



# PROVINCIAL Circular

Salesian Province of Chennai (INM)



**INM-KMJ-CIR 41/06-2020**

**JUNE 2020**

Dear loving confreres,

In the past four months, we have all experienced something very different from what we were used to. As for me, the first month went hale and hearty with the General Chapter and its proceedings. The lockdown and the inability to come back to India was something that I was not prepared for. These three months have made me reflect on life, its fragility and uncertainty and at the same time the true purpose of life. Of course, our final destiny is back to God forever. This is our belief. **The Risen Jesus is our Hope and our Salvation.** I felt the closeness of Jesus and it is so nice to place our hope in Him. Jesus really became the centre of my life and He helped me to purify my life. It is in putting our trust and hope in Him that enabled me to rely on Him and keep alive my true focus on Him and Him alone. Today my thoughts are only on giving my best to Jesus and His mission of salvation of souls. **This whole experience of the Corona should wake us all up from our negativities and search for luxuries of life.** In one of the Masses, I celebrated and preached here in Valdocco, I spoke of the hymn **“Lead Kindly Light”** by **Cardinal John Henry Newman**. This was a hymn that I used with many groups during the early days of my animation ministry. This hymn once again became alive in my life.

## Lead Kindly Light



John Henry Newman was born on 21 February 1801 in the city of London. He was the eldest of six children. Exposed to Bible from an early age, Newman became an avid reader of Scripture, but he formed no religious convictions until he was fifteen years old. Later Newman himself described the experience in the period from August to December 1816 as: “When I was fifteen a great change of thought took place in me... the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator.”

In 1824, he was ordained a Deacon and a year later a priest of the Anglican Church. He felt when he was ordained: *“I have the responsibility of souls on me to the day of my death”*. In Tract 90, published in 1841, Newman argued that the defining 39 articles of the Church of England were in fact more Catholic than Protestant. He went in search of the truest form of the Christian faith. As time progressed, he became increasingly convinced that the Church of Rome, the Catholic Church, was the Church truest to the spirit of early Christianity.

In 1833, as a young priest of the Anglican Church, John Newman went on a tour of Southern Europe and finally visited Rome, which he described as 'the most wonderful place on earth'. When he went to Sicily he fell a victim of typhoid fever that killed many. But he recovered and wanted to return home, but his ship was stranded for several days. The delay frustrated him. His recent illness had made him very weak. His mind was troubled by doubts and vexing questions. In his own words:

*"Before starting from my inn, I sat down on my bed and began to sob bitterly. My servant, who had acted as my nurse, asked what ailed me. I could only answer, "I have a work to do in England." I was aching to get home, yet for want of a vessel I was kept at Palermo for three weeks. I began to visit the churches, and they calmed my impatience, though I did not attend any services. At last I got off in an orange boat, bound for Marseilles. We were becalmed for whole week in the Straits of Bonifacio, and it was there that I wrote the lines, Lead, Kindly Light"*

He is said to have opened his Bible and prayed Psalm 25 that makes an earnest plea: "Make known to me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me... I hope in you all the day long. Then he took a pencil and paper from his pocket and began to write. A breeze seemed to blow up gently out of nowhere, ruffling the water; and the passengers called to each other in excitement as the sails slowly filled. But John Henry Newman did not notice. Even before the ship was well on its way again sailing out of the Strait of Bonifacio toward England and home, he had written this beautiful hymn:

***1. Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,  
lead thou me on; the night is dark, and I am far from home;  
lead thou me on. Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
the distant scene; one step enough for me.***

***2. I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou shouldst lead me on;  
I loved to choose and see my path; but now lead thou me on.  
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,  
pride ruled my will: remember not past years.***

***3. So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still will lead me on,  
o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone,  
and with the morn those angel faces smile,  
which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.***



If you look at the hymn carefully, **the first stanza talks of the present, the second the past and third the future.** As for the past, whatever might have happened, we need to let go, as God does. In fact, we don't even need to pray, "remember not past years". He doesn't. **Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs.** As for the future, we need to trust in his power that will lead us on till the night is gone, till it dawns and we are able to glimpse the smiling angel faces. **For the present, it is enough to be able to take just a step.** We don't need to see the distant scene, as he walks with us every step of the way-as he leads and light our path.

