



Cir #04

APRIL 2017

My dear confreres,

Affectionate greetings from the Provincial House!

We are entering the last phase of the holy season of Lent. In a week's time, we shall be in Holy Week. During these days, the Church celebrates the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord, the most important mysteries of our faith. As His faithful disciples, let our thoughts and longings during these days be fixed on Him, as He enters Jerusalem, is betrayed, captured, scourged, crowned with thorns, and finally crucified. But Lent is only a preparation for Easter. It is Easter that defines the Christian, not Lent. As St. Augustine, would say, "We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song."

There are so many aspects of the resurrection narrative which offer us valuable insights and inspiration. Here I wish to offer a brief reflection on one little detail from it: the women going to anoint the body of Jesus early on that Sunday morning. They had carefully prepared the spices and ointments, but on the way, they suddenly realized their helplessness thinking about the huge stone at the grave's entrance.

## The Risen Lord Still Moves Stones

It was early that first Easter morning. The bright morning star could still be seen in the northern sky—a symbol of hope, a sign that something great was looming on the horizon. But for the small group of women making their way to the tomb of Jesus, hope was in short supply that morning. Their spirits had been crushed by the nails that pierced the hands and feet of Jesus. They were discouraged, disheartened and defeated. They only wanted to visit his tomb one last time to honour him by anointing his body with spices and perfumes.

But as they walked that lonely path to the tomb, suddenly a huge problem comes in their way – it is the stone, the huge stone at the entrance to the grave. **"Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"** (Mk 16:3). Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James had seen where the body had been placed and knew that a huge stone had been rolled across the entrance to the tomb (Mk 15:47). They realized that even if all of them worked together, they wouldn't have been able to move it even an inch. As far as they were concerned, it was an insurmountable obstacle.

We all have stones that block our paths. For some, their path is blocked by the boulders of unemployment, abandonment, abuse, or addiction. Daily others face the insurmountable obstacles such as debts, drunkenness, depression and what not. Others have bills they can't pay, grades they can't make, people they can't please, a past they can't shake off, and a future they can't face. The truth is that, by ourselves, we aren't strong enough to roll those stones away. But Jesus will do for us what He did for Mary, for Salome, for Peter, James and Thomas.

Their lives were forever changed because He rolled the stone away. That stone represented their fears and failures. And His resurrection personally and powerfully impacted their lives and the lives of those who knew Him and loved Him. It rolled away the stones that hindered their faith and their future. But the deeper reality is that at that first Easter morning, Jesus moved not only the huge stone that blocked the entrance to his tomb, but many other stones from the lives of his disciples. Let us take a brief look at some of them.

## 1. THE STONE OF DISCOURAGEMENT

Look at Mary and the other women at Jesus' tomb. To say these women were discouraged would be an understatement—they were, in fact, devastated, heartbroken. They believed in Jesus. They put their faith in Him. All their hopes and their dreams rested in this man whom they believed was God in human flesh. But then He died. They weren't the only ones feeling discouraged either. All of Jesus' followers were disappointed and disillusioned. The two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus spoke for everyone when they said, **“We had hoped that He was the one”** (Lk 24:21). Anytime one starts talking about hope in the past tense (“we had hoped...”), you know there is trouble. A soul without hope is like a body without food. We can easily identify with these disciples. We all know people who are struggling through life with disappointments. When our dreams go unfulfilled or our hopes are shattered, it's discouraging, sometimes devastating.

But when Mary and the others saw their risen Savior, it changed everything! “The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord” (John 20: 20). They were thrilled when they saw the Lord. Seeing Jesus made all the difference. In that moment, they went from hopelessness and depression to joyful, thrilling, overflowing exuberance.

When we put our faith in Jesus we will never experience hopelessness. Psalm 22:5 puts it best: “They trusted you and were never disappointed”. Apart from Christ, life is full of disappointments and discouragement, but the risen Christ gives us hope. When we pin our hopes on the things of this world, we are only building castles in the sand. But when our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ, then we will be standing on solid ground and we will never be disappointed.

