



**TJA/Cir-XXXI/01/2012**

**13 January 2012**

My dear confreres,

Cordial greetings from Don Bosco Provincial House, Bangalore!

Let me wish you all a New Year filled with God's grace, peace and hope. The month of January is the most Salesian of months on account of the five major Salesian festivities that begin midway through this month: Blessed Louis Variara (15<sup>th</sup>), Blessed Laura Vicuña (22<sup>nd</sup>), St Francis of Sales (24<sup>th</sup>), Blessed Bronislas Markievicz (30<sup>th</sup>), Don Bosco (31<sup>st</sup>). May the celebration of these feasts help us to imbibe to a greater degree the common charism that we share as the members of the great Salesian Family and bring us closer to each other.

### **Major Archbishop Mar George Alencherry named Cardinal**

We are delighted to know that Pope Benedict XVI has appointed Major Archbishop George Alencherry, the Head of the Syro-Malabar Church, a Cardinal. The investiture of Mar George Alencherry, the 11<sup>th</sup> Indian and the fourth Syro-Malabar prelate to become a Cardinal, will take place in Rome at the consistory convoked for 18<sup>th</sup> February.

As we know the primary task of a Cardinal is to assist Peter's Successor to carry out his mission of confirming people in the faith and to be the source and foundation of the Church's unity and communion. We shall pray that the Cardinal-designate may always bear courageous witness of his love for Christ and His Church. Our hearty congratulations and prayers to the Cardinal-designate, Mar George Alencherry!

### **New Province of Silchar**

We are elated to know that the territory of the Salesian Province of Guwahati has been bifurcated and a new Province, with Bl. John Paul II as its patron, has been formed with its Headquarters at Silchar, consisting of the Archdiocese of Shillong and the dioceses of Nongstoin, Jowai, Agartala and Aizwal and a portion of Diphu.

This indeed is a historic event and a moment of grace inasmuch as it tells the marvellous spread of the Salesian charism throughout North-East

India. While we congratulate the Provincial and the confreres of the Province of Guwahati we thank the Almighty for all His blessings in the past and implore Him to continue to bless the new Province as well as the mother Province that both excel in the service of the young in the years ahead and bring greater glory and honour to God.

### **Visit of FMA Mother General**

We extend a warm welcome to Sr. Yvonne Reungoat, the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary of Christians, who together with some of her Councillors and all the six Indian FMA Provincials and their delegates will be holding the Triennial Evaluation from 24<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> January at the Sacred Heart Provincial House, Avalahalli, Bangalore. We pray for the success of her team visit that it might lead to the desired renewal and rejuvenation of their nation-wide Salesian mission and apostolate, especially on behalf of the disadvantaged young girls.

### **Annual Retreats**

In a few days from now we will be beginning the series of annual retreats in different venues. The schedule has already been published thanks to the efforts of the Vice-Provincial and I know that everyone is thinking of choosing the more suitable venue and preferred time. I am sure that all of us will see this time of grace as an opportunity to focus *less on doing and more on meaning*. For if we know the why of what we do then we can do and endure anything and everything.

In this connection I would like to point out that I will not be in a position to offer the opportunity to meet me personally to those attending the directed retreat in Bangalore. This could cause some inconvenience to those who want to meet me and discuss issues especially related to their work and possible transfers as we will soon be into the time of the obediences. I would therefore request the interested confreres to contact me personally and fix a mutually convenient time and place to discuss related issues or be satisfied with telephonic or e-mail communications.

### **Golden Jubilee of Don Bosco, Irinjalakuda**

Don Bosco, Irinjalakuda has entered into the Golden year of its foundation. This Salesian presence was started in 1962 at the invitation of the late Rt. Rev. George Alappat, the then Bishop of Trichur. The school was recognized in 1962 as an unaided school. Today there are three schools functioning in the campus - Don Bosco LP School; Don Bosco Higher Secondary School; and Don Bosco ICSE School with a total student strength of 2700 and a staff of 120.

