



Provincial Circular

Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Auxilium Provincial Office Nongthymmai, Shillong - Meghalaya - 793014

CIR/EG/INS/21/2020

01.05.2020

Dearest Sisters,

Loving greetings from Auxilium Provincial House, Nongthymmai!

The period of global crisis caused by the Pandemic, has brought our normal life to a sudden halt. We are controlled by the restrictions imposed by the lockdown regulations. We seem to be living a decisive moment of human history, awaiting the emergence of something new, something more positive after COVID-19. Therefore far from feeling destabilized, disoriented or being indifferent we have been able to react quite positively to this situation. First and foremost we knelt at the feet of the living and omnipotent God in an attitude of surrender, intensifying our prayers for grace and healing for the world. It is very heartening to see how every community chose to spend extra time in front of the Eucharistic Lord. Secondly, it opened our hearts in solidarity with our suffering brothers and sisters. I thank and appreciate every community who rose to the occasion with great generosity, dedication and creativity to respond to the call of the Church, the Government and the Local Administration by providing face masks, food stuff and making available the premises for quarantine centres. Thirdly, I am sure the difficulties and hardships of COVID -19 became for every one of us an opportune time to build our faith, hope and resilience to fight against future crises. It gives us sufficient time to reflect on what we have been doing, how we have been living our religious and apostolic commitments and the impact of our life. It also challenges us to pause and to take a new path towards the creation of a new world, a transformed life. The sufferings of our brothers and sisters have in some way touched the core of our hearts and made us more grateful for the blessings even spiritual graces which perhaps we took for granted. Our minds have become wiser and more creative; our hearts have become more caring and compassionate; our relationships have become more genuine and authentic, bonding us in deep faith to God and to our brothers and sisters. May we learn wisdom of heart and equip ourselves to face the opportunities and challenges that COVID-19 brings. May our Blessed Mother whom we venerate under the title Help of Christians be our powerful help to guide us in this period of global transition and transformation.

With Mary and the Salesian Saints

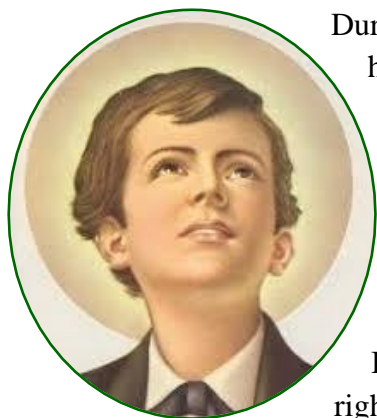
We are at the threshold of the month of May - a month dedicated to our Blessed Mother. Traditionally, the month of May is celebrated with practices of devotion and small sacrifices called "*spiritual flowers*" to be made in homage to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is our loving mother whose maternal heart is ever flooded with love and mercy for her beloved children. She is always waiting for us to turn to her for her motherly guidance. As we spend this month in her company let us entrust ourselves to her that she may guide us safely on the path to her Son Jesus. In this month specially dedicated to Mary, our Holy Father Pope Francis has also invited the whole

Church to pray fervently the Holy Rosary and has given two prayers to be prayed at the end of the Holy Rosary. In his letter he says “*contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial*”. Let us join our Holy Father and the Church in praying fervently interceding for the various needs of the Church and humanity. [The two prayers are attached along with this circular] You can pray any one of them.

The month of May is also marked by a series of heroic models of sanctity in the Salesian Family. Going down the historical pages of these saints, we find that there is a common bond that acts as a linkage to their radiant and valid presence even today. Their exemplary life can be well attributed to the Spirituality of the Preventive System of Don Bosco which they have so beautifully embodied personally and transmitted in their mission- the simple way of life that has led them to the altars of sanctity. We are the privileged ones to inherit this legacy and to follow the trail they have paved. When we speak of and replicate the Preventive System in our own times, it is necessary to go back to Don Bosco and learn from the spiritual experience of his preventive system. Don Bosco demonstrated by his life that young people need "witnesses"; his was a charity that was translated and made visible in concrete gestures of closeness, love, commitment and prayer.

The Preventive System is therefore a spiritual experience that finds its source in the charity of God who cares for every human person with His Providence, accompanies with His intervention and saves by offering His life. Article 7 of our Constitutions clearly states that the Preventive System is “*an experience of the pastoral Charity that has its source in the heart of Christ Himself...*” It predisposes us to welcome God in young people and calls us to serve him in them, recognizing their dignity, renewing trust in their good resources and educating them to the fullness of life. We have many examples that prove to us that the Preventive System is indeed not just a system of education but much more a spirituality that has moulded and accompanied the lives of many on the path of sanctity.

