



PROVINCIAL Circular

Salesian Province of Chennai (INM)



INM-KMJ-CIR 67/09-2022

GENTLENESS: A GENTLEMAN'S VIRTUE!

SEPTEMBER 2022

Dear Confreres,

We are in the month of September, when we fondly remember and celebrate the Nativity of Our Mother Mary on 8th September. The Church has celebrated Mary's birth since at least the sixth century. Scripture does not give an account of Mary's birth. However, the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James fills in the gap. This work has no historical value, but it does reflect the development of Christian piety. According to this account, Anna and Joachim are infertile but pray for a child. They receive the promise of a child who will advance God's plan of salvation for the world. Such a story, like many biblical counterparts, stresses the special presence of God in Mary's life from the beginning. Saint Augustine connects Mary's birth with Jesus' saving work. He tells the Earth to rejoice and shine forth in the light of her birth. "She is the flower of the field from whom bloomed the precious Lily of the Valley. Through her birth, the nature inherited from our first parents is changed." The Opening Prayer at Mass speaks of the birth of Mary's Son as the "Dawn of our Salvation", and asks for an increase of peace in our world and in our hearts.



Peace is possible only when we are gentle and meek. This year in which the whole Church celebrated the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Francis de Sales, I thought of not only reflecting with you on the "Gentleness and Meekness" of this Saint, which we have all certainly heard about, but to also see, how we can be imitators of these two qualities which is very much needed, not just in today's society, but in our own personal lives as well. "*Learn from me, I am meek and humble of heart*" (**Matthew 11:29**) are at the very heart of the Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales, because they make our hearts beat in rhythm with the heart of Jesus. Throughout all of his writings, in his life and teaching, the Saint emphasized and reemphasized the two virtues of humility and gentleness. They were for him the two virtues that make us most closely resemble and live Jesus. He firmly believed that: "Our Lord based his whole teaching on these words." His well-known saying, "**humility perfects us with respect to God and gentleness with regard to our neighbour**" reveals the interrelatedness of these virtues and their great importance. Francis not only taught gentleness and worked arduously and ceaselessly to instil it in others, he lived it to an extraordinary degree. As he said himself, it took him 20 years to conquer his quick temper, but no one ever suspected he had such a problem, so overflowing with good nature and kindness was his usual manner of acting. His perennial meekness and sunny disposition won for him the title of "Gentleman Saint."

Biblical Understanding of Gentleness and Meekness

Scriptures give us many examples of God being gentle with his people, restraining his strength for the weak...tending his flock like a shepherd: gathering the lambs in his arms, carrying them close to his heart, gently leading them that are young (**Isaiah 40:10-11**).

By patience a ruler can be persuaded and a gentle tongue can break a bone. (**Proverbs 25:15**).

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (**Matthew 5:5**)

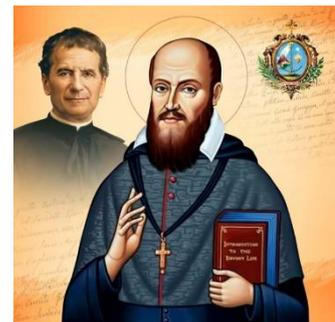
Clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (**Colossians 3:12**).

As Apostles of Christ, we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her children (**Thessalonians 2:5-7**).

Gentleness is not weakness or cowardice. Gentleness is not passiveness or inactivity. When you think of gentleness you might think of a gentle animal, one that's tame and placid and easily led. Biblical gentleness is not about being tame, compliant or docile. It's not about weakness, cowardice, or inactivity. **Gentleness is strength.** Unlike the movies where problems are solved with guns and ammunitions, we are challenged to be patient, gentle, kind and considerate in solving our problems. Gentleness is strength, but strength under control, disciplined strength, "restrained strength". It is choosing not to use violence or power or force or weapons or any other means to bring others under control. It is strength that brings harmony. Gentleness is strength, but disciplined strength for the benefit of others, for the good of the family, community and society. It is concern for others, especially the weak and the vulnerable. It is putting our agenda on hold to meet the needs of others. Gentleness calls forth self-discipline, self-restraint, self-control, other-centeredness and real humility!

