



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Salesiane di Don Bosco
Our Lady of the Snow Province - INT
Tiruchirappalli - India

Provincial Circular

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My dear Sisters,

Cordial greetings and prayerful wishes from Tiruchirappalli.

The sacred season of Lent has commenced, and we are now moving into March, a period that calls for spiritual growth and reaching out to those in need. It is fitting to celebrate the solemnity of St. Joseph, the man of faith, in this season. St. Joseph serves as a powerful model for understanding and executing the divine plan, exemplifying faith and humility. His intercession is sought to enhance the meaning and fruitfulness of Lenten observance. As we enter March, we delve into the significant liturgical season of Lent, prompting reflection on God's salvation plan and personal conversion. Commitment to selfless giving, akin to Jesus, is emphasized, encouraging prayer and hard work. This Lenten season is an opportunity for self-evaluation, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and progressing towards Easter glory. The month also includes the celebration of St. Joseph, who, despite being an ordinary labourer, fulfilled God's plan by safeguarding Jesus and Mary. St. Joseph is remembered for his obedience to God's will, becoming a model for those struggling to discern and accept divine plans with sheer faith. As we celebrate the solemnity of St. Joseph, communities are encouraged to pray for the embodiment of his virtues, including faith, humility and commitment to God's call.

JOSEPH: THE MAN OF FAITH

The Gospel according to Matthew 1:18-25 presents Joseph's introduction to the mystery of the Incarnation, which Pope John Paul II in his exhortation, *Guardian of the Redeemer*, describes this text, "*Joseph's annunciation.*" The saintly pontiff suggests that Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-25 should be read together: "There is a strict parallel between the 'annunciation' [to Joseph] in Matthew's text and the one in Luke [to Mary]. The divine messenger introduces Joseph to the mystery of Mary's motherhood." Noting the points of contact between the two texts, Pope John Paul invites us to concentrate on the content of the message revealed to both Mary and Joseph and their identical response of faith. While Luke presents the mystery through the eyes of Mary, and reveals her response, Matthew presents the identical mystery through the eyes of Joseph.

The angel greets Mary, "*full of grace*" (Luke 1:28). This greeting reveals Mary as the living personification of the people of Israel, God's grace of election having come to perfection in her. She is the *Daughter of Zion* whose vocation is to welcome the Messiah in the name of her people. In Mary, Israel welcomes her Saviour and is transformed by God's grace. The angel greets Joseph using his identity as, *Son of David*. Although far from the trappings of royalty and, in reality, a poor man, Joseph descended from the noble family of the Hebrew people, of whose lineage the prophets foretold the Messiah would be born. The angel's greeting indicates that Joseph's vocation is directly related to the Messiah's mission. The angel pledges that God will strengthen Mary and

Joseph in their appointed mission. Gabriel tells Mary “*Do not be afraid.*” Similarly, the angel says, “*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife.*” This assurance suggests that both Mary and Joseph are invited to accept a mission that is important and significant: a task that will be humanly impossible to accomplish apart from God’s grace.

According to the Jewish custom of the times, marriage took place in two distinct stages. First, there was the betrothal before the rabbi in the synagogue. The bride and groom would not, at that moment, begin to live together. After a period of several weeks or months, the bride’s relatives would lead her ceremoniously to the bridegroom’s home. Only at that point would they begin to live under the same roof as husband and wife. Unlike the modern custom of engagement before marriage, this betrothal was a legal and religious marriage contract.

There is no warrant in either Scripture or Catholic tradition to affirm that Joseph was an old man when he was betrothed to Mary. It was likely that Joseph was Mary’s age or a few years older than she. Certainly, they loved each other as husband and wife. The Church, while always recognizing the unique character of this marriage, has not hesitated to insist that it was a true and legal Jewish marriage, although never consummated out of reverence for the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary’s virginal self. We see from the infancy narratives of both Luke and Matthew, that the angel of the Lord came to Mary and Joseph after they had been legally married, but before they came together to live as husband and wife. But what was the motive of Joseph’s decision to divorce Mary in an unobtrusive manner?

