

Cir #03

MARCH 2017

My dear Confreres,

Affectionate greetings from the Provincial House! I write this circular just after the conclusion of the 5-day long meeting of the Rector Major and his team of councilors with the provincials and their councilors and other invitees of our region of South Asia, commonly referred to as the "Team Visit".

The Team Visit – A Time of Grace and Great Salesian Fraternity

From 28th February to 4th March, we were privileged to have with us our beloved Rector Major Angel Fernandez Artime, his vicar Fr. Francesco Cereda, our regional councilor Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga, the Councilors in charge of Formation (Fr. Ivo Coelho), Youth Ministry (Fr. Fabio Attard), Missions (Fr. Basanes Guillermo), Social Communications (Fr. Filiberto Gonsales), and the RM's Delegate for the Salesian Family (Fr. Eusebio Munoz). They were here to take part in the Team Visit.

The Team Visit is an instrument of animation and government that the Rector Major uses particularly with regard to regions or groups of provinces. It is an initiative that was started about 30 years ago, by the then Rector Major Fr. Egidio Vigano, and takes place roughly once in six years, in every region of the congregation. Even though not prescribed by the Constitutions or Regulations, it has become a regular practice in the congregation because of its usefulness.

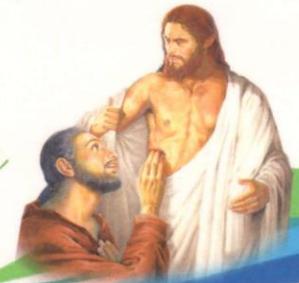
So far we have had six Team Visits in our region: New Delhi (Alaknanda) in 1987, Hyderabad in 1994, Mumbai in 2000, New Delhi (Okhla) in 2005, Bangalore in 2011 and the present one here in Chennai. They are occasions of sharing together our concerns and hopes and of deepening our understanding of the various issues that affect our mission in the region; they are also excellent opportunities for the provinces to grow as a region.

The meeting in Chennai, presided over by the Rector Major brought together 111 Salesian leaders from the region to study, reflect and deliberate on a series of issues ranging from mission, witness, formation, community life, networking etc. In his concluding address to the assembly the Rector Major, in the light of discussions and deliberations of the five-day exercise, outlined the priorities and vision for the future and called all Salesians to have a passion for the young and preference for the poor. He stressed the role of the Salesians in



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responding to the challenges facing India and in its transformation. “Mission”, he pointed out, “is not mere activities, initiatives, or works. It is passion for the salvation of the young”.

The Rector Major stressed evangelizing witness, primacy of God and community life rooted in fraternal communion as the touchstones of Salesian life and mission. He proposed personal and community project of life for growth as effective means to achieve these goals.

He called upon the Salesian communities to “live and deepen their style of life and presence among young people, thus overcoming the danger of fragmentation, individualism, activism and compartmentalisation”.

He urged communities and individuals to overcome differences arising from language, culture and ethnic identity, and become living witnesses of the Gospel, thereby enhancing evangelisation and promoting unity within the society.

The Rector Major called for a planning mentality and systematic evaluation which can deepen in the communities, awareness of the common mission, a shared mentality, and a convergence of criteria, objectives and lines of action.

I give below for your reflection the Challenges Facing Us and the Lines of Actions (Way Forward) suggested in the concluding statement of the Team Visit.

