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04th September 2021

Dear Confreres, members of the Salesian Family and friends,

The month of September 2021 is a significant month as we celebrate the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 08th September. She is our mother and a brave woman who faced all odds for our salvation. As we are in the midst of our preparation for the centenary celebration, I would like to share with you a few thoughts on “**The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary**”. She was the one who welcomed the 11 Salesian Pioneers on 13th January 1922.

INTRODUCTION

In the fullness of time, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, that they might receive adoption as sons (Gal 4:4-5).



God put great care into selecting his daughter, spouse, and mother. And the holy Virgin, the most exalted of women, the creature best loved by God, conceived without original sin, came into our world. She was born amid a deep silence. It was autumn, when the fields are ready for sleep. No one living at that time was aware of what was happening. Only the angels in heaven rejoiced. Of the two genealogies for Christ that appear in the Gospel, the one recorded by St. Luke is most likely Mary’s. We know that she was of illustrious lineage, a descendant of David, as the prophet had said when speaking of the Messiah: “A young woman is with child and will give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel” (Is 7:14); “*A shoot shall spring from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom*” (Is 11:1). And St. Paul, when he writes to the Romans, says that “*Christ was born of the line of David according to the flesh*” (Rom 1:3).

HOW THE CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST CAME ABOUT

The Catholic Church celebrates the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary on its traditional fixed date of September 8, nine months after the December 8 celebration of her Immaculate Conception as the child of Saints Joachim and Anne. The circumstances of the Virgin Mary’s infancy and early life are not directly recorded in the Bible, but other documents and traditions describing the circumstances of her birth are cited by some of the earliest Christian writers from the first centuries of the Church. These accounts, although not considered authoritative in the same manner as the Bible, outline some of the Church’s traditional beliefs about the birth of Mary.

The Protoevangelium of James, which was probably put into its final written form in the early second century, describes Mary’s father Joachim as a wealthy member of one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Joachim was deeply grieved, along with his wife Anne, by their childlessness.

Joachim and Anne began to devote themselves extensively and rigorously to prayer and fasting, initially wondering whether their inability to conceive a child might signify God’s displeasure with them.



As it turned out, however, the couple were to be blessed even more abundantly than Abraham and Sarah, as an angel revealed to Anne when he appeared to her and prophesied that all generations would honour their future child: “The Lord has heard your prayer, and you shall conceive, and shall bring forth, and your seed shall be spoken of in all the world.”

After Mary’s birth, according to the Protoevangelium of James, Anne “made a sanctuary” in the infant girl’s room, and “allowed nothing common or unclean” on account of the special holiness of the child. The same writing records that when she was one-year-old, her father “made a great feast, and invited the priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and all the people of Israel.”

“And Joachim brought the child to the priests,” the account continues, “and they blessed her, saying: ‘O God of our fathers, bless this child, and give her an everlasting name to be named in all generations’... And he brought her to the chief priests, and they blessed her, saying: ‘O God Most High, look upon this child, and bless her with the utmost blessing, which shall be forever.’”

The protoevangelium goes on to describe how Mary’s parents, along with the temple priests, subsequently decided that she would be offered to God as a consecrated Virgin for the rest of her life, and enter a chaste marriage with the carpenter Joseph.

Saint Augustine described the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary as an event of cosmic and historic significance, and an appropriate prelude to the birth of Jesus Christ. “She is the flower of the field from whom bloomed the precious lily of the valley,” he said. The fourth century bishop, whose theology profoundly shaped the Western Church’s understanding of sin and human nature, affirmed that “through her birth, the nature inherited from our first parents is changed.”

MARY OUR MOTHER THE QUEEN OF APOSTLES

From Christ’s conception until his death, Mary was united to her Son in his work of salvation. From the Cross, Jesus entrusted his beloved disciple to Mary, telling him to see her as his own mother (Jn. 19:27). When the Apostles and disciples gathered to pray after the Ascension of Jesus, Mary was with them praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Mary continues to pray before God for the Church and all humanity.



