



XXV/8

January 2018

My dearest Sisters,

Loving greetings from the provincial house Bangalore!

As we are blessed with another year, let me wish you all God's choicest blessings for a Very **Happy New Year** with all the surprises God has in store for His children whom He loves so dearly.

Motherhood of Mary is the blessing par excellence of God to humanity. This privilege of Mary – namely, her dignity as Mother of God-is the foundation of all her other titles, dignities, and graces. It is the first title by which she is recognized in the Litany. Mary is Virgin of Virgins, the unique virgin – mother who miraculously gave birth to Her Son without ever losing the attribute of Virginité, because Her Son is God and the Son of God, Who has a Father in eternity and none in time. May the Mother of God intercede for us! Let us become effective signs and bears of Mary's maternal presence in the world of today.

1st January is observed all over the world as the World Day of Peace. I am glad to present to you the Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the celebration of the 51st **World Day of Peace: 'Migrants and Refugees: Men and Women in search of Peace'**. In India we observe 30th January as the Day of Peace. *Let us allow this message to sink deep into our hearts and flow out into action.*

STRENNA 2018: Let Us Cultivate the Art of Listening and of Accompaniment

"Sir, give me this water" (Jn 4, 15)

The theme chosen by Rector Major is in continuity with that of the previous year and refers to the forthcoming major ecclesial event of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, convened by Pope Francis for the month of October 2018, which is entitled: *"Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment"*.

This is a subject that directly concerns the heart of our charism. We will try to prepare in the best possible way, sensitising ourselves and making many lay and young people aware of this important ecclesial event and of the need to take part in it. With this Synod, «the Church has decided to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to

the fullness of life and love and to ask them to help her in identifying the most effective ways to announce the Good News today»

Five points with which Rector Major articulates the reflections are:

1. **An encounter that does not leave indifferent: "Listening".**
A form of listening that is Reception and Personal Encounter.
2. **An encounter that pushes the person forward: "Discerning".**
Faith and Vocation to the Joy of Love – The Gift of Discernment.
3. **An encounter that transforms life: "Accompanying".**
Accompanying, like Jesus. - Don Bosco, Educator and Spiritual Guide of His Young People.
4. **In view of what kind of pastoral action?** - *Vocational Discernment as Suggested by Pope Francis.*
5. **In company with the Samaritan woman** - *as Jesus called His own followers, towards what goal would He be leading us today...?*

I invite you dear sisters to accept the Strenna with gratitude and benefit from it through personal and community reflection and apply it in our community living and pastoral situations.

COMMUNITY REFLECTION

In continuation with the themes that we have reflected together in preparation for the Silver jubilee celebrations of our province, this month I would like to reflect together with you on the theme of **Commitment**.

Commitment means pledging oneself to someone or to something, with dedication and loyalty. Making a commitment, is making a promise, a vow, a pledge and an obligation, and binding oneself. Commitment is the responsibility to practise specific activities. God has entrusted or committed a valuable deposit unto each person that is to be guarded and protected, that is to be faithfully proclaimed, followed, or exercised, and that in turn is to be committed to others. Each person is responsible to respond to God's call by committing one's heart, mind, body, and life to serve Him, to share the Gospel, and to be His ambassadors in this world.

Jesus has always demanded one's all in following him. He never made an exception. If he ever did, it would have been the time a rich young man came to follow Jesus. Outwardly the man had all the trappings that would make for a great follower. Inwardly, however, he was holding back. Jesus recognized that. He wouldn't accept a partial commitment. He didn't then; he doesn't now. He expects unconditional surrender. We shall reflect on the different ways of committing ourselves to God.

- **Commitment to God in prayer**

Diligent and consistent time spend in daily prayer will produce results in one's life. Just as Jesus walked with Peter and John on the shores of Galilee, He still walks with us. This means we can talk to Him and listen to Him at all times. The more we commune with Him, the more clearly we will understand His plan for us. It's not just a master plan for our whole life and eternity. It's a daily plan, 24 hours a day.

St. Paul had an amazing ministry. He experienced the power of God through many mighty miracles and powerful messages, in spite of all experiences, he *never* forgot the importance of prayer. For him, prayer was not an empty religious exercise or ritual but a personal encounter with his Master. He had seen prayer opening miraculous doors and making difference. He knew that prayer was an integral part of spiritual warfare. He understood that no one is above the need for prayer, and recognized that the work of God could not be carried out without being committed to prayer.