There is also the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians dedicated to spreading devotion to Mary, Our Help. The Youth Centre caters to the local youth. The boarding which was started in 1963 was closed down in 1987. Today, the Institution can certainly boast of shaping the destinies of

thousands of youngsters by imparting quality education and moulding their character and making them competent enough to contribute to the nobler mission and task of building a better society and a more vibrant nation.

The Golden Jubilee Celebrations will formally be inaugurated on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2012. It is yet another momentous opportunity for us to thank God for the innumerable blessings He has bestowed upon this institution for the past fifty years. With grateful hearts we remember all those significant people, both Salesians and lay, who toiled hard for the sake of its welfare and without whose sacrifices the institution would not have been what it is today. The house is gearing up for the year-long celebrations and I wish the Rector and the community every success as they prepare themselves to undertake meaningful celebrations with a clear vision for the future growth of the institution.

### **Provincial Commissions: Annual Evaluation cum Planning**

As already indicated in the Province Directory, a meeting of the Coordinators and the Members of all the Provincial Commissions and the Youth Pastoral Team will be held on **10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> April 2012** at Don Bosco Provincial House, Bangalore.

The Commissions will meet separately on 10<sup>th</sup> April to evaluate the 2011-12 action plans and then formulate a fresh one for the academic year 2012-13. The programme will commence on 10<sup>th</sup> April at 9.00 a.m. with a short orientation talk in common and will conclude on 11<sup>th</sup> April by 4.00 p.m. On 11<sup>th</sup> April, a brief report of the evaluation and the newly formulated action plans will be presented to the Provincial Council for further deliberations and approval.

### **Meeting of the School and College Commissions**

A meeting organized by the School and College Commissions in which the Rectors, the Salesian Principals and the Administrators of the school and college communities are expected to take part will be held at Don Bosco, Aluva, at 9.30 a.m. on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012. The purpose of this meeting is to study those pertinent issues related to school and college administration including salary scales, government policies, collaboration in projects of common interest, etc. This is meant for the Kerala Region of the Province. I will be present at the meeting together with the Vice-Provincial and the Provincial Economist.

A similar meeting is planned for the Karnataka Region of the Province and those concerned will be informed of the same in due course.

### **MoRD Project – What has been and What can be**

I am sure that all of us have been following the progress of the MoRD project in several of our institutions during the past two years and more. Now that the project is coming to an end, in fact the current batch of

trainees is the last, I would like to place before you a brief report about the same and exhort all involved to explore new opportunities and possibilities of a similar nature in order to make sure that our work on behalf of the more needy youth may be carried on to the advantage of all concerned. I am grateful to Fr. Joy Nedumparambil for seeing the project through and for exploring new possibilities and facilitating new initiatives.

There is no gainsaying the fact that through the DB Tech-MoRD project many of our centres have been through a new experience. The project has helped the province in more ways than one. The confreres involved with the project have been introduced to a new way of imparting vocational skills to unemployed youth. It is non-formal, of short duration, employment driven and truly Salesian in character as it is meant for the most disadvantaged sections of the society. The project has proved that there is no dearth of employment opportunities for the youth, provided they are skilled in one of the many domains on offer. For many centres this has been a godsend to cater to the needs of the neighbourhood youth. The project has also taught how one has to be accountable in terms of numbers, time schedules, data/reports to be submitted and reviews/evaluations to be done. Contacts have also been established with corporates, government organizations and others which could prove beneficial in the future.

