



INM-DBL-CIR 01/02-2023 **To be with Him and to be sent forth** (Mk 3: 14) **FEBRUARY 2023**

Part I – Gratitude

Dear Confreres,

As I sit down to write this my very first Circular to you all as the Provincial of INM, my heart is filled with immense gratitude to God, my parents, the Salesian Congregation, the Rector Major and the General Councillors whom I met last week in Turin, all the confreres of Chennai Province, the Salesian Family members and my dear young people. Our Province has been truly blessed in manifold ways, from its very beginning till today. It has the largest number of Salesians among all the Provinces in the South-Asia Region, and a steady flow of vocations. The Salesian charism is firmly implanted in all its diversity in the Province and is vibrant with a variety of ministries and outreach programmes that seek to educate and empower the young and the poor. Today we stand tall on the shoulders of those who went before us and toiled hard to plant and nurture the Salesian charism in our land.

I praise and thank the Lord for this opportunity given to serve you, to which my response is like Mary's: "Behold your servant, O Lord, be it done to me according to your Word". May our Bl. Mother, our Father St. John Bosco, Venerable Mamma Margret, and Saint Artemide Zatti, help us to love and serve the Lord together, collaboratively and co-responsibly, for the salvation of the souls of the young people who are vulnerable and distressed.

Part II – Reflection: To be with Him and to be sent forth (Mk 3: 14)

At the Retreat in Yercaud, there used to be a poster facing everyone coming down the steps of the chapel. It showed the apostles sitting around Jesus and listening to him intensely. Below the picture were the words, "**To be with him and to be sent forth**" (Mark 3:14). It carried a message that was very appropriate and striking. In fact, it was a proclamation of the very purpose of our being there.

At the time of my priestly ordination, I made these same words my ordination motto. **To Be With Him and to Be Sent Forth**: These words continue to be my guiding spirit. This inspirational phrase from the Gospel of Mark has two dimensions – a vertical one and a horizontal one.

The vertical or mystic dimension: To be with Him: It means we are called, like the Apostles, to be with him, (Mark 4:34) to be close to him. It means to sit at his feet, like Mary, (Luke 10:38-42) and listen to him to understand his mind, to catch his spirit, to share his trust in the Father, and his passion to seek and to save the lost – this is the first requirement for any

effective discipleship. There were perhaps many other things that the Apostles needed—unlettered, ignorant, and inexperienced as they were. But with Jesus, what is needed most was: to **be with him**, to see what he saw, to hear what he heard, to feel what he felt. That was the first thing needed – the root and source of all else.

Sometimes we are tempted to plunge headlong into our work. Our mood often is “Let’s get going.” We easily forget that the amount of good we do depend on how much we have been with Him. We forget the fact that how much we can give to others depends on how freely we have received from Him.

No wonder, St. Benedict would often pray: “Gracious and Holy Father, give me the intellect to understand you, reason to discern you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, spirit to know you, heart to meditate upon you, ears to hear you, eyes to see you, a tongue to proclaim you, patience to wait for you and perseverance in looking for you.” (Cf. *Strengthen Us*, No. 39, p. 37) May He grant all of us an undying desire to be with Him!

The horizontal or prophetic dimension: To be sent forth. Notice the passive voice, “be sent”. Christian discipleship comes not from man’s whimsical option, but from God’s commission. It has its origin in God (Luke 9:1-2). The disciple is sent forth to preach, to preach the word, to preach the *Word made flesh*. We do not fulfill that commission by engaging in any kind of work but only by doing His work, His mission – the mission that He has entrusted to us.

So, at the start of my ministry of animation and governance of this glorious Province, I would like to remind myself of my ordination motto and use it as an inspirational spark for my way forward. I invite all of you, my dear confreres, to join me on this journey of discipleship and apostolic action.

Part III: My Vision in the service of the Province as a Servant Leader

Let me share with you now, dear confreres, the thoughts and plans that are uppermost in my mind. I have put them together in the form of an eight-point vision-plan in the service of the Province as a Servant Leader for the coming years.

- 1. Religious life:** First and foremost, we are SALESIAN religious. The Father “consecrates us and sends us out to be apostles of the young” (C 3); “the Salesian vocation places us at the heart of the church and entirely at her mission” (C 6); “we are evangelizers of the young, and the more so if they are poor” (C 6). “To live and work together is for us a fundamental requirement... our love for each other leads us to share all we have in a family spirit” ... and thus “we become for the young signs of love and unity” (C 49). This, dear confreres, is our specific identity. It is my conviction that nothing will go well and nothing we do will bear fruit if we do not live this identity with sincerity and humility. To maintain this religious spirit, this sense of being consecrated, we must pay special attention to the religious tone of our communities. In this context, three important areas I would like to highlight are:

a) Our moments of coming *together* for prayer and meals

The Special General Chapter (1971) told us, “The moments of reunion in prayer of our ‘little church’ (the community) are an expression of the great ‘praying community’ which is the universal church.” When the Salesian community prays, it rediscovers its deep identity, it renews its ability to really live its fraternal communion and its apostolic service. A community which does not pray would gradually lose the sense of its own identity and destroy its own roots, through forgetting “its intimate and living relationship with God.” (cf. SGC, 538-539) By coming together for prayer, the community proclaims the centrality of God in it. We have only a few moments of common prayer – the morning and evening prayer, the meditation, the Eucharist. Participating in them together is a profound sign of our fraternal communion and a powerful help for sustained apostolic work. Let us remember that, if “to live and work together is for us Salesians a fundamental requirement,” (C 49), it is praying together that will sustain both our life and our work and make them fruitful.