Don Bosco and the Gentle Saint

When St. John Bosco began his ministry among young people, he chose St. Francis de Sales, who was Bishop of Geneva almost two centuries before Don Bosco lived, as his model. What impressed Don Bosco about St. Francis de Sales was his **unbounded kindness and gentleness toward everyone he encountered.** Truly, St. Francis de Sales sought to model himself after Jesus, meek and humble of heart. Don Bosco believed that in working with young people, one must develop these same qualities that St. Francis de Sales did. The situation of young people in 19th century Turin was fraught with abuse, immorality, breakdown of family structures, and government structures that were amid change. Many of the young people coming into Turin or having to live within this quickly industrializing city found themselves the victims of human trafficking, lack of education, lack of good role models, and an even greater lack of faith. To get them to hope again, **Don Bosco saw the gentleness and kindness of St. Francis de Sales as the roadmap to success.** It was not easy! To gain the trust of these young people required Don Bosco and his collaborators to show herculean patience, indefatigable gentleness, and the charity of Christ, which knows no limit.



The Saints on Gentleness and Meekness

Gentleness is hard to define because it involves lots of other qualities like compassion, wisdom, patience, humility, love, and respect and so on. Webster's Collegiate dictionary uses many words to describe the word "gentle": honourable, distinguished, kind, amiable, docile, free from harshness or violence, soft, delicate, moderate and so on. "Take care to practice well the humble meekness that you owe to everybody, for it is the Virtue of virtues which our Lord greatly recommended to us." (St. Francis de Sales) **Do not wish to be anything else other than what you are; and try perfectly to be just that.** "Nothing is so strong as gentleness - nothing so loving and gentle as strength", says Francis. Gentleness is not weakness. **Gentleness flows from inner strength and peace.** To be gentle is often seen as being weak, mild, submissive, subservient, lacking courage, ineffective, passive, etc. If that is so, who wants to be gentle?!!! Such gentleness is not seen as a virtue.

St. Francis de Sales himself often encountered those who were rude and disrespectful to him. Although his personality was such that he could be boiling on the inside, his external demeanour exuded charity and meekness. Usually, the person who was upset with him would leave a friend, amazed at how gently he had been treated. According to his experience, **the best remedy against anger is to practice gentleness every day and to put one's heart on guard**: If we're able to recognize our anger with calmness and gentleness, we'll be much more apt to control it and not let it explode. "At the first sign of anger, collect yourself gently and seriously, not hastily or with impetuosity," writes the author of Introduction to the Devout Life.

Gentleness includes true humility that does not consider itself too good or too exalted for humble tasks. **Gentleness results from my experience of God's Love for me as I am**. When I am sure of God's acceptance and Love, I can afford to be gentle because when God himself considers me worthwhile, there is no further need to assert myself or compete with others and prove my worth. The certainty of God's love for me frees me from self-concern and self-absorption. I can afford to be gentle.

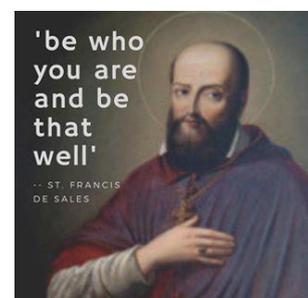
St. Vincent Ferrer was never seen angry, whatever insult or injury he received. The same may be said of **St. Vincent de Paul**. He was much inclined to anger, as he himself admitted to a friend, saying that, he allowed himself to be conquered more than once by his disposition to melancholy and to fits of fury. But having seen that God called him to live in community, and that in such a state he would have to deal with people of every variety of nature and disposition, he had recourse to God, and earnestly prayed Him to change his harsh and unyielding temper into gentleness and benignity; and then he began with a firm purpose to repress those ebullitions of nature. **By prayer and effort combined**, he succeeded in making such a change that he seemed no longer to feel any temptations to anger, and his nature was so altered that it became a source of benevolence, serenity of countenance and sweetness of manner, which won for him the affection of all who shared his acquaintance. As a rule, he received all those who went to his house with pleasant words, full of respect and esteem, by which he showed his regard for them and his affection in seeing them. This he did with all, with the poor as well as those of high rank, adapting himself always to the position of each.

St. Francis Xavier treated everyone with great mildness and kindness, which drew to him all---both small and great, won the hearts of all and induced all to do what he wished. **St. Francis Borgia, St. Paula, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. John Berchmans, were all Saints** who knew how to be gentle and meek. **St. Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi** was never known to assail or oppress anyone.

How can I be Gentle and Meek?

