



Province of
St. Francis De Sales

PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

Salesian Province of Dimapur - IND

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My dear confreres,

A very happy feast of St. Joseph the Worker!

In the Catholic world the month of May is specially set apart to honour the Blessed Virgin Mary: Happy Marian month to all! From the Salesian perspective it is a month with several liturgical commemorations: 6 May St. Dominic Savio; 13 May St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello; 15 May the Virgin Mary of Fatima; 16 May St. Louis Orione; 18 May St. Leonard Murialdo; 24 May Mary Help of Christians, and 29 May Blessed Joseph Kowalski.

For us Salesians 24 May is a very important date. On this day we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary as the principal patroness of our Congregation (C.9). Traditionally it is the day on which our novices make their religious profession and those in temporary vows either renew the same or make their perpetual profession. The 24th of May is also the anniversary of the first profession of many of the confreres in the province. Hence there are many reasons for me to wish all of you a *Very Happy Feast of Mary Help of Christians*. I extend the same to all the members of the Salesian Family. May Mary Help of Christians intercede for us, and teach, guide and protect us, as she did to Don Bosco.



1. Mary Help of Christians: A Title with "Political Charge"

I am sure, all of us are quite familiar with the history of the devotion to Mary Help of Christians in the Church. It is a title with a certain "political charge" and related to the struggles of the Church to defend herself in the course of history. I would like to recall here some of the major events connected with the title "Help of Christians" with the hope that it will help us to strengthen our devotion to the Virgin Mary.

2. Ancient References to Mary Help of Christians

The devotion to Mary as Help of Christians can be traced back to Apostolic times in as much as the early Christians believed in the intercessory power of the Mother of God, and turned to her with great confidence for their spiritual and temporal needs. It is said that the invocation of Mary as "Help of Christians" is part of the oldest prayer addressed directly to Mary, the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* ("We Fly to Your Patronage") which was found on an Egyptian papyrus dating, at the latest, from the end of the 3rd century A.D. The first person to use the Marian title "Help of Christians" was St. John Chrysostom, one of the renowned Fathers of the Church: he used it in a homily in 345 A.D. After him several other Fathers of the Church also referred to the Virgin Mary under this title. In this sense, the title itself is not anything new in the Church.

3. Victory in the Battle of Lepanto

Since the Middle Ages the title "Mary Help of Christians" acquired special "political connotations". In 1571 the Muslim Ottoman Turks planned to invade Christian Europe, and Pope Pius V called upon the Christian armies all over Europe to come together and defend the continent. He also asked all Christians to pray to Mary for the defeat of the enemy. The naval Battle of Lepanto took place on 7 October 1571 in which the fleet of the Christians defeated the Ottoman Turks, even though militarily of the Turks had an absolute superiority over the Christians. The Christian forces publicly prayed the rosary and received the sacraments before going into the battle against their enemies. The Christians credited the victory to the Virgin Mary under the title of "Help of Christians". The Christian

commander, don Juan of Austria, publicly proclaimed that his triumph was due to the powerful intercession of the Queen of the Rosary. And the Venetian Senate wrote to other States, claiming that “It was neither generals, nor battalions, nor arms, that brought us victory; but it was Our Lady of the Rosary”. To commemorate the event, Pope Pius V instituted the feast of Our Lady of Victory which was later re-named as feast of the Holy Rosary, and celebrated on 7 October every year. He also inserted the title of “Mary Help of Christians” in the litany of Loreto in thanksgiving to Our Lady for the victory in the Battle of Lepanto.

4. Victory in the Battle of Vienna

Christians of Europe experienced the protection of Mary under the title of “Help of Christians” also in the battle of Vienna of 1683. The battle of Vienna took place on 12 September 1683 after the imperial city had been besieged



by the Muslim Ottoman Turks. Emperor Leopold I of Austria had taken refuge in the shrine of Mary Help of Christians at Pasau, when 200,000 Ottoman Turks besieged the capital city of Vienna. A coalition of Christians was established under Pope Innocent XI to push back the Ottomans. Christians of Europe joined with the Pope in praying the rosary, calling out: “Mary, Help!” On 8 September, feast of the Nativity of Mary, plans were drawn for the battle, and on

12 September, feast of the Holy Name of Mary, Vienna was freed from the Ottoman Turks through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians. The victory marked the historic end of the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into Europe. Because the Christians had sought the intercession of Mary for victory in the battle, Pope Innocent XI commemorated the event by extending the feast of the Holy Name of Mary to the whole Church.

