



Provincial Circular

Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Auxilium Provincial Office Nongthymmai, Shillong - Meghalaya - 793014

CIR/EG/INS/57/2023

01.04.2023

My dear Sisters,

Loving greetings from Auxilium Provincial House, Nongthymmai!

We are blessed to begin the month of April with the initiation of the Holy Week which reminds us of the centrality of our Christian life in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, our Redeemer; a week which speaks to us tangibly of the great and sacrificing love of God for us, the love that bears all suffering, calumny, shedding of blood and death on the Cross. As we earnestly enter this month with deep sense of gratitude to God for such great love for us, we are also invited to spend more time in prayer and reflect on our openness to correspond with this great love of God and our willingness to take part generously in the passion of Christ. Jesus has crowned the meaning of life with His Love. His sufferings and passion were proved victorious in his death and resurrection – all and just for Love. As Christians borne by such great and surpassing love of our Saviour, we are motivated to believe that a life without love is a wasted life. For Jesus, showing and living love is expressed in his obedience to bow to the Father's will to the point of giving up His life. But what does "love" mean for me today and when does it become truly real in my life? For no one ever in history would be able to undergo the trials, suffering and death as Christ did for the cause of Love. We can therefore say that it is only when we meet Christ and allow ourselves to be conquered by His love, that Love becomes reality in life.

During the Holy Week, we will be given ample opportunities to let ourselves be touched by the love of God in different ways - in the celebration of the Liturgy, in the moments of encounter with God and one another, in the moments of self-abnegation and in the sincere meditation on the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. These are the unique "opportunities" in the Liturgical year that help us look at the only way to God and to happiness - that of Loving as Christ has loved us. As we enter into these momentous moments of God's Love in the holy week which will guide us through the month, let us rediscover the spark of God's love in us – the Love that changes everything. This time of grace will be more fruitful when we make sincere efforts to take our steps closer towards God and His love, to walk the journey within ourselves sustained by the accompaniment of each other in the community and in the mission.

Pope Francis in his Message for Lent 2023 invites the faithful to reflect on the benefits of the relationship between Lent and the ongoing synod on synodality, which focuses on listening and journeying together. He said "*Our Lenten journey is synodal!*" and he stresses on the need of directing our life on listening to the Lord and on mutual listening. This goes in line with the journey we are

making as a Province in this centenary year guided by the theme “*Make our community a privileged place of formation in the synodal style.*” We are invited to walk this path together in love and communion, to reflect and rediscover the essence of Togetherness. Our community is the most privileged place where we form ourselves towards the wholeness of ‘being’ and ‘growing’ together by listening to one another, by upholding the dignity of each other, by helping one another grow towards God through the daily calls of our mission. Each one has got the responsibility to contribute towards building up the desired synodality of love, of togetherness, of faith and hope.

Our General Chapter XXIV gives great importance to this element that characterizes the genuineness and authenticity of our FMA communities. When the world around us is in quest of true peace amidst painful situations torn down by war, hatred, natural disasters and violence of every sort, there is also a danger that in our personal world inside oneself and in our community, there may exist similar situations where peace and tranquility, communion and togetherness may be destroyed by our indifference, our negligence, our lack of enthusiasm, our pride and jealousy, our irresponsible confrontation of the mission and our unwillingness to change. The Holy Week is an opportune time for all of us to make a commitment to return to God’s love, to give back to God in gratitude for the love we received, to return to the passion of our response to Him, to follow the trail and zeal of our sisters, our pioneers and our missionaries who have loved God much and who gave their lives totally for Him. May this time of spiritual renewal kindle in each of us the genuine pledge to fill our lives with greater love and to contribute in making our communities and educative mission places of formation towards love, communion and synodality- where everything is motivated by love and aimed at building up love.

Celebrating the Week of Love

PALM SUNDAY: We begin the solemn commemoration of Jesus’ offering of Love with the celebration of the Palm Sunday. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem is acclaimed and remembered with the words “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna to the Redeemer!” In this holy week, in the real events that we will relive, we are offered to contemplate the mystery that

moves all of history, which attracts, purifies and reveals the love of the Father for humanity, manifested definitively on the cross and was fulfilled in the resurrection.



