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My Dearest Sisters,

Viva Gesu`! Affectionate greetings to each one of you from Kodambakkam!

The Vow of Obedience in Religious Life: A Process of Growing in Holiness by Being More Fully Aligned with God's Will.

INTRODUCTION

The religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are considered ways to conform to the life of Jesus Christ more perfectly. By living the evangelical vows, they radically emulate the life of Christ, become free for God, and find true joy. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* describes consecrated persons as beacons of joy, radiating the joy of the Gospel. This joy stems from their commitment to imitating Jesus and dedicating their lives to God's will through vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vows are not a path of denial or something that I give up but a profound path to holiness. Consecrated persons are called to be contagious with their holiness of life, imitating Jesus and His complete devotion to doing God's will, bringing its fruits to the women and men of our time.

This month, I would like to share my reflections on the significance of the vow of obedience. Obedience means "*to listen intently, to open one's ears, to heed in practice*". Obedience is a response to the Lord's words, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me to complete his work" (Jn 4:34). The vow of obedience in religious life signifies a commitment to prioritise God's will over one's own, often through obedience to leaders within the religious community. This vow is an active listening to God's voice in all the ways possible, especially through community leaders. It's a means of aligning one's life with the teachings of Jesus and living in closer union with God. It calls for a willingness to respond in a spirit of humility, love and service.

1. Prioritise God's Will and Joyous Decision-Making in the Light of Christ

With the vow of obedience, we, like Christ, seek to live God's will. Ironically, the greatest limits in the fulfilment of the will of God come not from outside of us but from within us. We are driven by self-serving needs and wants, human desires and ambitions, often without being aware of them. But when these desires and needs are exaggerated, we become enslaved and are driven to the point that they shape our choices in life and mission. "Our sinfulness, our pride, our weakness, our greed, and the need to be right or useful or to dominate others often drive us to take certain self-centred decisions and actions. In reality, these interior forces are chains binding us, preventing us from living this vow of obedience with inner freedom and responsibility!"

On 2 February 2015, Pope Francis told religious men and women that total obedience to God's will brings wisdom, joy and hope. The Pope said, "Yes, the happiness of a religious is a consequence of this path of lowering oneself with Jesus, and, when we are sad, when we

complain, it will do us well to ask ourselves how we are living this dimension of ‘kenosis’ or self-emptying.” The life of obedience demands a constant formation in listening less and less to the demands of the ego and more and more to the invitation of the one who stands in the person of Christ. Obedience is an intentional, deliberate and conscious act of putting the self aside and surrendering to God’s will. This tames the ego, the will, the intellect, the character and even the personality (Pope Francis, 2 February 2015). It is about moving away from what is good or best for oneself to what is better or best for all, the local community or the institute, and for the greater glory of God.

2. A Special Place of Grace Lived in Responsible Freedom and Love

Obedience leads us to a greater and responsible freedom and love. It enables a more profound union with God. As an individual, one completely offers one’s being, including one’s will, time, energy, resources, love and everything, to God. Our love for Christ and his commands naturally extends to love of our Sisters in community, including those who are in positions of authority. At the same time, those in positions of authority are called to show generous love to those entrusted to their care so that obedience may be lived out in this same spirit of love: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15). When lived in this way, obedience does not have to be burdensome. It becomes less of responding to demands and more for the love of God and others.

Obedience is a special time of grace that enables one to live in love and responsibility. Such obedience calls for an interior bending of one’s will. The reason we bend our knees in prayer is to symbolise the bending of our will in adoration to God. Pope Francis highlights the vow of obedience in religious life as a journey towards closer union with God and a more faithful following of Jesus. It’s a complete offering of oneself, including one’s legitimate needs and choices, to God. This vow enables us religious, to discern and embrace God’s will with love. It obliges us to submit our wills to legitimate superiors when they order us to do what is according to our constitutions. Const. Art... 31 states: “Through the vow of obedience made with faith and love, the FMA publicly commits herself to submit to the lawful superiors as ‘God’s representatives.’” Lawful superiors, we are told, act in the place of God. Those who, by God’s grace, are living in a religious community should thank God on bended knees and bend their wills at any cost to self-will, to obey humbly, cheerfully and lovingly. After all, Jesus Christ, the first religious, paid dearly for His obedience, even unto death on the Cross. Should we not be ready with His grace to do the same?

