

Cir_Ref. No: LPO/49/2022

02nd March 2022

Dear Confreres, members of the Salesian Family and friends,

Today we begin the season of lent with Ash Wednesday. We commence the sacred season with penance, fasting and prayer. The entire period will prepare us to celebrate the day of resurrection of Jesus Christ which will take place on 17th April 2022.

This year is of great significance for us since this year marks the hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the Salesian Charism in North East India. We thank God for this great gift. This is also a moment wherein we take stock of the hundred years of our Salesian life - religious life and the commitment to the Church and the Society. It is at this juncture of the Lenten Season that we need to introspect ourselves and assess how we have lived, inspired, enlightened, strengthened, contributed, accomplished and fell short of.

LENTEN SEASON – A JOURNEY

The 40 days of Lenten journey will definitely lead us up to Easter. The word 'Lent' is derived from the Anglo Saxon "*lencten*," meaning "spring," So Lent is a special time of reflection, fasting, and prayer, where Christians are encouraged to recall the sacraments of baptism and penance in preparation for Easter Sunday.

It is also a season wherein the 40 days represent the amount of time Jesus spent in the desert – fasting and preparing for his ministry. It is an opportunity for many to make a sacrifice of their own during these 40 days. It's also common practice that we give up bad habits, luxuries like parties, alcohol, smoking, eating betel nut, eating meat and other things during Lent.

During this time, we are called to grow deeper in our relationship with God and become ever closer with Him in our earthly pilgrimage. Lent also makes us aware of our susceptibility to sin and inspires us to seek God's help in a more authentic, and sincere manner. Lent is, a time of 'metanoia'. It is a moment of conversion, a time where we finally turn away from the old, sinful ways, and embrace the new life Our Lord has envisioned for all of us. This feeling is what strikes at the heart of the Lenten Season.

The hope is that this new 'act' will not die out in 40 days, but rather, ignite a fire within us that will only glow brighter with each passing year particularly this Centenary year. Pray five minutes longer; say a decade or more of the Holy Rosary daily and the Divine Mercy. Offer up time to help around the house without being asked. Help out a neighbour or to strike up a conversation with a new person once or twice a week. Ask someone what could we pray for others. One critical bit of advice we offer is to do two important things: keep it reasonable, and keep it realistic. One reason many may falter during Lent is due to a lack of attention here. Many have big plans, but they put out too early. Taking some time to prayerfully consider what God may be calling you to do during this journey can be helpful.

This is not a 'me' journey as much as a 'we' journey. God calls us into the Church, into the Salesian Congregation and in the community where we are. This experience is meant to build relationships, thus the need to join with others and act for our betterment. Often times, a sacrifice leads to new opportunities. Money and other luxurious things, which were meant for enjoying and the pleasure of lives, can now be donated and be given to others who are less fortunate, the poorest of the poor and the marginalized. It adds up! That extra prayer one chooses to recite can now be said along with the community, other confreres, the family members, or group of friends, just before everyone begins their day. Time spent away from social media can be spent volunteering helping and accompanying others who need most of our assistance.

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The fact is that most of the greatest contributions to our present world came as a result of being creative and making room for the Holy Spirit. That is what Lent is about; creative 'God-given' ways to build community and family; ones that pull us out of our own individual places in order to connect with others. This effort also incorporates the many aspects of Catholic Social Teaching, which our Holy Father Pope Francis has encouraged us to participate in during this time. We know the devil preys on idle beings and forces them to dwell on their inadequacies. Satan's deceptive tactics can be especially strong, yet we take comfort in reflecting on Christ's 40 days spent in the desert, and we are inspired, and spiritually invigorated, by His loving care and constant protection.

SEVEN STEPS IN THE LENTEN JOURNEY

We need to reflect on our personal life and community life. This is the best season for all of us to amend our life. It is the Centenary year where we need to introspect ourselves in the personal level, community level, province level and congregational level particularly as sons and daughters of Don Bosco.

This Lent 2022 is a time and season of penance an ascetical warfare. The enemy is concupiscence, the world and the devil. The goal is pure hearts so that we can joyfully celebrate the resurrection of our Lord at Easter, the greatest feast of the liturgical year. In a way, Lent should be a microcosm of our entire struggle on earth, just as the Paschal feast of Easter is a microcosm of our heavenly triumph in Christ. Yet, a good Lent takes focus and discipline. Let me share a few practical ways to have a good Lent in our province, community and personal.

