



Cir\_Ref. No: ZJ/05/2024

2<sup>nd</sup> August 2024

My dear Confreres,

Loving greetings from Don Bosco Provincial House, Shillong.

As you may know, our Rector Major, Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, will step down from his office on August 16, 2024, following the Salesian Youth Synod in Turin. I had the opportunity to meet him at the Generalate in Sacro Cuore, Rome, last month before he embarks on his new role. On behalf of all the INS confreres, I congratulated him on his appointment as Cardinal and expressed our gratitude for his dedicated service as Rector Major for the last ten years. He extended his warm greetings to all the confreres of the Shillong province and fondly recalled his visit to Shillong during the centenary celebrations in 2022.

I also met Fr. Stefano Martoglio, the Vicar General, and all the General Councillors. They hold a positive view of our province and recognize our promising future, especially given our increasing number of vocations, while other parts of South Asia are experiencing a decline. Currently, we are the fastest-growing province in the South Asia region. Our total number of confreres has reached 314, with 42 communities (27 canonically erected houses and 15 non-canonically erected presences) across the four states of Northeast India: Meghalaya, Assam, Mizoram, and Tripura. The presence of approximately 140 young confreres in initial formation is a significant blessing and one of our greatest strengths. However, it is crucial to remember that quality is more important than quantity, as the vocational fragility among young confreres remains a concern. Our Rector Major and his Councillors have advised me to provide exceptional care for these young confreres, focusing on their spiritual growth and vocational discernment.

In his proposal for the animation and governance of the province for 2024-2030, our Rector Major has outlined eight key guidelines and recommendations:

1. Prioritize the formative journey of confreres in both initial and ongoing formation.
2. Foster growth in Salesian charismatic identity.
3. Strengthen communities with both qualitative and quantitative consistency.
4. Enhance youth ministry within the province.
5. Continue the tradition of evangelization with a renewed emphasis on catechesis.
6. Ensure good stewardship of temporal goods through increased transparency and accountability.
7. Implement collegial decisions decisively, with the support of the Council and various leadership groups.
8. Encourage collaboration with members of the Salesian Family, other religious, and the laity.

To implement these recommendations, we will develop a systematic strategy and establish action plans through various commissions and meetings at different levels within

the province. Many of these recommendations were also highlighted by the Regional Superior during his Extraordinary Visitation last year and are being incorporated into the plans and lines of actions prepared by various commissions. We will monitor the progress through 'action taken reports' during the Provincial visitation. I urge all communities to take these recommendations seriously and to work collaboratively with Provincial delegates and coordinators of various commissions and sectors to ensure effective animation of the province at all levels.

As our Rector Major has invited us to give the greatest priority to the formative journey of the confreres in initial and ongoing formation, let me share with you the three key areas we need to focus on.

- 1) **Spiritual Accompaniment:** All of us know that spiritual direction is crucial for discernment process and essential for the young confreres in initial formation. We really need to take seriously this as our fundamental responsibility. Usually, the rector is the spiritual guide or mentor of the young confreres in the community, although freedom is given to them now to choose someone else, if other spiritual directors are available in the same community or nearby. Since the rector has "*a direct responsibility toward each confrere and helps him realize his own personal vocation*" (C 55), it is his duty to initiate friendly talk with young confreres. He should take initiative not vice versa. Our rectors and leaders of the communities often fail to do this. We should never wait for them to approach us first. It is our duty to invite and call them for this friendly talk (*rendiconto*) or spiritual direction on regular basis. We must also be available when the young brothers want to come and talk to us. We know that it is a great sacrifice from the part of the rectors since most of us have demanding schedule of works and activities. But let us remember that this is our primary task as rectors and leaders of the community. Unless we give utmost importance to the spiritual accompaniment of our young confreres especially through spiritual direction we will not be able to have the kind of Salesians we expected in the near future.

Young people of today face lot of challenges in their own personal interior life especially in the area of affective maturity and celibacy due to the influence of social media. As they are exposed to all sorts of digital contents they need proper guidance and accompaniment. Initially we need to build up trust and confidence between us and invite them to share how they use social media and how it has influenced their personal life, especially their own celibate life as religious. Young confreres also need to open up and be sincere, feel comfortable and free to share their feelings and experiences. In this way, they can be guided and helped in their spiritual journey so as to become integrated and fully committed Salesian religious. Once again, I request all the rectors and leaders of the community to accompany our young confreres entrusted to them with great care and love, especially through spiritual direction and friendly talk. If we cannot give spiritual guidance to them, let us help them find someone else with whom they feel free and comfortable to share, and make sure that they regularly go for spiritual direction.

