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Mary Help of Christians Province - INC
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Provincial Circular

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My dearest and loving Sisters,

Prayerful greetings for a very holy, happy and grace-filled Year 2023!

As we begin the New Year, holy Mother the Church invites us constantly to imitate the most important features of Mary's Motherhood: receiving the Word of God in faith, treasuring it in her heart and pondering over its significance for one's life. We have just steered into the New Year 2023 and we welcome it with joy for it brings along new hopes, new opportunities, new surprises and many blessings. I take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy and Peaceful New Year. I pray that the Lord Jesus and His Mother Mary may enrich your lives during this year with an abundance of Divine blessings.

Now we have with us the Acts of the GCXXIV, which highlights Mary's presence at the wedding feast of Cana: John 2: 1-6, where we have the model of a mother with her "Life- Generating Presence". A presence with all its dynamism: attentive presence, believing, creative, itinerant, witnessing, helping, involving, listening and foreseeing presence. Let us follow Mary's example in this regard, that our mission among young people and children bears abundant fruit. To have this we need to introspect or ponder and see whether we are living our lives by chance or by personal choice. On New Year's Day, our Heavenly Mother invited us to make review our life and recall to our mind the steps we need to take in order to live a meaningful and purpose-driven life, journeying the path to holiness.

This feast of Mary's motherhood points to the whole Church's mission to be a mother. As members of the Church and as Daughters of Mary we too are called to become 'spiritual mothers' to others by "doing" God's Word. This requires a great deal of holiness in our life in order to touch the hearts of the young and lead them to experience God's powerful love for them. As we have commenced the New Year dear Sisters let us resolve to live our lives in holiness with a deep joy that comes from the Lord. Let **JOY** characterize all our activities and let them be made visible to our young people. Let us traverse the path of holiness not alone but together with and for the young in the style of Salesian holiness, thus becoming generators of new life. Mary can help us to live the generative power of the charism during this New Year supported by the joyful and unwavering certainty that the Holy Spirit effuses and infuses in our communities. Under her guidance we want to journey this path together with her maternal style and gaze, placing ourselves in a listening attitude, attentive to the educational challenges of the young people of today. Like Don Bosco and Mary Mazzarello let us have an ardent desire to let

ourselves be transfigured through a deep encounter with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and in Him to be women who generate life and radiate joy and hope to the new generation.

World Day of Peace

The 56th World Day of Peace was observed on 1st January and the theme of the Holy Father's message this year was: **"No one can be saved alone. Combatting Covid-19 together, embarking together on paths of peace"** Pope Francis began his message by quoting the words of St Paul: "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you, yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1 Thess 5:1-2).

Pope Francis commented: "Certainly after directly experiencing the fragility of our own lives ... the greatest lesson we learned from COVID-19 was the realization that we all need one another." He added: "We also learned that the trust we put in progress, technology, and the effects of globalization was not only excessive but turned into an individualistic and idolatrous intoxication, compromising the very promise of justice, harmony, and peace that we so ardently sought." The pope underscored that "in our fast-paced world, the widespread problems of inequality, injustice, poverty, and marginalization continue to fuel unrest and conflict, and generate violence and even wars." We cannot continue to focus simply on preserving ourselves; rather, the time has come for all of us to endeavor to heal our society and our planet, to lay the foundations for a more just and peaceful world, and to commit ourselves seriously to pursuing a good that is truly common." Pope Francis asks that in the coming New Year "we journey together, valuing the lessons that history has to teach us."

Strenna 2023

The theme of the Strenna 2023 is: *'As the Yeast in Today's Human Family'*.

The lay dimension in the family of Don Bosco". The Rector Major specifies as a first aspect, the twofold nature of the recipients of the Strenna: young children, adolescents, and older youth wherever Don Bosco's Family is to be found in all the presences of the world and, at the same time, all the Groups of the Salesian Family, with the aim of discovering or rediscovering the lay dimension and the complementarity of the Groups, called together and to be "leaven in the dough of the bread of humanity."

The evocative image of leaven in the dough of bread is taken from the parable of Luke's Gospel, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed [in] with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch of dough was leavened." (Lk 13: 20-21).



The Rector Major explains that the **leaven** is “*the only living ingredient,*” the element that is used in small quantities but that “*has the ability to influence, condition, and transform the whole batch of dough.*” The metaphor refers to the mission and commitment of each person, in relation to the great Human Family in which the Salesian Family is inserted: “Every person in this world is called to discover the meaning of their own existence, which is precisely that of living in a healthy and fraternal lifestyle within the Human Family.” “The construction of the Human Family is a responsibility and a commitment of all of us,” says Fr. Ángel. The Salesian reference is ‘the recipe for holiness’, proposed by Don Bosco to his young people, in particular to Dominic Savio (on the evening of 24 June 1855) and contains: **joy, fulfilling duties, and doing good**. It is a whole program that indicates how to be leaven in the small space where God planted us.