Mary and Joseph were asked to make an identical act of faith - Mary was asked to believe that she would become the virgin mother of the Messiah by the power of the Holy Spirit and Joseph was invited to believe that his pregnant wife was bearing a child in her womb that was conceived *of the Holy Spirit*. In other words, each is asked to believe in the divine origin of the virgin’s child. Believing the word of God spoken by Gabriel, Mary surrendered herself, without reserve to the Lord’s plan by stating: *I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me* (Luke 1:38). Joseph, without uttering a word, did exactly what Mary had done. In faith, he surrendered his entire life to the mystery of the Incarnation. Saint Matthew writes in very simple terms: *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord told him to do* (Matthew 1:24).

Summarizing Joseph’s act of faith, John Paul writes: “...Joseph is the first to share in the faith of the Mother of God and that in doing so he supports his spouse in the faith of the divine annunciation. He is also the first to be placed by God on the path of Mary’s “pilgrimage of faith” (*Guardian of the Redeemer*). If the son of Mary was to be the Messiah, it was imperative that he belong to the family of King David through male descendancy. Joseph’s mission, then, revealed by the angel, was to incorporate Jesus, the son of Mary, into the genealogy of David, thereby conferring, humanly speaking, and the title of *Messiah* on Jesus. According to Jewish law and custom, Joseph legally adopted Mary’s child when he welcomed her to his home. When Mary, carrying Jesus in her womb, crossed the threshold of Joseph’s house, Joseph conferred his name, *Son of David*, on the child that he thereby willingly adopting him. Joseph bestowed the title *Messiah* on Jesus through his act of faith.

Physical begetting ends with Joseph. Joseph adopts Mary’s son and gives him the name *Son of David* simply by welcoming Mary into his house as his spouse. Matthew’s intention is to

demonstrate that Mary's child is the Messiah precisely through the adoptive action of Joseph, in and through an act of divine faith.

The accounts of the Annunciation to Mary in the Gospel of Luke, and to Joseph in Matthew's, reveal that God accomplished his greatest work through the cooperation of two human beings through the *obedience of faith*. Jesus, the Eternal Son of the Father, became the son of Mary through her faith in the Word proclaimed by Gabriel. In his readiness to receive Mary into his home as his wife, and to adopt her unborn child, Joseph joined Mary in her act of faith in the heavenly origin of the child. Through Mary's faith, the Son of God became man. Through Joseph's faith, Mary's child became *Son of David*, the Messiah of Israel.

Extolling Joseph as a model of faith, Pope Saint John Paul II says:

Already at the beginning of human redemption, after Mary, we find the model of obedience made incarnate in Saint Joseph, the man known for having faithfully carried out God's commands. Through Joseph's response to God's word spoken to him by the angel, his total trust in God's power to save, and his tender love of Mary and her son, Saint Joseph is the paradigm of the obedience of faith, hope and love for every member of the Church. Through his heavenly intercession, Joseph obtains for the Church a share in his obedience of faith. With fatherly love, he pleads that each member of his family on earth may come to share in his knowledge and love of the Messiah who was uniquely his son.

1. Consider the cooperative role of Mary and Joseph in God's plan for human redemption. How can your own obedience and faith contribute to the spiritual growth and redemption of those around you?
2. Drawing inspiration from Pope John Paul II's praise of Joseph's fidelity and intercession, how might you seek guidance from the examples set by saints and virtuous figures in your own journey of faith?

On this Solemnity of St. Joseph, I wish you a day filled with the grace and inspiration drawn from the life of this extraordinary man of faith. May St. Joseph's unwavering trust in God's plan serve as a guiding light in your own journey of faith.

May you find strength in his humility, dedication, and love for the Holy Family. Just as St. Joseph played a crucial role in the earthly life of Jesus and Mary, may you, too, discover the profound impact your faith can have on those around you.

May this special day be a reminder of the importance of faith, family, and unwavering commitment to God's Will. Happy Solemnity of St. Joseph! May his virtues continue to inspire and bless your lives abundantly.

