



"Passionate about Jesus Christ and 'Dedicated to the Young'."

"... Dedicated to the Young": Dedication = "Dying"!?

My dear confreres, it is a joy to write to you all after our recent Provincial Chapter held in the context of the Pongal celebrations. Pongal is a celebration of gratitude and as I complete one year as the provincial, I am grateful to each and every one of you for all my journey with you as a Salesian all these years and in a special way for this past one year for your trust in me and warm acceptance of me. Starting from the Vice Provincial, Economer, Provincial Councillors, Rectors/Leaders and to each one of you, who makes this Glorious Province of Chennai a place and a possibility to live, work, pray, share, grow and journey together: a sincere and resounding THANK YOU to all!

In this circular, I choose to meditate with you on our '**dedication to the young**'. There is a fundamental reason for this choice of mine, as I and you are here because of them and for them like our father and founder Don Bosco. Not only our Provincial Community, but every community and our Congregation exist because of them and for them, given to us as 'the best gift' by the Lord for our life and growth in Him. Another important reason for this choice is in preparation for our forthcoming General Chapter, at the end of our Provincial Chapter, as a continuation from my last Provincial circular, now on the second aspect of the GC's theme.

If being "Passionate about Jesus Christ" is **INSPIRATION**, i.e. allowing the passionate love of God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit ('the Breath' of the Triune God), to fill us deep within through and through, just like Mary as we saw in the previous circular, "Dedication to the Young" is **EXPIRATION**, i.e. 'letting go' of that same 'Breath of the Triune God', that fills us to keep us alive, to fill the depths of the other/young and the whole universe. To be dedicated is equivalent to that 'life-receiving' and 'life-giving' fundamental reality of our **BREATHING**: "Breathing in and Breathing out" (of Inspiration/ *living* and Expiration/*dying*)!

Yes dear confreres, it is that simple and yet so important and so **vital** i.e. **to live and continue to live, I have to 'die and continue to die'**! As I breathe in, I have to necessarily 'breathe out' in order to breathe in again, to be able to continue to live. It is a must and there is no other way of living on earth! It is the preordained 'divine order' of every life on earth: if we have to fill the earth with life and if life has to continue (cf. Gen 1). It is a divine order not in the sense of a command but in the sense of being 'ordered on the very life of God Himself' in the way He created us and in the way He redeemed us and in the way He is with us: So **PRESENT!** So **INVISIBLE!** So **SELF-EFFACING!** So **LIFE-GIVING!** So **COMMUNITARIAN!** So **EUCCHARISTIC!** So **RECONCILING!** So **UNCONDITIONAL!** = His 'Breathing in and Breathing out'/'Inspiration and Expiration'!

‘Dying’ is thus part of our destiny in God and if we want to live we have to die. If we are really ‘Passionate about Jesus Christ’, as He was and is with each one of us, it will naturally lead us to be ‘Dedicated to the Young’ i.e. to die for the young! If this does not happen then all what we are saying, doing, professing, preaching, celebrating and worshiping is nothing but a ‘professional, well-organized, well-planned, master-minded **Acting**: a vanity of vanities and nothing but emptiness, and a ‘well-decorated personal and collective EGO’! Ego is a self-constructed ‘false image’ of our self and it will never like to die. On the other hand, our ‘true image’ which is of God Himself will willingly die for the other as He died for us.

Dedication = ‘Dying’. Yes! But what exactly do we mean here by ‘dying’? All of us who are born will one day certainly die. But is that the death we would like to highlight here? No! What we mean is a ‘choice’ about how we want to die and for what we want to die. To put it in other words: how we want to live and for what we want to live! This qualitative living entails a certain type of death or dying everyday while we live, so that when finally our day of death comes it becomes the best gift to God and to our neighbour/‘young people’. This is what Don Bosco meant when he said, “When a Salesian (every Salesian/you and me) ‘dies’ working for souls/the young, then our congregation has won a great triumph” (cf. MB XVII, 273). This message can be a good examination of conscience for each one of us before God and our young people to whom He has sent us.

