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07th December 2021

Dear Confreres, members of the Salesian Family and friends,

As we enter the month of December, the last month of the year, we remind ourselves about some important events in our faith journey – the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (08th December), the Holy Mass which the 11 Salesian pioneering missionaries celebrated in the little room of Don Bosco at Valdocco before they began their journey to North East India (20th December) and the Solemnity of Christmas (25th December). I would like to share with you a reflection on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mother Mary.

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The feast of the Blessed Virgin's Immaculate Conception is the most solemn of all those which the Church celebrates during the holy time of Advent; and if the first part of the cycle had to offer us the commemoration of some one of the mysteries of Mary, there was none whose object could better harmonize with the spirit of the Church in this mystic season of expectation. Let us then, celebrate this solemnity with joy; for the Conception of Mary tells us that the Birth of Jesus is not far off.



The intention of the Church, in this feast, is not only to celebrate the anniversary of the happy moment in which began, in the womb of the pious Anne, the life of the ever-glorious Virgin Mary; but also, to honour the sublime privilege, by which Mary was preserved from the original stain, which, by a sovereign and universal decree, is contracted by all the children of Adam the very moment they are conceived in their mother's womb. The faith of the Catholic Church on the subject of the Conception of Mary is this: that at the very instant when God united the soul of Mary, which He had created, to the body which it was to animate, this ever-blessed soul did not only not contract the stain, which at that same instant defiles every human soul, but was filled with an immeasurable grace which rendered her, from that moment, the mirror of the sanctity of God Himself, as far as this is possible to a creature. The Church with her infallible authority, declared, by the lips of Pius IX, that this article of her faith had been revealed by God Himself. The definition was received with enthusiasm by the whole of Christendom, and the eighth of December of the year 1854 was thus made one of the most memorable days of the Church's history.

MOTHER MARY'S PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

It was due to His own infinite sanctity that God should suspend, in this instance, the law which His divine justice had passed upon all the children of Adam. The relations which Mary was to bear to the Divinity, could not be reconciled with her undergoing the humiliation of this punishment. She was not only daughter of the eternal Father; she was destined also to become the very Mother of the Son, and the veritable bride of the Holy Spirit. Nothing defiled could be permitted to enter, even for an instant of time, into the creature that was thus



predestined to contract such close relations with the adorable Trinity; not a speck could be permitted to tarnish in Mary that perfect purity which the infinitely holy God requires even in those who are one day to be admitted to enjoy the sight of His divine majesty in heaven; in a word, as the great Doctor St. Anselm says, *'It was just that this Holy Virgin should be adorned with the greatest purity which can be conceived after that of God Himself, since God the Father was to give to her, as her Child, the only-begotten Son, whom He loved as Himself, as being begotten to Him from His own bosom; and this in such a manner, that the selfsame Son of God was, by nature, the Son of both God the Father and the blessed Virgin. This same Son chose her to be substantially His Mother; and the Holy Spirit willed that in her womb He would operate the conception and birth of Him from whom He Himself proceeded.'*

Moreover, the close ties which were to unite the Son of God with Mary, and which would elicit from Him the tender love and the most filial reverence for her, had been presented to the divine thought from all eternity: and the conclusion forces itself upon us that therefore the Divine Word had for this His Future Mother a love infinitely greater than which He bore to all His other creatures. Mary's honour was infinitely dear to Him, because she was to be His mother, chosen to be so by His eternal and merciful decrees. The Son's love protected the mother. She, indeed, in her sublime humility, willingly submitted to whatever the rest of God's creatures had brought on themselves, and obeyed every title of those laws which were never meant for her: but that humiliating barrier, which confronts every child of Adam at the first moment of his existence, and keeps him from light and grace until He shall have been regenerated by a new birth – oh! This could not be permitted to stand in Mary's way, her Son forbade it