❖—◆◆ MONTH'S SPECIAL! ◆◆—❖

ANNUAL EXAMINATION: My best wishes to all our students as they write their public exams this month. May their hard work yield great achievement and may they be guided by the blessings of God to excel and succeed. A big thank you to all the Sisters and staff who work so hard to prepare the students for these exams. Your dedication and patience don't go unnoticed. May you be blessed for your diligence work.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (08 March): International Women's Day, celebrated annually on 08 March, is a global platform to honor women's achievements and advocate for gender equality. For us, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, it holds particular significance, prompting reflection on women's invaluable contributions and reaffirming our commitment to serving with love and compassion. We stand in solidarity with women facing oppression, safeguarding their rights and dignity. Let this day inspire change and work towards a more inclusive, just, and equitable world for all women.

HOLY WEEK (24 - 30 March): Holy Week, the final phase of the sacred journey leading up to Easter, invites us to pause, reflect, and immerse ourselves in the salvific love of Christ. The Holy Week reminds us of three important aspects of our Christian faith:

- **Waiting and New Life:** Holy Week reminds us that waiting is part of our own passion experience. We wait for death, but ultimately, we wait for what comes after death - a new life of eternity. Just as Christ emerged from the tomb, we too shall emerge as new creations in Him, even amidst all our trials and challenges.
- **The Beauty in Suffering:** As we contemplate Jesus' sacrifice of love, we glimpse the beauty within His suffering. The Cross, once an instrument of pain and shame, becomes a symbol of redemption and glory. In our own struggles, we find echoes of God's limitless love in Christ.
- **Examine Our Hearts:** Holy Week invites us to examine our hearts. As those who stood by the cross, those who crucified him and all those who abandoned him, were convicted to their hearts to examine and find the call of God, so are we called during the Holy Week to examine our hearts and our disposition before God and God's call.

May this Holy Week be a time of deep reflection, drawing us closer to the heart of Christ and His transformative love.

FEAST OF ANNUNCIATION OF MARY (25 March): The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord recalls the historical event of the Angel Gabriel appearing to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It reminds us of the flawless "Yes" of our Blessed Mother to the Divine plan. We honor her docility, obedience, humility, and most importantly, her role as the Mother of God! As we celebrate this glorious solemnity, we ponder on all these central mysteries of our faith. Faith must be celebrated, not just believed in. It must be proclaimed, rejoiced in, loved, and lived. On this day, we consciously profess our faith in the Incarnation and seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Let us ask her to pray for us that we may imitate her "Yes" to the will of our Father in Heaven so that we can continue to bring forth her Divine Son in our soul so that Christ shall continue to be made manifest in the world through us.

HAPPY EASTER (31 March): The Solemnity of all Solemnities! Easter is the fulfillment of the promise of eternal life, when Jesus, our Saviour, has broken the shackles of death and given us life again. We have spent forty days, during the Lenten Season, fasting and introspecting, preparing ourselves for the great feast of Easter. The disciples' bold proclamation of Jesus' resurrection is so apparent and true that those who had known them previously were marveled into believing them. As St. John Paul II insists, the Resurrection of Christ is not a mere symbolism but a concrete historical event that has transformed humankind forever. It is undoubtedly the foundation and the wellspring of our faith. The central theme of Easter is triumph over sin, evil, fear and death. It is all about hope, fresh starts, and new life. Thus, dear sisters, let us reflect on the profound meaning of this great event of Easter and live as living witnesses of it. May God grant us the ability to enjoy the benefits of the Lord's resurrection both now and in the days to come. **Alleluia! Christ is risen!**

WORLD GRATITUDE DAY (26 April): This year, the feast of the World Day of Gratitude 2024 shall take place in Mozambique, on 26 April, and shall be animated by the Mozambican Province “St. John Bosco”. The theme for the celebration shall be “With Mary, guided by the “dream”, we generate peace by taking care of our Common Home.” To prepare ourselves for this event, we are offered a four-week itinerary from 01 to 26 April 2024 and the material for the preparation, the daily prayer, the indications, and the necessary information will be sent to you and you can find them on the website of the Institute. To involve the whole Institute with a common symbolic gesture, it is proposed that each Province choose a seed typical of their land; sow it, take care of it, and then send a photograph, accompanied by a short caption, with the meaning that this seed has for the population of that country.



