



XXXI/11

01 April 2024

My dearest Sisters,

The month of April opens with a joyous note because it is Easter and invites us to live intensely our encounter with the Risen Jesus—an encounter of renewed love—in the awareness that He is the Lord of our lives and that we cannot keep the joy of having met Him for ourselves alone. Like the women of the Gospel, we want to ‘run’ to proclaim Him with enthusiasm, with faith, with our own lives. As Mother Chiara says in her Easter Message, this experience will transform fear into trust, flight into faithful sequela, silence into joyful proclamation, and expectation into a new transfiguration. Only the Light of the Risen One can open hope to the entire human family, which has an urgent and extreme need for it today.

ADIEU DEAR SR. HELEN



On the tranquil and sacred day of March 30th, 2024, Holy Saturday, as the Church observes a day of peaceful reflection, our beloved Sr. Helen Thonippara was called by the Lord of Life to join in the eternal joy of His Resurrection. Just as we keep watch alongside Mother Mary, awaiting the Resurrection of Jesus, Sr. Helen is now invited to partake in this sacred vigil with the Blessed Virgin, entering into the eternal Paschal Feast. Her longing to be with the Lord is fulfilled as she is called home on this Easter vigil, a moment she often expresses as her deepest desire. Though we will feel her absence, her spirit remains close, interceding for us, our communities, and the Province she cherished. Our heartfelt

condolences go out to Sr. Helen's family, especially her niece, Sr. Bridget Thonippara, who faithfully cared for her throughout her illness, alongside Sr. Sherly Joseph and the Sisters of the Provincial House. Today, as we lay her earthly body to rest, let us surround her beautiful soul with our affection and the solace of our prayers.

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

The Church joyously commemorates the feast of Divine Mercy each year on the first Sunday following Easter. Divine Mercy encapsulates the profound manifestation of God's eternal love, embracing us in our moments of anguish and vulnerability. In the depths of our struggles and brokenness, Divine Mercy shines forth as God's tender outreach to humanity. Irrespective of the depths of our shortcomings—be it sin, guilt, suffering, or the stark reality of mortality—God stands ever-ready to infuse our lives with His

boundless mercy and compassion. His love knows no bounds, flowing ceaselessly to aid and uplift us in our times of greatest need.

Our Lord Jesus extends to us words of profound comfort and boundless mercy, desiring to bestow His love generously upon all His children. Through His revelations to St. Faustina, a humble nun from Poland, Jesus conveyed the profound message of His infinite mercy.

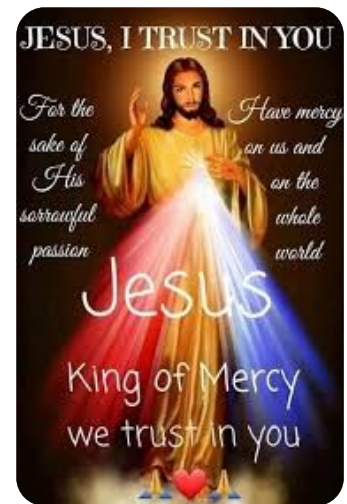
Jesus said: ***“My daughter, do you think you have written enough about My Mercy? What you have written is but a drop compared to the ocean. I am Love and Mercy itself. There is no misery that could be a match for My Mercy, neither will misery exhaust it, because as it is being granted-it increases. The soul that trusts in My mercy is most fortunate, because I myself take care of it.” (P1273)***

My Secretary, write that I am more generous toward sinners than toward the just. It was for their sake that I came down from heaven; it was for their sake that My Blood was spilled. Let them not fear to approach Me; they are most in need of My mercy. (P1275)

Sr. Faustina was sometimes chided by another sister for being too gentle with the beggars at the gate. Yet Sr. Faustina did her best to treat everyone with compassion. She even took measures not to embarrass the people if they came back for additional handouts. We read in her diary, “Although Sister N. tells me that is not the way to deal with beggars and slams the door in their faces, when she is not there, I treat them as my Master would. Sometimes more is given when giving nothing than when giving much in a rude manner” (*Diary*, 1282). Certainly, Sr. Faustina struggled to express her full kindness with another sister nearby. Yet she found solace when ministering to the poor without their presence.