THE MOTHERHOOD – MARY THE IMMACULATE



This truth of Mary's Immaculate Conception – which was revealed to the apostles by the divine Son of Mary, inherited by the Church, taught by the holy fathers, believed by each generation of the Christians with an ever-increasing explicitness – was implied in the very notion of a mother of God. To believe that Mary was Mother of God, was implicitly to believe that she, on whom this sublime dignity was conferred, had never been defiled with the slightest stain of sin, and that God had bestowed upon her an absolute exemption from sin. But now the Immaculate Conception of Mary rests on an explicit definition dictated by the Holy Spirit. Peter has spoken by the mouth of Pius; and when Peter has spoken, every Christian should believe; for the Son of God has said: 'I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith shall not fail.' And again: 'The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.'

The Symbol of our faith has therefore received not a new truth, but a new light on a truth which was previously the object of the universal belief. On that great day of the definition, the infernal serpent was again crushed beneath the victorious foot of the Virgin-Mother, and the Lord graciously gave us the strongest pledge of His mercy. He still loves this guilty earth, since He has deigned to enlighten it with one of the brightest rays of His Mother's



glory. How this earth of ours exulted! The present generation will never be forgotten the enthusiasm with which the entire universe received the tidings of the definition. It was an event of mysterious importance which thus marked this second half of our century; and we shall look forward to the future with renewed confidence; for it the Holy Spirit bids us tremble for the days when truths are diminished among our children. He would, consequently, have us look on those times as blessed by God in which we receive an increase of truth; an increase both in light and authority.

THE HISTORY OF THE FEAST OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The Church, even before the solemn proclamation of the grand dogma, kept the feast of the eighth day of December; which was, in reality, a profession of her faith. It is true that the feast was not called the Immaculate Conception, but simply the Conception of Mary. But the fact of such a feast being instituted and kept, was an unmistakable expression of the faith of Christendom in that truth. St. Bernard and the angelical doctor, St. Thomas, both taught that the Church cannot celebrate the feast of what is not holy; the Conception of Mary, therefore, was holy and immaculate, since the Church has, for ages past, honoured it with a special feast. The Nativity of the same holy Virgin is kept as a solemnity in the Church, because Mary was born full of grace; therefore, had the first moment of Mary's existence been one of sin, as is that of all the other children of Adam, it never could have been made the subject of the reverence of the Church. Now, there are few feasts so generally and so firmly established in the Church as this which we are keeping today.

THE DEVOTION OF KINGS

The three great Catholic nations of Europe - Germany, France, and Spain, vied with each other in their devotion to this mystery of Mary's Immaculate Conception. France, by her king Louis XIV, obtained from Clement IX that this feast should be kept with an octave throughout the kingdom; which favour was afterwards extended to the universal Church by Innocent XII. For centuries previous to this, the theological faculty of Paris had always exacted from its professors the oath that they would defend this privilege of Mary, a pious practice which continued as long as the university itself.

As regards Germany, the emperor Ferdinand III, in 1647, ordered a splendid monument to be erected in the great square of Vienna. It is covered with emblems and figures symbolical of Mary's victory over sin, and on the top is the statue of the Immaculate Queen.

The zeal of Spain for the privilege of the Holy Mother of God surpassed that of all other nations. In the year 1398, John I, king of Arragon, issued, a chart in which he solemnly places his person and kingdom under the protection of Mary Immaculate. King Charles III, in the eighteenth century, obtained permission from Clement XIII that the Immaculate Conception should be the patronal feast of Spain.



OH MARY! ARK OF THE COVENANT FOR YOU ARE OUR MOTHER

How your gentle light gladdens our wearied eyes, sweet Mother! Generation had followed generation on this earth of ours. People looked up to heaven through their tears, hoping to see appear on the horizon the star which they had been told should disperse the gloomy horrors of the world's darkness; but death came, and they sank in the tomb, without seeing even the dawn of the light, for which alone they cared to live. It is for us that God had reserved the blessing of seeing your lovely rising, O you fair morning star! Which shed your blessed rays on the sea, and brought calm after the long stormy night! Oh! prepare our eyes that they may behold the divine Sun which will soon follow in thy path, and give to the world His reign of light and day. Prepare our hearts, for it is to our hearts that this Jesus of your wishes to show Himself. To see Him, our hearts must be pure: purify them, O you Immaculate Mother! The divine wisdom has willed that of the feasts which the Church dedicates to you.