In our communities, we come together not only for prayer but also for meals. Taking meals together is an expression of mutual acceptance and fraternal communion. Meals in common are occasions when fraternal love is joyfully expressed and the family spirit is better manifested. To stay together we need regular, predictable, daily rituals. Mealtime is one such precious moment when we relish not only the food but also the “manna of our daily presence.” In modern times the demands of the apostolate are such that occasions for coming together are becoming rarer and rarer. Let us take care to make our mealtime a moment when we experience fraternal love, mutual support and conviviality.

b) Financial Transparency and Accountability

We are not owners of the things we use; we are only stewards and administrators. Transparency and accountability in financial matters is a matter of great concern today in all organizations. It is of utmost importance to ensure that our financial transactions are totally transparent and that we remain accountable to the last penny. We have put in a lot of effort to streamline our accounting system in compliance with the demands of the government. From our part, both as individuals and communities, let us take utmost care in ensuring financial transparency and accountability.

c) Information and Permission

As religious, we are dependent on the community for everything. This is something we have willingly accepted along with our religious commitment. We depend on the community all the time and are accountable to the community with regard to where we are, where we go, and what we do with our time and talents, etc. We express this dependency on the community by keeping those in authority informed about ourselves and by seeking permission from the lawful superior for doing anything that is beyond our day-to-day assigned tasks.

In the context of sharing information and co-responsibility, the *House Council* and the *Assembly of Confreres* have a specific purpose recognized by the church. Everyone is aware of the house council which the whole tradition of religious life recognizes as the principal instrument at the superior's side in his role of animator and guide. More than an administrative organism, the council is a team which shares responsibility with the rector as regards the realization of the mission. To this end the council reflects on the community situation, studies appropriate directives for the different pastoral sectors, and feels directly committed and co-responsible for all the areas of activity. "The members of the council should remember their solidarity as regards decisions taken" (C180) and "the rector should keep the confreres duly informed about decisions of common interest" (C180).

As regards the Assembly of Confreres which came into existence only after the SGC (1971), our common life requires the responsible and effective participation of all the members in the life of the local community. The confreres are invited to deepen their sense of shared responsibility, to learn to dialogue and contribute to the meetings in fraternal fashion, and to foster the sense of the common good and unity.

I believe that the above three points – namely, coming together for prayer & meals; financial transparency & accountability; and, information & permission, will strengthen our religious spirit and sense of being consecrated persons.

2. Taking care of and accompanying the Salesians

a) Promoting the Spiritual Accompaniment of the Salesians.

Personal Accompaniment of the confreres includes various forms of accompaniment such as the friendly talk with the Rector, personal spiritual accompaniment (*spiritual direction*), the sacrament of reconciliation, psychological accompaniment, periodic evaluations (*scrutinies*), and intellectual, liturgical and pastoral accompaniment. Several Salesian documents in recent times have highlighted the need to give greater attention particularly to the "friendly talk" and "spiritual direction".

The **friendly talk with the Rector** is a simple means for creating a sense of family and for helping the confrere grow in fidelity to his vocation. This is a practice that has suffered a decline in recent years. It needs to be revived, not only for those in initial formation but for all. Since DB's own time, it has been a very efficacious means for the animation of the life of the community and of each confrere. DB considered it to be one of the most effective means for "promoting the good running of the community" (C 70). When all the confreres regularly meet their rector for a friendly talk, they are giving him a very valuable help for the animation and governance of the community. The friendly talk then becomes a way of practising the participatory leadership that is part of the process of renewal of religious life, as recommended in the document *New Wine in New Wine Skins*.

Here it is good to keep in mind that the friendly talk is protected by confidentiality: *nihil, nunquam, nulli*—nothing, never, to no one. (see, *Animating and Governing, the Ministry of the Salesian Rector*, p 96). Fr. Albera wrote, "Let the rector be careful never to reveal to others

the faults a confrere may have, even when they may already know of them through other channels. Let it be obvious to his subjects that he is able to respect the confidentiality of what is entrusted to him. It only takes some small indiscretion to weaken and maybe entirely destroy the confidence they have shown him.” (*Manuale del direttore* of Don Paul Albera, 131).

The Rector may be asked by the Provincial for his opinion on some confrere or other, and in such a case he has to give the necessary information objectively and responsibly. But it should be based exclusively on the external behavior of the confrere concerned and on what others may say about him. Confidences that may have been given in private talks are protected by a rigorous secrecy: *nihil, nunquam, nulli* [nothing, never, to no one].

The Friendly Talk is a practice on which our Father Don Bosco frequently insisted, to such an extent that we can say that it is one of the characteristic elements of the Salesian spirit. For Don Bosco it was one of the “fundamental norms of Salesian houses” (BM X, 458); it was “the key to good order and morality” (BM XI, 331), and hence “a duty to which the superior must attend with the greatest diligence” (BM XI, 323, 331, also BM X, 454; BM XII, 44-45).

