



Provincial Circular

Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Auxilium Provincial Office Nongthymmai, Shillong - Meghalaya - 793014

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Dearest Sisters,

On this first day of the year I am happy to convey my warmest and affectionate greetings for a Blessed and Happy New Year 2019. Following the Apostolic Exhortation 'Gaudete et Exsultate' of the Holy Father and the Strenna of the Rector Major for the year 2019, I shall focus on "Holiness" as a running theme for all my animations this year.

Goodbye and welcome

Saying goodbye and wishing welcome to people and places are common experiences in our life that leave us with mixed feelings and emotions. However, what I am referring to here does not touch persons or places. It refers to saying goodbye to a Calendar Year and welcoming another. We have concluded the eventful year of 2018 with a beautiful thanksgiving vigil on December 31st. The 365 days of this grace-filled year is no more within our reach but we have surrendered them into the merciful heart of God, with deep gratitude for all the blessings known and unknown we have received. Every day of this bygone year is recorded in the book of life. Many persons who saw the dawn of the year were not blessed to see its end.

We are now blessed with the gift of a new year 2019 which will unfold to us new opportunities to embrace, new challenges to encounter and new hurdles to overcome. This is a fresh outpouring to graces which the Good Lord has gifted us with, a blank register with another 365 pages for us to fill with our good deeds and our personal response to God's daily invitations, which will form part of the story of each one of us. The exciting thing of this story is that it has just begun; it is in the here and now. Many interesting episodes, personal encounters, surprise blessings, adventurous experiences are going to color our story.

We are familiar with the song "Make something new in my life O Lord". What could be the new things we want to see happening in our life? It could be a new way of looking at our life, a renewed and more personalized spiritual life, a more convinced and authentic way of living our consecrated life, a more enthusiastic and vibrant way of reaching to the mission, or putting right our priorities as consecrated persons, giving a new slant to our youth ministry in light of the recent Synod on "*Faith, vocational discernment and young people*", and soon...The New Year's resolutions will be the perfect opportunity to set right our values and priorities, to dream new dreams and work towards its actualization.

The birth of a New Year also opens up for us new horizons, new hopes, new dreams and new desires. Every new beginning beckons us to something new in our life. The Lord who created time, now gives us this New Year, this new time as a gift. In Him, time now becomes a field of choice wherein we can grow in holiness, experience true happiness and find real freedom. Let us then begin this New Year of grace with hope and positive attitude asking the Lord to rekindle our life with new enthusiasm and renew our convictions to a more committed life in God's service and in the service of His people.

Motherhood of Mary



We begin the year with the solemnity of the Motherhood of Mary. It is indeed befitting to start this journey with our Blessed Mother imploring her help and intercession in our lives and mission. As the Mother of God, our Blessed Mother has played a significant role in the wonderful mystery of God's Love for us. The Divine Motherhood of Mary is the greatest privilege that God has bestowed on her. Mary's Motherhood was lived and embodied by her not just at the incarnation of the Son of God but all through the journey of life to the Cross. She united her offering with that of her Son and thus in a very real sense cooperated in the work of redemption. She is our true mother whose love for us has no limits. She teaches us how to be a true disciple of Jesus; how to hear and obey God's Word. In celebrating this great solemnity, we are reminded that we too are called to cooperate generously in the loving plans of

God as she did. The Church also observes the day as the World Day of Peace. Let us ask Mary, the Queen of Peace to intercede from her Son the much longed -for peace for the world.

World Day of Peace

On this first day of the year, celebrating the 52nd World Day of Peace, Pope Francis focuses his message on "good politics" at the service of peace. He warns against the vices that are too often linked to politics today and do not build up peace in society. While emphasizing that politics is "at the service of peace" and "respects and promotes fundamental human rights, which are at the same time mutual obligations," the pope highlights the fact that "the thirst for power at any price leads to abuses and injustice."