On a dreary day with rain lashing against the windows, Sister Faustina heard the persistent ring of the gate bell. Peering through the downpour, she saw a shivering young man standing there, soaked to the bone. Hurrying to answer, he pleaded for food. Despite initially finding nothing, Sr. Faustina's determination led her to discover a pot of nourishing soup in the kitchen. She quickly heated it up and added bread to fill his hungry stomach. Rushing back to the gate, she offered the warm meal to the grateful stranger. As he savoured it, Sr. Faustina realized, to her astonishment, that he was none other than Jesus Christ Himself. And in a blink, He vanished, leaving her in awe. Sister Faustina later reflected on the encounter. She heard an interior voice: “My daughter, the blessings of the poor who bless Me as they leave this gate have reached My ears. And your compassion, within the bounds of obedience, has pleased Me, and this is why I came down from My throne—to taste the fruits of your mercy” (*Diary*, 1312).

Can we even imagine this? Take a moment to ponder the true story told above. Jesus actually came down from His throne in Heaven to experience the fruits of Sr. Faustina's mercy and to tell her that He was pleased with her loving mercy towards the poor! Imagine Jesus appearing in disguise at your doorstep. Would He see you generously sharing His love? Reflect on your role as a gatekeeper in your life. How welcoming are you? Also, ponder your vocation and role. Think about how you could possibly be a gatekeeper, ushering souls to Heaven because of your example and charity. Ponder St. Faustina's statement, “Sometimes more is given when giving nothing than when giving much in a rude manner” (*Diary*, 1282). Could there be times in your busy days when you might act a bit hasty or even a tad rude towards someone? If so, let us resolve to transform those behaviours with new resolutions. As we meditate in gratitude for God's gracious mercy shown to us, we should look honestly at the mercy that we show to others. Our God is a God of mercy. Wishing you all fervent days of novena to the Divine Mercy and a fruitful celebration of the feast!



THE SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD TO THE B.V. MARY



As we near the auspicious occasion of the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord to Mother Mary, I am humbled to reflect with you upon the profound theological insights that have shaped our faith throughout history. Bishops engaged in a fierce theological debate in the fifth century, over the unity of the divine and human natures of Christ, referred to as the “hypostatic union.” Nestorius, the Archbishop of Constantinople, argued that there were two underlying hypostases, or substances, in Christ, one human and one divine. He believed that the humanity of Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, but not His divinity. Therefore, Nestorius believed Mary should only be called the “Christ-bearer” and not the “God-bearer” (Theotokos). Saint Cyril, the Archbishop of Alexandria, argued that the divine and human natures of Jesus were united in one hypostasis. Divinity and humanity were perfectly united and, therefore, Mary is properly called the Theotokos, or “Mother of God,” not just the “Mother

of Christ.” God was born of her, not just His body. Mary conceived a Person in her womb, and that Person was both God and man, perfectly united as one. In 431 the Church held a Council at Ephesus at which Cyril’s position was adopted and Nestorius’ position was condemned. Nestorius was then removed as Archbishop of Constantinople.

In the midst of theological discourse and doctrinal clarity emerged the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, a sacred observance that not only commemorates the angelic visitation to Mary but also underscores the sublime mystery of the Incarnation. Though Christmas commemorates the birth of Christ, the Annunciation commemorates the Incarnation within the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As we pause to honor this solemnity, we are reminded not only of Mary's profound "Yes" to the divine plan but also of the unfolding of God's perfect salvation through her obedient fiat. We celebrate her humility, obedience, docility, and especially her motherhood of God and man.

This solemnity is also a celebration of the Father in Heaven because it reveals the beginning of the pinnacle of His perfect plan of salvation. That moment in time, the moment of the Incarnation, holds significance beyond comprehension. This moment was in the mind of the Father in Heaven from all eternity and took place in a hidden way, known only to this lowly and humble virgin.

As we celebrate this glorious solemnity, let us ponder all these central mysteries of our faith. Faith must be celebrated, not only believed. It must be proclaimed, rejoiced in, loved, and lived. As we delve into the depths of these divine mysteries, let us not only profess our faith but also embrace it whole-heartedly, allowing it to permeate into our lives and guide our actions. May we, like Mary, embody humility, obedience, and a willingness to cooperate with God's will, thereby becoming vessels through which His divine Son is made manifest to the world. With hearts overflowing with gratitude and devotion, let us lift our prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, asking for her intercession and guidance as we strive to emulate her unwavering faith and trust in the Almighty.