5. Victory against Emperor Napoleon

In 1809 Emperor Napoleon’s soldiers entered the Vatican and arrested Pope Pius VII and exiled him first to Savona (Italy), and then to France. His imprisonment lasted five years. Napoleon also occupied and annexed the Papal States. The Pope vowed to God that, if he were restored to the Roman See, he would institute a special feast in honour of Mary. Christians everywhere prayed continuously to the Blessed Virgin under the invocation of “Help of Christians” for the release of the Pope from captivity. In the meantime, Napoleon experienced military reverses and was forced to release the Pope and sign his abdication from power. On 24 May 1814, Pius VII returned in triumph to Rome. A year later the Pope decreed that the feast of Mary Help of Christians be kept on 24 May, the anniversary of his return to Rome after the captivity, and to commemorate the help bestowed on Christendom in all ages by the Mother of God.

6. Spoleto Events and the Title “Help of Christians”

Spoletto is an ancient and historical city in Umbria, Italy. In early 1862 the Virgin Mary in a painting on the wall of a ruined church at La Fratta near Spoleto spoke to a five-year-old child, named Righetto (Enrico) Cionchi. The fresco depicted the Virgin Mary holding Child Jesus in her arms. Many miracles were attributed to people who had recourse to that image. People began to refer to this unnamed image of the Virgin by a variety of names: “Madonna Unsheltered”, “Our Lady of the Star” or simply “Madonna of Spoleto”. However, Archbishop Giovanni Battista Arnaldi of Spoleto officially bestowed the title, *Auxilium Christianorum* (“Help of Christians”) to that image.



The events of Spoleto gave currency to the title “Help of Christians” in Italy and conferred on it a “political charge”. At the beginning of 1860, the calamitous year of the annexation of the Papal States, Archbishop Arnaldi of Spoleto in a pastoral letter addressed to the faithful in the name of the bishops of the whole region, expressed the hope that “the Virgin responsible for all the victories of the Church”, would once more come to the rescue of the Pope and the Christians. He then called on the faithful to pray to God for help through the intercession of the Mother of God, Help of Christians.

7. Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians

The events of Spoleto in the 1860s greatly influenced Don Bosco’s devotion to Mary Help of Christians. In the Good Night of 24 May 1862 Don Bosco spoke of the Spoleto events. He told the story of the apparition and the miracle with great joy, and expressed his happiness in the decision of the Archbishop of Spoleto to honour the Virgin under the title of “Help of Christians.” In the Good Night of 30 May 1862 Don Bosco narrated the “Dream of the Two Columns”: he spoke of two pillars rising in the midst of the sea, one holding the Sacred Host, the other the statue of Mary Immaculate beneath which a placard bore the inscription “Help of Christians.” He then described a flotilla of enemy ships attacking the Pope’s galley and trying to sink it. The Pope is wounded and falls, but he rises and steers his ship in between the two columns and anchors it safely there.

In the Marian Calendar of the *Catholic Readings* for June and July 1862, the date 26 April carried an important note on the feast of Mary Help of Christians and its meaning. Taking note of the political situation of Italy marked by the annexation of Papal States as part of Italian unification (1861), revolution and anti-clericalism, Don Bosco said that the Church is really in need of the help of the Mother of God, which calls on her as “Help of Christians”. He wrote: “As we are surrounded by enemies [and attacked] without respite, [...] we are very much in need of extraordinary help against their ambushes and dangerous attacks. [...] But where shall this help come from? From Mary, the Mother of God. The Church calls her the Help of Christians.”

In Don Bosco’s preface to his *Marvels of the Mother of God* (1868) he stated that there was a special reason why the Church in recent times wished to invoke Mary as Help of Christians. He said: “In our day, it is the Catholic Church itself that is under attack in its ministry, in its sacred institutions, in its Head, in its doctrine and in its discipline.”

In 1885 Don Bosco composed a beautiful prayer in Latin addressed to the Virgin, which was a prayer replete with unshakable faith and hope in Mary Help of Christians. Part of this prayer read as follows: “O Mary, mighty Virgin, you are the strong and glorious defence established in the Church; you are the marvellous Help of Christians; you are as awesome as an army in battle array; you are the one who alone has vanquished all heresies throughout the world. In difficulties, in struggles, in straits do you defend us from the enemy.”