The complementarity of vocations in Don Bosco’s family, with the commitment and co-responsibility of each and everyone, are according to Fr. Angel, fundamental in order to be truly effective in the mission in favour of the education of young people. With a great sense of gratitude, the Rector Major also brings to our attention the tradition of holiness which has borne so much fruit on the great tree of the Salesian Family, “*young people, lay people, martyrs, people who have filled their lives with the leaven of love, love that gives itself to the end, faithful to Jesus Christ and His Gospel.*” The Rector Major concludes the Strenna, inviting the whole Family of Don Bosco and in particular the laity and many others of this vast Salesian movement “*to respond in a creative, collaborative, and concrete way, in everything possible, to this humble proposal of Strenna 2023 to truly be this leaven similar to that preached in the Gospel of Jesus our Lord*”. Let us read and reflect on the Strenna personally and as a community, share its content with the educating community, and draw some practical conclusions.

Holiness in the Salesian Family

In the month of January, the Church celebrates the holiness of a number of Salesian saints. We are privileged to belong to a congregation with numerous saints, blessed, venerables and servants of God who were the living reflections of the Gospel in the spirit of our holy Founders. Every saint in our Salesian Family tells us that holiness is possible as we recall with gratitude the saints of this month: Bl. Titus Zeman (8), Bl. Louis Variara (15), Bl. Laura Vicuna (22), St. Francis de Sales (24), Bl. Bronislaus Markiewicz (30), and St. John Bosco (31). I would like to make a short reflection on some of them for our inspiration and emulation.

Bl. Louis Variara

He was a Salesian missionary to the lepers in Agua de Dios, Colombia. When he joined the mission in 1894, the mission numbered 2,000 people, of whom 800 were lepers. As soon as he arrived, he became the life and soul of the patients, especially the children. He then developed the Salesian charism of sacrifice and founded the Congregation of the "Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary". Like Don Bosco he was exemplary in obedience. Even in the face of calumny, he said nothing.

Bl. Laura Vicuna

Although she was only twelve when she died, Laura Vicuna had grown to a maturity of faith well beyond her years. In an age of sexual license, when often girls and young women can be at the mercy of sexual predators, the life of Laura Vicuna has something to say in our own day. Laura did not let the sordidness of Mora destroy her innocence, nor did she allow her heart to become embittered. Instead, she prayed for her mother and also for her lover. In September 1988, Pope John Paul II beatified Laura, calling her a 'Eucharistic flower whose life was a poem of purity, sacrifice and filial love'. Her life is a testimony to the words of St. Paul: 'However much sin increased, grace was always greater' (Rom. 5:20).

St. Frances de Sales

Francis de Sales took seriously the words of Christ, "*Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart.*" As he said himself, it took him 20 years to conquer his quick temper, but no one ever suspected he had such a problem, so overflowing with good nature and kindness was his usual manner of acting. His perennial meekness and sunny disposition won for him the title of "Gentleman Saint." His gentle character was a great asset in winning souls. He practiced his own maxim, "A spoonful of honey attracts more flies than a barrelful of vinegar."

St. John Bosco

Our Father and Founder St. John Bosco educated the whole person—body and soul united. He believed that Christ's love and our faith in that love should pervade everything we do—work, study, and play. For John Bosco, being a Christian was a full-time effort, not a once-a-week, Mass-on-Sunday experience. It is searching and finding God and Jesus in everything we do, letting their love lead us. Yet, because John realized the importance of job training and the self-worth and pride that comes with talent and ability, he trained his students in the trade crafts, too. At the end of his life, he could say boldly, "I have done nothing by myself," saying it was "Our Lady who has done everything" through her intercession with God. In fact, he died, after conveying a message: "Tell the boys that I shall be waiting for them all in Paradise." In Don Bosco's house, there was room and a welcome for a whole variety of people, of all sorts of characters and temperaments, yet in the light of faith, the facts show that no personal situation constitutes an obstacle to holiness and that there are many paths along the road to holiness and they are very personal. Don Bosco involved everyone in his mission. So, let us also learn from him to involve all our staff and friends in working together for the salvation of young people and children of today.

COMMUNICATIONS

- ❖ The 2nd Prayer Ministry gathering was held at Auxilium Renewal centre, Gobra on 6 - 7 December 2022 animated by Rev. Fr. Remesh Cherian SDB. Sincere appreciation to Sr. Alphonsa Kachappilly and the community of Auxilium, Gobra for the warm hospitality offered with joy.

