



Provincial Circular

Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Auxilium Provincial Office Nongthymmai, Shillong - Meghalaya - 793014

CIR/EG/INS/26/2020

01.10.2020

My dear Sisters,

Loving greetings from Auxilium Provincial House, Nongthymmai!

The world is still caught up in the web of Covid-19 pandemic. At the initial stages one could never have imagined the gravity and intensity of the harm that this tiny, invisible virus would cause to humanity. Even if we are spared from the virus physically we can be caught up in the psychological web if we are not careful. Every experience in our life is bound to teach us some good lessons. But it depends on us whether we analyze the lessons or just turn the pages. Analyzing positively, this pandemic situation could be viewed as an opportunity to discover new paths of human solidarity, to look at the world and its value systems from a new perspective, to live with stronger convictions and deeper faith and to cherish optimistic thoughts for a brighter tomorrow. People have made several predictions regarding life after Covid-19. Whether they are authoritative or not, one such prediction is that life in the post Covid stage will never be same as life in the pre-Covid stage. Indications to this are already seen in the way that people function from a virtual world and making widespread use of digital devices to get through day to day activities. We just need to be prepared to live the 'New normal'.



Stopping at this point, I would like to make a quick flashback to the time of our Co-foundress, St. Mary Mazzarello. Mary Mazzarello was a robust and healthy young lady endowed with uncommon physical stamina that even the strong men whom her father employed in the vineyard were not able to cope up with her. The spread of the typhoid epidemic in the village required of her the sacrifice to attend to the typhoid patients, which eventually made her a victim of the disease. Though she recovered from the illness, she was completely drained of her physical strength making it impossible for her to work in the field anymore. It is in this moment of weakness and helplessness that she had the vision that indicated her future mission, with the mandate "*I entrust them to you*". She understood the meaning of this vision and began to discover a new path, learn a new trade and respond to a new call. The experience of the typhoid epidemic made a U-turn in her life. Today, the world is blessed because of her YES, and several thousands of young people are blessed because of her YES and this mandate is carried out from generation to generation.

As our Institute is preparing to celebrate the 150 years of this YES of Mother Mazzarello and her companions and as FMA India we are gearing towards the centenary of our presence, we are asked to live this mandate in our times with the creativity required of our times. As we reflect on this theme we need to find concrete ways to live it in our community and our mission.

Therefore the **theme** I would like to propose for our communities and Province this year 2020-21 is:

“I entrust them to you” - Become a CARING and LOVING Community

It is good to remember that we are entrusted to one another in the community and as a community the young people and all our other recipients are entrusted to us. May our Blessed Mother help us to live this entrustment with the spirit of Mother Mazzarello and the first community of Mornese.

St. Theresa of Lisieux

We begin the month dedicated to the Holy Rosary and the missions with the feast of St. Teresa of Lisieux who was proclaimed by Pope Pius XI “*Patroness of the missions*” together with St. Francis Xavier. This young Saint who had a short earthly sojourn of just 24 years (1873-1897), lived her life at every instant full of the love of God. Reading her life, the fact that strikes most is that to be holy does not require extraordinary works or actions. Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus did not accomplish anything so conspicuous and extraordinary. She just lived her life in the ordinariness of daily circumstances with goodness, ready to sacrifice and available to the needs of others, an open heart to the missionary world which she lived with authentic and profound love for God and neighbor.



Saint Theresa insisted on saying that God is Father; He loves us more than we love ourselves, and He is merciful towards our weaknesses. That is, God forgives! He knows and understands the weakness of human creatures. God does not need our works, He only needs our love. The root of Teresa's missionary spirit was her consecration to the love of God which she extended to all people. She let herself be involved in this divine love, which ignited in her the desire to be a missionary without leaving the convent. Let us turn to this humble saint, the patroness of the missions and missionaries in this month of the missions, seeking for the grace that we may truly be missionaries of God's love in our daily life and apostolate.

Guardian Angels

The celebration of the feast of the Guardian Angels on 2 October reminds us again of the presence of the angels in our life who guide, inspire and bring us closer to God at every instance. The Church teaches us that our Guardian Angels are given to us by God to ward off demons, protect us from harm, strengthen our faith against temptation, give us courage, intervene to save us from trouble and guide us to salvation. Pope Francis in one of his teachings on the Guardian Angels, points out that the significant role the Angels play in our life is helping and guiding us through safe and upright paths of life and showing us "where we must arrive".