3. Discernment: The Articulation and Action of an Incarnate God

Our vow of obedience is the articulation and action of an incarnate God in the lives of those of us called to live this vow. The word in Hebrew for obedience, *shama*, is to listen, to hear, to pay attention to and to align our lives to the Word of God. Discerning what God is calling us to, is not just an individual activity. It requires deep listening, reflecting with others, and an openness for the unexpected. We are also called to listen, to reflect and to articulate the needs of God’s people, the charism of the Institute, and journey into a yet-unknown future. Don Bosco considered obedience as the ‘hinge’ of our life because it is closely linked to our apostolic mission and to the community dimension that characterises it (Const. Art 32). It is an invitation to take seriously the invitation of the leaders, to be honest and open with those in leadership in the community, and to be a part of the mutual community discernment process. Through mutual discernment, the individual learns to graciously obey and witness to Christ’s mission with zeal and compassion.

Discernment becomes a pathway to an interior perception in the light of the Spirit. It is not about choosing one good thing over the other or identifying the best possible responses to challenges, needs or situations. The vow of obedience involves a constant practice of listening to God's voice, both directly and through the guidance of spiritual leaders and guides. This listening requires discernment, reflection, and openness to the unexpected, as we seek to understand God's will in our daily lives. Living the vow of obedience is demanding, not because we need to be very attentive to God's inspirations and obey God's representatives, but because we are in love with a lavish God. Discernment is a part of the 'daily' in our religious life. Discerning what God is calling us to, is not just an individual activity. It requires deep listening, mutual dialogue, and ever-ready openness to God's surprises.

5. Living in Conformity with Christ's Service and Unity

Religious obedience is the engine of consecrated life and is the gift of God to know, love and serve Him as Christ did. It fosters a spirit of service and unity within the religious community. The vow of obedience is a vow of discernment through listening to the many voices of God. It promotes the common good, and the way we live obedience invites others to "understand the importance of living interdependently". Mature obedience requires conformity with Christ's life of love, service and unity. It encourages individuals to work together, relying on each other and submitting to shared authority for the common good. Obedience involves everyday personal and community choices as we live our ministry today. Through respectful communal discernment, the Spirit of Wisdom eventually yields holy, obedient, flourishing of shared mission, peace and harmony. The individual, together with the community, listens and scrutinises interior voices to make a just decision.

The consecrated religious also have to be obedient and docile to their religious community, their superiors, rules of the congregation's and the church. Jesus came not to follow his own will but to obey the Father's will (Pope Francis, 2 February 2015). To live loving obedience, we must listen, submit to our lawful superiors, engage in fraternal discussion and work together for each other. The vow of obedience often demands more faith to live it meaningfully because many aspects of our lives are decided by others who speak with the authority of God. We have committed ourselves out of love for God to obey those who are, for us, His representatives. This surrender of our will forms us in the likeness of Christ and commits us to humbly accept the decision taken for the good of the community.

6. A Journey of Growing in Holiness

The vow of obedience is a daily journey of conversion, allowing the Holy Spirit to permeate the heart and transform the individual's way of living. It's a process of growing in holiness and becoming more fully available for the mission of God. The path of religious obedience is a path of fulfilment, of plenitude, of richness in which one is empowered in one's pursuit of sanctity. Then, the frenzy of our over-activism and anxieties neutralises our goal for holiness and happiness. It destroys our capacity for good and healthy relationships, unconditional acceptance and forgiveness in daily life, and the ability to focus on the common good of the community and the mission. The obedience in the Gospel is an act of trust, an act of following God's commandments of love.

An obedience full of love and trust in the relationship between Jesus and God the Father is a means to collective and individual holiness. The consecrated persons are to strive daily to concretely express and live out the vow of obedience. It is to surrender one's independent decision-making to further our common mission and a sign of God's unifying community holiness of life. Most profoundly, the vow of obedience enables the religious to live in union

with God, completely offering their whole being to Him. It is a journey freeing the religious to follow Jesus more wholeheartedly, to do God's will completely and to become saints... Therefore, let us give God the time and space to be able to speak to us so that we can discern His will and accomplish it willingly with love. Let us remember the story of Jeremiah and the potter at work when God says, "Can I not do with you what the potter does?"