Art. 70 of the Constitutions says the confrere meets with the Rector “for his own personal advantage and for promoting the good running of the community.” Regarding the content of the Friendly Talk, our General Regulations, Art 49, says: “In an atmosphere of mutual trust every confrere should frequently see his rector to let him know the state of his health, how his apostolic activity is proceeding, the difficulties he faces in the religious life and fraternal charity, and everything that may contribute to the welfare of the individual members and of the community. This means that the talk covers everything that concerns the concrete life of the confrere: personal life, community life, apostolic life. The rector is, according to article 55 of the Constitutions, “a father, teacher, and spiritual guide.”

The secrecy covering the friendly talk covers also personal spiritual direction; it is not, however, absolute, as is the seal of the sacrament of reconciliation. (see *Animating and Governing*, p 96)

Medical help for parents of Salesians: Part of the accompaniment of confreres is the solicitude and concern we show for the families and especially the parents of confreres. In this connection, I am thinking of offering Medical Insurance Policy for the parents of confreres who require it. We will work out the logistics in the coming months.

b) Empowering the Provincial Councillors who will be residing in the four regions.

Being a large Province, in order to facilitate better contact and communication with the communities and confreres, I have been thinking of giving the Councillors a wider role. In fact, I have been seriously thinking of Provincial Councillors who will be full-time Councillors. They will reside in the four regions of the Province so that they will be free to visit other houses to acquaint themselves with the problems and possibilities of the various houses in the region. They could be heading one or other departments like Formation, Salesian Family, Laity, Youth Ministry, Kalvi Solai, Social Engagement, Evangelization & Catechetics, land, Buildings, Legal issues, Government Sectors, Documentation, etc., thus enhancing the sectors assigned to

them with better animation and governance. For the houses in the region, the Councillors will be an easily accessible link between them and the Provincial. This is in view for a better accompaniment of the communities and confreres.

3. Special consideration towards the poorest, socially disadvantaged, orphans, and semi-orphans.

In Art 79 of the constitutions, we read, “We make every effort to stay close to them (the poor), to alleviate their needs, making our own their lawful aspirations for a more human society ... Remember well that what we have is not ours; it belongs to the poor; woe to us if we do not use it well” ((BM X, 141). DB was born poor and loved the poor. He showed a practical love for the poor. All his work was dedicated to the human and Christian advancement of poor youth. He was concerned also about the ordinary people who were in greatest need of help. He would often say: “Our Lord is present in the lowliest and most destitute beggar” (BM XIII, 84). In his spiritual testament, DB wrote: “The world will always welcome us as long as all our concern is for the underdeveloped peoples, for poor children, for those members of society most in danger. This is our real wealth which no one will envy and no one will take from us.” (BM XVII).

Our preferential option is for “the young who are poor, abandoned and in danger” (C 26), and for “poor people in general” (C 29). The Lord made it clear to DB that he was to direct his mission first and foremost to the young, especially to those who are poorer... With DB we reaffirm our preference for the young who are “poor, abandoned and in danger” (BM XIV, 536), those who have greater need of love and evangelization, and we work especially in areas of greatest poverty. In our province, we have been working with some of the most disadvantaged groups in society such as the Tribals, Thurumbars, Gypsies, Dalits, Irulars, etc. Some of these works have come up as the result of the vision and commitment of certain individual confreres. We appreciate those confreres who make Don Bosco present to these at-risk people. These ministries need to be strengthened and promoted.

Here, an important point to be kept in mind is that our closeness and solidarity with the poorest of the poor will affect our own lifestyle. The closer we are at heart with the poor, the more willingly we will adopt the lifestyle of the poor, both as individuals and communities, in order to lift the poor from their misery. Like Jesus who, “though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor so that you might become rich through his poverty” (2 Cor 8:9).

GC28 Guideline 5 speaks of the “absolute priority for the young, the poorest and most abandoned and defenceless.” Already in 2016, our Provincial Chapter had approved a Provincial Policy for Orphans. Provincial Chapter 2019 reaffirmed the same and said each institution, with the support of Don Bosco Foundation, will sustain this policy and ensure that all orphans will receive free education. The same chapter spoke of Neighbourhood Educational and Cultural Centres to promote study centres, oratories, satellite youth centres, mobile libraries, folk art training, music and art in the neighbourhood in collaboration with DBSARC and decided that every able confrere will render at least two hours of service weekly at such centres.

4. Formation - A Lifelong Process:

All life is a vocation; all life is formation.

The Salesian vocation is a call to become disciples of Christ, like Don Bosco, bearing witness to the Good Shepherd's love for the young. We respond to this call by committing ourselves to an adequate ongoing formation.

"Jesus called his Apostles individually to be with him and to be sent forth... Patiently and lovingly he prepared them... He calls us too to live out in the church our founder's project as apostles of the young... We respond to this call by committing ourselves to an adequate ongoing formation", says art. 96 of our Constitutions. Like the Apostles and the first Salesians, "each one of us is called by God" (C 22). Jesus prepared his apostles so that they would learn to carry out the mission he was going to entrust to them.

