

DEAR CONFRERES,

Cordial Greetings...

As we step into the vibrant panorama of a new year, I invite you all to pause and reflect on the blessings that have graced our journey in the past year. Let us give thanks for the countless opportunities to serve, for the continued support of our benefactors, and for the tenacity and dedication of our Salesian family. The past year was a momentous one as we celebrated the Silver Jubilee of our Province. It was a time of profound gratitude for the countless lives touched by our Salesian mission over the past 25 years. We celebrated the achievements of our alumni, the dedication of our educators, and the unwavering support of our benefactors.



Building upon the legacy of the past 25 years, we now look forward to the future with renewed hope and enthusiasm. Let us renew our commitment to the ideals of Don Bosco, to nurture the young, to inspire hope, and to build a more just and compassionate world. May the blessings of God be upon us all as we embark on this new year. [Sending you all the best wishes for a joyful and glorious 2025.](#)

Feast of our Patron and Founder



As Salesians, we are blessed to have two extraordinary saints: [St. Francis de Sales](#), the gentle and persuasive Doctor of the Church, whose feast we celebrate on [24 January](#) and [St. John Bosco](#), the tireless advocate for the young, whose feast we celebrate on [31 January](#). St. Francis de Sales as a model of gentleness and persuasive holiness, reminds us of the importance of love, patience, and understanding in our ministry. He teaches us the art of spiritual direction, guiding souls with kindness and wisdom. Don Bosco, our beloved Founder, dedicated his life to serving the needs of the young, particularly the poor and abandoned. His innovative methods of education, combining faith, reason, and loving kindness, continue to inspire us today.

On these feast days, let us reflect on the lives and legacies of these two great giants of joyful spirituality. Let us strive to emulate their virtues in our own lives and

ministries. Let us renew our commitment to serving the young with love, compassion, and dedication, following the footsteps of our beloved saints.

Pongal – A Harvest of Blessings

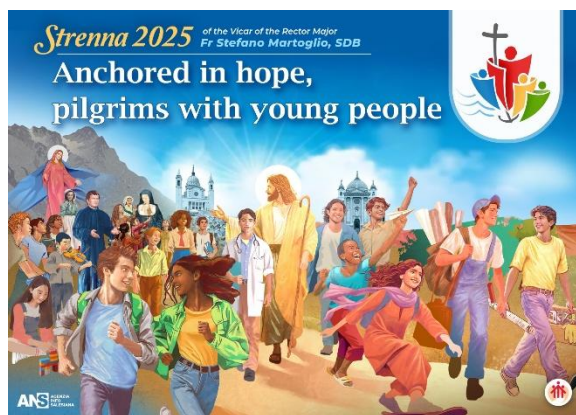


Pongal, the vibrant harvest festival of Tamil Nadu, is a time for joy, gratitude, and celebration. It is a time to express our gratitude to Mother Nature for her bountiful blessings and to share our joy with family and friends. This festival, deeply rooted in our cultural heritage, reminds us of the importance of hard work, flexibility, and the interconnectedness of all beings. It is a time to appreciate the efforts of our farmers and to recognize the significance of agriculture in sustaining our lives. Let us use this festive occasion to strengthen our bonds with one another and to extend a helping hand to those in need. May

the spirit of Pongal – joy, gratitude, and togetherness – fill our hearts and homes.

Dissemination of Strenna 2025

The 2025 Strenna for the Salesian Family is "Anchored in hope, pilgrims with young people." It connects the 2025 Jubilee Year of the Church and the 150th anniversary of the first Salesian missionary expedition. The Strenna explores the theological meaning of hope, describing it as a virtue essential for facing challenges and promoting the future. It encourages Salesians to be pilgrims with young people, guiding them on a journey of faith and hope.



The dissemination of the Strenna will be held for all the leaders of our communities on [Saturday, January 4, 2025, at Don Bosco Provincial House, Kallukuzhy](#). Subsequently, the leaders will organize a day of animation on the Strenna within their respective Salesian presences, inviting all members of the Salesian Family and young people from the neighbourhood to participate before February 15, 2025. To foster a greater sense of fraternity and sharing, nearby communities are encouraged to consider holding the Strenna presentation together.