Most of our institutions are multi-faceted and we are faced with multi-tasking as well. This can make us hyperactive and tensed in our daily activities. As important as our mission may be, our students, staff, and members of our own community will believe us to be authentic Salesians only if they feel that those around them are **easily approachable because they radiate gentleness, joy, and authentic concern for others!** When you have to make arrangements, settle quarrels, or win others to your views, take care to be as mild as possible. **You will accomplish more, and conquer more readily, by yielding and humbling yourself, than by harshness and disputation.**

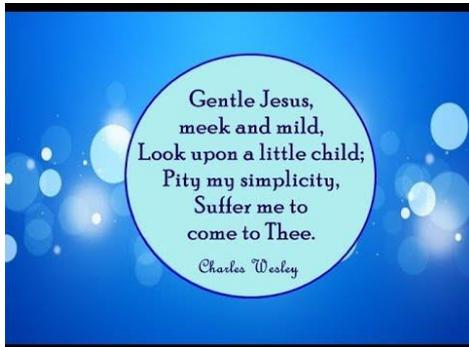
It is a matter of great importance to make our conversation agreeable. To do so it is necessary to appear humble, patient, respectful, cordial, yielding in all lawful things and to all. Above all, we must **avoid contradicting the opinion of anyone**, unless there should be an evident necessity for it. In that case, it should be done with all possible mildness, and with the



greatest tact, without outraging the feelings of the other person. In this way contests will be avoided which produce only bitterness, and which ordinarily spring rather from attachment to our own opinion, than from love for truth.

In the **Introduction to a Devout Life**, the Saint gives advice on how to correct others. He stresses that gentleness, that is reason unaccompanied by passion, is the most effective because passion can tyrannize but reason accompanied by gentleness is much more effective: “By nature the reasonable soul is subject to reason and therefore it is never subject to passion except through tyranny.” St. Dionysius said, “**The man who would correct others must first take care that anger does not stir up rebellion, sedition, and confusion within ourselves**”. In correcting others, **Saint Dionysius** realizes that there is always the danger of becoming angry. However, we have to make sure that this anger is a just anger and does not create chaos within us so that we exceed the bounds of reason.

St. Francis de Sales taught that **as followers of the Gentle Saviour**, we too are to take up the little virtues of joy, humility, meekness, patience, and simplicity so to conform ourselves to the Heart of God. It is not enough to practice great virtues. They must be performed in the spirit of love. For it is love alone which forms the basis of and gives weight and value to all good works in the sight of God. **St. Vincent de Paul** used to say, “At times a single word is sufficient to cool a person who is burning with anger; and, on the other hand, a single word may be capable of desolating a soul, and infusing into it a bitterness which may be most hurtful”. **St. Bernard** said, “There are some characters which appear very gentle as long as everything goes well with them; but at the touch of any adversity or contradiction, they are immediately enkindled, and begin to throw forth smoke like a volcano. Such as these may be called **burning coals hidden under ashes**. This is not the meekness which Our Lord aimed to teach, that He might make us like Himself. We ought to be like lilies among thorns, which, though they come from amid such sharp points, do not cease to be smooth and pliable”.



PRACTICAL TIPS TO BE GENTLE

1. **Be kind and gentle with YOURSELF!** Allow yourself to be moulded by the Divine Master and to change over time. The Lord Jesus, meek and humble of heart, wants each one of us to imitators of his meekness and humbleness.
2. **Everyone** must be treated with respect, prudence and evangelical simplicity. **Be kind and gentle with ALL.** Remember, everyone is on the same journey!
3. Always wear a **serene countenance and be calm**, no

matter how tense the situation may be.

4. It is important to **give proof of amiability**. This is why Don Bosco used to say, it is not enough to love, but to make yourselves loved and to make sure that the boys know they are loved!

5. The man who, looks up to God alone, in whom he trusts, makes trust as the foundation of all he does. Hence, let us often, in practice, **ask our Lord for the virtues of gentleness and meekness** united to humility of heart.

CONCLUSION

St. Bernard said, “**As without faith it is impossible to please God, so without gentleness it is impossible to please men and to govern them well**”. St. Francis de Sales says that meekness and mildness of heart is a virtue rarer than chastity, and yet it is more excellent than that and all other virtues, for it is the end of charity, which, as St. Bernard says, is in its perfection when we are not only patient, but also kind. It is necessary, however, to have a great esteem for this virtue, and to use every effort to acquire it. Far from being weak, **the meek possess an inner strength to restrain**

anger and discouragement in the midst of adversity. The beatitude of meekness is not only a grace-filled power, but a very elevated manifestation of that power. **The real POWER of meekness lies in its capacity to diffuse anger. Meekness is particularly meritorious when practiced toward those who make us suffer;** only then can it come from God and take us back to Him.