This Immaculate Conception should be celebrated during Advent; that thus the children of the Church, reflecting on the jealous care wherewith God preserved you from every stain of sin because you were to be the mother of His Divine Son, might prepare to receive this same Jesus by the most perfect renunciation of every sin and of every attachment to sin. This great change must be made; and your prayers, O Mary! Will help us to make it. Pray – we ask it of you by the grace God gave you in your Immaculate Conception – that our covetousness may be destroyed, our concupiscence extinguished, and our pride turned into humility. Despise not our prayers, dear Mother of Jesus who chose you for His dwelling place, that He might afterwards find one in each of us.

O Mary! Ark of the covenant, built of an incorruptible wood, and covered over with the purest gold! Help us to correspond with those wonderful designs of our God, who, after having found His glory in your incomparable purity, will now to seek His glory in our unworthiness, by making us, from being slaves of the devil, His temples and His abode, where He may find His delight. Help us to this, that by the mercy of your Son have never known sin! and receive this day our devotion praise. You are the ark of salvation; the one creature un-wrecked in the universal deluge; the white fleece filled with the dew of heaven, whilst the earth around is parched; the flame which the many waters could not quench; the lily blooming amidst thorns; the garden shuts against the infernal serpent; the fountain sealed, whose limpid water was never ruffled; the house of the Lord, whereon His eyes were ever fixed, and into which nothing defiled could ever enter; the mystic city, of which such glorious things are said. We delight in telling all your glorious titles, O Mary! for you are our Mother, and we love you, and the Mother's glory is the glory of her children. Cease not to bless and protect all those that honour your immense privilege, O you who was conceived on this day! May this feast fit us for that mystery, for which your Conception, your Birth, and your Annunciation, are all preparations – the Birth of your Son Jesus in Bethlehem: Yes, dear Mother, we desire your Jesus, give Him to us and satisfy the longings of our love.





DAY OF ANIMATION – 20TH DECEMBER 2021

I invite every confrere to keep the 20th December 2021 as a day of Animation in your region and community. This day will be a commemoration as we recall the **20th December 1921** wherein the 11 Salesian missionaries celebrated the Holy Mass together in the little room of Don Bosco at Valdocco and then started their journey to North East India.

Many of the Superiors and Salesians accompanied them to the railway station. The 11 missionaries said their sad farewells and watched from the carriage windows as the station platform and their fellow religious gradually faded away. That same day they reached Nice and went to the Salesian orphanage there. When Father Louis Mathias was asked to say a few words to the community he naturally spoke about Assam – North East India.

On 22nd December 1921, they were in Marseilles and the same evening they stepped aboard the *Kaiser-i-Hind*, a P. & O. steamer of 11,000 tons. The night was calm and the sky spangled with stars. Helped by an Irish Carmelite who spoke French, the Salesians prepared for Christmas Holy Mass in the second-class dining-room, with the kind permission of the captain. The Carmelite sang the Holy Mass, the Salesians sang *Missa de Angelis*, Father Louis Mathias accompanied them on the piano, and a Maltese gentleman played the violin. After the Holy Mass, a small statue of the Child Jesus was set out on a table, and among the faithful were a group of Goan sailors, members of the ship's crew, who filed by it and kissed it reverently. This was the Salesians' first experience of Indian devotion.

The journey through the Suez Canal and across the Indian Ocean was peaceful and uneventful: it was mostly out of sight of land except when the ship was negotiating the canal. Father Louis Mathias had time to sit down and leisurely write letters, some to the Superiors in Turin in which he gave details of almost every knot of the way!

