



INM-KMJ-CIR 58/12-2021

THE INCARNATION AND PRIESTLY ORDINATION

DECEMBER 2021

Dear Confreres,

As we are in December, the last month of 2021, our hearts are filled with immense gratitude for the numerous graces and blessings that we have received this year. In spite of the raging pandemic at the start of the year, we have been able to come through safely and we have been strengthened by this experience which has certainly reshaped our mode of thinking and doing. **This year we will be blest with fifteen new priests for our Province!** This itself is a miracle for our times! Therefore, in this Circular, I thought that while reflecting with you on the Incarnation of Christ this Christmas season, we could also **reflect on our own *incarnation* in our consecration and mission, with special emphasis on the Sacrament of Holy Orders and the Priesthood.** I thank Fr. Charles Panackel for his contribution in this reflection.

### The Mystery of the Incarnation

Christmas is the celebration of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. This unfathomable doctrine—the truth that the eternal Son of God became flesh and dwelt among us (**John 1:14**)—is at the very heart of the Christian faith. The most widely accepted definitions of the incarnation and the nature of Jesus were made by the First Council of Nicaea in 325, the Council of Ephesus in 431, and the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The incarnation is the Christian belief that God took human form by becoming Jesus. Incarnation literally means 'to take on flesh'. For Christians, **the incarnation shows that Jesus was fully God and fully human.** Christ was truly God and truly man. It is in the Incarnation that Jesus the Messiah must be understood: a single person uniting all that it is to be God and all that it is to be human. It is because of the incarnation of Christ that we celebrate with joyful hearts, even in the midst of our burdens. By taking on a united divine human form, God the Father enabled His Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to rescue the world from its broken disarray.



### Why the Incarnation?



We could enumerate many reasons why an Omnipotent and perfectly good God might choose to become incarnate, i.e., to become human as well as divine: that we might know the depth of God's love; to identify with our suffering; to reveal to us moral and theological truths that we need for living. To reconcile us with God through the forgiveness of our sins; to be our model of holiness; to make us partakers of the Divine Nature (**2 Peter 1:4**)-in other words to "divinize" us; to destroy the power of the Evil One.

Just as the incarnated Jesus, the Son of Man, kept his promise and fulfilled the purpose for the mystery of the Incarnation, **it would also be good to remind ourselves of the obligations we took upon ourselves on the day of our Priestly Ordination or Religious Profession.** Apart from the celebration of the Sacraments which pertains to the Ordained Priest only, all the other commitments of religious life are pertinent for all of us who have either temporary or perpetually professed as Priests or Religious.

## The delicate nature of the Incarnation and our apostolic lives in the Mission

*'We are only earthenware jars that hold this treasure to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us.'* (2Cor: 4-7)

In this image lies an important key to our ministry. Just as the all-powerful Baby Jesus, by virtue of his Incarnation, was so weak and vulnerable, so too our lives in the ministry is ever-fragile. At his Ordination the new priest receives this 'overwhelming power': the power of consecration and the power of absolution. To change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is indeed an astonishing power. So too is the power to forgive sins in Christ's name. Yet **we remain earthenware jars, today and always.**

**Earthenware vessels come in all shapes and sizes.** So do we religious. There is no single model, no one mould from which we are all drawn. This, I believe, is a great encouragement to anyone who senses within himself the call of God to the priesthood or even to religious life. **The Lord wants us as we are, so that He may shape us to be his finished work.** The analogy can be taken further. Some earthenware is tough and oven-ready; other pieces are clearly for more careful use; some are esteemed for their design and beauty which both reflects and creates an environment of refinement and finesse. **Priests and religious, too, have different talents and strengths which need to be appreciated.** But we must not overplay the analogy. **The affection in which we hold each other is not ultimately related to an outward form but much more to a treasuring of the real and varied gifts which that outward form contains.**

