



Provincial Circular

Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Auxilium Provincial Office Nongthymmai, Shillong - Meghalaya - 793014

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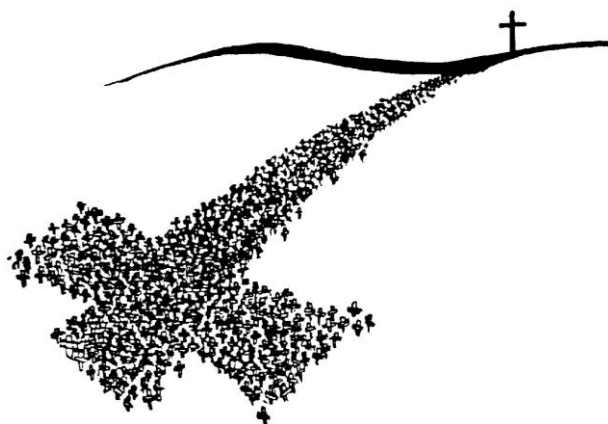
01.04.2020

Dearest Sisters,

Loving greetings from Auxilium Provincial House, Nongthymmai!

We are living in a period which is dramatic and historic with the outbreak of the Corona virus pandemic in these days. COVID-19 in the time of Lent is so closely connected to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. It is an opportune time for us to reexamine our lifestyle and our activities while asking ourselves how these activities and rhythm of life enable us to unite ourselves more closely to the suffering of Our Lord. In fact, it gives us the opportunity to look at the profound meaning of Lent as a whole.

This total lockdown in Lent 2020 will remain in human history and memory of all of us. Looking at the significant coincidence of the pandemic and Lent this year, takes our attention to the singular link of the two- that of renunciations and sacrifices. Our focus is to turn to the implications of the fragility of life, of the things that really matter, above all, of the supremacy of God. This time of crisis during Lent reminds us of our frailty before God, teaches us to respect life, makes us rediscover the common good of every human person; it brings us back to our interiority, it leads us to a more genuine relationship with God and others. In many of our communities, families, society and the Church at large, various initiatives are taken to move out of our own personal lives towards a more realistic and concrete service of God and humanity through community and family prayers, social outreach, personal renunciations and commitment.



This period of emergency in the world is truly an invitation for us to serve life - primarily by putting an end to superficiality, indifference, selfishness that puts me at the centre of everything, not forgetting that everything is a gift of God. The life of self and others is a gift to be rediscovered and be treasured through our closeness to God – the Creator of life and the sense of solidarity with one another. May this time that entails lot of sacrifice, renunciations and deprivations of various type enthuse our passion for God and humanity. May this singular experience we are living in this period

of Lent bring us to a closer union with the passion of our Lord as we courageously journey with faith towards the great event of our Lord's resurrection at Easter.

As I already communicated through the whatsapp message, I would like to request everyone to make wise and creative use of the lockdown period. The world needs our prayers and sacrifices. I am glad that many communities are having chain adoration, chain rosaries and other practices of piety during these days. I was happy to hear even from some of the smaller communities that the chain adoration is carried out for some hours of the day. Make use of this time also to read more, to learn something new, including a new local language which will be useful for our mission. Let us also be generous to see to the needs of the people around and reach out in whatever way we can in collaboration with the local Church or civil organization.

On the night before His passion and death Jesus gave us the new commandment of Love "*I give you a new commandment. Love one another as I have loved you*" (Jn. 13:34). Let this be an auspicious moment to think how to live this commandment of Love. Let us overcome the temptation to be lost in the small world of our own concerns and preoccupations and open our hearts in love and compassion to the larger world that is struck at the moment with a fatal viral attack. Our prayers, our authentic living and our generous giving are the needs of the hour.

Holy Week - A favourable time to grow in grace



The Holy Week reminds us more vividly of the singular love the Father has for humanity through the passion and death of his only begotten Son Jesus. The Liturgy of the Holy Week offers us the opportunity to follow Christ more closely and be in closer communion with Him who offered himself to the Almighty Father to save humanity from sin. The celebration of the Holy Week reminds us too that we cannot follow the liturgy and at the same time not live what Christ himself is, that is, to follow his person. The dramatic moments of the conclusion of the earthly journey of Jesus, means that in order to obtain life from Christ there is need to follow in his footsteps. It is not just a message or an outward gaze but it means looking at Christ and joining him in the same total offering in self-sacrifice.

The Paschal event of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection is the centre of our Christian faith. The cross is the door leading to the resurrection. The liturgy of the Holy Week sheds new light on humanity, on the history and destiny of humankind, on our Christian vocation to be a new creature in Christ. Celebrating the events throughout the Holy Week therefore, does not mean admiring Jesus' gestures and words from a distance, but being involved in his mission of saving the world. The passion, death and resurrection of Christ is still a "salvific" event for those who adhere it in faith. In celebrating these divine mysteries, the Church invites us to confess our faith in the presence of the crucified and risen Lord in the present moment, becoming the contemporaries of the Lord and waiting in hope towards the definitive fulfilment at the end of time.

