



XXXI/ 12

01 May 2024

**My dearest Sisters,
Loving and prayerful greetings from Sacred Heart Provincial House,
Bangalore!**

Let me greet you a very happy and fervent month dedicated to our Blessed Mother! This month of May that we have just started is indeed special for us, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, to feel ever more intensely the loving presence of our Blessed Mother in our personal lives and in the mission. Into this war-torn, tension-ridden world dawns the month of May, sparkling with the holiness of many saints, especially those of the Salesian family. We begin the beautiful month of May by expressing our love and gratitude to Mary, our Mother, and our filial devotion to her, which our Father and founder, Don Bosco, and Co-foundress, St. Mary Mazzarello inculcated in us. The month of May is marked with many Salesian feasts. The first in line is St. Dominic Savio (6 May), the young pupil of Don Bosco, followed by our own Mother and Co-foundress, St. Maria Dominica Mazzarello. Saints of the Salesian Family, St. Louis Orione (Priest 16th), St. Leonardo Murialdo (Priest 18th), and Blessed Joseph Kowalski (Priest and martyr 29th), also speaks of the sanctifying power of the Salesian Spirituality. Crowning all is the SOLEMNITY of our beloved Mother Mary, Help of Christians, the Inspirer and Protectress of our Institute. But St. Joseph takes precedence to begin this beautiful month of Mary, as we honour him not only as patron of interior life but as an active worker in the family of God.

ST. JOSEPH THE WORKER



Saint Joseph, even though he doesn't speak a word in the Sacred Scripture, has been deeply loved by Christians since the very beginning of the Church. It did not take long for St. Joseph, on account of his role as the protector of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus, to become known as the principal patron of the Universal Church and, by extension, a quiet protector of all Christ's faithful. Don Bosco has given him as one of the patron saints of our Congregation. The designation of St. Joseph as the patron saint of workers by the universal Church has deep theological and historical roots. Here are some reasons why St. Joseph was chosen for this role:

Model of Labour and Dignity: St. Joseph was a carpenter by trade, engaging in manual labour to support the Holy Family. His profession reflects the dignity of work and the importance of honest work in the eyes of God. By working with his hands, St. Joseph sanctified ordinary work and demonstrated its value in the service of God.

Provider and Protector: As the earthly father of Jesus and the guardian of the Holy Family, St. Joseph is revered for his role as a provider and protector. He worked tirelessly to ensure the well-being of Mary

and Jesus, demonstrating responsibility, diligence, and selflessness in his labor. St. Joseph's commitment to his family exemplifies the virtues of work ethic, care, and sacrifice.

Exemplar of Humility and Obedience: St. Joseph's life was characterised by humility and obedience to the will of God. Despite his important role in salvation history, he remained humble and obedient to divine guidance. His example inspires workers to approach their labour with humility, recognising that their work is ultimately an expression of their service to God and others.

Intercessor for Workers: The universal Church recognises St. Joseph as a powerful intercessor for workers, advocating on their behalf before God. Believers turn to St. Joseph in prayer, seeking his guidance, protection, and assistance in their work-related endeavors. His patronage offers comfort and support to workers facing challenges, difficulties, and uncertainties in their professions.

Role in the Family of God: St. Joseph's role as the foster father of Jesus and the spouse of Mary signifies his central place in the family of God. By honouring St. Joseph as the patron saint of workers, the universal Church acknowledges the integral connection between work and family life. St. Joseph's example underscores the importance of integrity, responsibility, and devotion in both work and family relationships.

Overall, the universal Church has recognised St. Joseph as the patron saint of workers due to his exemplary life, his sanctification of labour, and his intercessory role on behalf of the workers. By honouring St. Joseph in this way, the Church seeks to affirm the dignity of work, promotes social justice in labour practices, and fosters a deeper spiritual connection between work and faith. Let's emulate Saint Joseph's virtues by safeguarding the presence of Christ within our hearts, our loved ones, and the world. Through the intercession of Saint Joseph, let us ask the grace to mirror his exemplary life, nurturing the hidden presence of our Lord to grow within us. Seek St. Joseph's intercession as we undertake daily duties, dedicating everything to God's glory.

ST. DOMINIC SAVIO

Dominic Savio, despite his tender age, was already deeply immersed in his journey towards holiness. His days at the Oratory were marked by fervent prayers and a profound sense of God's presence. But Dominic knew that being a saint meant more than personal piety; it meant sharing God's love and wisdom with others. In his short life, he taught others, by example, that holiness can be achieved through the practice of simple, non-flashy actions in one's daily life—behaviours such as cheerfulness, fidelity in friendship, helping others, playing games with children, and obeying one's elders.