Continuing our reflection on St. Paul's analogy **2Cor: 4-7: we are merely the instruments of God's work and never its true author.** Paul drives home this dimension of his analogy in forceful terms. He highlights the difficulties he faces, the persecution he suffers, the blows he endures. He spells out the feebleness of his own efforts so as 'to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God.' (v.7) A newly ordained priest is rightly feted. Many will rejoice in him, bringing him gifts and good wishes. He will be welcomed wherever he goes. But this must not go to his head, as it easily can. People certainly rejoice in the generosity of the gift of the self the new priest has made, but they rejoice more in the prospect of God using him for fruitful ministry in the Church. **High esteem for the office of priest must be matched by the humility in the heart of the priest, for humility is the virtue that puts us at the disposition of God rather than the pursuit of our own needs and ideas. Thus a good priest, and indeed every religious, never falls into the trap of pride or exaggerated notion of the self. He remains aware of the 'instrumentality' of his ministry.**

The second application of this analogy to the life of the priest gives us a reminder of our fragility. **'Earthenware jars' are easily chipped, cracked or broken.** No matter their provenance or purpose, crockery is essentially fragile and needs appropriately careful handling. Now the first responsibility for the way we are treated lies with ourselves. We have a substantial duty to take care of ourselves,



our physical and spiritual wellbeing. **Ordination does not create 'supermen'. Our fragility remains. Every priest needs to ensure that he does not allow his heart, his thoughts, his imaginings, or his actions to chip away at the flaws and cracks of his nature.** If that happens the cracks grow wider until the priest is in real trouble. Under pressure the cracks give way and the vessel lies broken. Through attentiveness and care, on the other hand. Priests do well to keep an eye on each other,

bringing each other that particular sensitivity to the stresses of their ministry. **Good friends also do the same, not being afraid to remind the priest of his vulnerability and of the need to take care.** We must take care of each other.

The third aspect of **the image of the priest as 'earthenware jars' is equally important.** In fact, the earthenware jar of our self is constantly refashioned. In many ways, we continue to remain clay in the hands of the Potter. He shapes and reshapes us so that we can fit for purpose in each situation in which we minister his grace. So many events, circumstances and, most of all, people have shaped and reshaped this earthenware vessel. This is the course of ministry. **Every priest and religious is called, day by day, to be responsive to so many situations.** Some he will deal with readily and competently. Others will be beyond him, taking him to breaking point. They will drive him back to the Lord in prayer. Then he is back in the skilful hands of the master potter.

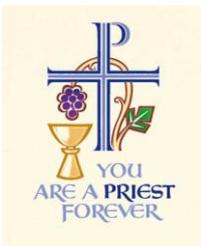


**Just as when even the Baby Jesus had to flee to Egypt with his parents, so too we priests and religious will occasionally experience real trauma and breakdown.** Then we are back on the Potter's wheel, having lost our previous coherence, waiting to be remoulded in a manner which he alone knows and is able to achieve. At moments such as these, which come in the life of every priest, the first and most important point of St. Paul's analogy remains of paramount importance. **It is always the treasure that matters, not the vessel.** If at times the world sees only broken vessels – and sometimes shouts this aloud – **the eyes of faith always strive to see the treasure even when the jar is leaking,** badly cracked or, finally, fallen to pieces. The treasure is always there, waiting for us to put ourselves into his hands so that he can reshape us to be filled again with his love, his graciousness, his brightness. The life of a priest or religious is indeed a great adventure. It is not the steady, well-planned route of a professional career moving towards retirement and leisure. **It starts with a total gift of self in response to the glimpsing of a treasure.** And seeking after the Lord remains its secret heart.



### **Our Friendship with God**

Knowing the fragility of our spiritual lives, we need to nurture an indestructible bond with HIM. It is true that we are all called to be HIS friends (**Jn 15:15**). But the relationship that the Priest and the consecrated religious is called to is still more profound and inimitable. The nature of such a friendship is best seen in the lives of the Apostles. While this does not make the priest's vocation better than other vocations, even a cursory reading of the scriptures clearly demonstrates the special friendship Jesus had with his disciples. **Jesus personally chose twelve disciples. He called them by name. He invited them to share three precious years with him. Jesus journeyed with them. They are together. He spoke to them plainly, as the scriptures say, and not in parables. He called them friends. And after Jesus died, his ministry was passed directly on to them.** Here are some aspects:



**1. It is God who chooses:** A friendship with God follows upon acceptance of the divine initiative. It is God who chooses and God does not reveal the reason for the choice. It is simply mysterious, divine prerogative. "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you" (**Jn 15:16**).