Thus, Don Bosco saw in Mary’s help the promise and guarantee of the ultimate success of the Church’s mission. For him she was the *Help of Christians* in the great battle of faith and in building the Kingdom of God, the one who protects and guides the Church. She was the symbol of victory over forces of evil that assail the Church and the life of Christians in all ages. These ideas we find repeatedly mentioned in the writings of Don Bosco and in his prayers and exhortations.

The Christians have frequently witnessed the miraculous interventions of Mary Help of Christians in the history of the Church. Whenever persecutions, wars, and tyranny of anti-Christian forces threatened the Church, Mary has stretched forth her arms, and the obstacles were removed. This has been repeatedly proved over the centuries. Whenever the people called upon her in deep faith, and accompanied by prayer, especially the rosary, Christians have experienced the power of Mary’s intervention in most dramatic ways.

8. Conclusion: Special Prayers to Mary Help of Christians for India

As we are well aware, the Christians in India are going through very difficult times. Though they are a very small minority in the country, since some years, they are experiencing religiously motivated violence in its various forms. In some places



Christians are harassed, physically attacked, threatened and even killed for following Christ. Mary Help of Christians is the “Madonna of times of trouble”. We read in our Constitutions: “We believe that Mary is present among us and continues her ‘mission as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians’” (C.8). So, we shall pray to her to stretch forth her arms and protect and defend the Church in India.

The Lok Sabha Elections in the country is in progress, and it is expected that on 23 May the results will be announced: the eve of the Solemnity of Mary Help of Christians! We need to intensify our prays for a government that will rule the nation according to the principals laid down in the Constitutions of the country and guarantee to all the citizens their fundamental rights. We also need enlightened political leaders who will promote the good of all, especially the poor and the marginalised, and defend democracy, secularism, and the cultural and religious pluralism of India, and practice true *Dharma*, as envisaged by our freedom fighters. I invite all the conferees and communities to say special prayers to Mary Help of Christians, especially the holy rosary, for a good outcome of the general elections.

INFORMATION, NEWS and UPDATES

Renewal of the Act of Entrustment of our Communities to Mary Help of Christians on 24 May 2019

If you remember, on 24 September 2018 all our communities had made the Act of Entrustment of our communities to Mary Help of Christians. I would like that we *renew* the same act of entrustment on 24 May 2019. I wish also that it becomes an annual practice in our communities. I am giving below the prayer of entrustment:

Prayer for the Act of Entrustment of our Communities to Mary Help of Christians

(Adapted from the Prayer for the Solemn Act entrustment of the Salesian Congregation to Mary Help of Christians, 14 January 1984, Invocation to Our Lady composed by Don Bosco and other prayers to Our Lady)

Mary Help of Christians, and Mother of the Church, we, the sons of Don Bosco of this community gathered in front of your holy image, entrust ourselves today to your motherly intercession.

We place in your care our pledge to be faithful to the charism of Don Bosco, and the Constitutions and Regulations. We entrust to you our communities and institutions, our apostolic works on behalf of youth and common people, the challenging task of educating and evangelizing the young, the heavy responsibility of formation, the labour and fatigue of our missionaries and catechists, the sacrifice and dedication of our teachers, the hidden service of the non-teaching staff, volunteers, friends, benefactors, and well-wishers, the immense apostolic field of integral human development, of social communication, of vocational training, and the delicate task of animation of those entrusted to our pastoral care and our collaborators in mission and the Salesian Family.

Keep us O Mother under your mantle, which is a shelter, a refuge and a place of security. Guard and protect us from all dangers, calamities and disasters, conflicts and violence, accidents and misfortunes, and from all the snares of the enemy, physical and moral. Bless and strengthen our every desire to do good; give new life and nourishment to faith; sustain and enlighten hope; awaken and animate charity; and guide us all on the path to holiness.

Accept, we beg you O Help of Christians, this filial Act of Entrustment with the benevolence of a Mother, and intercede for us with your Son.

Mary Help of Christians, pray for us. Amen.