Our Constitutions Article 45 also asks of us to give special honour and respect to the Angels who together with our patron Saints ‘*contemplate the glory of God and accompany us on our earthly pilgrimage*’. We are privileged to have our guardian Angels who constantly watch over us and inspire us with good thoughts and with wise directions to take in life. In our daily encounters, we are also entrusted with the task of being angels to one another in our mission; angels who help out others through times of need and let them know that someone cares. As we celebrate this feast it is opportune to reflect how in our own turn we become guardian angels to those God entrusted to our care...the Sisters, young people, people who need our care, etc.

Feast of the Holy Rosary

The Feast of the Holy Rosary (7 October) is a feast very dear to every one of us to recall the powerful help of Mary in our life and especially in our vocational journey. The Rosary is considered the bond that unites us to the Virgin Mary and an encounter of love with her. The Church teaches us that Our Lady has promised that whoever prays the Holy Rosary devoutly will not be oppressed by misfortunes, will not be punished by God's justice, but will keep oneself under God's Grace. The history of the Rosary shows that the Church, in difficult moments, has resorted to the prayer of the Holy Rosary which possesses particular strength to obtain God's help through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother.



This special month dedicated to the Holy Rosary reminds us again that it is prayer that nourishes our spirituality and makes us grow as Christians and religious, because, through Mary, it leads to a deeper knowledge of the mysteries of Christ. Indeed, the Holy Rosary guides us to the heart of Christian life and helps us to contemplate and deepen the mystery of Christ and the role of our Blessed Mother in the mystery of Christ, in the Church and in our own personal lives. Let us therefore grow in our conviction of the powerful help of our Blessed Mother through the Holy Rosary. Let us seek the grace of God for our life and mission through the fervent prayer of the Holy Rosary in this month specially dedicated to her.

St. Teresa of Avilla

St. Teresa of Avilla the patroness of our Institute whose feast we celebrate on 15 October is a great model of living faithfully the Salesian identity of contemplation and action. This great doctor of the Church teaches us much through her disciplined life and outstanding works of reform that above everything else, God is the centre of all. She was an expert in combining her rich spirituality with practical sense which was for her the virtues that proved necessary to fulfill the mission to which God called her. Her teachings on the importance of prayer were beautiful and she personalized it in saying “*Souls without prayer are like people whose bodies or limbs are paralysed: they possess feet and hands but they cannot control them.*”



Don Bosco chose St. Teresa of Avila as the Patroness of our Institute to draw inspiration from the rich spirituality of the saint who knew how to harmonize contemplation and tireless activity, spirit of faith and the pedagogical concreteness with which she guided others, interiority and the joy of

communication, humility and courageous denunciation of the hindrances that block the path to holiness. The spiritual experience is expressed by her in the perspective of friendship with God and with others. In it, everything human is valued and unified by the presence of God. As we honour this great and holy patron of our Institute, may we become aware of the importance of putting ourselves in a state of constant search for God in every person and at all situations, to complement contemplation and untiring action in our educative mission thus making our spiritual journey an enriching experience of enjoying the indescribable happiness of union with God.

World Mission Sunday

The annual celebration of the World Mission Sunday is an important occasion to bring our attention to the numerous needs of the Church and to recall the responsibility of each one to support the mission of the Church with concrete gestures of solidarity. Celebration of mission Sunday is a reminder of the great mandate given to every Christian and more especially to consecrated persons.

In this time when we are caught within the net of the pandemic Covid-19, we are reminded all the more of the need to proclaim and witness more courageously to the message of Jesus' Love to the world. In his message for the World Mission Sunday this year which will fall on 18 October 2020, Pope Francis wrote: *"In this year marked by the suffering and challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the missionary journey of the whole Church continues in light of the words found in the account of the calling of the prophet Isaiah: 'Here am I, send me.' This is the ever new response to the Lord's question: 'Whom shall I send?'"*



The Pontiff's message is a clarion call for us that amidst the reality of a painful situation we need to move forward together because it is Christ who urges us to be "Church on the move". God reveals his love for humanity in Jesus crucified and asks from us too our personal availability to His loving call to continue the mission of Jesus in our own history. Pope Francis reminds us that we will be able to recognize God's call only if we live an authentic personal relationship with Jesus.

When we are still delving into the reality of the long-lasting pandemic and being restricted by a variety of norms and protocols especially the physical distancing from each other, Pope Francis invites us all the more in his message to rediscover the importance of relationships with God and others and of the need to be more attentive to the needs of others. As we celebrate the world mission Sunday in unison with the Church, in a spirit and attitude of communion, prayer and charity, let us make a sincere reflection on our response to God's call to be missionaries through the very same questions asked by our Holy Father in his message:

- Are we prepared to welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, to listen to the call to mission, whether in our life as married couples or as consecrated persons or those called to the ordained ministry, and in the everyday events of life?
- Are we willing to be sent forth at any time or place to witness to our faith in God the merciful Father, to proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, to share the divine life of the Holy Spirit by building up the Church?
- Are we, like Mary, the Mother of Jesus, ready to be completely at the service of God's will?

