remains indispensable in the method and style of a synodal Church”. The second indication is that of *“not taking refuge in a religiosity made up of extraordinary events, evocative experiences, for fear of facing reality with its daily toils”*. Lent, the Pope specifies, is oriented towards Easter and it is not an end in itself, but prepares us to *“be artisans of synodality in the ordinary life of our communities”*. May the Holy Spirit inspire and sustain us this Lent in our ascent with Jesus, so that we may experience his divine splendour and thus, confirmed in faith, persevere in our journey together with Him.

JOURNEY WITH MARY IN THE COURSE OF THE CENTURY AND BEYOND ...

At the end of the *Plenum* winter meeting, *La Madre* and the General Council of our Institute, in the Choral Circular No. 1025, speak of the *‘Experience of family and synodality in the Church and for peace’*. They define 2022 as a “year of grace”, characterized by the celebration of the 4th centenary of death of St. Francis de Sales, on which occasion Pope Francis gave the Church and the Salesian Family a gift of the Letter *Totum Amoris*, and above all, by the closing of the 150th anniversary of the

foundation of the FMA Institute: *“The transparency of God’s action in the life of so many of our sisters and educating communities and the presence of Mary in the history of the Institute is a reason for praise, blessing, and commitment for a new missionary proclamation, capable of generating life, hope, and future for the vitality of the charism on all Continents”*. The Circular concludes with the wish to *“live Lent with a merciful heart, willing to let oneself be transformed by the Word as Mary did”*.

I invite you this month, to reflect on **“three dimensions of synodal reality: the theological dimension, the spiritual dimension, and praxis, in particular on Faith”**.

We know that the Praxis alone will not express the **depth and reality of synodality** if it is not grounded in a rich and creative theology, one that uses the resources of our Trinitarian faith to grasp, by analogy, the nature of unity in relationality and the dynamic ordering of the soteriological - salvific mission: the Son is sent by and from the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both the Father and the Son, as the gift of life-giving grace and truth. Neither the theology nor the praxis of synodality will bear lasting fruit if they are not nourished by the life of the Spirit and do not reflect something of this graced relationality. The life and mission of the Church are manifested in these great theological virtues of **faith, hope and love**. **These nourish and sustain the life of every Christian and they become the hallmark of the Church’s presence and her work of redeeming and sanctifying.**

Faith: When our relationships express our faith, we will be committed to each other on the journey, no matter how long or what difficulties may occur. This is because our faith is not just faith in one another and the sacramental structures of the Church, but it is faith in God who is present and guides everyone who is a member of the community of faith. Faith also gives us the ability not to get diverted by conflicts and divisions, but to come to understand them, and what lies behind them, so that rather than a source of despair and paralysis they can become a means of advancing in God’s service. **Faith is the courage to persevere, keeping our minds, hearts and wills always focused on and open to God.**

If we take this theological virtue of faith as our starting point, it can also **help us with the process of discerning the path of the Holy Spirit that brings life to the community** and its work. It is operative all through the criteria sketched in Lumen Gentium § 12 and we can begin to see how it will also be active in the synodal process. An application of the theological virtues as part of the way in which we discern as well as an act, can serve to guide us in our thinking and in our relations. In this way we can become a Church walking in consolation, even when members experience persecution, suffering and martyrdom.

Faith is a requirement to live our consecrated life meaningfully and joyfully despite problems, difficulties and suffering that are inevitable in human life. Jesus made suffering a normal part of the Christian life. He promised his disciples multiple blessings, but tacked onto the end of the good things he said they could expect was a promise of suffering: “There is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times as much, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land—and persecutions too—now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30). So suffering is not an option for Christians. It’s a guarantee. The word suffering means **enduring pain or distress, sustaining loss or damage, being subject to disability or sickness**, and ultimately submitting to death. It comes in all shapes. Faith leads to acceptance and acceptance brings peace and serenity which in turn **enhances community living- that is the synodal process.**

Mother Mazzarello in her letter to the Missionaries in Uruguay writes, exhorting the sisters to take courage **finding strength in Jesus, for in him the burdens become light, fatigue becomes easy, thorns are turned into sweetness** (Cf. L.22). She encourages them to overcome their weaknesses and live in the style of synodality with faith, patience and endurance.

Let us reflect on the following questions and share our insights:

- ✚ How do I seek to keep my Mind, Will and Heart always focused on and open to God?
- ✚ How do I express my faith in the ordinary everyday situation and how does it help me to live my consecrated life meaningfully?

CELEBRATIONS OF THE MONTH

- 08 - International Women's Day
- 19 - St Joseph
- 24 - Sts Mark and Timothy
- 25 - Annunciation of the Lord

ALL IN THE FAMILY

FMA PCI 2023

The FMA PCI Meet will be held from 14 to 16 March 2023 at Manikandam Trichy on the theme, ***“With Mary reawakening the original freshness of vocational Fruitfulness in the spirit of Valdocco and Mornese, placing ourselves in a state of ongoing formation”***. I am happy to communicate to you that from our province, along with me, Sr Kanickaraj Mary Tamizharasi, the PCI Secretary, Sr Anthony Raj Christina, delegate chosen by the Province and Sr Chinnappan Gracy Fatima, delegate chosen by the Provincial Council will be participating in the meet. I request your earnest prayers for the fruitfulness of the PCI, that all the participants may be guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit and discern the will of God for our country.