Provincial Community Day and Silver Jubilee Way Forward

The Provincial Community Day for this year will be held on [January 18, 2025, at Savariarpalayam](#). Following lunch, we will have an animation and discussion focusing on the silver jubilee way forward, for our province. This day will be a time for our province to gather, express gratitude to the Lord for the blessings and graces bestowed upon us and seek His continued guidance and support in our mission to save young souls.

On this occasion, we will also honour the following jubilarians:

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

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

I invite you, dear confreres, members of the Salesian Family, and lay mission partners, to join us in this celebration. Let us cherish our unity, express our deep sense of belonging to the Province, articulate our appreciation for each other, and renew our fidelity to the young. The program will commence with the Holy Eucharist at 9:30 am.

The details of the program will be informed to the communities by the Vice Provincial. I encourage all communities to ensure loving participation in this Salesian family event, including young Salesians, members of the Salesian Family, and young people.

Contribution for Provincial Community Day

The contribution from all communities this year will be directed towards Savariarpalayam mission for the construction of four additional rooms in the Salesian residence on the first floor above the portico and it will be ready for use by May 2025. As per the decision made during the provincial chapter and reiterated during the initial visit, each house is required to contribute five percent of its annual budget to the province. The Provincial Community Day will serve as the designated occasion for making this contribution annually. These funds will be utilized for the development of a specific mission within the province each year. I urge all leaders and administrators to joyfully and generously contribute. We have received much and let us give much.

Annual Retreat

The province is planning to hold five retreats this year: four as general patronage and one specifically for leaders. The Vice Provincial has already communicated the retreat details to all Rectors and Community Leaders. I strongly urge all Rectors and Leaders to ensure that every member of their respective communities participates in this essential annual spiritual renewal. Let me remind you that even if you make a retreat of your own choice outside the province or animate retreats for others, making a retreat in the province is a must and I am sure making more retreats will only make us more holy.

PROGRAMME OF THE MONTH

04 Sat Strenna Presentation for Leaders @ DBPH
10 Fri Provincial Council
11-16 Sat-Thu Retreat – General Patronage I @ Manikandam

18 Sat Provincial Community Day, Silver Jubilee Way Forward @ Savariarpalayam
31 Fri Feast of Don Bosco

RECALLING EVENTS

SYMFEST 2024, held at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, from December 29th to January 1, 2025, was a resounding success, achieved through the collaborative efforts of Salesians, young people, and volunteers. The entire program was meticulously planned, incorporating essential inputs, spiritual moments, and engaging recreational activities, including cultural programs and competitions. Approximately 1800 young people participated in this vibrant gathering. I extend my sincere appreciation to Fr. Don Bosco Lourdusamy, the Provincial in charge of DBYA of South Asia, Fr. Lepcha Patrick, the South Asia Delegate for Youth Ministry, all Youth Ministry Delegates from Salesian Provinces of South Asia, the Youth Service Coordinators, priests, sisters, brothers, and all the young people who dedicated their time and energy to the successful execution of this program. I express my special thanks to Fr. Charles Joseph, INT Youth Ministry Delegate, Fr. Rosario Antony, the Youth Director and all the confreres and young people who actively participated from our province. I had been there for the new year celebration and it was wonderful. I want to congratulate the province of INM and especially the Sacred Heart College community for the hard work and dedication to make this great event a memorable one.

CONDOLENCES...

On behalf of the province, I offer my sincere condolences,
To [Fr. Daneil Sebastian](#) at the demise of his brother [Rev. Fr. Louis Mathias](#) on 03 December 2024.

May the soul rest in peace!

