



Provincial Circular

Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Auxilium Provincial Office Nongthymmai, Shillong - Meghalaya - 793014

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02.12.2020

My dear Sisters,

Loving greetings from Auxilium Provincial House, Nongthymmai!

We have just begun the season of Advent- a season of intense preparation for the coming of the Lord at Christmas. Advent constantly reminds us to renew our memory of the great love of God who emptied Himself to come down to earth taking the human form in order to share His Divinity with us and to fulfill His promises for our salvation. This holy season invites us to take notice of the coming of our God in different circumstances of life, to live with vigilant attention and to make every moment a profound encounter with God. Faith teaches us that the Lord keeps coming to us to save us. Therefore, our Christian life ought to be a continuous Advent- an ever prompt readiness to receive Christ not just at Christmas but at all times when He comes.



As a Province just very recently, we have witnessed the visit of our Lord in the passing away of our dear Sr. Percynia Synnah into eternal life on 20 November 2020. Her witnessing earthly life was marked by constant Advent of the visit of her Lord and Spouse. Those of us who have shared life with her at close quarters can testify to this fact that she was ever ready to embrace the Lord's coming. Her bed of pain was never a burden or a barrier to her deep communion and strong bond with God. The constant Advent of the Lord was for her a time of preparing to clearly envision and embody the life soon to come. Sr. Percynia who embraced the Lord's coming just as the Advent Season was about to dawn, gave us the true sense of this waiting - the hopeful attitude to recognize the second coming of Jesus as a perpetual coming. May the memory of our dear sister who is enjoying now the blessings of Heaven spur in us the thought of vigilant waiting and readiness to welcome the Lord in our lives.

While contemplating and reflecting upon this significant tone of Advent, we are also invited to live the same attitudes of waiting for and encountering the Lord in the concrete context of our life- in our Sisters in the community and in our brothers and sisters and the young people in our mission. Just as Jesus is a bridge between God and the people on earth, so too are we called to be so in the different situations of life that we face every day, to be the bridge of love, of reconciliation and of communion with everyone. The invitation to be "bridges" responds well both to the ever-living exhortation of St. John the Baptist to prepare the way for an encounter with the Lord and to the need to find new and

current ways to live the Gospel of fraternity among ourselves. In this holy Season let us take more courageous and fearless initiatives to build bridges than to build walls in our life and mission so that the coming of Christ may be made more significant and ever fruitful.

I entrust them to you

As FMA India we have launched the second year of preparation for the centenary of our presence in India on 21 November 2020 with the theme: "*I entrust them to you. Reviving the Family Spirit and strengthening Community Communion.*" The mandate "I entrust them to you" becomes more important and realistic in the present context when we are called to show more attention to the others. As a Province we are journeying along this path of being a beacon of God's love to one another and to those who are entrusted to our care. Paying particular attention to one another in the community and the mission involves desiring the good of others in all respects: physical, moral and spiritual in order to stimulate, protect and promote life, fraternity and communion. During these years of preparation for the centenary of FMA India, we are given ample opportunities to update ourselves in all aspects of our vocational and charismatic identity. Let us grasp these opportunities with gratitude and openness to the graces and blessings. As we move forward living the call of our vocation and mission, let us pay particular attention to one another in reciprocity to recognize the good that the Lord has done and to thank Him for the wonders of grace He continues to work in our land.



This year's preparation and animation is entrusted to our Province and to the Province of Guwahati (ING). The proposed programme for the year's celebration was already sent to you on 19 November 2020. Kindly take an active part in all these celebrations as a sign of gratitude to mark the 100th anniversary of the arrival of our Sisters.

First year Triduum of the 100th anniversary of the FMA presence in North East India

On the 8th of December 2020 we begin the first year of the Triduum to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of the 6 Pioneers to North East India. Way back in 1923 on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (8 December), 6 valiant and passionate Daughters of Mary Help of Christians –Sr. Innocenza Vallino (Leader), Sr. Giulia Berra, Sr. Maria Bricarello, Sr. Clotilde Appiano, Sr. Cecilia Da Roit and Sr. Antonietta Rosetti set foot in Guwahati to begin their life in their mission land- the land of their dreams on a day very significant and dear to our Salesian mission and apostolate. Notwithstanding the barriers of language, tradition, climate, food, etc, the missionaries positioned themselves as brave soldiers of Christ and immediately started the orphanage, crèche, school, workroom, health care, village touring and Catechesis at St. Mary's, Guwahati. The initial years were definitely not easy for them but, the passion for the Da Mihi Animas, trust in the powerful intercession of our Blessed Mother and faith in the Divine Providence overcame all odds and difficulties. Their indomitable spirit to spread God's love in our land and to inculcate the Salesian Charism in our soil is indeed a legacy and an inspiration for us today. They have lighted the torch of our Founders and have laid the path for us to tread upon.