- 2) **Periodic Assessment and Fraternal Correction:** Everyone makes mistakes and no one is perfect. Hence we need mutual support and fraternal correction as we live together. Young confreres in particular, need to be accompanied and be corrected whenever it is required. It is the responsibility of the rector and his council to assess the young confreres in initial formation periodically and provide thoughtful observations and remarks to them. This important practice has been often neglected and overlooked by some communities. So, may I remind all the rectors and leaders of the communities not to fail to do the quarterly assessment (scrutiny) of our young confreres and follow them up. Let us remember that this process is not about finding faults and mistakes but about helping young confreres recognize their strengths, talents, and areas for growth. It should not be seen by young confreres as a criticism or judgement, rather it should be seen as a means of self-awareness and improvement so as to become mature religious with personal convictions.

The Vice Provincial who is also a Formation Delegate will follow up the communities where the young confreres are residing, and ensure that this periodic assessment is regularly done and the observations or remarks are made known to the brothers. However, let us never forget that this periodic assessment process is to be carried out with utmost care and love for the good of our brothers.

- 3) **Family Spirit in the Community:** To effectively accompany and guide our young brothers through spiritual direction and periodic assessment we also need to cultivate a healthy atmosphere and family spirit in our communities. As we have a number of young confreres, they are placed in different communities either for studies or for practical training. First of all, we must welcome and accept them with openness, and make them feel at home with us and enjoy fraternal friendship in the community. *“The Salesian house becomes a family when affection is mutual and when all, both confreres and young people, feel welcome and responsible for all the common good”* (C 16). Family atmosphere and fraternal relationship in a community will automatically nurture the formative experience of young confreres and furnish the growth of his vocation. Instead, if confreres are divided, selfish and individualistic, young confreres will feel isolated and will gradually lose interest in their vocation because of this bitter experience.

Therefore, to be able to accompany well our young confreres in their vocational journey the first thing we need is a formative ambience, and there should be family atmosphere and fraternity among ourselves. Otherwise, formation can never take place. If there is no unity and fraternity among the confreres in the community and young confreres are not cared for, they will feel out of place and will begin to look for other alternatives outside the community. Gradually, they will get discouraged and will find no meaning in their religious vocation. For this reason, we need to make every effort to build up fraternal bond and family atmosphere through daily common prayer, family gathering, sharing and planning together, holding regular house council and assembly of confreres, celebrating day of the community etc.

In conclusion, the responsibility for nurturing and accompanying our young confreres rests with each individual confrere, the local communities, and the entire province. Let us commit to supporting them with our words of encouragement, our exemplary conduct and daily prayers.

## **NEWS AND INFORMATION**

### **Meetings of the Province Youth Delegate**

Fr. Ritonbor Kharkongor was part of the South Asia regional level meetings in the last two months. He attended the Don Bosco Youth Animation (DBYA) Core Team meeting in Delhi from 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024; SYM Province Representatives in Hyderabad from 28<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> June 2024; and Youth Ministry Delegates and Coordinators for Oratory and Youth Centres in Chennai from 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

The SYM Coordinators have started planning for SYMFEST 24. It will be organized in Chennai from 29<sup>th</sup> December to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 and each province will send 100 participants with 10 animators. The youth delegate will look into the possibility of organizing a mini SYMFEST in the province in preparation for the SYMFEST 24.

The meeting on Oratory and Youth Centres raised some concerns on some of our general attitude of being unavailable for the young, closing our centres / infrastructure from young people for recreation, seeing the presence of young people as inconvenience, etc. The team also discussed dreams of equipping our centres for better response to the needs of the young and of having confreres available in accompanying the young outside our structured system.

We are happy to be able to spare a full-time Youth Delegate as directed by the Congregation. We look forward for better animation of confreres and young people on youth ministry in the province.

### **Meeting of South Asia Salesian Brothers' Delegates**

On 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> July 2024, Br. Bosco Ekka, INS Delegate of the Salesian Brothers participated in the meeting of South Asia region Salesian Brothers' Delegates in Kolkata. There were 11 participants representing all the provinces of South Asia except Sri Lanka. Some of the practical proposals that came up included increasing Brother representations at the General Chapter of the Congregation, mandating Brothers to attend Specific Formation in Manila, Philippines immediately after their perpetual profession, and inviting Rectors of formation houses and Novice Masters to the National Congress of Brothers. The brothers also discussed concerning the venues for the next national level Brothers' Congress in 2028-2029.

### **Meeting with the Rector Major**

On 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024, I had a meeting with the Rector Major, Card. Angel Fernandez Artime, together with Fr. Sebastian Kuricheal, ING Provincial, and Fr. Sunil Barla, the new Rector of Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong in Sacro Cuore, Rome. Fr. Ivo Coelho, General Councillor for Formation and Fr. Biju Michael, Regional Councillor for South Asia

were also present. The Rector Major discussed with us some of the concerns of the theological formation of future Salesian priests such as the spiritual accompaniment of each candidate, Salesian formation in the theologate, the need for a systematic preparation of good formators and professors, and other important issues for the governance and animation of the provinces.

I also had a meeting with all the General Councillors and in-charge of different sectors of the Congregation in the Generalate. Thanks to Fr. Biju Michael, the Regional Councillor for all the arrangements of these meetings.

### **Meeting with Fr. Pier Luigi Cameroni, Postulator General**

On 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024, I also met Fr. Pier Luigi Cameroni, Postulator General of the Salesian Congregation and he briefed me about the cause for the canonization of the two Servants of God, Fr. Constantine Vendrame and Bp. Orestes Marengo. According to him, the reports of the diocesan inquiry have already been approved and then submitted to the Vatican for further investigation by a team of theologians, historians, cardinals and bishops. Once this investigation is over the decree on the venerability of these two Servants of God will be promulgated and they will be entitled "Venerables."

Fr. Cameroni said that he was deeply touched and inspired by the lives of these two holy missionaries as he read through all the reports. He asked us to encourage and spread the devotion to these two saintly figures in Northeast India involving the whole Church and the faithful as they made indispensable and unique contributions to the growth of the Church in this region. The process of diocesan inquiry for Fr. Vendrame had already begun on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2006. We sincerely thank Fr. Barnes Mawrie, the postulator of diocesan inquiry, for his interest and hard work for this noble cause. Let us continue to spread the devotion to these two Servants of God, and pray earnestly that the process may go on smoothly.

### **Meeting with the Student Confreres in Rome and Regensburg, Germany**

Apart from meeting with the Rector Major and other major superiors in Rome, I spent time meeting and interacting with all the confreres studying in Rome except Fr. Leeborki Dhar who is at present in the province for holidays. I also visited Fr. John Sohshang who was in Sardegna for summer ministry in one parish. They are keeping well and progressing in their studies and research works. From the new academic year Fr. Clarence Kharmawphlang will join the Theological Community of Bufalotta, Rome for one year as staff member and will do Formators' Course as well before he comes back to the province.

It was also a joy for me to visit our two young confreres - Cl. Banraplang Nongrum and Cl. David Thongribah, students of theology in Regensburg, Germany. They are doing well in their studies; both of them will come for home holidays in August. I also met Fr. Arnes Sohshang who is working in Don Bosco Benediktbuern as Educational trainer. He will continue to work for some more years. Fr. Gesing Reinhard, the Provincial of Germany warmly welcomed me in the Provincial House, Munich and is very happy with our confreres there.

## **Vendrame Commemorative Seminar**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 there was a One-day Seminar on the missionary life and works of Fr. Constantine Vendrame, Servant of God, organized in Sacred Heart Theological College, Mawlai. Among the 200 participants there was a delegation from Italy led by Fr. Lorenzo, the Youth Director and nine young people from Vittorio Veneto Diocese, the home diocese of Fr. Vendrame. We congratulate and thank Fr. Barnes Mawrie for the beautiful initiative and all those who contributed for the success of the seminar which was instrumental in bringing alive the missionary spirit and enthusiasm of Fr. Vendrame. We also thank Fr. Shaji Puykunnel for accompanying the delegation from Vittorio Veneto Diocese, Italy.

## **Congratulations to the New Provincials**

Once again we congratulate Fr. Joseph Pampackal SDB, the new Provincial of Dimapur and his team. The installation of the new Provincial will take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> August and Fr. Genesis Wanniang, the Provincial Economer, will represent our province. We shall remember them in our prayers.

We also congratulate Sr. Rosa Pyngrope FMA, the new Provincial of Shillong as she begins to shoulder the new leadership role on 13<sup>th</sup> August. We assure her of our prayers and wish her God's abundant blessings.

## **Health Updates**

Fr. Davis Aricatt's health has improved greatly after the treatment at Kauvery Hospital, Chennai. He will be discharged soon from the hospital and will rest for few more days in the Provincial House, Chennai. We sincerely thank Fr. Don Bosco Lourdusamy, the Provincial and the confreres who took care of him during his illness.

Dn. Donald Savio Sohshang also has joined the community in Lawngtlai for his diaconate ministry after the treatment in Nazareth Hospital, Shillong.

We thank God for the grace of recovery granted to our confreres. We continue to pray for their complete recovery.

## **Additional Information**

- Fr. Thomas Marak has requested for a sabbatical year due to ill-health. He will stay at home for treatment and rest.
- Fr. Alistair Marwein is temporarily appointed as Asst. Parish Priest in Pynthorumkhrah.
- We welcome confreres from other provinces who joined the community of Sacred Heart Theological College as resident staff this year – Fr. Timothy Gangmei IND, Fr. Aloysius Hembrom ING and Fr. Arul Kumar Sebastian INT. We thank them for their availability and generosity. Fr. Jose Palakeel MST also has joined the community of SHTC as a resident professor for a period of 3 years.