He concludes his message by identifying three inseparable aspects of peace which he calls as a project of Peace: **Peace with oneself** - rejecting inflexibility, anger and impatience; **Peace with others** - family members, friends, strangers, the poor and the suffering, being unafraid to encounter them and listen to what they have to say and **Peace with all creation** - rediscovering the grandeur of God's gift and our individual and shared responsibility as inhabitants of this world, citizens and builders of the future." Let peace begin from our hearts, from our communities, from our institutions and from our families. In the words of Saint Francis of Assisi: "As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts". Simple ways to be messengers of peace starting from our heart is to get rid of all negative and toxic thoughts and attitudes. Mother Teresa who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, said: "We in our family don't need bombs and guns, to destroy, to bring peace – just get together, love one another... And we will be able to overcome all the evil that is in the world".



Holiness for you too



The Saints are given to us as examples to emulate and companions on the journey of a life which is to be lived by faith. They were also men and women, just like us, who responded to God's invitation to become like Jesus Christ and were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. They now pray for us because we are joined with them in the eternal communion made up of all those who are joined to Jesus Christ. They show us what holiness truly looks like as it is lived in the real world by real people. We too are called to be saints, precisely because we are Christians, followers of Jesus Christ.

Throughout his pontificate, St. Pope John Paul II endeavored to offer to the Church and the world at large models for Christian living: people we can imitate and learn from, as we try to make our own way through the maze and pitfalls of life. Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation ‘Gaudete et Exsultate’ (GE) makes it very clear that the call to holiness embraces everyone: “**Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy.** Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.” (GE 14)

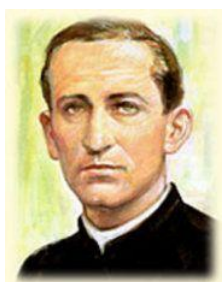
The Rector Major, Don Ángel Fernández Artime in his Strenna 2019 has reminded each of us that Holiness is not just for few and extraordinary people but instead for everyone who live even the ordinary Christian life which consists in bearing witness to the perfection of Love that was made flesh in Christ. He further said that this is an ongoing journey accompanied by God’s patience and kindness and involves personal freedom and commitment.

In his exhortation to the Salesians to be Saints, the former Rector Major Don Pascual Chávez Villanueva SDB said: “For us Salesians, holiness is built on the daily response, as the expression and fruit of the spirituality and axis of ‘*da mihi animas cetera tolle*’. God, the source of all holiness, cannot fail on his side. It is our response that needs continual stimulation because, as St Francis de Sales says: ‘*Even though the source may be abundant, the water enters a garden not in proportion to its quantity but only according to the breadth, great or small, of the channel which allows it to enter*’

Our Mother General, Sr. Yvonne Reungoat in her Circular N. 979 (*A renewed call to holiness*), reminded us that Holiness is something fascinating, attractive, accessible. It is a spiritual journey that asks us to be marked with prayer and community journey. She posed before us a provoking question: Dear sisters are we convinced that Holiness is an essential part of our mission to walk with young people? This question is indeed a point of reflection and introspection for us. Holiness is undoubtedly part of our Salesian Charism and to become a Saint is not just our privilege but our prime duty too. Let us therefore, be convinced of this call and offer the young people this gift of holiness which we together can achieve through constant commitments and journeys of daily life.

Reflecting and pondering on the essence of Holiness, we have a number of models this month whose heroic and saintly virtues can be imbibed in our own personal lives. Our Salesian Saints in particular give us the example of living Salesian Sanctity in a very ordinary and simple way of life.

Bl. Luigi Variara (January 15)



“I feel so happy to be a Salesian and I bless the Lord for having sent me to this leper colony where I learned how to gain heaven”.

Blessed Luigi Variara was an apostle to the lepers in Colombia and founder of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary who ran the homes he set up for lepers. The three years before his priestly ordination in 1898, proved to be a time of spiritual growth and maturation for young Luigi, who came to understand better the reality of sacrifice and self-giving in serving others, and in running the risk of contagion through continual contact with lepers. Like Don Bosco he was

exemplary in obedience. Even in the face of calumny he said nothing, he held firmly to God's will and began to climb the Calvary of not being understood or accepted by those who should have been closest to him. Let us learn from this great personality the art of surrendering to God's Holy Will always, especially amidst trials and difficulties.