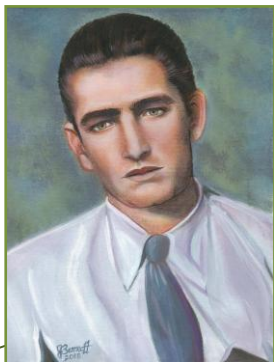
Let us be prompt to God's invitation to be His witnesses of love especially in this crucial moment with our generous and credible response: 'Here am I, Lord send me!'

In the company of the Salesian Saints

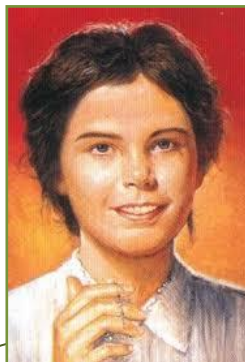
Holiness is the trademark of the school and oratory of Don Bosco. His life and ministry is a testimony to the fact of what a person gripped with the love of God and a passionate zeal for the salvation of souls can do for the entire humanity. His Spirit, his system of education, his passion and zeal for his mission captured many souls to God and sanctified the Salesian Family with a perfume of Holiness from his days to our own now.

The Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, in his letter at the conclusion of the Second Seminar on Salesian Holiness in 2018 in Rome rightly said *"From Don Bosco to our days we recognize a tradition of holiness which deserves attention, because it is the incarnation of the charism that originated from him and which is expressed in a plurality of states of life and forms. These are men and women, young people and adults, consecrated and lay people, bishops and missionaries who in historical, cultural and social contexts that differ over time and space have made the Salesian charism shine with a singular light, representing a heritage that plays an effective role in life and in the community of believers and for people of good will..."*

The month of October is marked by a number of models of Salesian Holiness whose example we are invited to emulate and replicate in our own life and our educative mission.



Bl. Albert Marvelli



Bl. Alexandrina



St. Louis Guanella



Bl. Michael Rua

Blessed Albert Marvelli (5 October): Immediately after being enrolled in the Italian Catholic Youth of Don Bosco, Albert began to breathe and taste the Salesian spirit which prompted him to attend the oratory assiduously. His early formative years in the family were enriched by the values and principles he learned at the Salesian oratory and subsequently had great influence on his spiritual and apostolic life. In the Salesian environment, he experienced an atmosphere of great religious fervor and profound spirituality. He was a valued catechist and leader, whose strong faith and belief in caring for the poorest and weakest led to his involvement in politics.

The milieu of Albert's human, apostolic and spiritual formation was totally Salesian and his Salesian educators equally engaged, trusted and guided him on the path of spiritual growth. As a young lad, Albert prayed with concentration, taught catechism with conviction and manifested zeal, charity, serenity and purity in his dealings with God and others. He stood out among all the good young

people of the oratory for his uncommon virtues and for the apparent ease and naturalness with which he did even the most difficult things. His word was valued by life and right principles among all.

Blessed Alexandrina Da Costa (13 October): A fervent Salesian Cooperator chosen by Christ to suffer in atonement for the sins of humanity. Alexandrina da Costa was bedridden for life from the age of twenty after sustaining injuries while escaping from an attacker. She mystically underwent the Passion of Christ on Fridays and her sufferings helped to shorten World War II. For the last thirteen years of her life she miraculously lived on the Holy Eucharist alone. “Love, suffer, make amendments” was the spiritual itinerary that the Lord pointed out to her which she generously accepted and lived with great love. As a faithful cooperator in the spirit of Don Bosco, she wanted to place her diploma as a Cooperator ‘in a place where she could always have it under her eyes’, to collaborate with her pain and her prayers for the salvation of souls, especially the young. She prayed and suffered for the sanctification of the Cooperators all over the world.