As the MoRD project was time and target-bound, it will come to an end by March 2012. However our mission to skill the young should be carried forward and I would exhort every community/centre involved to work out plans to carry forward the same in a self-financing mode. DB Tech seems to be in a position to continue to pay the salaries of the staff for another year while individual communities/centres try to find the resources to meet the running costs – through charging training fees from the trainees themselves with the assurance of a job; by registering the trainees with a nominal amount with the undertaking that the rest will be paid during the course of the training or after landing a job; or by approaching the prospective employers themselves who too stand to benefit from the skilled youngsters whom we train in our institutions. BREADS and particularly Fr. Joy will make all efforts in the coming months to liaison with government agencies and corporates and explore future possibilities. I am sure that we as Salesians will do that extra in order to continue the skill-training programme which has proved to be so beneficial to so many of the needy youth in our province.

### **New FMA Provincial of Shillong**

Hearty congratulations to Sr. Isabella Suja FMA who has been appointed as the new Provincial of the Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Shillong. I pray for God's choicest blessings upon her as she takes up the task of animation and governance and remember with gratitude the services rendered by Sr. Rosa Pyngrope, the outgoing Provincial.

## **Condolences**

- Our sincere sympathies to the Provincial and the confreres of the Province of Chennai at the unexpected sudden death of **Br. Pennaparambil Antony (P.K.)** on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at Kuravilangadu, Kerala. All those who have known Br. P.K. Antony will testify to this simple and service-minded Salesian's commitment, love for Don Bosco and sense of belonging to the Congregation. May the Lord grant his soul eternal repose!

## **Republic Day**

On 26<sup>th</sup> January we are celebrating the 63<sup>rd</sup> Republic Day of our country. While we pray for our motherland let us earnestly hope that despite all the present-day odds and the alarming situation of political polarization on the issue, the ongoing struggle against corruption may lead to a positive outcome and result in the emergence of a strong nation capable of safeguarding the dignity and welfare of every one of its citizens. *Let our country awake into such a heaven of freedom!*

## **Feast of Don Bosco – An Occasion to Know, to Love and to Celebrate our Father**

In his letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011 the Rector Major had designated the first of the three years – from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2011 to 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012 – of the three-year preparation for the bicentenary celebrations of Don Bosco's birth as the year meant to study the history of Don Bosco. Keeping this exhortation of the Rector Major in mind I thought that I would share with you some historical aspects of the period in which Don Bosco lived and worked.

Don Bosco lived at a time of great changes in the world. It was in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic years that he was born. The new ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity propagated by the revolutionaries began to circulate in Europe. French Society became secularized. The Church, the Pope and the teaching of the hierarchy were freely criticized, religious orders suppressed at will and Church traditions and practices regulated. From France these ideas and similar attacks against the Church spread to the rest of Europe including Italy.

In Italy there were efforts to establish a Republic with a parliament and to do away with the power of the Pope who at the time was also a temporal ruler with large possessions in the Italian Peninsula. People desirous of unifying Italy – and in the process doing away with the Papal States and the temporal authority of the Pope – began a concerted attack on the Church through books and pamphlets and through every other means in a calculated and vicious smear campaign. The Pope, fearing for his life, fled Rome and took refuge at Gaeta. Such is the background of Don Bosco's birth and the work he initiated for poor and abandoned boys.

And poor and abandoned boys there were aplenty. Many of them were orphaned because they had lost their parents in the ongoing revolutionary movements and the consequent wars. Others had come to the cities in search of jobs leaving their parents and homes in the distant villages.

In these very trying circumstances for the Church and for the Papacy, Don Bosco never made a secret of his identity or of his loyalties. He was a priest of the Catholic Church and he was loyal to the Successor of Peter. But at the same time he maintained good relations with politicians and all others. He never criticized anyone. He did what he thought was right. He did not work for a revolutionary change in governments or structures. He did whatever good he could; he tried to educate and form the moral character of the poor and abandoned youngsters of his time. This he did because he was convinced that the young were the future of the nation and of the church. Realizing that for actualizing his plans he needed the support of both the Church and the society he sought to cultivate the friendship of both. He was very close to the Pope. He was also very close to the politicians including some ministers. We all know that Minister Ratazzi was a very special friend and benefactor of Don Bosco, that it was he who suggested that Don Bosco found a congregation. Ratazzi, it is pertinent to remember, was a non-believer, an agnostic, who in his time had also suppressed more than 30 religious congregations in Italy. Yet he was fascinated by the personality of Don Bosco and his commitment to forming useful citizens.