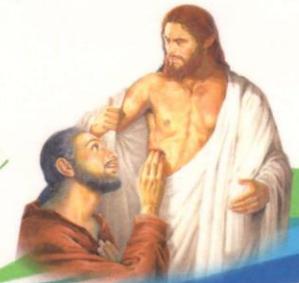
THE CHALLENGES BEFORE US

- a) We are called to be *mystics in the spirit* (GC27). But we are at times perceived as service-providers and not as God-oriented persons.
- b) Individualism, activism, and divisions stemming from ethnic, linguistic, and cultural factors prevent us from being *prophets of fraternity* (GC27).
- c) Institutionalization has limited us from being *servants of the young* (GC27) and from responding appropriately to the needs of the young.
- d) Inability to ensure the numerical consistency of our communities reduces the quality of our Salesian life and mission.
- e) Vocational fragility, inadequate motivations, departures from Salesian life, and a lack of commitment to ongoing formation are areas of serious concern for us.
- f) There is an urgent need to cultivate greater sensitivity to the relevance of the vocation of the Salesian Brother in our region.
- g) There is a weakening of the missionary thrust so vital to our Salesian identity, often expressed in an unwillingness to move beyond the confines of our Provinces.
- h) We have been found lacking in our animating presence among the young (marked by fidelity to the Preventive System) and the personal accompaniment of the young towards their holistic development.
- i) In our pursuit for success and excellence, attention to the poorest of the poor, the most marginalized, and rural youth has at times been neglected.



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- j) We have been working mostly for children in our educational institutions, and not focusing enough on *the young 15+*.
- k) Our planning is often limited to 'event-management', to the neglect of the Salesian community dimension and of opportunities for collaboration with other members of the Salesian Family and the laity.

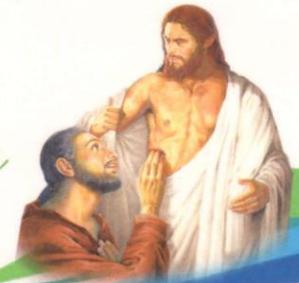
THE WAY FORWARD

- a) In imitation of Don Bosco's constant union with God, and in keeping with our identity as consecrated persons, we seek to give expression to our God-orientation through personal and community adoration of the Eucharistic Lord, becoming attentive listeners of the Word of God, and the daily living of our *Constitutions and Regulations*.
- b) Ever conscious of our Salesian religious vocation, we become fraternally sensitive to the uniqueness of every member of community and bear prophetic witness to our life of communion, accepting cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences.
- c) To break out of an institutional mentality, we try to become better immersed and involved in the lives of the young in imitation of the Good Shepherd.
- d) In view of the forthcoming Synod, we intend to focus our attention on the accompaniment of the young in their vocational discernment.
- e) To address the problem of vocational fragility, through proper discernment of the suitability of the candidates, we accompany those in initial formation towards a personalization of their formation, and on ensuring a systematic plan for the ongoing formation. This will be supplemented by the formation of the formators themselves. It is up to the SPCSA to offer any specific directions in view of interprovincial collaboration.
- f) To instill in the hearts of our formees a genuine Salesian missionary enthusiasm, we will disseminate relevant information on mission *ad gentes*, and on exemplary missionaries. In addition to promoting vocations, we shall enthusiastically plan for missionary vocational accompaniment, and respond to the missionary call of the Rector Major. The Provinces will take up appropriate initiatives to offer missionaries to the Salesian world.
- g) In view of a greater appreciation of the vocation and the role of the Salesian Brother, we aim at giving greater attention to specific vocation promotion and at cherishing our Salesian identity in its two forms. The Provinces will ensure the qualification of Salesian Brothers and the SPCSA will ensure their involvement at various regional-level and national-level activities.
- h) To counter the growing challenge of individualism prevalent in our mission and ministries, we take seriously the role of the House Council and the Community Assembly. In this venture, we make every effort to abide by the Salesian Educative Pastoral Plan.
- i) In view of ensuring the numerical consistency of our communities and improving the quality of our Salesian life and mission, every Province will (i) make a critical assessment of existing works and new initiatives; (ii) aim at the qualification and better distribution of confreres in the communities; and (iii) increase efforts at promoting vocations to the Salesian life.