CONGRATULATIONS DB SILCHAR AND NORTHEAST GREEN SUMMIT

In the name of the Province, I would like to extend my appreciation and congratulations to Don Bosco Centre Silchar community, the school and Bosco Tech for having collaborated excellently with the North East Green Summit in Silchar from 16th – 18th November 2021. It was a learning, motivating, and an eye opener for all of us. It helped the teachers, the students, the parents and above all the whole Barak valley to love the nature and to be Eco-Friendly.

Below is the commitment that we have made as a Province to the invitation of the Holy Father Pope Francis, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime (Rector Major) and the North East Green Summit:

1. The Don Bosco Educational Institutions of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Barack Valley pledges henceforth their dedicated collaboration with the Northeast Green Summit for the future green initiatives.
2. We will plant 2 lakhs trees every year by making 40,000 students of the Don Bosco Educational institutions of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Barack Valley to plant them as part of the institution's activities.



3. It is hereby resolved that all these Don Bosco Educational institutions will be tagged as Green and Eco-Friendly Educational institutions.
4. We will prepare and implement Projects for Rainwater harvesting and Solar energy.
5. A curriculum on Ecology will be incorporated into our Don Bosco Educational institutions.

We appreciate the hard work, dedication and commitment of Br. Regy Joseph (Manager) and the whole team of Don Bosco Silchar. Let us continue to support our young people to love the nature and to take care the mother earth. May God bless them all.

CONGRATULATIONS

- ✚ **Fr. Dominic E Ralte:** We congratulate Fr. Dominic E Ralte who was ordained in the Aizawl Cathedral on 20th November 2021. We assure him of our prayers and accompaniment as he now journeys as a priest of God forever.
- ✚ **Fr. Sunil Barla:** We would like to Congratulate Fr. Sunil Barla SDB (INN), who has successfully completed his doctorate in Liturgy from Rome. We are also happy to welcome him to the Salesian Province of Shillong. He has been appointed as the Vice Rector, Professor and Liturgical Animator of Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong. We thank him for his valuable service and his availability. We implore the Lord's abundant blessings on him and his ministry. We would also like to thank Fr. Davis Maniparamben, the Provincial of New Delhi, for giving us Fr. Sunil B.

INS DEACONS TO BE ORDAINED

Our deacons are at the threshold of their sacerdotal ordination. We continue to support them with our prayers.

- ✚ **Patrick N Khupzaliana:** He is from Champhai Parish. He will be ordained on 18.12.2021.
- ✚ **Barnabas Syiem:** He is from Umden Parish. He will be ordained on 15.01.2022.
- ✚ **Jeffrey Kharkongor:** He is from Laitkor Parish. He will be ordained on 15.01.2022.

DAILY ONE HOUR ADORATION

I invite every community in the province to spend an hour of adoration every day for the sole intention of the success of our 04th Provincial Chapter. The chapter will begin on 08th February and it will conclude on 12th February 2022. Preparation is on in full swing for this important event in the province.



BIRTHDAY WISHES

I take this occasion to wish the confreres who celebrate their birthday this month God's choicest blessings on them and their ministry.

Dates	Names	Dates	Names
03	Cl. Khrawburom Wanniang		Fr. Anthony Mallai
04	Cl. Rinaldo Tympuiñ	15	Cl. Aiborlang Nongsiej
05	Fr. Stephen Kharbani		Cl. Venantius Sympli
	Cl. Anthony Kharbuki	16	Fr. Marius Thongnibah
06	Fr. Lukas Murmu	17	Fr. Juel Ekka
	Cl. Hubert Lyngdoh		Fr. Albastar Kharkongor
08	Fr. Sebastian Palatty	21	Cl. Philimon Baxla
10	Cl. Kyrbasius Tympuiñ	25	Fr. Anthony Valluran
	Cl. Prabir Minj	27	Cl. Rajib Pasleñ
13	Fr. Hubert Thyрниang		Cl. Pasjoin Kharsati
"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" 1 Peter 4:10		28	Cl. Ricky Mawlong
		31	Cl. Lazarus Xalxo