We cannot merely *assume* God's blessings, even if we've been successful in the past. We must continue to seek God through prayer. This commitment to prayer must be the central part of our lives. Dear sisters, today, let us commit ourselves to a life of prayer as never before. Paying heed to St. Paul let us "*Never stop praying.*"

- **Commitment to God all the time**

There is another face to our prayer life. Offering ourselves to God is not something that should be contained within our time of prayer. A living sacrifice is a sacrifice that is alive and continuous in action. This means prayer occur not just in the sanctuary but in our whole world. This means that prayer moves away from just this hour to all the hours of our lives, and it moves away from one activity of coming to prayer to all of our activities: each relationship, each task, each opportunity, each problem, each success, and each failure.

True prayer is linking of faith and work, the offering of everyday life to God, and it isn't something that takes place only in church. Real prayer sees the whole world as the temple of the living God and every common deed as an act of prayer. Real prayer is the offering of everyday life to God. We may say, "I am going to church to pray" but we should also be able to say, "I am going to the office, the school, the garden, the field, the kitchen to pray." To truly know how we pray, we need to see our commitment in the places of work, how we relate with our sisters, children, neighbours, collaborators and friends. Prayer affects everything we do and everywhere we are. Prayer is not just a church activity; it is a life activity.

- **Commitment to God through transformation and renewal**

We demonstrate our commitment by refusing to conform to this world by being transformed with renewed minds. When we give ourselves unconditionally to God it is reflected in how we live. We live as people who are distinct, different from the ways and the wiles of this world. We live as nonconformist persons, who are not like chameleons, which changes according to the surroundings. We live as transformed persons who have been changed from within.

Praying persons are transformed persons. It is reflected in their walk, their talk, and their personality. When we give ourselves to God we live, not a self-centred life, but a Christ-centred life. The world seeks to pressure our mind from without, but those who have given themselves wholeheartedly to God allow God's Spirit to release his power from within. This happens when Christ takes complete possession a person. She/he becomes a new person; his/her mind is different, for the mind of Christ is in him/her. Rather than allow the world to squeeze him/her into its mould; He/she allows Christ to shape him/her into his likeness. Prayer is a moulding process. We are to be to Christ as an image is to be to the original. The primary goal of our

prayer is transformation. The only way transformation can occur is to give ourselves totally to God. And when that happens, at every moment, and in every activity, we are like Jesus.

-----CELEBRATIONS-----

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY

January 7th The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the oldest Christian feast, celebrated throughout the centuries. Epiphany comes from a Greek Verb meaning “to reveal” and all of the various events celebrated by the Feast of the Epiphany are revelations of Christ to man. In the Western Church, the Feast of the Epiphany celebrates Jesus’ first appearance to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi, while in the Eastern Church, the feast is the commemoration of the baptism of Christ where the Father and the Holy Spirit gave combined testimony to Jesus’ identity as Son of God. Later, in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus revealed himself as the promised Messiah, and at Cana he revealed his divinity by transforming water into wine. These multiple revelations are all suggested by the Feast of the Epiphany.

The Magi – foreigners and pagans – recognized and gave Jesus proper respect as the King. That means, there is nothing in human sinful lives that would keep God from bringing them to Jesus. There were three groups of people who reacted to the Epiphany of Christ’s birth. The first group headed by King Herod tried to eliminate him, the second group of priests and scribes ignored him and the third group represented by the shepherds and the Magi came to adore him. The challenge is to belong to the third group and continue to bear witness to Him!

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

Many of the incidents which accompanied Christ's baptism are symbolical of what happened at our Baptism. At Christ's baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon Him; at our Baptism the Trinity took its abode in our soul. At His baptism Christ was proclaimed the "Beloved Son" of the Father; at our Baptism we become the adopted sons of God. At Christ's baptism the heavens **were opened; at our Baptism heaven was opened to us. At His baptism Jesus prayed; after our Baptism we must pray to avoid actual sin.**

BLESSED LUIGI VARIARA

On 15th January we celebrate the feast of Blessed Luigi Variara, who was a humble and brave Salesian missionary, determined to give a genuinely Salesian approach to nursing the most marginalized sick people, the lepers. He was an apostle to the lepers in Colombia and founder of the congregation of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, who ran the homes for lepers. "Our goal", he stated, "along with that of our own personal sanctification, is to care for the leprosy patients in the hostel and in serving God by offering ourselves as victims of expiation". He suffered much at the time of this founding the new Congregation through lack of understanding of people and certain superiors who thought he should be removed from Agua de Dios, a number of times. Like Don Bosco he was exemplary in obedience, even amidst misunderstanding.

BLESSED LAURA VICUÑA.

Blessed Laura Vicuña, whose feast we celebrate on 22 January is a shining example of Salesian education. As a happy and joyful adolescent she became a model of friendship with Jesus, of apostolic charity among her companions, and of fidelity to her daily duties.

In complete trust she endured with heroic fortitude, the physical and moral sufferings which circumstances brought to her life, though they were well beyond her age. Faithful to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, she did not hesitate to offer herself as a victim to bring her mother back to the way of salvation.

To the youth of today Laura Vicuña is an example of purity, inspiration and courage. In the present day context, Laura Vicuña's life and death is very relevant to motivate our young people. As we celebrate her feast together with our young people this year, let us make it a special event for them.

THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2018

The theme for the 2018 January 18- 25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, "Your Right Hand, O Lord, Glorious in Power," is taken from the book of Exodus 15:6. Consistent with Christ's words, therefore, the only unity for which the Church and her faithful children can pray, is that which results from the conversion of those who are outside the One, True Fold of the Church. Thus, each of the days of the Chair of Unity Octave is dedicated to prayers for the conversion of some poor segment of mankind which is still "walking in darkness," imploring that they may open their hearts to God's grace, and return to the true Shepherd of their souls. This is the exercise of true charity. To imagine, as do the liberal ecumenists of our day, that we can achieve "unity" by pretending that those outside the Church do not stand in desperate need of conversion, is to deny the foundation of Christ's True Church, and to renounce the very reason for the heroic apostolic labours and martyrdom of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul

ST FRANCIS DE SALES

"You will catch more flies," St. Francis used to say, "with a spoonful of honey than with a hundred barrels of vinegar. Were there anything better or fairer on earth than gentleness, Jesus Christ would have taught it us ; and yet he has given us only two lessons to learn of him— meekness and humility of heart." St Francis De Sales, whom Don Bosco has given us as our Patron Saint inspires us to live the virtues of gentleness, and docility of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. As we celebrate his feast, let us ask him to help us to live the spirituality of Joy, Gentleness and Meekness.

REPUBLIC DAY

On 26th January India completes 69 years as a Democratic Nation. As we think of the state of our Motherland, we recall with nostalgic sentiments the struggle that the Father of our Nation and other brave and beloved leaders had gone through in order to attain freedom from the foreign rule. 69 years after India became a Republic the country is still suffering the scourge of inequality, discrimination and intolerance. The fundamental rights speak of Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, Right against Exploitation, Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Rights and Right to Constitutional Remedies. Lofty thoughts. But when it comes to

implementation part, the people of India realize with considerable pain that the rights promised are not theirs and within their each.

All talk of India making rapid economic progress and getting ready to be one of the three world economic powers in the foreseeable future is simply insulting when one looks at the poverty, injustice, discrimination and intolerance reigning supreme over the lives of people. The greatness of a country lies not in the wealth some in the country come to have but in the system in which the poorest of the poor is able to live in dignity, without any fear of discrimination and oppression. India has to go a long way to provide to its people the basic human conditions before the dream of the founding fathers of the free India can be realized. As we celebrate the Republic day, let us inculcate true patriotism in our young people. Let us educate them to live a life of love, generosity and self sacrifice, which alone can bring us inner joy, peace and contentment.

NOVENA AND FEAST OF DON BOSCO

On 22nd January we begin the Novena in preparation for the feast of St. John Bosco, our Father and Founder, Model and Guide. Don 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 Don 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. Let the celebration of the feast of our Father and Founder lead us to wholeness and Holiness.

----- COMMUNICATIONS -----

TRIENNIAL EVALUATION – WELCOME TO MOTHER AND COUNCILLORS

The PCI Triennial Evaluation will be held in the Provincial house, Kolkata from the 24th – 28th January, 2018. Besides Mother General, the General Councillors Sr. Alaide Deretti, Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukayil, Sr. Phyllis Neves and Sr. Runita Borja will be coming from Rome.

Along with me

Sr. Maria Goretti	: Delegate
Sr. Margaret Mathai	: Delegate
Mrs. G. B. Daizy	: Laity Representative, Teacher from Secunderabad
Miss. Anjana Teresa Joseph	: Youth Representative, Past pupil from Kunnamangalam

Will be participating in it. Let us continue to pray and offersacrifices for the fruitful outcome of the Triennial Evaluation and that it may serve as a channel of renewal for FMA India.

SILVER JUBILEE OF THE PROVINCE

On 3rd and 4th of February the Jubilee bells will ring joyously and jubilantly in our provincial house, announcing the marvels our loving God has done for us in the past 25 years in our province, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We have no words to express our thanks for His accompanying presence in the past two and a half decades. Dear sisters, let us spent these days in humble gratitude to God for his goodness to us. **Happy jubilee to all!**

HEARTY WELCOME TO SR.LUCY ROSE OZHUKAYIL

We extend a warm and loving welcome to dear Sr. Lucy Rose as she will be gracing the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of our province with her gracious presence. She will be with us in Bangalore from 29th January to 5th February. She has kindly accepted to animate our senior most and junior sisters on the 3rd February.

CONGRATULATIONS & ASSURANCE OF PRAYERS

To Fr. Januarius S. Sangma SDB who is appointed as the Twelfth Provincial of the Salesian Province of Guwahati and Fr. Paul Olphindro Lyngkot SDB as the 2nd provincial of the Province of Shillong. May they experience the loving presence of God in their mission of animation.

NATIONAL PEACE CONVENTION

Sr. Sophy Joseph and Sr. Shiji Abrahm will be participating in the National Peace Convention organized National Peace Movement from January 31st to February 2nd 2018 at Kochi.

ECONOMERS' MEETING

The local ecomomers will be having the annual closing of the accounts as per the following dates: 2 - 4 January for those of Kerala regions; 5 – 7 January for those of Andhra and Telangana regions and 17 -18 January for those of Karnataka region. May the Spirit of the Lord be with you to assist and guide you in this important task.

ANNUAL RETREAT FOR THE ANIMATORS

Annual retreat for the animators begins at 5.30 p.m. on 8th January 2018 and concludes on 15th morning. All are expected to be in the Provincial house by lunch. May these days be days of deep encounter with the Lord like the disciples of Emmaus. Let us accompany them with our prayers.

ANNUAL EVALUATION AND PLANNING

After the Silver Jubilee celebrations, on 5 & 6th there will be the evaluation ad planning for the new Academic year, by the Team members and the Animators of Communities. Kindly read, reflect and assimilate the Strenna and the message of the Holy Father Pope Francis for the celebration of the 51st World Day of Peace and become familiar with signs of the times and challenges of the province so that we may be able to plan effectively for our mission. Come prepared with your valuable contributions!!!

CONGRATULATIONS

- To Sr. Lizzie Abraham, who is appointed as the CWC (Child Welfare Committee) member in the district of Hassan.
- To Sr. Jacintha Lobo who has been appointed as the member of an Expert Committee of 8 members by Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR) to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of JJAct 2015 in the State.

We are proud of you dear sisters and wish you fruitful ministry on behalf of the vulnerable children and assure you of our prayers.

REQUEST FOR PRAYERS

- ✓ For the speedy and complete recovery of our dear sisters, relatives and benefactors who are aged and ailing
- ✓ For the Father of Sr. Shiny Karakkatt, Mother of Sr. Sheela Jacob and brother of Sr. Lizy C.D who is sick and is under treatment.

CONDOLENCES

- To Sr. Shobharani Pasala at the loss of her beloved mother Mrs. Pushpamma Pasala aged 62 on 10th December
- To Sr. Anita Joseph at the loss of her Paternal Uncle Mr. Kurian Kunnumpurath aged 83 on 18th December
- To Fr. Joyce and the confreres of Bangalore Province at the passing away of Fr. Oonupalathinkal Joseph aged 87 on 17th December
- To Sr. Ancy Mathew at the loss of her maternal Aunt Mrs. Rosamma aged 85 on 23rd December.
- To Sr. Nirmala Lazar and Sisters of Chennai Province at the demise of Sr. Maria Vittoria Devasahayam on 30th December, 2017.

May their souls through the mercy of God rest in peace and May the presence of God console the bereaved families.

May the New Year be one of increased riches of Grace...

Hearing His Voice more clearly
Knowing His Heart more deeply
Resting in His Love more fully
Trusting His Care more completely
Walking His Path more peacefully
Knowing His Presence more intimately
Blessed by His Goodness more abundantly.



Yours affectionately,

Sr. Celine Jacob

*Sr. Celine Jacob
Provincial.*