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

Retreat with the Rector Major

Beginning from the evening of Wednesday, Sept. 7, and continuing until next Tuesday, Sept. 13, the Provincial Superiors of the 11 Salesian Provinces of India and the Vice Province of Sri Lanka, together with the members of their Provincial Councils and the Councillor for the South Asia Region, Fr. Michael Biju, for a total of 96 people, will be gathered at the Centre for Spiritual Retreats "St. Joseph Vaz" in Panjim, Goa State, India, to experience together the Spiritual Exercises preached by the Rector Major, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime.

It is a moment of profound unity and sharing for the entire Region, which is huddling around the 10th Successor of Don Bosco to receive from him insights and orientations to carry forward the roadmap envisaged by the 28th General Chapter. In fact, this week's activities include several lectures given by Fr. Á.F. Artime on the first of the eight program guidelines delivered after GC28, thus pertaining to the promotion and preservation of Salesian identity. To complete the work there will then be four dialogue meetings between the Rector Major and the assembly on topics of animation and governance of the Congregation. As is typical of these gatherings, times for shared spirituality and fraternity, characteristic of every Salesian gathering, will also be essential.

At the end of the Spiritual Exercises, on Sept. 14 and 15, the Rector Major will lead the Conference of Major Superiors of the Salesian Family present in South Asia. The meeting, which is usually held every two years, did not take place in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and is aimed at creating familiarity among members of the Salesian Family, fostering understanding of each group's charism, and developing a common intervention on behalf of young people. As part of this meeting, in the morning of Wednesday 14, the Rector Major will preside at Mass with all those present - 35 people - and then inaugurate the new "Don Bosco South Asia" website; he will then have talks and a moment of interaction with members of the assembly. The program, which will also take place at the "Joseph Vaz" Center, will conclude on the morning of the 15th with a solemn Eucharist presided over by Regional Councillor Fr. Biju Michael. This will be followed by the meeting of the Conference of Salesian Provincials of South Asia on September 15 and 16, 2022.

According to the latest available data, those as of Dec. 31, 2021, the South Asia Region is the most populous in the Congregation, with 2940 professed Salesians and 102 novices. There are a total of 404 Salesian houses in the region, consisting of the Indian and Sri Lankan nations: 333 canonically erected and 71 presences.

Visit of the Rector Major to INM

Our Province was blessed with the presence of our dear Rector Major Fr Ángel Fernández Artime from the 2nd to the 5th of this month. On the 3rd he left for Katpadi and was with the Salesian Sisters for the conclusion of their Centenary Grand Finale. On the 4th morning, Don Bosco Orphanage Katpadi, gave a solemn welcome to the Rector Major for the meeting with the Salesian Family members. Beside the cultural program and felicitations, two books were released in



the presence of the Rector Major and the South Asian Regional Councillor, Fr Biju Michael, namely: Take care of Priests and Remembering the Legend: Fr. Joseph Murphy. The Rector Major began his address by thanking everyone for the welcome accorded to him and felt glad for the opportunity he was provided to address the Salesian family members.

His message was first directed to the Salesians. He expressed his sincere joy and gratitude to the confreres of INM Chennai Province for the sense of communion with the Congregation. He exhorted the confreres not to forget the charism of our Mission to the poorest of the poor which would mean forgetting our Father St. John Bosco himself. He encouraged the confreres to grow in the missionary zeal that defines our charismatic identity. While thanking the Past Pupils, he invited them to build up their families first with the values that they have learnt from Don Bosco, and encouraged them to strive to be of help to the poorest of the poor young people in the Society. While addressing the Salesian Co-operators, he reminded them that their vocation was a call from God, which enabled them to be a Salesian in the world. He further stressed that the family plays a vital role and insisted on them to educate the young in their own families with the Salesian charism. He further invited them to encourage and foster the vocation to the Salesian Co-operators. He reminded the Volunteers of Don Bosco of the sanctity and the beauty of their calling and encouraged them to grow like a seed sown in the soil, though not seen externally, yet growing internally and produces fruit. He expressed his joy of seeing so many young Salesians and exhorted them to be deeply rooted in the Salesian charism by being ever joyful in their Salesian religious consecration. At the end, the Salesian Family Members felicitated the Rector Major, which concluded with a festive dinner.

