



Provincial Circular

Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Auxilium Provincial Office Nongthymmai, Shillong - Meghalaya - 793014

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01.03.2019

Dearest Sisters,

Loving greetings from Auxilium Provincial House, Nongthymmai!

During my recent visits to the communities, I was delighted to see how every community has taken to heart the theme proposed for this year's provincial visitation: ***Holiness- a journey together in Love***. The theme, creatively displayed in a prominent place in the community and the prayer animations oriented to the theme are external indications showing an interior disposition to strive for everyday holiness of which Pope Francis frequently speaks. Holiness consists in aligning our will to God's will in all that we do. We have a wonderful example of this in Mary who became a perfect disciple of Jesus by doing His will. Her journey of discipleship began with the "Yes" she pronounced on the day of the Annunciation and culminated at the foot of the cross. Let us seek her help and intercession to live our YES of discipleship which we uttered on the day of our profession.

Holiness: doing God's Holy will

As we continue on the path to holiness, we are constantly reminded that God calls us to be holy, because He is holy. Our Constitutions too give us the right principles to conform ourselves to this in the Spirit of our Founders. Bowing our wills to God's in every situation is an indication of our wholehearted willingness to walk the path of sanctity in our daily life. Article 32 of our Constitutions invites us to make our Lady's *Fiat* our own in order to share in the salvific plan of God for humankind by living in a spirit of faith the demands of our vocation. In *Lumen Gentium* No. 61, we read that our Blessed Mother cooperated in the work of the Savior in giving back supernatural life to souls by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity. We also, on our part have the task and duty to share in the redemptive plan of God by our humble submissiveness and cooperation with His will.

As we journey together on this path in this new month, may we be motivated by our desire to do God's will always. May we humble ourselves and seek to live in conformity with His will in our personal lives, in our relationship with others and in our mission.

Ash Wednesday (6 March)

Celebrating the Ash Wednesday is a reminder that we begin the beautiful and profound time of the Holy season of Lent; a guarantee of the grace and an opportunity that the Lord gives us to make this grace newer before Him. This Season calls for our constant personal conversion and spiritual growth and is also a time for surrendering our lives to God. We may ask ourselves a question:

“Why exactly do we have the season of Lent?” There is no better response to this than confirming: “so that God may have His way with us”.

The formula in the rite of the imposition of the ash “Remember that you are dust and into dust you shall return”, tells us of our fragile, weak and mortal nature. Not to sadden us, not to make us darken our faces, but to make us understand how God has turned his gaze into our reality. If we only allow ourselves to be looked at by His Love, everything becomes precious, even our limitations, because this will give us the occasion to meet His loving mercy.



Lent is a favourable time for deepening our spiritual life through the means of sanctification offered us by the Church: **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving**. It is the invitation to a choice of life, a choice beyond the things we see and do, beyond the exteriority to which we are accustomed, beyond what we touch with our hands; it is the transition from a material life to a spiritual life, where the spirit and the heart count.

In his Lenten message 2018 Pope Francis spoke of the efficacy of these three powerful means to spend the season of Lent in a holy manner: Devoting more time to *Prayer*, will enable our hearts to root out our secret lies and forms of self-deception and then to find the consolation God offers. *Fasting* weakens our tendency to violence; it disarms us and becomes an important opportunity for growth. It allows us to experience what the destitute and the starving have to endure. It expresses our own spiritual hunger and thirst for life in God. Fasting wakes us up and makes us more attentive to God and our neighbour. It revives our desire to obey God, who alone is capable of satisfying our hunger. *Almsgiving* sets us free from greed and helps us to regard our neighbour as a brother or sister. When we give alms, we share in God's providential care for each of his children. If through me God helps someone today, will he not tomorrow provide for my own needs? For no one is more generous than God.

Lent is also a time of conversion, to leave the life of sinfulness and to live the way that God wants us to live as St. Paul writes to the Christians of Corinth: “Do not model yourself on the behaviour of the world around you but let your behaviour change modelled by a new mind, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God -- what is good and acceptable and mature” (Romans 12, 2).

