



My dear confreres,

Affectionate greetings from the Provincial House!

Soon we will be entering the week of the Season of Lent, a time of grace and renewal! In the last two months, we have been reflecting on the Strenna for 2018, trying to focus on various practical aspects of 'Listening to and Accompanying' the young in our care. In the first part of this Circular I would like to very briefly reflect on the **Ministry of Accompaniment in our Parish settings** and then to conclude with a short reflection on the theme of "**Reconciliation, not Revenge**" as part of our Lenten meditation. As pastors we are called to accompany the faithful more carefully during this season of Lent. Therefore, I think it is very appropriate that we reflect on how we, as Shepherds, can accompany our sheep, in a more loving and fatherly way. I would like to thank Fr. Jeffrey Gladstone and the Parish Sector for their valid contribution in helping me to prepare this Circular.

Introduction

Article 10 of our Constitutions speaks of pastoral charity as the centre of our Salesian Spirit. *The Salesian Spirit finds its model and source in the heart of Christ, apostle of the Father (C 11)*. Every Salesian is called to reflect this image of Christ to everyone in all the settings of our apostolate. But it behoves the priests working in parishes to become 'another Christ (*alter Christus*)' to the flock entrusted to their care and to act *in persona Christi Capitis* (in the person of Christ the Head). It means that every priest needs to be a Shepherd after the example of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.



Accompaniment through Sacramental Ministry

Sacraments are the palpable moments when God meets the human person to bestow grace in abundance. It is the privileged moment of accompaniment of Christ in the different phases of one's life. Hence, every priest as an authentic representative of Christ is called to make God's accompaniment very experiential through his own active and meaningful accompaniment of all those who are

getting ready to receive the various sacraments. This accompaniment would entail the following:

1. Identifying those who have not received the sacraments of initiation through family visits, casual talks with the parishioners and through the mediation of the Anbiam leaders.
2. Constantly reminding people during homilies, Sunday announcements, etc to receive the sacraments, and creating opportunities for the faithful to frequent the sacrament of reconciliation.
3. Selecting and training teachers to impart sacramental catechesis, teachers who would not only take care to teach the basics, but lead the students to a deeper understanding of our faith, without making it dull and drab.
4. This is to be followed up by immediate and intensive preparation given by the parish priest or his substitute in a caring manner.
5. As far as possible, the administration of the sacraments must be done in a community to assure them of greater accompaniment by the larger parish family.
6. Regarding the sacrament of Holy Matrimony more attention to be given not only before marriage, but also after the marriage, at least for two years, through periodical ongoing formation programmes for the newly married couples.
7. The quality of our accompaniment will be seen from the way we carry out our catechetical responsibilities in the parish, the commitment and enthusiasm we show in the proper and systematic teaching of catechism.
8. Making the celebration of Eucharist, particularly the Sunday Eucharist, an experience to be cherished, with the active participation of the young.



Accompaniment Through Shepherding Ministry

The whole of the Bible is a narration of God's accompaniment of humanity. We see God accompanying the people of Israel with faithfulness and patience, with love and kindness, with mercy, compassion and forgiveness and by establishing His covenant with them. He also reprimanded them, consoled them and renewed his covenant with them. Jesus accompanied the apostles drawing strength from His intimate relationship with the Father and the Spirit. Jesus accompanied the apostles with love, compassion, trust, patience, constancy, and truth. The Spirit's accompaniment of them from within made them work for communion of hearts and minds (unity in diversity).

Following the style of the Trinitarian God, every priest is called to accompany his flock by "being with" them in the 'dailyness' of life. Accompaniment is simply, as William Stringfellow calls it, the sacrament of mere presence. Accompaniment is not rescuing or saving; accompaniment is simply being with, among, and in relationship with the poor. Accompaniment is extending the sacrament of friendship. To accompany is to protect the humanity of others, sheltering them with your presence from the humiliations and degradations of life. Keeping in mind the following points can help the priest to translate his governing ministry into a ministry of accompaniment.

1. Walking shoulder to shoulder with the faithful especially when they are in the midst of crisis and pain.
2. Every faith encounter should become a celebration of God's love and reaffirmation of one another.
3. The pastor should become an agent of communion and communication.
4. Regular pastoral visits to the homes of the faithful are privileged moments of accompaniment.
5. A genuine effort to empower the laity in the spirit of an authentic missionary discipleship and to seek a wise process of inculturation of the gospel message in the daily life and traditions of local culture.
6. Accompaniment involves much patience and disregard for constraints of time (EG §24).
7. It involves mercy and patience [through] the eventual stages of personal growth as these progressively occur (EG §44)
8. It's about encouraging people to reach a level of maturity where they can make truly free and responsible decisions.
9. It means inviting others to let themselves be healed, to take up their mat, embrace the cross, leave all behind and go forth ever anew to proclaim the Gospel (EG §172);
10. It involves realizing that each person's situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without (EG §172);
11. It means acknowledging that in evangelization God takes the initiative, we are called to cooperate with the work of the Spirit; God alone "gives the growth" (1 Cor. 3:7) (EG §12).