To commemorate this significant event of the arrival of our Pioneers, on 10th December 2020, the official opening of the Triduum Year will be celebrated together with the members of the Provincial Council, the Animators and some member representatives of the communities in Shillong. To mark the date, the Centenary Committee of our Province has prepared the animation materials for the 8th December in order to begin the arrival of the missionaries in a fitting manner. Every community is requested to live this historic moment of our mission joining the whole Province from their own communities although as a Province we will have the solemn inauguration on the 10th when we will gather for the Provincial Community Day.



Our first missionaries had faced the unknown, crossed all barriers and overcame all hardships in order to set the basis for a strong and deep-rooted charism in our land. Today we salute them for their undaunted spirit and unfailing hope that has carried forward the Spirit of our Founders to our days. As we launch into the first year in preparation for the great Centenary of their arrival to the North East, we are invited all the more to go back to the roots and relive the passion of our Pioneers in our own days.

The Core Committee for the Centenary Celebration of our Province will timely communicate to us of the various initiatives and proposals for the three yearlong preparations and celebrations.

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

The Church highly reveres Mary and we honor her throughout the year with several feast days, among which is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The solemnity of the Immaculate Conception invites us to celebrate the pure heart of our Blessed Mother—transparent like the spring water. This solemnity is an opportunity to reflect on the maternal tenderness of the Blessed Virgin Mary and at the same time on her courage to say ‘Yes’ to God. In the time of Advent, this solemnity finds its natural place, joining the celebration of the Lord who comes with the contemplation of the one who was pure waiting for him from her conception. God planned in the fullness of time to bless the earth with Mary, who was called and willingly volunteered to be the Mother of God. Her being without sin is only the beginning of her blessings. Mary was fully human, vulnerable to human weakness, but from the first moment of her existence, God filled her with grace so that she could live her life completely open to the Holy Spirit and to God's will. In every way, Mary had no other desire than to please her Heavenly Father in all things. She gleamed with all the perfections of the human soul – love, joy, humility, peace, and all the captivating virtues pleasing at God's sight.



The day of the Immaculate Conception has a very special affinity with our Institute. This day commemorates the humble yet significant beginning of the Salesian mission way back in 1841. Don Bosco laid great emphasis on the role of our Blessed Mother in all his apostolic works and gave her as a model of purity to the young people under his care. Don Bosco's mission of helping young people to know God and to become good Christians and upright citizens began exactly on the feast of the Immaculate Conception with his educative encounter with Bartholomew Garelli. It was also on this day in 1878 that Don Bosco gave to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians the first printed version of their Constitutions. Today as committed daughters of a great father, we are reminded that God is calling us again to be partakers and bearers of this great legacy and mission of Don Bosco. As Don Bosco often would say "*All of our great initiatives began on the day of the Immaculate*" (BM XVII), hence, let us place our trust and let ourselves be guided by the maternal hand of our Blessed Mother in all our apostolic works and mission among the young.

Family News & Communications

Congratulations: Our sincere and heartiest Congratulations to Sr. Merciful Nongsiej for her hard work and efforts put in to come up with excellent results in her Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) from Tripura University. We wish her God's blessings for a more effective mission in the years to come.

Webinar on Salesian Pedagogy: From 4-7 November 2020, the FMA India had a webinar on "**Salesian Pedagogy**" as part of the first year preparation for the centenary celebrations. We are grateful to the Provinces of Bangalore and Kolkata particularly to Sr. Sahaya Sangitha Rani (INK) and Sr. Stella Potteparambil (INC) who efficiently coordinated the whole programme. The beautiful insights on the Preventive System of St. John Bosco, St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello and the Salesian Pedagogy lived by Blessed Michael Rua and Mother Ersilia Canta were creatively and relevantly presented by Sr. Nirmala Mumadi (INK), Sr. Sahaya Sangitha Rani (INK), Sr. Lilly Perumpettikunnel (INC) and Sr. Stella Potteparambil (INC) respectively. We thank our Sisters for their competent and insightful sharing. The words of wisdom and introductory talks of all the FMA India Provincials gave a rightful tone to the days' sessions. Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukayil and Sr. Runita Borja also shared their words of wisdom and views on the implication of the Salesian Mission in our context today. Many of our communities participated in the Webinar. May the Salesian Charism become more relevant in our mission today through our life of fidelity and conviction to keep the roots of our origins ever fresh in us.

