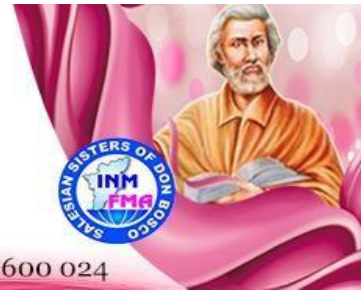




Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Salesiane di Don Bosco
St Thomas the Apostle Province - INM
Madras - India



Provincial Circular 2023 - 2024

Mazzarello Convent, Kodambakkam, Chennai - 600 024

INM FMA / Pro.Cir.9

February 2024

My Dearest Sisters,

Viva Gesu`! Affectionate greetings to each one of you!

SYNODAL PRESENCE, AS BEING, WORKING, AND WALKING TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION

The word synod comes from the Greek words *syn*, which means with, and *hodos*, which means way or path. Since the Second Vatican Council, the synod's discussions have been held on subjects like the Eucharist, the Word of God, the Middle East, the new evangelization, the family, young people, the Amazon, and synodality. Each synod unravels new pathways and sheds new light on the life and mission of the entire church. The recent synod on synodality invites us to journey with Christ toward the Kingdom of God by making synodality our way of life and our journey a journey of togetherness, not only with the members of our community but with everyone and the whole of creation.

In relation to consecrated life, we may describe a synodal community as a group of consecrated persons who are brought together by God to live in communion and carry out the apostolate that God wants to be done in a particular place in a participatory way. In a synodal community of consecrated persons, the synodal elements of being together, listening in prayer, engaging in authentic dialogue, and sharing responsibilities must be present (Acts 15). In a synodal community, synodal presence and the lifestyle of consecrated persons have to take place in a joint journey towards the mission. It requires a loving presence (**being**), a just and willing contribution (**working**), and the forward journey of everyone in the same direction (**journeying**).

Synodal presence is a journey of sharing, reflecting, and listening to all at all levels across the entire educational community. The words of Pope Francis to the General Chapter members of the Sisters of St Dorothy summarize the essence of synodal presence in a synodal community. The Pope said that the Institutes of Consecrated Life are "repositories of a great heritage and a rich tradition of synodality." He insisted that being, working, and walking together, with Christ and in the Spirit, constitutes the essence of Christian religious life.

Being and walking together in the Spirit imprint a style of communion and participation marked by mission. God calls every consecrated person to build a synodal community through the synodal presence, amidst the challenging reality of today's world! The synodal presence aims to **put synodality into practice from now on**, in every aspect of our lives and every sector of our community mission. This calls all of us, at every level of our presence, to renew our way of being, working, and moving forward together.

1. Being and working together

“Being and working together” is at the heart of the synodal presence (cf. C 49). In this sense, synodal presence is a way of renewing ourselves to be more united with one another and better carry out our mission in the world. Concretely, being “synodal” is a way of being and a way of working that takes a more grassroot, collaborative approach, taking time to discern the path forward together. In this way, a “synodal presence” is a presence that listens: “It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn and teach. It is listening to each other and the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of Truth” (Jn 14:17), to know what He is saying to us today.” This naturally calls us to change our ways of being and doing things to become more and more who we truly are as FMA.

A complete synchronization of synodal presence is found in the articles of our Constitution. Art. 49 states that for us FMA, “living and working together in the name of the Lord is an essential element of our vocation” (C 49). Art. 36 confirms that “Our community finds the deepest reason for its existence in the mystery of Trinitarian communion. Among the People of God, it is a particular sign of a new way of living together, not founded on ties of flesh and blood but on the power of faith and sisterhood in Christ” (cf. C 36).

It is the synodal style that we are all called to be and carry out our mission as it was lived in true simplicity and deep profundity by Mother Mazzarello and the first Sisters of the community of Mornese. Let us work together to build with conviction and joy the family lifestyle that is so necessary and important for us and young people today. The family spirit is vital for us and requires everyone's commitment and contribution to create an atmosphere of trust and joy, to involve the young and the collaborators and thus favour the birth of Salesian vocations (cf. C 50).

2. Working and Journeying Together

We can only move forward if we work and walk together. No one is an island! Every step is important in the synodal missionary journey. Pope Francis has stated that this collaborative, inclusive approach to synodality is precisely “the path that God expects of the Church in the

third millennium.” The synodal presence reminds us that the voice of everyone matters because God can talk through anyone. The community with the synodal presence is where the presence and the gift of each other are welcomed; the contribution and service of everyone are valued; the involvement and the co-responsible participation of everyone become the tangible signs of God’s presence, which is love and inter-personal communion (cf. C 51).

