

DEAR CONFRERES, SALESIAN FAMILY AND BELOVED YOUNG PEOPLE

Cordial greetings of peace and joy to you all ...

As we step into October, the traditional **Month of the Holy Rosary**, I extend my warmest greetings and prayers to each of you. This is a time of special grace for us, the Salesians, to deepen our devotion to our Blessed Mother, Mary Help of Christians. The Rosary is a powerful tool for contemplation. It is a prayer that guides us through the life of Jesus Christ, seen through the eyes of His mother. It is a simple yet profound way to meditate on the Gospels, to walk with Mary, and to come closer to her Son. As Don Bosco taught us, Mary is our surest guide and help in all our endeavours.



In this month, let us make a renewed commitment to pray the Rosary daily, both individually and as a community. Let us not see it as a mere routine, but as a living conversation with Mary. Let our Rosary be a chain that binds us to her maternal heart, a heart that intercedes for us and for the young people entrusted to our care. Let us also remember the words of our Founder, "Entrust everything to Jesus and Mary, and they will bring it to a good end." Let us place our trust in her, as we continue to serve the young with renewed zeal and a deep sense of Salesian fraternity.

Consultation for the Nomination of the Next Provincial

The Rector Major has assigned Rev. Fr. Biju Michael, Regional Councillor for South Asia, for the consultation of the next Provincial. We welcome him to our Province for this important moment of discernment. The consultation will be held from **08 to 12 October 2025 in three places**. This is an important event in the province that needs our daily prayer both as individuals and as communities that the Lord may accompany us in the process of discernment. The following will be the schedule of these meetings:

08 October 2025 Wednesday	Meeting the Provincial Council at DBPH (09.30 am – 12.30 pm)
09 October 2025 Thursday	Meeting the Rectors at DBPH (09.30 am – 12.30 pm)
10 October 2025 Friday	The Retreat, Yercaud (09.30 am – 12.30 pm)
11 October 2025 Saturday	Don Bosco Jawaharpuram, Madurai (09.30 am – 12.30 pm)
12 October 2025 Sunday	DBPH, Trichy (09.30 am – 12.30 pm)

On the first day, there will be a provincial council meeting in the afternoon. All the other days, there will be an [animation from 02.00 pm to 04.30 pm on the six-year plan of our province](#) - way forward based on GC 29 and INTPC 09. I invite all of you to plan your programme accordingly as to participate without fail, in this important discernment process. The statistics shows that the percentage of participation in consultation is reducing year by year and let us not succumb to personal ideologies in this exercise, rather follow the Salesian tradition in word and letter.

Salesian Family Live-In

The Salesian Family Day is organized in our province on [01 and 02 October 2025 at Don Bosco School of Excellence, Vellakinar, Coimbatore](#). I extend my warm welcome to all the Salesian family members for two days of togetherness and celebration. I am sure that these two days will help each other to understand the richness of the Salesian life with various associations to cater to the life of the young people, understanding the mind and spirit of Don Bosco. The programme begins with the registration and tea in the evening on the first day and ends with a picnic and tea in the evening on the second day.

Zonal Level Meeting for those in Initial formation

Two zonal-level meetings for clerics in initial formation will be held this month. One meeting will be organized in [Tiruppur on 04 October 2025](#) and the other meeting in [Jawaharpuram on 18 October 2025](#). This meeting promises a vibrant opportunity for clerics to connect, share experiences, and be inspired by the lives and mission of one another. The Vice Provincial will provide further details regarding the meeting.

PROGRAMME OF THE MONTH

01, 02	Wed, Thu	Salesian Family Live-in @ Coimbatore
04	Sat	Zonal Meeting for Young Salesians @ Tiruppur
08-12	Wed-Sun	Consultation
18	Sat	Zonal Meeting for Young Salesians @ Jawaharpuram
25	Sat	Cooperators Elective Congress @ Manikandam

RECALLING EVENTS

Quinquennium Meet

The meeting for the young priests who are in the first five years of ordination was held at The Retreat - Yercaud, on 12 and 13 September 2025. They were given inputs on Challenges of being a Consecrated Salesian in India today: Current Trends and Prophetic Responses by Bro. Paulraj SG and interaction with the provincial on the first day. On the second day they were animated on the topic Effects of Digital Media by Fr. Selvakumar SDB and they had sharing in their batches. I appreciate the Vice provincial, all the resource persons and the Rector and community of The Retreat - Yercaud for organizing the meeting.

Meeting for those due for Perpetual Profession

The clerics who are due for perpetual in this academic year had a day of meeting at Don Bosco Provincial House on September 20, 2025. The clerics were animated by Fr. John Dharman SDB. In the afternoon, they had a pilgrimage to Poondi.

Zonal Level Meeting for those in Initial formation

The clerics who come under the Thanjavur zone had a day of animation on 27 September 2025, at DB Thanjavur. They were given input on the topic Salesian Assistance by Fr. Suresh Felix SDB. In the afternoon, they went on a pilgrimage to Elakurichy. I thank the Rector and the confreres of DB Thanjavur community for hosting the meeting.