Among his peers, Dominic was a beloved figure. He excelled academically and revelled in the lively games and activities of his time. In the bustling streets of nineteenth-century Italy, sports as we know them today were a rarity, replaced by a plethora of races, field games, and spirited competitions. Dominic was always at the heart of the action, not only participating but also assuming the role of mentor to his companions.

However, his leadership was tested one fateful day when he learned of a brewing conflict between two boys. The dispute had escalated to the point where they were preparing for a dangerous rock duel, a common means of settling disputes among young troublemakers. Despite his small stature, Dominic felt compelled to intervene.



Rushing to the scene, Dominic pleaded with the boys to abandon their reckless course of action, but they remained obstinate. Undeterred, Dominic accompanied them to the designated field, where tensions ran high and stones lay ready for the impending confrontation. Summoning all his courage, Dominic proposed a condition for the duel—one that would challenge the boys' hearts rather than their fists. With a small crucifix in hand, Dominic instructed them to look at it before casting the first stone at him.

His audacity startled them. The gravity of their intended actions dawned upon them as they faced Dominic's unwavering conviction. Overcome with shame, the boys dropped their stones, realising the folly of their anger-driven vendetta. In the aftermath, one of the boys confessed his remorse to Dominic, seeking guidance and reconciliation. Dominic's fearless stand not only averted violence but also stirred hearts to contrition and forgiveness. As the boys walked away from the field, chastened but enlightened, Dominic stood silently, his crucifix held aloft—a beacon of compassion and grace in a world fraught with conflict and strife. As we celebrate His feast, let us be mentors for the young who stir hearts to forgiveness and contrition.

ST. MARY D. MAZZARELLO



At the foundation of our Institute itself, Don Bosco desired that it have Marian characteristics and that the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to be the living monument of his gratitude to Mary Help of Christians. This characteristic Marian note desired by Don Bosco was grasped, assimilated, and lived by Mother Mazzarello and the first community at Mornese. Mother Mazzarello was convinced that true devotion to Mary cannot consist only in devout practices but in perseverance and constant effort to model our lives on her in order to live those solid evangelical virtues that shine forth in Mary. This can be attested to by her constant exhortation to the sisters, "We are true images of the Madonna." The great trust that Mother Mazzarello had in our Blessed Mother can also be testified from her

humble attitude of placing the keys of the house every evening with filial trust at the feet of our Blessed Mother, considering her as the true Superior of the house. Mother Mazzarello and our first Sisters persevered in their efforts to conform their lives as true "living monuments" by incarnating the virtues of Mary in daily life. Mother Mazzarello would often affirm to her Daughters sincere love for the community and the practice of those virtues that would please God and our Blessed Mother. She would often repeat: "If we will use charity among ourselves, if we are mortified and animated by a spirit of sacrifice, if we remain faithful to our Rules, then we can truly say that we are daughters of Our Lady." Her constant reminders were, "Let us commit ourselves to exercising ourselves in true humility and charity, bearing with each other's faults; exercise more in our works of piety, making our communion and prayers with enthusiasm and fervour, and by practicing our vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. If it will be like this, believe it, my good daughters, that Our Lady will be happy with us". May the celebration of the solemnity of our Mother, help us in living the virtues that characterised Her as we contemplate in her the "the fullness of self-giving to God and neighbor." Let us imitate her openness to God's Word and her docility to the working of the Holy Spirit so that we may live worthily with our identity as Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians".

Rooted in humility and overflowing with charity towards her sisters and the young under her care, she exemplified virtues accessible to all, inviting each of us to embark on our own journey towards holiness. As we commemorate her birth and feast day, let us rekindle the spirit of Mary Mazzarello within our hearts, drawing inspiration from her life and virtues as we strive to emulate her example in our own unique realities.

SOLEMNITY OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS



As we commence the month of May, dedicated to Our Blessed Mother, it holds profound significance for us, Salesians. This period marks our preparation for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, our heavenly Mother, and for many among us, it coincides with the anniversary of our religious consecration. The devotion to Our Lady under the title 'Help of Christians' vividly portrays her maternal presence in the tapestry of humanity, within the Church, our Congregation, and in the lives of each one of us. Mary, the ever-watchful Mother, never forsakes her children; rather, she accompanies and aids us through her intercession.

One of the most important legacies that Don Bosco left to the Salesian Family is devotion to Mary Help of Christians. Countless schools, chapels, squares, and neighbourhoods around the world bear her name. Millions of children, older youth, and adults gather around the Virgin and are sheltered beneath her mantle. Although the devotion existed before, it was Don Bosco who made it popular all over the world and left it as an

example for protection and encouragement.

The Virgin Mary was always present in John Bosco's life, above all because his mother, Mamma Margaret, instilled in him a love for and devotion to her through her prayers and daily life. In the dream when he was nine, so significant for his life, it was precisely the Virgin Mary who showed little John his vocation to the priesthood.