**2. The chosen one leaves everything to follow Jesus:** The Apostles left everything to follow Jesus. Our God is a "jealous God" (**Ex 20:5**). The price of this friendship is a complete self-surrender. Such a demand makes the practice of clerical celibacy more understandable. We are to be like the person finding the buried treasure in the field; he gave up everything for this treasure. The scriptures note that he did so with "joy" (**Mt 13, 44**). We, too, should be full of joy in the divine treasure for which we have sacrificed everything.

**The outward expressions of this friendship with Christ which lie at the heart of priesthood are clear: the daily celebration of Mass, the work of being a minister of Word and Sacrament, caring for the people in the daily needs of life 'in the person of Christ, the Head'. There can be no compromise on these outward signs of inward disposition.** This said, the inner form of that friendship is different for each and every priest. The inner contours that unfold over the years, the emotional and spiritual impact of this bond are quite hidden. This relationship, like all others, is deeply personal. It cannot be fully expressed and certainly not fully understood by another. It is a unique 'one-to-one'.

**3. A familiarity with Jesus:** The Apostles were the daily companions of Jesus. They ate with him. The Beloved Disciple laid his head on Jesus' chest. They enjoyed his company, asked him questions. Then, as well as today, the friends of Jesus have an enviable familiarity with him. Today's friends of God ought to be found often in prayer, opening their hearts and minds to this regular and familiar discourse with God.

**4. Ready to accept both joys and sorrows:** Any true friendship involves both joys and sorrows. It is the same with friendship with God, only more so. A divine friendship carries with it a peace that the world cannot give (**Jn 14, 27**) and a joy that is "complete" (**Jn 15, 11**). Its blessings are inestimable. At the same time, Jesus promised his disciples, "*The cup that I drink, you will drink*" (**Mk 10, 39**). Any true friend of God must carry the cross of Jesus. If we have not suffered so, we cannot truly be called friends of God. Priests are acutely aware of the sufferings that such a friendship entail.

**5. The Ministry of Jesus is direct, explicit and total:** The friends of God continue the ministry of Jesus. While all the faithful continue the work of Jesus in some way, the priest as friend of God is called to engage in the ministry of Jesus directly, explicitly, and totally. Jesus told Peter three times, "*Feed my lambs*" (**Jn 21, 15**). The priest most explicitly and fully continues the life of Christ in the Eucharist. Hence, **the Eucharist and the Priesthood are inseparable.**

As Salesians, we do know that the Salesian vocation has a unique charism and thus a unique spiritual life. Therefore, **instead of viewing our Salesian spirituality as one of trying to squeeze out a few sacred moments in an otherwise unspiritual day,** we should recognize that **the life of a religious among our people is an integral part of our spirituality and the way in which God is revealed to us.** At times we may tend to misinterpret this spirituality by falling prey to such rationalizations as: "*My work is my prayer.*" While recognizing the true spirituality of public ministry, the call to prayer and to fostering a personal relationship with God is as critical for the priest as it is for those who follow any other vocation.

### **The Danger of Clericalism**

While avoiding the watering down of the priestly identity, we equally dread the other extreme: **the arrogant insistence on prestige and power, a deplorable vice that history has called clericalism.** Clericalism speaks of privilege, prerogatives, special treatment, being served rather than serving; it prefers sacristies to streets, and is usually more concerned with cuff links and cassocks than care of souls. Clericalism does not indicate a sense of confidence in one's priestly call but rather such a lack of confidence in one's vocation that one must prop up one's weak identity with externals and pettiness. **Clericalism is a vice; priestliness is a virtue. Priests are called to priestliness, not clericalism.**



**The Mystery of the Incarnation is precisely about God becoming man to serve man and to save him.** Are we ready to spend our life by giving ourselves totally for others? Are we prepared for at

times unrewarding service, constant inconvenience, continual giving, radical availability – to be taken, blessed, broken, and given? If you are approaching the priesthood or already exercising it as a life of ease, comfort, convenience and advancement, then **we need to wake up, fall on our knees and resolutely bring back in our thoughts, words and deeds “the call to serve and not to be served”**.

