



## PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

DECEMBER 2024

### DEAR CONFRERES,

Cordial Greetings...

As the joyous season of Christmas approaches, I extend my warmest greetings and heartfelt wishes for a blessed and peaceful Advent. May this sacred time be filled with spiritual renewal, joy, and a profound sense of God's love. Christmas is a time to commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of our hope and salvation. It is an opportunity to reflect on the profound significance of His incarnation and to renew our commitment to His teachings. Let us embrace the true spirit of Christmas, which is characterized by love, compassion, and service to others. During this festive season, let us reach out to those who are less fortunate and share the joy of Christmas with them. We can do this by organizing various initiatives. Let us spread the joy of Christmas through melodious carols, bringing cheer to the hearts of our young people and the community. Let us celebrate Christmas with festive Masses, cultural programs, and community gatherings, fostering a sense of belonging and togetherness. Let us organize charity drives and outreach programs to support the needy and marginalized, embodying the spirit of giving and sharing.



As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, let us take time for personal reflection and spiritual renewal. We can do this through prayer, meditation, and the sacraments. Let us also strengthen our commitment to our Salesian vocation and mission. May the blessings of the Christmas season fill your hearts with joy and peace. Let us celebrate this sacred time with gratitude and renewed hope. [I wish you all dear confreres and Salesian family members a Merry Christmas.](#)

### Salesian Brothers Day

Salesian Brothers, the unsung heroes of our Congregation, play an indispensable role in the mission of Don Bosco. Their selfless service, often behind the scenes, is the bedrock of our educational and pastoral work. On this special occasion of Salesian Brothers Day on [05 December](#), let us take a moment to acknowledge and appreciate their invaluable contributions. Salesian Brothers are more than just educators; they are mentors, friends, and

spiritual guides. They embody the Salesian charism through their practical wisdom, silent service, fraternal love, and spiritual depth. On this special day, let us express our gratitude to our Salesian Brothers. Let us celebrate Salesian Brothers Day with gratitude and renewed commitment to our mission. May we all strive to emulate the spirit of service and dedication exemplified by our beloved Salesian Brothers. We wish all the five Salesian Brothers (Br. George, Br. Arockiadoss, Br. Sagayaraj, Br. Chinnapparaj, and Br. Edwin) of our province a joyous feast. May God grant them all good health and happiness.

### **Consultation for Vice Provincial, Council Members and Rectors**

I am making consultation for the appointment of the Vice Provincial and two Council Members. Fr. Xavier Michael, the vice provincial and Fr. Arul Maran, a council member are completing the term of office on 24 May 2025. Fr. Ferrington Poobalarayen who had come to our province for a short break is returning to the missions in Africa. I am making consultation also for the appointment of the Rectors who are completing the term of office on 24 May 2025. The list is given below:

S. No.	Name	Period	Place	Completing
1.	P John Barnabas	2019 - 2025	Keeranur	Two Terms
2.	P Vimalan Santhiyagu	2022 - 2025	Alangulam	One Term
3.	P Justin Sengol	2022 - 2025	Savariarpalayam	One Term
4.	P Jude Muthuselvan	2022 - 2025	Manakkal	One Term
5.	P Joe Augustine	2022 - 2025	Surya Nagar	One Term
6.	P Arul Maran	2022 - 2025	Yercaud	One Term
7.	P Ferrington Poobalarayen	2021 - 2025	Madhakottai	Four Years

Since it is a matter of importance for our Province, I request the sincere and responsible cooperation of all our confreres so that suitable confreres are chosen for the respective roles. Kindly suggest names after prayer and due reflection. You are recommended to [send the forms to me directly by email on or before 20 December 2024](#). Those who do not have access to email can send in sealed envelopes. Kindly send the form after saving the file in your name so that it is easy for consolidation.

*Together with this circular, I am attaching the form for the consultation process.*

### **SYMFEST 2024: A Mega Four-Day Youth Gathering**

SYMFEST 2024, a monumental four-day youth event for our South Asian region, is set to take place at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, from [December 29th, 2024, to January 1st, 2025](#). This significant gathering will bring together approximately 1,500 young people, aged between 18 and 30, from 12 Salesian provinces of the region and 7 FMA provinces. The theme for SYMFEST 2024 is [‘Young People as Agents of Change: Anchored in Hope.’](#) The event will feature sessions on decision-making, media, national aspirations, ecology, and cultural exchange.

Our Youth Ministry team has provided detailed information about the event schedule and various competitions. Over 120 young people from our province will be participating in this monumental event. It promises to be a memorable experience, leaving a lasting impact on all participants. Thus, it is crucial that we seize this opportunity to offer our young people this rare and impactful experience. I strongly urge all communities to ensure the participation of your local youth in this wonderful event. As SYMFEST will replace the Youth Mela this year, I request all youth service coordinators to accompany the youth and actively participate in SYMFEST 2024. Additionally, I request the Rectors and Leaders to encourage the participation of all young Salesians.