Bl. Laura Vicuña (January 22)

"I want to do all I can to make God known and loved"

The heroic example of Laura Vicuña is well noted by all. Although she was only thirteen when she died, Laura had grown to a maturity of faith well beyond her years.



In September 1988, Pope John Paul II beatified Laura, calling her a 'Eucharistic flower... whose life was a poem of purity, sacrifice and filial love'. Laura did not let the sordidness of Manuel Mora, her step father destroy her innocence, nor did she allow her heart to become embittered. Instead, she prayed for her mother and also for him. Her life is a testimony to the words of St. Paul: 'However much sin increased, grace was always greater' (Rom. 5:20).

Laura's personality mirrored God's love, and she became known as a friend to all. In response to learning of God's love for her, Laura yearned to share that love with all she encountered, desiring to do so especially with her mother. In an age of sexual license, when often girls and young women can be at the mercy of sexual predators, the life of Laura Vicuña has something to say in our own day. Let us follow her heroic courage to live by the right principles of Holiness of life.

St. Francis de Sales (January 24)

"The measure of love is to love without measure."



Francis De Sales called all men and women to pursue holiness in accordance with their state in life and vocation. He understood that holiness can look different, depending upon the state in life and vocation. However, all holy people look like Jesus, because Jesus begins to live His very life in and through them. He also emphasized that growing in holiness requires our continual and free cooperation with the grace of God.

Francis made it clear, as did Jesus Himself, that walking along this way of holiness is not easy. In our spirituality, Don Bosco chose him as the patron of the Institute for his kindness, meekness and the holiness of everyday life.

Through the inspirations of this influential and well-known saint, we gain great insight into how sin affects our lives, our relationships, and our witness to the world. St. Francis de Sales equips us in our pursuit of holiness, enabling us to live the fervent, authentic Christian and religious life to which we are called.

His famous aphorism "You can attract more bees with a spoonful of sugar than a cupful of vinegar" is a clarion call and reminder for us especially in the application of the Salesian Charism in our mission and apostolate among the young people.

Bl. Bronisław Markiewicz (January 30)



“Not all of you are called to become priests, but all of you must become saints, for this is the will of God”

Bronisław Markiewicz was born on July 13, 1842, in eastern Poland, at the time annexed to the Russian empire, into a modest household that would eventually include eleven children. At the age of 18, he lost his faith. In his despair, Bronisław turned to the great Polish authors. Touched by one of them, he fell to his knees and exclaimed, *“My God, if You exist, make me know You! ... May I see the Truth, and spend my life in thanksgiving! To gain this, I am willing to suffer any mortification”*. He was ordained a priest on September 15, 1867. Following his former desire to be a religious, in the fall of 1885, Bronisław left for Italy where he met Don Bosco at Turin. Bronisław Markiewicz made his Salesian religious profession on March 25, 1887. On the day of his profession, on Don Bosco's request, he committed himself with an additional vow to remain faithful to the Rule. He carried out the various tasks assigned to him by his superiors, which he sought to accomplish with dedication and zeal. In addition to his ordinary pastoral activity, he dedicated himself, in the Spirit of St John Bosco, to the formation of poor and orphaned youth. He opened an institute in which he offered his students both material and spiritual support preparing them for life with a professional formation in the schools around the institute itself. He was noted for his total dedication to children, his heroic self-denial and the enormous work he accomplished in forming youth and abandoned and orphaned children. He founded two religious congregations based on the spirituality of St. John Bosco, adapting his rules to reflect their own Charism. He is an example for us to live with creative fidelity and faithfulness the spirit of our father and founder Don Bosco. Let us ask Blessed Bronisław Markiewicz to obtain for us the grace of perseverance in the service of God.

St. John Bosco (January 31)

“I want to give you the formula for sanctity: first, be happy; second, study and pray; third, do good to everyone.”

Speaking of Don Bosco, there is nothing in him that cannot be associated with Holiness. Pope XI even said *“Don Bosco is a giant of sanctity”*. The holiness of Don Bosco was characterized by his perfect example of contemplation in action, apostolic interior life, pastoral zeal and loving kindness.



