



**Cir. No. 45**

**MARCH 2021**

Dearest Sisters,

Wish you a very happy and meaningful celebration of International Women's Day which is juxtaposed with the anniversary of the birth of the Servant of God Mother Rosetta Marchese, the Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the month dedicated to Saint Joseph, Patron Saint of the Institute, whom Pope Francis, through the Apostolic Letter *Patris corde*, indicates as an icon of tenderness, caring, listening, obedience, welcoming, courage, and protector in the difficult times of our history.

#### **TOWARDS THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2021**

The fifth objective of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals of UNO is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The Sustainable Development goals aim to grant women and girls equal access to education, medical care, decent work, as well as representation in decision making, political and economic processes. It will give new life to a sustainable economy, bringing large – scale benefits to society and humanity.

Every year on the 8 of March, we celebrate International Women's Day, an event promoted by the United Nations to celebrate the progress reached by women in the economic, political and cultural fields. Coincidentally the fifth Sustainable Development goal that resonates in The UNO theme for the International Women's Day 2021 is **“Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID – 19 world”** The campaign slogan is **“Choose to challenge”**.

The organization of Societies worldwide is still far from reflecting clearly that women possess the same dignity and identical rights as men. We say one thing with words, but our decisions and reality tell another story. Indeed doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence since they are frequently less able to defend their rights.” Even though the International Community has adopted numerous agreements aimed at ending slavery in all its forms, and has launched various strategies to combat this phenomenon, millions of people today – children, women and men of all ages are deprived of freedom and forced to live in conditions akin to slavery” (Fratelli Tutti 24)

*Leadership in our Institute:* As we glide through the history of our Institute, each of the Mothers General has dealt with the particular events of history, which took place during her time of leadership. Each has continued to pass on the heritage of St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello, as our Constitutions say, “Her main concern in her service of authority will be fidelity to our Salesian spiritual heritage and attention to the needs of the Church so that the Institute may attain the ends for which the Holy Spirit raised it up.” (FMA Constitutions #116)

March 8, 2021, on International Women's Day, marks the anniversary of the birth into heaven of the Servant of God Mother Rosetta Marchese, FMA (1922-1984), Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who, throughout her life, aroused and accompanied processes of change in the environment in which she lived and worked with faith, wisdom, and educational passion.

In Caltagirone in Sicily, as a young Superior, she was 36, she opened the Community of the FMA to the challenges of the time, encouraged them to a more authentic fraternal life, and involved them in a stronger experience of the Church with a diocesan catechetical course, carried out with the students of the Magisterial Institute and under the guidance and encouragement of Bishop Francesco Fasola (Servant of God and spiritual father of Mother Rosetta). To this was added the formation of the laity in the Salesian Family, which at that time was still in an embryonic state, and the first steps of accompanying the nascent Don Bosco Volunteers Institute (VDB) in Sicily. She also organized a pilgrimage to the Vatican, so that the school girls and other young people could participate in a Mass presided over by the Pope. She managed to convene 2,000 young people from the FMA houses in Rome. It is said that she allowed the girls to pose in photographs with the Council Fathers as they left the Council Hall and passed through St. Peter's Square, in order to make the figures of those Pastors more familiar and close.

With creativity, she invited the school pupils to engage in acts of love and small sacrifices and to put a grain of wheat for each one, as a sign of the commitment offered for the Council. The various grains, transformed into flour, were then used for the Hosts to offer to the Bishops and Cardinals for the Eucharistic Celebration. With true apostolic and ecclesial passion she promoted, together with the Sisters of the Community, the School for catechists, to form older girls to be evangelizers among the poor children of the peripheral parishes of Rome. Mother Rosetta favoured the collaboration of the laity and trusted the girls, believing in their potential for good. The FMA thus reached 30 parishes and almost 4,000 children.