CONCLUSION

The evangelical foundation of religious obedience is first of all found in the perfect accord of that obedience with the spirit of the Gospel. Freedom from ambition leads a person to choose the spirit of humility which esteems others as superior and willingly yields to them the first place; the sacrifice of one's independence and the life of the spirit of self-denial and mortification; the readiness to accept a common rule and direction manifests a spirit of union and concord; eagerness to do the will of God in all things is a mark of the charity towards God which led Christ to say, "I do always the things which please my Father" (Jn 7:29). Like Mary, let our 'Yes' lived in faith be offered over and over again in daily fidelity. As our Constitutions state, let us live our obedience "in all simplicity" in the Salesian attitude of 'I'll go, ready to make 'great sacrifice of our will.'" Let us make Mary's *fiat* our own (FMA Const. Art 32).

In essence, the vow of obedience in religious life is a profound commitment to follow God's will in all aspects of life through active listening, humility, and service, both to God and to those in authority in the religious community. Religious obedience recommends submission to lawful powers, especially by the following: "He who hears you hears me" (Lk 10:16). By the vow of obedience, religious make decisions in tune with God's Will, which is often mediated for them through the authority. Through mutual discernment, the individual learns to graciously obey and witness to Christ's mission with love and freedom. While obedience involves respect for authority, it requires discernment and the ability to distinguish between legitimate authority and potentially harmful demands. Individuals are encouraged to dialogue and express concerns when appropriate, always within the framework of respect and humility.

Finally, there are also the times when the faith and suffering that accompany obedience become a means God uses to bless us and others. We are the Mystical Body of Christ, and obedience to God is always blessed. Obedience is still the hardest vow, and yet it gives us the greatest freedom because it helps us to live in union with Christ who said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work" (Jn 4:34). Above all, the obedience we profess is a response to the love of God, poured into our hearts through God's grace. When living in this way, obedience is not arduous. Rather, it helps us to grow in love and to grow closer to God through our willingness to live out his commands.

Some questions to ponder:

1. Am I able to obey joyfully my leaders in the community and the province?
2. What are the blocks that I see in my life to obeying joyfully and willingly?
3. Do I, personally, have an experience of sincere discernment or conversation in the spirit before every important step in my life?
4. As members of the community, how can we enter this process of discernment before making important decisions?

CELEBRATIONS OF THE MONTH

01 Thu	-	St Joseph the Worker
03 Sat	-	Ss Philip and James, Apostles
06 Tue	-	St Dominic Savio
11 Sun	-	Vocation Sunday
13 Tue	-	St Mary Mazzarello and Our Lady of Fatima
14 Wed	-	St Matthias, the Apostle
24 Sat	-	Mary Help of Christians
26 Mon	-	St Philip Neri
29 Thu	-	St Paul VI, Pope
31 Sat	-	Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

A Tribute to our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis:

With profound gratitude and filial affection, we pay tribute to our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis. His life of humble service, tireless compassion, and unwavering faith has been a luminous witness for the Church and for the world. In a particular way, Pope Francis has shown a tender and paternal closeness to us, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco. His esteem for the Salesian charism was evident in his words, his gestures, and his encouragement to remain faithful to our mission among the young and the poor.

A moment of immense joy and blessing was his personal visit to the FMA Generalate in Rome (Italy) on 22 October 2021, when he met the participants of the XXIV General Chapter. Centred on the theme *“Do whatever He tells you (Jn 2:5): Communities that generate life in the heart of contemporaneity”*, the Chapter was graced by the Holy Father's message calling the Sisters to be “generative communities” and “women of hope.” In his address, Pope Francis encouraged the service carried out by the FMA throughout the world, especially in today’s multicultural and multi-religious social context, marked by tensions, uncertainties, and new forms of poverty exacerbated by the global crisis.