This hymn has brought comfort and hope to thousands. Mahatma Gandhi spoke of his love for the hymn and the influence it has had on his life. This is why a biography of Gandhiji has been titled, "Lead, Kindly Light", written by Vincent Sheean.

With the COVID-19, the world has been brought to an experience of gloom and uncertainty. In the midst of such a reality, this hymn takes us to a total dependence on God who will lead us in the right path. The readings of the Easter season helped me much to think of what is essential in life and what it is that we need to focus on especially as religious communities.

### **The Early Christian Community**

*"The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and great grace was upon them all". (Acts 4:32-35)*

*"Again the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." (Acts 6: 2-4)*

This delegation of duty is done so that the Apostles themselves will continue to fully devote themselves to "**Prayer and the Service of the Word**". Stephen was filled with grace and power and began to work miracles and great signs among the people. Then certain people came forward to debate with Stephen...they found they could not stand up against him because of his wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke. Stephen and his companions were basically appointed for "service at the table" for the administration of the temporal goods but they were not limited to administration. We see Stephen entering powerfully into the "service of the word". (Acts 6:8-10)

The charism will lead us to be apostles of prayer and service of the word. The concept of work will only limit ourselves to service at the table. **Effective Spiritual Presence and accompaniment are the outcome of our CHARISM.** All who share the Salesian mission are called to be in some way signs and bearers of God's love to the young. We as consecrated people are called to be eschatological signs focusing on the 'Last Things' along with the great yearning for holiness. It is precisely the reason why we need to know and experience Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Jesus said: "**I am the way, the Truth and the Life**". (Jn 14:6)

*Without the way, there is no going.*

*Without the truth, there is no knowing.*

*Without the life, there is no living.*

The world today needs to discover the way, the truth and the life.

If we have found Jesus, the Way, the Truth and Life, in these times of economic crisis caused by the COVID-19, we will definitely go for a *greater austerity, frugality, simplicity and sobriety in our style of life.*

### **Our Challenges**

In India the worst affected are the poor, especially the daily labourers, small shop owners, farmers etc...Today many countries have a frozen economic activity. The economic recession could be even deeper and prolonged. In some States the Government has ordered that no fee is to be collected for certain months but at the same time the teachers and other staff must be paid. There are so many factors have led to a serious drain on the income of the houses and consequently also of the Province.

Globally many countries have been seriously affected by the covid-19 pandemic, and this has serious negative effect on the economy of these nations. Our Mission offices are based mainly in Italy, Spain, Austria, Germany and the United States. All these nations have been badly affected by the pandemic. Many of our benefactors and sponsors were elderly people and have died. As poverty is being experienced by many people we cannot expect help from any of the funding agencies from abroad, now or in the near future.

### **Our Decisions**

Some practical things that we could do both individually and as communities, during this year to face the present economic crisis.

- 1. Let us avoid all unnecessary personal spending. Let us try to live austere and simpler lives of detachment and be content with the essentials.**
- 2. Let us avoid all unnecessary travels, especially using the hired vehicles, house vehicles etc.**
- 3. Let us make our Birthday celebrations, Jubilees of Profession and ordination etc. simple and sober.**
- 4. We shall not increase the fees of students and hostellers during this scholastic year. We shall provide fee concessions to students who come from families affected by the economic crisis caused by covid-19**
- 5. We shall suspend all major renovation works in our houses, institutions and campuses for this financial year.**
- 6. Let us suspend for this year the purchase of new vehicles, machineries, costly gadgets, equipments and furnitures.**

### **Salesian Constitutions**

**Don Bosco lived his poverty in detachment of heart and generous service of others; his manner was marked by austerity, hard work and much initiative. Following his example we too live detached from all earthly goods; we participate with a spirit of enterprise in the mission of the Church and in her struggle for justice and peace, especially by educating those in need. The witness of our poverty, lived in a common sharing of our goods, helps the young to overcome their selfish possessive instinct and opens them to the Christian sense of sharing. (C 73)**