## 2. THE STONE OF FEAR

Recall what happened to the apostles when Jesus was arrested. They all ran away. They abandoned Jesus in the time of dire need. Of the twelve apostles, hand-picked by Jesus, only one had the guts to follow Jesus to the cross. And, of course, after Jesus was crucified, they were even more terrified. They were certain that they would be the next. In fact, the Gospel of John says, “That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders” (Jn 20:19).

Confused and fearful, the disciples stayed close together, hiding from the authorities and huddled behind locked doors. Jesus had told them to meet Him in Galilee, but they wouldn't go. They were paralyzed by fear. Fear often does that to us, doesn't it? Fear closes the windows and locks the doors. Fear is a prison of our making and it keeps us from accomplishing what God wants us to do.

We all have our fears -- fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of sickness, fear of the future... and what not! As the disciples cowered behind those locked doors, Jesus appeared to them. St. John the evangelist tells us, "Then Jesus came and stood right in the middle of them and said, 'Peace be with you'" (Jn 20:19). Their fear was transformed into faith. The next thing you know, these same fearful followers are out in the city streets and the Synagogues boldly proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. What made the difference? Maybe it was the promise Jesus gave them: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat 28:19). Centuries earlier God said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

Whatever challenges we meet, whatever obstacles we face, we don't have to be afraid because we are not alone. Come what may, God is by your side. In the words of hymnist E. A. Hoffman: "What have I to dread, what have I to fear, Leaning on the everlasting arms" of Jesus?

### **3. THE STONE OF DOUBT**

Poor Thomas! Thomas missed the first appearance of Christ. While the others hid behind locked doors, Thomas was out on his own. No one really knows why Thomas wasn't there, but he sure has been chastised for it. Doubting Thomas—that's what we call him. The Scripture says: One of the disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side." (Jn 20:24-25)

Thomas was a skeptic. He wouldn't believe it, until he saw the evidence. Now, Thomas has taken quite a lot of criticism for his doubts, but he certainly isn't the only person to doubt the Christian faith. Maybe we all have our doubts too. St. John tells us that a week later, Jesus appeared to Thomas and challenged him to carry out his test: "Put your finger here; see my hands, reach your hand here and put it into my side" (Jn 20:27). Did Thomas really carry out the crude test he planned to do? Most likely he did not. One fleeting gaze at the wounded hands and side in the transfigured body of his Master was enough to melt his heart and banish his doubts. In that one burning instant, Thomas gathered up all the doubts of a depressed humanity to have them healed in that one great and spontaneous profession of his faith "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28). Thomas who was the last to believe, thus became the first to make a full profession of the Divinity of the Risen Lord.

### **4. THE STONE OF DEFEAT**

Peter was a simple yet passionate follower of Jesus. He was an all-or-nothing kind of man. On the night that Jesus was arrested, he was all for him: "Lord... I will lay down my life for you" (Jn 13:37). But by sunrise the next morning, he was cringing with shame and remorse after denying his Master. Jesus had said, "I tell you the truth, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times!" (Jn 13:38). Jesus was right. Peter failed Jesus when it counted most.

Peter's failure hung over his head like a dark cloud. He was ready to quit. Three years earlier, Jesus had called him away from his career as a fisherman to become a fisher of men. Yet, even after Jesus came back from the dead, Peter still felt like a failure. Rather than head toward Galilee like he was supposed to, Peter went back to what he knew best—fishing. He was ready to return to his old life, to give up being a follower of Jesus.

Peter and the others are out on the Sea of Galilee. They've been fishing all night with no success. Then Jesus shows up. He tells them where to cast their nets, and then he sits down with them on the beach to share a barbecue breakfast. During that meal, Jesus asked Peter three times: "Do you love me?" And each time Peter said yes. And the last words that Jesus spoke to Peter are exactly the same as the first word He spoke to him: "Follow me" (Mat 4:19, Jn 21:22). Peter got a second chance.

