

Cir_Ref. No: LPO/48/2022

31st January 2022

Dear Confreres, members of the Salesian Family and friends,

Today the 31st January 2022, we celebrate the feast of **St. John Bosco** our Father, Founder, Teacher and Lover of youth. We glorify the Lord and we renew our commitment to the Lord and to Don Bosco. We need to share and make known to our young people and the people in the parishes and institutions the joy and the gift that the Lord has given to each one of us.

This year 2022, the Salesian Family of North East India is blessed with the gift of Don Bosco and the Salesian Charism. It is the Centenary Year. It is a year of Gratitude. It also helps us to draw closer to him, know him better and also to prepare well for our Fourth Provincial Chapter. Therefore, I would like to make a reflection based on Don Bosco's missionary zeal.

MISSIONARY ZEAL OF DON BOSCO AND HIS MISSION-MINDEDNESS

There is no better approach to Salesian Missionary Life than to look at the Life of our Father, Founder and his missionary dream. His predilection for the young which is his special mission.

The 11th November 1875 is a memorable day in the history of the Salesian Congregation. A day when Don Bosco sent out the first missionary expedition. It is from this point of view that I would like to put ourselves dear confreres and the Salesian Family in a position to discern what was Don Bosco's inspiration, his original inspiration, his sense of mission and his mission-mindedness. This is an opportunity to better understand the kind of response we are called to give today, especially in this Centenary year, to the Church, the Congregation and to the young people. We need to understand the sense of mission and of carrying out the "*missio ad gentes*".

Here I would like to share with you about the source of Don Bosco's sense of mission and the reasons for his immense missionary zeal. There are three great elements and we need to spell them out one by one.

The **first** is being obedient to the command from the Lord Jesus Christ who, at his Ascension, before leaving this world to return to the Father, told us "You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This means for all Christians, for us Salesians, members of the Salesian Family, the young people, the first reason for being a missionary is obedience to the Lord Jesus. Missionaries are only doing what the Lord Jesus has asked them to do, to be witnesses to the ends of the earth, meaning that it is a task which will last till the end of our lives. There is always room, then, for mission. We are all called to be missionaries and now, more than ever before, is a time to be missionaries.

The **second element** which lies behind *Don Bosco's great missionary venture is his belief* in the leavening value of the Gospel, that is, his belief that the Gospel is a leaven for every culture. In one of the most beautiful documents ever came out of the Holy See, *Evangelii nuntiandi* in 1975, Pope St. Paul VI said that on the one hand it was obvious that the Gospel can be **inculturated** in any culture, and that is true, that it can be expressed in different ways according

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to the culture, but that the Gospel is also called not to identify itself with any culture. To understand why it cannot be identified with any culture it is enough to look at the cross. The cross blew Jewish culture wide open – it was closed in on itself and would not allow itself to be purified and transformed by Jesus and his Gospel, something we find reaffirmed in John's Gospel in Chapter 19:6, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die". The crucifixion seriously questions cultures for their lack of humanity, for everything that does not correspond with God's plan regarding the dignity of all people, whatever their culture, gender, race, or colour of their skin.

The cross obliges culture, any culture, to take another look at itself, so there is no evangelization unless the very nerve centre of culture is touched, the soul of culture, the decision-making heart of human beings. We saw an example of this is in some Christian countries, where two peoples who had received the Gospel already for centuries but who just twenty years ago or so witnessed a genocide which killed millions of people, most of them Christians. So, what does all this mean? It means that the Gospel had not touched the nerve in their culture. Every culture is important because it is the place where people are born, grow, develop, learn to relate, face up to life, but every culture has so many limits. So here we have Don Bosco's firm conviction of the leavening power of the Gospel which is able to take on, yes, but, at the same time purify and uplift culture. Put in other words, the whole world needs the Gospel. When we speak of a missionary sense, we are not just thinking of some continents but the whole world to be evangelized or re-evangelized. So even if not, everyone goes to the missions, everyone has to be a missionary there where they find themselves.

The **third key** and a very specific element of Don Bosco's mission-mindedness is his *predilection for the young*, aware that they do not count in the social fabric of peoples and they seem to have to be resigned to being merely consumers of products, experiences and sensations, or being spectators of history rather than key players. But this does not correspond with the Gospel, or Jesus' idea and practice. When the question was put to him "Who is most important?", he called over a child and placed him in their midst. This means that the young, the children, the teenagers must be at the centre: this is one of the richest elements of the Salesian spiritual legacy and it is this legacy that we should bring to all cultures. We go to where often young people do not count for anything.

