



INM-DBL-CIR 09/10-2023

OCTOBER 2023

“You have the words of eternal life”
– Salesian Life of Communion with the Word Made Flesh

My dear Confreres,

‘Prayer, Word and Bread’, that’s how I ended my reflection in my second circular for the month of March, wherein continuing from my very first circular I proposed the plan of a deeper journeying with you all throughout my tenure as Provincial by basing my monthly circulars on the motto I took for my priestly ordination as a blueprint for all our contemplation and action: ***“To be with Him and to be sent forth”*** (Mk 3:14). In keeping with that, in this circular I would like to highlight and summarize all the salient points of the seven circulars I have written to you so far. I find that October, the month of our Lady of the Holy Rosary, is fitting and apt to do this, as Mary’s example inspires us in our own desire and struggles to contemplate and commune with the mysteries of the ‘Word made Flesh’ for us ‘to remain with Him and to be sent forth’.

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (Jn. 6:68). This is the answer of Peter, representing the Twelve, to the question of Jesus at the leaving of many of His disciples who found it ‘hard and mad’ to understand Jesus’ invitation to commune with (eat and drink) Him. For the majority of the disciples, who left Jesus and went no longer with Him from then on, what mattered most was a certain level of following Jesus that guaranteed their daily bodily needs of food and drink without fail and in abundance. Hence Jesus as a king from such a perspective would prove to be of great security for them. Whereas His words that, ‘Life is more than food and body more than clothing’ (cf. Lk. 12:23) or ‘Cross as His glory’, or to be a ‘Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep’ unlike a mercenary and to be ‘a king whose kingdom is not of this world’ with its name, fame and defence mechanisms, where ‘too much’ for them. Hence, they drift and fall away. Instead, Peter with the other eleven chooses to remain with Jesus not because he perfectly understood these significances of this His call to ‘eat Him and drink Him’, or His Lord and Master washing His feet or his confessed Messiah and Son of God suffering rejection, persecution and crucifixion. But despite the craving for all the worldly hunger and thirst, glory and honour, which they too had and which they expressed through different words and actions even after having met the Risen Jesus, they preferred to stay with Him for some reason unknown to them and which they took upon themselves gradually to articulate it with their own ‘body and blood’ given up for their Master and Lord who gave Himself for them. Yes, it took their whole life to understand that ‘to eat and drink Him’ or to commune with Him deeply was to become ‘bread and drink’ like Him to satisfy the real and lasting hunger and thirst of the multitudes.

This wisdom of the cross demanded, despite themselves, their willingness ‘to be with Him’. Like Peter then, Cagliero later will repeat the same desire ‘to be with Don Bosco’ in his *Sequela Christi*. It is not different for me and you dear confreres, we too, despite all our cravings for the wrong bread and drink and misunderstanding or rejection of the wisdom of the Cross,

have for some reason chosen 'to remain with Him'. But do we like to grasp that unknown reason, which is basically His election of us even before we were conceived in our mother's womb, and articulate it like Peter and the other Apostles before it is too late?

The unknown reason or the election that precedes our coming to life is the eternal seed of God's Word, who is Christ His Son sown into us through His Holy Spirit. This is the truth of our being and of every human being. Before it is too late this truth of our being must be discovered, that is the challenge and our spiritual journey. The sower and the seed are both God, generously and with great trust 'present in us/given to us' to allow Him to become fruitful in us and through us. He gives Himself to us so unconditionally without any distinction or discrimination but only our response will make the real difference. He can be trampled upon by us and abandoned to the evil forces of the air; or He can be obstructed by our stony heart from taking deep root in us and thus left to be burnt alive; or He can be choked by our uncontrolled cravings and lust for the worldly needs. But He the Sower and the Seed remain the same towards us, totally self-emptying and totally self-giving. But when will we from being a path, a rocky soil and thorny bush gradually become the good soil to allow that 'eternal seed' to bear eternal life-giving fruits: to allow the Word to realize the purpose for which it was sent? (cf. Is. 55:11). Like Mary sooner the better for us and for the world in which we are and to which we are sent.