Nurses Meet: On 23 November 2020, the FMA Nurses of our Province had the 11th Annual INS Nurses Meet 2020 at FMA Outreach, Shillong on the theme "***Nurses: A voice to lead, a vision for the future health care***". All the Sisters presented the reports of their respective health care and support centers and also came up with the new action plans for the upcoming New Year. I greatly acknowledge the passion for the healing apostolate of our Sisters in their respective communities and mission.

Salesian Cooperators' Annual Meet 2020: On 28 November 2020, the Salesian Cooperators celebrated the 42nd Annual Meet in the different units of the Province. The theme of the Annual meet was taken from the Strenna of Rector Major "***Good Christians and Upright Citizens***". Each Centre took great and beautiful initiatives to celebrate the Annual Meet with a common vision and mission. I acknowledge and thank the Sisters for the fruitful outcome of all the celebrations and for the keen

interest taken at the various centers to keep up the tradition with the Salesian Cooperators. I congratulate the new members of the Salesian Cooperators who took the promise on that day. May the Salesian Cooperators grow from strength to strength to be the effective and holy lay Salesians in the world. We accompany them with our prayers and support them in their mission.

Preparation for GCXXIV: I am sure that these days the communities had the enriching experience of studying and reflecting on the Chapter Documents along with other materials provided. I thank you for the earnestness with which you took up this task. Thank you for answering the questions on time.

On 30th November, the Provincials, Delegates and Substitutes of GCXXIV had an online meeting to discuss matters related to the Chapter. Special committees were constituted for consolidating the answers that will be sent from the Provinces and translating the same for dispatching to Rome. Other matters discussed were the liturgical animation and goodnights allotted to PCI.

Animators' Meeting: Prior to the celebration of the Provincial Community Day, the members of the Provincial Council and Animators will have a two day meeting i.e. on 10th and 11th December. On the 9th evening, the Province will express gratitude to God for the gift of our Sisters who celebrate the Golden and Silver Jubilee of their religious profession with a Thanksgiving Mass at 6:00 pm. All those who will participate in the meeting are kindly requested to reach the venue latest by 3:00 pm. [Kindly inform the time of your arrival]

Retreats 2021: The dates for the Annual Spiritual Retreats 2021 are as follows:

DATES	PARTICIPANTS	VENUE
29 December – 5 January 2021	School Sisters + Perpetually Professed Sisters	FMA Outreach, Shillong
24- 30 January 2021	Principals/Headmistresses+ School Sisters	
21- 28 February 2021	Perpetually Professed Sisters	
1-8 March 2021	Temporary Professed Sisters + Perpetually Professed Sisters (up to 10 years of profession)	
10-17 March 2021	Provincial Council + Animators	
23- 30 July 2021	Temporary Professed Sisters	
20-27 July 2021	Novices	Novitiate, Bellefonte
22-29 July 2021	Postulants	Auxilium, Saiden

We send ahead our prayers for the fruitfulness of all the retreats. Kindly send your names for each of the retreats to the Provincial Office latest by 10th of December for the necessary arrangements.

***N.B*:** 1. The school sisters who may find difficult to adapt to the timings of the dates allotted for them are kindly requested to make the necessary adjustments with other dates and to notify the same to the Provincial Office.

2. The Retreats will start on the evening of the first day as indicated above and will end on the morning of the last date. The participants of all the retreats are expected to reach the scheduled venue latest by lunch on the starting date. Please arrange your journeys accordingly.
3. There will be no animation prior to/ after the Spiritual Retreats.

Second Novitiate: The first phase of the Second Novitiate is proposed to be held from 20 December 2020- 20 January 2021 at FMA Outreach, Shillong. However, if any further change should be made necessary due to the prevailing situation, the same will be communicated. The Sisters who will participate in the first phase of the programme are:

- Sr. Liza Mary Kharkongor
- Sr. Lucy Sangriang
- Sr. Monica Kharkongor
- Sr. Riodalin Ramshon
- Sr. Roda Mary Rongrin

Few Sisters from the Provinces of Kolkata (INC), Mumbai (INB) and Guwahati (ING) will join the group. We warmly welcome the Sisters who are coming from these three Provinces. We wish them a happy and fruitful stay with us. Let us support and sustain all our Sisters of the Second Novitiate with our prayers and sisterly accompaniment in this important stage of their religious life.