*Each one of us bears primary responsibility for his own poverty, daily living out by the frugality of his life the detachment he has promised. He accepts his dependence on the superior and community in the use of temporal goods, but he knows too that permission does not dispense him from being poor in spirit and in fact he is careful not to give way gradually to a desire for a comfortable and easy life, which poses a direct threat to fidelity and to apostolic generosity. When his state of poverty causes him some inconvenience or suffering, he is glad to be able to share in the blessings promised by the Lord to the poor in spirit. (C 75)*

**My humble request to every community would be to be sensitive to the conditions of its neighbourhood and bear witness to its poverty by a simple and frugal way of life in unpretentious dwellings.** We shall continue to trust in the Divine Providence and the powerful assistance of Mary Help of Christians as Don Bosco our Father and founder did, and pray that the suffering and the crisis caused by this pandemic may soon end.

### **NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE**

#### **Month of the Sacred Heart**

Our beloved Province has grown due to the numerous blessings and loving accompaniment of the Sacred Heart. In the year 1943, Fr. Carreno called all the Salesians of Madras Province to consecrate the entire Province to the Sacred Heart. Let us renew our commitment to the Sacred Heart and may we become the Heart of Christ for every person whom we meet. **As Religious, people expect us to be kind, compassionate and loving like the heart of Christ.** In these pandemic times, we as men of God should radiate that kindness and compassion to the people. In this way, we bring peace and consolation and sanctify ourselves and others. Wish you all abundant graces from the Heart of Christ!

#### **Ordination to Priesthood**

**Deacon Babu Stylo Dias** will be ordained a priest on the **4<sup>th</sup> of July in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin by the Archbishop Cesare.** We pray for him and implore God's abundant blessings so that he can be a blessing to all the people. May Our Blessed Mother fill him with grace so that he can sanctify the world.

#### **Jubilee Celebrations**

We have the beautiful custom of celebrating the Golden and the Diamond Jubilee of confreres on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, feast of St. Thomas, the Patron of our Province. **This year we shall have the celebrations later when it is conducive to have the celebrations.**

#### **2020 is LAUDATO SI' YEAR**



On 16 May, the first day of the *Laudato Si'* Week called for by Pope Francis, the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced a Special *Laudato Si'* Anniversary Year from 24 May 2020 to 24 May 2021. This is particularly significant in the context of the present pandemic, for, as the Holy Father reminded us in his *Urbi et Orbi* message

on 27 March, it was a fallacy to think that **“we would stay healthy in a world that was sick.”** Releasing the plans for the year ahead, the Dicastery said: “We invite everyone to join us. The urgency of the situation calls for immediate, holistic and unified responses at all levels – local, regional, national and international. We need, above all, ‘a peoples’ movement’ from below, an alliance of all people of good will. As Pope Francis reminds us, *‘All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents’* (LS 14)”.

**The *Laudato Si’* Year offers us a renewed opportunity to look for concrete ways in which we contribute towards caring for creation.** This could include promoting active eco clubs in all our schools, addressing environmental concerns through our youth groups, furthering the use of solar power in all our institutions, saving water and energy, introducing good waste management and recycling systems, and enhancing the green cover in our campuses. In all the efforts we make, let Pope Francis’ prophetic words continue to ring in our ears: *“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?”* (LS, 160).

### **CONGRATULATIONS FR. JOSEPH PAURIA**

**Fr. Joseph Pauria SDB** was installed as the 17th Provincial of the Salesian Province of Kolkata on 17 May 2020 at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin. Fr Guillermo Basañes, former General Councillor for Missions, presided at the ceremony. The GC 28 members who are still here at Valdocco, as well as other Salesians from the local communities on the campus, were present for the occasion. On behalf of the Chennai Province, I congratulate Fr. Pauria on his new appointment and assure him that we will accompany him with our prayers as he begins his leadership ministry as Provincial of the oldest province in India. The Province of Calcutta was erected in 1926 as the first Salesian Province in India.

### **FEAST OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS**

At the outset, I would like to thank the Novice Master who prepared the novices for their First profession and received the vows, the Rectors of communities who prepared our brothers for perpetual commitment and received their vows and also the Rectors who prepared the brothers to renew their vows and received their vows. Several of the brothers wrote to me saying that they had very meaningful preparedness and celebration. May this commitment make us give of ourselves fully to the Lord and to His mission among the poor.