Like Mary, the Church has a maternal role, giving birth to people in Christ. The Church can never cease to look at Mary, who gave birth to Jesus Christ. The Church contemplates Mary’s motherhood in order to fulfil her own calling to be mother of the members of Christ’s Mystical Body, the Church. Also, like Mary, the Church is virginal. The description of the Church as virginal is used here in the spiritual sense of the undivided heart and of fidelity in its most luminous form. God calls all the members of the Church to

fidelity to the union with him begun at Baptism and continued in the other Sacraments.

In our culture, there can be a discomfort with praying for Mary’s intercession on our behalf. This seems to be a mediating role that crosses a line set out in the First Letter to Timothy: “For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1Tim 2:5). So, Jesus Christ is the one and only mediator. Jesus alone is the Saviour.

But this does not deny the possibility that Christ would permit others to share in his mediating role. Here on earth, we routinely ask others for prayers. Instinctively, we turn to holy people for their prayers because they seem nearer to God. Why would we stop asking



saints for their prayers after they die? If we believe they are in heaven, would not their prayers be even more effective? From the earliest times, Christians have sought Mary's prayers and help. There has been the basic sense on the part of the Church that Mary continues in heaven to be concerned for the growth of all members of the Church into holiness and an intimate relationship with her Son.

Prior to Mary's birth, the earth was in darkness, wrapped in the shadows of sin. With her birth the dawn of salvation arose, as a herald of the coming day. As the Church prays on the feast of our Lady's Nativity: "By your birth, O Virgin Mother of God, you bring joy to the whole world; of you was born the Sun of Justice, Christ, our God" (Office of Lauds). Heavenly Father, place deep in our hearts the love of Mary, our help and the help of all Christians. May we fight vigorously for the faith here on earth, and may we one-day praise your victories in heaven. Protect us from every danger, especially from this pandemic Covid-19.



INS DEACONS

The four deacons of INS have completed their Bachelor in Theology (B.Th.) and Pastoral course from Sacred Heart Theological college, Mawlai. Now they are having their diaconate ministry in the different institutions of the province. At the same time, they are also preparing themselves for their Priestly Ordination. We support them with our prayers.

Names	Parish	Diaconate ministry
Dn. Barnabas Syiem	Umden Parish	Don Bosco Centre, Smit
Dn. Dominic E L Ralte	Durtlang Parish	Don Bosco Parish Lawngtlai
Dn. Jeffrey Kharkongor	Laitkor Parish	Christ King Church Sonapahar
Dn. Patrick N. Khupzaliana	Champhai Parish	Don Bosco School, Thenzawl

We would like to congratulate and thank all the deacons of Sacred Heart Theological College Shillong who have successfully completed their B.Th. and Pastoral Course. Now they are all back in their respective provinces and dioceses. We wish them all the best for their diaconate ministry and pray for them as they prepare themselves for their Priestly ordination.

WELCOME TO THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF SHTC 2021

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the First-year students of Theology who have begun their studies at Sacred Heart Theological College. We pray that the good Lord may continue to bless them with good health, joy and perseverance.

CONGRATULATIONS FOR THE SYMPOSIUM ON YOUTH MINISTRY

I would like to congratulate the Centenary Committee and all those involved in organizing the **Youth Ministry Symposium** which took place online from 02nd - 08th August 2021. I express my gratitude to Rev. Fr. AL Jose, Fr. Anthony Kharkongor, Mr. Royaldeen Shadap (Youth Coordinator), the Executive Committee of the Salesian Youth Movement of the Province and St. Anthony's College for the hard work and dedication to make the symposium a success. May the good Lord bless you and Don Bosco be with you all.