- ❖ A word of thanks to Sr. Teresa Pulickathadathil and the community of New Delhi - R. K. Puram for helping the sisters of the province to prepare for the solemnity of Christmas.
- ❖ The Rector Major, Rev. Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, on 14 December 2022 nominated Rev. Fr Don Bosco Lourdusamy as the provincial designate of the Salesian Province of St Thomas the Apostle, Chennai (INM). Fr Bosco will be succeeding Fr Jose Kochamkunnel, who has served as Provincial since February 2017. Fr. Don Bosco Lourdusamy will be installed as the 15th provincial of the province of Chennai on 04 February 2023. Let us offer him our prayers as he takes up his new responsibility.
- ❖ Juniors' meet will be held at Auxilium, Provincial House from 06 - 09 February 2023.
- ❖ Sr. Minimol Chettayil will leave for Rome on 18 February 2023 and return on 14 March 2023 for the Project Mornese Animators` course which will be held from 20 February - 12 March 2023.
- ❖ FMA-PCI, National Co-Ordinator for Education Sr. Josephine Antony Raj (INM) is organizing a National Conference for Province Co-Ordinator for Education & Principals with the theme "Network to Promote Global Compact on Education" from 27 to 29 January 2023. It will be held in the Provincial House, Dum Dum. Sr. Clara Saminathan, Sr. Aruna Kispotta, Sr. Sandhya Minj, Sr. Anima Minj, Sr. Lemnom Mosang and Sr. Dominica Thapa will be participating in the meeting from our province.
- ❖ The 14th National BOSCOREE will be held from 29 December 2022 - 03 January 2023 at Assam Don Bosco University, Tapesia Gardens, Guwahati with the theme "Save our planet home". Scouts and Guides from our Schools of Bandel (32 students), Ranchi (32 students), Jaigaon (16 students) and Vasant Vihar (16 students) will be participating. I wish all the participants, sisters, staff and students an enriching and inspiring experience.

Let us pray for our dear Departed - Condolences to:

- ✠ **Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI passes away:** Former Pope Benedict XVI died aged 95, on 31 December 2022 at his Vatican residence Mater Ecclesiae monastery, almost a decade after he resigned from his office due to ailing health. He led the Catholic Church for less than eight years until 2013. Let us pray for his eternal repose and offer in suffrage the prayers of the day and offer a Mass in all our communities.
- ✠ Sr. Amali Joseph at the demise of her sister Mrs Pauline Rose (50) on 20 December 2022 due to a massive heart attack.



- † Sr. Margaret Fernandes at the passing away of her brother Mr Dominic Fernandes on 21 December 2022.
- † Sr. Jyoti Baxla at the return of her father Mr. Jerome Michael Baxla (91) to his heavenly abode on 23 December 2022.
- † Sr. Aruna Kispotta at the demise of her mother Mrs. Margret Toppo (87) on 31 December 2022.

Dear Sisters,

I would like to conclude the letter referring to the new apostolic letter from Pope Francis titled "Totum Amoris Est" ("Everything Pertains to Love") which was released on December 28, the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Francis de Sales, who was born in France in 1567 and died in 1622, and was bishop of Geneva, Switzerland and doctor of the church. It is a great joy for us too as he is the patron of our Institute. In a letter that quoted from St. Francis' books, "Treatise on the Love of God" and "Introduction to the Devout Life," but also from his own exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis said the saint has much to teach the church today especially in recognizing the real-life struggles of ordinary people and judging faith by love. Pope Francis tells us in the letter to set aside undue concern for ourselves, for our structures and for what society thinks about us, and consider instead the real spiritual needs and expectations of our people. He has encouraged the faithful to keep asking at every moment, in every decision, in every situation in life, where the greatest love is to be found. He also added, "To live in the midst of the secular city while nurturing the interior life, to combine the desire for perfection with every state of life, and to discover an interior peace that does not separate us from the world but teaches us how to live in it and to appreciate it, but also to maintain a proper detachment from it. Finally, the Holy Father reminds us that the spirit of Charity cultivated by Saint Francis de Sales is now entrusted to us. Therefore, dear sisters as we enter into a New Year 2023, a new phase of life let us pay heed to the exhortation of our Holy Father through the new apostolic letter 'Everything Pertains to Love' let us become specialists in love in our communities, in our educational ministry and among the young people.

Wish you a sanctified and joy-filled New Year 2023!

Yours affectionately in Our Lady,

Sr. Leelamma Palliparambil FMA
Provincial