Failure is the stepping stone to success. Michael Jordan, the greatest basketball player of all time, put it this way. "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." Just because we fail, doesn't mean we need to quit. Just because we've been defeated in the past, doesn't mean we surrender and give up. We have a God of second chances, who rolls away the stone of defeat.

## 5. THE STONE OF DEATH

Ever since the Garden of Eden, death has been the archenemy of humanity—and death has always been winning. Death is inescapable; it comes to every living thing... that is, until Jesus. Jesus conquered death through His resurrection and offers to do the same for you and me. The Apostle Paul put it this way: "But Christ has been truly raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a human being came death, by a human being has come also the resurrection of the dead. All die in Adam, and in Christ all will receive life." (1Cor 15:20-22). All through Jesus' ministry He promised one thing that no one else could offer—eternal life, immortality. That's what Jesus came into this world to offer. In John 10:10, Jesus declared boldly, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly". Adam's sin allowed death to claim every human's life; Christ's death challenged that claim and nullified it in the Resurrection. Adam gave us all death; Jesus offers life to all. In other words, real life can only be found in Jesus Christ. At conception, we receive as part of our human inheritance the gift of death; at baptism, we receive Christ's gift of eternal life.

Dear Confreres, have you ever wondered why God rolled the stone away from Jesus' tomb? In His resurrected body Jesus, could have left the tomb without moving the stone. But He didn't. I think He moved the stone for Mary, for Peter, for James, for John, for you and me. He moved the stone, just to show that He enjoys moving stones from people's paths. Whatever challenges we face, whatever boulders block our path—whether it's discouragement, doubt, depression, debt, drunkenness, fear, failure, or even death—let's remember that He still moves stones, if only we learn to surrender everything to Him.

### **The Chrism Mass**

The Chrism Mass, which the bishop of every diocese celebrates with his "presbyterium" in his Cathedral and at which the holy chrism is consecrated and the oils blessed, manifests the communion of the priests with their bishop in the same priesthood and ministry of Christ. The faithful are also to be encouraged to participate in this Mass, and to receive the Eucharist. I exhort all the rectors and leaders and priests in our communities to take part in the Chrism Mass and express our communion in the priesthood and ministry of Christ along with the bishop.

## **NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE**

### **1. First Professions, Renewals & Perpetuals:**

The **First Profession** of the novices will take place at 10.30 a.m. on 24<sup>th</sup> May at Idaya Deepam Novitiate, Yellagiri. **The Renewals** of Profession will take place at Don Bosco, Tirupattur, at 7.00 a.m. on 24<sup>th</sup> May. **The Perpetual Professions** will take place at 5.30 p.m. at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur. Please note that, after their renewals in the morning, the brothers will remain in Tirupattur to take part in the Perpetual Profession at 5.30 p.m.

We thank God for the novices who will be making their first professions and the others who will renew them or make them in perpetuity. Let us support them with our prayers so that they may always remain steadfast in the commitment they make to the Lord to follow Him in the Salesian way after the example of Don Bosco.

### **2. New Deacons and their Summer Ministries**

Twelve students of theology studying at Don Bosco Theological College, Kavrapettai, were ordained deacons on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015, at St. Mary's Co-Cathedral, Chennai. We thank His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. George Antonysamy, Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore, for ordaining them. Six of these confreres are of our province while six are of Tiruchy. Two other clerics of our province received the Order of Diaconate at Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore on 19<sup>th</sup> March. We congratulate them and wish them a fruitful pastoral ministry in the places assigned to them.

I take this occasion to thank Fr. Stanislaus Swamikannu, the Rector, and all the other members of the staff of Becchi Don Bosco, Kavrapettai, and Fr. James Kadankavil, the Rector, and the other staff members of KJC, for following up the formation of these students with so much dedication, love, care and commitment. God bless them! I also thank Fr. Deva Joe, the vice provincial, and Fr. Xavier Packiam, the provincial economist, for making the necessary arrangements for the diaconate ordination. In a special way, I thank Fr. Pappuraj, the Rector, and the community of St. Mary's for hosting the ordination service.