The Holy Father urged the Sisters to immerse themselves courageously in this fragile reality, remaining deeply rooted in Christ and resisting the temptations of spiritual worldliness. He highlighted the need for a creative fidelity to the charism, reminding all that the charism is not an “embalmed relic” but a “living reality”, a vibrant life that must be continually renewed in collaboration with the Holy Spirit. It is, as he beautifully expressed, “the good wine” that must find new expressions today, always faithful to its original gift yet capable of responding to contemporary needs.

Pope Francis further emphasized cultivating communities woven with intergenerational, intercultural, fraternal, and cordial relationships, drawing inspiration from the family spirit of the first community of Mornese. He invited the Sisters to see diversity as a richness and to foster relationships of reciprocity and co-responsibility, offering a living witness to synodality with openness to the “novelties and surprises” of the Holy Spirit. His heartfelt appeal to the Chapter Members was clear: to be generative communities and “women of hope,” living the Salesian identity with a spirit of listening, active presence, and profound love for the young.

The extraordinary experience of that day was lived by all in an atmosphere of universal fraternity, leaving a lasting imprint of joy and renewed missionary ardour. It strengthened the resolve of each Sister to be a sign of hope and a bearer of the Gospel, reaching out with the passion and zeal that marked the first Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Let us put into practice his teachings and become for the young and the members of the Educating Community today a sign of hope and live the Gospel way as did Pope Francis!

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Welcome Home!

- We happily welcome our dear Sr Anandaraj Jaya Shanthi, who will be returning to India on 29 May 2025 after completing her one-year **Formation Course in Auxilium, Rome**. We wish her all the best for her new assignment.
- Hearty welcome to our dear Sisters, Sr Don Bosco Swingle Jerida (SL) and Sr Vasthiyampillai Sulaixana (SL) who return to our Province on 2 June 2025 after completing their one-year **Intensive Juniorate in Nongthymmai, Shillong**. We wish them all the best for their mission in Sri Lanka.

Entry into Novitiate, First & Final Commitment

- ✚ I am happy to communicate to you that our **Postulants** John David Asha Mary, Rajesh Srinithi and Tharsiyus Raja Auxilia, along with Charles Jasmin Jaya, Jonas Jenova Theresa and Subbiah Shenbaga Mallika of INT, will be entering into the period of their Novitiate on 23 May 2025 after their annual retreat from 16-23 May 2025 at Sacred Heart Novitiate, Manikandam, Trichy.
- ✚ Hearty congratulations to our second-year novices Sr Antonyraj Narmadha, Sr Arockia Doss Anish Hema, Sr Arul Prakasam Fabia Cletus, Sr Maria Selvam Susai Mary along with Sr Babiles Paul Prabhakaran Sweety and Sr Rabel Ketharin of INT, who will be making their **First Profession** on 24 May 2025 at Sacred Heart Novitiate, Manikandam, Trichy.
- ✚ Hearty congratulations to our Sisters Sr Charles Lowra Nambikkai Mary and Sr Joseph Karmel for their joyful 'Yes' to God's call and their irrevocable decision to follow Him till the end of their life. They will be making their **Final Commitment** on 25 May 2025 at Mary Help of Christians Church, Tirupattur at 5.30 p.m. The Holy Eucharistic celebration will be presided over by Most Rev. Dr Jeevanandam Amalanathan D.D., Bishop of Kumbakonam Diocese. We express our hearty congratulations to our Sisters Sr Arulnesam Maria Jenatnayaki (SL) and Sr Emmanuvel Camalin Rialini (SL) for their determination to commit themselves to God in serving young people in a Salesian Way. They will be making their **Final Commitment** on 31 May 2025 at St Antony Church, Rambaikulam, Vavuniya, Sri Lanka at 10.30 a.m. Most Rev. Dr Anthonipillai Gnanapragasam D.D., Bishop of Mannar Diocese, will preside over the Holy Eucharist.

Summer Course and Renewal of Vows

- ✚ **Our eighteen Junior Sisters** will be participating in the summer renewal course from 12 to 22 May 2025 at **Yercaud**. They will be enriched on FMA Constitutions and various other topics by different resource persons. I am grateful to Sr Irudayanathan Helen for accepting to accompany the young Sisters during these days of the renewal course. I thank Sr Susai

Josephine Rani for organizing the Programme and the resource persons for the same. I also thank the Sr Chinnappan Philomena and the Sisters of the community for creating a conducive atmosphere for formation and renewal.

Our thirteen Junior Sisters in Sri Lanka will be participating in the summer renewal course from 18 to 28 May 2025 in **Negombo**, Sri Lanka. I owe my gratitude to Sr Lazar Maria Nirmala for coordinating the programme and accompanying our Sisters in their formative journey. I also thank Sr Arokiasamy Rackel Mary and the community for their contribution to the smooth running of the programme.

✚ On 23 May 2025, at Yercaud, our **temporary professed Sisters** will be **renewing their fidelity** to the Lord. Let us accompany them with our prayers that they may continue joyfully their formative journey in our Institute with passion for Christ and His Kingdom. We express our hearty congratulations to them and to our temporary professed Sister Sr Sahayaseelan Kajana in **Sri Lanka** who will be renewing her vows on 30 May 2025 in **Omanthai**.

On this happy occasion, I express my gratitude to the Superiors, Formators and Assistants who accompanied these postulants, novices and temporary professed Sisters to discern God's will and stood by their side to pursue God's call, particularly, Sr Cruz Michael, the Novice Formator and the community of Sacred Heart Novitiate, Manikandam, Trichy, and Sr Chinnappan Gracy Fatima, the Superior and community of Sacred Heart Home, Katpadi, and all the superiors, past and present, who accompanied Sr Charles Lowra Nambikkai Mary and Sr Joseph Karmel, Sr Arulnesam Maria Jenatnayaki (SL) and Sr Emmanuvel Camalin Rialini (SL) all set to make their final commitment.

✚ A special thanks to Sr Alphonse Yettukuri who coordinated the Programme and Sr Antony Raj Christina and the Sisters of Kodambakkam, Sr Kunnathu Anna, the Provincial Economer and Sr Susai Josephine Rani, the Formation Coordinator, for facilitating and guiding them during the II Phase of II Novitiate in various capacities from 15 April to 15 May 2025. A sincere thanks to Sr Fernando Majella, the Provincial and the Sisters of INT for their accompaniment during their Annual Retreat from 16 to 23 May 2025.

✚ Hearty congratulations to all the Sisters who keep the anniversary of their first and final profession during May 2025.

Community List 2025-2026

I am profoundly grateful to each one of you for your generous collaboration and wholehearted adherence to the mission entrusted to your care. I deeply appreciate your spirit of obedience and your great sense of belonging to our Province, demonstrated in your readiness to serve wherever needed. You will soon receive the list of the Sisters assigned to the various communities of the Province for the year 2025–2026. I earnestly appeal to you, dear Sisters, particularly those who have received new assignments, to execute the handing over of your duties with exactness and openness, under the supervision of the Superior, to your successor. I kindly request that you ensure your arrival at your designated community **by 28 May 2025**. Let us each strive to keep alive the vibrant spirit of our Institute and to guarantee the seamless continuation of the apostolate entrusted to us, with fidelity and zeal.

Request for Prayers

- Let us earnestly beseech our Heavenly Father, through fervent prayers and heartfelt sacrifices, for the election of a holy and wise Pope - a true Shepherd who will faithfully lead the flock of Christ in the ways of God and uphold the sacred mission of the Church.
- Let us keep in our prayers all those who are sick, especially our Sisters, Parents, and the dear ones of our Sisters.

NOTE OF THANKS

- ❖ Hearty thanks to Sr Chinnappan Philomena Rani and the community of Mornese, Yercaud, for making all the arrangements to create a prayerful atmosphere for the Animators and Provincial Councillors who made their Annual Retreat from 3 to 11 April 2024 and for hosting the Provincial Council on 12 and 13 April 2024.
- ❖ Grateful acknowledgements to Sr Antony Raj Christina, the Animator, and the entire Kodambakkam Community for the hospitality extended to the ecomomers for the submission of the Society Accounts on 23 April 2024. Sincere thanks to Sr Kunnathu Anna for organizing it.
- ❖ A note of thanks to Sr Sebastian Vimala and Sr Maria Prakash Kanimozhi for organizing and coordinating the entire Summer Vocation Camp in different phases in Polur and Katpadi. I thank Sr Fernando Amutha and the community of Polur, Sr Gaspar Celine and the Sisters of Auxilium Home, Katpadi for hosting the Vocation Camp and nurturing Vocation Culture. A word of thanks to Sr Josephine Antonyraj and Sr Chinnappan Gracy Fatima, and all those who helped in various ways for the vocation camp. Special thanks to all the Superiors and the Sisters involved in vocation drive all through the year.
- ❖ Thanks to Sr Susai Raj Mary Sheila and the community of Kingsford for hosting the Vocation Camp for Girls. A special note of thanks to our dear Sr Selvam Maria, who coordinated the programme and Sr Arockia Samy Ancy Jenifer, Sr Joseph S. Christina Jenifer, who were full-time helpers and Sr Mahimainadhan Sathiyavani, Sr Anthony Cruz Mathalen Mary and Sr Santhiagu Mary Theresa, who helped in various capacities for the smooth running of the camp.

COURSES AND SEMINARS

- Sr Pazhayattil Annie and Sr Fernando Metilda will be participating in the course '**Ongoing formation for Missionaries Ad gentes**' from 3 to 29 May 2025 organized by the Mission ad/inter gentes sector, **Rome**. They will leave from Sri Lanka on 30 April and return on 30 May 2025.
- Sr Ananda Raj Jaya Santhi will participate in the Ordinary and Elective General Assembly of VIDES Internazionale, to be held from 9 to 11 May 2025 **at the International Center for Mission and Formation (CIAM), Rome**.
- Sr Alphonse J. Isabella will participate in the PCI Meet from 15 to 17 May 2025 at the INC Provincial House, Dum Dum, Kolkata.

- Sr Francis Jayamani, together with Ms Shree Shuruthi Easwaran, Mr Sagaya Divya Joseph Selvan, and Ms Valentine Usha Kalaiselvi, will participate in the **8th International Congress of Past Pupils**, organized by the Mornese World Federation of Past Pupils. The Congress will be held from 25 to 29 May 2025 **at Sacrofano, Rome, Italy**.
- Sr Anthonipillai Arulmalar, Sr Anton Bernard Liyana, Sr Christopher Dionit Nilojana, Sr Santhiogu Verginiya, and Sr David Anushiya will be participating in the Inner Healing Retreat, scheduled to take place from 15 to 18 May 2025 at the Divine Centre, Colombo.
- Sr Susai Raj Mary Sheila, Sr Mariapragasam Reetha, Sr Chinnanayagam Mary Sheela, and Sr Victor Juliana Agnes will participate in **Project Mornese**, Italy, from 3 to 23 June 2025. They are scheduled to depart on 30 May and return on 26 June 2025.

We wish them a fruitful experience!

HEARTFELT SYMPATHIES

Our loving prayers and condolences to all those who lost their dear ones in April 2025:

- Sr Fernando Nilmini and her family at the demise of her mother, Mrs Fernando Jacintha (65), who passed away on 1 April 2025 in Negombo.
- Fr Don Bosco Lourdasamy, Provincial of Chennai Province and the Conferers at the demise of Fr Augustine Nathan (81), on 7 April 2025, at Chetpet and Fr Arul Valan (54), on 8 April 2025, in Gingee.

LIVING IN OUR MEMORY

01 † Sr Colussi Rina (1966) † Sr Merlo Teresa Pierina (1993)
 02 † Sr Appiano Luigia (1970)
 05 † Sr Gomes Anna (2000) and Sr Battigelli Genevieve (2014)
 06 † Sr D’Gama Bertha (2008), Sr Piera Olivieri and Sr Dias Lydia (2014)
 07 † Sr Pereira Anne (1996)
 12 † Sr Mascarenhas Josephine (1988)
 18 † Sr Cogliolo Clotilde (1939) and Sr Gallina Cesira (1987)
 19 † Sr De Berardinis Tullia (1957) and Sr Perez Mary Magdalene (2019)
 20 † Sr Mathews Maddalena (2015) and Sr D’Souza Gladys (2017)
 21 † Sr Susai Pillai Saveria (1996)
 22 † Sr Vallino Innocenza (1946) and Sr Shyby Chirayth (2010)
 25 † Sr Agnes Anthony (2022)
 26 † Sr Sylvia Philomena Fernandes (2022)
 29 † Sr De Silva Muriel (1991)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 2025