### **Some Practical Hints to make our Priestly / Religious Life more like the Baby Jesus’ Incarnation**

1. **Be more outgoing and become less reclusive.** We must learn to spend lesser time in our rooms and offices. We could have an erroneous tendency of avoiding others lest they bother us or wanting to flee from people and responsibilities.
2. **Learn to plan and execute your plan well.** Missing appointments, not returning calls, postponing obligations, are all signs that something is certainly wrong.
3. **Be calm and serene.** Being grumpy and cynical with people does not help anyone but only hinders the bond of both spiritual and relational growth.
4. **Prioritize your work.** Becoming too wrapped up in gadgets, TV, social outings or gatherings, time-consuming hobbies etc. does not speak well of our seminary formation. Nothing wrong with having hobbies as long as they enhance our priestly zeal and make us more effective.
5. **Be conscious at all times of your Priestly/Religious Identity.** Father David Donovan, spiritual Father at the North American College (Rome) once said: “Don’t become a priest if you’re not excited about it.” Yes, if we drift into the priesthood, we’ll drift through it.
6. **A priest for others.** We are no more for ourselves. As public figures, we need to be available for the mission all the time.
7. **A well-lived Priest/ Religious becomes a therapeutic presence.** The world that is at times frantically moving in the material welfare, a sincere priest/religious becomes a witness of spiritual yearning.
8. **A Happy Priest.** The best gift we can give to the world is a happy priest. We receive the gift of priesthood happily and we tell the world that we are happy to be priests.
9. **To Serve is our privilege.** When we exercise Priesthood as a service, we will avoid all clericalism and accept to humbly walk with the laity and collaboratively accomplish the mission of Jesus.
10. **Mission to share God’s love.** We are known for our schools, colleges, Technical institutes etc. They are only a means for us to enter into the lives of people but our primary mission is to share God’s love with all our beneficiaries.

## **NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE**

### **INM PC 2022 – Guidelines from the Moderator**

I sincerely thank the communities for discussing and responding well to the Chapter documents. The Moderator will be in contact with you for the other logistics of the Chapter. The Pre-Chapter will be on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Provincial Chapter will begin with the Recollection on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022, at 5 p.m. and conclude on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and we will have the Provincial Community Day and the Jubilee celebrations in the evening. The Vice Provincial will send you the details. Kindly plan ahead for the success of the Chapter.

### **Practical Training & College Student Brothers Meet**

We thank Fr. Don Bosco, the Vice Provincial for organizing the mid-year meeting for all the clerics who are in Practical Training and doing their university studies. The meeting which was conducted at DBYAC, Ennore, started on 3<sup>rd</sup> evening and concluded on 5<sup>th</sup> December, with lunch. All the clerics

were very appreciative of this gathering which helped them to renew their fervour in Salesian consecrated life and mission.

### **Bl. Philip Rinaldi Feast - Salesian Brothers Day & VDB Day**

Today the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, is the 90<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary of Blessed Philip Rinaldi. He was won over by Don Bosco at the age of 21. After his priestly ordination, he was given the task of the formation of aspirants and novices. In 1889, Don Rua sent him as Rector to Sarria, Spain; subsequently he became Provincial and played a decisive part in the development of Salesian Spain. Appointed Vicar General of the Congregation, he showed still more clearly his fatherly qualities and fertile initiative, which included the following achievements: the care of vocations; the setting up of centres for the spiritual and social assistance of working girls; the guidance and support of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at a sensitive moment in their history. His enthusiasm proved a great incentive to the Cooperators; he set up the World Federations of the past-pupils, both men and women. Working among the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians, he envisaged a new form of consecrated life in the world and followed up this idea, eventually setting up the flourishing *Secular Institute of the Don Bosco Volunteers* (VDB).

Elected Rector Major in 1922, he made every effort to adapt Don Bosco's spirit to the times. A keen student of everything Salesian and a master of the spiritual life, he revitalized the interior life of the Salesians, encouraging them to develop absolute confidence in God and limitless trust in Mary Help of Christians; he obtained from Pius XI the indulgence of sanctified work: he gave special attention to the Missions, sending out missionaries while still very young, so that they could learn the local language and customs and thus become more effective evangelizers. He died on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1931 and was beatified by John Paul II on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1990.

On this day we remember and celebrate our Salesian Brothers in the Congregation as Salesian Brothers Day. Let us thank the Lord for the gifts of 13 Salesian Brothers to our Province and celebrate their Brotherhood vocation.

### **INM Senior Salesians (75+) Meeting**

The meeting of Senior Salesians (above 75 years of age) will be on the **09<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2021 at the Citadel – Provincial House**. Fr. Don Bosco, our Vice Provincial, will personally send the details of this meeting to our beloved senior confreres.

### **INM Salesian Family Day**

As informed in the previous circular, the Salesian Family Day and the Salesian Spirituality Day, at the Province level, will be celebrated on **12<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at the Provincial House, Citadel**. This will also serve as a wonderful preparation for the world level Salesian spirituality days in January 2022. Fr. Jeffery Gladstone, the Salesian Family Delegate for our Province, will coordinate this celebration. We wish him and the team for a fruitful celebration.

### **INM Priestly Ordinations 2021**

We are exceptionally blessed and guided by the Almighty God, Mother Mary of Help Christians and St. John Bosco through consistent gifts of new priests to our Province. This year we have fourteen Deacons (13 for INM + 1 for INN) who would be ordained on the **27<sup>th</sup> of December 2021, Monday, at 10 am, in Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur**. **Most. Rev. Dr. A.M. Chinnappa SDB, D.D.**, the Archbishop Bishop Emeritus of Chennai-Mylapore has consented to confer them the Sacrament of Priestly Ordination. The following Deacons will be ordained:

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. D ANTHONYRAJ Lourdu           | 8. D GEORGE Joseph              |
| 2. D ANTONYSAMY Albert Nelson    | 9. D PERIYANAYAGAM Kolas        |
| 3. D CHARLES Lio                 | 10. D PETER Balasingam          |
| 4. D CHRISTOPHER Arockia Vincent | 11. D PUSHPARAJ Michaelraj      |
| 5. D DEVADASS Oswalt             | 12. D YESUBALAN Suresh          |
| 6. D FRANCIS Amalavanan          | 13. D THANGASAMY Vinoth         |
| 7. D GALI Jayasimmon             | 14. D BALTHASAR Anbarasan (INN) |

We wish these young Salesian Deacons God's abundant blessings and guidance through our fervent prayers and accompaniment.

### **INM Winter Vocation Camp**

The INM Vocation Team has decided to organize one day Salesian Vocation Camp in the month of December 2021. The details are given below:

Date	Day	Venue	Region
26.12.2021	Sun	St. Bede's School, Chennai	Chennai
29.12.2021	Wed	Don Bosco Boys Home, Pondicherry	Pondy-Cuddalore
30.12.2021	Thu	Don Bosco School, Tirupattur	Vellore-Tirupattur
02.01.2021	Sun	Don Bosco School, Polur	Tiruvannamalai

The aim of this Winter Salesian Vocation Camp 2021 is to encourage the interested boys from VII, VIII, IX, X, XI and XII to discern the Salesian vocation to work for poor youth. I kindly request all the Rectors, Leaders and all the confreres, to find out youngsters in our presences and encourage them to attend this one-day vocation camp.