Don Bosco was a man who was sensitive to the social situation, a man who saw in the poor and abandoned youngsters a sign that God was pointing out to him as his mission, a man who sees that maybe he has to embark on new directions as a priest, a man who had no other reason to live other than for the young; a man who discovered that even if the young do not count in society they are the most delicate portion and so in need of great opportunities, resources and investment for their development; a man who knew how to believe in them and place his trust in their education in a truly innovative style, involving empathy, trust, friendship, love, that produced marvelous results as demonstrated by the fact that these were the very same youth who then wanted to share Don Bosco's passion for education and extend his work into the future: Young people are not only the future: they are also the present!



THE THREE ELEMENTS FOR REFLECTION

1. Obedience to Jesus' Command: Being witnesses of Christ

We have to be witnesses of Christ for North East India today or the world at large to have hope, because it seems that hope is dwindling. It would seem that we have arrived at the conclusion that we can achieve transcendence, the infinite through technology and the economy, but it is not true. We have been locked into an immanence without a future. We are witnessing the birth and development of a culture without a future because it lacks hope. Being Christians then means taking our chances on North east India and the world with Hope. Just like Archbishop Luis Mathias's motto spelled it out very clearly - "Dare and Hope".

What does this mean? Pope St. John Paul II, the patron of Shillong Province expressed it very clearly as giving back the Christian soul to the process of integration. This is done not only by recognizing the past Christian roots, but especially by having Christians now who can give witness and say what it means for them to be Christians in a world that has decided to organize itself without God, like those who built the Tower of Babel and tried to reach heaven with their own hands, as if they wanted to wrestle heaven away from God and become God themselves. What does it mean to be Christians and give back a Christian soul to North east India? It means building a welcoming North east India and a welcoming world. The world we live in is decidedly unwelcoming. It is enough just to see the increasingly burning problem of migration, people seeking refuge from wars and underground movements, victims of natural disasters but also the result of sheer stupidity and injustice; it means taking our chances on a world which is more emphatic in a context of globalization. A world which gives prime of place to individual success, "being number one"; it means having a different idea of the person, community, social fabric, the world. It means building a world which has more and more respect for diversity. That is why I was saying that this missionary expedition is in continuity with Don Bosco's first missionary expedition in 1875 but is also different. We can no longer impose the Gospel today; we can offer it but not impose it. We need to be respectful of cultural, religious diversity and cooperate in building a world which is ever more comprehensive and tolerant. So, this is what it means to be ever more obedient to Christ's command.

2. The leavening value of the Gospel

It is a human reality, but an opportunity, not a destiny, which can also have positive results: broadening of horizons, exchange of information at a planetary level, awareness of situations of poverty and exploitation wherever they happen to be, setting up international and national cultural centres, awareness of international and national solidarity and openness to structural exchange. However, what do we mean by saying it is not a destiny but an opportunity? It means that it needs to be politically governed, positively guided in the direction indicated earlier of international and national solidarity. Pope St. John Paul II insisted on the need to humanize globalization, give it a human face. This is the real gamble of globalization which involves all of us and remains a question for new generations especially. Because its greatest significance is not economic, not even social or political but anthropological.



The challenge, then, is that of guaranteeing a globalization focused on the individual, who is the required element of a globalization of solidarity, peace and human sense of belonging. Only by focusing on the human individual, young people, adults, the disabled, migrants, that is, beginning from the littlest and the least, can communion between individuals and communities be given their worth over and above any system, idea or ideology. We insist that the problem in the world is not poverty but the dominant culture, meaning our way of thinking, conceiving of the human person, organizing the social fabric, international relationships that foster individualism, greed, selfishness, the prevalence of individual good of social good, exclusion, segregation. It is from this perspective that we are not convinced that the problem of the world at international level is not just one of “a new governance”, as some claim, but that we also have “a new international order”.

We need concrete action plans, investment to create new work opportunities, the courage to shift from a scholastic programme of pure instruction to more holistic planning, aware that education is a priority for overcoming poverty and changing culture. UNESCO, in the preamble to its constitution, says that the economic growth of a nation is necessary but not sufficient and that political development is essential but not sufficient, that true welfare depends on the intellectual and moral solidarity of its society. So, we need to try to touch the cultures that have been so affected by this globalization, made hostage to the economy, with the power of the Gospel and our educative presence. To globalize solidarity, peace and human sense of belonging, we need to direct ourselves specially to educating the young. This is more than ever before an opportunity for us, as Salesians, Salesian Family, Salesian Volunteers Movement etc. It is also necessary and urgent to act because young people are the ones most exposed to the risks, unjust and evil power because they lack experience, preparation and are fragile. Young people are called on to enrich peoples, cultures, and transform them by their presence. This was Don Bosco’s conviction. Young people are full of new life, and they bring joy and music to our hearts.