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- j) We take concrete measures to ensure that no young person is excluded from benefiting *from any of our facilities* because of his/her economic situation or because of our focus on academic success or excellence.
- k) In the coming years, we shall make a conscious effort to focus more on the 15+ poor youth, especially by personal accompaniment in view of their holistic development and through higher education and training facilities.
- l) Inasmuch as *the digital world is the playground of the young* (GC27), we ought (i) to become conversant with the world of the media so as to harness its potential for education and evangelization, and (ii) to utilize every means of communication to give the best to the young.
- m) In response to the Church's ardent call, following the recent Synod on the Family (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*) and *Strenna 2017*, we shall intensify our ministry to families.
- n) We seek to be more attentive to the urgent ecological concerns of our times. To this end, we aim at conscientizing and empowering the young in all our institutions to care for *mother earth, our common home*.
- o) To ensure greater effectiveness in our mission, we actively collaborate with the members of the Salesian Family and other religious.
- p) Sharing responsibilities with laypeople should be deemed an imperative. To this end, we motivate and empower the laity so that they become our close collaborators in the actualization of the Salesian charism.
- q) In the interest of greater Salesian effectiveness in the region, every Province must own up its obligation to and partnership in the SPCSA and work towards a common unified vision and a shared regional perspective, focusing on serving and supporting the Provinces through consultation and collaboration in the relevant areas of our mission.
- r) The SPCSA should focus on becoming more efficient and effective through *leaner structures and processes*, with due emphasis on credibility and competency.
- s) Under the auspices of the SPCSA, the various networks should play a significant role of *animation* rather than becoming administrative agencies that implement projects..

I take this opportunity to thank in a very special way Fr. Vice-Provincial, Fr. Economist, the Administrator and the confreres and staff of the Provincial House and the various departments for the excellent planning and meticulous execution of the Team Visit. The participants were unanimous in acknowledging the quality of service we were able to offer them during the Team Visit. Congrats, all of you, confreres and staff.

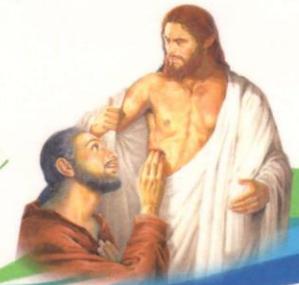
Lent: A Journey with the Lord

The Lenten journey that we have just begun is characterized, in the tradition of the Church, by some practices: fasting, almsgiving and prayer. Fasting means abstinence from food but it includes other forms of privation for the sake of a more sober life. But all of this does not yet constitute the full reality of fasting: It is the external sign of an interior reality, of our



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commitment, with God's help, to abstain from evil and to live the Gospel. **He does not really fast who does not know how to nourish himself on the Word of God.**

Fasting, in the Christian tradition, is closely linked to almsgiving. In one of his addresses on Lent, St. Leo the Great taught: "**Whatever a Christian does always, he must now do with greater dedication and devotion**, to fulfill the apostolic norm of Lenten fasting consisting in **abstinence not only from food, but above all abstinence from sins**. To this obligatory and holy fast, no more useful deed can be added than **almsgiving**, which under the unique name of 'mercy' includes many good works. Immense is the field of works of mercy. Not only the rich and wealthy can benefit others with alms, so can those of modest and poor condition. In this way, though unequal in goods, all can be equal in their sentiments of mercy of the soul" (Address 6 on Lent, 2: PL 54, 286).

Lent, moreover, is a privileged time for prayer. St. Augustine says that fasting and almsgiving are "the two wings of prayer," which gives them greater impulse to reach God. He states: "In this way our prayer, made with humility and charity, in fasting and almsgiving, in temperance and the forgiveness of offenses, giving good things and not returning bad things, removing ourselves from evil and doing good, seeks peace and obtains it. With the wings of these virtues our prayer flies safely and is taken with greater certainty to heaven, where Christ, our peace, has preceded us" (Sermon 206, 3 on Lent: PL 38, 1042).