More than 150 Salesians gathered in Citadel on September 5th, for the Holy Eucharist around the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime. All the students of Theology, brothers and the aspirants were also present for the Eucharist. Fr. K.M Jose, the Provincial, in his introduction thanked Rector Major and the Regional Councillor of South Asia, Fr. Biju Michael, for their presence in the Province. The Rector Major in his homily, expressed his sincere joy in having witnessed the confreres' sense of communion with the Congregation. Reflecting on the Word of God, he explicated how St. Paul encouraged the people of Corinth to remain faithful to the values of the Gospel. He said that we need to model our lives like that of Jesus Christ who strove to do good in every situation. The people should read on our foreheads that we are people ready to serve them. It would be a sin if we choose to live in comfort and indifference, when the people around us live in pain and poverty. He invited all the Salesians to look at the example of Pope Francis for his life of simplicity and commitment and not to seek a life of wealth and power. Every Salesian should live as a blessing from God to the people. He concluded his homily by inviting everyone to ask this question every day in prayer "What do you want from me O Lord today?".

After the Holy Eucharist, the Rector Major then moved to Don Bosco Beatitudes, Vyasarpadi, where he was received with much fanfare. A tour around the various sectors of the house deeply inspired him. By 11.45 a.m. he met the Salesian Family members and addressed them. Before the rector Major's address, two books were released: "Ethics of Mercy for those in wounded marital love according to *Amaris Laetitia* and a book authored by a Salesian past pupil, titled, "Dan's Den". The Rector Major then felicitated the different heads of the Salesian Family.



In his message to the Salesian Family, Rector Major expressed his gratitude to all the members of Salesian Family for their great dedication and service in taking forward the mission of Don Bosco. He

commended the services rendered by Don Bosco Beatitudes to all those in the fringes of the society and appreciated the different Salesian family members who were working in unity and harmony. He affirmed: "I am deeply moved by the numerous services carried forward for the poorest of the poor from the womb to tomb, and definitely I share this wonderful experience to the Congregation as well. Later in the afternoon, the young people of the Salesian institute of Graphic Arts (SIGA) and Don Bosco College of Arts and Science gathered around the Rector Major to bid him farewell as he left to the Airport for his next destination Goa, where he will be preaching the Annual Retreat to all the Provincial Council members of South Asia Region.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to all the Salesians of our Province who were present for the meetings with the Rector Major in Katpadi and in Chennai. Special thanks to the Vice Provincial, Economist and their collaborators for having planned the Rector Major's program. I also gratefully thank the Salesian communities that hosted these events. The Rector Major was very much impressed seeing the confreres, Salesian Family members our beneficiaries and the mission during his stay in INM.



FMA Centenary in INDIA 1922-2022

The grand finale of the FMA Centenary celebration began with the solemn thanksgiving eucharist at 11.00 a.m. in Auxilium College, Katpadi, Vellore on 3rd September 2022. The Rector Major Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime presided over the Holy Eucharist along with Rev. Fr. Biju Michael, the Regional of South Asia, the SDB Provincials from Chennai, Trichy, Hyderabad, Fr. I. John Robert, the Diocesan

Administrator, Vellore, and hundreds of priests. The Mother General of the FMA, Sr. Chiara Cazzuola, Sr. Borja Runita, General Councillor for Youth Ministry, Sr. Mora Ruth del Pilar, General Councillor for Missions, Sr. Celine Jacob, Visiting General Councillor and all the past and the present Mother Provincials of FMA in India along with almost eight hundred of Salesian Sisters from various provinces, a few hundreds of college students and the Salesian Family members were present to thank the Lord and our Bl. Mother for the guidance in the last 100 years.

The FMA Centennial Cultural bonanza took place in the evening on 3rd September 2022 at the Auxilium College, Katpadi in the august presence of the Rector Major, Mother General, General Councillors, SDB and FMA Provincials and other dignitaries. Apart from the festive song and dance program, three books were released in the presence of the Mother General which were authored by the Salesian sisters themselves on various topics namely Mother Mary, Pioneering Missionary Sisters and Social Ministry. On this auspicious occasion, seven Sisters from the seven FMA Provinces were given Life Achievement Awards for their untiring and selfless service in the field of Education, Medicine and Women Empowerment. The Mother General thanked the pioneering missionary Sisters for this beautiful charism that has been sown and nurtured during these hundred years in India, specially to the poorest of the poor women. She invited everyone to preserve and develop the Salesian charism which is a gift from God.

The Rector Major in his turn expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Salesian Sisters for their centenary milestone. Fr. Biju Michael the Regional Councillor thanked the FMA sisters for keeping the Salesian flame ever burning in India and at the world at large. Mgr. John Robert, the Vellore Diocesan Administrator thanked the Rector Major, Mother General and her Council, along with the

present INM FMA Mother Provincial for their untiring service in the development of the poor in the Diocese of Vellore.



DBICA Silver Jubilee

On Saturday 27th August 2022, Don Bosco Institute of Communication Arts (DBICA) marked the milestone of the Silver Jubilee of its existence with a grand celebration at St. Bede's School Auditorium at Santhome, Chennai in the presence of the General Councillor for Social Communication Rev. Fr. Gildasio Mendes, SDB who graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. This historical moment in the Salesian Province of Chennai was held in the presence of the Provincial Team, the past directors of DBICA and prominent media personalities in the presence of a large vibrant group of youth and adults.

DBICA was launched in 1997 to address the impact of the fast-evolving social communication media. Since its inception, through its multifarious media services such as media education, production and training it has garnered a niche in Chennai's media and academic circles, which is the second most important media hub in India. The General Councillor for Social Communication in his keynote address placed on record his sincere appreciation for the far-sighted vision and mission of empowerment of the young through art, music, dance and media. He insisted on the need to adapt to the media engagement with the changing times by embracing digital media, artificial intelligence, augmented reality and the like.

On behalf of the guests of honour, B. Lenin, veteran film editor, director and writer from South India and a close associate of DBICA praised the contribution and pioneering efforts it has made in the media industry in Tamil Nadu. One of the most notable things that he highlighted was the culture of short filmmaking and short film festivals that was initiated from this centre in the late 1990s much ahead of others. He also said that this created a buzz in the minds of budding storytellers and media enthusiasts and encouraged many to become filmmakers.

Fr Ernest Rosario, the Director of DBICA highlighted the memorable milestones in the journey thus far through a media presentation and also spotlighted the innovative media initiatives which are geared towards responding to the evolving signs of the times. The new collective identity under the banner of the "Don Bosco Mediapolis" was introduced on this occasion.

SDB CHANGE CONGRESS in ROME

Fr. Edwin Vasanthan (Economer) and Fr. Joseph Leo (SURABI Director) will be travelling to Rome to participate in SDB Change Congress from September 19 to 23, 2022. The ultimate objective of the SDB Change Congress is to conceive and experience change as an opportunity to improve. The event conceived by Br. Jean Paul Muller, SDB, General Economer of the Congregation, together with his collaborators, intends to focus on five macro-areas of interest to provide solutions and guidelines to better deal with the social, economic, and environmental changes the world is experiencing. They are Sustainable Economy, Salesian Spirituality and Leadership, Artificial Intelligence, Communication of the Future, and Corruption Prevention. We shall accompany our confreres and all those who will be part of this important international meeting. We hope that adapting ourselves and responding effectively to the present conditions, we may continue to make the charism of Don Bosco ever relevant for the temporal and spiritual benefit of all, especially the young.

NECDBS 2022

The Sixth National Educational Conference of Don Bosco Schools (NECDBS) 2022 will be held at **Vaduthala, Kochi, Kerala from 16-19 November 2022**. It is hosted and organized by the province of Bangalore and All India Don Bosco Educational Society (AIDBES), New Delhi. I take this opportunity to encourage all our school Principals/Headmasters to attend this conference. The SURABI Director will send you more information for the same.

ASSESSMENT OF SALESIANS IN INITIAL FORMATION

I would like to remind the Rectors of Formation Houses and the Rectors of those Communities that consist of young Salesians in initial formation to send their **first quarterly assessment by the end of September 2022**. The Formation Delegate studies the assessment of each temporarily professed Salesian in order to closely accompany them and enhance their maturing process in their Salesian religious vocation.

CANONIZATION OF SALESIAN BROTHER ARTEMIDE ZATTI

We have gladly received the joyful news of the announcement of the date of Canonization of Blessed Artemide Zatti. At the Consistory on August 27, 2022, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, announced that our Holy Father set **October 09, 2022** for the Canonization of Blessed Artemide Zatti together with Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini. The Rector Major has invited all the Salesian Coadjutors to Rome to participate in the Canonization. Depending upon their health and travel documents, the Coadjutors from our Province will plan and be present for this momentous occasion. The Rector Major's Letter to mark this occasion is attached with this Circular.