HOUSE BLESSING AT OMANDAI - SRI LANKA

13 February 2023 was a joyous and memorable day in the annals of Salesian Sisters -Sri Lanka as we had the Inauguration and Blessing of the Auxilium Vocational Training Centre at Omandai near Vavuniya, and I was happy to be present there along with Sr Kanickaraj Mary Tamizharasi, the Province Secretary. At 9.30 a.m. the Bishop of Mannar, Most Rev Dr Fidelis Lionel Emmanuel Fernando, the Provincial of Sri Lanka Rev Fr Roshan Miranda SDB, the Parish Priest of Omandai Rev Fr Jeganathan and the guests of honour, including all the animators of the communities of Sri Lanka, were warmly welcomed; the bishop blessed the new building and I inaugurated the Auxilium Centre. The solemn Holy Eucharist concelebrated by the bishop along with 7 priests was a divine moment to invoke the copious blessings of the Lord on our Sisters and the young girls who will be residing in the Centre.

The happy moment of felicitation began with the ceremony of lighting of *Kuthuvilakku* and was followed by a welcome dance beautifully performed with the neighbouring government school girls, honouring of the bishop and all the dignitaries and the thanksgiving song by the girls of our home at Vavuniya. After the sumptuous meal, we had the animators' meet from 3.00 to 5.00 p.m., and the sharing of news, reflections and views with regard to life and mission especially on the Island. On 15 February, we had a meeting with Junior Sisters of Sri Lanka, during which Sr Kanickaraj Mary Tamizharasi animated them on resilience, while I received them personally.

Our loving gratitude to our beloved pastor Most Rev Dr Immanuel Fernando, the Bishop of Mannar, for blessing the building, for his gracious presence and fatherly concern and guidance to our mission; to Fr Roshan Miranda SDB, the Provincial of Sri Lanka, for his brotherly assistance in all our endeavours; to the Omandai Parish priest for his hospitality and generous availability and to all the religious of the neighborhood who had come for the celebration for their presence and support. Sincere appreciation to Sr Paul M. Mary, the animator of Vavuniya, for her hard work and commitment to

realize this new home for the needy young people and for her painstaking organization of the events of the day, with the sisterly collaboration of her community sisters and all the animators of Sri Lanka.

WORLD FEST OF GRATITUDE

Sr. Maria Del Rosario Garcia Ribas, our Vicar General, has communicated that the World Feast of Gratitude will be celebrated on **26 April 2023 in Bogotá, Colombia** and will be animated by the 4 Colombian Provinces: - Province "N. S. del Rosario of Chiquinquirá" (CBC) - "Our Lady of the Snow" Province (CBN) - "Mary Help of Christians" Province (CMA) - "Santa Maria Mazzarello" Province (CMM). The theme proposed to us is **"With Mary we generate a culture of peace"** which is illuminated by the Word of Jesus: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Mt 5:9).

Sr. Maria del Rosario says *"In our charismatic tradition, the world feast of gratitude is a significant moment in the family life of our Institute, a sign of love and fidelity that we celebrate in an atmosphere of prayer and joy, to express the gratitude and affection that unite us to La Madre, as the centre of communion of our Institute."* The other details for the preparation will be sent to you soon. As we start the month-long prayer for our Superior General on 26 March, let us pray for our beloved Mother General Rev Sr Chiara Cazzuola that she may be filled with the bountiful blessings of the Lord.

COURSES AND SEMINARS

- ✚ Sr Chinnappan Gracy Fatima attended the "Intensive Liturgy Course" from 21 to 25 February 2023 in Benaulim, Goa, organized by the Liturgy commission of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India.
- ✚ Sr Regina Rathinaswamy, Sr Elizabeth Sebastian and Sr Rayappan Leema Rose will be attending the Leadership Course from 5 - 18 March 2023 at Don Bosco Renewal Centre, Bengaluru.
- ✚ Sr Cherayath Anna Rani, representing school eco club coordinators, and Sr Amirthanathan Preethi Diana, representing non-formal NCP coordinators who are involved in Eco-club activities, will be participating in Training of Trainees on Environment Stewardship on 18 and 19 March; and Sr Kanikairaj Shermila, the Social Development Coordinator of our Province, and her Staff, will take part in the Training Programme and NDF Annual Meet on 20 and 21 March to be held in CDEW Society, Bengaluru.