Jesus enters Jerusalem on the back of a donkey which testifies to his meekness and empathy in sharing the burdens of others and in serving them, which he did all through his life and continued to this very moment of entry into death. Where there is the ability to serve, the Kingdom of God will be realized. The attitude of Jesus on this day invites us to open ourselves to the ability to love and to serve. Jesus enters his week of 'completion' having a donkey as a throne, and ends it on another throne, the cross: a sign of love that goes to the end. Let us therefore enter with attention, recollection and adoration to experience the profundity of our salvation, which already contains in itself the entire fulfilment of the promises that concern Christ and all of us.

HOLY THURSDAY: The manifestation of Jesus' love continues to be seen and witnessed in his act of perpetuating love in the world at the Last Supper. "After having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn. 13:1). On this significant day, Jesus performed the miracles of charity that continues to be in our days the patrimony of His great love - *the Holy Eucharist, Priesthood and the great*



Commandment of Love. With the Holy Eucharist, Jesus shows His desire to stay forever with us, to be a companion of our journey - every time and every hour. With the Sacrament of Priesthood, He continues the exercise of his admirable charity and sacrifice. With the Commandment of Love, He invites us to live the spirit which he has shown by his example. These are the greatest gifts that He leaves for us - gifts made through service and a sign of His ever-abiding presence.

Our responsibility lies in corresponding to Christ's love with greater generosity and humility; correspond by valuing more and more the gift of the Eucharist, our participation in the Holy Mass, our communions, our adorations, our personal encounter with the Eucharistic Lord; correspond by partaking with greater ardour in the priestly ministry of Christ. Jesus invites his disciples and all of us to follow him not for a formal and obedient imitation, but to make us sharers in his mystery and his ministry. Here lies the root of the baptismal priesthood for which all of us are consecrated: to be servants of everyone in the world particularly in our mission, to accompany them to the knowledge of God's love that will ultimately transform life. And lastly, to correspond by living genuinely the commandment of Love with each other: valuing and respecting the gift of one another, welcoming them in their diversity and loving them with the tenderness of Christ's love. On a significant day as this, we are called to delve into this great mystery of Christ's love a little bit more and to let ourselves be guided by this love. As Jesus who instituted the Eucharist and who offered himself as a model of service and an icon of charity, let us also strive to live the Eucharistic mystery in our daily life by becoming a servant of love for everyone, of everyone and in everything.

GOOD FRIDAY: The liturgy of Good Friday calls us to relive the culminating sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. The sacrifice of Jesus on Holy Thursday with the offering of himself in the Holy Eucharist is continued with the sacrifice of his blood and the offering of his life on the Cross. The significance of the Passion and Death of Christ reveals to us that only Love remains. The tortures, the scourges, the pain, the suffering, the mocking and scolding are surpassed by Love alone. Listening and participating in the celebration of Jesus' passion and death reminds us of how unfortunately this story continues today. The innocent blood of Christ continues to be shed for humanity today. This day calls us to look attentively at all the suffering of humanity. The many unpleasant situations in the world – war, hatred, injustice, political conflict, intolerance, exploitation, abuses, moral torture, slavery of selfishness, etc.... are putting a strain on all the nations of the world and in the lives of everyone. These

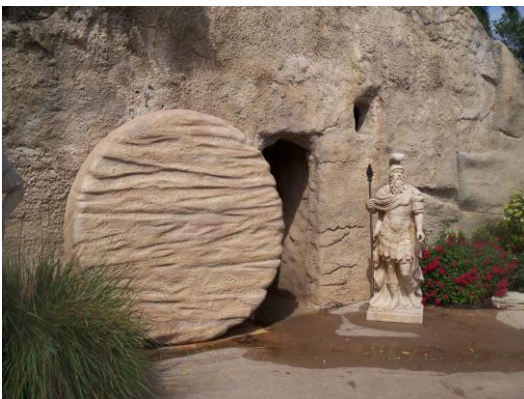


sad happenings show us how many innocent people are still being crucified outside Jerusalem, how many are crucified on the altar of profit, of interest, how many are crucified for wars, how many are being tortured for the interest of a few, how many are being scourged for the wrong exercise of power by some, how many are denied justice and a lot more deprived of living a dignified life.