Lent invites us to a more faithful and intense prayer and to a prolonged meditation on the Word of God. St. John Chrysostom exhorts us: "Embellish your house with modesty and humility through the practice of prayer. Make your house splendid with the light of justice; adorn its walls with good works as if they were a patina of pure gold and instead of walls and precious stones place faith and supernatural magnanimity, placing over all things, high on a pediment, prayer as decoration of the whole complex. In this way you will prepare a worthy dwelling for the Lord; in this way you will receive him in a splendid palace. He will enable you to transform your soul into a temple of his presence" (Homily 6 on Prayer: PG 64, 466).

Dear confreres, on this Lenten journey let us be careful to accept Christ's invitation to follow him in a more determined and coherent way, renewing the grace and commitments of our baptism, to abandon the old man that is in us and to clothe ourselves with Christ, so that renewed, we will reach Easter and be able to say with St. Paul, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). A good and profitable Lenten journey to you all!

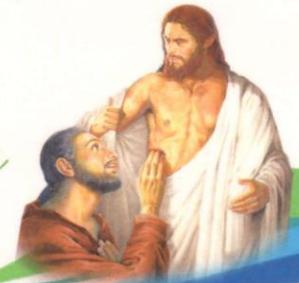
Here are some practical hints on making Lent meaningful in our lives.

- Give up complaining—focus on gratitude.
- Give up pessimism—become an optimist.
- Give up harsh judgments—think kindly thoughts.



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Give up worry—trust Divine Providence.
Give up discouragement—be full of hope.
Give up bitterness—turn to forgiveness.
Give up hatred—return good for evil.
Give up negativism—be positive.
Give up anger—be more patient.
Give up pettiness—become mature.
Give up gloom—enjoy the beauty that is all around you.
Give up jealousy—pray for trust.
Give up gossiping—control your tongue.
Give up sin—turn to virtue.

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

CONGRATULATIONS TO FMA PROVINCIALS

The erstwhile FMA Province of Chennai has been bifurcated to form the two new Provinces Chennai (FMA-INM) and Tiruchy (FMA-INT). With great joy we welcome the appointment of Rev. **Sr. Lazar Maria Nirmala** as the New Provincial of FMA Chennai Province and Rev. **Sr. Amalanathan Mary Margaret** as the first Provincial of the FMA Province of Tiruchy for the next six-year period. We congratulate the new provincials and assure them of our prayerful support as they animate and govern their respective provinces along the paths of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.

ADMISSION TO MINISTRIES

On 16th March 2017 at 6 p.m., our first and second year students of theology will receive their Lector and Acolyte ministries at DBTC from the Provincial, Rev. Fr. K. M. Jose. We accompany these bothers with our prayerful wishes.

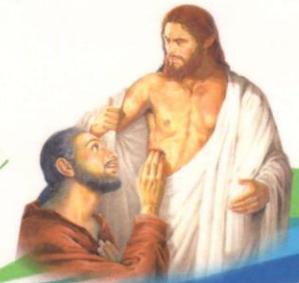
DIACONATE ORDINATIONS

This year, the Diaconate Ordinations will be held at St. Mary's Co-Cathedral, Chennai on 18th March 2017 at 10 a.m. Twelve of our students of theology in Becchi Don Bosco (six of INM and six of INT) will be ordained deacons by Archbishop George Antonysamy. We praise and thank the Lord for these young sons of Don Bosco and we wish them a fruitful pastoral ministry as they prepare for their ordination to priesthood.



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FIRST ANNUAL RETREAT at DBTC

The first INM annual retreat for this year will be held from March 28th till April 2nd 2017 at DBTC, Kavarapettai. The consolidated list of retreat participants will be sent to you soon. I exhort everyone to make the best use of this wonderful opportunity for personal renewal that the Congregation provides us every year.

WORKERS RETREAT

The dates of the Domestic Staff retreat for this year is as follows:

Tirupattur Region	6 th and 7 th March (Monday and Tuesday)
Vellore Region	8 th March (Wednesday)
Puducherry Region	9 th March (Thursday)
Chennai Region	13 th and 14 th March (Monday and Tuesday)

If possible, you can also include the non-teaching staff of the institution, if they have not made their retreat elsewhere.