Called then by obedience to Lecco, in Lombardy, she committed herself to the Centenary of the foundation of the Institute (1972), arousing new energies of love for the Charism, for the Founders, for the educational mission, for collaboration in the local Church, in communion with others Religious Congregations. In 1981, with the heart of a mother, she accompanied the Institute to celebrate the Centenary of the death of Saint Mary D. Mazzarello, encouraging paths of conversion and renewal, springing from the deeper knowledge of the Co-founder and from the grace of the consignment of the renewed Constitutions to each FMA.

Her own illness and death were transformed into a source of new fidelity and commitment to holiness among the daughters scattered throughout the world. These are some of the **sprouts of new life** that Mother Rosetta was able to support, accompany, and make grow. With farsightedness, discernment, and with a gaze full of hope (cf. Circular 1005) she knew how to read the challenges, the unprecedented opportunities of the time and, with the attraction of the gift of herself, still today she evokes new dynamism of good, seeds of life and holiness.

**A CLARION CALL FOR CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP TODAY:** Unfortunately, the pandemic is making more fragile the progress made in the field of self-recognition, respect and protection of dignity, rights and specific contribution of women. Cases of domestic violence have increased by 30% in some countries. Furthermore, women are more likely to be infected by Covid – 19 because 70% of health and social workers are women. Women also bear additional household burdens during the pandemic because they spend about three times as many hours in unpaid domestic and care work as men. At this juncture, what type of leadership is to be practised by women in this twenty-first century? Recognizing the context of these changing times, we realize that the purpose of leadership in the twenty-first century is:

- To create a supportive environment where people can thrive, grow and live in peace with one another
- To promote harmony with nature and thereby provide sustainability for future generations.
- To create communities of reciprocal care and shared responsibility – one where every person matters and each person's welfare and dignity is respected and supported.

**THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH:** Saint Joseph is the patron of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, wanted by Don Bosco (FMA Constitution 1885) to invoke his intercession and embark on a path of holiness made of silence, humble availability, and acceptance of God's signs.

*In the FMA communities, St. Joseph is invoked as 'treasurer' and protector of the works: "In Nizza too, St. Joseph was elected "treasurer" of the house; he was entrusted with the health of the sisters and girls and the task of distancing sin. Saint Joseph is invoked in the various circumstances of the life of the Institute: moments of joy and pain, in the face of dangers and evils of various kinds, with novenas, sacrifices, and acts of devotion that express full trust in the Patron Saint.*

*St. Joseph is also a nurse and doctor: "With this beautiful function, the month of St. Joseph remains open, already invoked as the 'treasurer' of the Institute, and this year also as nurse and doctor; because in Nizza, as in all of Piedmont, smallpox continues to spread. (...) The people cannot explain how our house remained unharmed. (...) They do not know what a protector we have in St. Joseph, to whom we have entrusted ourselves!" (Cronistoria III 145)*

I am happy that with the guidelines given in the Province, we are preparing ourselves in this year to Consecrate ourselves to him with thirty-three days of preparation for the Feast of St. Joseph on 19 March 2021. Let us invite our Educating Communities to entrust themselves to his intercession during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. Let us ask him to continue to keep alive in each one of us our commitment in preparation for GCXXIV, *to listen with a willing heart to the word of Mary, his Bride, who tells us: 'Do whatever He tells you' ... May he teach us to live in prayerful silence as he did in the face of delicate, precarious, and humanly difficult situations, especially due to the Corona Virus.*

## **WITHIN THE FAMILY:**

**JUNIORS RECOLLECTION AND ANIMATION:** Thanks to Fr. Susai SDB, Rector of AMSAM who animated the Tri-monthly Recollection for sixteen Juniors on 13 February 2021, Sr. Azarias Arockia Mary Selvi on the theme **Towards Fulness of Life** and Fr. Terrance on **Prophetic Mission** from 13 to 14 February 2021.

After prayer and recollection thirteen Juniors, three Second-year Novices and eleven Postulants have submitted their applications for the next stage of formation and renewal of their vows. Let us accompany them and our three Junior Sisters who are entering into the second year of their biennial vows, with our Prayers and sisterly support in their vocational journey.