1. **Have a plan:** The fastest way to ruin Lent is to have good intentions but no plan. Be specific. Once you've determined what you are going to do, stick to it every single day. One word of advice: Make it *doable*. Often, we are overly ambitious and commit to way too much. When we fail in our Lenten goals, we grow discouraged and give up completely. This is a victory for the devil. Let us make our commitments modest and practical, and our Lent will be the better for it.
2. **Read a good book:** The saints are constantly exhorting us to read good spiritual books, and there is no better time to begin this practice than during Lent. Reading Scripture or the writings of the saints is a great place to start.
3. **Examine ourselves:** Lent is an excellent time to take an inventory of the state of our soul. What are our predominant faults? Do we have any hidden idols in our life? What is keeping us from following the will of God with all our heart? Let us use a thorough examination of conscience to help us assess our spiritual health. Remember, Lent is not ultimately about giving up sweets, food, or other things we enjoy, it is first and foremost about repentance, which means giving up sin and returning to God, our loving Father. While taking inventory of our sins may be painful, it is a healthy pain that restores the soul.
4. **Confess our sins:** After examining our conscience, the logical next step is to confession. Normally, it can be hard to find a parish or institutions with confession readily available, but the good news is, many parishes or institutions have increased confession times during Lent, so it's a great time to go. Before receiving the sacrament of penance, though, remember the five requirements for a good confession: 1) Examination of conscience 2) True contrition for having offended God 3) Firm resolution to sin no more 4) Clear confession 5) Penance for the sins we have committed.
5. **Pray:** Let's face it, we can all pray more, and Lent is a great time to plan and implement a daily prayer rule that can guide us the rest of the year. During this season, however, we should especially focus our prayers on repentance and contrition for our sins.



6. **Fast:** We've written before about the importance of prayer and fasting, so suffice it to say that it is something we should be doing all year round, not just during Lenten Season. Still, Lent is a very good time to refocus our efforts and renew our commitment. We should especially focus on fasting from things related to our predominant sins.

Are we addicted to television, telephone, computer, radio, mobile phone, SMS messages, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, video calls, YouTube, Live telecast, etc.? Fast from them. Give it up. On the other hand, maybe we're addicted to criticizing others. Make a special effort to fast from negative speech. The point is, while fasting from certain foods is an excellent ascetical practice, we do not have to limit our Lenten fasting to things we eat. Remember the words of Jesus: "If your eye offends you, pluck it out." Nothing should stand between us and the heavenly kingdom, and we should be intentional about cutting off those things that are causing us to sin.

7. **Give alms:** During Lent, we especially remember the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. This is the greatest act of generosity in history, for Jesus died not just for his friends, but for his enemies. "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The generosity of God in Christ should impel us to be generous and merciful to others, especially those poor and in need. This Lent, find a way to give, whether it is supporting a confrere or helping at a homeless shelter. Remember the promise of Jesus, "And whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

We began this post by talking about our own failure, and yet, when it comes to Lenten disciplines, true failure is not really possible. We mean that even failing in our commitments can help us grow in humility and knowledge of our own spiritual poverty - and growth in these is always spiritual advancement.

This year of Lent which is also the Centenary year of the arrival of the Salesian Charism to North East India, we must try to do our best. Strive to root out sin and cultivate holiness. But when we fail, realize that even those who can be considered righteous fall seven times daily (Prov. 24:16). Let our failure be a lesson in humility that drives us back to the grace of God flowing from the pierced heart of Jesus - for that is the true heart of Lent.



PRAY FOR PEACE IN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

We are well aware that the situation in Ukraine is very unstable and the precarious situation of the confreres in the Greek-Catholic Vice Province of Ukraine and in the Salesian communities of Latin rite, which are part of the Province of Krakow. The confreres and the people are very much worried and we do not know how this situation will evolve. I request all the communities, parishes, institutions and families to organize some moments of prayer as our way of expressing our solidarity; keeping in mind the sole intention that peace may reign in these two countries.



SPCSA COUNCIL & ASSEMBLY

The SPCSA Council and the Assembly were held online via Google Meet from 27th to 28th February 2022. We had a lot of discussion on many matters. There was lots of sharing and after much deliberations many decisions were taken for the good of the Salesian Congregation in South Asia Region. The whole Council and Assembly were animated by Fr. Biju Michael, the Regional. We thank him and the whole SPCSA Team.

INS PRINCIPALS' MEET & ADMINISTRATORS' MEET

The INS Principals' Meet will be held at Don Bosco Silchar from **06th - 08th March 2022**. I request all those responsible and accountable of the various educational institutions within the province to kindly attend the meeting without fail.

The INS Administrators' Meet will be held at Don Bosco Provincial House, Mawlai Shillong from **10th - 11th March 2022**. Kindly be present without fail. May the Lord bless you and the community.