MEETING FOR PARISH PRIESTS

A new direction from the archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore requires that the parish account to be kept separately from our other activities in the campus. For this purpose, the Economer's office is organizing a training programme on 15th March 2017 for all the parish priests, administrators and the lay accountants in the province. Kindly make sure everyone attends this meeting without fail.

YPT MEETING

The Youth Pastoral Team had its last meeting for this academic year on 11th February 2017 at Citadel. It was a very inspiring day of animation and evaluation. I thank Fr. Deva Joe, the Vice-Provincial, for coordinating this meeting. I must say, I had a very fruitful interaction with the members of the YPT team.

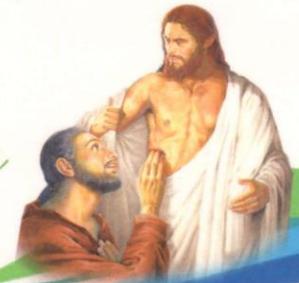
RECTORS' MEETING

All the INM Rectors were present on 16th February 2017 for a one-day meeting with the Provincial. Fr. Deva Joe, the Vice Provincial, facilitated the day's meeting which was an open-interactive session about the Salesian Mission and Spirit of our communities and the Province in general. Numerous suggestions were voiced by the leaders of our communities on how we could enhance our lives both in the community and in the mission, in our efforts to remain faithful to the charism of Don Bosco. Fr. Xavier Packiam, the Economer, presented the financial situation of the Province.



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COMMUNITY BUDGET FOR 2017-18

Make sure that the budget of your community is prepared and submitted to the Economist's office before the end of April 2017. This first draft has to be done by the present community members, which will be finalized by the new community in the coming year. This has to be done before the end of June.

DOCUMENTS NEEDED FOR THE COMMUNITY

It is highly desired that all those communities who have not applied for the following certificates, should apply for the same at the earliest: 12 AA Certificate, 80 G, PAN Card, TAN number, Society Registration, Minority Certificate, Filing of IT Returns. Other certificates pertaining to building, government approvals and those with government offices like metro water, corporation etc. are also to be kept in order.

SIGNATURE NEEDED FOR DOCUMENTS

Rev. Fr. Jayapalan sdb, our former provincial, is leaving for Rome on 20th of March 2017. Kindly make sure that you get his signature for your various documents, especially for the Annual General Body Meeting of the Society (on or before 30th September 2016) and FORM 7 (to be filed within a month). This has to be done after having an extraordinary meeting of the Society. The whole process should be completed before the first week of March 2017.

SCRUTINY

Rectors are reminded to ensure that the Scrutiny is done for those in initial formation and the forms reach the Provincial's office on or before 31st March 2017.

ADMISSIONS

As is our tradition, those in temporary vows wishing to renew their profession and novices seeking to be admitted to their First Profession, will submit their application to the Rector/Novice Master on 19th March, feast of St. Joseph. These applications will be sent to the Provincial Office by 24th March 2017.

Welcome back to the Province

We are happy to welcome back to the Province the following confreres: Bro. Francis Chinnappan, Fr. Arokiasamy (now recuperating in St. Bede's), Fr. Edwin George, Fr. Stanley Ignatius, Fr. Samson David, and Fr. Thomas Savari.

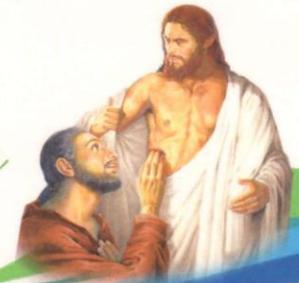
Holiday Assignments

First and second year students of theology will go for Hindi course in Ranchi for a month from 21st of March 2017. First year students will go to Don Bosco Youth Center, Hatia, and the second years will go



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to Don Bosco, Kokar. First and second years students of the theology will be available for summer ministry only after 25th March. Those Rectors & Leaders who have not yet requested the Vice Provincial for Deacons, students of theology & philosophy for summer ministry, may do so on or before 10th March 2017.