St. Dominic Savio can be well regarded as one of the most beautiful fruits of the Preventive System, which came out of the hands of Don Bosco himself, the masterpiece of his pedagogy and his apostolate. He himself became an apostle among his companions. His first communion commitments remained famous and inspire many other boys and girls even to this day.



During his life time, Dominic Savio displayed a remarkable depth of humanity and holiness. Once he wrote in his diary: “*Help me to make myself a saint*”. Don Bosco pointed out to him the right “recipe” for holiness: joy, observing the duties of study and prayer, doing good to others. From that moment until his death, Dominic Savio was always submissive to the guidance and accompaniment of Don Bosco and he tried to be exemplary in everything. He always sought to make his choices in life all for the love of God. The educational System of Don Bosco, thus, motivated the young saint to make clear choice of what was right and wrong in life and to act decisively all for the love of God.

Don Bosco always insisted that love is the educator's language – the language of the heart – and that no good can come from education until a young person has opened his/her heart in confidence. This can be well tested in the very life of the young Saint Dominic Savio who so spontaneously and confidently cooperated in God's work for him through the hands of Don Bosco. The guiding principles of Don Bosco led him to inculcate in himself a healthy and balanced spirituality combined with cheerfulness, playfulness, and attentiveness to duties. He would often say, *"I can't do big things. But I want all I do, even the smallest thing, to be for the greater glory of God."* May the example of this giant saint guide us to be the effective bearers of the defining virtues of the preventive System especially submissiveness to God and His work.

Mother Mazzarello is another personality that can well define the essence and significance of the Preventive System. In her we can find the gem of goodness and spiritual motherhood which coexisted with her pedagogical skills and religious vocation. She was a skilled educator, with a formative style equal to that of Don Bosco, a balanced synthesis of personal gifts and formative ability, typical of the Preventive System. Her motherhood was attentive to life and growth, and was expressed in personalized love, in respect for individual persons and in encouraging inner growth. She incorporated into her Spirituality her attitude of saintly maternity that takes care of others, their physical, affective, moral and religious needs.

Her way of guiding and animating the first community of Mornese reflected the true spirit of the Preventive System. Faithful to the teachings and exhortations of Don Bosco, she was always attentive to the needs of the Sisters and the young people with vigilant eye, attentive presence, fraternal love, kindness and joy.

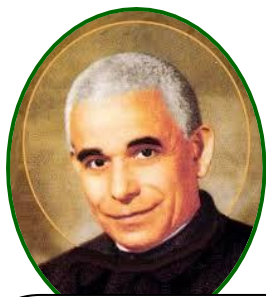


The many examples of her associations and accompaniment of the young people and candidates who entered the door of Mornese speak tangibly of her capacity to capture the hidden potentials in each one. With her maternal gaze she was able to focus on all the necessary conditions for goodness to flourish. Her method was always in harmony with the preventive system of Don Bosco. With authority and kindness, she demanded from the Sisters and young people, dedication, commitment, sincerity, love, generosity and reciprocity that were transformed into openness, confidence, and responsiveness. In fact even Don Cagliero remarked *"Maria Mazzarello sought at all costs to resemble the spirit, system and character of Don Bosco's oratory."* Her very life and interventions proposed the base of positive relationships, rich in humanity, respectful of others, a true human and Christian workshop. As we celebrate the solemnity of our Saintly Mother let us ask God's grace through her intercession that our entire educational community may become the paradigm of the formative path that leads everyone to God through our life of witness and commitment.

St. Louis Orione a saintly pupil raised at the school of Don Bosco is yet another saintly figure groomed by the Preventive System. In his mission he was known worldwide for the extraordinary work done in favor of the marginalized, the poor, the abandoned and the sick through his integral educational system adopted from the spirituality of Don Bosco based on the principles of kindness, reason and religion. The principle of his life was to offer one's life for the spiritual well being of the people, to serve God faithfully in loyalty to the Mother Church and the Pope. In one of

his speeches given on January 27, 1939, Don Orione testified to Don Bosco saying: “*At Don Bosco's school I learned that the saint did not fill our heads with nonsense, or anything else, but fed us with God, with the spirit of God [...], he turned everything to Heaven, everything to God, and from everything he drew motive to elevate us, our souls, to heaven, to direct our steps towards heaven*”