So how do we help young people overcome the huge problems they need to tackle such as the desire to want things now, fragmented personality, a do-it-yourself ethic without values? We repeat that in this globalized world we need a new culture: a culture of responsible freedom. Victor Frank used to say that just as the Statue of Liberty had been erected on the East Coast of the USA, sent a gift from France, so on the West Coast they should erect a Statue of Responsibility. We not only need a culture of sense of belonging but also one of duties, a culture of responsible freedom in the service of others that can help us overcome a culture of the logic of power, the prevailing individualism. And what do we need to create this new culture? We need to put in place an essential culture in contrast to the general impoverishment of spiritual and material goods. A culture of love in contrast to idolatry of the body and the prostitution of the spirit we see around us. It requires cultural honesty to call a spade a spade, call what is evil, evil, what is good, good, fearlessly denounce what is unjust, the violation of the sense of belonging of the weak without demonizing or canonizing everything and everyone. It implies overcoming the cult of the body (just look at the hours young people spend on body building and fitness) to the point where it becomes idolatry.

I ask myself where St. Mother Teresa found the light to see the needs of the poor and the energy to do something about it? Not to form “body builders”, but to attend to the health and care of the body. It implies the courage to be emphatic, to share our spiritual and material

goods and struggle against wastage in nature, language, suffering. It means having the joy of love. So, this is what it means to be convinced as was Don Bosco of the leavening value of the Gospel. All cultures are to be accepted but also purified and uplifted.

3. Predilection for the Young

So, what should we do? Believe in the centrality of the young, as Jesus said, placing a child or a young person at the centre. This means respect for the sense of belonging to life, safeguarding family life. It means struggling individualism, consumerism, ethical relativism, superficiality. More concretely it means looking after migrants, learning intercultural dialogue, putting more and more faith in education, formation, work, defending marriage, commitment to a much more active citizenship. We need to be builders of peace.

As sons and daughters of Don Bosco, we are, everywhere, true missionaries of the young and youth is our mission land. We live our lives of being missionary disciples by living Don Bosco's missionary spirit. This missionary spirit – summed up in the 'Da mihi animas' – is the heart of pastoral charity, which manifests itself in the 'Oratorian heart', fervor, drive and the capacity for intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. It is the passion for evangelization, especially of young people, and the willingness to be sent wherever there is a need, it is always expressed in the language of Don Bosco 'ci vado io' ('I'll go there') as the 'Salesian motto'. In short, the missionary spirit is typical of every member of the Salesian Family especially the Salesians, because its roots are in Don Bosco's charism itself. It is this missionary spirit that makes us live the Salesian consecrated life "permanently in a mind and heart of mission".



CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS INAUGURATED

The inauguration of the centenary celebrations was well organized and solemnly inaugurated on 13th January 2022 which also marked the arrival of the 11 Salesian Missionaries to Shillong. It was well appreciated by all the confreres, members of the Salesian Family and the whole Archdiocese of Shillong. It began by the hoisting of the Centenary flag by His Grace Most Rev. Victor Lyngdoh DD, the Archbishop of Shillong, surrounded by the priests from the Archdiocese of Shillong, Salesians, the Past Pupils, the laity, the youth, the Cathedral Band and many religious men and women. We then proceeded with the Marian procession from Don Bosco Technical School to the Cathedral of Mary Help of Christians to honour our Lady Help of Christians.

It was followed by the Holy Eucharistic celebration presided by Archbishop Victor Lyngdoh. There was also the releasing of the book **Being Salesians Today** edited by Fr. Jose Varickasseril and Br. MA Abraham SDB. The celebrations concluded with a family meal at Don Bosco Technical School. I would like to thank and congratulate Fr. AL Jose, Fr. Anthony K, the Executive members of the Salesian Youth Movement, Fr. Pascal Lyngdoh (Parish Priest of the Cathedral) and his collaborators, the Sisters of Little Flower Convent Malki and the Auxilium Convent Nongthymmai and all the confreres. May the Lord continue to bless them. May Mother Mar, Don Bosco and the Salesian Missionaries intercede them all.



PRAYERS FOR THE NEWLY APPOINTED SECRETARY GENERAL

We would like to congratulate and thank the Lord for the gift of the newly appointed Secretary General **Rev. Fr. Guido Garino**. We pray that the good Lord continue to bless, inspire and direct him.

We would also like to appreciate and thank the outgoing Secretary General Council **Fr. Stefano Vanoli**. We pray that he may be rewarded abundantly by the Lord.

CONGRATULATIONS! NEWLY ORDAINED PRIESTS OF INS

On behalf of all the confreres of Shillong Province, I would like to congratulate the newly ordained priests viz Fr. Dominic Eddie Ralte Lalrintluanga, Fr. Patrick N Khupzaliana, Fr. Barnabas Syiem and Fr. Jeffrey Kharkongor. May the Lord continue to bless them and guide them.

NEW PRIESTS DAY 2022

I would like to inform you and the communities that the **INS New priests' day 2022 celebrations** will be held at **Savio Juniorate on 13th February, 2022 at 05.00 pm**. All of you are most welcome to celebrate and rejoice with our new priests. Kindly plan and free yourself on this day. Fr. Vice Provincial will be sending the programme of the day.