St. Louis Guanella (24 October): Throughout his life Louis Guanella was animated by a special attention for the poor and the needy combined with a tireless missionary spirit. His missionary vocation was delineated and made strong in the years of formation. Even after his priestly ordination, Fr Guanella's call to mission persisted strongly. Just on his arrival in Turin in January 1875, Fr Guanella heard a missionary invitation from Don Bosco which he lived and witnessed with great conviction and unwavering passion for the poor, the weak and the sick. His life is marked by true and genuine love combined with missionary ideal and enriching it with the witness of charity towards the least, often left on the peripheries. On his death Guanella left a moral commitment to his Congregations which he founded: "The whole world is your homeland". "It is impossible to finish it, as long as there are poor to be cured and their need to be cared for"

Blessed Michael Rua (29 October): Michael Rua as Don Bosco's closest collaborator and first successor, was very much in the heart of the development of the Salesian congregation and was consistently prudent and foreseeing to the growth of the educative mission. He was a faithful interpreter of the Preventive System, a builder, consolidator and communicator of the charism and spirit of Don Bosco in all its dimensions. He was a true and genuine replica of Don Bosco in his life and actions. He would say “*We must consider ourselves very fortunate to be children of such a Father (Don Bosco). Therefore, our concern must be to support and in due time develop the works begun by him more and more, faithfully follow the spirit he practiced and taught, and in our way of speaking and working try to imitate the model, which the Lord in his goodness has given us in him.*”

Paul VI beatified Don Rua on 29 October 1972, stating: “*The Salesian Family [...] had its origin in Don Bosco, continuity in Don Rua [...]. He made a school of the saint's example, a spirit of his Rule, a model of his holiness [...]. Don Rua inaugurated a tradition*”. As daughters of our saintly father Don Bosco, we dare to ask ourselves if we are truly the models and witnesses of his spirit in our own days. May Don Rua give us this courage to follow in his footsteps of replicating and making known the spirit of Don Bosco in all its fullness in our life and mission.

Family News & Communications

Entry into Postulancy: We are happy to communicate that 17 Aspirants will enter the Postulancy on 7 October 2020. We extend our heartiest congratulations to them for their courageous and generous ‘YES’ to God’s call. Let us support them with our prayers as they embrace this important

step in their religious formation. They will prepare themselves for this great day with the spiritual retreat at Saiden from 30 September- 5 October 2020. We thank Sr. Phyllis Bamon and the community of Saiden for the accompaniment and guidance of these young candidates.

Merging of the Communities in Mornese: It was communicated from Mornese, Italy that on 13th September 2020, the two communities at Mornese were merged into a single international community. In the letter of communication Sister Maria Vanda Penna and Community of Collegio wrote: *“The sisters of the two places will now live all together at the Collegio, where the history of our Institute began. This decision was reached after many years of reflection shared by Mother General and the Provincial with their Councils as well as by the two communities involved in the process”* [...] *“The new single community will continue to welcome all the people coming here, managing the reception and hospitality as before in the three “houses” of Mornese (including the “Valponasca”). In the meantime, however, this very new reality would like to begin its life taking a special care of the ‘community’ itself. “What does that mean? “- you may ask. It simply means that we want to look back at our first Community where “life was beautiful”, in the words of Sister Enrichetta Sorbone, and try to look a bit similar to it.”* Let us sustain this project at the cradle of our Institute with our prayers and genuine fidelity. (The full letter is attached along with this circular)

“Personal Encounter”- New Document of the Institute: On 22 September 2020, the Formation Sector from Rome organized a meeting for the Provincial Council and Formation Team of all the Provinces of FMA-India. Sr. Nieves Reboso, General Councillor for Formation and her collaborators Sr. Maria Fisichella and Sr. Anelfreda Miranda presented beautifully the Institute’s Document **“Personal Encounter”**- a document published as a response to a mandate from General Chapter XXIII. The members of the Provincial Council and Formation team members of our Province participated in it. We are recommended to do the personal and community study on the Document and the report of it will be sent to Rome. Few copies of the document have been sent to all the communities (though there are not sufficient copies for everyone). The Province will propose the modality for the sharing of the Document which will be communicated to you a little later. We thank Mother General and her Council, Sr. Nieves Reboso and the Formation Team for their generous efforts and interest for our vocational growth and religious formation. Let us welcome this document as a gift of the Institute to strengthen the joy of our religious commitment as Mother General wrote in her presentation of the Document *“I pray that in the Institute we will find the joy of the personal encounter lived with affection, trust, maternal and filial simplicity, in the reciprocal and sincere search for God’s will”*

Meetings and Seminars: The following seminars and meetings were organized and attended by our Sisters in September at the Institute, FMA-PCI and Provincial level.