NOTE OF THANKS

- ✚ Sincere thanks to Sr Gaspar Mary Celine, the animator, and the community of Kodambakkam for hosting the Tri-monthly Recollection and Animation of Juniors on 04 and 05 February; and the Provincial Council Meet on 09 and 10 February.
- ✚ Hearty thanks to the following communities who organized the trimonthly recollection for senior sisters: Sr Stanislaus Mary Dora and the community of Salem - Avvai Nagar on 08 February; Sr Devadoss Margaret and the community of Sacred Heart Home, Katpadi and Sr Arockiasamy Rackel Mary and the community of Auxilium Negombo on 11 February; Sr Susairaj Mary Sheila and the community of Our Lady's Centre, Kingsford, Sr Anthony Raj Christina and the community of Mary Immaculate Convent, Tirupattur on 12 February.
- ✚ Sincere gratitude to Sr Mora Ruth del Pilar, General Councillor for Mission ad/inter gentes, and her team, for organizing the webinar on 12 February to the province coordinators of Mission ad/inter gentes and the Missionaries ad gentes.
- ✚ Loving gratitude to Sr Fernando Mary Ann, the delegate of Sri Lanka, for organizing and animating the trimonthly recollection and animation of the Juniors of Sri Lanka on 25 and 26

January at Auxilium Convent, Negombo; to Sr Kanickaraj Mary Tamizharasi for animating the juniors of Sri Lanka on 15 February and to Sr Arockiasamy Rackel Mary and the community of Auxilium Negombo for hosting the meetings.

- ✚ A note of appreciation to Sr Sebastian Elizabeth, the animator of Mazzarello Home, Tirupattur and the SPM Coordinator, for animating the SPM Training programme for the 33 students of Vellore, Arni and Auxilium Home Schools from 14 to 17 February; and for hosting the ADMA Day Celebration on 19 February; Congratulations to Sr Varghese Mary Janet, the ADMA Coordinator for organizing the same.
- ✚ Million thanks to the animators and communities of Arni, Kingsford, Salem - Avvai Nagar and Mary Immaculate Convent, Tirupattur for organizing the Retreat for Workers and House Staff of Vellore Zone, Chennai zone, Salem zone respectively on 18 February and Tirupattur zone on 25 February. Congratulations to you dear Sisters for assisting our workers spiritually and generously offering them the take-away gifts.

HEARTFELT SYMPATHIES

Our loving prayers and heartfelt condolences to all those who lost their dear ones in February 2023:

- ✚ To Rev Fr Agilan Sarprasadam, the Provincial and Confreres of INT Province, at the demise of Fr Marcel Lincoln SDB (60) on 01 February.
- ✚ To Rev Fr Lourdasamy Don Bosco, the Provincial and Confreres of INM Province, at the passing away of Fr Arampulikal Joseph SDB (91) on 07 February 2023.

LIVING IN OUR MEMORY - MARCH 2023

- 09 † Sr Arokianathan M. Josephine (2021)
- 10 † Sr Marie Dulla Cardozo (2004)
- 24 † Sr Castelli Giovanna (1995)
- 26 † Sr Cazzuli Eugenia (1973)
- 28 † Sr Nunes Nellie (1983)
- 29 † Sr Anthoni Philomena (2017)
- 30 † Sr Versino Eugenia (1951)
- † Sr Gonsalves Dorothy (2019)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS – MARCH 2023

- 02,03 - Formation meeting for Provincial Economer, Online
- 04 - Women's Day Celebration, Kodambakkam
- 14-16 - FMA PCI Meet, Manikandam, Trichy
- 17 - Province Social Communication Coordinators' Meet, Online
- 17 & 18 - Provincial Council, Kodambakkam
- 19-26 - Annual Retreat I, Yercaud
- 26 - Animation to Retreatants, Yercaud
- 27-03 April – Annual Retreat for Animators II, Wellington
- 03-04 April - Animation to Retreatants, Wellington

The month of March is dedicated to Saint Joseph, the foster father of Jesus. Pope Pius IX declared him to be the patron and the protector of the Catholic Church, in addition to his patronage of the sick and of a happy death, due to the belief that he died in the presence of Jesus and Mary. Being a patron saint of the virgins too, he is venerated as "most chaste".

In his Apostolic Letter entitled *Patris Corde* ('With a Father's Heart'), Pope Francis describes Saint Joseph as a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father and a father in the shadows.

Joseph is "an accepting Father," because he "accepted Mary unconditionally" — an important gesture even today, says Pope Francis, "in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence towards women is so evident." But the Bridegroom of Mary is also the one who, trusting in the Lord, accepts in his life even the events that he does not understand, "setting aside his own ideas" and reconciling himself with his own history.

We celebrate the **International Women's Day on 8 March**. The theme for IWD 2023 is "**Digit ALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality**". Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Let us pray through the intercession of St Joseph, the virginal husband of Mary, for the empowerment of all women everywhere and in all walks of life, and that 'gender equality' becomes a reality in our society and in the world over.

As we honour St Joseph in a special way throughout this month and celebrate His feast on 19 March, let us pray through his powerful intercession for all the students, in particular, the X, XI and XII students who are starting their Board exams soon, for the special intentions of our Province and all the communities.

Loving festal wishes to the communities of St. Joseph's Convent, Arni and St. Joseph's Home, Mosavadi who keep him as their patron.

*I wish each one of you a fervent continuation
of Lent and a very happy feast of St. Joseph!*

**HAPPY
FEAST!**



Yours affectionately,

Sr. Nirmala Lazar

**Sr Nirmala Lazar FMA
Provincial**