The bitterness of the death of the innocent One more than two thousand years ago continues to be felt and experienced by many. It is a moment of questioning for humanity today particularly for us Christians who are redeemed by every drop of Christ's blood: Are we satisfied to see that Christ continues to be crucified today? Are we responsible for the death of the innocent ones in the world today as were the people in Jesus' time? Are we the Pilates who wash hands to protect one's image in the face of adversity? Are we the Caiaphas who condemn the innocent ones? Are we among the crowd who unjustly shout "Crucify"? Or on the other side instead, are we the faithful ones like our Blessed Mother, her sister, Mary the mother of Clopas and Mary of Magdala or like John who stood by the brutality of the cross to the very end, who stood by the truth of life, who stood by the moral principles that give true meaning to life?

On a day like this as we commemorate the total sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, it is an opportune moment for us to stop a while and see where do we stand at this juncture of life...are we promoters of life or are we instrumental in crucifying Christ in our brothers and sisters? As Christ transcended the Cross, let us also climb with Him to find meaning in the crosses we undergo in life and let us prevent the crucifixions we or the situations cause in others' life. As Jesus our Saviour transformed the cross of torture into a sign of glory and redemption, let us also face the reality of our contemporary world with a positive outlook that there is life in every suffering, there is hope in every trial, there is future in every hopelessness and above all there is Love when we focus on promoting life and when we stand for the truth and righteousness of all in the world.

HOLY SATURDAY: Holy Saturday is the day of great silence and waiting at the tomb of Jesus together with Mary, his Mother. It is the moment in which the whole Church is gathered around Mary in union with Christ. It is the hour of the Mother who cries but who reiterates that 'Yes' said to the Angel a long time ago, accepting God's will at that time as in this difficult hour. Mary stood waiting the resurrection of her beloved Son with sorrow that pierced her heart with a determined faith and unwavering courage. Mary had an incredible faith. She is a silent figure, a figure who fully respects her Son's choices, choices she did not know and could not comprehend humanly.



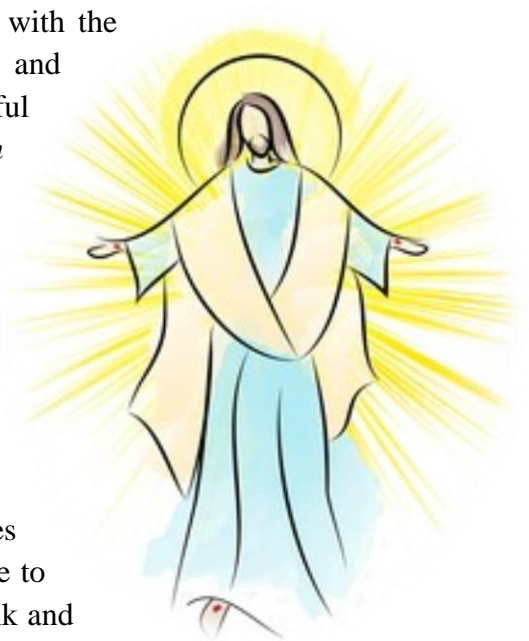
There at the tomb and at the foot of the cross she remained silent in the immense pain of the death of her Son and she remained in the silence of waiting without losing faith in the God of life, while the body of her Crucified Son lay in the tomb. This sorrowful scene of our Blessed Mother spelled out clearly the exemplary attitude of hers, the faithful virgin who with her fidelity to this very moment makes us rediscover the primacy of God's initiative and of listening to his Word as a believer. At the foot of the

Cross, Mary relived the great moments of her life that shone since the scene of the Annunciation and characterized her pilgrimage in faith till the death of her Son.

Mary is presented to us today as an image of Hope. She stands as a faithful Mother who accompanied her Son even at the sorrowful moments of torture, suffering and death. In her we find consolation that there is no emptiness, poverty, fragility where she does not come close. On this Saturday of silence, prayer and reflection, let us seek our Mother's help to sustain our hope and give us the consolation of the heart with a firm conviction that "*Nothing is impossible for God*".

Alleluia! He is Risen

Easter is a solemn moment that gives us so much of Hope that with the Risen Christ there is joy and salvation, there is courage and enthusiasm to stand firm in our belief and to become the faithful witnesses to the world. "*Go quickly and tell the disciples, He has risen from the dead and now he is going ahead of you to Galilee; that is where you will see him*" (Matthew 28:7). These were the words that the Risen Lord spoke to Mary when he appeared first to her. They clearly signify that with the Resurrection, everything becomes a testimony. As Christians redeemed by this great mystery of Christ's self-giving, we are also called to testify and become witnesses and testimonies to His resurrection. To be a witness of Jesus Christ is to have a convinced personal testimony that He is the Son of God, the Saviour and Redeemer of humanity and of the world. We are witnesses of Christ when we live to reflect His teachings. People should be able to see something of Jesus Christ in us. The way we act, speak, look, think and our attitudes should reflect the ways of Christ. We also become witnesses of Christ when we help others come to Him. Pope Francis also calls for this urgency in our time to become the missionaries of evangelical joy. In his Apostolic Exhortation '*Evangelii Gaudium*' he calls every Christian to become ever more missionaries, heralds and evangelizers of the Risen Christ. He said '*having had the real experience of the Lord's Easter, we must leave quickly, that is, we must not waste time and opportunities for the missionary transformation of the Church. [...]; like the women disciples, we must leave the sepulchre empty and run to announce the greatest news in human history.*'



The conviction that Christ has truly risen should fill us with joy, with true profound joy based on the certainty that the risen Christ no longer dies, but is alive and active in the Church and in the world. This conviction should motivate us to move out to become evangelizers of this great joy. The centrality of the Risen Christ in Christian life is prolonged and completed by the centrality in evangelization and in becoming missionaries and evangelizers with Hope and Joy of the Risen Saviour. The love that Christ has shown and given to us with His passion, death and glorious resurrection should also infuse in us greater love, faith and hope to tell the world that we have been saved and sanctified. We become true missionaries of Christ's love by our right attitudes, by our effort to conform ourselves to Christ's ways, by the love that we share with others and by our exemplary life

which in themselves become elements of evangelization without the need of proclaiming in words and deeds. *“The love in our heart makes us missionaries, not what we do or where we do it. What gives fruitfulness to our life is the love Jesus places in our hearts and which we can pour out on others”* said our former Superior General Mother Yvonne Reungoat when she addressed the new missionaries in 2016. Rightly said, it is love alone that truly makes us missionaries and evangelizers of God’s love. With the resurrection of Christ, we become evangelizers called to proclaim continuously the joy and the love we have experienced. Mother Chiara Cazzuola in her Circular 1018 also said *“Whoever evangelizes is always on a journey [...] Whoever really proclaims does not seek escape from the world, nor from the community. Whoever proclaims welcomes God’s dream of love and tries to reach everyone because they know no enemies, but only traveling companions with whom to share this love.”* As we live with gratitude the joy and the love we received from the Risen Christ, let us strive with greater faith to make this transition of a life transformed to the image of the Risen Lord. While we seek to evangelize and proclaim the message of Easter, let us pray for the faith, the courage and the grace of the Resurrected Christ that we may become instruments to produce the fruits of Easter that turn selfishness to charity, from a life withdrawn into itself to a life totally given for others; from a closed heart to an open heart and one that knows how to love.

World Gratitude Day

On 26 April we will unite with the FMA world to thank God for the gift of our dearest Mother General, Mother Chiara Cazzuola to our Institute. I am sure each of us is preparing for this feast with love and with creative animations to feel ourselves one with the Institute. The theme that is proposed to us **“With Mary we generate a culture of peace”** is indeed a clarion call to move forward as instruments of peace in our hearts, in our community, in our mission and in the world. I am sure the proposals made by the host Province has triggered our motivation and interest to go through the Salesian, Ecclesial and Biblical sources for a more profound significance in building up a culture of Peace in the interior home, in the welcoming home and in the common home.



We thank the 4 Colombian Provinces for such an enriching proposal given for the journey of celebration. May this journey we are making as an Institute not just end with the celebration but may continue to be lived by each of us striving to create and maintain a culture of Peace always in our personal lives, in our community, in our mission and in the world. Let us unite in gratitude with our Sisters of the Colombian Provinces for the celebration of the Feast by offering our dearest Mother the gift of our prayers and fidelity and our commitment to become generators of Peace wherever we are and whichever mission we are called to do. May our Blessed Mother help us in this journey as we continue to sow the seeds of Peace.

[Kindly follow the programme for the various moments of celebration as given by the host Province.]

Family News and Communications

Orientation Programme: The “Come and See” Programme for the Post Matric and Post-XII will be conducted at Auxilium, Nongthymmai [1- 30 April 2023] and at Auxilium, Khapmara [13 April- July] respectively. We pray that these programmes may be fruitful and that the young people may be inspired to discern and give heed to God’s call by the experience they will have in sharing our community life and mission. Let us also encourage and make effort to invite many more young people to come and experience the love of God for them. I would like to anticipate my gratitude to the two communities of Nongthymmai and Khapmara for their availability to accompany and guide these young people. May God bless our Sisters and especially our young candidates. At the same time, I would like to invite all our communities to promote vocations at the regional level by accommodating and accompanying girls who show signs of vocation so that our mission in the different regions may be perpetuated with the increase of local vocations.

Novices for INK and INB: I would like to inform that 4 of our Postulants will continue their formation in the Novitiates of Bangalore (INK) and Mumbai (INB) this year. We thank God for the gift of many young vocations and we are happy to share this gift with the other Provinces who have lesser vocations in this significant year of the centenary. They will return to the Province after their first profession. We pray that the Lord of the harvest will send more vocations to our Province and to FMA India as a whole. The 4 Postulants are:

For Bangalore : Altina R. Marak and Aitimary Bamon

For Mumbai : Magdalence Pohleng and Rosina Kharwanniang

We thank our Postulants for their spirit of generosity and we accompany them with our prayers and support in their journey of formation. We also thank Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukayil, Sr. Meenakshi D’Silva, the 2 Mistress of Novices and the respective Provinces for the accompaniment they will render to our Novices. They will leave the Province in the first week of May.

Episcopal Ordination: The 16th of April 2023 will be a remarkable day for the Church of Nongstoin with the blessing of a new shepherd in the person of Fr. Wilbert Marwein who will be ordained Bishop on this day. While we congratulate him for this grace of God conferred upon him, let us offer him our prayerful support and collaboration for the fruitfulness of the mission of the Church in Nongstoin Diocese.

Appointment of the Auxiliary Bishop: We also thank God for another blessing of a new Auxiliary Bishop in the Diocese of Aizawl, Mizoram. On 30 March 2023, Fr. Joachim Walder was appointed by our Holy Father Pope Francis as the Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese. We congratulate Fr. Joachim for this noble appointment as the Shepherd in the Church as we assure him our prayers and collaboration for the fruitfulness of his mission and growth of the Church in Mizoram and in Barak Valley.

PCI Meet: The Provincial Conference of India Meet that was held from 13-16 March 2023 at Auxilium Provincial House, Manikandam, Trichy with the theme “*With Mary reawakening the original freshness of vocational fruitfulness, placing ourselves in a state of ongoing formation*” was a