Contemplation is 'seeing' this truth of us. Action is 'communing' with this truth in us and in the other. This is our true life hidden with Christ in God to be discovered, celebrated and proclaimed every day as the 'Paschal Mystery'. Thus 'contemplation' is not some exotic practices leading us away from the reality of us and the other; and 'action' some forced, condescending, ego-uplifting and upholding acts of charity towards the other. It is 'seeing' and 'communing' with the truth of our being and thus the truth of everyone. It is the mystery of 'Christ' hidden in us and always waiting to be discovered with great joy for which it is worth giving up everything, even our own life.

Prayer, Word and Bread: Yes prayer is nothing but seeing the eternal beauty of this 'Word' sown in us even before the foundations of the world and being nourished by it as it is the 'Bread' broken for us. Thus we become gradually in this **being with Him**, His 'word and bread' **sent forth** for the hunger of everyone and every created reality. This is the 'Salesian Presence' or the 'Salesian Preventive/Providential System' of being with and giving oneself selflessly as we saw in our first three circulars with some central and critical questions: **to be or not to be? why am I still here or wanting to be here? What keeps me here and what keeps me going?**

Our reflection of the 'Passover' of Jesus in the circular of May, adorned by the persons and life of Joseph and Mary his parents, took us deeper in this journey of how to be with and how to be sent forth with the 'great outpouring' of the Spirit of God in us (Pentecost). My special circular on Mary Help of Christians was not just an eye-opener on the significance of the title 'Help of Christians' but a plunge into our own vocation like that of Mary to discover, grow and give birth to 'the Christ/the anointed of the Spirit' in us.

In the circulars of June, August and September I tried to highlight the implications of 'Being with and being sent forth' in our personal and community 'prayer life and planning' and how the sacrament of confession is the best prayer and plan at our disposal for our own 'personal educative plan' and 'pastoral educative plan'. The Salesian meditation, understood not just as 30 minutes but a sustained and uninterrupted encounter with the Lord, the 'Word made flesh' among us, through the **Lauds-Meditation-Eucharist** in the morning and **Vespers-Spiritual reading and Rosary-Night Prayers** in the evening, makes our prayer, planning and confession possible and efficacious.

In connection with this, I pointed out how the faithful celebration of the office of the readings is obligatory like the wedding ring in our communion/marriage with the Word made Flesh living and praying among us, in us and through us 'deacons and priests'. It is really shocking to see that a great majority of us priests have given it up and what is sad, already as deacons some do not prioritize this banquet made of: the 'word of God' and its beautiful exegesis by the 'fathers of the Church, saints and documents of the Church'.

St. Jerome one of our important Latin fathers of the Church whom we celebrated on 30th September was convinced of our regular 'contemplation and communion' with Christ the Word made flesh by saying: '**Ignorance of the Scripture is ignorance of Christ**'. Unlike most of us who only repeat this his saying sometimes in our homilies or talks just for effect without doing anything about this in our daily life, he took up the study of the Sacred Scriptures seriously and made the new Latin translation of the whole Bible from the Hebrew Manuscripts which we know as the 'Vulgate'.

What about our knowledge of such fathers of the Church (be it Greek fathers be it Latin fathers) who laid the great foundations of our Christian Faith by their writings and life which flowed from their great love for the Sacred Scripture in which they 'contemplated and communed' with Christ the Word made Flesh?

I thought I could do something regularly to stimulate our love for the 'Word of God'. Two concrete steps: 1. I am already doing it through my monthly circulars which are Biblically Salesian. 2. From this month onwards I shall start sharing with you on the Church fathers. So my plan is simple, in the first part of the month I shall journey with you through my provincial circulars and in the second part of the month through one of the Fathers of the Church. Thus this will help us to discover our Salesian roots in the Bible and in the fathers of the Church both revealing the beautiful face of the 'Word made Flesh' among us with whom we ourselves can renew our deeper communion through our regular contemplation of Him.

I earnestly request the Rectors and leaders in all our communities to revive the important Salesian tradition of daily 'Goodnight' through which you can disseminate and further enrich the insights and reflections from the monthly circulars and sharing on the fathers of the Church.

In this connection, I urge the confreres in all our formation houses to take seriously their study and celebration of the Bible and Fathers of the Church. They should have a good familiarity with the Bible and its world. Interest and familiarity are lacking with regard to the Bible and the Biblical figures, the foundation and source of all our life and formation. Let our younger confreres in the various communities sent for practical training and college studies be helped to become familiar with the Bible and fathers of the Church by organizing Biblical and Patristical days, evenings, weekends, etc. for the boys, girls, youth and adults in all our school and parish structures. It goes without saying that in the Theologate during the four years of Theological formation, this must gain more depth and intensity which will help them in their preaching and serving, providing at the same time and in the first-place real nourishment and meaning for themselves.

Mary our Mother, Teacher and Guide teaches us through her whole life how to contemplate and commune with Christ the eternal Word of the Father. In our daily Rosary, we should discover and celebrate this contemplation and communion of Mary with all the mysteries of Christ's Life in the first person, in and through her own body, mind and spirit. Thus Rosary becomes another regular privileged place of our contemplation and communion with Christ the Word made Flesh. Using apt Biblical verses and quotes from the Fathers of the Church for every mystery enriches and enhances this experience.

The significant saints of this month, St. Luke the evangelist who has given us this contemplative and communing heart of Mary and St. Francis of Assisi who through his radical life of conformity to the Incarnate Word who started also the lovely tradition of the Christmas crib with his living crib which he installed in Greccio, Italy, intercede for us and inspire us that we too may take our life of Communion with the Word made Flesh seriously, experiencing it and expressing it through our daily life to Him like Peter and the other Apostles: ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”***

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

Pray for Fr. John Rosario

Let us intensify our prayers for Fr. John Rosario, who is at present recuperating at the Citadel, Chennai. He is constantly assisted by his younger sister, Sr. Metilda belonging to the Institute of Foreign Mission Sisters (ISME), who is also a trained nurse. Witnessing their profound faith in the healing power of our Saviour is truly inspiring. For immediate and better treatment on 2nd October, Fr. Rosario will be admitted in Apollo Multi-Speciality Cancer Institute, Chennai. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Fr. Rosario for his dedicated service as he is relieved from the responsibilities of Rector and Director of Novices. May the merciful Lord grant him complete healing from his illness.

New Director of Novices

The Rector Major has appointed Fr. Bellarmine Fernando as the Rector and Director of Novices in the place of Fr. John Rosario. As we thank and congratulate Fr. Bellarmine for accepting this significant responsibility of guiding the future Salesians of our provinces, let us assist him with our prayers and support.

Conclusion and Follow-up of the Team Visit

The Provincial and his council are grateful for your hospitality, love and concern shown during the team visit. After the intense team visits to our communities, I feel the need to focus on the following areas. 1. Salesians are consecrated men, 2. Community dimension and 3. Apostolic dimension. We must be obedient to God as Christ was obedient to the will of His father. The Rector/ Leader of each community represents Christ who unites his followers in the service of the Father. He is at the centre of the community, a brother among brothers, who recognize his responsibilities and authority (C. 55).

Our life of poverty calls for a detachment of heart and generous service of others and our vow of chastity helps us to take the authentic love of God to others. Community life is prescribed not simply for reasons of convenience and economy, not even for mutual support in ministry, but because it manifests our communion in Christ. Our apostolic life must cater to our consecrated life and our commitment to the poor and the needy. We cannot change the whole world, it never can be done by an individual, but by changing ourselves for the community, we can do tremendously what we want to do to the world as a community.

Provincial, Community, Individual -Budget Plan

Upon reviewing the communities' budgets and observing our current mode of religious life, I am deeply convinced that we have fallen short in promoting prophetic austerity, both individually and collectively. It is crucial to acknowledge certain shortcomings that demand

genuine realization and immediate rectification in various aspects of our religious life. These include considerations related to food choices, modes of travel, mobile phone usage, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, dress code expenses, the proliferation of special food, the nature of picnics, birthday celebrations, and extravagant jubilee festivities.

It is imperative to recall the cautionary words of Our Father and Founder, Don Bosco, who reminds us that "what we have is not ours; it belongs to the poor; woe to us if we do not use it well" (C. Art. 79). Therefore, I urge a thorough revision of the budget in alignment with the principles outlined in articles 73–79 of the constitution and regulations 51–65. It is essential to ensure that the expenses of both individual confreres and communities do not exceed the resources available for our beneficiaries. Additionally, each community should engage in an annual reflection on the Province Economic Directory, which should lead us to embrace a simple lifestyle.

Moments of Prayer & Togetherness

Particular emphasis is placed on enhancing our regularity and consistency in personal prayer and community moments of prayers, meals and other moments of community. The absence of even one confrere impacts the spiritual atmosphere of the community, disrupting the collective journey towards responding to God's call. To establish communities of prayer, it is imperative that each individual cultivates a personal commitment to prayer (C. 93). Despite the demands of a busy day, finding moments for personal prayer is essential.

Collectively, the community should prioritize the celebration of the Eucharist as a central act, fostering fraternal communion and renewing our commitment to apostolic service. It is, therefore, an opportune time for us to recommit ourselves to regularizing our spiritual practices within the community, fostering an environment where every communal moment is celebrated with a united heart and mind.

Commencing of the PC 2024 in view of the GC 29

On the occasion of the Salesian missionary expedition on Sunday, September 24, 2023, in Turin-Valdocco, the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, announced the theme of the 29th General Chapter (GC29): "**Passionate for Jesus Christ, Dedicated to the Young - For a faithful and prophetic lived experience of our Salesian vocation.**" The Moderator of the GC 29 will be **Rev. Fr. Alphonse Owoudou**, Regional Councilor for Africa and Madagascar.

The Provincial Council with the consent of his council has appointed **Fr. John Britto SAVARINATHAN as the Moderator of PC 2024.** Fr. John Britto Savarinathan exemplifies a Salesian deeply rooted in Christ, community, and mission. His character is marked by neutrality and fairness in all his roles, drawing from extensive experiences as a Rector, Director, and Provincial Councillor.

In collaboration with him, the members of the preparatory committee listed below will carry out their roles with expertise:

- 1. Fr. John Alexander**
- 2. Fr. Varghese Choorackal**
- 3. Fr. John Christy**
- 4. Fr. Emmanuel Maddhichetty**

We wish the moderator and preparatory committee team the choicest blessings for the execution of a fruitful Provincial Chapter.

INM Overall Provincial Plan (OPP) 2023-2029

The OPP is the strategic plan for animation and government that accompanies the development and the continuity of the province (cfr. GC25, nos.82-84). The OPP is a practical tool that helps reaching the aim of all the educative and pastoral resources within the province. The OPP is also a point of reference for all the programmes and projects of communities and works (SYM Frame of Reference, 290-291.311).

On 7th October, on the occasion of the Feast of the Holy Rosary, The Overall Provincial Plan (OPP) 2023-2029 of the Salesian Province of Chennai will be released during the solemn Eucharistic celebration at Citadel, Chennai.

46th SPSCSA Council

The 46th Council of the SPCSA was convened in the Vice-Province of Sri Lanka from September 1st to 4th, 2023. Although all 12 provincials attended the meeting, it's important to note that Fr. Biju Michael, the President of the SPCSA and Regional of South Asia, was unable to be physically present due to passport-related issues. During the ensuing discussions, the SPCSA Council reached several decisions, some of which I would like to highlight as they may be of interest to our confreres namely:

1. All the provincials are asked to send names of candidates for study or teaching in Social Communication and Pedagogy, with their CVs to the Regional Superior. It would then be taken up by the "Personnel Commission" of the UPS which includes the Rector Major, Vicar, Rector Magnificus of UPS and others.
2. The common course for Deacons be resumed after getting in touch with the Rectors and Presidents/Principals of the theologates about the possible joint timings.
3. The province secretaries are asked to collect data about the qualification of confreres in order to make Human Resource Directory of the Provinces.
4. The province secretaries meet once a year in different provinces.

I would like to thank Fr. Roshan Miranda the provincial of the LKC vice-province and the members of his council for going out of their way to make our stay a memorable one as they also took us to some of their centres of apostolate.

Welcome Fr. Sagaya Francis Pinto

The Rector Major has given a definitive transfer for Fr. Sagaya Francis Pinto SDB from the Province of Annai Vellankanni of Trichy (INT) to the Province of St. Thomas the Apostle of Chennai (INM). We wholeheartedly welcome him and wish him a fruitful ministry in our province.

Educare for Vulnerable Children & Don Bosco Foundation

We are delighted to announce that from this month, we will channel our assistance towards supporting the education of orphans, semi-orphans, and providing scholarships to economically disadvantaged students through the Don Bosco Foundation. We thank Fr. Edwin Vasanth, Economer for his strenuous effort put in to collect the complete list of orphans and semi-orphans studying in our institutions.

Medical Insurance for the Confreres

We are pleased to share that from this month, we are launching the medical insurance policy for the members of our province. Fr. Johnson Bashyam, Secretary of the South India Salesian Society will coordinate the medical insurance policy.

Don Bosco Global Youth Film Festival (DBGYFF)- Season 2

Don Bosco Global Youth Film Festival (DBGYFF), Season 2, is scheduled to be celebrated with our young people on the 13 & 14 October 2023 in as many of our institutions worldwide. I would exhort every community to organize this festival for our beneficiaries in those two days as per your convenience. Through this festival we can certainly make the name of Don Bosco and our charismatic commitment to young people resound throughout the world, and unite ourselves with the congregation and the Salesian family in this meaningful project. It will be wonderful way to encourage and celebrate these young people who have made short films on the theme: “Love builds peace and solidarity”.

Missionary Appeal- Papua New Guinea & Nepal

The Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, has invited the whole Congregation to respond with missionary courage and generosity to requests from new presences in the poorest contexts. He says that “the missionary dimension is part of our identity”. Besides, it is the missions that drive the Congregation forward to free us from “paralysing inertia”, giving rise to “beautiful dreams that come true”.

The **Vice Province of Blessed Philip Rinaldi, Papua New Guinea** is appealing to our confreres to serve in the province temporarily or permanently. Similarly, we are in need of missionaries to work in **Nepal**. Hence, interested confreres both priests and scholastics can express their desire to me or the Councillor for Mission after going through a good discernment. We shall take the necessary steps for this great cause.

Celebrating Faith @ Vellore

Evangelising is the first and fundamental purpose of our mission (R.7,13). Deepagam, the Catechetical department of our Province is planning to conduct a one-day program with the theme: “Celebrating Faith” at Don Bosco Gandhi Nagar, on 29th October 2023 for all the baptized children, youth and the parents of Salesian institutions of Vellore region. This is aimed decisively at all our people especially our youth to grow in full maturity in Christ. On this day we gather together in order to renew our Faith and our commitment to preach the Gospel. This occasion provides a golden opportunity for all the baptized who are entrusted to our Salesian Catechetical Ministry to reflect on their own Christian calling to live a witnessing life and share the Gospel with others to grow in Faith. This is the first attempt to gather our people in the Vellore region and eventually, this effort will be extended to other regions of our Province.

INM Missionary Animation & Meeting of Clerics due for Perpetual Profession

On September 24, 2023, a meeting was held at the Citadel for clerics who were in various stages of their formation. The gathering was organized by Fr. John Alexander SDB, the Vice-Provincial and Formation Delegate of the Province of Chennai. In attendance were 24 clerics, including 9 preparing for perpetual profession, 8 participating in the pre-perpetual course, and 7 doing their practical training and college studies in the Chennai region.

On 23rd evening the event began with a solemn Rosary service and a talk by Fr. Praveen Antony SDB, the Vocation Promoter and provincial delegate for missionary animation of the INM province. On September 24, the Holy Eucharist was solemnized by Fr. Vasanth Raj SDB, an INM Missionary who was recently ordained and currently working in Mozambique. After the mass Fr. Vasanth shared about his personal journey as a Salesian missionary.