We can ascertain Don Bosco's holiness from the many pupils of his who have reached the height of sanctity. His oratories became factories of saints and he created space and an ample environment where sanctity could blossom in every way. However, his sanctity did not blossom from an extraordinary life instead from an ordinary consecrated life lived with creative love, undying passion for souls and above all his constant union with God in whatever circumstance of life he was. His zeal for winning souls for Christ, his spirit of sacrifice, humility, simplicity, love for purity and poverty, continuous union with God and his unlimited service to the poor and abandoned youngsters have marked his identity as a model of sanctity.

He has left for us a great legacy of holiness with distinctive facets of love, apostolic zeal, creative fidelity, contemplation in action and passion solely for the salvation of souls. As we celebrate his

feast on the last day of this month, let us pray that we may imbibe his calibre of making simple but holy daily steps to sanctity and that our witnessing life may truly be an attractive bait to a life of holiness for the young and those we encounter in our mission.

Communications

Come and see: The 'Come and See' Programme held at Sacred Heart Convent, Mawlai from the 17-20 December 2018 went off well with 128 young people participating in it. We continue to pray the Lord of the Harvest to sustain them and send more workers to His vineyard. I would like to thank the community of Mawlai for their generous availability to support this event in the Province. I also appreciate the hard work and enthusiasm of the Vocation Pastoral Team especially Sr. Carmelina Sun, Sr. Euginia Kyntiewlin Susngi, Sr. Maria Roibok Suchiang, Sr. Aquila Makri and Sr. Vanisha Sympli to make this event a success.

Second Novitiate: 9 sisters of INS and 4 sisters of ING have already initiated their first phase of the Second Novitiate at Mary our Help Training Centre, Bellefonte on 28 December 2018. Article 98 of our Constitutions gives clear indication of this important phase in the life of an FMA as a moment of prayer and reflection to prepare her for a definitive response of fidelity. Let us be generous with our prayers to accompany our dear Sisters in this time of grace as they intensely prepare for their final commitment. I thank the community of Bellefonte for offering their hospitality for this period and I am grateful to Sr. Rosa Pyngrope for coordinating the programme.

Winter Apostolate: According to Don Bosco, holiday means a change of occupation. I congratulate and appreciate the sisters who made available their time and energy to the work of evangelization in the families and in the villages. Do continue to bring God's blessings to the families through your visits and accompanying presence among them.

Apostolic Experience: The second year Novices will make their apostolic experiences in the different communities of our Province. We assure them too of our prayers for a fruitful experience of community and pastoral life. I thank the different communities for the accompaniment they will render to our Novices during this period of community exposure.

Retreat: The first retreat of the year 2019 will begin on January 10th evening. Retreat is a grace-filled opportunity to evaluate our personal and community life and our commitment to the mission in the light of the Word of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us treasure this moment of Grace offered to us by the Institute.

History Writing: In view of the Centenary celebrations of the FMA presence in India, the core group for the History writing will meet at the Provincial House, Kodambakkam from 24-26 January 2019. Sr. Euginia Laloo will participate in it. We wish them all the best.

Salesian Cooperators' South Asia Regional Congress: The South Asia Regional Congress of the Salesian Cooperators will be held on 25 and 26 January 2019 at Citadel, Salesian Provincial House, Chennai. Sr. Teresa Phawa, National Coordinator of the Salesian Family and Sr. Christina Kharkongor, Provincial Delegate will participate in it.

Welcome: We warmly welcome Sr. Rongilla Sangma who will be coming to the Province on 8 January 2019 for her home leave. We wish her a happy stay at home and in the Province.

Progetto Mornese: The Project Mornese for English speaking group will be held from 18 February-17 March 2019. The province has proposed the following sisters for this experience - Sr. Happyline Shadap, Sr. Teresa Kamsuan and Sr. Virginia Wankhar.

Congratulations: We congratulate the Deacons of the various Provinces and Dioceses who in these months are receiving the Sacrament of the Holy Orders. We assure them of our prayers for a fruitful priestly ministry.