The Holy Father Pope Francis in his Lenten message 2019 gives his reflection on three important nuclei – *the redemption of creation, the destructive power of sin and the healing power of repentance and forgiveness* with an invitation to personal conversion as a means to rebuild communion with God. He invites the Church not to allow this season of grace to pass in vain, but to ask God for the grace to set out on a path of true conversion, leaving behind all forms of selfishness and self-absorption. (The full text of his message is attached along with this circular)

As we enter into this holy season, let us ask God for His grace that we may worthily live the graces that will come to us. Let us cultivate our hearts, so that it does not dry up and does not allow itself to be dominated by fear and by the worries of life. Instead let us live this opportunity to perfect our

lives with conversion from where we stand and what we are into what we ought to be as destined by God- our sanctification.

International Women's Day (8 March)

The celebration of the International Women's Day recognizes and appreciates the valid contributions and achievements of women in various fields in the Church and Society. Over the centuries, the role of women is well noted and appreciated. There have been outstanding figures of courageous women who came to the fore front making valid contribution in different spheres. Even today there are also those who silently and humbly sacrifice their lives for the common good of humanity without coming to the lime light of glory and public recognition.

The theme for this year's International Women's Day Celebration "**Think equal, build smart, innovate for change**" invites us to reflect on the progress made, calls for a change and celebrates acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played extraordinary roles in the Church and the Society.

On an occasion like this it is apt to recall the noble sentiments of appreciation which Pope St. John Paul II had for this significant and indispensable section of the world's population.

FOR THE GIFT OF WOMEN and womanhood for their vocation and Mission, THANKS!

➤ **Thank You, Women who are Mothers!** You have sheltered human beings within yourselves in a unique experience of joy and travail. This experience makes you become God's own smile upon the newborn child.

➤ **Thank you WOMAN who are wives!** You irrevocably join your future to that of your husbands, in a relationship of mutual giving at the service of love and life.

➤ **Thank You WOMEN who are Daughters and Sisters!** In the heart of the family, and then of all society you bring the richness of your sensitivity your intuitiveness, your generosity and fidelity.

➤ **Thank you WOMEN who work!** You are present and active in every area of life - social, economic, cultural, artistic and political. In this way you make an indispensable contribution to the growth of a culture which unites reason and feeling to a model of life ever open to the sense of "mystery". You contribute to the establishment of economic and political structures ever more worthy of humanity.

➤ **Thank you Consecrated Women!** Following the example of the greatest of women, the Mother of Jesus you open yourselves with obedience and fidelity to the gift of God's Love.



You help the Church and all humankind to experience a “Spousal” Relationship to God- a relationship which magnificently expresses the fellowship God wishes to establish with His creatures. Through the insight, which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world’s understanding.

From the beginning of God’s creation, the image of a woman is well reflected in the history of humankind. God created the feminine creature as a symbol of utmost affection that not only leads the perfect life for herself but also lays down the strongest base for others’ dreams. The divine portrait of woman, as painted on the biblical image, is remarkable indeed, with many who contributed to the history of salvation. Among them, we cannot bypass the gigantic figure of our Blessed Mother as the loftiest model of collaboration in womanhood.

In the Church today, numerous women following Mary's example continue to offer humble, valuable service for the growth of Christ's kingdom. As we celebrate this event, let us remind ourselves to open our hearts like our Blessed Mother, to be aware that the development of the feminine personality calls for a commitment to charity, to personal self-giving and to fidelity in our consecration. May Mary, Blessed among all women enable us to discover our noble vocation and mission as woman.

Solemnity of St Joseph (19 March)



The solemnity of St. Joseph calls to mind the great virtue of humility lived by this giant saint of the Church. The Holy Scripture does not narrate expansively the virtues of St. Joseph. However, the different narrations of his association in the earthly life of Jesus and Mary reveal to us that he was an upright and just man, a man of principle. He was “just,” by his complete openness to all that God wanted to do for him and through him. He became holy by opening himself totally to God.

It is no contradiction of Joseph’s manly holiness that he decided to divorce Mary when she was found to be with child. The important words of the Bible are that he planned to do this “quietly” because he was “a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame” (Matthew 1:19). The just man was simply, joyfully, wholeheartedly obedient to God—in marrying Mary, in naming Jesus, in shepherding the precious pair to Egypt, in bringing them to Nazareth, in the undetermined number of years of quiet faith and courage.

The Church has considered St. Joseph as the greatest of all Saints for his most sublime and humble nature. In every situation of his life, he was totally playing the background role with humility especially in his earthly sojourn with Mary and Jesus. He was always putting God’s plan before his. He was a man after God’s will. He longed to know God’s will and searched to see how he could fit into the Father’s plan.