Fundamentally, synodal presence is about journeying together. This happens through listening to one another to hear what God is saying to all of us. It is realizing that the Holy Spirit can speak through anyone to help us walk forward together on our journey as the People of God, as consecrated women disciples, and as educators and evangelizers in the style of the Preventive System, which is the call of our vocation (cf. C 7). Working and walking together is a process, sometimes arduous that requires a deep faith experience, a strong sense of belonging, and a ready willingness to listen, to discern, to journey, and to accompany each other. It especially requires an ongoing formation that generates life, life in fullness (Jn 10:10).

3. Authority as Service

The authority that superiors receive from God through the ministry of the church is to be exercised by them in a spirit of service (Jn 13:14-17). It is an entrusted responsibility to care for the integral well-being of the members called to the mission of the community. The exercise of authority in religious life is to be at the service of others. In the logic of authority as service, we must always remember what Pope Francis says about authority: “For the disciples of Jesus, yesterday, today, and always, the only authority is the authority of service; the only power is the power of the cross: ‘whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave’ (Matt 20:25-27).”

In fulfilling their office, the superiors are to be docile to the will of God and treat the members of the community as children of God. As God’s representatives and spiritual guides, the superiors are to exercise their authority in the spirit of service by engaging every member of the community in dialogue to seek the will of God before making final decisions that affect their lives. The use of dialogue and communal discernment in the exercise of authority is of great importance as it helps in promoting the voluntary and responsible obedience of the members. The superiors are to listen willingly to the members of the community and foster their cooperation for the good of the community. In the light of faith and trust, the community members are to recognize those in authority as a visible sign of unity, communion and mediation in the search for God’s will (cf. C 108).

The synodal presence is calling every consecrated person to deeply rediscover the community's synodal nature in the service of authority. The exercise of authority has to be done in a synodal way without, however, cancelling the role of religious superiors as guides for the members in seeking and doing the will of God and fulfilling the purpose of the religious profession in and through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The service authority is to foster communion among the community members and their participation in the fulfilment of the mission of the community.

CONCLUSION

Synodal presence seeks to form a people, a fraternal and missionary community, at the service of the common good of the society and the care for the common home. One of the great fruits of a synodal presence is that decisions are made in prayer and received in peace, without winners or losers. In fact, religious life has a very concrete experience of this “being, working, and walking together” being an onward spiritual process. It has to become more evident that our communities live a participatory, communal, synodal lifestyle. To make our presence and life a synodal one, we need to intensify the family spirit in all our communities. The synod presence has to ignite in everyone an intended and conscious practice of being, working, and journeying together through attentive listening and meaningful dialogue. This change in the mindset will help us to recognize that each individual is an integral component of the family of God; each one has to offer one's very presence, gifts, talents, and skills in the service of the community in ways suitable to one's capabilities. The synodal presence will enable us to discard all forms of distinction, exclusion, discrimination, and omission based on limited human categorization of people. It will view all members of the same community, each gifted differently, as having equal opportunities to serve and walk together in the same direction and goal of the mission.

In the spirit of synodality, each individual is called to deepen her responsibility within the mission of the community, to creatively express her fidelity to the charism of the Institute, and to build solidarity with others, appreciating diversity and walking as fellow pilgrims. This begins by paying attention to those who are often forgotten, excluded, or not listened to, hearing what God has to say to us through those we may ignore. Synodal presence will help us to be synodal in our being and work and walk forward together towards the mission

we share by exercising an inverted pyramidal style of service of authority. The path to a synodal community through synodal presence starts with you and me. Let's be, work, and walk forward together!

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Do we realize that the synodal presence in the community requires a loving presence (**being**), a just and willing contribution (**working**), and the forward journey of everyone in the same direction (**journeying**)?
2. What efforts can we take to change our ways of being and doing things to become more and more who we truly are as FMA?
3. How can we revitalize the family spirit so that everyone's commitment and contribution offer an atmosphere of trust and joy and promote Salesian vocations?
4. Do we recognize those in authority as a visible sign of unity and communion and a mediator in the search for God's will?
5. Does the service of authority foster communion among the community members and their participation in the fulfilment of the mission of the community?

ADIEU SR PERIANAYAGAM SAGAYA SELVI

In the late hours of Friday, 19 January 2024 at 10.40 pm from the house of Sacred Heart Home, Katpadi, our dear **Sr Perianayagam Sagaya Selvi** was called by the Lord to her eternal reward after having suffered intense pain due to the dreaded cancer disease. Sagaya Selvi was born on 12 November 1967 at Velleripattu, Villupuram District, to Mr Perianayagam and Mrs Philominal as the eldest of six siblings with two brothers and three Sisters, of whom the youngest sister became religious in the congregation of the Nirmala Sisters and the youngest brother a priest in the diocese of Cuddalore and Pondicherry.