VOCATION CAMP 2021

We wish to thank and congratulate Fr. Vice Provincial, Fr. John Mathew, Fr. Richard Raptap, Br. Quirinus Warkhyllaw, Br. Lumlang Marbañiang, Cl. Donboklang Nongkhlaw, Cl. Samson Dkhar, Fr. AL Jose, Fr. LB Anthony, Cl. Deiborlang Nongtdu, Cl. Firstbornson Jyrwa, Cl. Eliphaz Nongdhar, all the resource Persons and domestic staff for having successfully conducted the Post-matric Vocation camp at two centres:

- ❖ **Don Bosco Tech, Pyndenglawar** : 17th – 23rd August 2021
- ❖ **Pastoral Centre, Shillong** : 23rd – 30th August 2021

A total of 39 boys came for the vocation camp to discern God's call, out of which 31 boys have decided to be with Don Bosco. May the Lord bless them! We accompany them as they continue their journey of discernment at Pastoral Centre and Don Bosco Aspirantate Nonglakhiat.

CONGRATULATIONS TO DON BOSCO MEDIA NETWORK (DBMN)

I would like to extend my appreciation and congratulations to Don Bosco Media Network and the Social Communication commission of the Province under the able direction and guidance of Fr. Michael Makri. Now we have already started airing news via cable broadcasting through Lelangki cable. The channel will broadcast Live News and Live programmes in preparation for the Centenary Celebrations of the arrival of the Salesian Charism in North East India. I would like to request all the confreres and the different institutions in the province to use it and to take part in it. Kindly invite young people on this platform. Let us continue to support DBMN and may God continue to bless us.

COMMISSION DELEGATES OF SHILLONG PROVINCE

I would like to thank all the Provincial delegates and the members of the various commissions for the very well-presented action plans for the coming three years 2021 – 2024. I would like to request all of you to have regular meetings so as to be able to execute the plans with great diligence. There will be the tri-monthly assessment of the three-year plan of every commission on **18th – 20th November 2021**. Every Provincial delegate of the various commissions will have to present the **Implementation Report** to the Provincial Council on the aforementioned dates.

MEETING OF RECTORS, PARISH PRIESTS & INCHARGE OF COMMUNITIES

I would like to request all the Rectors, Parish Priests and those Incharge of the different communities to attend this meeting without fail. It will be held offline at Don Bosco Provincial house on 30th September and 01st October 2021. It will culminate with the Jubilee of Confreres on 02nd October 2021. Fr. John Zosiama, the Vice Provincial will send to you the details of the Jubilee celebration.



UPCOMING EVENTS: SEPTEMBER to DECEMBER 2021

Dates	Programmes/events	Places	Animators
06 th – 09 th Sept	Junior Priests' Meet	Pastoral Centre	Fr. VM Thomas
10 th – 12 th Sept	Practical Trainees' Meet	DB Provincial House	Fr. Vice Provincial
30 th Sept – 01 st Oct	Rectors, Parish P & In charges' Meeting	DB Provincial House	Provincial
02 nd Oct	Jubilee of Confreres	STC, Shillong Region	Fr. Vice Pro. & Rector
03 rd – 09 th Oct	01 st Annual Retreat for Confreres	Pastoral Centre	Fr. VM Thomas SDB
10 th – 16 th Oct	02 nd Annual Retreat for Confreres	Pastoral Centre	Fr. VM Thomas SDB
04 th Nov	Requiem Mass for Salesians at 3.00 pm	Laitumkhrah Cemetery	Rectors - DBTS/SHTC
14 th Nov	Salesian Brothers' Day	DB Provincial House	Br. Quirinus W
19 th – 22 nd Nov	Practical Trainees' Meeting	DB Provincial House	Fr. Vice Provincial
08 th – 15 th Dec	03 rd Annual Retreat for Confreres	Siloam	

