



Provincial Circular

Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Auxilium Provincial Office Nongthymmai, Shillong - Meghalaya - 793014

CIR/EG/INS/29/2021

01.01.2021

My dear Sisters,

Loving and prayerful greetings on this first day of the New Year 2021!

We have arrived at the threshold of a New Year, and like every year we have the opportunity to reflect, pray and celebrate what the Lord has given us in the year just ended, to invoke him in this new year and above all to pray for peace, for new hope, for strength and for faith. The year 2020 will forever be remembered especially for the outbreak of the pandemic Covid 19 worldwide. Our lives and our mission have been affected in so many ways by this coronavirus pandemic. Yet the grace of God has brought us this far to end the year with His grace and to welcome the New Year with Hope.

A new year is always a time for renewed life, new ideas, new adventures to undertake and new commitments to make, to change or just improve our lives. It is a time to target the milestones we wish to achieve during this year and to live our lives more meaningfully. New Year is also an auspicious time to reflect back on the previous year and fill our minds and hearts with new dreams, new energy and fresh enthusiasm.

May the New Year mark a new beginning, to walk in newness of life, to exhibit a new quality of life and visualize a future full of Hope. Each day of the New Year is given to us as a blank sheet to fill in with the choices we make and the actions we perform that will make us feel happy and proud at the end of the year.



We thank the Lord, who gave us a precious gift to start the year with the new Archbishop for our Archdiocese of Shillong in the person of **Archbishop Victor Lyngdoh DD**. We congratulate Archbishop Victor for his generous 'YES' to shepherd the flock of our Archdiocese. We implore God's choicest blessings upon him while assuring him of our prayers, support and collaboration in the mission of the Church. May the Lord sustain him with His gifts of Wisdom and Good Health to carry forward the mandate He has entrusted to his care.

Congratulations and Prayers...



Solemnity of Mary Mother of God

The first day of the calendar year coincides with the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. The liturgy of the Church places its gaze on Mary from whom the Word took on our human nature. We are blessed to begin the New Year honouring Mary as the Mother of God and our Mother too. It reminds us of the certainty that she will accompany us all our days.

The title '*Mary Mother of God*' brings us to the heart of our faith and to the core of the mysteries that we celebrate in these days: God became man, and so in Jesus Christ, the Second person of the Blessed Trinity, the two natures, the divine and the human co-exist. The fundamental truth about Jesus as a divine person who has fully assumed our human nature is condensed in the expression "God sent his Son born of a woman". He is the Son of God, he is generated by Him, and at the same time he is the son of a woman, Mary.



Mary is the image of each Christian, of each person touched by God's grace. In fact, Christ is born in our soul when we too, like the Mother of God, answer to the Lord: "*Fiat! Be it done to me according to your word*" (Lk 1, 38). Basically, the mystery we contemplate on this solemnity is the mystery of human cooperation in salvation: God wants our salvation to pass through our very humanity. How greatly Mary cooperated in this plan of salvation and the Church too in all ages cooperates in carrying Christ as Mary did and interceding with Christ as Mary did.

The celebration of the solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God at the beginning of the year is therefore an invitation for us to increase our devotion to Mary in order to place our life with trust in her maternal hands that shines on our path as a consolation and a sign of sure hope. Let us then look forward with Hope and entrust to Mary Most Holy, Mother of God, the Year that has just dawned today together with the needs of the Church and the world, our Institute and Province and of every human person on earth. May the Virgin Mary help us to renew our faith and our hope in Christ the Lord, the source of all grace and salvation of all.

54th World Day of Peace

In a world wrapped by lots of unwanted elements that destroy Peace, the Church comes again this year to remind us of the need to come together as brothers and sisters, as caretakers of one another and as promoters of peace in the society and the world. The year 2020 was marked by a series of events particularly the pandemic Covid-19 and by various forms of fake ideologies, wars and conflicts that struck humanity in many ways. This situation of the era calls for a more sincere and unique expression of fraternity and love. In this prevailing situation, Pope Francis in his message for the 54th World Day of Peace has brought to light the essence of building up fraternity, a caring attitude for one another and care for God's creation in all sense. Right enough, he has chosen the theme for the World Day of Peace 2021, '*A Culture of Care as a Path to Peace*'. He called on the international community and every individual to foster a "*culture of care*" by advancing on



the “path of fraternity, justice and peace between individuals, communities, people and nations.” He emphasizes on promoting the culture of care as a way to combat the culture of indifference, waste and confrontation so prevalent in our time.

The Pontiff further says: “The culture of care ... calls for a common, supportive and inclusive commitment to protecting and promoting the dignity and good of all, a willingness to show care and compassion, to work for reconciliation and healing, and to advance mutual respect and acceptance. As such, it represents a privileged path to Peace”. Following the exhortations of our Holy Father we are called to be promoters of Peace by our way of living authentic relationships with one another inspired by fraternity, mutual respect and solidarity.

The recent encyclical of Pope Francis “Fratelli tutti” offers us the valid points and thoughts for reflection and action to concretize his exhortations of living in fraternal love with all and becoming caretakers of one another for a more dignified and peaceful world. Let us therefore ask God, at the beginning of this New Year for the gift of wisdom, prudence, but also courage, strength and perseverance, so that peace does not remain only a desire of the heart, but is translated into life choices - those choices that build up communion and fraternity in the world.

Salesian Sanctity

The month of January is marked by a series of Salesian Feasts that we can rightly call it the month of Salesian Holiness. Salesian Holiness is everyday holiness exemplified in the lives of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello and emulated by their sons and daughters down the years. Thus we are blessed to start the year with a number of Salesian models of Holiness [*St. John Bosco, St. Francis de Sales, Blessed Laura Vicuña, Blessed Luigi Variara and Blessed Bronislaw Markiewicz*] who will inspire, guide and accompany us on our journey throughout the New Year.

Don Bosco our father and founder is the archetype of great holiness. Don Bosco’s holiness had a magnetic effect on those who surrounded him. Everyone found in him a person capable of understanding their past, of recognizing the value of their present and of making them capable of realizing a meaningful and hopeful future. In a situation of the world today amidst the pandemic and various crises, Don Bosco comes as a model for our own times. In his days, not less were the difficulties he had to go through, the oppositions he had to endure and the hardships he had to cope up with. He responded to all these challenges and intervened in every situation with trust in God and faith in the powerful intercession of Mary.

He constantly expressed the profound awareness of having been the recipient of the gifts of God. Don Bosco's dreams are precious testimonies that allow us to grasp how his interior experience corresponded to a passionate search for the "mission" to which God had called him. His encounter with God could not be separated from a concrete and tenacious commitment to the good of the others especially the vulnerable and the poorest however difficult a situation might be. As we journey on



with the situation of our world today, we turn to our Father for strength, courage and inspiration to break through with love and faith each given situation.

F *Francis De Sales*, a Saint who possessed a wonderfully balanced and integrated personality, coupled with a profound spirituality is yet another example of living life authentically and happily amidst any difficult situation. In addition to his great kindness and holiness of life, he was also gifted with a psychological intuition that made him a sought-after spiritual director. In an age like ours in which there are many who suffer from depression and more or less severe forms of anxiety especially in the post-Covid situation, St. Francis De Sales reminds us through his spirituality based on the goodness of God and the conviction that our peace is found only in conformity with God's will. The circumstances around which our life is woven are the places where we find God. Hence he teaches us to accept with love the situation in which we find ourselves. The world is struck with a variety of great changes, difficulties, mishaps and discouragement but this Saint of goodness comes to remind us of the supremacy of love. If we truly seek to please God, then we will have peace of heart even in trials and difficulties. "Nothing can disturb us", he writes, "if not the love of ourselves and the importance we give to ourselves". Let us follow the example of this great Saint to remain calm in all difficult situations of life and to accept with love what God has in store for us and our mission.

L*aura Vicuna*, a young Saint whose life has touched and transformed many, gives us the assurance that amidst trials and difficulties, there is always the victory of love, perseverance and hope. The life of Blessed Laura Vicuña has many modern-day resonances. From an early age, Laura's life seemed destined for perseverance in difficulty as it began in the midst of the turmoil of civil war in Chile and the family problems. She stood tall against all odds with faith and courage to fight against the physical and moral threats to her life. We can say that her life is the fruit of a love story and today she shines as a model of this unfailing love. In her own simple yet robust capacity she knew how to welcome the gift of life and to make it a continuous response of love to God and to others. By living her life of difficult interventions she accepted the call of the Lord to be a prophet of love which was transformed into a freely accepted holocaust for the sake of others especially the conversion of her mother. Today amidst the complexity of our days, we are called to give various responses to the many queries of life, of young people and of the society. As Salesian educators, we are invited after the great example of Blessed Laura Vicuna to be prophets of love among the young and others, to be defenders of the truth and promoters of peace and communion. Let us look up to the heroic example of Blessed Laura in our efforts to live more authentic lives.

B*lessed Luigi Variara* and *Blessed Bronislaw Markiewicz* were fruits of the Salesian Charism and of Don Bosco's Spirituality. They lived life of love and of total service to God. The joy of sharing the fruits of holiness is seen in the lives of these two saints who went beyond their own confines to spread the message of God's love. Blessed Luigi Variara spent his life caring and loving the lepers and their children. Blessed Bronislaw Markiewicz worked tirelessly to bring up the social and moral status of the orphans. In them we can witness the capacity of perseverance and endurance to radiate the love of God in the poor and abandoned. They showed by their lives that what truly matters in this life is love of God and love of neighbour.

Looking at the impressive life of our Saints, we are privileged to say that we are the custodians of this precious heritage that deserves to be better known and valued in our own days. It is our

responsibility then to carry forward with love and audacity the legacy they have handed down to us and to keep alive the Salesian characteristic of Holiness.

Strenna 2021: Moved by hope: “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21: 5)

The Strenna 2021 of the Rector Major Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime with the theme “**Moved by hope: “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21: 5)**” gives us the thrust of moving forward with greater Faith, Hope and Courage in the midst of our situation that is characterized by so much of bewilderment, anxiety, doubts and, in some cases, even despair. Contextualizing the call for concrete



gestures of Salesian presence in the prevailing situation of our world, the Rector Major reminds us that our Holy Founder and Father Don Bosco was himself "a master in showing us how the path of faith and hope not only illuminate but also gives the necessary strength to change the unfavorable or adverse conditions ...” In the current situation of our days, we cannot hide the reality we are living and experiencing. Behind the appalling fact of a large number of people being affected by the pandemic and other forms of evil, there is need for

human warmth, encouragement and positive responses that bring Hope to the lives of people and the world. The situation of the pandemic as this is enough to make humanity "tremble" and make it much more vulnerable. The Rector Major reminds us that here lies the challenge for us as Salesian educators- to be signs of hope, to be healers of hurt feelings, to be attentive to the needs of all, etc...In our turn and capacity, let us search for those places to learn, exercise and give Hope to others convinced of the saying of Rector Major who reminds us that even in painful situations we are called to ‘continue to express the certainty of being moved by Hope: because God in his Spirit continues to make "all things new"’.

The Rector Major further invites us to make a Salesian reading of what we are living and to give more answers in particular to the young. As we move forward to live the invitation of Rector Major through this Strenna 2021, let us reflect and discern together the questions that he poses to us in order that we may be the authentic bearers of Hope in the world today.

- What response can we give?
- What contribution can we offer as the Salesian Family?
- What Gospel values, read in a Salesian perspective, do we feel we can offer?
- How can we, as educators, offer as an alternative an “education to hope”?

May Mary, Mother of Hope, accompany and guide us through, in our journey of becoming the prophets and sowers of Hope in the society and the Church today.

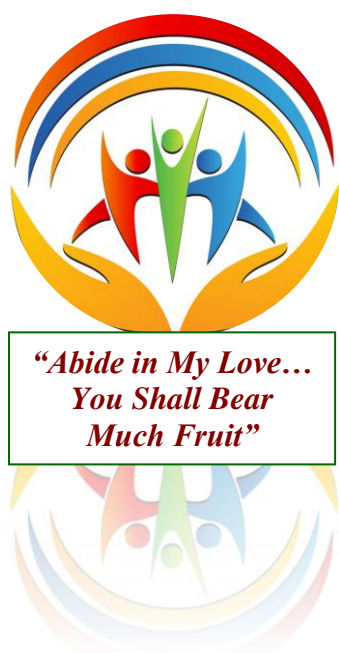
Unity Octave

The theme for the 2021 Week of Prayer (18- 25 January) for Christian Unity is “*Abide in My Love...You Shall Bear Much Fruit*”. The theme reminds Christians worldwide about the

importance of praying for the fruits of closer communion with our brothers and sisters in Christ and greater solidarity with the whole of creation. To explicitly elaborate the meaning of the theme, it is further divided into the following sections:

- Abiding in God’s love is to be reconciled with oneself
- Abiding in Christ until we bear fruit
- Abiding in Christ, the source of all love, the fruit of communion grows
- Abiding in Christ the fruit of solidarity and witness grows

For the eight days of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2021, a journey of prayer is proposed as under:



- Day 1 : Called by God: “You did not choose me but I chose you” (Jn 15:16a)
- Day 2 : Maturing internally: “Abide in me as I abide in you” (Jn 15:4a)
- Day 3 : Forming one body: “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12b)
- Day 4 : Praying together: “I do not call you servants any longer ... but I have called you friends” (Jn 15:15)
- Day 5 : Letting oneself be transformed by the Word: “You have already been pruned by the word...” (Jn 15:3)
- Day 6 : Welcoming others: “Go and bear fruit, fruit that will last” (Jn 15:16b)
- Day 7 : Growing in unity: “I am the vine; you are the branches” (Jn 15:5a)
- Day 8 : Reconciling with all of creation: “So that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (Jn15:11)

The celebration of the week-long Unity Octave reminds us of the love of Christ who urges us to pray, but also to go beyond our prayer for Christian unity. Communities and churches need God's gift of reconciliation as a source of life. But, above all, they need it in order to be able to give their common witness to the world. The world needs ambassadors of reconciliation, who break down barriers, build bridges, establish peace, and open the door to new lifestyles, in the name of the One who has reconciled us in God, Jesus Christ. The prayer of Jesus for unity sounds particularly important. Jesus prays that they remain united in the recognition of the one Lord. He then indicates the source of this unity which is exactly the unity of the Father with the Son (cf. Jn.17, 21). The unity of Christians is not that of mutual sympathy or of an identical way of seeing or even the generic recognition of a single God, but derives from having discovered the unity between the Father and the Son, a discovery that has changed life of the disciples. Let us unite ourselves with every ecclesial community in this week to raise prayers and supplications to Almighty God so that the longing of the Lord Jesus may be fulfilled: *‘That they may all be one!’*

Family News and Communications

Congratulations: We congratulate Fr. Davis Maniparamben SDB who was appointed as the 5th Provincial of the Salesian Province of New Delhi INN on 17th December 2020. We assure him of our

prayers in this noble responsibility of leading and animating the Province. May the Lord bless him and may our Blessed Mother guide and accompany him in this mandate.

PCI Formation Team Meeting: From 25-28 January 2021, there will be an online meeting of the PCI Formation Team. The meeting will deal with the presentation of the contextualized text of the Document “Guidelines for the Formation period of Temporary Vows”. Two members of the Formation Team from all the 7 Provinces will participate in the meeting. From our Province, Sr. Rosa Pyngrope and Sr. Euginia Kyntiewlin Susngi will take part in it. We wish the PCI Formation Team all the best and fruitful outcome of the meeting.

Prayers for the sick and the departed

We extend our prayerful support to all the sick ones through the intercession of our Blessed Mother. We offer our special prayers for:

- The nephew of Sr. Lina Kharjana, Sr. Mathilda Kharjana and Sr. Igina Kharjana
- The brother-in-law of Sr. Marvella Shangpliang
- Sr. Mary Edattukaran FMA of Guwahati Province
- All our Sisters who are sick in the community and in the hospital
- All our family members and members of the Salesian Family

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. Margaret Changte at the demise of her cousin brother on 22 November 2020.
- Sr. Rosa Pyngrope, Sr. Wismary Kharbihkhiew and Sr. Ibaniewkor Warjri at the passing away of their cousin brother and brother-in-law on 5 December 2021.
- Sr. Jubil Dkhar and Sr. Hunbih Dkhar at the death of their cousin sister on 11 December 2020.
- Sr. Assunta Lyngdoh who lost her eldest sister on 19 December 2020.
- Sr. Euphresia Thyрниang at the passing away of her cousin brother on 24 December 2020.
- Sr. Regina Nongbri at the demise of her brother-in-law on 25 December 2020.
- Sr. Rita Dora Thomas and the Province of Mumbai INB at the passing away of Sr. Beatrice Monteiro FMA on 24 December 2020.
- Sr. Celina Maslai at the loss of her uncle on 28 December 2020.

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.

Year of St. Joseph

We are privileged to enter the New Year 2021 under the protection of St. Joseph as the Church keeps this year (8 December 2020- 8 December 2021) as the “Year of St. Joseph”. In his Apostolic Letter “*Patris Corde*” (“With a Father’s Heart”), Pope Francis reminds the Church of the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church and in remembrance of this great occasion, the Holy Father has proclaimed the “Year of Saint Joseph”. In his letter the Pope says a lot about the gifts God gave Saint Joseph, which enabled him to look after Jesus and Mary, and he also suggests several ways we can learn from him. All through his life,

St. Joseph was obedient to God's plan, to ensure the well-being, care, and protection of Jesus and Mary. Like him, we are also called to serve Christ in all that we do. Furthermore, the Holy Father brings to light St. Joseph as a fine example of one who accepted Mary unconditionally and trusted God's word through the Angel. His life teaches us to accept with greater hope and courage, to embrace things the way they are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. St. Joseph becomes for us also a model of resignation, trust and hope in the Providence of God. As we enter into the New Year, let us encounter God in all situations in the company of St. Joseph, entrusting ourselves and our mission to his fatherly protection and powerful intercession with the following prayer of Pope Francis:



*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

I conclude wishing each and every one of you a Grace and Hope-filled New Year 2021. May the Lord sustain our life and mission as we move forward to encounter Him in our brothers and sisters, in our activities and apostolate throughout this whole year. May our Blessed Mother shield us from every danger, sickness and evil of every sort. Let us welcome with faith and gratitude every blessing the Lord will send us in this year.

Happy and Hope-filled New Year 2021

With assurance of prayers and loving accompaniment,

Affectionately,

**Sr. Elizabeth George FMA
Provincial**