BROTHERS HOLIDAY EXPERIENCES

We are very grateful to Fr. Vice Provincial for making the arrangement for our clerics who are doing their studies at Sacred Heart Theological College, Salesian College Dimapur and Don Bosco University to spend their holidays at home and in a few communities/parishes. We hope that they had a fruitful and learning experienced. May the Lord bless them with good health and wisdom. Thank you to the communities which willingly accepted and accommodated them. They really did accompany our young confreres.

VOCATION CAMP FOR CLASS VII PASSED

We congratulate Fr. John Zosiama, Fr. Mukt Tirkey, Cl. Shemphang Dkhar, the brothers and the community of Savio Juniorate for having hosted, organized and animated the vocation camp. It was held from 06th - 10th January, 2022. Around 84 boys from the dioceses of Shillong, Nongstoin and Jowai attended the vocation camp. We pray for their joyful perseverance. May God bless them all.



CONGRATULATIONS FR. ARCADIUS PUWEIÑ

We would like to Congratulate Fr. Arcadius Puweiñ SDB, who has successfully completed his doctorate in Biotechnology from Assam Don Bosco University Guwahati. May the Lord continue to bless him and we wish him all the best.

HEALTH UPDATES

Let us keep the following confreres in our prayers:

- Fr. VK Jose:** He is not keeping well these days. His health condition is not stable.
- Fr. John Bosco Minj:** After he suffered a stroke, he was not able to move on his own since the right side of his body is paralyzed.
- Br. Paul Mojo:** He is still in the hospital and is undergoing medication.

WELCOME TO SHILLONG PROVINCE

I would like to inform you that Fr. Donbor Jyrwa SDB who was a missionary in Czech Republic (CEP) has now returned and joined Shillong Province. On behalf of the province, I would like to warmly welcome him. He has been appointed as Manager and Administrator of Bosco Pnar Jowai.

BIRTHDAY WISHES

My prayerful wishes to all those confreres who celebrate their birthday in February. I assure them of my prayers and may God bless them and their ministry.

Dates	Names	Dates	Names
05	Cl. Purnajoy Rupini	13	Fr. Thiewbor Kharsyntiew
07	Cl. Dominic N Lalhruaitluanga	15	Cl. Joseph Kandulna
08	Fr. John Changsan		Cl. Santreki Mular
10	Fr. Alexius Dkhar	19	Cl. Riwanki Suchiang
	Cl. Aldo B Kharkongor	20	Cl. Jarnel Syiem
	Cl. Cleophas Lyngdoh	22	Cl. Bankitlang Lyngkhoi
11	Fr. Devasia Vazhayil	<i>Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:10</i>	
	Fr. Remol R Marak		

CONDOLENCES

We offer our heartfelt condolences to the Provincials, confreres and family members of the confreres who have gone before us. We pray for the repose of the souls of:

- † **Br. Raphael Kerketta SDB (ING)**
- † **Cl. Laleth Sukan SDB (INM)**
- † **Fr. Kissun Tudu SDB (INC)**
- † **Mr. PM Devasia, the eldest brother of Fr. PM Mathew**
- † **Mr. Michael Jino Pala, the eldest brother of Fr. Bernard Pala**
- † **Mrs. Sophia Melisibon Nongrang, the beloved mother of Fr. Patrick Nongrang**



CONCLUSION

St. John Bosco is one of the greatest missionaries in the Church who sent out his sons and daughters to the world. It is 147 years since the first missionary expedition. It is a great moment of joy, gratitude and celebrations as we commemorate the Centenary year of the arrival of his charism to North East India.

Missionary day, week, month, year especially the Centenary year is an opportunity to remind us of our duty of proclaiming our faith to those who have not yet heard about it and to strengthen those weak in faith. We need to take the reminder seriously not just for today but always. It is a lifelong duty. If we neglect our task and fail to reach out, people may perhaps remain ignorant of God's tremendous love for them. If today we are Christians, experiencing deeply the love of God, it is because someone took his missionary duties seriously and passed on the torch of faith to us. Sense of gratitude must draw us to make Jesus known and loved, relying also on his promise: 'I will be with you, always' (Mt. 28:20).

Let us thank God for the aspect of Missions in our Salesian vocation and for guiding us all in our mission. May the love of Abba Father, which we manifested during our earthly life and later through the marvelous deeds of the Holy Spirit, be shared with every human being especially the young people! May we all know, acknowledge and love him as our Lord and Saviour.

**MAY OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, QUEEN OF THE MISSION AND ST. JOHN BOSCO BE WITH US
AND INTERCEDE FOR EACH ONE OF US!**

Yours in Don Bosco,



Fr. Paul Olphindro Lyngkot SDB
Provincial