Province Secretaries Meet

The Province Secretaries of the South Asian region met together in the Provincial House, Kolkata from 18 to 20 September 2025. It was a chance for the secretaries to get familiarized with one another, informed with the best practices of other provinces and equipped with effective functioning of the office. Fr. Ashly, the province secretary, attended the meeting.

SPCSA Council Meeting

On September 8, we had the installation of the new Provincial of INB Rev. Fr. Ashley Miranda and the following two days, we had the SPCSA council. We went through various works and activities of the National networks and reviewed their functioning. Many of the forthcoming events in the South Asia Region were also discussed during this meeting. As some of the delegates are completing their term of office, new candidates were proposed, and it was decided that they could be contacted later and appointments given before May 2026. Poverty Eradication Project was discussed at length, and all the provinces were encouraged to do the maximum so that this would benefit the entire region. We are grateful to the INB Province and especially the provincial community for the superb hospitality and seeing to all the details of the meeting. God bless them all.

COMMUNITY REFLECTION

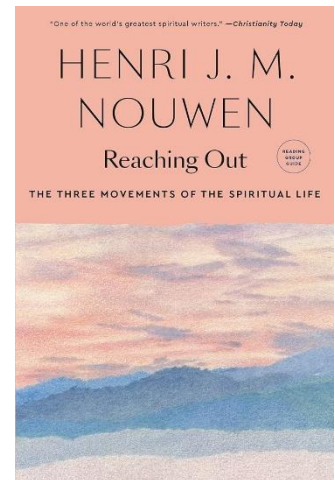
SILVER JUBILEE OF THE PROVINCE OF TIRUCHY – WAY FORWARD

8. From Loneliness to Solitude – Reaching Out to Our Inner Self

Several years ago, through an act of the Lord's providence, I came upon a copy of *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*. This short book was composed by Henri J. M. Nouwen, a Catholic priest and spiritual writer from the second half of the twentieth century. I was taken both by the timelines with which the Lord placed this book in my possession and the relevance it has for a time such as now. Considering the repercussions of COVID, with schools, workplaces, churches, and other institutions turning to online platforms, I assume many find themselves feeling like myself. Alone. Disoriented. Longing for the next "season of life". Nouwen's insights provide a framework for how the Christian

may grow in times such as these. I would like to present to you the first movement of spiritual life in this circular and draw some conclusions for living our day-to-day religious life.

Part 1 of *Reaching Out* concerns the inner self. It is subtitled “From *Loneliness* to *Solitude*”. Nouwen recognizes the rampant loneliness that plagues our culture. Although there are plenty of outlets—perhaps not so much in our current climate—to be “with people”, many still feel the gnawing sense of isolation. This acute felt sense of loneliness is distinguished from *solitude*.



Loneliness is a painful experience. All of us like to stay away from it. Still, at some time of our life we enter into this feeling, maybe as a child – others fool you; as a teenager – you are not chosen in the team; you must have felt homesick at the boarding; as a young adult in college – no friend to chat; as a teacher – your students do not pay attention; as a preacher – the audience dozes away. It happens in various circumstances, and in such situations we always say, “I feel lonely.” Loneliness is one of the most universal human experiences, but in some parts of the world – like in the West, for example – it is exaggerated. Though we come together so many times, we are still left with this feeling, loneliness.

We never confront this feeling of loneliness. We too often avoid all circumstances of being alone. Our culture is such that we do not want to experience pain. We not only bury the dead as if they were still alive, but we bury all our pains as if they were not really there. When we have nothing to do, what do we do? We keep ourselves busy with something or other; otherwise, we create something to be busy with. There is no time for us to take stock of our life, and worse still, we spend less time planning to take care of our inner self.

There is a false form of honesty that suggests that nothing should remain hidden and that everything should be said, expressed and communicated. This honesty can be very harmful. It makes life very flat and boring. Our world is full of empty chatter, easy confessions, hollow talk, senseless compliments, poor praise and boring confidentialities. Kahil Gibran’s words are quite inspiring.

Sing and dance together and be joyous
But let each of you be alone
Even as the strings of a lute are alone
Though they quiver with the same music
Stand together yet not too near together
For the pillars of the temple stand apart
And the oak tree and the cypress
Grow not in each other’s shadow.

For Nouwen, solitude is a posture of the heart. It is attained when one leans into their loneliness, ceasing to run from it but rather diving deeper into the barrenness of felt isolation. It is only by learning to embrace one's felt aloneness, often over the agonizing course of time, that one can truly learn to be with people. Without transforming one's loneliness into a posture of solitude, one will have difficulty loving others because others will naturally be viewed as a balm for one's loneliness and not as another to be loved.