moment of spiritual renewal and a way forward as FMA India. The presence of Sr. Celine Jacob, General Visiting Councillor, all the FMA India Provincials, National Coordinators and Delegates from the 7 Provinces was an enriching experience and openness to the call of the General Chapter XXIV to reawaken the original freshness of our vocation. The various moments of prayer, discussions, encounters, etc were geared towards the examination of our life and journey as FMA India so far and proposal for the journey ahead. The different sharing and enlightenment on the theme were indeed inspiring and motivating to make our charism alive and active in our land. The National Coordinators of the various sectors also presented the reports of the mission done in the different Provinces. It is amazing to see the growth of the charism in the different fields throughout India through the mission and apostolate of our Sisters in the different regions and sectors. We also had an input session by Fr. K.M. Jose SDB, former Provincial of Chennai Province who spoke beautifully on the '*New style of Formation at all levels.*' Another moment that takes us back to the original freshness of our vocation is the pilgrimage that the whole group made to Thanjavur, the place where the first missionaries set foot in India. The Sisters of Trichy Province has constructed the memorial building as a replica of Valponasca, Italy that has become a place of pilgrimage for Salesian Spirituality. We also had the opportunity of visiting the Cathedral Church, Thanjavur where the original statue of Mary Help of Christians brought by the first Salesians in 1906 is kept and honoured. We are grateful to the Sisters who have made possible this pilgrimage.

We express our sincere gratitude to Sr. Celine Jacob, the Presiding General Councillor for her valuable presence, suggestions, and interventions. A note of thanks to Sr. Nirmala Lazar, Provincial of INM and PCI President for the meticulous and tactful organization of the meeting; also, to Sr. Tamizharasi Kanickaraj, the PCI Secretary for her notable work and assistance with much love and precision. A special bouquet of gratitude to Sr. Margaret Amalanathan, Provincial of INT who along with her council and sisters of the Province have accorded the members of the PCI with an affectionate welcome and have seen to the details of every need. May the Lord bless and reward all our sisters and their mission abundantly. The meeting was indeed enriching and it invites all of us to respond positively to the call of our mission with fidelity to our origins and with an open mentality to the signs of our times. Let us join hands and hearts in the accompaniment of our Blessed Mother to journey along this path of ongoing formation and revitalize the beauty and richness of our vocation.

Prayers for the sick and the departed

We extend our prayerful support to all the sick ones, through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother, especially our sick sisters, relatives of our Sisters and members of the Salesian Family. We remember in our prayers particularly:

- Our Holy Father Pope Francis. May the Lord bless him with His healing and comforting presence.
- The father of Sr. Diamond Suja
- The father of Sr. Lusimai Maiong
- All our sisters who are sick in the communities, and
- All the sick relatives of our Sisters

We also offer our heartfelt condolences and prayers to all our Sisters who have lost their dear ones in the past month and all the members of the Salesian Family. May the departed ones enjoy the loving embrace of God forever in His Kingdom and may all those who mourn their passing away be consoled by the strength and grace of God. We offer our heartfelt sympathy and prayerful support particularly to:

- Sr. Wankyrkhu Biam at the passing away of her father on 5 March 2023.
- Sr. Bitrinitas Lyngdoh at the demise of her mother on 11 March 2023.
- Sr. Patricia Nongkhlaw at the departure of her brother on 27 March 2023.
- Fr Biju Michael SDB, the Regional Councillor of South Asia at the demise of his mother on 4 March 2023.
- Fr. Provincial and the confreres of Bangalore Province (INK) at the departure of Fr. Thomas Vailatt SDB on 13 March 2023.
- Fr. Provincial and the confreres of Shillong Province (INS) at the passing away of Fr. John Bosco Minj SDB on 15 March 2023.

As I conclude I would like to wish each of you a fervent celebration of the Holy Week. May this time of grace be truly holy as we celebrate the events of faith related to the last earthly days of Jesus, in his passion, death and resurrection. Let us spend time in prayer, in reconciliation and in gratitude for the love and great works God has done for us and for humanity. I am happy to extend my cordial greetings of ‘**HAPPY EASTER**’ to one and all. May the joy of the resurrection free us from loneliness, weakness and despair and lead us to strength, beauty and happiness and may the Peace, Joy and Hope that Easter gives us continue to illuminate our everyday life and mission.

“Easter is the event that brought radical news for every human being, for history and for the world: the triumph of life over death; it is the feast of reawakening and of rebirth. Let us allow our lives to be conquered and transformed by the Resurrection!”

- Pope Francis -

With assurance of prayers and loving accompaniment,
Affectionately,



Sr. Elizabeth George FMA
Provincial