COMMUNITY REFLECTION

SILVER JUBILEE OF THE PROVINCE OF TIRUCHY – WAY FORWARD

4. Grace of Unity

As we begin a new year, I want to share with you the theme that I have been sharing with all the communities during the provincial visitation this academic year, namely, “the Grace of Unity or Union with God, which was very much propagated by Don Bosco, our father and founder. The human need for union with God is one of the most infrequently dealt with topics today among the clergy, religious and Christians in general. It is rarely dealt with in books, sermons, conferences and goodnights in our tradition, and if anyone attempts to introduce it, it is dismissed as outdated and irrelevant. This is mainly due to our lack of interest in spirituality and things religious and owing to the invasion of our minds with secular ideas and excessive preoccupation with material things. And yet union with God is the most profound relationship and the most satisfying spiritual experience we can

ever have in our life. It is 'in him that we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17, 28). I wish that this new year may help us to discover God personally, the way he is alive in us and how he guides us every moment of our lives.

Union with God is very basic to our Christian life. Going back to our primary catechism, "Why did God create us?" we respond, "God created us to love him not only now but forever and ever." It simply means that God and we become one, finally one, and that is the purpose of our life. Going further to understand the Trinity and the relationship among them, we come to understand that there is unity among them, and we do not know how. Many of the saints tried their best to understand but finally came to a conclusion that we have to only accept and not analyse the details of their unity. As we read in the gospel of John, the parable of the vine and the branches, Jesus warns us that we cannot do anything without him: "Apart from me, you can do nothing." It's true that we can bear fruit only if we are united with God, just as the vine and branches are together and bear fruit. Still further, St. Paul speaks about the one body and different parts, which clearly enunciate the meaning of unity. Each part of the body has to act in relation to the other, though they have an independent function to play. It is not only the physical body that has to be together but also the mental functioning that gives life to the body. If the command of the brain does not reach the tip of the fingers at the same time instantly, then there is no proper movement. And we know that people who suffer from diseases of various kinds have difficulty in proper functioning because there is no unity of the body, the different parts of the body, and the mental functions. Thus, it's very clear that the grace of unity is not only spiritual, but it encompasses everything of life.



In the introduction to St. Albert the Great's medieval classic, *Union with God*, the editor begins by saying: "Surely the most deeply rooted need of the human soul, its purest aspiration, is for the closest possible union with God" (*Union with God*, 5). St. Thomas Aquinas says: "The end of the spiritual life is that man unites himself to God by love" (*Summa Theologica* IIa IIae, q.44, a.1, co.). When we are near to God, all is well and nothing seems difficult, and when we are distant from him, all is hard. Our soul yearns for union with God. We came from God, and we must go back to Him. Therefore, the whole life of a person is a return journey to God. The more complete this return, the more intimate will be our union with Him. Thus, our perfection consists in rejoining God and uniting ourselves to Him. In this union with God, we find peace, the assuaging of our hunger for the infinite and our thirst for love and imperishable felicity. St. Augustine says: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" (*Confessions*, Bk. 1). Human

beings find their eternal happiness in union with God, and the life of heaven is nothing else than this union carried to its ultimate perfection. Hence our primary goal in life should be union with God. The soul that truly loves God does not resign itself to waiting for heaven in order to be united to him but desires ardently to anticipate this union here on earth. Therefore, striving after union with God should become our highest priority in life. When we love someone, we want to be united to him or her at all times. God wants union with us, and that union is the purpose of our creation. We need to present ourselves to God for union, and we should ask for this grace incessantly.

How do we Cultivate this Union with God?

01. Prayer: All of us know the importance of prayer, and we do the acts of prayer well. We are there present for the various moments of our community prayer, and some of the confreres also excel in personal prayer. We thank God for this prayer culture that exists in our province. I have always admired and appreciated our confreres for the same. But what I



mean here is that attitude to prayer is more than the acts of prayer. What impels me to go to church for prayer? Or what is the impact created in me and my life after I fulfill the acts of prayer? Very often, the attitude is not clear, and so the results are poor. Or there is no proper mindset, and so the purpose is not achieved. A person who experiences the union with God or the grace of unity in his life, I am sure, will certainly cherish the fruits of prayer, namely the holiness. Even ecstasy will not be uncommon. Hence, let us ask ourselves, Do I miss prayer? If I feel that I have missed

prayer that is something precious, I will automatically find moments to substitute prayer. Or I will not miss that prayer the next time. For us religious, this is very important to fight our routine, or else, gradually we will become so used to prayer that it will no longer have any effect on us. The grace of unity is not only taking care of the moments of prayer but also the attitude to prayer.