The newly ordained deacons will exercise their summer ministry in the following places:

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| 1. Dn. Anto Jagadish          | – Mary Help of Christians Church, Tirupattur    |
| 2. Dn. Masilamani Jayaraj     | – Holy Spirit Church, Tagore Nagar, Pondicherry |
| 3. Dn. Arulanand Mariadass    | – Sacred Heart Church, Polur                    |
| 4. Dn. John Joseph            | – Vinnarasi Mission, Maranodai-Gedilam          |
| 5. Dn. William Paulraj        | – Sacred Heart Church, Thennangudi              |
| 6. Dn. Sagayaraj Perianayagam | – Lourdes Shrine, Perambur                      |
| 7. Dn. Anbu Francis           | – Our Lady of Consolation Church, Vyasarpadi    |
| 8. Dn. Sagayaraj Anto         | – Don Bosco Shrine, Ayanavaram                  |

### **3. Meeting of Administrators and Accountants**

On 23 March, we had a meeting of the Administrators and Accountants, at the Citadel, in which 42 Administrators and 51 Accountants from our various communities took part. The Provincial Economist Fr. Xavier Packiam animated the meeting. The Province Auditors too were present to give their valuable input. This was the second such meeting in this financial year. Several issues of importance were dealt with during this meeting to tone up the administration of our houses. I thank Fr. Xavier Packiam our Economist for organising the meeting and all the efforts he is making to streamline administration in the province.



#### **4. Meeting of Headmasters and Principals of Schools.**

On 25 March, we had the meeting of the Headmasters and Principals of our schools, during which Fr. Robert Simon, SPCSA Delegate for Groups and Movements, took a session on DEAL (Don Bosco Education Animation for Leadership). It is a programme to assist and accompany young people who have the intellectual capacity and aptitudes for leadership in bureaucracy and want to use them for the social transformation. He also informed the participants that the 2018 NECDBS (National Education Conference of Don Bosco Schools) will be organized by Chennai Province.

The participants also did an assessment of the evaluation of our schools done by Adhyayan some time ago. It was suggested that external auditing of our schools could be done periodically by the Province, even without involving agencies like Adhyayan. The need to formulate common policies for all our school was reiterated.

#### **5. Pre-Perpetual Course**

Fourteen of our clerics will be taking part in the Pre-Perpetual Course from April 20 to May 14, at Don Bosco Renewal Centre, Bangalore. They all have completed 6-7 years of professed Salesian life. This course offered by DBRC is tailor-made to help them to reflect on the meaning and implications of their life of consecration and to deepen their religious and Salesian convictions. We shall accompany them with our prayers so that they may make the best use of this opportunity for personal renewal and enrichment.

The following are the candidates for the Pre-Perpetual Course:

Cl. Antonyraj Lourdu	Cl. Gali Jaya Simmon
Cl. Antonysamy Albert Nelson	Cl. Periyamayagam Kolas
Cl. Arockiasamy Ananad	Cl. Peter Balasingam
Cl. Charles Lio	Cl. Pushparaj Michaelraj
Cl. Christopher Arockia Vincent	Cl. Savarimuthu Anthoniraj
Cl. Devadass Oswalt	Cl. Vinoth Thangasamy
Cl. Francis Amalavanan	Cl. Yesubalan Suresh

#### **6. Retreats**

We are just finishing the first retreat of the year at Becchi Don Bosco, Kavaraipettai (March 28-April 2). As already announced, the next four retreats will be held at Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri (April 6-11; April 24-29; May 3-8; and May 12-17). Participants are requested to arrive latest by 7 p.m. the previous evening. I exhort everyone to make full use of this opportunity to experience the grace of conversion and renewal recommended by art 91 of our Constitutions. These are indeed "privileged moments for listening to the Word of God, discerning His will and purifying our hearts." And let us help one another to achieve these goals by maintaining an atmosphere of total silence and recollection during the retreats.