GRATITUDE

- Chennai province:** I express my gratitude to Fr. Jose Kochamkunnel, Provincial of Chennai Province and the Provincial house community for taking care of Fr. D John Jayakumar when he was undergoing medical treatment in the hospital.
- Bangalore Province:** I am thankful to Fr. Jose Thomas Koyickal, Provincial of Bangalore, Fr. Joy Kaipen (Rector) and the community of Don Bosco Seminary Aluva, Cochin for taking care of Fr. Nelson and Fr. Valluran.

HEALTH UPDATES

Let us keep the following confreres in our prayers: Fr. V.K. Jose, Fr. D John Jayakumar, Fr. John Bosco, Fr. PM Mathew, Fr. Nelson Joseph and Fr. Anthony Valluran.

I would like to request the Rectors and the Incharge of the Communities to inform the Provincial or the Secretary when any of the confreres of the community is seriously sick or is being taken to the hospital. If there is any death of your family members especially close family members (Parents and siblings), kindly inform the Provincial. If I am not reachable, please inform the secretary.

IN LOVING MEMORY

We offer our sincere condolences to the Provincial, confreres and family members of the following deceased members of our family. We also pray for the repose of the departed souls.

- † Fr. Dominic Veliath SDB (INK)
- † Mr. Simon Baxla, the beloved father of Cl. Philemon Baxla.
- † Mr. Dionis Sohshang, the eldest brother of Fr. Arnes Sohshang.
- † Mr. M C Devasia, the eldest brother of Fr. M C Thomas.
- † Mr. Banrilang Nongrum, the elder brother of Fr. Kenny Nongrum.
- † Mr. Geraldus Nongrang, the eldest brother of Fr. Patrick Nongrang.
- † Fr. Suresh Xavier SDB (INM)



CONCLUSION

I am in the midst of the Provincial Visitation 2021 – 2022 in the province. I have completed the five regions i.e., West and South West Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi, Barak Valley, Tripura, a few more in East Khasi Hills. I will move to Jaintia Hills and Mizoram regions in the coming weeks.

Advent is a season of waiting. As a child, this waiting seemed to take forever. At the end of Advent was Christmas! However, we wait not just for the coming of the Messiah on Christmas morning, but also for the second coming, when Christ will return, making all things new, as described in Revelation 21:5. So the beginning of the Church's year reminds us that we are a people in waiting. We are a people of hope because God is still at work in the world. We remember the words of the Apostle, Paul, that *"God will be faithful to carry on to completion the good work that God has started"* Phil. 1:6.

Waiting is rarely fun. It's often painful. We wait for the results from a lab test. We wait in traffic. We wait in line at the department of motor vehicles and paying of bills. We wait for an apology that might never come. Waiting is a visible sign that we live in a fallen world, that not all is as it should be. For if everything were as desired, we would not have to wait for it.

But waiting also shapes. In the waiting, we can grow bitter, letting resentments fester. We can become paralyzed with fear. We can use the waiting as an excuse to do nothing. Waiting, however, is not passive. This message shows us that we can be a people who wait in hope. Our hope is in the Lord who is faithful. God will restore God's people. God brought the Messiah, Jesus, who was God in the flesh. And one day Jesus, this Messiah, will return again. So, in the waiting, we are not passive. Rather, we join with God, in God's mission, working to more fully bring about God's kingdom.

We must learn from Mother Mary the Immaculate, to live our daily actions with a new spirit, with the feeling of waiting that only the coming of God can fulfil. We need to have strong Hope in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and in our Blessed Mother since they know us everything.

Mary Immaculate helps us to do as you did, to trust God's Love to the point of being able to recognize our true name in His Love!

Yours in Don Bosco,



Fr. Paul Olphindro Lyngkot SDB
Provincial