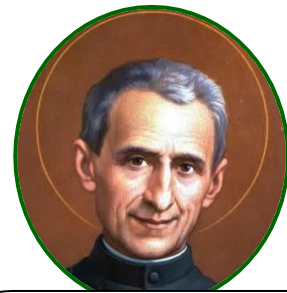
St. Leonard Murialdo was a collaborator of Don Bosco and Don Cafasso after his priestly ordination in 1851. During his close contact with Don Bosco, when he was entrusted with the direction of the oratory, Leonardo breathed the preventive system, embodied it and later applied it in all his future educational works. As Director of the College in Turin in 1866 he dedicated himself to the human, Christian and professional training of poor and abandoned children following the preventive System of Don Bosco. He was a man of spirit and prayer, contemplative in action like Don Bosco. His way of loving young people certainly depended on his character, his training and spiritual experience during his early years of life and later on in his pastoral associations with Don Bosco- fidelity in all his daily tasks combined with contemplative silence and tireless zeal of action.



St. Louis Orione



Bl. Joseph Kowalski



St. Leonard Murialdo

Blessed Joseph Kowalski, a young pupil of the Salesians is another outstanding example of one who incorporated the Spirituality of the Preventive System. After being enrolled in the Salesian College of Oswiecim (Auschwitz), Joseph immediately distinguished himself for his commitment to study, service, and sincere joy. This sincere sense of fulfillment in the Salesian ambience prompted him to even get himself enrolled in the pious associations of the Society of the Immaculate Conception and the Missionary Association, later becoming its president. He literally fell in love with the Salesian charism and Don Bosco, from whom he tried to take the example in everything: commitment to the joyful animation of religious and civil feasts, apostolic presence among companions and, in particular, the primacy of spiritual life. With rich educational, moral and human background of the Preventive System, he continued living with authenticity, zeal and passion for souls even to the point of giving up his life under the Nazis.

Mary Help of Christians

Mary Help of Christians is a beautiful, appealing, essential and all-encompassing title that draws our attention and honour throughout all times. Mary occupied a very special place in the life of Don Bosco and his mission. She is a living, fulfilled person who is actively involved in the history and life of people, even in a prodigious way. Our Lady is indeed the great helper of the human race and she intervenes powerfully as in the life of Don Bosco. To rejoice in Mary is to celebrate God's

greatest creation - the vessel He fashioned to be the Mother of His Son, the woman who would bear Jesus into the world. In the life of the “Handmaid of the Lord,” we learn what it means to say “yes” to God and to discover in Him the meaning of life.

Don Bosco always attributed the blessings received in his life and mission to the intervention of the Help of Christians. If his mission has borne remarkable fruits to this very day, much rationale can be given to his full faith and trust in the powerful intercession of his Madonna and his creative collaboration in God’s plan through her help. With the maternal intervention of Mary, the Holy Spirit raised up Don Bosco to be an apostle of the young people and founder of the Salesian charism in the Church. The faith of Don Bosco in the Risen Jesus, experienced and promoted with love for the Eucharist, was accompanied by that in Mary as a living and active woman in the life of the Church and humanity, in his vocational history and in his pastoral mission.



In the foundation of our Institute Don Bosco wanted us to be the *‘living monument of his gratitude to Mary Help of Christians’*. As his true daughters we are being reminded constantly of this distinctive identity that we are called to clothe ourselves with. It is an invitation to examine and see if faithfully and courageously we can be the authentic witnesses to this in our personal lives and mission. As we celebrate the feast of Mary, the Help of Christians let us seek her powerful intercession and recognize in faith her active presence in our lives as in the life of Don Bosco. As the Article 4 of our Constitutions reiterate, let us truly strive to *“make her dispositions of faith, hope and charity and perfect union with Christ, our own”*.

Ascension of our Lord ~ (24 May)

Celebrating the solemnity of the Ascension reminds us of the new and different presence of Jesus in the Church and in the life of the disciples. After forty days of the resurrection, our Lord Jesus ascended to Heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. But He remains forever with us in the Eucharist and in the other sacraments, guiding us towards him and accompanying us in every moment of our life. On the one hand, the Ascension of the Lord invites us to raise our thinking to heavenly realities, detaching it from the earth; on the other hand it teaches us not to remain inert in a passive wait for the return of the Lord, but to build the Kingdom of God in this world. In fact the message of the Ascension of the Lord gives sense to us today in the measure in which we can be the true witnesses of the Risen Lord. Ascension marks the end of Jesus' earthly mission - and perhaps the beginning of ours. Now we are His witnesses. Christ urges us to go out into the world, with courage and humility, proclaiming the Gospel of truth. The feast invites us to make sure that Christ is loved and served everywhere, through our way of life. We can say that, in the light of the Ascension of the Lord, we are exhorted to raise our hearts to Heaven and to place our feet well on the ground, working for the spread of the Gospel.