**ANNUAL RETREAT II:** The second Annual Retreat for forty-eight Sisters was animated in Don Bosco Wellington from 20 - 27 February. Thanks to Fr. Dr. Arnald Mahesh SDB, Parish Priest of Dindigul, Savariyarpalayam who animated the Sisters on the following themes: Lent a call for conversion, what kind of religious are we?, community life, forgiveness, Our Lady and the Eucharist. The well prepared Lectio Divina which was shared by the Sisters in six groups were moments of enrichment and richer experience with God and one another.

**PROMISE DAY FOR SALESIAN COOPERATORS:** My sincere appreciation to Sr. Ignaci Kulandai Theresa and Sr. Irudaya Raj Victoria who prepared twenty-one Cooperators in Wellington and two Cooperators in Coimbatore respectively to make their promise a significant one in their lives and the Salesian Family. I extend my gratitude to Fr. Joseph Charles SDB and Sr. Anthonyswamy Rosy FMA Province delegate for Cooperators, Fr. Thomas Louis SDB and Sr. Poobalarayen Nirmala FMA Province delegate for Salesian Family who were involved in the animation and coordination of the day of recollection in Don Bosco Wellington and Promise day

on 27 February 2021 in the Forestdale substation in Wellington.

**CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES:** As we raise our prayers in thanksgiving to the Lord for the service of animation rendered by Sr. Thomas Ritha Dora the Provincial of Mumbai and Sr. Rose Ezarath the Provincial of Kolkata, we implore God's blessings on our dear **Sr. Meenakshi D'Silva** who is nominated as the VIII Provincial of the Province of St. Mary Mazzarello - Mumbai and **Sr. Leelamma Palliparambil** the VII Provincial of the Province of Mary Help of Christians, Kolkata. Hearty congratulations Sisters! May our Blessed Mother accompany you as the mantle of animation is strewn on you with trust and hope for the future.

**VOCATION PROMOTION:** We extend our heartfelt thanks to **Sr. Devasagayam Maria Joice** who shared generously the responsibility of being the Vocation Promoter in the province from 2017 to 2021. We are happy that **Sr. Susai Anthonia** has graciously accepted to be the vocation promoter from the month of March 2021. We invite the Animators and the Communities to contact her and collaborate with her with joy in promoting quality vocations to the Church and our beloved Institute.

**FEAST OF THANKSGIVING 2021:** The Feast of Thanksgiving 2021 will be celebrated in Rome in the Vice-Province "Mary Mother of the Church" on 25 April 2021. The theme and mode of celebration will be communicated soon. Let us thank the Lord for the precious gift of our Mother General and her Councillors who share in the responsibility of animating the Institute according to the Charism of our dear founders with love and zealous leadership. com

#### **MEETINGS – MARCH 2021**

13	ISS Webinar Meet at Regunathapuram
14 – 15	Provincial Council - Regunathapuram
19	Blessing of VTC Centre in Madurai - Cittampatti

#### **LET'S CELEBRATE – MARCH 2021**

07	Saints Perpetua and Felicity
08	International Women's Day
19	St. Joseph
25	Annunciation of the Lord
28	Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

#### **OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES AND PRAYERS**

- To Sr. Sesu John and dear ones who suffer the loss of her younger brother Mr. Arul Augustus (36). He died in a fatal accident on 28 February 2021.
- To Sr. Susai Mary Anna Manickam and her family as they suffer the loss of her father Mr. Susai (78) who passed away on 1 March 2021.
- To Sister Arockianathan Virginia Mary and her family as they mourn over the death of her dear brother Mr. Maria Francis Xavier Raja (55), in Narayini Hospital Bangalore on 4 March 2021.

Entrusting the entire educating communities with their hopes, aspirations and projects along with the intention of electing a charismatic leader for Tamil Nadu to our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, to Mary, Mother, we invoke God's accompaniment in our day to day journey to respond generously to the new calls of God in history.

Yours affectionately,



Sr. Amalanathan Mary Margaret Provincial.

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