I wish to say a sincere word of thanks to the preachers of these retreats: Fr. Bellarmine Fernando, Fr. Dominic Sequeira, Fr. Sunderaraj Francis, Fr. Alphonse Philip and Fr. Joe Mannath. I also thank the communities of Becchi Don Bosco, Kavaraipettai, and Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri, for hosting the retreats. May I also remind you that the contribution for hospitality during the retreat is Rs. 3000/- per participant.

## 7. Missionaries wanted

We have urgent requests for missionaries from the following places: Chhattisgarh of New Delhi Province (Parish and other pastoral works); Sri Lanka (Formation, Printing, Technical education); Africa (Printing and Parish work). Volunteers are requested to inform me at the earliest. My dear confreres, let us remember that ours is a missionary congregation; for us Salesians, mission '*ad gentes*' is not just one work among many others; they represent something very much deeper: an essential aspect, a particular dimension of our identity as Salesians of Don Bosco in the Church.

## 8. Youth Pasch 2017 for INM & INT

Youth Pasch 2017 will be held from 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> April (Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday) at Don Bosco Camp Site, Yellagiri. Participants will be young people (18-35 years) from the Provinces of Chennai and Tiruchy. It is being organized by the Youth Services and Catechetical teams of Chennai and Tiruchy provinces, namely DBYES, Deepagam, Christodayam and *Ilamai*. Fr. Mani Lazar and Fr. Antony Christy will be in charge. The Youth Pasch is aimed at providing the participants an intense and memorable experience of living of the paschal events.

## 9. Altar Servers' Camp

The Altar Servers' Camp 2017 will be held from 24 to 27 April at Don Bosco Camp Site in Yellagiri. Participants are altar boys and girls (9-17 years) from all our parishes. The Camp has a threefold objective, namely: 1) helping the participants understand the meaning of serving at the altar; 2) helping them to understand and appreciate its methodology; and 3) helping them to relish the joy of serving at the altar. The three-day camp is intended to make serving at the altar into "a real school of learning the faith," to put it in the words of St. Pope John Paul II. The camp is organized by Fr. Mani Lazar (DBYES) and Fr. Antony Christy (Deepagam).

## NEWS FROM THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

1. Don Bosco, Egmore: Permission granted for constructing three rooms for the use of the non-teaching staff of the Matriculation School and the Primary School.
2. Vyasarpadi: Permission granted to start parallel English Medium Sections in the Higher Secondary.

## Condolences:

- **Fr. George Mukala SDB:** Our heartfelt condolences to the Provincial and the confreres of the Province of Dimapur at the passing away of Fr. George Mukala (86) on 14th March at the Salesian College, Dimapur. May his soul, through the mercy of God, rest in peace! Fr Mukala was one of those missionaries from Chennai Province who moved to North East India in 1966.
- **Sr. Philomena Anthoni FMA:** Our heartfelt condolences to Sr. Magnificat, Provincial, and the Sisters of Chennai Province at the passing away of Sr. Philo Anthoni FMA (68) at the CMC Hospital, Vellore, on 29 March 2017. May her soul rest in peace.

## Conclusion:

Let me conclude this circular by wishing each one of you a very happy Easter. Let the spirit of Easter pervade our lives every day, not only in the Easter season but in every season. Let us remember that Easter challenges us

- To love again, after our love has been rejected and we are tempted to hate;
- To hope again, after our hope has been dashed to pieces and we are tempted to despair;
- To believe again, after our belief has been shaken and we are tempted to doubt;
- To trust again, after our trust has been betrayed and we are tempted to mistrust;
- To pick up the pieces and start again, after discouragement has crushed us and we are tempted to quit.

To believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead is to believe that at the centre of things there is a power who is Lord of the universe and fully in charge. The earliest Christians used to have only a single line, rather a single phrase, for their creed: namely, "**Jesus is Lord**". For them, that said enough. It said that at the centre of all things there is a gracious, personal God, and that this God is powerful enough and loving enough to accept and uphold everyone and everything.

God bless you and keep me in your prayers.

Yours in Don Bosco,

**Fr. K. M. Jose SDB**

Provincial