News from the Provincial Council

1. Permission has been granted to Lourdes Shrine, Perambur, to carry out repair and renovation of the upper church.
2. Permission has been granted to Sacred Heart Church, Polur, to purchase a 3-phase Power Generator and a Tractor for the farm.

Obituary: Fr. Edward Xavier

We are saddened at the sudden demise of Rev. Fr. Edward Xavier SDB who went as a Missionary with great zeal to work in Sri Lanka from the Province of Tiruchy. He went to his eternal reward at 3.30 a.m. on 13th February 2017 at Don Bosco, Kotadeniyawa, Sri Lanka. We express our sentiments of grief to the Provincial of Tiruchy (INT), Province Fr. Antony Joseph and the confreres of the province and the family members of Fr. Edward Xavier. The funeral was held at 3 p.m. on Wednesday 15th February 2017 at AMSAM.

Fr. Edward Xavier was born on 20th October 1949 in Madathattuvilai, Kanyakumari District, which was incidentally Mission Sunday! He made his First Profession on 24th May 1975 and was ordained a priest on 18th December 1984. While he was still in INM, Fr. Edward worked in Ennore, Sagayathottam and St. Bede's. A very soft-spoken yet dynamic personality, he was loved by all. May the Blessed Virgin Mary and Don Bosco receive the Soul of dear Fr. Edward Xavier into our Salesian Garden in Heaven!

Condolences:

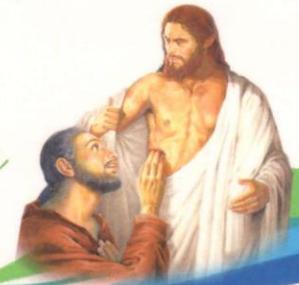
We also offer our sincere condolences and remember to pray for the following departed loved ones:

- Mr. C.V. Thomas, 90, the elder brother of Fr. Vikrant died on 16th February 2017
- Mrs. Margaret, 89, eldest sister of Fr. A. T. James died on 19th February 2017
- Mrs. Susai Mary, 81, the mother of Fr. Lawrence Varapasadam died on 24th February 2017



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CONCLUSION

St. Joseph the Beloved Saint

St. Joseph is, without doubt, one of the most loved saints in the Church. There are countless persons, churches, shrines, institutions and even towns and cities named after St. Joseph. Who exactly is this Joseph? He is that quiet figure named in the Christmas story as the husband of Mary and the stepfather of Jesus, and then basically is never mentioned again. The pious conception of him is that of an older man, a safe protector to Mary, a carpenter by trade, chaste and holy, humble and quiet, the perfect patron for manual laborers and humility incarnate.

But what do we really know about him? In the Gospel of Matthew, the annunciation of Jesus' conception is given to Joseph rather than to Mary: Before they came together, Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, being an upright man and unwilling to shame her, had decided to divorce her quietly, when an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, that the child in her had been conceived through the Holy Spirit.

What can we learn from this text? The Joseph of the Christmas story is clearly reminiscent of the Joseph of the Exodus story, he too has a dream, he too goes to Egypt, and he too saves the family. Likewise, King Herod is clearly the counterpart of the Egyptian Pharaoh; both feel threatened and both kill the Hebrew male children only to have God protect the life of the one who is to save the people. In essence what Joseph teaches us is how to live in loving fidelity to all that we cling to humanly and religiously, even as we are open to a mystery of God that takes us beyond all the categories of our religious practice and imagination.



Happy Feast of St. Joseph to all of you, dear confreres!

Yours in Don Bosco,

Fr. Jose Kochamkunnel SDB
Provincial