In 1862, Don Bosco reaffirmed his Marian choice, saying that "the Virgin wants us to honour her with the title of Help of Christians; the times in which we live are so hard that we need her help to preserve and defend the Christian faith."

The following year, he began the construction of the church, now the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, which Our Lady had asked him to build in Turin. Although at the time he had only a few pennies to pay the builder, the miracles that the Help of Christians granted to her devotees were so many and so great that such a great undertaking was completed just four years later. Don Bosco used to say, "Every brick in this church corresponds to a miracle of the Blessed Virgin." And in this regard, a conviction that went through all of his work and which he repeated whenever he could was that "She did everything" or "It wasn't me, it was the Virgin Help of Christians who saved you." For this reason, he asked the boys and the Salesians to say a brief prayer several times: "Mary Help of Christians, pray for us"—and to spread devotion to her: "So you will see what miracles are."

This devotion is not only from Don Bosco's time; we are struck by its relevance today, especially considering the difficult times that young people have to go through. Today, more than ever, special help is needed—special accompaniment—in order to be able to live the message of Jesus authentically. For our country, when we are so often bombarded by lifestyles that do not uphold the values of the Democratic, Republic, and Secular Nation, faced with the challenges of the present time, Mary presents herself as an example of a life based on love and availability. It is an example of listening to the Word of God, which makes the task of education and evangelisation fruitful.

Mary Help of Christians is also invoked as a refuge. Under her mantle are protection, rest, and peace—a place where we can recover from our daily struggles and labours and from our failures and discouragement. At the same time, She is an incentive for us not to give up, to persevere on the path of

joyful and generous dedication, to live the holiness of daily life, and to continue to cultivate the art of listening to and accompanying young people.

III & IV ANNUAL RETREATS

III Batch Annual Retreat for the sisters will begin at 5.30 p. m on 03 May and conclude with the Mass at 7.00 a. m on 10th May 2023. Rev. Fr. Saji Thomas CMI, an experienced Retreat Preacher in India and abroad, will be the animator and the last retreat will start on 13 May at 5.30 p. m and end on 20th May with Holy Mass at 7.00 a.m. The preacher is Fr. Biji Thomas SDB from INC province. The Animation programme will be conducted for the last group of Retreatants on May 21st till noon of 22nd.

STUDENTS FOR ITALY

Sr. Sophy Joseph, Sr. Carmel Arogya Swami, and Sr. Sumathi Bulla are embarking on a journey to Rome for their studies. Sr. Sophy will be participating in a one-year Spirituality Course at Casa Valse, Sr. Carmel will be engaged in a two-year spirituality programme at Casa Madre Ersilia Canta, and Sr. Sumathi will be undertaking a three-year Catechesis programme at Casa Madre Angela Vespa, Auxilium. We extend our heartfelt wishes to them for a deeply enriching experience at the heart of both the Church and the Institute.

JUNIORATE AT GUWAHATI AND SHILLONG

Srs. Auxilia Lakashiang, Biji Rajan, Jasmine Maria Theres, Joy Sharmista, Phibakordor Kharkongor, and Salome Sangma will be joining the interprovincial intensive Juniorate at Guwahati and Shillong respectively. We wish them a very fruitful and enriching formative experience.

TRANSFERS

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you, dear Sisters, who will soon embark on transfers or new appointments. Your willingness to embrace these changes with faith, readiness, and a spirit of obedience is truly commendable. May your sacrifices not only bring personal fulfillment but also spread joy and vitality to all those you encounter in your new missions! As a gentle reminder-all Sisters scheduled for transfer this year are expected to settle into their new communities by May 28th. If, for any reason, you anticipate a delay in joining your new community by June 1st, please promptly notify both myself and your Animator, providing the reason for the delay and the revised date of your arrival.

ARRIVAL OF CONTACT PERIOD CANDIDATES

Candidates who have expressed their interest and desire in experiencing themselves in our way of life across various locations, along with the girls who have been in contact with our Sisters, are scheduled to arrive at Nirmal Jyothi Bannerghatta by May 31, 2024. I request your assistance in ensuring their safe journey and arrival at their destination.

FMA PCI 2024

As I had mentioned in my previous Circular, the two-day FMA PCI meeting was held at Auxilium Provincial House, Guwahati, from April 2 to 3, 2024, and concluded successfully. The participants had a fruitful and enriching experience. The inspiring and thought-provoking animation by Br. Sunil Britto CF on the theme “Ecological Consciousness for Ecological Justice” was enriching and invited all to put into practice the action plan of ‘Laudato Si’ at the personal, community, and province levels. The animation led to discussions and dialogue among the participants on pressing environmental issues. Passionately, they explored ways to promote sustainability and advocate environmental justice.