"The first Salesians found their true guide in Don Bosco... they learnt to model their own lives on his. We too find in him our model..." (C97). "For us, Don Bosco is not just a memory of the past, but a charismatic and living presence, active and stretching out to the future. In him we reach a better understanding of ourselves and we find the true sense of what it means to belong to the Congregation" (GC 21, 163).

"Enlightened by the person of Christ and by his Gospel, lived according to Don Bosco's spirit, the Salesian commits himself to **a formation process which will last all his life** and will keep pace with his maturing in other ways... With the help of Mary, his Mother and Teacher, he gradually becomes **a pastor and educator of the young** in the lay or priestly state" (C98).

Christ is the centre of formation and Mary is the teacher of all formation. Her life, so deeply docile to the Spirit, predisposed her to conceive Jesus, to bring him up and let herself be educated by him in turn, according to the Father's will. Mary was always at Don Bosco's side as he went ahead with his mission.

To live according to the spirit of Don Bosco is to assimilate Christ in a Salesian manner. Like Don Bosco, in "reading the Gospel we become more aware of certain aspects of the figure of the Lord" (C11). If the Gospel is to be studied and lived in all Salesian communities as the "supreme Rule", all the more must it shine forth in the formation communities; but it must be the Gospel as understood and lived by Don Bosco.

Ongoing formation is a permanent personal frame of mind. "Living in the midst of the young ... the Salesian tries to discern the voice of the Spirit in the events of each day and so acquires the ability to learn from life's experiences. He sees his ordinary activities as effective means of formation and he also makes use of any other means of formation that may be offered him." (C 119)

"Each Salesian accepts responsibility for his own formation... The natural environment for vocational growth is the community which the confrere joins... The very life of the community, united to Christ and open to the needs of the times, is itself a factor in formation..." (C99).

In the context of today, formation is an area that needs very careful attention because it is through formation that we achieve our identity as Salesians and acquire the maturity needed to live and work in conformity with our charism. The Vice Provincial who is in charge of Formation will ensure that those in formation get all the attention they need. He has to be someone who keeps abreast of the signs of the times and is familiar with the relevant church documents and directives of the Church and the Congregation.

5. Youth Ministry: Our meeting place with God

“We believe that God is awaiting us in the young to offer us the grace of meeting with Him and to dispose us to serve Him in them,” so declared GC 23 (n.95) in 1990. In this way, our youth work becomes the preeminent context in which to meet God. This profession of faith of GC23 must become the *credo* of all of us Salesians who call ourselves youth ministers.

The FSDB (n. 88) highlights some important attitudes that the Salesian fosters in his work with the young.

- He works with genuine supernatural motivation, rising above the level of his natural inclinations and preferences;
- He grows in awareness of being sent by the Father; he strives to make himself available like the Son, of whose love he is a sign and bearer; he keeps himself open to the Holy Spirit who fills his heart with pastoral love and inspires all his efforts;
- He lives enthusiastically his experience of his service to the young using the method of Don Bosco;
- He trains himself to look at the youth reality with the attitude of the Good Shepherd.
- He submits his work to the so-called apostolic rules: he knows he must work with competence but relies primarily on God’s strength; he prays much and remains modest when he succeeds.
- His apostolic passion, lit up by youthful ardour gives a particular tone to his service of youth; called the “**Oratorian heart**,” it reveals itself in a method which Don Bosco named the **Preventive System** (FSDB 32).

To be a Salesian means to have affection for young people, especially for those who are poorest, at risk and who find themselves on the margins. It means to cultivate the gift of a predilection for the young which makes him (see FSDB, n. 188):

- Approach them with a friendly attitude;
- Accept them without conditions and prejudices;
- Walk side by side with them, adjusting to their pace and rhythm of life;
- Help them to grasp the richness of life and its values.

Presence among the young

- Meeting with the young is for the Salesian a school of formation. By becoming their travelling companion, the Salesian has a direct exposure to the world of the young; he listens to their questions and experiences and enters their culture and language. He

learns to accept and love them just as they are and to live the Preventive System with them.

- His contact with the constantly evolving world of the young makes him aware of the need for educational and professional competence, pastoral skills and constant updating.
- He makes every effort to become a good communicator who is able to convey to them messages with a meaning.

In our Province, we have a long history of youth ministry with two major sectors: the formal and the non-formal. The formal sectors such as schools, colleges, youth centres, etc., as a rule, receive considerable attention from us. However, our campuses need to become more youth-friendly and the young people need a much more effective and continuous spiritual and psychological accompaniment as well as opportunities for citizenship and leadership training so that they become the yeast that transforms the society in which they live. In the non-formal or unorganized sector like the migrant youth, the young at risk, etc., needs greater attention and commitment from our side.

As Fr. Vigano said, “In the hearts of all who are Salesian, young people are the sacred ground before whom we take off the shoes like Moses. God speaks to us through them, they are the native place of our mission, the theological place where God seeks to remain at our disposal awaits our return and offers then grace of an encounter with him.”

6. Collaboration and participation of Salesian Family and Lay Collaborators in both Animation and Governance.

The different groups of the Salesian Family are at the service of the local Churches just as we are. Don Bosco’s charism is a single unified reality and it must be offered as such in the Church; its visible manifestation is the Salesian Family, which must be ever more present in the Church as a united group. The linkage and coordination, therefore, between its component groups is important for fostering a better insertion and more efficacious Salesian service.

We do not pretend that by ourselves we can solve all the problems of youth. We know that around us exist organizations, movements and people who are as zealous as we are for the integral development of youth. Every Salesian community will consider it an apostolic duty to collaborate with all the active forces present in society.

Speaking of the Educative Community, Art. 47 of the Constitutions states: *“In this community, lay people associated with our work make a contribution all their own, because of their experience and pattern of life. We welcome and encourage their collaboration, and we give them the opportunity to get a deeper knowledge of the Salesian spirit and the practice of the preventive system.”*

The Church’s Magisterium also has made abundantly clear the role of the laity in educational structures. Vatican II provides a rich doctrinal, spiritual and pastoral teaching on the theme of the laity. Their role is the **Christian animation of the temporal order**. The decree on the Laity, *“Apostolicam Actuositatem,”* indicates active and responsible participation in the church’s mission as being proper to them and absolutely necessary (AA 2-3). *“Ad gentes”* points to the

importance and even indispensability of the laity in the missionary activity of the church (AG 41). *Gaudium et spes* describes the commitment of lay people as significant and decisive in the relationship between the church and the contemporary world.

We must bear in mind that the presence of laypersons in Salesian works is not just instrumental. They are there because of an intrinsic need in our Family: Don Bosco recognized and passed on to us the urgent necessity “of uniting the efforts of good people in helping each other to do good.” Lay people, therefore, are actively present in the Salesian educative and pastoral community, in which they have a specific role because of the “contribution all their own” (C 47) which only they can give. Lay people are valid and necessary collaborators who efficaciously complement our educational, pastoral and evangelizing work.

Our Provincial Chapter 2019 has asked us to involve lay people in vocation promotion, faith formation and marriage counselling as well as in animating the monthly recollections for Salesians and retreats for young people. The Chapter also asks that top priority be given to the establishment and efficient functioning of the EPCC in every community. DBYAC has been asked to offer formation programmes for the laity and leadership training programmes for the students at the Camp Site in Yellagiri. It further says, “Every community, being the veritable locus for promoting partnership with lay people, will strengthen/start wherever possible, the Salesian Co-operators Units, Past Pupils’ Units and ADMA by the end of 2022 that would facilitate greater lay collaboration.”

Besides and beyond these, a point I would like to highlight here is that the time has come for us to give laypersons continuous formation in Salesian pedagogy and progressively greater roles in administration and governance.

7. Attention towards Evangelization and Catechesis.

“This Society had its beginning in a simple catechism lesson. For us too, evangelizing and catechizing are the **fundamental characteristics of our mission**,” says art. 34 of our Constitutions. The same article also says, “We are called to be **educators to the faith at every opportunity.... We walk side by side with the young so as to lead them to the risen Lord**, and so discover in him and in his gospel the deepest meaning of their own existence, and thus grow into new men.” From this, we understand the importance the Congregation gives to evangelization and catechesis. It is our fundamental task. For us evangelization means “to lead the young to the risen lord, to discover the meaning of their existence, and to grow as new men. It enables young people while developing their own personality to grow at the same time in that new life which has been given them in baptism.” (Vatican II, GE 8)

Art. 31 of the Constitutions says: “We educate and evangelize according to a plan for the total well-being of man directed to Christ, the perfect Man. Faithful to the intentions of our Founder, our purpose is to form “upright citizens and good Christians.”

DEEPAGAM, our provincial catechetical centre, has been engaged in promoting evangelization and catechesis for many years. This is a work of great relevance and importance for our mission.

8. Special attention towards the legalization of land, buildings, documentation, legal issues.

The lands and buildings we have are necessary means for our apostolate. They are valuable assets given to us by Divine Providence. It is our responsibility to take care of them, to protect them and safeguard them, in compliance with the laws of the land. In the past few years, a lot of work has been done in organizing and arranging the land documents and ensuring that permissions and approvals are obtained from the appropriate authorities for the building plans and the completed buildings. This has been a work that is carefully followed up by the Economer's office for which the Province is grateful to the Economer and his staff. This is a task we have to follow up carefully in the coming years. A separate confrere, apart from the Economer's office, will be set aside to follow up this work as it needs continued attention.

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

Gracias Fr. K. M. Jose!

I am indeed grateful to Fr. K. M. Jose for being an economical leader of the province past six years and moreover a person humility personified. We thank the Lord for the great gift of Fr. K.M Jose as our Provincial from Feb 2017 to Jan 2023. Fr. KM treated everyone with politeness and kindness, not because others are nice but because he is. He is also an affectionate man with very few words and of course with an innocent smile on his face always no matter what. Fr. K. M. is a missionary at heart, though he has not physically worked in the missions but at heart he is a true missionary. The province circular letter always had a place for the mission and the life of the missionaries. Fr. KM always managed by his mind and led by his heart. He believed that Leadership is no longer about the size of our title but the strength of our impact; less about the size of our office and more about the depth of our commitment.

You are the personification of St. Joseph, the just man. You never wanted to put down any confrere and write off people just like that. You provided opportunities for people to improve. You believed that leadership is an action, not a position and that's why even though you took up your leadership at the tough time like Corona, you brought in financial stability and sustainability of course with the support of all the confreres. You also showed a special predilection for the Rural and special Ministries. He is said to be a **SMART Provincial**; Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound. All these definitely apply to you. But permit me to qualify them:

1. **Simplicity:** We appreciate your simplicity in your dealings.
2. **Magnanimity:** We thank God for your magnanimity especially in dealing with confreres who are in difficult situations.
3. **Availability:** You were truly available to the confreres to listen to their issues.
4. **Responsibility:** We thank you wholeheartedly for shouldering the responsibility faithfully and diligently.
5. **Tranquillity:** We applaud your tranquillity and the calmness you enjoyed even during the dark of part of the humanity, during the Covid period because of your complete trust in God's providence.

With a deep sense of gratitude, we salute you and thank you for the beautiful accompaniment that you have given to each and every one of us here; from a fresh novice who entered the Congregation to the veteran Salesian Fr. Vikrant and not forgetting those who are abroad too. This legacy will be continued definitely by humble self under the guidance of St. John Bosco, our Father and Founder. We assure you of our continued prayers for your good health and success in your future endeavours. May our Blessed Mother continue to protect and guide you in your life and mission.

Fr. K. M. Jose will be the assistant parish priest of Lourdes Shrine, Perambur till 24th May 2023. We wish him all the very best for his pastoral ministry.

A Big Thanks!

Although he will be helping us till May 24th, it is my duty to thank the outgoing Province Secretary Fr. Dominic Matthews, who has served as an efficient Secretary (Provincial Secretary / Province Secretary) under two Provincials: from 2005-2008 under Fr. Stanislaus Swamikannu and again under the leadership of Fr. K.M. Jose, from 2017 till date. This shows that he has been very much part and parcel of our Province mission and in the official INM correspondence with Rome. He has most diligently and responsibly carried out his secretaryship with confidentiality, commitment and loyalty for the past six years. He is very systematic in his work and has been effective in his communication skills in coordinating the Province events and news. I thank him and appreciate him for the unassuming work that he has done for the welfare and the growth of our Province. I wish him all the very best in the new responsibility that he will be entrusted with, in our Province.

Thank You - Fr. Biju Michael SDB

We are truly grateful and would like to express our sincere gratitude to Fr. Biju Michael, the Regional for South Asia for presiding over the Holy Eucharist at the time of the installation of the new Provincial and praying for us. We look forward to his valuable suggestions and plans for the development of our Province.

Thank You - Installation of the New Provincial

I greatly appreciate and my heart filled thanks to Fr. Thamathiruthuvam Irudayam and the community of St. Mary's for the time and energy spent for the installation of the new Provincial yesterday. It was very much appreciated by everyone. I take this opportunity to once again thank Fr. Edwin Vasanthan, Fr. Rajkumar Fernando, Fr. Dominic Matthews, Fr. Joe Anand, and all the confreres and staff of Citadel for their cooperation and collaboration for the same.

Welcome

I wholeheartedly welcome **Fr. Joseph Franklin Alphonse** (Mobile: **+91 72008 89122**, Email: **inmsec@inmsdb.com**) who will take the place of the **Province Secretary** in Citadel. We wish him fruitful ministry at the province level, and I thank him for accepting this principal task. I would like to inform you that **Fr. Arumainathan Jerry** (Mobile: **+91 93429 56344**, Email:

secretary@inmsdb.com) has been appointed as the **Provincial Secretary**. I thank him for accepting the responsibility and wish him a meaningful ministry.

Hearty Congratulations

I am extremely happy to communicate to you that the FMA Mother General Rev. Sr. Chiara Cazzuola has nominated Rev. Sr. Devadoss Margaret as the new INM FMA Provincial for the period of 2023 - 2029. Sr Margaret is currently serving the Province as a Provincial Councillor for the last six years and as the animator of the Formation house Sacred Heart Home, Katpadi for the past three years. She has a vast experience in the field of formation and animation. We are also glad that Rev. Sr. Majella Fernando is the new Provincial of INT FMA. We wish them all success in their new ministry of animation and governance of the FMAs. The installation dates will be announced later.

Hearty Welcome to INM

The province is happy to welcome **Fr. Joan Lluís Playa, the World Delegate for the Salesian Family**. He will be accompanied by Ms. Dagmar, the Major Responsible for the VDBs. They will be in our Province from 25th to 27th February 2023. They will meet the INM VDBs and the INM CDB candidate as well. They will also meet members of the Salesian Family when they visit a few of our communities during their short stay in INM.

Approval of Provincial Chapter Documents

Dear confreres, I am indeed happy to bring to your notice that the Rector Major and the General Council have approved the Provincial Chapter 2022 documents of our Province in the winter plenary session. My special thanks to Fr. Pathiaraj, who was the Moderator and I also thank all the Chapter members and all of you dear confreres who put their minds to give a shape for this document.

Consultation Forms

Dear confreres it is important that every confrere participates in this activity of consultation process as it was highlighted earlier. I thank all the confreres who took time to send the names of the confreres whom they think suitable for the services at the house and province level. I have received 83% of the forms from different corners of the Province. Those who have still not yet sent the forms are asked to hand over the forms, sealed in an envelope marked "CONFIDENTIAL" to the Provincial Office or to post/courier the same. You may also email them to inmprovincial@inmsdb.com.