Course for New Provincials

I will be absent from the province from 29 May to 28 June 2019 as I will be in Rome for the course for the new provincials. I will also take the occasion to complete some of the academic responsibilities I had assumed at the Faculty of Philosophy of UPS prior to my appointment as provincial. In my absence our Vice Provincial Fr. Nazarius Lakra will take my place and will be responsible for the ordinary government of the province (art. C.168).

Seminar on Evangelisation and Catechesis

We have completed the seminar on evangelisation and catechesis for the local ecomomers (administrators) and for the headmasters and principals of our schools and colleges. The same seminar will be offered to the parish

priests (8-9 August), junior priests (17-18 September) and rectors and in-charges of communities (24-25 October). Those who do not belong to any these categories are welcome (expected!) to participate in one of the forthcoming seminars.

Catechetical Congress 2019

In preparation for the centenary celebrations of the arrival of the Salesians in Northeast India, a Catechetical Congress will be organized at Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong from 17 to 19 May 2019. Those who wish to participate in the congress are to contact Fr. Barnes Mawrie SDB, the coordinator of the congress.

Commission for Education and Culture

I am appointing the following confreres as members of the Commission for Education and Culture: Fr. Thettayil Joseph (Delegate), Fr. Gangmei Jangsinlung Joshua, Fr. Hans Igness, Bro. Kaliyaden Mathew, Fr. Kunnathettu Vincent (K.C), Fr. Madathiparambil Jose Thomas, Fr. Karinattu Benny Kurian and Fr. Chazhisseil Stephen.

Novices

There are nine pre-novices who will be entering the novitiate this year at Emmaus Novitiate, Zubza. I thank Fr. Rector and other Salesians of the Pre-novitiate house for preparing them to enter the novitiate.

SI No	Names	Diocese
1	ARÜCHO Lohe Asahrü Anthony	Imphal
2	BIER Khriekedozo Francis	Kohima
3	EKKA Nitesh	Rourkela
4	INDWAR Akash Mukti	Dibrugarh
5	KHAWAKHRIE Petevisie Paul	Kohima
6	PAMEI Aching Albert	Imphal
7	PANMEI Somrei Titus	Imphal
8	PANMEI Thaikhui Henry	Imphal
9	YEPTHOMI Hekheto Thomas	Kohima

First Professions

The following ten novices will be making their first religious profession at Emmaus Novitiate, Zubza, on 24 May 2019. Let us accompany them with our prayers. A word of appreciation to the novice master and other formators who have prepared them for this important event.

SI NO	Name	Diocese
1	AKEO Kabian Clement	Imphal
2	ATHEW Clinton Anthony	Imphal
3	EPETSING Isaac	Imphal
4	GANGMEI Ngamphunang Paul	Imphal
5	HUMTSOE Zabenthung Dominic John	Kohima
6	KOMPOING Eliasetpe Thomas	Imphal
7	KUJUR Surjit	Dibrugarh
8	MAHEO Elow Stephen	Imphal
9	POUPUVEIO Christopher	Imphal
10	YANTHAN Ekonthung Aaron	Kohima

Perpetual Profession

Four clerics will make their perpetual profession on 19 May 2019 at Christ King Parish, Kohima. We congratulate them for their courageous step to commit themselves forever to the Lord in the Salesian Congregation.

SI No	Title	Name	Year of First Profession
1	Cl	KAPE Mekrúo Lawrence	2012-05-24
2	Cl	LUGUN Michael	2012-05-24
3	Cl	PHIKUTO Xavier	2013-05-24
4	Cl	SHONGVAH Ningyangmi Lucas	2012-05-24

LIVING IN OUR MEMORY – May

Date	Name	Place	Year
15 May	Fr. Paliakara Raphael	Ngarian	2001
15 May	Fr. Kindo Andreas	Ngarian	2001
15 May	Cl. Valliparambil Shinu Josep	Ngarian	2001
16 May	Fr. Arackal Thomas	Tinsukia	1991
25 May	Bro. Orappankal James	Rajapuram	2007

Imploring God's grace and protection on all the confreres and communities,
Yours in Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco,



Fr Jose Kuruvachira SDB
(Provincial)



Corrigendum: In my circular letter of April 2019 I had erroneously written that Fr. T.C. George SDB was the SPCSA delegate for missionary animation for 13 years. In reality he held that office only for 9 years. The mistake is regretted. Fr. Jose Kuruvachira

Programme for the Month of May 2019

Date	Day	Province Programme	Fr. Provincial's	Fr. Vice Provincial's	Fr. Economer's
1	Wed	St. Joseph: the Worker, May Day	Preparation for P. Chapter	Dimapur	Dimapur
2	Thu		Dimapur	Dimapur	Dimapur
3	Fri	Philip and James Apostles, First Friday	Dimapur: Meeting with Moderator of PC and logistical team	Dimapur	Dimapur
4	Sat		Dimapur	Dimapur	Dimapur
5	Sun	Third Sunday of Easter, Provincial Chapter (5-10) arrival, Chapter Inaugural function at 5.00 pm	Provincial Chapter	Dimapur	PC
6	Mon	Feast of St. Dominic Savio, Institutional Feast: Imphal and Zubza Savio Home, Chapter - Recollection	Provincial Chapter	Dimapur	PC
7	Tue	Chapter Day - 2	Provincial Chapter	Dimapur	PC
8	Wed	Chapter Day - 3	Provincial Chapter	Dimapur	PC
9	Thu	Chapter Day - 4	Provincial Chapter	Dimapur	PC
10	Fri	Chapter Day - 5, Chapter ends at 20.30	Provincial Chapter	Dimapur	PC
11	Sat	Mission Day, Bl. Zefferino Namuncura	Dimapur	Dergaon	
12	Sun	Fourth Sunday of Easter, Vocation Sunday	Visitation DB School Dimapur (evening)	Rangajan	Rangajan
13	Mon	St. Mary Mazzarello, Congregational Feast: FMA	Visitation DB School Dimapur, Mass at Auxilium	Dimapur	DBS Dimapur
14	Tue	Mathias: Apostle - Feast	Visitation DB School Dimapur	Dimapur	AIDA
15	Wed	✠ <i>Fr. Raphael (2001), Fr. Andreas (2001), Br. Shinu (2001)</i>	Visitation DB School Dimapur → DBPH	Dimapur	Imphal
16	Thu	St. Louis Orione, ✠ Fr. Thomas Arackal (1991)	Dimapur	Dimapur	Khoupum
17	Fri	Retreat for PT Brothers at DBIDL starts at 18.00 hours, Theme: Evangelisation and catechesis	Dimapur Retreat of PT Brothers	Dimapur	Khoupum
18	Sat	St. Leonard Murialdo , Full Day Recollection for Brothers who are making Perpetual Profession, Retreat	Retreat of Brothers → DB Kohima (evening)	Dimapur	→Tamenglong
19	Sun	Fifth Sunday of Easter, Perpetual Profession in Christ King Parish, Retreat	Christ King Kohima	Amguri	Tamenglong
20	Mon	Retreat	DB Kohima	Dimapur	Tamenglong
21	Tue	Retreat	Emmaus Novitiate (evening)	Dimapur	→Maram
22	Wed	Retreat	Emmaus Novitiate	Dimapur	Maram DBC
23	Thu	Renewal of Vows at Salesian College, Retreat for PT Brothers ends at 8.30 am	Emmaus Novitiate	Dimapur	Maram DBC
24	Fri	MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS: 1 st Profession at Emmaus 9 am, Patronal Feast: Kohima Diocese, Congregational Feast: FMA, MSMHC, SDB, Institutional Feast: Borduria, Dibrugarh, Khobong, Punanamai; Parish Feast: Punanamai, Khobong, Renewal of Act of Entrustment of Communities to MHC	Emmaus Novitiate →Dimapur	Dimapur	Maram
25	Sat	✠ <i>Br. James Orappankal (2007)</i>	Dimapur	Dimapur	Dimapur
26	Sun	Sixth Sunday of Easter, Salesian Family Day in DBPH	Dimapur Salesian Family Day	Dimapur	Dimapur
27	Mon	PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MEETING (27)	Dimapur	Dimapur	Dimapur
28	Tue		Dimapur →Delhi	Dimapur	Dimapur
29	Wed	Bl. Joseph Kowalski	Delhi →Europe	Dimapur	→Palin
30	Thu	Ascension of the Lord	Europe	Dimapur	Palin
31	Fri	Don Bosco, Visitation of Our Lady, Feast of VSDBs	Europe	Dimapur	Palin