There is also a little known fact of Don Bosco's friendship with Garibaldi. Garibaldi was one of the leaders of the attempts to establish a Republic in Italy with Rome as the capital. He was opposed to the Pope. But he nevertheless had the greatest respect for Don Bosco.

In fact Don Bosco was once even invited for the birthday celebrations of Garibaldi. Given the fact that it was a particularly difficult time for the Church in its relations with the Republicans, Don Bosco was at first quite reluctant to accept the invitation. He was reluctant because he feared that the Pope may not be pleased with him if he went for the birthday celebrations of a man who was the sworn enemy of the Pope. Finally however, Don Bosco decided to go. He went, as was his wont, dressed as a priest, and was warmly received by Garibaldi and his Republican friends. When the time for raising the toast came, they asked Don Bosco to raise the toast! Don Bosco was taken aback. The standard toast must have wishes for a long life, fulfillment of the celebrant's life-goals etc. Now Don Bosco, a Catholic priest, is asked to raise the toast in honour of Garibaldi, a sworn enemy of the Pope, and wish him long life and the fulfillment of all his plans! Don Bosco dreaded to think of what the Pope himself would have to say when he came to know of it!

But there was no escape. So with a smile and shrugging away his hesitations, Don Bosco gave a beautiful speech. He praised Garibaldi as a great military leader, appreciated his other qualities, thanked him for having invited him to the party and for asking him to raise the toast. Then he said : *"Let us drink to the Italian Republic, and to the health of Signor Garibaldi, the*

*great champion of the Republican aspirations of the People of Italy!*. Everyone applauded... they cheered Don Bosco. But then Don Bosco paused, raised his hands for silence and added: *Long live the Italian Republic, but let it be under the Pope!* Though surprised, the gathering applauded yet again. Garibaldi, with no indication of being annoyed or offended came up to Don Bosco, shook his hands and told him: *Hai parlato bene Don Bosco! – Well-spoken Don Bosco!*

Well, Don Bosco was someone who was very shrewd. He knew how to wriggle out of very difficult situations. He knew how not to compromise on his convictions. He knew to give to Caesar what belonged to Caesar, and to the Church and to God what belonged to them. He did it also in the most pleasing and I would add, disarmingly acceptable manner.

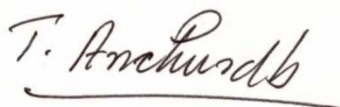
In fact in the year 2011, the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Unification of Italy and the establishment of the Italian Republic, the Italian government officially thanked Don Bosco and his Salesians for the services that they rendered to the society and to the state! The government thanked Don Bosco for having already in his time understood the importance of building the character of the young and of preparing them for life through an all-round education.

It is I believe keeping this history of Don Bosco in mind that the Rector Major prepared the Strenna for this year: *Let us make the young our life's mission by knowing and imitating Don Bosco!* The Rector Major felt that first and foremost one should know Don Bosco – the context in which he lived, his attractive personality and his passion for the young. Admittedly knowing more about Don Bosco and his times the Salesians will be led to love him more and loving him more will also be brought to imitate him more closely.

Knowing and imitating Don Bosco we are not to be at the service of any ideology, nor at the service of any political or economic theory, but at the service of the young making them capable of facing up to the challenges of society and ensuring that they have the necessary moral values, and the moral strength in order not to be lost in the tumultuous world we live in. If we do that, making no secret of our identity and our loyalties, we shall gain like Don Bosco, the favour of all people and blessings from God.

Happy Feast of Don Bosco to all of you dear confreres and may we all experience the Lord's continued providential care through the intercession of our Father and Founder.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,



Fr. Thomas Anchukandam, sdb.  
Provincial