- Fr. Jose Varickasseril has gone for mission preaching in US and to help in the parish of Fr. Paulson. He will raise fund for the construction of the province infirmary and will be back on 11<sup>th</sup> September. We pray for success of his ministry.

## Upcoming Events

Let me remind you about the important upcoming events of our province. I would request those concerned to schedule their programme accordingly and plan their travel in advance. Fr. Babu Stephen, the Province Delegate for Education and Fr. Jeevan Lakra, the Vice Provincial will send you reminders with detailed information of the meetings.

**Principals' Meeting: 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at DB Provincial House, Shillong**  
**Junior Priests' Meet: 15<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> September 2024 at Don Bosco, Silchar**

## Birthdays of Confreres

We express our prayerful wishes to all our confreres who celebrate their birthday this month. We assure them of our prayers; may God bless them and their ministry.

Dates	Names	Dates	Names
01	Fr. Denis Lalfela	18	Fr. Joachim Ekka
	Cl. Rangdabiang Lyngdoh	19	Br. John Colombi
02	Fr. Gedwin K. Warbah	20	<b>Fr. John Zosiama</b>
08	Cl. Ershal Thyrniang	21	<b>Card. Angel Fernandez Artime</b>
	Cl. Robito Sangriang	22	Fr. Babu Stephen Pallithottam
09	Br. Dianetious Fernandez	23	Cl. Pyndappura Nongdhar
10	Fr. Mani Kochupura	24	Fr. Protasius Syngkli
	Br. Barnabas Khriam	25	Fr. Shemphang Dkhar
11	Cl. Silbanus Salahe	26	Fr. Bernard Grace Pala
12	Fr. Zepherinus Baxla		Cl. Savio Kurbah
		Fr. Isaac Mattappillil (MA)	27
14	Cl. Dawanmi S. Pasi	29	Fr. Alistair Marweñ
15	Fr. Kenny Pakma		Fr. Thomas Puliparambil (PA)
16	Fr. Rueben Lyngdoh	31	Cl. Palbiangstar Khonglam

## Salesian Feasts

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August, we commemorate Bl. Augustus Czartoryski, SDB priest. It is Optional Memoria.

On 26<sup>th</sup> August, we commemorate Bl. Zephyrinus Namuncurá, Salesian Aspirant. It is Optional Memoria.

## Death Anniversary of INS Confreres

25<sup>th</sup> August is the fifth death anniversary of Fr. Joseph Kizhakechennadu (KJ). Let us remember him in our prayers especially during the holy Eucharist. May the Lord grant him eternal rest.

## Condolences

We express our heartfelt condolences to:

- Most Rev. Andrew Marak DD and all the priests, religious and faithful of Tura Diocese at the passing away of **Most Rev. George Mamalassery DD (92)**, Bishop Emeritus of Tura, who passed away on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- Fr. Santiago Thomas, the Provincial of Hyderabad and all the confreres at the passing away of **Rev. Fr. Kudiyrrippil James (80)** on 05 July 2024.
- Fr. Jayakumar D. John at the demise of his younger sister, **Mrs. Lilian Mary Stella (71)** who passed away on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- Br. Wanpherbor Lyngdoh at the demise of his beloved mother, **Mrs. Mary Christine Lyngdoh Ryntathiang (70)** who passed away on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- Fr. Michael Khongngaiñ at the demise of his beloved mother, **Mrs. Catharina Khongngaiñ (74)** who passed away 20<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- Fr. Don Bosco Lourdusamy, the Provincial of Chennai and all the confreres at the passing away of **Rev. Fr. John Joseph Kuruvachira (84)** on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
- Fr. Raphael Tham at the demise of his beloved elder brother, **Mr. Edmund Tham (61)** on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

## Conclusion

Vocation is the precious gift that the Lord has given to each one of us. While thanking God for the number of vocations in our province, it comes with a big responsibility to take care of them especially those in initial formation. The primary responsibility lies with the rector or the leader of the community; at the same time, it is the duty of every confrere to make the community a home where vocation is nurtured with love for its growth and stability. The Congregation is optimistic about our commitment for the progress in both the quality and the quantity of vocation. The rest is left to us.

We have the road map for the coming six years with clear guidelines and recommendations. Let us take these to heart and I am sure the good Lord will continue to bless us abundantly.

As we approach the twin celebrations of the Assumption of our Blessed Mother and Independence Day on 15<sup>th</sup> August, let me extend my heartfelt wishes to you in advance.



May our Blessed Mother continue to guide and support us on our journey toward true freedom and inspire us to be dedicated, responsible citizens committed to the welfare of our country.

May God bless you all.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



Fr. John Zosiama SDB  
INS Provincial