Indeed his life is an inspiring example we can all emulate in our daily lives. We are all invited to model our lives on the example of St. Joseph by doing everything for the glory of the Lord.

Solemnity of the Annunciation (25 March)



Holiness consists in doing God's Holy Will. This was truly lived by our Blessed Mother especially when she said her generous '*FIAT*' at the annunciation of the Angel. She became the model and example of perfect and total obedience and correspondence to God's grace. Her "yes" is an act of mercy not only because by giving birth to Christ she helped secure a means for our salvation, but also through her example, we learn to draw closer to God, to trust in Him and to experience His Love in deeper ways.

Our Blessed Mother did not merely pronounce her fiat; but with perfect humility and at every moment she fulfilled that firm and irrevocable decision to obey God with perfect love and commitment. Such was the degree of her Holiness and correspondence to God's grace that she was able to live it throughout her life in Faith, placing herself in the hands of God, trusting completely in His will and desires. The Blessed Virgin lived her faith in a fully human existence, that of an ordinary woman of her time. She teaches us to be completely available to the Divine Will, even when it is mysterious. Precisely for this reason she is a teacher of Faith and a model of Holiness.

As we celebrate her great generosity to surrender her will to God's, let us pray for the singular grace that like her we may be faithful and prompt when God calls, especially if it goes against our likes and interests, our wills and desires, our plans and projects and let us repeat with the same attitude of Faith and Humility of our Blessed Mother: "***I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done unto me according to your word***".

Communications

Heartiest Congratulations: To Rt. Rev. Albert Hemrom who was ordained Coadjutor Bishop of Dibrugarh Diocese on 24 February 2019. We assure him of our prayers for the fruitfulness of the mission entrusted to his care.

Project Mornese: The three sisters – Sr. Virginia Wankhar, Sr. Happyline Shadap and Sr. Teresa Kamsuan who left for Project Mornese on 14 February 2019 are profiting by the rich experience of visiting the historical places of the Church and our Institute. They send their greetings and prayers to everyone in the Province.

Secretaries' Course: Sr. Euginia Kyntiewlin Susngi will participate in the new secretaries' course to be held at Casa Generalizia, Rome. She will leave on 2 March and return on the 21 March. We wish her an enriching experience of learning and spiritual renewal.

Missionary Mandate: We are informed from the Mission Sector, Rome that Sr. Aprilda Pasi who had opted for the missions and is completing her missionary course in Rome has been assigned the mission in the Province of Equatorial Africa (AEC) which comprises of Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. We support her missionary passion with our prayers.

Applications: The temporary professed Sisters, Novices, Postulants and Aspirants will make their applications to the different years of profession and stages of formation on 25 March. Let us accompany them with our prayers that they may be docile to God's Holy will with the same FIAT of our Blessed Mother. The Provincial Council will have the meeting on March 29-31, at the Provincial House, Nongthymmai. The community Animators are requested to ensure that the applications together with report from the community reach the Provincial Office prior to this date.

Condolences and Prayers

- We offer our heartfelt sympathy to Sr. Nirmala Lazar and the sisters of Chennai Province at the demise of Sr. Clara Jeganathan FMA on 3 February 2019 and to Sr. Ritha Dora Thomas and the sisters of Mumbai Province at the departure of Sr. Teresina Barreto FMA on 5 February 2019. May the dear departed ones rest in Peace and may they intercede for the various needs and intentions of the Provinces.
- We convey our condolences and prayers to Fr. Nirmol Gomes SDB and the confreres of the Salesian Province of Kolkata at the passing away of Bro. Matthew Thaiparambil SDB on 1 February 2019. May he rest in peace.
- Our heartfelt condolences to Fr. Jose Kochamkunnel SDB and the Salesian Province of Chennai at the demise of Fr. Kuriakose Enchyil SDB on 20 February 2019. We pray for the departed one and he may rest in peace.

I would like to conclude with a thought and reminder for each of us: *'Holiness consists simply in doing God's will, and being just what God wants us to be'*. May our Blessed Mother the example par excellence of total abandonment to God's Holy will be our model, our guide and our inspirer as we forge ahead in our journey of fidelity.

Assuring you of my sisterly support and accompaniment,

Affectionately,



Sr. Elizabeth George FMA
Provincial