Here in Valdocco, we did have a meaningful celebration of the feast with eight Masses and concluded with a solemn rosary service after supper. The Archbishop and the Rector Major were present. People participated in the celebrations in a restricted manner as there were many rules to be followed in having public celebration. We helped out with the cleaning, distribution of communion, guiding people to the right place etc. I did pray for all the confreres, our beneficiaries and particularly for all the young confreres who made their commitment.

**At this juncture, I also would like to give you the guidelines with regard to the transfers of this year 2020-2021.** May I take this opportunity to thank all the confreres for their

willingness to move to the new settings and for the welcoming attitude of the confreres. It is nice that we make people feel at home and give a homely welcome to everyone. It is so nice to live as happy brothers to one another. In this connection, let me offer you the following guidelines:

1. **All the confreres who are able to move to the new communities can do so from tomorrow 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020. The NEW community will begin to function from 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2020. If movements are not possible, confreres will remain in the house till they are able to go.**
2. **The Aided-school Headmasters who are on transfer can move according to the direction given by the Government.** If they are asked to complete the conduct of the Public Exams for the Std. X, let us do that and then move. When the admission process is permitted, let us do so till we move to the next assignment. In this, let us be considerate with regard to the fee collection. Let us follow the Government guidelines and **let us not increase the fees this year.** Allow parents to pay in instalments.
3. **In this year of the pandemic, in all our settings, let us follow the directions of the Government, the Church and the Province.**
4. It is possible that due to the absence of the accountants during the lockdown period, the accounts may not be complete. If the Administrators are on transfer, kindly keep all the bills and vouchers ready and hand over the accounts to the new Administrator in the presence of the Rector.
5. **The Installation of the Rectors will be done by the following Councillors:**

Don Bosco, Ennore	-	Fr. Edwin Vasanthan
Refuge, Broadway	-	Fr. Edwin Vasanthan
Don Bosco, Egmore	-	Fr. Edwin Vasanthan
Sagayathottam	-	Fr. Edwin Vasanthan
SIHARAM, Tiruvannamalai	-	Fr. Francis Sebastian
St. Joseph's, Katpadi	-	Fr. Francis Sebastian
Sacred Heart College	-	Fr. Thaddeus Gregory
Dominic Savio, Tirupattur	-	Fr. Thaddeus Gregory
Don Bosco College, Yellagiri	-	Fr. Thaddeus Gregory
Our Lady of Victories, Jolarpet	-	Fr. Thaddeus Gregory
Don Bosco College, Dharmapuri	-	Fr. Thaddeus Gregory
Don Bosco, Kotagiri	-	Fr. Thaddeus Gregory

**Fr. Anbu Francis, the Provincial Secretary, will contact you and plan the schedule accordingly.** The installations will take place as and when it is conducive. Those who are continuing the service of being Rector in the same house after three years need not be installed. The installation of Fr. Nallayan Pancras will be done after he reaches SIGA from Rome.

6. I would like to appreciate all of you for remaining in our houses and doing the works that we can do. **We all know the dangers of moving around here and there at this period of time.** Therefore, may I request you all to remain in the houses where you are and spend

time in praying, reading and doing the possible works in the house. **Free movements can lead to infection which can be dangerous.** I do understand that confreres are looking for holidays and to go home. But **for the good of everyone, let us continue to remain as we have done so far, moving only to the new community and not to our homes for holidays.**

7. The start of the Novitiate and Theologate will depend on the possibility for free movements. We know that buses cannot go from zone to zone completely. **So we shall continue to wait in order to make an appropriate decision for the start of our formation houses.**

### **Condolences**

1. We offer our condolences to the Mumbai Province at the demise of their beloved confrere, **Fr. Byron D'Silva** on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May.
2. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, **Fr. Shiran Karawgodage** of the Province of Sri Lanka died of heart attack in France. We offer deepest sympathies to all our confreres in Sri Lanka.

**We hope to reach Delhi on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June.** Till we reach, we are not sure! We have to spend 14 days of quarantine. We will know the rest of the movements, only after reaching Delhi. Pray that everything goes peacefully. Praying for you and looking forward to being with you all soon.

**Fr. K.M. Jose SDB**  
INM Provincial

Date: 01.06.2020  
Place: Valdocco