Dying = the ‘Wisdom of God’: This type of dying calls for a wisdom which the world is not attracted to. Not only the world but honestly I and you are also not attracted to. But what is this wisdom? The long journey of the ‘three wise men’ from the east to the famous city of Jerusalem and then to the poor village of Bethlehem, can help us catch a glimpse of what this ‘true wisdom/wisdom from the Spirit’ is all about. Their whole life was a very long journey. It was one of earnest ‘searching/seeking’, and in that, once getting a help/sign in the form of a star, **‘risking it all’** in this their journey, ‘come what may’! This is identical to death or dying while living i.e. a choice to live and for what to live. For when they do find what they were searching and longing for ‘all their life’ and ‘with all their life’, to accept what they did find, called for a total ‘dying’: **‘Poor Child in a manger’**, in a seemingly God forsaken place in a small village! Utter foolishness or wisdom? Who on earth will be attracted to it or accept it? You and I? They did! In a scene of total darkness, poverty and imminent threat of death from Herod, shines brightly the Star on the face of this ‘Poor Child in the manger’. An external reflection of the ‘internal light’ in the heart of the three wise-men?!

That ‘Poor Child’, as their **King** (Gold), **God** (Frankincense) and at the same time **Mortal** (Myrrh)?! Not just to accept but to adore that ‘poor, helpless and defenceless Child’ with their whole life requires ‘special eyes’ and ‘special heart’ (full of faith, hope and love). Beyond all reason! What the world will never like to see and hence can never see. It is this that Jesus praises in the Gospel looking at His disciples: *“Blessed are your eyes that see what the world cannot and blessed are your ears that hear what the world cannot”* (‘light’ and ‘promptings’ of the Spirit within?! Cf. Mt 13:16 and especially **1 Cor 2:7-10**). Only a ‘Spirit-filled and Spirit-led’ life can embark upon such a ‘journey’ and what we can rightly call as a **‘Passionate and Dedicated Journey’**. What is our life’s journey? To where and to whom? Where are our eyes fixed? On the ‘poor’? What are our hearts longing for? Palaces, cities and money or poor villages? Whom or what do we adore? God or our own self-image? Are we lead by the Spirit or by our ambitions for fame, name and power? We call ourselves proudly as Salesians of Don

Bosco and dedicated to the cause of the ‘poor youth’, but are we really? The three wise-men’s journey passed through the palace of Herod in Jerusalem to the Manger of the ‘poor child’ in Bethlehem. As Salesians, we started our professed journey with a focus on the ‘poor child’, but is our journey and heart, contrary to theirs, towards the ‘rich, comfort, ease and luxury’? Being rich they became poor in every way. But having started poor have we become rich in the wrong sense? Then how can it be a ‘faithful and prophetic living’ in the eyes of the people around us? Whom are we passionate about and dedicated to?

Passionate = Blessed ‘Suffering/Dying’. The etymology of the word ‘Passion’ from Latin is suffering and it is the ‘Passion’ of Jesus Christ, of how to live and die, and for what to live and die on the Cross, changes once and for all the semantics or the ‘deep meaning’ of this word ‘passion’ i.e. a ‘Great Love/Joy’, ‘born of’ and ‘shining through’ **excessive suffering and death!** That was Jesus’ ‘passionate long journey’ which ended in contemplating in our ‘poor/sinful faces’ coheirs in His ‘Kingship and Divinity’ though mortal!

This his longing and life’s ambition, Jesus would articulate it to His disciples before His death during the last supper as: “**Greater love (passion/dedication?) has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.**”(cf. Jn 15:13). In their betraying, denying and abandoning faces He could contemplate His ‘best friends’. That is ‘true wisdom’ expressed in those His ‘special eyes’ and ‘special heart’ because it was filled with and led by the ‘Spirit’ of His Father! God’s Spirit cannot be but that. That was Jesus’ worship and adoration in ‘Spirit and in Truth’ of the Father with His whole life. ‘*Such type of worshippers the Fathers seeks*’, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman and us (cf. Jn 4:23). Is not this Spirit of Christ that is transmitted to Johnnie Bosco by Christ Himself in his dream of the ‘wolves and lambs’?

The seeking, journey, finding, worship and adoration of the three wise men from the East in this way is a ‘prefiguration/**prophecy**’ of God’s own journey through Jesus in the Spirit to us His beloved but ‘poor children’. To discover such passion of God for us in Jesus and to live (‘breathe in and breathe out’) such a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life we have ‘to be with Him’ in order ‘to be sent forth’ to the young to do this ‘**in Memory Him**’: His Great Passionate Love! To love them exactly the way He loved us and loves us ... to the extent of dying for them the way He died for us. This is what we mean by ‘... Dedication to the Young’, which is nothing other than the continuation and ‘**incarnation**’ of the Eucharistic celebration i.e. to break bread for them or rather to be the ‘**broken bread**’, to the ‘divided and hungry’ world of the young, that ‘**binds and nourishes**’ them in memory of Him! Through Him, with Him and in Him let us ‘die to ourselves’ to destroy their death. So be our dedication like Jesus in the footsteps of Don Bosco whose ‘**dedication made disciples**’ to the ends of the earth.

To sum up ... **Dedication to the Young = Dying i.e. “To be a ‘Broken Bread, in Memory of Him”!** Amen.

This summing up of our prayerful meditation on ‘our Dedication to the Young’ leads us to the subtitle of our GC’s theme: “For a ‘faithful’ and ‘prophetic living’ of our Salesian vocation”. I would like to underline this in the light of what we have meditated so far above here in this circular (‘Inspiration’ and ‘**Expiration**’: God’s Breathing), and in the previous circular (being passionate as ‘**Discovery**’ of Christ’s Passion for us), as our immediate context, and in the light of all my circulars in my past one year as the provincial with the main theme from my ordination motto, “*To be with Him and to be sent forth*”(Mk 3:14), and all these in the blessed

liturgical context which the month of February offers us: 1. Feast of the Presentation of the Lord 2. The season of Lent 3. The Feast of St. Peter's Chair.

The '**Broken Bread**' is the very life of the Triune God in Jesus Christ for us. It is His 'breathing out' for us by 'emptying Himself' of His equality with God, by being born as a 'poor child' to Mary, by living an invisible and unassuming life in Nazareth, by His preaching, healing and feeding of the 'poor and rejected', and finally by His 'Breathing out'/Dying for us on the Cross as a 'Broken Bread' and 'Poured out Wine' to **bind** our wounds of division and **nourish** our hunger and thirst (cf. Phil 2:6-8). Our being 'passionate about Him' and being 'dedicated to the young' as a 'broken bread' is in memory of this His passion for us and dedication to us 'unto death/last breath' in His redemptive work and even much before in His breathing out into our nostrils in His creative work (cf. Gen 2:7).

Do we understand now that Jesus' words to us His disciples before His death, '**Take and eat for this is my body**' ... '**Take and drink for this is my blood**' and '**Do this in remembrance of me**', is a command/order in the sense of being 'ordered' on His own very Life and Death? His Inspiration/breathing in and Expiration/breathing out? It is so deep and **all-embracing** through 'His hands' that 'formed us', 'broke the bread' for us, by being 'stretched out' and 'nailed for us' on the Cross as an eternal 'Blessing and Breathing': **the Eternal Broken Bread!** What about our mind, heart and hands? Do they reflect the very mind, heart and hands of the Triune God in Jesus Christ like Don Bosco for the 'poor youth'?

The feast of the **Presentation of our Lord in the Temple** and the prophetic words of Simeon to Mary that her Child will be a sign of contradiction, revealing the secret thoughts of many hearts, and that a sword will pierce her own soul too (cf. Lk 2:34-35), were an invitation of the Spirit of God to Mary through him, to continue to grow in her 'passion and compassion' for God and neighbour, to continue to die to 'herself' with Her Son till the Cross and beyond. This feast in a real sense ends the season of Christmas, which though a season of great 'joy', is in many ways overshadowed by the 'dying of God' for us through His choice of utter 'poverty, invisibility and total self-effacement'. Mary beautifully continues to dance with this 'Breath of the Triune God'. **What a dance** of 'death and life' of 'breathing in and breathing out' (so be our 'consecration and dedication' as this feast reminds us!)!

This blessed season of Christmas thus opens the big gates of the blessed season of **Lent**: the 'Passion and Death' of God in Christ for us! Unlike the joyful season of Christmas it may look like the season of suffering, sorrow and death. But just like the joyful season of Christmas was overshadowed by the 'death' of Christ, the apparently sorrowful season of Lent is overshadowed by the glorious 'life' of Christ: his passionate choice to live and continue to live, and die and continue to die for the right thing in life. What 'Passion'! What 'Dedication'! It was no 'Acting' for a career to stardom but real passion and dedication unto death in utter poverty, invisibility, and total self-effacement (ways not in our life's dictionary/journey?)!

The feast of **St. Peter's Chair**, which represents our own chairs of responsibility and governance in the province and in our communities, has to be understood in this light. It is never a career or a journey for a position, power, fame and name. On the other hand, it should reflect the journey of Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds and the three Wise-men which was a prophetic-prefiguration of the very life and journey of God to us His 'Poor' but 'Beloved' children. The life of our father and founder Don Bosco, whom we celebrated yesterday, was

also such a 'faithful and prophetic witness' like that of these great biblical figures, reflecting and ordered on the very life of God: INVISIBILITY and SELF-EFFACEMENT!