APOSTOLIC ASSIGNMENTS

Name of Confreres	Community	Designation
Fr. Chiharme K Alayee P (IND)	Sacred Heart Theological College	Counsellor & Professor
Fr. Thanglamtuanga Mark	St. John Bosco Shrine, Cherrapunjee	Asst. Parish Priest & Teacher
Fr. Lakra Edmund	Queen of Peace Church, Laitkroh	Asst. Parish Priest & Teacher
Fr. Perunneparambil James	Don Bosco Provincial House	Community member
Cl. Syiemlieh Eldingland	BIDS, Nongthymmai	Asst. Director
Cl. Syiem Sad Soniverius	St. Joseph's Church, Laitkor	BA English (3 rd year)
Br. Marbañiang Lumlang	Don Bosco Tech, Pyndenglawar	Warden & IGNOU (1 st year)
Cl. Warjri Marcellino	Savio Juniorate, Shillong	PT 1 & IGNOU (1 st year)
Cl. Tympuñ Rinaldo	Savio Juniorate, Shillong	PT 1 & IGNOU (1 st year)

IN LOVING MEMORY

We express our heartfelt condolences to the Provincials, confreres and family members who lost their beloved ones. Let us pray for the repose of the departed souls:

- ✠ RIP Fr. George Nadackal SDB, of New Delhi Province.
- ✠ RIP Br. Joseph Das SDB, of Chennai Province.
- ✠ RIP Mrs. Mary Mathew, the mother of Fr. Jose Mathew SDB (Secretary of SPCSA)
- ✠ RIP Mr. Thomas Palamattathil, the brother of Fr. George Palamattathil.



BIRTHDAY WISHES

I wish all the confreres who celebrate their Birthday this month a very **Happy Birthday**. May God continue to bless you with good health and spiritual strength in order to carry out the duties entrusted to you. Be assured of my prayers.

Dates	Names	Dates	Names
01	Overland Kharkongor	15	Fr. John Bosco Minj
03	Fr. James Thyrniang	17	Fr. Mukht Kumar Tirkey
	Cl. Silbanus Sohtun		Cl. Soniverius Sad
05	Fr. Davis Aricatt	19	Fr. John Kenny Nongrum
	Fr. John Mathew M	20	Cl. David Thongnibah
06	Fr. Stephen Saji P	22	Fr. Joseph Nelson
	Fr. Sylvanus B Lyngdoh	23	Cl. Firstbornson Jyrwa
07	Fr. James Mani	26	Fr. Jose Vettath (VT)
	Fr. Donborlang K		Fr. Suman Kiro
08	Cl. Shanboksius S	28	Fr. Thomas E (Kanala)
09	Fr. Jose Varickasseril	30	Fr. Joby Joseph M
	Br. Bosco Ekka		Cl. Sniawshngaiñ Papang
14	Fr. PJ James	"I am the way, the truth and the life" John 14:6	

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude with a short narrative about the first day of the arrival of the 11 Salesian Pioneers. In the morning hours of 13th January 1922, the pioneering missionaries took the winding road from Guwahati to the *citta dei fiori* (City of flowers – Shillong) the Scotland of the East. As they reached Shillong, the *sede* of the Prefecture Apostolic of Assam, they noticed the papal flag fluttering over the Divine Saviour Church. Fr. Van Lambergh SJ, the parish priest, Bro. Brisson CSC and a group of children extended a warm welcome to the new group of 'Gospel-bearers'. To their great surprise and joy, they realized that the statue of Our Lady over the side altar of the Church at Shillong was that of Mary Help of Christians. Their Madonna, they felt, had preceded them to the mission! They repelled the words of Don Bosco, 'Have faith in Mary Help of Christians, and you will see what miracles are!'

So, the Ten Salesians led by Fr. Louis Mathias moved in to storm that Jericho or search for the Holy Grail and in their hearts was all the hope, joy and enthusiasm they could muster. The sight of the statue of Mary Help of Christians, on the day they arrived in Shillong was like a good omen for them and they felt the warmth of holy confidence in Don Bosco's Madonna, exclaimed: "She came before us". There was much discussion about the statue, mentioned above and which is now preserved as a precious souvenir at Don Bosco Novitiate Sunnyside Upper Shillong.

Don Bosco taught us, "Mary has continued from heaven and even more efficaciously, the mission of Mother of the Church and Help of Christians, which she had begun on earth".

Yours in Don Bosco,

Fr. Paul Olphindro Lyngkot SDB
Provincial