Thank you: I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to everyone who has been close to us during the passing away of our dear Sr. Percynia Synnah on 20 November 2020. I owe my gratitude to all the communities of our Province who have visited, encouraged and prayed for our dear Sr. Percynia during her sickness and especially at her demise. Thanks to all those who could not be present but expressed your solidarity in one way or another. I pay my gratitude to all the FMA and SDB Indian Provinces, all religious and ecclesial institutions and individual persons, civil administration, Salesian Cooperators, past pupils and young people who have sent their condolence messages and who were close to us in prayerful solidarity during those days. My sincere appreciation to the community of Auxilium, Nongthymmai for the loving care and accompaniment of our dear Sister during her earthly pilgrimage especially in the last few years of her life when she was confined to her sick bed totally. A note of special appreciation to Sr. Martilin Nongkynrih for the meticulous attention given with much love and selfless dedication to the care of dear Sr. Percynia at her sick bed in all these years. To the Mother and dear ones of our Sr. Percynia, we pay our deep respect for their love, care and concern and for being close to Sr. Percynia and to all of us during her life on earth and at her death. To everyone who loved, cared and prayed for the repose of the soul, I say a big ‘Thank you’. May our dear departed Sister intercede for God’s blessings upon you and your mission.

Winter Apostolic Experiences: Due to the barriers caused by the pandemic, the usual winter apostolate that was always at the heart of all our communities will have to take on a different slant this year. Although we cannot tour the villages and be present physically with the people in the villages and families, I exhort all of us dear Sisters to be in communion with our people who long to meet and prepare for the coming of the Lord through our prayers, sacrifices and online initiatives wherever is possible. Let not the barrier of the situation be a block to prepare the way for the coming of our Saviour but instead an opportunity to encourage and enthuse ourselves and our people with different initiatives and spiritual animation.

The Second Year Novices too will not be going to the communities during this winter time for their community experiences, instead round about the year, when the situation becomes better they will be making their community and apostolic experiences. Information regarding this will be given you a little later.

Priestly Ordinations: We extend our warmest congratulations and assurance of prayers to all the Deacons who will be ordained during this winter season in the various Provinces and Dioceses of India. We pray that they be committed and faithful ministers of Christ and be effective instruments of God's love to the world.

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 offer our special prayers for:

- The sister of Sr. Bontila Makdoh
- The aunt of Sr. Margareth Changte
- Sr. Pasqualina Susngi of Guwahati Province.

And we continue to implore God's mercy for the suffering world and for deliverance and protection from Covid-19.

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

- Sr. Madona Lytep at the demise of her maternal uncle on 9 November 2020.
- Sr. Margaret Changte at the passing away of her cousin brother on 16 November 2020.
- Sr. Rosa Mystica Mylliemumlong who lost her elder brother on 17 November 2020.
- Sr. Rodalin Kamar at the demise of her maternal uncle on 25 November 2020.
- Sr. Aithun Lawai who lost her cousin brother on 1 December 2020.
- Fr Joseph Pauria SDB, Provincial of Kolkata and the Province of INC at the passing away of Fr. Sebastian Alancheril SDB and Fr. Varghese Kalluvachel (KC) SDB on 25 and 26 November 2020 respectively.

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.

We are in the last month of the year 2020. This year was indeed special that left an indelible imprint in the history of our lives and the world particularly with the global outbreak of the Corona disease. Yet in all this, we have tangibly experienced the power of God and His Grace that have accompanied us throughout the course of this year. We have also experienced, witnessed and tasted the wonderful things that life brought along in spite of the situation- the closer bond of relationships built up and strengthened, the new insights received and shared, the good health and protection from all harm and attack of the virus, etc,...were few of the many wonderful things we were privileged and blessed with.

Looking back at the progress of the year, it is a bit strange perhaps to think of the many missed opportunities during these months of the lockdown, the closure of the apostolate in the schools, boardings, oratories, the mistakes made, the unrequited relationships, the health that has failed,

etc...but, it would be even stranger to escape from the past rather than learn something from it. This last month of the year gives us the best time to collect all the positive notes and blessings of a long and intense 2020 to reuse them as a starting point for the coming new year 2021. Let us therefore spend these last days of the year in an attitude of gratitude, of forgiveness and of commitment to fill up the gaps lost during these months, to build up on the mistakes of the past, to progress with the positive and blessed moments we have had and to shape a better, committed and more promising future for ourselves and our mission.

Once again, I wish each and every one of you a holy and fruitful encounter with the Lord in this Holy Season of Advent, a fervent Christmas Novena and a happy ending of the year 2020.

Other important Feasts of the month

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| 03 | - | St. Francis Xavier |
| 05 | - | Blessed Philip Rinaldi |
| 26 | - | St. Stephen |
| 27 | - | Holy Family |
| 28 | - | Holy Innocents |



With assurance of prayers and loving accompaniment,
Affectionately,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth George".

**Sr. Elizabeth George FMA
Provincial**