In his catechesis of Wednesday 6 April 1966, Blessed Pope Paul VI explained eloquently: "If there is a liturgy, which should find us all understood, attentive, solicitous and united for a participation that is ever more worthy, pious and loving, this is the one of the great week. For a clear and profound reason: the Easter mystery, which finds its highest and most emotional celebration in Holy Week, is not simply a moment of the liturgical year; it is the source of all the other celebrations of the liturgical year itself, because they all refer to the mystery of our redemption, that is, to the paschal mystery ".

Alleluia! Christ is risen

Celebrating the solemnity of Easter reminds us again that our faith is not a legend nor a fairy tale, but a love story that continues to reveal God's infinite mercy for humanity. It is the discovery of a Lover, God, who possesses a Love that conquers death. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is overflowing with meaning for our lives, for where we are now and where God wishes to lead us. By the mystery of His passion, death and resurrection, God has come close to us in our suffering, and has conquered sin and death and every evil. He has come close to us by sharing our human condition, by suffering betrayal, by undergoing agonizing torture, and by dying a most horrific death.



The episode of Easter morning reveals to us a God who walks with us in the ordinary circumstances of life and a God who bountifully showers His love on humankind every moment of everyday. In the letter of St. Peter, we see how the Risen Lord was found by those "who ate and drank with him": eating and drinking are the actions of the Eucharist but also of ordinary life, sharing and fraternity.

The Risen Jesus identified himself forever with the everyday person. In the Holy Scripture, we see many apparitions of the Risen Christ at different timings and to different persons. The Risen Saviour appeared to those whom He manifested himself – to Mary Magdalene and to the Apostles as a traveler, a stranger, a fisherman, thus proving that he is one with the common man in the ordinary

circumstances of life. Easter thus, gives us the conviction that precisely in the folds of those moments of ordinary life, it is possible to meet the Lord.

We can meet the Risen Saviour not just on a solemnity of the Church once a year but more especially in living well the ordinary life, in entering into communion with ordinary people and in the various daily circumstances of life. Let us embrace the ordinary means of God's grace, love and peace in this Easter while recognizing His presence with us at all times as he himself had said "I will be with you always, even to the end of the ages".

"Young man, I say to you, arise!" - Diocesan World Youth Day

Yearly, the Palm Sunday is kept as the World Youth Day and this year's celebration of the 35th World Youth Day at the Diocesan level will be on the theme. **"Young man, I say to you, arise!"** (Lk 7:14). The Holy Father's message for this year 2020 is divided into five sections:

- The ability to see pain and death
- To have compassion
- To come forward and 'touch'
- "Young man, I say to you arise!"
- Living the new life as "risen ones"

Pope Francis invites the young people to be missionary disciples full of hope in Jesus Christ. Bringing in the episode of Jesus raising to life the only son of a widow in Nain, he encourages the young to have hope in the Lord even in situations in which there is loss of vitality, dreams, optimism and enthusiasm. He points out that many of the young people are *'dead because they feel hopeless and waste their lives with superficial things'*. He emphasizes that true happiness comes only if we can be in solidarity and compassion with those in pain, to weep with those who are weeping. He invites the young to be always attentive to the plea of those who are suffering.

The Pope invites the young people to come forward and show closeness to one another especially those who are in need in order to generate and restore life to another person. Touching a person's life in compassion is an authentic human love which leads to the fullness of life, he reminds. Speaking of relationship with one another, he comments that "we are often 'connected' but not communicating. He invites the young to a change and to embrace reality, to give passions to their dreams, offering something beautiful to the world, the Church and to other young people.

Sr. Runita Borja, the General Councillor for Youth Ministry has also recommended that we read and deepen the message of the Holy Father personally, in community and in groups so that we may become more aware the experience of our interconnectedness in life.

World Feast of Gratitude

On 26 April 2020, our attention will be drawn to Rome as the whole FMA World expresses gratitude to God for the gift of dear Mother General to our Institute in a more particular way during the 12 years of her loving and noble service of animation. In this crucial time of crisis in the world, it is all the more significant to unite in prayers and solidarity offering up our hearts of

gratitude to our dear Mother General in the person of Sr. Yvonne Reungoat for her self-gift to the Institute.