PROMOTIONS OF VOCATIONS

The fourth Sunday of Easter, known as Good Shepherd Sunday and also celebrated as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, will occur this year on April 21st. On this day, we unite in prayer, seeking divine guidance for vocations in both priestly and religious life, aspiring for these vocations to amplify the voice of the Shepherd among His flock. It is incumbent upon us to attentively observe our surroundings, actively identifying and encouraging young individuals who exhibit a readiness to serve the Gospel. To

foster such vocations, we must shift our perspectives, dismantling the barriers of our conventional thinking, and recognize the church as a unified family, embracing our Institute as an integral part thereof. Our personal connections with God and steadfast dedication to our charism are essential prerequisites for nurturing vocations and inspiring others through our own faithful and creative devotion. Vocation is undeniably a divine gift, whether it beckons us toward a life dedicated to priesthood, religious service, or marriage. In embracing our religious calling, we express profound gratitude to God for summoning us to walk closely in His footsteps. Reflecting on our personal vocations fills us with joy and gratitude, recognizing this extraordinary gift bestowed upon us. It's essential to recognize the pivotal role played by human guidance and support in leading us to the Salesian congregation, where we have found our place within this cherished family. As proud members of our congregation, it becomes our responsibility to share the richness of our Salesian charism with the younger generation. Failing to extend invitations and spread awareness about our Salesian family would be a significant oversight, depriving others of the opportunity to experience the transformative power of our shared vocation. Therefore, let us wholeheartedly commit ourselves to the noble task of promoting vocations and organizing vocation camps during this vacation, ensuring that the flame of our Salesian spirit continues to burn brightly for generations to come. I request that you send to the camp the girls who have expressed their desire to choose religious life and those who have given names already from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, and Karnataka by May 10, 2024. Let us intensify our prayers as they do their exams and take keen interest in following them. The dates of the Vocation camp in each Region are communicated to you in my last Circular of March 2024.

WORLD DAY OF GRATITUDE

Let us intensify our prayers for our beloved Mother General as we prepare ourselves to celebrate World Gratitude Day on April 26, 2024, in Mozambique, in **Maputo Infulene**, with the theme *“With Mary, guided by the ‘dream’, we generate peace by taking care of our Common Home”*.

On the website <https://www.festadelgrazie.org>, there is the Journey in Preparation for the World Feast of Gratitude 2024 of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. **Given in different languages, the website** is a meeting place in which to join in the network as FMA, Educating Communities, lay people, and young people of the Salesian Family, express our gratitude to Mother Chiara Cazzuola, and prepare to live, with renewed enthusiasm, the charismatic event of the World Feast of Gratitude.



It offers the resources to deepen the theme according to the itinerary **proposed by the Province** of Saint John Bosco (MOZ):

1st Week (1–6 April): **‘taking care’ in Mother Mazzarello**

2nd Week (8–13 April): **‘taking care’ in Don Bosco: the dream at nine years of age.**

3rd Week (15–20 April) **Ecological Spirituality**

4th Week (22–25 April): **Lectio on the Beatitudes**

On the site, under GESTO (GESTURE), you can find everything published, and thus you will know the variety present throughout the Institute.

“The Feast of Gratitude is for us a very significant moment at a charismatic level, which gives continuity and expression to the family spirit and gratitude so characteristic of Valdocco and Mornese” (Circ. 1017).

We extend our heartfelt wishes to our beloved Mother Chiara Cazzuola and her esteemed Councillors a very happy feast day, along with the young people of our community and our dedicated lay collaborators. Let us pause to reflect on the abundant blessings bestowed upon our Institute and each individual within it, giving thanks to God and offering prayers of gratitude. May our Blessed Mother continue to illuminate our path and graciously guide us onward.



- ❖ Mother General has asked for Sr. Sahaya Sangitha Rani to be part of the Salesian Family Sector at the Centre as the World Delegate of the Past Pupils from October 2024. In view of that she will be going to Rome for a month from 30th April to 5th June. We wish her a safe journey and a fruitful experience at the Centre as she prepares to take up this important role in the Institute and in the Salesian Family worldwide.
- ❖ The second novitiate of our sisters, Sr. Sumathi Bulla and Sr. Nisha Francis, at the Sacred Heart Convent Bangalore Provincial House, has been rescheduled from April 6th to April 15th. The culmination of this period will be marked by their **final profession on May 20th, 2024 and not on May 13th**, due to the coinciding electoral dates in Andhra and Telangana States. As they enter this period of intensive preparation for their final commitment, let us accompany them with our heart-felt prayers, supporting and uplifting them as they take this significant step in their religious life.