What about ours? **The Three**: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the Wise-men and the Trinity, though they are three they act as One! This should shed light on the 'communitarian' aspect of our passion for Christ and dedication to the young. Jesus was not an individual superstar but chose disciples to live and work in a community and die for the life and transformation of the community. Don Bosco followed exactly His footsteps. The young to whom he was passionately dedicated became his disciples. Is our way of living and working in our community an expression of such oneness, communion, invisibility and self-effacement of 'the Three'? That would be a 'faithful and prophetic' living of our Salesian vocation! Unless we are with Him to discover the joy, suffering and glory of such a life of God that always shines brightly and enlightens the darkness within us and in the lives of the 'poor youth', we can never truly be called as 'sent forth' by Him. But to be sent forth to 'be' and to 'do' what?

'To be' and 'to do' **The 'Broken Bread'**: It is a 'Living Bread' because it is 'broken'! In other words 'He is alive' because He died for us. We are alive because He died for us. On our turn we can also be alive only if we 'die'/'broken' like Him for the 'poor youth. Just like God in Jesus we are also the grain of wheat: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*" (Jn. 12:24) To be with Him and to be sent forth by Him means that we become such a 'grain of wheat' and 'broken bread' by learning every day to be partakers the 'One Bread and One Chalice' in Him becoming thus, though we are many, 'One Body' in Christ to heal every division and bind every brokenness! I wish you all such a blessed month of February and fruitful season of Lent! We are CONSECRATED to be DEDICATED like the BROKEN BREAD!

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

Canonical Approval for Lalpahar Presence

On 15th January 2024, our Rector Major Card. Àngel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME with the consent of the General Council has approved our request and has canonically erected the community of St. John Bosco- DIYAA, Lalpahar, S. Andamans in accordance with article 132 of our Constitution and Can. 609 §1 of the Code of Canon Law.

Extraordinary Visitation

Fr. Gianni Rolandi will be with us from the end of February up to May 2024 for the Extraordinary Visitation. We welcome him wholeheartedly to exercise this important role on behalf of the Rector Major (Reg. 104) In this regard, I would request the confreres to give your best cooperation in facilitating and fulfilling the requirements expected by him. To streamline this process, my secretary Fr. Jerry ARUMAINATHAN will contact and coordinate with the Rectors/Leaders of the various communities in advance.

Provincial Chapter 2024

The Provincial Chapter was undeniably filled with the Holy Spirit, fostering a rich and profound atmosphere. Our committed confreres passionately shared their reflections on the

vitality of community life, emphasizing a collective aspiration to lead lives prophetically in our daily mission. The deliberations included a thoughtful exploration of community engagement with the chosen theme, while a comprehensive discourse on self-sustainability, with a steadfast commitment to embracing the marginalized, enriched the proceedings. Consequently, it was unanimously decided to present the third core area for extensive discussion within our communities. Your invaluable insights and fruitful suggestions are eagerly awaited as we collectively strive to align ourselves with the less fortunate and enhance the efficacy of our religious life.

Congratulations to **Fr. Stanislaus Swamikannu and Fr. John Alexander** for being elected as the delegates for the 29th General Chapter and **Fr. John Britto Savarinathan and Fr. Pathiaraj Rayappan** for being elected as substitutes.

Ash Wednesday

Lent is a time of truth. We, Christians, called by the Church to pray, to do penance, fast and self-sacrifice and to place ourselves before God in order to recognize ourselves and rediscover ourselves. “Remember, man, you are dust and to dust you will return” (Formula for the Distribution of Ashes). It is a reminder that we are called to a life other than worldly and material goods that can easily divert us from what is essential. The season of Lent is a reminder of our first calling that we come from God, and we have to return to God by going towards the Resurrection which is the path marked out by Christ. “Whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:27). Lent is a time that makes us think about our relationship with “Our Father”; it re-establishes the order that should reign between our community members and brothers and sisters. Lent is a time that makes us jointly responsible for one another; it detaches us from our selfishness, small-mindedness, meanness and pride; it is a time that enlightens us and makes us understand better that we too, like Christ, must serve. Therefore, let us make use of this time for our spiritual renewal.

25th Anniversary of BICS INFOTECH

BICS INFOTECH has been a trailblazer in empowering the youth, especially those in rural villages in the field of computer technology. It has been a beacon of hope, providing opportunities for the underprivileged youth and stands as a testament to the transformative power of education in the digital realm. It has been instrumental in providing very useful and excellent softwares which has been benefited by hundreds of institutions in India and abroad. As it marks its Silver Jubilee of its inception, we fondly remember late Fr. Francis Guezou and all the Salesians, benefactors, the staff, lay collaborators who have supported us in the past and continue to support us in the present.