Provincial Visit: You will be receiving along with this first circular of the year 2019 the Calendar of events for the coming months. This also includes the itinerary of my first official visits to the communities. The Visit of Superiors is a tradition in our Congregation that dates back to the time of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. Don Bosco felt the need of seeing his sons to give them joy and to encourage them by his presence. He was committed to “see and examine everything and talk with superiors and pupils” (BM X 426). Mother Mazzarello understood, from the suggestions and example of Don Bosco, that visits can favour communion between the Sisters and the houses. She considered the visits as an opportunity for direct communication with her Sisters, with whom she did not have daily contact. As I begin my visit to our communities, I request you to pray for me and to join me in praying for your community so that it will bear the desired fruit. I also request you to keep up-to-date the records and files related to your specific responsibility in the community.

Greetings of Mother General: Our Mother General has sent her affectionate greetings to every member of our Province. Below is the extract of her message:

I thank you on behalf of the Sisters of the Council for the warm greetings you sent to us on behalf of the sisters of the Province. Thank you for your remembrance and prayers so precious in this time of the Plenum. I reciprocate them with great affection and with the wish that the birth of Jesus will bring a message of peace, solidarity and hope, especially to the numerous brothers and sisters who are in situations of difficulty, war, discrimination and social injustice. Christmas brings peace, serenity and hope to everyone and the whole human family needs it. We invoke these gifts in the certainty that the Lord will listen to our prayer.

May Mary of Nazareth, the virgin of Hope, help us to generously give gestures of peace in our daily life and to radiate the profound joy that comes from feeling loved by God. How many young people, children and families need tenderness and signs of humanity. If we succeed with God's grace to be this light, then it will be a real Christmas for all of us!

With all my heart I wish that 2019 will be a year rich in apostolic and vocational fruitfulness and a happy journey towards sanctity.

Sr. Yvonne Reungoat fma

Prayers and Condolences

- We offer our heartfelt condolences and prayers to the families and dear ones of Sr. Helen Puweiñ and Sr. Graceland Wahlang who lost their fathers on 1 December and 9 December respectively.

- Our deepest sympathy to Fr. Paul Lyngkot SDB and the confreres of the Salesian Province of Shillong at the demise of a great and valiant missionary Fr. Joseph Cilia SDB on 10 December 2018.
- Our sisterly solidarity with Sr. Alphonsa Kurisinkal FMA and sisters of the FMA Province of Guwahati at the passing away of Sr. Alice Minj FMA on 21 December 2019.
- Our prayers and condolences to Rt. Rev. Bishop Michael Akasius Toppo DD and the faithful of Tezpur Diocese at the departure of Bishop Emeritus Robert Kerketta SDB, DD who went to his eternal reward on 22 December 2019.
- We unite in prayers and offer our condolences also to Most Rev. Archbishop Dominic Jala SDB, DD and the Archdiocese of Shillong at the demise of Fr. Andreas Sutnga on 24 December 2018.
- Our heartfelt sympathy to Fr. Nirmol Gomes SDB and the Salesian Province of Kolkata at the demise of Fr. A.U. Jose Alapurackal SDB on 27 December 2018.

In conclusion...

Pope Francis recalled recently on the occasion of the canonization of seven new saints. *"The saints are men and women who enter deeply into the mystery of prayer, men and women who struggle with prayer allowing the Holy Spirit to pray in them and to struggle with them. They struggle to the end, with all their energy and power, and they win. But they do not win alone: the Lord wins in them and with them ... This is how they remain firm in the faith, with a generous and faithful heart."* As Salesians, we are called to be educators to holiness and therefore, let us walk this path together with the young in creative fidelity and loyalty to our Charism.

As we are at the threshold of the New Year 2019, I wish each of you once again all the very best and may your life unfolds God's copious blessings in every day of this year- in your personal lives and your mission. Let us together strive to walk each day of this New Year in Love and Holiness with Passion, Courage, Perseverance and Creativity.

A very Happy and Fruitful year 2019!

Affectionately,



Sr. Elizabeth George FMA
Provincial