01-29	Thu-Thu	On-going Formation Course for Missionaries, Italy
02-09	Fri-Fri	Annual Retreat- IV, Fr Emmanuel Maddhichetty SDB, Yercaud

09	Fri	Animation for Retreatants
09-10	Fri-Sat	CRI National Executive Committee Meeting, Bangalore
12-23	Mon-Fri	Summer Meet, Juniors, Yercaud
15-17	Thu-Sat	PCI Meet, Kolkotta
18-28	Sun-Wed	Summer Meet, Juniors, Negombo, SL
22	Thu	Full Day Recollection for Juniors, Yercaud
23	Fri	Renewal of Vows, Yercaud
24	Sat	First Profession, Manikandam, Trichy
25	Sun	Final Commitment, MHC Parish, Tirupattur
26	Mon	Provincial Council, Mary Immaculate Convent, Tirupattur
27	Tue	Inauguration of the New Community, Auxilium Care Home, Katpadi
29	Thu	Full Day Recollection for Juniors, Omanthai, SL
30	Fri	Renewal of Vows, Omanthai, SL
31	Sat	Perpetual Profession, Vavuniya Parish Church, SL

As we step into **May 2025**, we are graced with rich spiritual and social significance. **The first day of May, known as May Day**, is observed as the *International Day of Workers*, under the heavenly patronage of St Joseph the Worker. On this occasion, let us lift our prayers in a special way for all labourers, particularly those who generously collaborate with us in our institutions. May we also commit ourselves to initiatives that foster the sustainable development and dignity of all workers, in keeping with the Gospel spirit of justice and solidarity.

May is a month adorned not only with flowers but also with the feasts of two illustrious saints of the Salesian Family: *St Dominic Savio* **on 6 May**, and *St Mary Domenica Mazzarello* **on 13 May**. Both Saints, in their brief but luminous lives, demonstrated a profound and tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who shaped their spiritual journeys in extraordinary ways.

St Dominic Savio, youthful yet rich in virtue, harboured an ardent love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary. His prayer was simple yet sublime: "*Mary, I always want to be your son. Let me rather die than commit a single sin against chastity.*" With a heart purified by love, Dominic Savio often crafted edifying stories about Mary to inspire his school companions, gently encouraging them towards Confession and Communion in honour of the Blessed Mother. He did not merely speak; he led others by the silent eloquence of his example.

St Maria Domenica Mazzarello, from the days of her early youth, ardently participated in the Sodality of Mary Immaculate, striving to mirror the virtues of the Immaculate Mother. As the first Superior General, she became a living beacon of Marian devotion among the Sisters. In a gesture of humble trust, each evening she would lay the keys of the house at the feet of Mary Help of Christians, entrusting to her maternal protection the Sisters and their mission. Mother Mazzarello's unwavering confidence in Our Lady is reflected in her enduring counsel to the missionaries: "*Have great confidence in Our Lady; She will help you in everything*" (L 23:3). As we journey through this blessed month, may we, too, cultivate in our hearts an ever-deepening devotion to Our Lady, and in imitation of our Salesian saints, entrust ourselves and our mission entirely to her loving care.

On 24 May, we solemnly celebrate the **Feast of Mary Help of Christians**, a title that emerged from the rich tapestry of Christian history as a sign of Mary's powerful intercession, especially during times of trial and peril for the Church. This date was chosen to honour the miraculous return of Pope Pius VII to Rome in 1814, following his providential liberation from captivity, a clear manifestation of Mary's maternal aid. Saint John Bosco, with profound spiritual insight, recognized in the invocation "Help of Christians" a beautiful and comprehensive expression of Mary's ongoing role in the economy of salvation. In his words: "*The experience of eighteen*