Celebrating the Bicentenary of the Dream of Our Don Bosco

2024 marks the bicentenary of the dream of Don Bosco at the age of nine which served as a guideline for Don Bosco's life, focusing on his mission with poor and abandoned children. The educational method emphasized charity and kindness over force and threats. Mary Help of Christians played a crucial role as a teacher and support in Don Bosco's dream. The dream highlighted the transformation of wolves into lambs as a result of Don Bosco's commitment. Understanding and making dreams concrete, following the Lord's guidance, is emphasized as a task for everyone. To commemorate Don Bosco's dream, a community-level celebration can be planned. I thank in a very special manner all the confreres and communities of our province

for taking various initiatives and using several innovative means in spreading the message of our Father and Founder Don Bosco to all the people.

General Election

Active participation in the electoral process is not just a civic duty but a crucial opportunity to mould the destiny of our nation. Approaching this fundamental responsibility with a unified purpose, we embark on the noble task of preparing our beneficiaries with a vision for positive change. As we pray for our nation let us invoke the divine guidance for the emergence of a virtuous and effective government. As responsible citizens, let us play an integral role in shaping a brighter and more promising future for our beloved nation.

Day of Consecrated Life

The Day of Consecrated Life honours men and women who have made commitments to live the consecrated life as priests, brothers, sisters, and members of secular institutes. The primary purpose of this day is to encourage members of the consecrated life to renew their vows and commitments and to provide an opportunity for the Church and the faithful to express gratitude for their dedicated service. The day is an occasion for members to reflect on their calling, discern their mission, and deepen their commitment to the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. To mark this occasion TNCRI and DCRI are organizing a Seminar and Pannel discussion on the theme of Consecrated life and Constitutional values at Loyola College, Chennai on 3rd February 2024 at 3.00 p.m. I request you to take part in this event.

SPCSA Assembly and the Council

The second session of the SPCSA assembly and the Council will take place in Mumbai from the 7th to 11th February 2024. Fr. John Alexander, our Vice Provincial and I will be participating on behalf of the Province.

Book on Fr. Venantius Villanova

The missionaries who toiled in our land are not forgotten for they still live in the hearts of the people. This was affirmed by the people of Veeralur together with the Rector and community by releasing a book on him titled: Venantius Villanova – *Indiavil Vazhindha Italia Sithar* at the book fair in Nandhanam, Chennai on 19 January 2024. We thank Mr. Peter for compiling it and Aram publication for taking it forward. A good number of Salesians and laypeople participated in the event.

Don Bosco Mission – SAGAI

We thank and appreciate the Rector and community at Bagalur for having blessed and inaugurated the extension block of Sagai Stampa Press on 24 January 2024. This new block would be used as the storeroom, and workspace and to install new machineries. The centre has steadily grown in the field of quality notebook production and has catered to all our Don Bosco Schools and to other institutions in Tamil Nadu & Karnataka.

Welcome Back!

Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga who has served 12 years as the Regional Councillor for South Asia and 3 years as the Superior of the Vice Province of ‘Maria Sede della Sapienza’, UPS, Rome.

Fr. Pudumai Doss Jesu who has served several years as Professor and Dean of Canon Law at UPS, Rome.

Fr. Augustine Arokiasamy who has served several years in the ICP Province, Italy.

Province-Level Events in February

Date	Event
1	Remembrance of Deceased Salesians
7	Monthly Recollection @ DB Egmore preached by Bp. Visuvasam Selvaraj (Bishop of Port-Blair)
14	Ash Wednesday
15&16	Provincial Council
24-29	Annual Retreat III @ Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri

Rest in Peace!

Sr. Sagaya Selvi, FMA went to her heavenly home on 19th January 2024 at Sacred Heart Home, Katpadi. We express our sincere condolences to the Provincial and the sisters of INM FMA Province and offer our prayers for the repose of the soul of Sr. Sagaya Selvi.

Mr. Stanislaus (54) the beloved brother of Fr. K. J. Arulraj (St. Bede's, Santhome) went to his eternal abode on 13th January 2024.

Mrs. Arogya Mary Kabilai (84), the beloved mother of Fr. Vincent Kabilai (Vinnarasi Mission, Maranodai) entered eternal rest on 22 January 2024.

We offer our prayers for the repose of the souls and heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members.

Yours affectionately,



Fr. Don Bosco SDB
INM Provincial



Date: 01.02.2024

Place: Chennai - 10.