REST IN PEACE – Rev. Fr. George Palackapilly SDB

Obituary Note: An Educator Who Loved the Young and the Poor



Dear Confreres,

Our dear confrere, Fr. George Palackapilly (P. P. George), returned to the Father's House in the early hours of 13 August 2022, from St. Thomas Hospital, Chennai. In his passing, the Province of Chennai has lost an observant religious, a great son of Don Bosco, and an esteemed educator who spent most of his active years in the service of higher education at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur. He was 87 years old and had been a Salesian for 67 years, and a priest for 57 years.

For the past few months, he had not been keeping too well. On 22 July, several of his family members had come to SIGA to celebrate his 87th birthday, the following day (July 23). However, in the evening of the 22nd, he had a fall in the bathroom and was taken to St. Thomas Hospital. The doctors found that he had suffered a heart attack and hence he was admitted to the critical care unit. Slowly his condition improved and he was discharged from the hospital on 11th August and he returned to SIGA. However, the next day (12th August), after lunch, he collapsed and had to be rushed back to the hospital where he passed away soon after midnight.

Requiem in Chennai

Fr. George's mortal remains were brought to SIGA in the afternoon of Saturday 13th August and laid in repose in the chapel for public homage. At 6 p.m., there was a solemn requiem Mass at SIGA for the repose of his soul, presided over by the Most Rev. Dr. A. M. Chinnappa SDB, Archbishop Emeritus of Madras-Mylapore, in which a large number of confreres and members of the Salesian Family and his own family members participated. Fr. Stan Swaminathan SDB preached the homily, in which he highlighted some of the outstanding qualities of Fr George. After the Eucharist, the Archbishop spoke a few words expressing his personal appreciation and gratitude to Fr George for the different ways he helped to promote the education of the poor in North Arcot district. Fr. Nallayan, Rector of SIGA, gave a brief account of the last days of Fr. George. Fr. K. J. Louis spoke about Fr. George, highlighting especially his services to the CBCI, and SPCSA in New Delhi.

Funeral Service at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur

The next morning, 14 August, the mortal remains of Fr. George were taken to Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, and laid in repose in the college auditorium for public homage. The solemn funeral service started at 3 p.m. with the Eucharistic celebration, presided over by Fr. Provincial Fr. K. M. Jose, and with the participation of a large number of confreres, members of the Salesian Family, former and present staff and students of the college and several family members of Fr. George. In his introduction, Fr. K. M. Jose, the provincial, spoke about Fr. George's contribution to the college and the Province and his exemplary religious life and convictions. Fr. C. M. Varghese, former Principal of Sacred Heart College, preached the homily which highlighted the different ways Fr. George had touched the lives of his students during the 30 years of his service at Sacred Heart College. After the Mass, Fr. Nallayan, Rector of the Community of SIGA, spoke about the last days of his illness and death. Fr. K. J. Louis spoke on behalf of the Province, highlighting Fr. George's distinguished service not only to the College in Tirupattur, but also to the Church in India, the Salesian Provincial Conference of South Asia (SPCSA), and the Universal Church as a consultant to the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture. Fr. John Alexander, Rector of Sacred Heart College, spoke on behalf of the College community; Prof. Chandrasekar, retired professor of Chemistry, spoke on behalf of the staff of Sacred Heart College; Fr. Xavier Michael, Vice-Provincial of INT, spoke on behalf of the Province of Tiruchy, and Mr. Paul Palackapilly, Fr. George's nephew, spoke on behalf of the family.

The mortal remains of Fr. George were then taken in solemn procession to Don Bosco, Tirupattur, and were interred in the Salesian cemetery. Fr. Camillus Fernando, former Provincial of Chennai, led the last rites at the cemetery.

His Early Life



Fr. George Palackapilly was born on 23 July 1935, at Thevara, Ernakulam, Kerala, to Mr. Paily and Mariam Palackapilly as the eighth of their nine children. He joined the Salesian aspirantate in Tirupattur in 1949 and completed his Matriculation in 1952 and his Intermediate from Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, in April 1954. Thereafter, he entered the Salesian Novitiate at The Retreat, Yercaud, and professed as a Salesian on 24 May 1955. After his philosophical studies at Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri (1955-57), he was sent to Loyola College, Chennai, for his B. A. (Hons) which he completed in 1960 with distinction and a gold medal. He did his practical training at the Salesian House, Tirupattur (1960-63), during which he served as a lecturer in Economics at the College and assisted the aspirants. In June 1963 he started his theological studies, first at Shillong (1963-64) and then at

Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri (1964-67). He was ordained a priest on 5th January 1967 at Don Bosco, Irinjalakuda by Archbishop Joseph Attipetty of Verapoly.