The logo of the Feast, through some significant elements, offers us a beautiful symbology: Mary, prototype of taking care that embraces the world, our common home; the different faces of young people of the five continents, that express our educational mission given to Johnny Bosco in the dream at nine years; the baobab, sacred tree, symbolizing life, powerful symbol of Africa, that seems to unite heaven and earth, and that provides people with nourishment and remedies to various ailments; the colors of the flag of Mozambique that represent the country with its riches, its history, and its commitment to peace.

✂️...NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE!...✂️

- **PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND:** The pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which was unfortunately interrupted by the outbreak of ‘the Israel - Hamas War’ in October 2023, has been arranged once again from 04 to 15 March 2024. As Sr. Madalaimuthu Pokkisha Mary will be participating in this sacred journey, let us entrust her pilgrimage to the Divine guidance and protection of the Almighty.
- **PROVINCIAL COUNCIL CUM TEAM MEET:** The Provincial Councillors will have a day of meeting with the Province Team Co-ordinators on 10 March 2024, at Auxilium Provincial House, Tiruchirappalli.
- **SEMINAR ON SYNODAL FORMATION FOR JUNIOR RELIGIOUS FORMATORS:** Sr. Susai Anthonia and Sr. Antony Rayappan Jothy will participate in the seminar on Synodal Formation for Junior Religious Formators, from 11 to 16 March 2024 at Shanti Sadan, CCBI Secretariat Extension, Benaulim, Goa.
- **NATIONAL LEVEL CONFERENCE ON WASH:** Sr. Azarias Arockia Mary Selvi will participate in the National Level Conference on WASH (WATER, Sanitation and Hygiene), from 20 to 22 March 2024 at St. Joseph Vaz Retreat Centre, Cruz dos Milagres, Old Goa.
- **FMA PCI MEET - 2024:** I am happy to inform you that Sr. Peter Selvarani, chosen by the Province and Sr. John Bosco Edal Queen, chosen by the Council will be attending the FMA

PCI Meet 2024. The event will take place on 02 and 03 April 2024, at the Auxilium Provincial House in Christian Basti, Dispur, Guwahati. The theme of the PCI Meet is “Ecological Consciousness for Ecological Justice”.

✂️♦♦PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS AND THANKS ♦♦✂️

- **RECOGNITION TO SISTER RUNITA GALVE BORJA:** The Embassy of the Philippines to the Holy See has conferred on Sister Runita Galve Borja, General Councilor for Youth Ministry of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, an award for service to the Church and the Country. The award, officially conferred on 03 November 2023, was received by her at the Embassy in Rome in February 2024. Congratulations to Sister Runita! We are proud of her for her selfless dedicated services and grateful to God for the call and for having enabled her towards that passionate and enthusiastic service to the Institute, to the Church and the people of God, in the spirit of “da mihi animas,” for the salvation of young people, especially the poorest.
- **HEADMISTRESS MEET:** Sr. Sebastian Margaret Mary, Province Academic Coordinator, organized the Headmistress Meet on 04 February 2024 at Auxilium Convent Puthenthurai. The 14 participants were animated on the theme “Evolving Role of School Leaders in Fostering 21st Century Learning Environment” by Dr. Jonas Richard, HOD of Social Work and the Director of the Centre for Life Skills Education and Centre for Continuous Professional Development in Kristu Jayanthi College, Bangalore.
- **MEDIA COURSE:** Sr. Samson S. Gnana Jennifer and Sr. Sundaram Bernadette Neha participated at the PCI level “Workshop for Social Communication Coordinators” from 09 -11 February 2024, at Don Bosco Skill Mission, Bangalore.
- **TRIMONTHLY RECOLLECTION AND A DAY OF ANIMATION:** On 17 and 18 February 2023, Auxilium Provincial House in Tiruchirappalli hosted the INT Junior Trimonthly Recollection and a Day of Animation. Fr. Joseph Charles SDB preached on the topic, “Spirituality of St. Paul - Life in the Mission”, and highlighted the need for courage to live a witnessing and coherent life based on the Life and Teachings of Jesus, spreading with passion, the Reign of God far and wide!
- **VIDES MEET:** The VIDES Meet was organized by Sr. Devaraj Jeyarani, the Province Team Coordinator for VIDES, at Vadakku Paganoor on 18 February 2024. There were 39 participants who attended the meeting. The themes presented were: “the presentation of the Strenna -2024: “The dream that makes you dream”; Pope’s Message for World day of Peace: “Artificial Intelligence and Peace”; and the UNO Theme: “International year of Camelids”. The resource persons were Mrs. Deepa Mannikam, Assistant Professor at Tamilnadu National Law University, Tiruchirappalli and Sr. Amalorpavanathan Premila Ruby.
- **NOVICE FORMATORS’ MEET, ROME:** We are happy to welcome back Sr. Cruz Anthoni Michaela, the Novice Formator, who had been to attend the formators’ meet in Rome from 07 to 27 February 2024.