### **Diaconate Ministry**

The four deacons from Don Bosco Theological College, Chennai will have diaconate ministry in the north India from November 2024 onwards and they will reach the province in April 2025. The deacons from Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore will be available from 29 November to 20 April 2025 for their diaconate ministry. They are assigned to the following parishes:

1. Dn. Arul Sebastian - Therespuram
2. Dn. Ajilash Dhas - K. Pudur

We wish them all the best that they may have enriching experiences in the diaconate ministry, a time specially dedicated to service and proclamation of the Word.

### **PROGRAMME OF THE MONTH**

05	Thu	Salesian Brothers Day
21	Sat	Provincial Council
25	Wed	Christmas
29-01	Sun-Wed	SYMFEST

### **RECALLING EVENTS**

**The Batch Meeting** for those who professed before 1991 was held in Divine Word Centre at Vadipatti on 8th and 9th November 2024. Fr. Arul Ambrose from Pallayamkottai diocese animated on "Appropriate youth ministry for present generation" and Fr. Selvakumar animated on "Use of AI tools in our youth ministry". Sr. T. Arockiamary from the congregation of Franciscan Sisters of St. Aloysius Gonzaga presented the history of their congregation and their different apostolates in educational ministries, social action and social work for the down trodden. Fr. John Dharmanathan presented the scientific study of our province and moderated the assembly of Confreres. I sincerely thank Fr. Xavier Michael, the vice provincial of the province for organizing all the batch meeting for this year contacting appropriate people for animation and arranging different places for accommodation.

**Animation on Spiritual Direction for Leaders** was held from 19 to 23 November 2024 in Don Bosco, Manikandam. The animation consisted of various theories, techniques and practical sessions related to spiritual direction. I thank all the leaders for their valuable presence and active participation in all the sessions. I extend my sincere thanks to Fr. Wilson OFM Cap who animated the entire programme with his vast knowledge and expertise. I also thank the rector and community of DB Manikandam for hosting the animation with wonderful hospitality.

**All Commissions and Departments** of the province gathered for the mid-year evaluation in Don Bosco Provincial House, Tiruchy on 30 November 2024. I thank all the heads and members of Commissions and Departments for your valuable participation and the presentation of the report with proper details and methodology. I thank Fr. Charles Joseph, the youth ministry delegate of the province for coordinating the whole day programme.

**Domestic Staff Tour to Goa:** As we are in the silver jubilee year of our province, to share our token of love for the domestic staff who are working in our province, a two-day tour to Goa was organized on November 22 and 23, 2024. A total of 60 staff members joined the tour. They departed from Tiruchy on 21 morning, traveling to Chennai by train and then to Goa by air. Similarly, they returned to Tiruchy on 24 morning. They were also fortunate to have a closer look at the relic of St. Francis Xavier, which is exposed once every ten years. After the trip, many sent notes of thanks, expressing their gratitude and enjoyment of the experience. May God bless them all.

**Higher Education Institutions' Meet (DBHEI):** The Annual General Meeting of the Don Bosco Higher Education Institutions in India (DBHEI) was held from 15th to 17th November 2023 at Salesian College, Sonada. 73 representatives from 57 Salesian institutions of higher education in India participated. Fr Rajadevan Pushpanathan, Provincial Delegate for Higher Education, Fr. Peter Arockiaraj and Fr. Prince Raja were the representatives from our province. The meeting focused on innovation in higher education, including leadership, partnerships, AI integration, industry-academia collaboration, international exposure, and entrepreneurship. Fr. George Thadathil SDB, the General Coordinator of Salesian Institutions of Higher Education (IUS), Rome also addressed the meeting and mentioned about the multifold opportunities that are available to us in the field of higher education today. We congratulate our confrere Fr. Prince Raja who has been elected as the executive member of DBHEI.

**National Catholic Media Conference** – The Illuminaire 2024 conference was held on November 23-24 at St. John's Medical College, Bangalore. Organized by the Salesian Social Communication Sector (Rome), BOSCOM India, and the Vatican Dicastery for Communication, the event aimed to equip Catholic leaders with digital skills to effectively serve the Church's mission in the digital age. Around 300 priests and religious from India attended, including Fr. Arockia Selvakumar, Provincial Delegate for Social Communication,



and Fr. Francis Britto from our province. Key speakers included Dr Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication; Fr Gildásio Mendes, General Councillor for Social Communication; Mr Derek O'Brien, member of Parliament; and Fr Cedric Prakash SJ, renowned human rights and social justice activist. The conference covered topics such as digital ministry, social media, AI, and digital wellness. It provided valuable insights and practical guidance for religious leaders to navigate the digital landscape and leverage technology for evangelization.