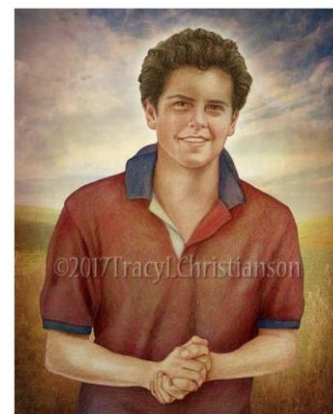
- The Administrative Sector, Rome organized a webinar on the *“FMA Collaborative Platform”* from 18-19 September 2020. Sr. Gemima Pohrmen, Provincial Economer, few local economers and other sisters of our Province attended the sessions.
- On 19 September 2020, Sr. Helen Puwein, Sr. Igina Kharjana, Sr. Janicia Nongrum and Sr. Garnet Sutnga participated in the online orientation programme on E-Commerce organized by the FMA India NDF.
- The FMA India Social Communication Sector had an online meeting from 25- 26 September 2020 on the theme *“FMA India making a Positive Impact among the Young through the*

Media". From our Province the team members of the Social Communication, the local media coordinators and few other Sisters participated in it.

- At the Institute level, Sr. Mary Lamare participated in the online meeting of the Salesian Cooperators of South Asia on 26 September 2020 with the theme "*Solidarity of Cooperators in the pandemic situation*".
- On 26 September 2020, an offline seminar on the "*National Education Policy 2020*" was organized at FMA Outreach. The resource person was Fr. Maliekal George SDB. Few animators, Principals and Sisters involved in the school ministry attended the half day session.

Blessed Carlo Acutis - a new blessed in the Church: On 10 October 2020, **Venerable Carlo Acutis**, an Italian teenager and computer expert who died in 2006, will be beatified in Assisi, Italy. Carlo is a teenager of our own times who lived an ordinary style of life just like any other normal person of his age. What is outstanding in his personality that shines at the altar of God is his special friendship with Jesus especially in the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary. He had special devotion to some saintly models for his spiritual life among whom are St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic Savio.

Carlo Acutis was born in London in 1991, but his parents moved to Milan not long after his birth. From an early age he recited frequent rosaries and received his First Communion at the age of 7. He made efforts to go to daily Mass and to spend time in front of the Blessed Sacrament in addition to weekly Confession. He loved traveling but loved to visit Assisi more than any other places. His fortune to be groomed in a good and stable family and his exceptional knack of dealing with technology did not hinder his great love for God; rather it soared higher to proclaim His Glory and love. His great reverence for the Eucharist was outstanding and can be expressed in his own words "*The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus and already on this earth we will have a foretaste of Heaven*". One of Carlo's most significant computer ventures was cataloguing all the Eucharistic miracles of the world, the project which he started when he was 11 years old.



Carlo Acutis died of leukemia at just 15 years of age and was buried in Assisi according to his wish. He did not get discouraged nor stop even when his body was marked by the disease. He had foreseen it for some time: "*I will die young*". He fed on the Eucharist and dined with the Lord in order to be with him and like him. A few days before his death, he had offered his life for the Pope and the Church. His mother, Antonia, narrates: "*The figure of Carlo can be summarized in this sentence: **The Eucharist is my highway to Heaven.** My son from an early age, and especially after his First Communion, never missed the almost daily appointment with the Holy Mass and the Rosary, and with a moment of Eucharistic adoration. Despite this intense spiritual life, Carlo lived fully and joyfully his fifteen years, leaving a profound trace in those who knew him.*"

He is a model of youthful holiness in our contemporary world and an example that nothing is far greater than the Love of God. Reading through his biography we can comprehend the depth and perennial validity of Don Bosco's pedagogical style which has many saintly implications in the life

of the young people. May this young saint of our century inspire our mission with the young people that many more may follow his ardent love for God, for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and our Blessed Mother.

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 all those who are being affected by COVID-19 particularly priests, religious and members of the Salesian Family. We remember in our special prayers:

- Sr. Maristella Ryngkhlem who underwent a surgery on 29 September 2020.
- The father of Sr. Jomita Sangma who is hospitalized at GMC Hospital, Guwahati.
- The niece of Sr. Elizabeth Thannimoothil who underwent a surgery recently.
- Our sick and elderly Sisters.

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

- Sr. Mildred Kharsyiemlieh at the passing away of her niece on 11 September 2020.
- Sr. Maria Goretti Nongrum at the demise of her maternal aunt on 21 September 2020.
- Sr. Joplanglin Nongkseh who lost her cousin on 13 September 2020.
- All relatives of our Sisters.

May the departed ones enjoy forever the eternal Peace of Heaven and may all those who mourn their passing away be consoled by the strength and grace of God.

I conclude by extending my greetings once again for a very happy and holy month of the Rosary and of the missions to each and every one of you. May this month that will usher in abundant blessings to us in varied ways help us to respond generously our **'YES'** to God like our Blessed Mother and our saintly Mother Mazzarello and let us live with concreteness and zeal the mandate of the mission Sunday "*Here I am, Send me*".

With assurance of prayers and loving accompaniment,
Affectionately,



Sr. Elizabeth George FMA
Provincial