02. Listening: As we understand by the word listening, it is giving a good ear to people's words and going beyond, understanding the non-verbal communication of people. We also listen to the silence of people and the meaning behind their silence. But this isn't all. I guess good listening is following Jesus' style of meeting the needs of people for what they encounter us. In short, doing good to everyone just like Jesus, who went around doing good. No one goes away from us discouraged or unsatisfied. We may not be able to fulfil all their expectations or do whatever is asked of us. But we should be able to at least patiently spend time with them and tell them that we are unable to help in all the ways and assure them of help and assistance at the earliest opportunity. We may not be able to offer



immediate solutions to all their problems, but we should be able to at least understand their problems and positively motivate them to fight the odds of life and give them hope and confidence. This is the complete meaning of listening, and only those who have the grace of unity could exercise this fully.

03. Sense of Mindfulness: All those who are aware of their actions can certainly practice this sense of mindfulness. This is proposed by the Buddhist tradition, which propagates that all those who have a sense of mindfulness can never commit a mistake or do things badly because they are aware of themselves all the time. It is advised that we should say things and do all that we do from morning till night. For example, when I get up, I say in my mind, I am opening my eyes, I am taking a bath, I am eating, I am walking, and I am sleeping, etc. When such an awareness exists, no one can do things that are harmful to the other. For example, I cannot say that I am going to hit someone and do the same thing, or I cannot say in my mind that I am going to kill someone and do the same act of cruelty to someone. Only those who are united with God and filled with the grace of unity can excel in this sense of mindfulness, and the others would always be carried away by routine.

04. God sees you: Mamma Margaret instilled in Don Bosco the fear of God and He in turn taught the same to his boys that God is all the time watching over everyone. I guess this is at times interpreted negatively in our tradition that Salesian assistance ends up being a policeman or a military officer who is waiting to catch some one doing wrong and punish them accordingly. God sees you style is not exactly that. On the contrary, it is to tell everyone that we are all in the presence of God and God is there always to help and support us. When we are in the presence of God, it is he who will make sure that we do things well and there will be nothing that we cannot do well. So, God sees you is more positive than negative. We have to somehow make sure that our young people get this thought clear in their minds so that they will not anymore fear God, rather they will develop more trust and confidence in God.

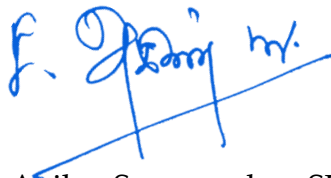


05. Seeking God's will: At the end of the day, what matters in life is that we all surrender to God our entire life. We may not understand the reason behind our success or failure. But it is very important to surrender ourselves to God and rely on God for everything. When this deep trust and faith are there in us, we need not fear anything at all. The results will not matter to us anymore because it is God who is granting us success. And if failure is there, we have to understand that it is God who is forming us and giving us yet another opportunity to make efforts and better the doing. Think what God thinks and act what God acts. Let us follow the example of Mary, "pondering all these in her heart." Lk 2:19.

Dear confreres, we are beginning a new year, 2025. Let us be united with God like our father and founder, Don Bosco. Art 86 tells us, "Don Bosco, docile to the Holy Spirit, lived an experience of humble, trusting, and apostolic prayer in which prayer and living were spontaneously united." It is true indeed. For Don Bosco, prayer and life were not two entities but one and the same. That is the reason he could accomplish so much for the young people of his time. Further, Art 21 reminds us, "We study and imitate him, admiring in him a splendid blending of nature and grace. He was deeply human, rich in the qualities of his people, and deeply the man of God, filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit." Let us continue to walk in the footsteps of Don Bosco, growing in the grace of unity and union with God, and I am sure we will become worthy sons of him and win young souls for God.

Prayerful best wishes to all in the Family,

Yours Affectionately in Don Bosco



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Provincial – Salesian Province of Tiruchy, INT.