**Don Bosco Past Pupils AGM:** The association of the past pupils of Don Bosco, Tiruchy provincial federation had its annual general body meeting at Don Bosco College of Arts and Science, Keela Eral on 24 November 2024. There were altogether seventy-five members from eleven past pupils local units of our presences who took part in the meeting. It is an annual event wherein the past pupils come together at the province level to express their joy, gratitude, connect, discuss and evaluate their activities and to plan for the future course of action. Thanks to Fr. Henry Dominic, provincial delegate for past pupils for coordinating the meeting and the Rector and community of Keela Eral for hosting the meeting.

### **CONDOLENCES...**

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

To the [Provincial and the confreres of INB Province](#) at the demise of [Rev. Fr. Vincent Rasquinha SDB \(78\)](#) on 30 November 2024 at Andheri.

To the [Provincial and sisters of the province of FMA INM](#) at the demise of [Rev. Sr Peenikkaparamban Elizabeth FMA](#) on 29 November 2024 at Auxilium College, Katpadi.

*May the souls rest in peace!*

### **COMMUNITY REFLECTION**

#### **SILVER JUBILEE OF THE PROVINCE OF TIRUCHY – WAY FORWARD**

##### **3. Credibility and Witnessing Life**

The whole world admires Pope Francis for his simplicity of life and authenticity of character. There is so much talked about him, and many books are written about his qualities and his style of life. What is special about him, as I see him, is his credibility. A man who speaks what he believes and lives what he believes, and therefore there is so much oneness with his words and life.

Many wondered why he took the name Francis. He, being a Jesuit, should have decided to take the name of Ignatius. I guess he wanted to be more inclusive. Traditionally, many of the popes were following the Benedictine spirituality, giving more importance to spirituality and spiritual outlook of life. Descending from the Jesuit tradition, Pope Francis was fully aware of the Ignatian spirituality, which is popular all over the world, and there are so many following it faithfully. But somehow the name Francis was very attractive to

the Pope. I believe Saint Francis was a person who was very inclusive. He had a strong power of authority in humility. He could free his life from everything and yet possess everything in life. He had nothing for him, and yet he was a happy and fulfilled person.



Hence, he attracted many followers. He could call the sun his brother and the moon his sister. He was a lover of nature, and he went beyond the limits of humanity to become a being of the universe. That's the reason why the Pope took the name Francis.

All of us are aware of the words spoken by the Pope when he was asked to describe himself when he became the Pope by the interviewers. He said humbly, "I am a sinner and in need of forgiveness." In a world where he is considered the number one spiritual leader, his humble words became so powerful and profound that he proved his character as a good leader.

Humility is the first requisite for credibility. Pope Francis took to the balcony with the word "Bishop" crossing his lips more than "pope" or "pontiff." He referred to himself first as the Bishop of Rome and to Benedict XVI not as a retired pope but as an emeritus bishop. There was something genuine about the way he referred to the journey of faith as one that he and the faithful take together in love and trust. He asked for help and the favour of a prayer — but this wasn't the standard "pray for me." Pope Francis bowed to receive that prayer from the people of God he now serves. He abandoned the palace of the Popes and decided to live in a simple apartment. It is said even as an archbishop, he lived in a small apartment. He loves to visit the poor and the abandoned, and that's why he could advise the shepherds to love the smell of the sheep. He fell on his knees and kissed the feet of the leaders so that there could be peace in the world. This genuine gesture inspired the whole world, and certainly Pope Francis is a living saint.

My dear confreres, all of us need to become humble and credible as Salesians living amidst the young people. They are looking for models and witnesses. What we can offer to them is not something outside of us but ourselves and our witnessing lives. After going around the province and getting to know more and more about our confreres, the situation of our houses, and the mindset of people in our region, I come to understand that many people believe that authority is power or at least those who are in authority are powerful. It's not true. The real power is humility. Great people have always been humble till the end of their lives. God lifts the lowly.



We had the batch meetings this year, and it's surprising to hear the topic on the appointment of leaders again and again. All of us know well that we don't need to be a leader or hold some portfolio to do good. The ability to do good is innate in everyone. That goodness grows gradually and becomes more visible when someone assumes responsibility. But all those who are in power need not possess that goodness. That's why I say seeking power and position disqualifies the person from assuming that role or responsibility, because they are not looking for service but want to enjoy authority. Thus, they are selfish in their intention. As long as people are selfish and cozy, they can never be oriented towards goodness or service. Generosity will not be in their dictionary. We must remember the gospel that motivates us: "I came to serve and not be served." Let us follow the example of Pope Francis in our lives. Let us become credible and authentic in our religious life. Let our witnessing life move the hearts of young people towards the newborn Jesus.

Prayerful best wishes to all in the Family,

Yours Affectionately in Don Bosco



Fr. Agilan Sarprasadam SDB  
Provincial – Salesian Province of Tiruchy, INT.