### **Welcome Back Fr. Lourdusamy Anthony SDB**

We congratulate and welcome back Fr. Lourdusamy Anthony SDB, who has successfully completed his doctorate in Systematic Theology in Rome, Italy. Fr. Lourdusamy will serve as Professor in Don Bosco Theological Centre, Kavarapettai. We wish him all the best in his ministry.

### **BOSCOREE 2022-23**

In the last National Boscoree, held at Nashik-Mumbai, it was decided that the next Boscoree would be hosted by the Province of Guwahati. Now, Fr. Januarius Sangma SDB, the Provincial of Guwahati has officially convoked the next Boscoree. **This will be held from 29<sup>th</sup> December 2022 to 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2023 at Assam Don Bosco University.** I request all our institutions, to prepare our scouts and guides in advance to participate in the mega event and in the competitions.

### **Important Days in December**

- 04<sup>th</sup> & 05<sup>th</sup>** - *Practical Training & College Student Brothers Meet @ Ennore*
- 05<sup>th</sup>** - *Bl. Philip Rinaldi - Salesian Brothers Day & VDB Day*
- 08<sup>th</sup>** - *Feast of the Immaculate Conception*
- 09<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>** - *INM Senior Salesians (75+) Meeting @ Citadel*
- 11<sup>th</sup>** - *Provincial Council Meeting @ Citadel*
- 12<sup>th</sup>** - *INM Salesian Family Day*
- 25<sup>th</sup>** - *Christmas*
- 27<sup>th</sup>** - *INM Priestly Ordinations @ Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur*

## Rest in Peace

**Rev. Sr. Elsy Thomas SMA**, aged 62, passed away on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021 due to sickness. We express our sympathies to Sr. Josephine Selvi SMA, the Superior General and the sisters of SMA Congregation.

**Rev. Sr. Anthoniappan Celine FMA**, aged 82, passed away on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021 in St. Mary's Convent, Vellore. We express our deep sorrow to Sr. Lazar Maria Nirmala FMA, the Provincial and the sisters of Chennai Province.

**Rev. Fr. Dominic Veliath SDB (INK)**, aged 79, passed away on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at Bangalore. We convey our heartfelt condolences to Fr. Joy Koyickal SDB, the Provincial, and the confreres of Bangalore.

**Mr. Belavandiran**, aged 59, father of Fr. Antro SDB (INT), Vice Rector & Dean at Idaya Deepam Novitiate, Yellagiri Hills, lost his father in the sea on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

**Mrs. Arokiamary**, aged 53, younger sister of Fr. Arulsamy Lourdusamy SDB, passed away on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021 due to serious illness.

**Mr. C.C. Lawrence**, aged 61, brother-in-law of Fr. Philip Louie SDB, passed away on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 due to serious illness.

**Mr. Murali Krishnan**, aged 45, former DB-Basin Bridge Scout Master and Secretary of DBYC Oratory, passed away on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021 due to electrocution. We express our heartfelt condolences to his wife and children.

We offer our condolences to our dear confreres who have lost their dear ones in their family. We shall continue to pray for the deceased souls and for their family members.

## Conclusion

Christmas is the feast that we all long for cause we all long for the arrival of Jesus. God who came directly into our lives will continue to come into our lives. **We just need to say "come in"**. Jesus



chose to come into the house of Zacchaeus and he readily welcomed Him. The arrival of Jesus was very transformative. He made life-changing decisions and became an ardent disciple of Jesus. Jesus acknowledged this by saying "*Salvation has come into this house today*". **Having gone through this pandemic period, and survived the corona attack, I can boldly say that our purpose on this earth is to welcome Jesus into our hearts.** May He take control of our lives. **This**

**Christmas can be a turning point in our lives.** My wish and prayer is that we all allow Jesus to enter into our hearts and occupy the prime place in our hearts. With Jesus we are sure to walk the way to our salvation.

I take this opportunity to **wish you all a Christ filled Christmas and a new year full of hope, peace and serenity that we experience in Christ.**

Yours truly in Don Bosco,

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



Date: 05.12.2021

Place: Chennai – 600020