WELCOME BACK

We are so glad to welcome back our dear young Salesians who have finished their Post Novitiate formation and Bachelor of Philosophy (B.Ph.) from Nashik. A few of them are getting ready for their Practical Training and the others are going for their mission and community experience. We wish them all the best as they are pursuing their Salesian life.

SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT OF YOUNG SALESIANS

I highly recommend that the Rectors and the Parish Priests who have young Salesians doing their Practical Training in the community to send them for their Monthly Recollection. Those who are in Tripura region will have their Monthly Recollection at Don Bosco Nandannagar Agartala. They will be accompanied by Fr. Babu Stephen and Fr. Christopher Warlarpih, the Rector of Don Bosco Agartala. Those who are in East Khasi Hills and Ri Bhoi regions will have at Don Bosco Provincial House Mawlai Shillong and will be accompanied by Fr. Vice Provincial. I would also like to request you to follow up their spiritual journey especially, Spiritual Direction and Prayer life.

SEASON OF EXAMINATIONS

The matric boys in Savio Juniorate, the Cl. XII aspirants in Don Bosco Aspirantate Nonglakhiat and all our Matric and Cl. XII students are preparing for their Board examinations. Let us keep them in our prayers. That they may be assisted by the Holy Spirit and be able to perform well in their examinations.



BIRTHDAY WISHES

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

Dates	Names	Dates	Names
02	Cl. Mebanteilang Lyngdoh	23	Cl. Jetendis Sohshang
	Cl. Shailang Jyndiang	25	Fr. Jose Thekkekunel (TA)
	Cl. John Tundoubou Newmei		Fr. Gabriel Colney
06	Fr. Paul Panachickal		Cl. Synsharsuklang Kharsyntiew
09	Cl. Malcolm Nongsiej	27	Fr. Joseph Umbavu Thattil (UV)
10	Fr. Gervasius Nongkseh		Fr. Cyril Tirkey
	Cl. Honest Pyngrope	29	Cl. Abialstar Kharsotun
12	Br. Regy Cherukunnel		Fr. Henry Warbah
15	Fr. Jeevan Kishore Lakra	30	Fr. Pyndeilang Khongkhlad
	Fr. Benedict Kharlyngdoh		Fr. Arnes Sohshang
19	Fr. Biju Michael	31	Cl. Midnightstar Khongsit
	Cl. Primlanding Jyrwa		"For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" Psalm 139: 13-14
22	Fr. Daniel Dabitlang M Cajee		
	Fr. Blasius Kujur		

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:

- ✠ Fr. Michael Eanthanamkuzhiyil SDB (IND)
- ✠ Br. Sushanto Biswas SDB (INC)

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude this circular reflecting a bit on St. Joseph the patron of the universal Church. It is more important for all of us to imitate the life and example of the foster father of Jesus. There are four important things that we need to imitate St. Joseph.

- a) **Listen to the Holy Spirit:** The first was to raise our mind towards the heart of St. Joseph and consider how docile he had been to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, then examining our own heart we humbled ourselves for our resistance and animated ourselves to follow more faithfully the inspiration of grace.
- b) **Unity of prayer and work:** The second was to consider with what perfection St. Joseph unified the interior life to the occupation of our state in life, then reflecting on our own life, we examined if there were some defects to correct.
- c) **Devotion to the Virgin Mary:** The third was to unite ourselves spiritually to St. Joseph as the spouse of the Mother of God; and considering the admirable lights which the saint had on the virginity and maternity of Mary, we encouraged ourselves to love this holy patriarch for the love of our blessed Mother.
- d) **Adore the Child Jesus:** The fourth was to represent to ourselves the profound adoration and the paternal services which St. Joseph had rendered to the Child Jesus: we ask to be permitted to join with us in adoring loving and serving this Divine Infant with the tenderest affection and the profoundest veneration.



St. Joseph, humble and obedient servant of God, pray for us that we may live faithfully our personal vocation and mission. Help us to embrace silence so that we may hear the voice of Christ in our life so that you may guide us on the path you have chosen us. Equip us with the skills we need to accomplish our life's work and protect us from worldly distractions that drive us away from God's will. In imitation of you St. Joseph, may we live by faith, humility, and obedience, submitting our mind and heart to God with complete trust and confidence in Jesus Christ our Lord. St. Joseph, pray for us.

The Lord Jesus said, **“Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** Mt. 4:17. Only those who truly repent can be protected by our Loving and Merciful God and avoid being destroyed in disasters.

Yours in Don Bosco,



Fr. Paul Olphindro Lyngkot SDB
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