The theme proposed by the Roman Province of St. John Bosco “*Your life is a tree that bears fruit. Thank you, Mother!*” adapts well to express our befitting gratitude to our dear Mother General for having been the efficacious linkage of our life and our charism in the Institute. We have been blessed in every way through the life and instrumentality of our dear Mother. The tiny seed of the Charism has grown to a gigantic tree today with the commendable mission and dedicated life of our founders, our past superiors and particularly of our dear Mother General in these 12 years.



In preparation for this family feast of gratitude, as a province we have reflected together on Circular 992 of Mother General entitled “**Regenerated by the Holy Spirit communities that generate life**”. In this circular, Mother said that ‘...we are called to be **women of the Spirit, spiritual women and thus, deeply human**. The Spirit finds a ‘home’ where there is love, and one savors the joy of giving and receiving simple gestures of acceptance, respect, human warmth, patience, and trust’. She reiterated further ‘Being mothers is a gift given to us in full gratuity, along with the suffering that any gestation requires. We wish to give it with joy in response to the deep expectations of many young people and to God’s dream that, through the Holy Spirit, guides us to desire with prophetic passion and apostolic daring a future rich in humanity’

It would be most appropriate then, to express our gratitude to our dear Mother if we can truly follow her motherly advice of being communities that generate life so that the charism of our Institute may grow and expand like a tree that bears desirous and plentiful fruits among the young people and the whole educating community and with them we may glorify God in being the authentic ‘*living monuments of gratitude to Mary Help Christians*’

Congratulations

We offer our heartiest congratulations and prayers to:

- Fr. Jose Chirackal who is appointed by Pope Francis as the Auxiliary Bishop of Tura Diocese. We assure Him of our prayerful support and collaboration in the pastoral works of God’s Kingdom.
- Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime who is re-elected as the 10th successor of Don Bosco at the 28 General Chapter of the SDBs, and to all the elected members of the General Council especially Fr. Biju Michael Pulianmackal of Guwahati Province who is elected as the new Regional of South Asia. May the Lord bless them in their service of animation in the Salesian Family.

Communications

Spiritual Retreat: The next Annual Spiritual Retreat is scheduled for 15-22 April 2020. We will communicate to you if there is any change in the date on account of the prevailing situation of the pandemic and lockdown period.

Online Visits: Due to the uncertainty of the lock down period, I am attempting to make my visit to the communities online, starting from the communities of Jaintia Hills.

Orientation programme: The orientation programme for the post-matric and post-XII which is scheduled to be held from 1 April- 1 May 2020 for the former and from 14 April 2020 onwards for the latter is kept in suspense due to the lockdown. As soon as things are clear, we will communicate to you. Continue to pray and support the candidates who opted for us.

Prayers for the sick and the departed

We extend our prayerful support to all the sick members of our communities and families through the intercession of our Blessed Mother. We pray especially for:

- The nephew of Sr. Rosina Lare.
- All the people who are being affected by the virus Covit-19.
- We offer our prayers also for all the health and social workers and everyone who is directly and indirectly involved in combating this disease that the Lord may keep His hands of protection upon each of them.

We offer our heartfelt condolences and prayers to all those who lost their dear ones in the past month.

- Sr. Ethelda Thubru who lost her nephew and brother on 15 March and 19 March respectively.
- Sr .Teilanda Syngkon and family members at the passing away of their father on 22 March 2020.
- Sr. Rose Ezarath FMA and Sisters of Kolkata Province at the demise of Sr. Mary George Uzhunnalil FMA on 27 March 2020.
- Fr. Thathireddy Vijay Bhaskar SDB and the Salesians of Hyderabad Province at the departure of Bro. Dennis Soosai SDB on 14 March 2020.
- Most Rev. Soundaraju Periyamayagam SDB, Bishop of Vellore who passed away on 21 March 2020.
- All the victims who succumbed to the Coronavirus.

May the departed ones enjoy forever eternal Peace of Heaven.

As I conclude, I greet you a very Happy Easter filled with the blessings of Peace, Joy and Love of our Risen Saviour. Undoubtedly, this year's celebration of the Lord's Resurrection will be different from what we would have expected or longed for. However, the Lord offers us ample opportunities to share in the mysteries of His passion, death and resurrection in many different ways. Let us grab the occasions of grace the Lord is revealing to us in this ineffaceable event in our history.

As Easter symbolizes the renewal of life; may the resurrection of our Lord uplift every pain and sorrow from the face of the world and elevate us to a renewed life, love and happiness in the Risen Christ. With courage let us be united with the suffering world in this time of pain and affliction and turn with hope towards our Risen Lord who will fill our lives with greater faith to stand the test of time and increase our trust in God. Once again I wish each of you a very **HAPPY AND JOYFUL EASTER!**



With assurance of prayers and loving accompaniment,

Affectionately,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Sr. Elizabeth George FMA".

Sr. Elizabeth George FMA
Provincial