CONGRATULATIONS AND GOOD WISHES

Our hearty congratulations to Sr. Mabel Gothorp and Sr. Rosa Pyngrope on their appointment as the new Provincials of ING and INS respectively! We extend to them our good wishes with the assurance of our prayerful support as they take up the role of leadership in the two Provinces of North East blessed with a good number of Vocations and youthful energy.

AUDITING OF SOCIETY ACCOUNTS

Our Prayerful accompaniment and wishes to Sr. Sini Varghese and all the dedicated local Economers as they prepare for the annual auditing of accounts. Between April 10th and 13th, the sisters (Local Economers) from Andhra Pradesh & Telangana will convene at **Guntur** and **Navajeevana Uppal** respectively. Meanwhile, from April 17th to 19th, Sisters from Kerala will gather for the same purpose at **Auxilium Palluruthy**. The Economers of Karnataka Houses will meet at the **Provincial House** on April 22nd and 23rd. In anticipation of their upcoming meetings, I extend my sincere gratitude to the communities of Guntur, Navajeevana Uppal, Palluruthy, and the Provincial House for their warm hospitality and generous availability.

REQUEST FOR PRAYERS

- ❖ For our elderly and sick Sisters and our near and dear ones that the Lord may visit them with His comforting and healing touch.
- ❖ For the eldest sister of Sr. Joyly Mawthoh (INS) who is currently hospitalized.

CONDOLENCES AND ASSURANCE OF PRAYERS

- ✚ To dear Sr. Mary V.J. at the sudden demise of her Sister-in-law Mrs. Mary Jose (59) on 3 March 2024.

- ✚ To dear Sr. Maria Jasmine at the sudden loss of her paternal cousin Mr. Livingston (28) on 3 March 2024.
- ✚ To dear Sr. Asha Latha at the passing away of her paternal grandfather Mr. Michael on 10 March 2024.
- ✚ To Sr. Victoria Rani Marsakatla at the loss of her paternal grandmother Mrs. Marsakatla Pushpamma (85) on 11 March 2024.
- ✚ To Sr. Ritsel D’Almeida, at the passing away of her paternal cousin uncle Mr. Atlee D’Cunha (74) on 13 March 2024.
- ✚ To Sr. Diana Rodrigues, at the demise of her maternal uncle Mr. Simon Fernandes on 14 March 2024.
- ✚ To the Provincial and Sisters of INS province at the demise of Sr. Catherine Susngi (93) on 14 March 2024.
- ✚ To Sr. Maria Rajeshwari at the passing away of her eldest brother Mr. Paul Jai Prakash (48) on 19 March 2024.
- ✚ To the Provincial and sisters of INB province at the demise of Sr. Teresa Castellino (81) on 29 March 2024.

CONCLUSION

In Circular 1036, Mother General speaks about the significance of meditation beyond mere religious practice, emphasizing its central role in spirituality. As we are starting the annual vacation, take time to read, reflect, and make decisions that will improve every aspect of our religious life and can bring about changes in our lives. Let me highlight a few of them here: She underscores the importance of forging a close companionship with Jesus, moving away from self-centeredness, and sharing the Gospel fervently. Highlighting Jesus' instruction to his disciples, it emphasizes the necessity of learning intimately from Him before embarking on their apostolic mission. The narrative through which Mother speaks underscores the essence of consecrated life as being rooted in communion with Jesus, like the vine and branches. Additionally, it echoes Saint Teresa of Avila's perspective on meditation as a profound dialogue with the Divine, leading to transformative encounters. Quoting Pope Francis, Mother General stresses the importance of discernment and spiritual renewal guided by the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, it emphasizes meditation as a means of spiritual rejuvenation and the cultivation of a contemplative outlook, crucial for fulfilling the apostolic mission of spreading Christ's message. I have addressed only a fraction of the suggestions provided by our Mother General. I urge all of you to thoroughly review this circular in its entirety and make decisions that are both feasible and suitable for both our individual and community life.

May the joy and peace of the Easter Season remain with each one of you, your families, the Educating Communities, the Salesian Family, the young people the privileged portion of our educative mission.

Good wishes and prayerful greetings to all in the Family.

Affectionately,

Sr. Lucy Rose

**Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukayil
Provincial**