Solemnity of Pentecost~ (31 May)

The celebration of the solemnity of Pentecost constitutes the fullness of the Easter event: the Risen Jesus, ascended to heaven and participating in the lordship of God, fulfills the promise made to his disciples to send them the Holy Spirit. On this day we relive the event of the birth of the Church, the new humanity recreated by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Pentecost marks the accomplishment of God's redemptive work for humanity.



For us Christians, Pentecost makes us more aware of our identity as children of God and as such, we must live, act and hope, because Pentecost is the feast of Christian hope that walks on spiritual wings. Pentecost is a propitious moment to let ourselves be invaded by the hope that the Spirit raises in our hearts, to be an active and charismatic presence in the Church and in the world. If for the people of Israel Pentecost was the feast that commemorated the gift of the Law from God to Moses on Sinai and was celebrated as a feast of the covenant, for the community of Jesus the gift of the Spirit is a celebration of the new covenant.

Jesus did not leave His community and the Church "orphaned" but He sent the Spirit of God, the Spirit which dispels fear; makes us know and feel that we are in the hands of an omnipotence of love: no matter what happens, His infinite love does not abandon us. This is confirmed by the witness of the martyrs, the courage of the confessors of the faith, the intrepid enthusiasm of the missionaries, the frankness of the preachers, the example of all the saints. This is witnessed by the very existence of the Church which, despite the limits and sins of people, continues to cross the ocean of history, driven by the breath of God and animated by its purifying fire. Let us ask the Lord to let His Spirit fall on us and on the Church today that strengthened by the gifts of the Spirit, we may remain steadfast in faith, courageous in hope, ardent in love, enjoying the dignity, grace and freedom of the children of God.

Congratulations

We extend our warmest congratulations and prayers to all the candidates, Sisters and brothers of the Salesian Family who will celebrate their religious professions and anniversaries of professions during this month of May in the different Provinces of the Institute and especially of India. May our Blessed Mother continue to accompany them in their vocational journey and may the Lord bless and reward their generous 'Yes'.

Communications

Spiritual Retreat: The Annual Spiritual Retreat and animation programme for the Provincial Council and Animators scheduled for 2-10 May 2020 is postponed due to the lockdown in Meghalaya which will end only by the 15 of May. The next proposed dates will be communicated to you when the situation takes its normalcy.

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 brother of Sr. Embok Suchiang who is admitted at Neighrims hospital.

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

- Sr. Evangelica Suja and her sister Novice Celina Suja at the passing away of their maternal grandfather on 28 April 2020
- Sr. Nirmala Lazar FMA, Provincial and Sisters of Chennai province at the demise of Sr. Philomena Solomon on 28 April 2020
- Fr. Vijay Bhaskar Thathireddy SDB Provincial and the Salesians of Hyderabad Province INH at the departure of Fr. Yeddanapalli Anthony Selvaraj SDB on 9 April 2020
- Fr. Savio Silveira SDB, Provincial and the Salesians of Mumbai Province INB at the passing away of Bro. Michael Condillac SDB on 12 April 2020.

May the departed ones enjoy forever the eternal Peace of Heaven.

As I conclude, I would like to bring the example of *St. Joseph the worker* whose feast we celebrate today. By his way of life, his communion with God at work and in all circumstances, St. Joseph teaches us that every work we do has a religious sense, a saving value, because through it, we collaborate in the creative and redemptive work of God. To Joseph of Nazareth, who taught Jesus the profession of a carpenter, we entrust our commitment to be credible witnesses of the Gospel and we ask him the grace to be faithful to our daily commitments, to live our faith in everyday actions and to give more space to the Lord in our life.

Once again I wish each and every one of you a very Happy Feast of *St. Joseph, the Worker*, of our *Lady, the Help of Christians*, of *Mother Mazzarello, Dominic Savio* and all the Salesian Saints of the month.

Happy Feast!

With assurance of prayers and loving accompaniment,

Affectionately,



Sr. Elizabeth George FMA
Provincial