*centuries demonstrates in a most vivid way that Mary continues most effectively from heaven her maternal and helping mission in the Church which she began on earth” (Maraviglie della Madre di Dio, 1868, p. 45). Faithful to the charism of Don Bosco, the Salesian Family embraces with filial devotion the maternal guidance of Mary Help of Christians. Her powerful intercession sustains us, invigorates our apostolic zeal, and strengthens our witness to God's tender love, particularly among the young, for whom she remains a beacon of hope and a sure refuge. As Mother General, Sr Chiara Cazzuola invites us in her circular 1048, let us be *strongly attuned to Mary, to love her with the heart of a true daughter, and to make some aspects of her beauty and maternal solicitude shine in our lives.**

On 29 May 2025, the Church joyfully celebrates the glorious **Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ**, marking His triumphant return to the heavenly realms. With majestic splendour, Christ ascended from Mount Olivet, bidding farewell to His disciples and entrusting to them the divine commission to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth. At the moment of His ascent, He assured them of His abiding presence through the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Ascension stands as a luminous testament to Christ's definitive victory over sin and death and His exaltation at the right hand of the Father, where He intercedes continually for all humanity, until the fulfilment of all things in Him. It invites us to lift our hearts heavenward, anchoring our hope not in the passing things of this world, but in the eternal glory that Christ has prepared for those who love Him.

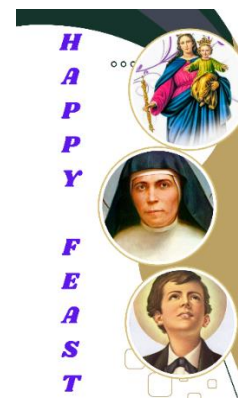
On 31 May 2025, the Church joyfully commemorates the Feast of the **Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, a profound moment of grace recorded in the Gospel of St Luke. Having received the astonishing announcement of the Incarnation, Mary, full of faith and humility, hastens with loving concern to the hill country to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who herself bears the herald of the Messiah, St John the Baptist. This sacred encounter is a luminous testimony to Mary's selfless charity, her obedience to the divine will, and her readiness to serve. At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, recognises the hidden presence of the Saviour within her young kinswoman; and John, even in the womb, leaps for joy. In a moment of divine revelation, Elizabeth acclaims Mary as “*the mother of my Lord*”, recognising in her the vessel of God's greatest promise. In response, Mary offers her sublime *Magnificat*, a canticle of profound praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty. In this song, she magnifies the Lord for His boundless mercy, His justice towards the lowly, and His fidelity to His covenant with His people. The Visitation thus stands as a radiant witness to the joy that springs forth when Christ is present, and calls us to emulate Mary's example of faith, charity, and joyful proclamation of God's enduring love.

Let us pay heed to the call of our beloved Mother General, Sr Chiara Cazzuola, who in her circular No.1048 presents to us the richness of **Mary's maternal presence in our life**, in the life of the Institute, in the life of our Founders. Let us *highlight in our own lives the features of Mary's face, to be her living memory today, to respond to God's call, and make the charism more vital in the Church and the world.*

Yours affectionately,

Sr. Devadoss Margaret

Sr Devadoss Margaret
INM FMA Provincial



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May 2025

01	Thu	Journey to Yercaud
02-08	Fri-Thu	Annual Retreat - IV, Yercaud
09	Fri	Journey to Bangalore
09-10	Fri-Sat	CRI National Executive Committee Meeting, Bangalore
11	Sun	Journey to Yercaud
12	Mon	Inauguration of Juniors' Summer Renewal Programme, Yercaud Journey to Chennai
13-14	Tue-Wed	Provincial Office, Kodambakkam
15-21	Thu -Wed	Personal Work
22	Thu	Journey to Manikandam, Trichy
24	Sat	First Profession, Manikandam, Trichy
25	Sun	Final Commitment, MHC Parish, Tirupattur
26	Mon	Provincial Council, Mary Immaculate Convent, Tirupattur
27	Tue	Inauguration of the New Community, Auxilium Care Home, Katpadi
29	Thu	Journey to Jaffna, SL
30	Fri	Renewal of Vows, Omanthai, SL
31	Sat	Perpetual Profession, Vavuniya, SL
JUNE 2025		
04	Wed	Return to Kodambakkam