Nouwen summarizes the movement from loneliness to solitude as a greater awareness of the world around us, learning to view perceived interruptions as an invitation from God and to see our own properties—whether physical or not—as gifts to be shared. The goal seems to be a greater sense of self-knowledge in addition to a detachment from the expectations of the world. Greater self-knowledge for the sake of giving oneself more fully to the other while, at the same time, learning to depend on God, not others, for satisfaction.

How Do We Understand Solitude?

The word 'solitude' can be misleading at times. It suggests being alone by oneself in an isolated place, something like the idea of the life of hermits and monks. But the solitude that really counts is the solitude of the heart. It is an inner quality or attitude that does not depend on physical isolation. It is one of the human capacities that can exist, be maintained and be developed in the center of a big city, in the middle of a large crowd and in the context of a very active and productive life. A man or woman who has developed this attitude of heart is no longer pulled apart by the most divergent stimuli of the surrounding world but is able to perceive and understand this world from a quiet inner center. What is the difference between solitude and loneliness? When you are alone in the office, you suffer from restless loneliness but also enjoy a quiet solitude. The difference is restless and restful, driven and free, lonely and solitary in our surroundings.

By slowly converting our loneliness to a deep solitude, we discover our vocation. A lonely person has no inner time. He

wants the answers and wants them here and now. But in solitude we can pay attention to our inner self and wait. In solitude we become present to ourselves. There we become present to others by reaching out to them. Solitude does not pull us away from others but instead makes real fellowship possible. Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, spent the last years of his life living as a hermit, but his contemplative solitude brought him into very intimate contact with others. He wrote in his diary, Jan 12, 1950, 'It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brothers. The more solitary I am, the more affection I have for them. It is pure affection and filled with reverence for the solitude



of others as well.' Without the solitude of the heart, the intimacy of friendship, marriage and community life cannot be creative. Without the solitude of the heart, our relationships with others easily become needy and greedy and parasitic, because without the solitude of the heart, we cannot experience the others as different from ourselves but only as people who can be used for the fulfilment of our own often hidden needs.

Our Creative Response

As long as we are trying to run away from our loneliness, we are constantly looking for distractions with the inexhaustible need to be entertained and kept busy. We become the passive victims of a world asking for our idolizing attention. We become dependent on quick changes of mood, capricious behaviour and sometimes revengeful violence.

From my young age, somehow, I had the experience of spending lots of time alone. When I was the assistant in Tirupattur during my first year of practical training, I was in charge of the X std, and their exams ended last. The other brothers went for holidays, and I had to be alone. Later in the second year, a similar thing happened. In the third year of my PT, I was sent to the Novitiate as the assistant, where I was the only cleric. During my college days, I was in Egmore, where there were no clerics before, and once again for theology we were in Becchi, an experience of small community living, invariably, I was guarding the house every summer or when others went for holidays. After my ordination, I was in a diocesan parish for six months. Later, when I went to Savariarpalayam, there were only two of us. But I never suffered loneliness all these times; rather, I enjoyed the solitude. I spent a lot of



time listening to music and writing music. Maybe that's the reason I could write music notations for so many songs. And there was a lot of time to relax and to reflect on life. I grew in my faith in God and became strong day by day, feeling that God was beside me all the time.

Sometime back, I remember a confrere was feeling low and discouraged because of the problems and challenges in the place of his ministry. During his visit to the provincial house, he was pouring out his heart in the dining hall. All of us were feeling sorry for him. It was true that he underwent agony and pain for some time. I wanted to encourage him and so began to propose a positive response to every negative statement he made. It went on for more than 45 minutes. He did not stop, and I did not give up. Some of the confreres around us were watching the show and came into the conversation now and then. But the fact was that the confrere could not be consoled at all because he felt 'lonely' all the time. He felt 'alone' in his community. He thought his confreres did not support him. He experienced that suffocating loneliness which made life bitter for him.

Can we carry the burden of reality? How can we remain open to all human tragedies and aware of the vast ocean of human suffering without becoming mentally paralyzed and depressed? Maybe for the time being we have to accept the many fluctuations between knowing and not knowing, seeing and not seeing, feeling and not feeling, moments of joy and depression, and so on and so forth. But life can teach us that although the events of the day are out of our hands, they should never be out of our hearts, that instead of becoming bitter, our lives can yield to the wisdom that only from the heart can a creative response come forth. Only when our mind has descended into our heart can we expect a lasting response to well up from our innermost self.

My dear confreres, let us take some time to go into our innermost self. Very often we are distracted with the externals and make judgements that affect our whole life. We become desperate, angry and bitter. Mostly the problem is not from outside or other people or even the situations. It is our outlook towards life, our prejudices, our unchallenged ideologies, our resistance to being open to reality and the like. That is the reason we suffer from loneliness. Here is an opportunity and a call from God to look at ourselves first. It is worth it to spend some time on ourselves without giving into pressures of all sorts. I am sure there will be a ray of hope. Let our inner journey become a lifelong process which will make us enjoy solitude.

Prayerful best wishes to all in the Family,

Yours Affectionately in Don Bosco



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Our Lady of Rosary
Pray for us!