Now it is up to us to put into practice the recommendations of ‘Laudato Si’ and ‘Laudate Deum’ in our own communities. I thank Sr. Rosy Lopez, who communicated the same to the Provincial Council, and Sr. Alice Chacko, who passionately accepted to animate the different groups of Sisters, the Second Novitiate, and the two groups of Retreatants. The Animators will have the same in the month of August. We shall continue to live out the deliberations of GC XXIV in our communities. It is the need of the hour to contribute to taking care of the Common Home for our benefit and the benefit of future generations.

CONGRATULATIONS & ASSURANCE OF PRAYERS

- **Entry into Novitiate**

To our Postulants who will begin the period of Novitiate on 21st May 2024:

BASUMATARY Sundurika Cecilia,

RENKUNTALA Anusha and

NONGRUM Dashisha

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to them and offer our prayers that they may respond to God’s call with abundant generosity, joy, and love. My sincere gratitude goes to dear Sr. Shiny Karakkat and the community for their dedicated accompaniment and preparation of these candidates for this significant moment.

- **First Profession**

To our Novices who will make their first profession

Sr. KALUKOLLA Haseena

Sr. SANGMA Namsila

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to them and offer sincere gratitude to God for the precious gift of these beloved sisters, who will joyfully pronounce their first Vows, dedicating themselves wholeheartedly to the service of the Lord. My heartfelt gratitude goes to dear Sr. Meenakshi D’Silva, the Provincial of INB, and Sr. Supriya Noronha, the novice Formator along with the entire community, for their devoted accompaniment and meticulous preparation of these our sisters for this pivotal moment. I will be participating in the Profession Ceremony at Nashik and receive the Vows of our two Novices. Sr. Bincy Thomas will be accompanying me to Mumbai and Nashik.

- **Perpetual Profession**

We joyfully lift our hearts in gratitude to God for the precious gift of our beloved ***Sr. Nisha Francis*** and ***Sr. Sumathi Bulla***, as they solemnly commit themselves with their final YES, marking their Perpetual Profession at the Provincial House Chapel on May 20th, during the Holy Eucharist presided over by Fr. Alex Kalathikattil, Rector of the Visvadeep community in T C Palaya. As we extend our heartfelt congratulations to them, let us also unite in fervent prayer, asking for abundant blessings upon their forthcoming service among the youth.

- **Renewals**

Seventeen temporarily Professed Sisters will be renewing their Vows on May 22nd at Sacred Heart Convent, Bangalore and four of them at Guwahati. Let us extend our prayerful support to accompany them that they may continue to uphold the commitment they have embraced with steadfast faithfulness.

REQUEST FOR PRAYERS

- ❖ For our elderly and sick Sisters.
- ❖ For the father of Sr. Sheeja Joseph who is recovering.
- ❖ For the sister of Sr. Teresita Thomas who is ill.

CONDOLENCES AND ASSURANCE OF PRAYERS

- ✚ To Sr. Saritha Joseph at the sudden loss of her dear sister-in-law Mrs. Leelamma (55) on 1 April 2024.
- ✚ To Sr. Annamma Joseph at the passing away of her dear Mother Mrs. Mariam Joseph (83) on 6 April 2024.
- ✚ To Sr. Bridget Thonippara at the loss of her dear sister-in-law Mrs. Jancy, on 10 April 2024.
- ✚ To Sr. Rosely Devassy at the passing away of her paternal uncle Mr. Thomas Thykoodan (86) on 10 April 2024.
- ✚ To the Salesian Provincial and Confreres of Shillong Province at the demise of Fr. Mathew Payyappilly (63) on 15th April 2024.
- ✚ To Sr. Margaret Devadoss and the Sisters of INM at the demise of Sr. Hilda Felix (73) and Sr. Alice Pears (86) on 20 April 2024.

CONCLUSION

The Church takes us from one feast to another. Along with the many celebrations of this month, we have the very important celebrations of the Church's liturgical year, the Solemnities of the Ascension of the Lord, Pentecost, and Holy Trinity, bringing with them the greatest of God's gifts: **the Ascension on the 12th, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the 19th, and the Most Holy Trinity on the 26th.** What else do we require to build community relationships and launch out into our mission in Synodal togetherness? We have plenty of reasons to praise and thank God for standing by us and staying right within us to encourage, enlighten, and enable us to live and work for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, especially of young people, women, and the poorest. Jesus assures us: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever" (Jn. 15:16). "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you." Let us pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and His gifts on us.

In this hour of "anguish," especially for the Church in India and for the war-torn nations, let us pray continuously and offer up sacrifices so that peace may be restored and the values of truth, justice, freedom, and respect for life are upheld. Let us entrust ourselves, our Institute, the Pope, the Church, and the restless world, especially our India, to our loving and caring Mother so that those ancient values for which India was respected by the whole world may continue to be practiced by the Indians.

Good wishes and prayerful greetings to all in the Family.

Affectionately,



Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukayil