

**DEAR CONFRERES,**

Cordial Greetings...

As we stand on the threshold of a momentous occasion—the **Silver Jubilee of our Province**, the solemnity of the **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** coinciding with the **77th Independence Day of India**—our hearts swell with gratitude and hope. Just as Our Lady was assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven, our country too emerged from the shackles of colonial bondage to embrace its destiny as a sovereign nation. In the same spirit, our province, having completed 25 years of its journey, ascends to new heights of service and commitment.



Mary, the Queen of Heaven, is a beacon of

hope, faith, and perseverance. She is the epitome of courage and resilience, qualities that India displayed during its freedom struggle. Likewise, our province has weathered storms, embraced challenges, and emerged stronger, much like our Mother Mary. As we celebrate these triple anniversaries, let us draw inspiration from Mary's intercession, India's indomitable spirit, and our province's dedication to the young. May this auspicious occasion be a catalyst for renewed commitment to our mission of evangelization and nation-building. Let us

together embark on this joyous celebration, reflecting on the past, embracing the present, and envisioning a brighter future.

*Happy Feast of the Assumption, Independence Day, and Silver Jubilee!*

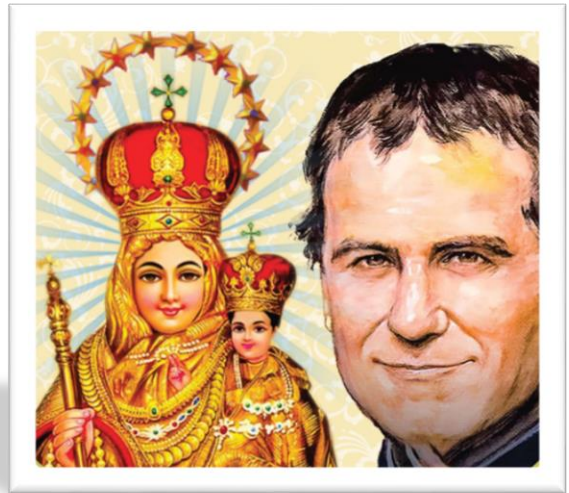
**INT Silver Jubilee Grand Finale: A Quarter Century of Transformational Impact**

In Salesian history, the Tiruchy Province, named after our beloved Annai Velankanni, stands as a vibrant thread to connect young people to Don Bosco. Born on 05 August 1999, with the audacious motto "To Make the Periphery Center," it embarked on a journey that would redefine the contours of the Salesian mission.

Twenty-five years later, as we celebrate this Silver Jubilee, we look back with profound gratitude at the seeds sown by the missionaries and other Salesians and the harvest reaped.

This province, once considered a periphery, has blossomed into a vibrant center of Salesian spirituality, education, and social action. The motto, a prophetic statement, has been the compass guiding our actions. We have ventured into the remotest corners, carrying the light of Christ and empowering the marginalized. Schools, colleges, vocational training centers, youth centers, Anbu Illams—these are not mere structures but living testimonies of our commitment to making the periphery the epicenter of hope and transformation.

Today, as we stand at this pivotal juncture, we renew our pledge to the young, the poor, and the excluded. The next twenty-five years beckon us to dream bigger, to love deeper, and to serve with greater passion. Let us, with renewed vigour, continue to make the periphery not just the center of our attention but the heart of our mission.



I extend my welcome on behalf of the confreres to Rev. Fr. Stefano Martoglio, the Vicar of the Rector Major, as our chief guest, Rev. Fr. Biju Michael, the Regional Councillor of South Asia, and all the Provincials of the South Asian Region as our special invitees, the provincials, priests, and sisters from various congregations and dioceses as our important guests for the silver jubilee grand finale on [05 August 2024](#).

We remember with love and affection the following [Jubilarians of the year](#):

Silver Jubilee of Ordination - Fr. Xavier Michael, Fr. Arockia Raj Mariasusai  
Fr. Jerard Britto, Fr. John Dharmanathan  
Fr. Justin Antony, Fr. Agilan Sarprasadam

Silver Jubilee of Profession - Fr. Arockiam Vedamuthu, Fr. Bharath Jeyaraj  
Br. Edwin Arockiadoss, Fr. Eugene Florence  
Fr. Herbert Amos, Fr. Jude Muthuselvan  
Fr. Mohan Christuraj, Fr. Vincent Arockia Xavier

### **Congratulations to Bishop Elect Mgr. Sagayaraj Thamburaj - Thanjavur Diocese**

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has appointed Fr. Sagayaraj Thamburaj (55), of the clergy of Tiruchirapalli, as Bishop of the Diocese of Thanjavur. This provision was made public in Rome on 13 July 2024. Fr. Sagayaraj Thamburaj was born on 14 March 1969 in Ayyampatty, in the Diocese of Tiruchirapalli. He was ordained a priest on 17 April 1996. At present, he

has been teaching as a professor at St. Paul's Seminary in Tiruchirapalli since 2023. On behalf of our province, we wish him all the best and support him with our prayers.

It was my privilege to work with him as a co-pastor in Dindigul, Marianathapuram parish, in 2000, immediately after my ordination. He was a pastor par excellence, thinking and working with people 24x7. I was greatly inspired by his hard work and commitment to uplift the Dalit people of that parish. That passion caught fire in me too, and many of my initiatives in Savariarpalayam flowed from his style of life. He is a person who radiates the message of the pope, 'the smell of the sheep' to the full, wherever he was and in whatever he did. May God bless him with good health and courage as he becomes a shepherd after the heart of Jesus.



### **SPCSA Council Meeting**

SPCSA (Salesian Provincial Conference of South Asia) council meeting will be held in [DBPH Kallukuzhy on 06, 07 August 2024](#). After joining us in the silver jubilee celebration, the Regional, the Secretary of SPCSA, and all the provincials will attend the meeting. We are glad to organize this conference in our province, and with a warm heart, I welcome them to our province. May they have a joyful experience of participating in the jubilee and meaningful sharing in the meeting.

### **Batch Meeting**

Our province is organizing the batch meeting for the perpetually professed confreres of our province this academic year. The first batch meeting will be held on [23 and 24 August 2024](#), at the animation centre of the Sacred Heart brothers in [Irudayakulam, near Tenkasi](#). The confreres who made their first [profession from 1992 to 2001](#) will attend the meeting. I invite all the confreres who belong to these batches to attend the meeting with enthusiasm and eagerness.

### **Initial Visit**

I have completed the initial visit to all our communities, along with the Economer. I thank all the leaders, sector heads, administrators, and the confreres for preparing all the documents needed for the initial visit with the utmost care for the welfare of the young people who are entrusted to our care. I wish and pray that all our efforts and planning may add joy and vigour to the apostolate and reap abundant fruits for all the beneficiaries through the intercession of our Blessed Mother and the guidance of Don Bosco.

### **PROGRAMME OF THE MONTH**

- 02 Fri Welcoming the Vicar @ Salem
- 02 Fri Province Silver Jubilee Celebration with YaR Children @ Moolakadu

03	Sat	Province Silver jubilee celebration with Young Salesians @ Yercaud
04	Sun	Province Silver jubilee celebration with Salesian Family @ Manikandam
05	Mon	Province Silver jubilee Grand Finale @ DB Thanjavur
06, 07	Tue, Wed	SPCSA Council @ DBPH Kallukuzhy
19	Mon	Provincial Council
23, 24	Fri, Sat	Batch Meet (1992 – 2001 Profession Batch) @ Irudayakulam
<i>Tri Monthly Recollection</i>		
<i>Quarterly Assessment of the Temporary Professed</i>		

## RECALLING EVENTS

### Leaders Meet

The meeting for all the Rectors and Leaders of our communities was held on 12 July 2024, at DBPH Kallukuzhy. There was a session on effective ways of forming and updating both SEPP (Salesian Educative Pastoral Project) and EPCC (Educative Pastoral Community Council) and a discussion on effective ways of executing the silver jubilee celebration. I extend my sincere gratitude to all the leaders for their attentive listening and active participation.

### Anniversary of the Deceased Salesians

27.08.2007 – [Fr. Rosario Perez](#) died at Madurai at the age of 46.

## CONDOLENCES...

On behalf of the province, I offer my sincere condolences,

- To the [Provincial and confreres of INK Province](#) at the demise of [Rev. Fr. Josin Thazhathette](#) (70) on 03 July 2024.
- To the [Provincial and confreres of INH Province](#) at the demise of [Rev. Fr. James Kudiyirippil](#) (80) on 05 July 2024.
- To the [Provincial and confreres of INM Province](#) at the demise of [Rev. Fr. John Joseph Kuruvachira](#) (84) on 30 July 2024.

*May the souls rest in peace!*

## COMMUNITY REFLECTION

### SILVER JUBILEE OF THE PROVINCE OF TIRUCHY

#### A Historical Overview

The establishment of the Salesian Province of Tiruchy in 1999, bifurcating from the Province of Chennai, was both timely and prophetic. However, its history is inseparably linked to the arrival of the first Salesians to India in 1906. It would further date back to 1876, when Pope Pius IX made a request to Don Bosco himself to send missionaries to India.

Before we delve any further, it would be better to keep in mind what history is all about, especially when we are talking about someone who has just attained 25 years of age. We can certainly celebrate one's prime youth. We can feel proud of whatever one has achieved, even during the years of one's maturation from childhood to adolescence and young adulthood. We can accept the failures and struggles of a young one as an essential part of growing up. We can perceive them as steppingstones for the future.

One way of looking at history is to see it as a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past. It is not about who did what, where, when, and why; instead, it is about seeing where we have arrived and where we should be heading. Jubilee, from a biblical perspective, is renewal. Let us begin where it all began.

### **The Roots**

In 1876, Pope Pius IX offered Don Bosco twelve vicariates in India, which were in urgent need of personnel. Don Bosco agreed to take up one of these and requested twenty months to prepare his men. Returning from Rome, he told his sons, "Those of you who wish to go to India have twenty months to get ready." A little later, he wrote to Fr. Cagliari in Argentina: "I really feel you must return to Europe in 1877 and make a trip to Ceylon in India. That place needs a Castelnuovo boy." He wrote to Cagliari again: "We shall accept the vicariate of Mangador (Mangalore) in India, and Fr. Cagliari will be the vicar apostolic." [BM XII,

621]. Despite these plans, it took another 30 years for the sons of Don Bosco to reach India. And when they did come in 1906, it was not to Ceylon or Mangalore but to Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu.



The Bishops of the Padroado diocese of Mylapore were instrumental in bringing the Salesians to India. Negotiations were

started as early as 1896 by Msgr. Antonio de Souza Barroso, who had heard that it was Don Bosco's desire to send the Salesians to India. His successor, Rt. Rev. Teutonio de Castro, had a personal reason to pursue this cause. As a young seminarian, he was an ardent admirer of Don Bosco and, after his ordination, traveled twice to Turin to meet the saint. Blessing him and his future work, Don Bosco told him, "You will do much good."

After protracted negotiations, the first group of Salesian missionaries to India landed in Bombay on January 6, 1906, under the leadership of Fr. George Tomatis. With him were two other priests, one brother, a scholastic, and an aspirant. Traveling by train from Bombay, they reached Thanjavur on January 14, 1906.

At Thanjavur, the new missionaries began their work with six orphans at St. Francis Xavier's Orphanage. The numbers soon rose steadily, until they reached 800 in 1928. Vocations were steady. The first Indian boy to join was Karunal, who was sent to Italy in 1907 as an aspirant. From Italy, he proceeded to Portugal for his novitiate. Unfortunately, he fell ill and died in Lisbon in 1909. Two others opted to follow Don Bosco. They were Ignatius Muthu and Arulsamy, both of whom were also sent to Italy in 1908 and later proceeded to Portugal for the novitiate. They professed in 1911. Ignatius Muthu was ordained a priest in Mylapore in 1916.

In 1907, Fr. Ernest Vigneron, one of the pioneers, passed away after surgery in 1908, and Fr. Eugene Mederlet, originally destined for China, substituted him. In 1909, Fr. Tomatis left Thanjavur under the care of Fr. Mederlet and went to Mylapore to start the second foundation in India: The San Thome Orphanage.



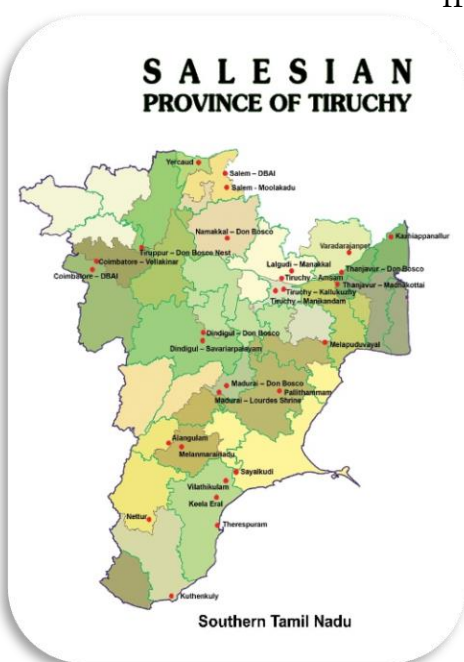
Meanwhile, the Holy See was pressing the Salesians of Don Bosco to take up the vast mission of Assam. It was accepted on July 21, 1921. Each European province was requested to send volunteers for the Assam Mission. Two priests each from Italy, Spain, and France were accepted, and Fr. Louis Mathias, a French Salesian then working in Sicily as Rector of the Salesian House of Catania, was chosen as their leader. Five brothers from Italy and Spain were included in the pioneering group at the special request of Fr. Mathias. He had ample opportunity to be briefed at length on the Assam mission in his meeting with Msgr. Christopher Becker, a Salvatorian and the first Prefect Apostolic of Assam, who is considered the real pioneer of the Assam mission. They reached Shillong on January 13, 1922. Barely three weeks later, on February 5, they began work in various centres: four going to Raliang, two to Guwahati, and four with Fr. Mathias, who on December 15, 1922, was appointed the Prefect Apostolic of Assam.

From 1906 to 1912, the Salesians in India were part of the province of Portugal. From 1912 to 1923, they were under the care of the Roman province of St. Peter. In 1923, a Visitatoria (Vice Province) was formed with Mgr. Louis Mathias as superior. The new Visitatoria (Vice

Province), headquartered at Shillong and under the patronage of St. Thomas the apostle, consisted of all the Salesian works in northeast India and those of Thanjavur and Mylapore, in the south.

Despite the lack of personnel and means, the work progressed rapidly. In less than a year, six centres were opened. In 1925, a novitiate was started in Shillong, and novices were brought from Europe to be trained along with their Indian counterparts. In 1925, they also assumed charge of the Catholic Orphan Press and the Cathedral Parish of Calcutta, and they also started the new mission of Jowai.

On May 18, 1926, the Visitatoria (Vice Province) of India was made into the Province of India, with Fr. Mathias as Provincial. The province, with headquarters at Shillong, extended from the northeast of India to Thanjavur, a distance of some 4,000 km.



In the 1920s, while work progressed rapidly in the northeast, those in the south were passing through a stage of uncertainty and indecision. As early as 1920, Fr. Albera, the then Rector Major, decided to withdraw the Salesians from Thanjavur and Mylapore in deference to Rome taking over the vast mission of Assam. This decision was reversed following protestations and pleas from the confreres in the south as well as the Bishop of Mylapore.

Again, in 1922, Turin decided to recall the Salesians from Mylapore. This decision, too, was reversed due to urgent entreaties from Mylapore. The relationship between the Salesians and the diocese began to deteriorate.

There was great anxiety and uncertainty regarding the continuation of their work. In both places, Salesians were merely administrators of diocesan property, and the attitude of the Vicar General, Msgr. Texeira, did not favour expansion or development.

In 1927, Fr. Peter Ricaldone visited Thanjavur and Mylapore to apprise himself of the situation. He presented the Vicar General, Msgr. Texeira, with a report outlining the conditions under which the Salesians would continue to work in the diocese. As the diocese was in no mood to accept his proposal, it was decided to withdraw the Salesians from the diocese of Mylapore with effect from May 1, 1928.

Leaving Mylapore and Thanjavur was painful, but it paved the way for further expansion of Salesian works in the south. After handing over the San Thome orphanage to the diocese, Fr. Hauber and Fr. Dehlert went to Bombay to open a new house there. Fr. Mederlet and

four others went to Vellore in May 1928 to start a new presence in North Arcot. This district was offered to the Salesians by the Archbishop of Pondicherry during the visit of Fr. Ricaldone in 1927. In compensation for what the Salesians left behind at Thanjavur and Mylapore, the diocese gave them the ancient sanctuary of Our Lady of Happy Voyage at Bandel in West Bengal. The Salesians took charge on September 1, 1928.

In the reorganization of the dioceses, following double jurisdiction in the missions, by the Papal Bull *Ad Maius Religionis Incrementum* of July 3, 1928, North Arcot was joined to the archdiocese of Madras, which was entrusted to the Salesians, and Fr. Mederlet was nominated its Archbishop.

In recognition of the substantial progress that was made, the Holy See raised Shillong to the status of a diocese in 1934 and appointed Msgr. Mathias as its first bishop. Fr. Vincent Scuderi took his place as Provincial of North India.

In 1934, the Salesian Province of India was divided into two provinces: the Province of North India, with headquarters at Shillong (which later shifted to Calcutta), and the Province of South India, with St. Thomas the Apostle as its patron, Fr. Cinato as Provincial, and headquarters at Vellore (which later shifted to Madras).

Msgr. Mathias was appointed Bishop of Shillong in 1934, while Msgr. Stephen Ferrando took over as Bishop of Krishnagar. On December 21, 1934, Archbishop Mederlet of Madras passed away while hearing confessions at Pallikonda. Msgr. Mathias was then transferred to the See of Madras, which he governed, faithful to his motto "Dare and Hope," from 1935 to 1965.



Bishop Louis Mathias of Shillong was transferred to Madras as the new Archbishop. During his thirty years in Madras, he proved to be one of the most energetic bishops in India. Whenever the interests of the Church were under attack from governments in any part of India, he raised his voice in protest, often with success. Among the numerous institutions established by him, the Major Seminary at Poonamallee and the Catholic Centre at Madras stand out prominently.

The arrival and expansion of the Salesian presence in India can thus be summarized in the following lines: The Salesians arrived at Thanjavur (Tanjore) in India in 1906. In 1923, the



Vice Province of India (Visitatoria) was formed, with its headquarters in Shillong. In 1926, the Province of India was formed, and Shillong continued to be its base.

In 1934, the Province of India, with its base in Shillong, was divided. The Province of North India, one of the sub-divisions, retained Shillong as its provincial house for the first 11 years of its inception. Later, in 1937, the Provincial House was shifted to Calcutta (Kolkata). The other sub-division was the Province of South India, with its Provincial House in Madras (Chennai).

The Salesian Province of Bombay (Mumbai) was carved out of the Province of South India in 1972. A little later, in 1979, the Bangalore (Bengaluru) province was formed out of the Province of South India. In 1992, the Province of Hyderabad was carved out of the Bangalore Province. The Province of South India once again saw the division of the Province of Tiruchy (Tiruchirapalli) in 1999. The Province of Bombay was further divided in 2004 with the Konkan Vice Province; today, the Panjim Province comes into being. The Province of South India saw the erection of the Vice Province of Sri Lanka in 2004.

Today, the Salesians in the South Asia Region have their presence in 11 Provinces and 1 Vice Province: Calcutta (Kolkata) (INC) 1934, Madras (Chennai) (INM) 1934, Guwahati (ING) 1959, Bombay (Mumbai) (INB) 1972, Bangalore (Bengaluru) (INK) 1979, Dimapur (IND) 1981, Hyderabad (INH) 1992, New Delhi (INN) 1997, Tiruchy (INT) 1999, Panjim (INP) 2004, Shillong (INS) 2012, and 1 Vice-Province of Sri Lanka (LKC) 2004. While we are growing today in India, we are approximating 2,700 Salesian priests and brothers, 1,300 Salesian Sisters, 27,000 Salesian Cooperators, and over 50,000 registered Past Pupils.

### **The Birth of Tiruchy Province**

During the 1992 Provincial Chapter held at the Citadel, Chennai, Fr. Vincent Durairaj, who was the then Provincial of Chennai, presented in his report the need for the division of the province. He expressed his difficulties in the animation and administration of the province,



which had at that time 49 places of apostolate and 375 confreres. His successor, Fr. Camillus Fernando, too, had repeatedly voiced the same.

A few years later, a consultation was carried out in this regard during the time of Fr. Camillus Fernando, and the report was submitted to the General

Council. The Rector Major then asked the Province to launch the preparatory work for the eventual division of the INM Province and the erection of the new circumscription. Accordingly, on September 08, 1997, the new delegation of Tiruchy came into being, with Fr. James Theophillus as the Provincial Delegate. It had 18 places of apostolate.

In February 1999, when the Regional Superior, Rev. Fr. Joachim D'Souza, came for the consultation of the new provincial, he announced that the Chennai Province would be divided and initiated the consultation for two Provincials. On March 25, 1999, the General Council officially approved the division of the Chennai Province. The Province of Tiruchy was formed with Tiruchy as its headquarters. Its territory consisted of the dioceses of Coimbatore, Kottar, Kumbakonam, Madurai, Palayamkottai, Salem, Sivagangai, Tanjore, Tiruchirapalli, and Thoothukudi. The Latin diocese of Trivandrum had a few presences in the state of Tamil Nadu, located within the territory of the province. There were three dioceses belonging to the Syrian Rite: two of Malabar and one of Malankara. The new Province had 148 confreres, 16 novices, and 18 places of apostolate to begin with. Though the Chennai Province was divided, it was said that the cooperation and collaboration between the two provinces would continue in as many ways as possible.



On August 05, 1999, the official inauguration of the Tiruchy Province took place. Fr. James Theophilus was installed by Fr. Joachim D'Souza as its first Provincial. The new provincial house in Manikandam, Tiruchy, was officially blessed and inaugurated on February 24, 2000. Our Lady of Velankanni, locally known as *Arockia Annai* (Mother of Good Health), was chosen as the Patroness of the Province. Interestingly, this shrine called the 'Lourdes of the East' comes under the same Thanjavur Diocese, where the first Salesians began their mission in India.

### **Vision of Tiruchy province**

"We, the Salesians of the Province of Annai Velankanni-Trichy, wish to realize the Kingdom of God, following the footsteps of Christ. In keeping with the *charism* of Don Bosco, we educate and evangelize the young together with the members of the Salesian family, lay collaborators, and all those who wish to join us in this endeavour. By becoming the agents of empowerment and social transformation, we will strive to become signs and bearers of God's love to all, especially the marginalized and the rural poor youth in the southern part of Tamil Nadu."

### **Growth in the Sectors in 25 years**

The Province has 15 educational institutions, both academic and technical, an increase from 12 to 15. The parish sector has 11 parishes, a growth from eight to eleven. In the formation sector, there are four houses. The PHS house in Nettur is an addition. In the YAR sector, there are five houses. In addition, there is hostel service for the tribal children of Yercaud at the Retreat.

## Commissions and Departments

Provincial commissions include Formation and Missionary Animation. The Youth Ministry Commissions include: Academic Education, Higher Education, Technical Education, Parishes, Young at Risk, Rural Ministry, and Migrant Ministry. The Provincial Departments are: Catechetics, Counseling Services, De-Addiction Ministry, Career Guidance and Job Placement, Scouts and Guides, and Social Communication.

## On the achievements and the challenges of INT

The achievements and success stories are given in great detail under each Salesian presence. However, here are some general highlights.

- ✓ We have grown from just 19 presences to 33 presences.
- ✓ Our efforts to consolidate our communities with regard to mission developments, accommodation facilities, and numerical consistency have been encouraging.
- ✓ We have a well-defined youth ministry model in the province.
- ✓ We have policies for almost all the sectors and departments, approved by the Provincial Chapters.
- ✓ Our efforts to standardize our education, both academic and technical, have been regular, involving external experts.
- ✓ We have been pioneers in reaching out to those really deserving, such as HIV-infected and affected, young prisoners, Sri Lankan refugees, youth addicted to alcohol and drugs, students needing counseling, communities needing eco-awareness, and educated youth in need of special coaching in English.
- ✓ New institutions developed to serve the rural young: Don Bosco Arts and Science College at Keela Eral; Polytechnic Colleges at Kuthenkuly and Kazhiappanallur; Media Institute at Manikandam; and CBSE Schools.
- ✓ Our rural ministry for children, women, and youth has been expanding.
- ✓ In the rural ministry, numerous social interventions have been realized. Vembu of Vilathikulam, Cauveri Development Office, Don Bosco Youth Village of Keeranur, and the Organic Farm of Chengipatty are some of them.
- ✓ Our participation in relief works during natural disasters such as Tsunami, Gaja cyclone, and recent floods in southern districts has been tremendous.

Our province has considerably served the Generalate and the South Asian Region, taking on responsibilities both at the global and regional levels.

## Our Vision for Future of INT

- Building up our communities to be more rooted in Salesian *charism* and Salesian identity.
- Motivating our confreres to be more spiritually centered and to have a mystical outlook.
- Develop more new initiatives for the new types of poverty in southern Tamil Nadu.

- Strengthening our communities to be more passionate about working for the young.
- Greater quality in fraternal life is marked by sincerity and genuine love.

The Province of Tiruchy began with a clear mandate to be closer to the rural poor and work for them. It has certainly remained faithful to this commitment. In these first 25 years, the Province has opened new frontiers and reached out to the most neglected youth. It has ventured into higher education both academically and technically. It has miles to go before consolidating this budding mission. This Jubilee is a moment of renewal, to take stock and to plan all for the glory of God and carry forward the legacy of Don Bosco. In this connection, the scientific study made on the province recently and the findings presented at a symposium in Tiruchy are worth mentioning. This is a time to renew one's enthusiasm. It is also an opportune moment for the Province to rededicate itself to the rural poor.

Prayerful best wishes to all in the Family,

Yours Affectionately in Don Bosco



Fr. Agilan Sarprasadam SDB



Provincial – Salesian Province of Tiruchy, INT.



**Maria Assumpta  
Pray for us!**