Priestly Ministry

After his priestly ordination, he was sent to Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, where he served the college in various capacities for the next 30 years, including 14 years as its Principal. In 1977-81, he completed his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Baroda, choosing for his doctoral thesis the Economics of Higher Education in Tamil Nadu. After his retirement as Principal of Sacred Heart College, in 1994, he was sent to Don Bosco, Okhla, New Delhi, initially as Secretary of All-India Don Bosco Educational Services (AIDBES) and then as Secretary of the Salesian Provincial Conference of India (SPCI) from 1996 to 2001. From 1996 to 2006, he was also the Secretary of the Commission for Education & Culture of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI). In 2007 he returned to the Province and was a member of the Citadel community from 2007-2010. In 2010-11, he served Don Bosco, Tirupattur as confessor and from 2011 to 2013 as confessor at Don Bosco College, Karaikal. From 2013 till his death on 13 August 2022 he was at SIGA, Chennai.

In recognition of his services in the field of Higher Education, the State of Tamil Nadu honoured him with the Dr. Radhakrishnan Award for being "the Best Principal of the Year 1989- 90". In 1991, he was chosen as "The Teacher of the Year" by the All-India Association of Christian Higher Education (AIACHE), New Delhi, a Consortium of nearly 300 Christian Colleges in India. Fr. George taught at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA, during the Spring Semester of 1993. He was a regular Visiting Professor at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN, USA, during the Summer Semesters for eight years. He has authored two books, namely, 1) Economics of Higher Education in Tamil Nadu, published by the Centre for Research on New International Economic Order, Madras 1984, and 2) The Challenge of Education in India, published by Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, 1986, and co-authored with Prof. T. D. Felix, the much-appreciated students' reader, Religion and Economics – A Worldview. He has also presented papers both at national and international conferences.



A Note of Thanks

Before concluding this Obituary note, I would like to thank, first of all, God Almighty for giving us the gift of Fr. P. P. George, through whom the Province has been blessed in so many ways. Secondly, a word of thanks to the Palackapilly family for giving us this wonderful Salesian, who gave his all to the Congregation and for the good of souls. At the same time, I also wish to extend, on my personal behalf and on behalf of the whole Province, our sincere condolences to the bereaved family and promise to keep them all in our prayers. Thirdly, I want to thank the Rector and the Community of SIGA for having looked after Fr. George with so much love and care these last nine years, and, particularly during the time of his last illness. Sincere thanks also to the Rector and community of Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, for making all the arrangements for the grand funeral service, which was so well planned and prepared.

Adieu till we meet Again

And now, we can truly say of our dear Fr. P. P. George that "when the hour came for him to bring his consecrated life to its highest fulfilment" (C54), he was fully prepared, and death for him "was made bright by the hope of entering into the joy of his Lord" (C54), and he continues to remain united with us "in a love that will not pass away" as Art. 54 of our Constitutions reminds us. Thus, he now, along with our other departed confreres, strengthens the bond of our 'Salesian communion of saints'.

Indeed, the memory of him -- his life, his leadership, his achievements, the hardships he faced, his last illness and finally his death -- are for us "an incentive to continue faithfully in our mission" (C 94). Adieu dear Fr. George, till we meet at Jesus' feet. Thank you for the good life that you lived and the many lives that you touched. Continue to love and pray for us and the province you loved so much when you were down here.

Let me conclude...



Velankanni is also known as "the Lourdes of the East," and the devotion to Our Lady of Good Health is immensely popular in South India. As much of the world still struggles with coronavirus and its numerous variants, we look to our Blessed Mother for comfort, healing, protection, and strength. We pray for the healing of those affected physically and mentally, protection and cure for those who do are already suffering from various other ailments, and grace as we endure the challenges of our daily lives.

Praying for you all and wishing you a Very Happy Feast of Our Lady of Velankanni!

Affectionately in Don Bosco,
Fr. K.M. Jose SDB
INM Provincial

Date: 08.09.2022
Place: Chennai – 600010.



AS THE YEAST IN TODAY'S HUMAN FAMILY

The Lay Dimension in the Family of Don Bosco