Sagaya Selvi was highly influenced by her parents who were very active and much involved in the life of the parish as members of the various catholic associations. She was the soul of the Legion of Mary in the parish. Love for Jesus in the Eucharist and Mother Mary grew strong and matured in her from her younger age. Being the eldest in the family she was loved by her parents, siblings and all the relatives which helped her to grow and mature in responsibility and a sense of belonging.

Sagaya Selvi joined the aspirantate on 13 June 1988. During her formation period, she was appreciated by her assistants and superiors as being dynamic, responsible and sacrificing. Sr Sagaya Selvi made her first profession on 24 May 1993 in Bangalore and final profession on 30 May 1999 in Tirupattur. After her perpetual profession in 1999, she dedicated herself to the young people in the school, boarding and parish in her different roles as teacher,

assistant, in charge of the boarding, headmistress, pastoral, media and VIDES coordinator in the various houses of the province: Auxilium Home Katpadi, Kodambakkam, Polur, Arni, Madras Port Trust Quarters, Tirupattur, Vellore, Puliadithammam, Vyasarpadi, and lastly as the headmistress and pastoral coordinator in Chetpet, Chennai.

Sr Sagaya Selvi kept everyone in the circle of her love and always had a soft corner for the poor. She loved simplicity of life, was satisfied with the minimum of comforts and never complained about anyone around her or about anything given to her. She was faithful to her prayer life and enjoyed being with the community. In her various roles among the young and the Sisters in the community, she exercised servant leadership.

In August 2023 she was sent to Rome to do the one-year Formators Course. In December she complained about some discomfort in the abdominal region and underwent various clinical examinations prescribed by the physician. Subsequently, the superiors decided that it would be better for her to return to India to take further tests and undergo the needed treatment. She landed in Chennai, India on 2 January 2024 and immediately underwent several clinical tests. On 4 January she was admitted to Christian Medical College Hospital, Ranipet Branch where she was given special care. On 18 January she was discharged from the Hospital and was taken to Sacred Heart Home, Katpadi. There she was comforted by the presence of her elderly parents and surrounded by her dear ones and all the Sisters in Auxilium Campus. The Sisters from the other houses continued to visit her bringing her solace and comfort. She was lovingly cared for by the community of Sacred Heart Home.

During her last days, she patiently endured the discomforts caused by her physical ailments. The Lord looked with compassion on her and relieved her of all pain and suffering by calling her to Himself at 10.40 pm on Friday, 19 January 2024, to share in His Paschal Mystery. She passed away serenely in the company of the Sisters of the community of Sacred Heart Home and the Nurse Sisters who lovingly accompanied her during her hospitalisation and the final days.

We trust that Sr Sagayaselvi is now interceding with God for all our needs especially for the good health of the Sisters, for joyful fidelity in our consecrated Salesian life, and for genuine vocations for the province. We recommend to her intercession all the educating communities, the new apostolic educative undertakings, all the dreams, hopes and expectations, all the anxieties, cares and concerns of the Province to take them all to Jesus and Mary and shower upon us God's blessings in abundance!

CELEBRATIONS OF THE MONTH - FEBRUARY 2024

02 - Presentation of the Lord / World Day of Consecrated Life

04 - St John de Britto

07 - Bl. Pius IX

08 - St Josephine Bakhita

09 - Blessed Eusebia Palomino

11 - Our Lady of Lourdes / World Day of the Sick

14 - Ash Wednesday

16 - Bl. Sr Maria Troncatti

18 - St Kuriakose Elias Chavara

25 - Sts Versiglia and Caravario SDB

NOTE OF THANKS

- ✚ I am deeply indebted to our beloved Mother General, Sr Chiara Cazzuola, for her motherly closeness during the moments of pain and anxiety, from the time dear Sr Periyamayagam Sagaya Selvi was diagnosed with the disease in Rome and all through the period of her treatment, until she rested in the Lord. A very big 'thank you' to dear Mother Yvonne and dear Sr Celine Jacob for their supporting accompaniment during these days of uncertainty and anguish. I am sure Sr Sagaya Selvi from her heavenly abode is interceding for the various needs of the Institute especially the good health of all the FMA and genuine vocations for the Institute.
- ✚ I thank profusely Sr Jessica Salvaña Togonon, the Provincial of the Visitatoria RMC, Sr Chongo Cola Bernadette, the Animator and the community of S. Maria D. Mazzarello, Rome for taking care of our dear Sr Periyamayagam Sagaya Selvi during her stay in Rome.
- ✚ I owe my gratitude to Sr Chinnappan Gracy Fatima and the Community for the care rendered to Sr Periyamayagam Sagaya Selvi during the last days of her life on earth and for the arrangements made for the funeral. Thanks to Sr Anthony Raj Mary Josephine and the community of Auxilium College for getting ready the burial ground for our deceased Sister. I thank all the Provincial Councillors for their collaboration and closeness during the suffering moment.