❧... APPRECIATION AND THANKS! ...❧

- To Sr. Poobalarayan Nirmala and the community of Auxilium Convent Puthenthurai - for having facilitated the Animation for the Head Mistresses on 04 February 2024.
- To Sr. Soosaimuthu Arul Mary and the Community of Auxilium Provincial House, Manikandam, Tiruchirappalli for having facilitated the following meetings: the special course on Journal Writing from 05 to 07 February 2024, the Provincial Council Meet on 16 and 17 February 2024 and the Juniors' Trimonthly Recollection and a Day of Animation on 17 and 18 February 2024.
- To Sr. Santhana Pushpa Jeya and the Community of Vadakku Paganoor for hosting the VIDES Meet on 18 February 2024.
- To all the Animators and the Communities for having organized the Retreat for the Domestic Staff at the zonal level on 10 February 2024.

❧... IMPORTANT DAYS OF THE MONTH AHEAD! ...❧

08	-	International Women's Day
19	-	St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary Solemnity
24	-	Palm Sunday
25	-	The Annunciation of the Lord, Solemnity
28	-	Maundy Thursday
29	-	Good Friday
30	-	Holy Saturday
31	-	Easter Sunday

❧... MEETINGS IN THE PROVINCE ...❧

DATE	MEETING	PLACE
03	Be a Conqueror 21 st Century Skill Training	Local Communities
05-08	Interim Audit	Auxilium Provincial House - Tiruchirappalli
09	NCP - Training	Tiruchirappalli
09-10	Provincial Council Meet	Auxilium Provincial House - Tiruchirappalli
10	Team and Provincial Council Meet	Auxilium Provincial House - Tiruchirappalli
21	Women Group - Evaluation Meet	Tiruppur

✂️... CONDOLENCES AND PRAYERS ...✂️

† *To the Provincial and the confreres of INK Province* at the demise of Fr. George Cheruvalli SDB (59) on 07.02.2024.

I extend warm wishes to you all dear Sisters, and all our staff, students, parents and collaborators a wonderful Feast of St. Joseph, as well as for the Lenten season and Easter celebrations ahead. May St. Joseph's steadfast faith guide us. Let's reflect and seek repentance, deepening our connection with God this Lent. May we live this season for self-purification, with our hearts fixed on Jesus Christ. As Easter approaches, let's embrace our religious commitment with vigour, proclaiming the Risen Christ through love and compassion. May this season bring blessings, joy, and renewed faith.

HAPPY EASTER TO YOU!

Yours affectionately in Christ,



Sr. Fernando Majella

Provincial

PROVINCIAL ITINERARY

MARCH - 2024

01 - 03	Provincial Visit	Regunathapuram
09 - 10	Provincial Council Meet	Auxilium Provincial House - Tiruchirappalli
10	Team and Provincial Council Meet	Auxilium Provincial House - Tiruchirappalli
15 - 16	Provincial Visit	Coimbatore
21 - 23	Provincial Visit	Divyadhanam Novitiate Manikandam Tiruchirappalli.
01 - 04 April 2024	PCI Meet	Guwahati