Fr. Praveen Antony conducted a session on "The Salesian Missionary Vocation." This session explored the key aspects of the Salesian missionary vocation as outlined in a letter from Fr. Alfred Maravilla, General Counsellor for the Missions. The discussion focused on the congregation's missionary nature, especially as it approaches the 150th anniversary of its first Salesian missionary expedition.

EXTERNAL TVET FEASIBILITY STUDY- KICK OFF WORKSHOP (25th and 26th September 2023)

As a follow-up of INM Technical Directory 2022 recommendations, SURABI has written a 3-year Project "RISE – Resourceful Institute for the Sustainable Employment in 10 TVETs centres of INM Province". It includes 10 TVET Centres of our Province. This 2-day Kick-off Workshop was inaugurated by Fr. L. Don Bosco, INM Provincial on 25th September, and on the 2nd day Fr. Edwin Vasanth, INM Economist addressed the participants on the importance of this Feasibility study. Mr. Christoph, DBM Germany also addressed the session online of its importance. It was attended by all the Principals of TVET centres with another lay staff. This feasibility study is a venture of SURABI and undertaken by an Agency selected by the Donor. The Feasibility Study should give guidance to strive to make the Youth Technically skilled and highly employable with market-relevant training in compliance with the prescribed standards without compromising the Salesian charism of reaching out to the unreached the poor and the marginalized. The modalities and the scheduling of the activities were discussed. This Feasibility will be completed by 30th November 2023.

ANIMATION of SALESIAN COOPERATORS

The Animation programme for the Aspirants of the Salesian Cooperators of Chennai Region was held on 24th September 2023 at Don Bosco Shrine, Ayanavaram. 56 Aspirants participated in the Formation Programme. Earlier the same programme was conducted for the Aspirants of Vellore Region at Our Lady of Victories Church, Jolarpet. The Visitations to the local units are being carried out by the Provincial Delegate Fr. Maria Louis along with Mr. John Bosco, the Provincial Coordinator and the Provincial Team. At present we have 30 Local Centres in the Province of INM – SDB and FMA with 514 members.

REST IN PEACE!

Sr. Molly Joseph SMA (54) passed away suddenly on 13th September 2023 at Dominic Savio Illam, Amsam, Trichy. We express our deepest condolences to Sr. Josephine Selvi SMA, Superior General and sisters of SMA and assure them of our prayers for the repose of the soul of Sr. Molly.

Mrs. Antomiammal aged 76 the loving mother of Fr. Joseph Kamalesh (DB - Gandhi Nagar) passed away on 6th September 2023. Let us offer our prayers to the departed soul and support Fr. Kamalesh and the family with our prayers.

Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas aged 84 the beloved mother of Fr. Edwin Vasanthan (Economer - Citadel) went to her eternal abode on 13th September 2023. Our heartfelt condolences to Fr. Vasanthan and the bereaved family members. May her soul rest in peace.

Mrs. Rosamma Mathew aged 81, the younger sister of Fr. P. J Sebastian (St. Mary's Co-Cathedral, Chennai) passed away on 26th September 2023. Heartfelt condolences and prayers for the repose of the soul of Mrs. Rosamma.

Province-Level Events in October

Date	Event
3-4	Monthly Recollection
6-7	Provincial Council
7	Inauguration of Don Bosco Illam, Peravallur
13	Don Bosco Global Film Festival
29	Celebrating Faith for Vellore Region

As we kick off the month of October, let's mark our calendars to celebrate 7 powerful feast days! *October 1st: St. Therese of Lisieux, 2nd: Feast of the Guardian Angels, 4th: St. Francis of Assisi, 5th: St. Faustina, 7th: Our Lady of the Rosary, 15th: St. Teresa of Avila, 22nd: St. Pope John Paul II.* May these saints intercede for our spiritual growth as we embark on our ministry for the poor, vulnerable and deserving boys and girls.

Yours affectionately,



Fr. Don Bosco SDB
INM Provincial



Date: 01.10.2023
Place: Chennai.