A special word of thanks to the Sister nurses, Sr Perianayagam John Martina, Sr John Baptist Mary Francisca, Sr Perianayagam Auxilia and Sr Adaikalasamy Jecintha Jeyarani for staying close to our dear Sister during her treatment, especially while she was undergoing tests and during her hospitalisation.

- ✚ Heartfelt thanks to Sr Anthony Raj Mary Josephine and the community of Auxilium College for making all the arrangements for one day animation on 2 January 2024 for the retreatants. Our extended thanks to Sr Gaspar Mary Celine and the community of Auxilium Home for hosting the team meeting on 2 January 2024.
- ✚ My sincere thanks to Sr Regina Rathinasamy and Sr Susairaj Mary Sheila and the communities of St Mary's Convent, Vellore and Our Lady's Centre, Chetpet, for hosting the Educating Community meeting on 6 January 2024.
- ✚ My sincere thanks to Sr Antony Raj Christina, and the community of Kodambakkam for hosting the Provincial Council on 07-08 January 2024.
- ✚ Sincere thanks to Sr Susairaj Mary Sheila and the community of Our Lady's Centre, Chetpet for hosting SPM for the students from 8 to 11 January 2024. My sincere appreciation to Sr Elizabeth Sebastian for her hard work and commitment in animating the students.
- ✚ Thanks to Sr Regina Rathinasamy and the community of St Mary's Convent, Vellore for hosting the Animators and Team Meet on 21 January 2024.
- ✚ A Note of thanks to Sr Mahimainadhan Sathiyavani, in charge of Young at Risk, migrants & non-formal sector for conducting a webinar on career guidance for classes X & XI on 28 January 2024.
- ✚ My sincere appreciation and thanks to Sr Elizabeth Sebastian for organizing the first Peace Convention in our Province, on 30 January 2024 at Auxilium Home, Katpadi. Million thanks to Sr Gaspar Mary Celine and the community of Auxilium Home for hosting the Peace Convention 2024.

COURSES AND SEMINARS

- Sr Lourdunathan Solomon Kalai, Sr Kanickaraj Shermila, Sr Tharsius Sagaya Mary, Sr Salvadore Gertrude M. Nirmala, Sr Packiayanathan Mary Rita, and Sr Innasi Malarvizhi, will attend the Renewal course for Silver Jubilarians at DBRC, Bangalore from 05-27 February 2024
- Sr Arockiadoss Brijith Nirmala, Sr Savari Fathima, Sr Gabriel Mariammal, and Sr Anthony Cruz Mathalene Mary will participate in the PCI level updating seminar for the Sisters in Social Communication from 09-11 February 2024, at Don Bosco Skill Mission, Bangalore.

HEARTFELT SYMPATHIES

Our loving prayers and condolences to all those who lost their dear ones in January 2024:

- To Sr Arockiasamy Felix at the demise of her brother-in-law Mrs Chinnappan, on 1 January 2024, at Kattupadi.
- To Sr Chinnappan Mano Ranjitham at the passing away of her sister in Law Mrs Natchathiram (85), on 3 January 2024 at Srivilliputtur, Pudur.
- To the family of Sr S.T Philo at the demise of her sister Mrs. Josephine, the wife of Mr Ganam, on 5 January 2024 at Thambaram.
- To the family of Mr Selvam at the sudden death of Mrs Assumpta, our orphan, on 15 January 2024, at Chetpet, Chennai.
- To Sr Lucy Rose Ozhukayil, the Provincial and the Sisters of INK, at the passing away of our dear Sr Helen Netto (80), on 17 January 2024 at Thope, Kollam.
- To our dear Sr Chinnappan Rose Mary, Sr Bridget Kabilai INK Province, and Fr Vincent Kabilai SDB, on the demise of their mother Mrs Arogyamary Kabilai (84), on 21 January 2024 in Seegahalli, Bangalore.
- To Sr Soosey Philomena Rani at the passing away of her younger brother Mr M. Irudhaya Raj (73) on 21 January 2024 in Grace and Compassion Hospital, Tiruvannamalai.
- To Sr Santiago May at the demise of her beloved sister Ms Gladys Santiago, on 30 January 2024, at Coimbatore.

HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS

- Hearty Congratulations to our dear Sr Xavier Wency on the successful completion of the Ph.D. Viva Voce Examination on 8 January 2024 at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur. May this great achievement lead you onward in your selfless service for the welfare of the young people entrusted to our care.

LIVING IN OUR MEMORY- FEBRUARY 2024

- 02 † Sr Mary Joseph Chiriat (1998)
03 † Sr Jeganathan Clara (2019)
03 † Sr Giuseppina Gaod (2009)
05 † Sr Louis Evelyn (2006)
08 † Sr Braganza Rose (2000)
12 † Sr Domingo Frances (2009)
13 † Sr Matilde Watts (1959)
14 † Sr Barbon Arokia Jebamani (2020)
18 † Sr De Santis Rosaria (2018)
24 † Sr Bricarello Maria (1925)
25 † Sr Rossini Maria (1986)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - FEBRUARY 2024

- | | | |
|-------|---------|---|
| 01 | Thu | - Trimonthly Recollection for Juniors & Animators, Negombo |
| 02 | Fri | - Animation for Juniors & Animators, Negombo |
| 03 | Sat | - Trimonthly Recollection for Seniors, Sacred Heart Home, Katpadi |
| 03 | Sat | - Trimonthly Recollection for Juniors, Kodambakkam |
| 04 | Sun | - Trimonthly Animation to Juniors, Kodambakkam |
| 04 | Sun | - HM's Meet for Matriculation Schools, St Mary's Convent, Vellore |
| 10 | Sat | - Provincial Community Day, St Mary's Convent, Vellore |
| 11-12 | Sun-Mon | - Provincial Council, St Mary's Convent, Vellore |
| 17 | Sat | - VIDES General Body Meeting, Chetpet |
| 24 | Sat | - LYPC Meet, Mazzarello Home, Tirupattur |
| 25 | Sun | - Provincial Team Meet, Kodambakkam |

On 11 February, the feast of our Lady of Lourdes, we keep the 32nd World Day of the Sick. Pope Francis has given a beautiful message on the theme: “It is not good that man should be alone”: Healing the Sick by Healing Relationships. Holy Father reminds us that the first form of care needed in any illness is compassionate and loving closeness. To care for the sick thus means above all to care for their relationships: with God, with others family members, friends, healthcare workers, with creation and with themselves. Let us do all we can to provide physical, emotional, and spiritual support to all who are facing health challenges, especially our Sisters, parents and those entrusted to our care.

We enter into the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday on 14 February 2024, a favourable time of reflection and preparation before the celebration of Easter. May the observance of fasting, penance and almsgiving lead us to personal conversion uniting ourselves more deeply to the passion of our Lord and experiencing His immense and unconditional love.

*I wish each one of you a very happy feast of
the Presentation of our Lord,
Our Lady of Lourdes
and a fervent season of Lent!*



Yours affectionately,

Sr. Devadoss Margaret

**Sr Devadoss Margaret FMA
Provincial**

Itinerary of the Provincial FEBRUARY 2024

01-02	Thu-Fri	Trimonthly Recollection and Animation for Juniors & Animators Meet, Sacred Heart Novitiate, Negombo, SL
03	Sat	Trimonthly Recollection for Juniors, Kodambakkam Celebration of Consecrated Day, Loyola College, Chennai
04	Sun	Trimonthly Animation for Juniors, Kodambakkam
10	Sat	Provincial Community Day, St Mary's Convent, Vellore
11-12	Sun-Mon	Provincial Council, St Mary's Convent, Vellore
13	Tue	Provincial Office, Kodambakkam
14	Wed	Departure to Sri Lanka – Jaffna
14-17	Wed-Sat	Provincial Visit – Jaffna
17-19	Sat-Mon	Provincial Visit – Columbuthurai
19-22	Mon-Thu	Provincial Visit – Urumpirai
22-25	Thu-Sun	Provincial Visit – Omandai
25-28	Sun-Wed	Provincial Visit – Eppawala
28-02 Mar	Wed-Sat	Provincial Visit – Nochchiyagama

MARCH

02-05	Sat-Tue	Provincial Visit – Thirukovil
05-08	Tue-Fri	Provincial Visit – Colombo
08-10	Fri-Sun	Provincial Visit – Auxilium, Negombo
11-13	Mon-Wed	Provincial Visit – Novitiate, Negombo
14	Thu	Departure to Chennai