Welcome Back!

Fr. Maria Lawrence SDB is coming back to the Province on February 15 after serving for many years at the congregational level. He will now oversee the Archives of the INM Province. We welcome him wholeheartedly and wish him a joyful ministry in the Province.

Don Bosco Novena

My sincere appreciation to Fr. John Christy in charge of Youth Ministry, Fr. Ernest Rosario and the DBICA Team for preparing and telecasting on Madha TV, on the theme: **The**

Making of the Saint Don Bosco: You can become a Saint; You can help the young to become a Saint. The Salesians, lay people and the Youth were the resource persons of each day. I thank everyone for your enriching and thought-provoking reflections. The program was much appreciated by all the Catholic faithful and those who watched it through the Aflame DBICA YouTube channel. I recommend those in charge of Catechism to make use of the material to spread the love of Don Bosco.

Regional Meeting of Salesian Cooperators at Bengaluru

The Association of Salesian Cooperators (ASC) from all our Salesian Provinces of South Asia Region (SDB & FMA) will gather in NBCLC campus, Bengaluru for their Regional Meeting on 18th and 19th of February 2023. The theme of this regional meeting is the Strenna 2023 of Rector Major: "As Yeast in the Salesian Family." Together with the Province Delegates (SDB & FMA) of INM, all the newly elected office bearers of ASC-INM will be attending the meeting. We wish them a deeper and fruitful Salesian Family experience to play their role of Lay leaders as Yeast in the Salesian Mission!

Team Visit @ Hyderabad

The Provincial Councilors, Fr. Fernando Bellarmine, the Rector of Becchi Don Bosco and myself will be joining the Team Visit with the Rector Major and the General Councilors in Hyderabad from 28 February and I will continue to be there for the SPCSA. I will be back to the province on 9th March 2023.

INM Province Community Day

The INM Provincial Community Day was celebrated in a fitting manner on 17th January 2023 in Don Bosco Shrine, Ayanavaram - Chennai. The newly ordained priests of past three batches were felicitated. I am also very grateful to all the confreres who participated in the Province Community Day and a sincere word of appreciation and thanks to Fr. Maria Louis and the confreres of the community for making the event a memorable one. I also thank the Rectors and Leaders of the community who prepared the children for a colourful cultural experience. Thank you Fr. Jesudoss Perianayagam for breaking the word of God for us, Fr. Leo for felicitating Fr. K. M. Jose and Mr. Francis from Ayanavaram for addressing the new priests. At this juncture I thank all the communities for your generosity for the development of the Don Bosco Mission in Kadambur.

Guided Retreat for the Pre-Perpetuals and Perpetuals

We express our gratitude to Fr. Antony Roswan SAC for guiding the brothers who are preparing for the perpetual profession during the Christmas and Pongal vacations. It was a great spiritual renewal and enrichment for the brothers.

Strenna Dissemination in INM

The Strenna Disseminations were held for all the Salesians and Salesian Family members. I thank the communities – Don Bosco - Katpadi, Sacred Heart College – Tirupattur, Holy Spirit Church – Pondy and Citadel – Chennai and the rectors of the houses who ensured

the event on the assigned days and Fr. K.M. Jose and Fr. John Britto for animating the confreres and the Salesian Family members.

Pray for Fr. Deva Joe

Dear confrere when we say a prayer for the sick, it is asking God to heal us from our ailments. We place Fr. Devapragasam Joseph, the Rector and Parish Priest of Lourdes Shrine, Perambur, under the care of God and humbly ask that He may restore his servant to health again. He is admitted in Kaveri Hospital, Chennai.

Silver Jubilee – Andaman Mission

It was exactly 25 years before (1997) the Salesians took up the Andaman Mission to be the signs and bearers of God's love to the Young. The Salesian Mission in Andaman and Nicobar Islands has made impact in the life the faithful who are under our care and all walks of life as well. To mark this achievement the Silver Jubilee of the Salesian presence as well as the Silver Jubilee of the Parish, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Ferrargunj was celebrated in a grand manner 8th January 2023. I thank Fr. Patrick Alphonse and the entire community for keeping the faith alive and active and their everyday sacrifices.

Foundation Day Celebration - Fujairah

On 31 January 2023, Salesian community at United Arab Emirates celebrated the China anniversary of the foundation day of St. Mary's Catholic High School, Fujairah, on the Feast of Don Bosco, in the presence of Bp. Paul Hinder (former Bishop) and Bp. Paulo Martinelli (current Bishop), Salesian Priests in Fujairah, UAE Government officials and the stakeholders of the school. The Salesian Priests who had served and are currently serving since 2007, were thanked and appreciated for their visionary leadership which has contributed to the rapid growth of the school. We are ever grateful to the Capuchin Bishops who have entrusted this mission to the Salesians. It was a witnessing value for the very first time in the history of St. Mary's school, that 2250 students and 206 staff of both UK and Indian streams came together, to celebrate the oneness of 39 nationalities in the school, keeping up the school motto 'The End Crowns the Work'. The mass gathering of more than 4000 people of different nationalities and from different Emirates of the UAE added colour to the festivity and they expressed their gratitude to the school management, for the family atmosphere that they enjoyed in the school premises. I express my sincere gratitude to the Salesians in Fujairah, UAE – Fr. Balasamy, Rector, Fr. Suresh, Principal, Fr. Rajan, Vice Rector and Parish Priest, Fr. George, Assistant Parish Priest and Fr. Rozario, the Administrator and for their constant support and guidance in the journey towards the fulfilment of the entrusted mission.

Jubilee Inauguration – Basin Bridge

The inauguration of the Platinum Jubilee of Mary Help of Christians Church, Basin Bridge was held on 22nd January 2023. The Holy Eucharist was solemnized by the presence of Fr. K.M. Jose and the homily was preached by Fr. Bellarmine. The event was marked with the felicitation of the guests, cultural program, and distribution of prizes for various competitions. The organization of this event was headed by Fr. Joy Kurien together with the collaboration

of the parish council core team and the volunteers. I appreciate the community for their lively organization of the event.

Silver Jubilee Inauguration of Don Bosco Scouts and Guides

The Tamil Nadu Don Bosco Scouts and Guides District Association will inaugurate the Silver Jubilee of its establishment at Don Bosco Thanjavur on 11th February 2023. The inaugural function will be held between 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. The scout district will organize several programmes throughout the year to encourage and strengthen the scouts and guides of our institutions. I request the respective Unit leaders to make necessary initiatives to participate in the celebration. On behalf of the province, I wish them all the very best, for all the initiatives, that they undertake throughout the year.

Commemoration of Deceased Confreres

The memory of the deceased confreres, who have gone before us to meet the Lord is a blessing and an important tradition of our Congregation. During this month of February let us remember all the deceased Salesians of our province. Let us offer a mass especially for the Salesians who have worked in the respective communities. I request the rector or the senior confreres to share the exemplary and sacrificial life of the deceased Salesians whom they know with the young clerics and confreres of the community. They too support us through their constant intercession to the Lord for our province. I too pray that may they all enjoy eternal bliss and beatific vision of God.

Rest in Peace

Fr. Tharakan Mathew SDB (IND), age 88, breathed his last on 3rd January 2023. We offer our condolences to Fr. Kuruvachira Jose, and the confreres of Dimapur Province.

Fr. Marcel Lincoln SDB (INT), age 60, went to eternal abode on 1st February 2023. We offer our heartfelt condolences to Fr. Agilan Sarprasadam, and the confreres of Trichy Province

Mr. Aaservatham (80) the beloved father of Bro. Amalraj (2nd year student in Becchi Don Bosco-Kavarapettai) passed away on 10th January due to illness.

Mrs. Catherine Arulappan (75), the beloved mother of Fr. Jayaraj Mari Arulappan died on 13th January due to cancer.

Mrs. G. Josephine Nirmala, (65), mother of Fr Theophil Anand passed away on 14th January 2023.

Mrs. A.P. Opisthal (91), mother of Fr. Nallayan Pancras (Rector-SIGA) passed on 20th January 2023.

Mr. U.A. Francis (70) elder brother of Fr. Sagayaraj (Broadway) went to eternal abode on 21st January 2023.

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

Dear Confreres, I would like to conclude this Circular, with the words of Pope Francis: “As religious, we do not only receive a vocation individually; we are also called together. We are like the tiles of a mosaic,” the Pope said. “Each is lovely in itself, but only when they are put together do they form a picture. Each of us shines like a star in the heart of God and in the firmament of the universe”. Our Salesian vocation is about making God’s dream come true, the great vision of fraternity that Jesus cherished when He prayed to the Father 'that they may all be one'. Let us implore the light of the Holy Spirit, so that all of us may find our proper place and give the very best of ourselves in this great divine plan!”

Dear Confreres, what I have presented here is a plan that will serve as a road map for me in the coming years. God has called us to be Salesians to accompany the young people of today and offer them “life – life to the full,” which is their right. Walking alongside young people and encouraging them to make their lives meaningful and gently challenging them to higher goals is our task. To do so, we need to have our priorities clear. Our mission sets the tenor of our life. In this circular, I have highlighted eight important points we need to focus on in the coming years. They are not new; they are all based on our Constitutions, General Chapters and other magisterial teachings of the congregation.

Two things we need to keep in mind to preserve the effectiveness and fruitfulness of our ministry are: first, attentiveness to our religious and charismatic identity as Salesians; and second, clarity regarding our target group youth, particularly the poor, the marginalized, and those at risk.

The above eight aspects will certainly help us to live our consecration and mission in the Salesian community when we surrender ourselves daily under the mantle of Our Lady and at the feet of Don Bosco, when we meditatively pray every day the consecration prayer, renewing our fidelity to our consecrated life and apostolic mission.

Our Lady loved, cared and guided Don Bosco as a Mother. She instructed and inspired him as a Teacher. He grew in maturity and acquired sanctity because of his fervent love and devotion to her. I will be offering each of our communities a symbolic gift of our love for Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco, and I invite each one of you to surrender yourselves and our Province under their feet.

Be assured of my humble prayers for each one of you and I seek your valuable supplications for me as I commence my journey as a Servant Leader, seeking to remain always with HIM so as to be strengthened while reaching out together with you to those in need.

Yours truly in Don Bosco,



Fr. Don Bosco SDB
INM Provincial

Date: 04.02.2023

Place: Chennai – 600010.