Special Accompaniment of the young in our Parishes

Our Regulations, article 26, requires that ***a parish entrusted to the congregation should be distinguished by its low-income population and its interest in the young, especially those who are poorer.*** We are convinced that Don Bosco accompanied his boys with a father's love and care; with a friend's loyalty and support; with a guide's teaching and sharing. Don Bosco accompanied his boys by his loving and dynamic presence. Don

Bosco accompanied his boys by his numerous writings and publications too. Don Bosco accompanied his boys by giving himself totally to them (total availability). Don Bosco accompanied his boys by giving them freedom.

Following the style of Don Bosco, let the accompaniment of the youth become the distinguishing characteristic of every Salesian parish. Here are some ways of doing it.

1. Young people need strong examples; they need to see their parents, priests, brothers and sisters loving God and one another; they need to see us enthusiastic about our faith and our relationship with Jesus.

2. The youth need friendship; we priests and Salesians are called to be persons who can be easily approached by young people, persons who can be trusted, relied upon; young people want to share their difficulties and worries with persons who have had experience in life and in faith. They love fun, but they expect more than fun from us.
3. They have questions in their minds, questions about life, questions about the Church, questions about faith... They expect us priests and educators to be knowledgeable about things that matter to them and willing to take their questions seriously. And they expect us to guide them and challenge them.
4. Young people need prayer and the sacraments. They long for prayer but often many of them do not know how to pray; they need to be guided into prayer.
5. The youth should be encouraged to take part in activities that help them grow in the faith by inviting them to invest their time and energies in learning more about the Catholic faith, about the Bible, the church and her mission in the world of today.
6. The overall goal of youth and young adult outreach is to integrate them into the life, mission, and work of the parish and the Catholic Church. To accomplish this, parishes must invite, welcome, and include the youth and young adults in parish life, and accompany them in the mission.

NEWS FROM INM

INM Youth Pasch 2018

I would like to remind you about the **Youth Pasch 2018** organized by Deepagam from 29th March 2018 (Holy Thursday morning) to 31st, Easter Vigil, which will be held at Don Bosco Youth Animation Centre, Ennore. The Church this year wishes us to focus on how to lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love. The Salesian Congregation too emphasizes on the spiritual accompaniment of the young towards fullness of life. May I request you to give your full cooperation by sending the young people from all our settings to participate in this Youth Pasch, which will give them an opportunity to encounter the Risen Lord through a deeply meaningful celebration of the Paschal mysteries.

INM Meetings in MARCH 2018

<u>Date</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Venue</u>
07	Wed	PARISH & FORMATION COMMISSION	TIRUPATTUR
09	Fri	ADMINISTRATORS	CITADEL
10	Sat	PRINCIPALS / HEADMASTERS	CITADEL
14	Wed	Animation Centre Directors	CITADEL
15	Thu	Department Directors	CITADEL
17	Sat	RECTORS/LEADERS	CITADEL
18	Sun	Diaconate	DBB - Vyasarpadi
19-24	Mon - Sat	INM FIRST RETREAT	DBTC - Kpet



SPCSA Council and Assembly

The SPCSA Council began on 25 February 2018 at Don Bosco Provincial House, Kolkata with the Eucharist at which Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga, the Regional Councillor of South Asia, presided. Fr. Arokiam gave the keynote address. He stressed that we are leaders not just of a region but of the Congregation; hence our concern should be for all, not only for 'my province' or 'region,' and so we need to offer the best we have for the service of the Congregation. In the afternoon Fr. Ivo Coelho, the General Councillor for Formation, dealt with the process of formation. On 26 February, Fr. Francesco Cereda, the Vicar of the Rector Major, dealt with matters pertaining to religious discipline. The morning of 27 February had Bro. Jean Paul Muller, the Economer General, touching on financial matters. He emphasised the need for proper management and transparency in all our financial dealings. **The SPCSA Assembly** was held on 27 and 28 February. The various departments of the SPCSA presented reports of their activities. It was a rich sharing of the ministries of the departments, and a fruitful planning that will enrich our ministry in our provinces and in the region of South Asia. Dr. Om Prakash Misra presented a paper on "Nation Building, the Constitutional Way"; Fr. George Thadathil presented "The Challenges and Prospects of Christian Education in Contemporary India"; Fr. Savio Silveira presented a concept note on "Don Bosco Green Alliance". The Council will continue on 1st March for the approval of plans and budgets; to discuss strategies for nation-building, a green alliance, and a nerve centre; and for updates on the Salesian Brothers' Congress and the Boscoree.

*Rest in
Peace*

Our condolences to the Provinces of ING & IND

Rev. Fr. Joseph Pazhekadavan SDB (86) of ING died on 07.02.2018.

Rev. Fr. Anthony Abong B. Marak SDB of ING died on 12th February 2018.

Rev. Fr. Mathew Narimattam SDB of IND died on 24th February 2018.

We offer our heartfelt condolences to the provincials of Guwahati and Dimapur and assure them of our prayers for these departed confreres. May they rest in peace.

Our heartfelt condolences and prayers to Fr. Xavier Packia and family members, at the passing away of his dear younger brother **Mr. Amaladoss** (49) who died on 17th February 2018. The funeral was held on 17th evening at K. K. Patty, near Tanjore. Just two days later, his niece Rev. Sr. Jesi Jeya Rani FMM (32) passed away two days later on 19.02.2018.

for give
US OUR TRESPASSES
for give
THOSE WHO TRESPASS
AGAINST US

CONCLUSION – The season of Lent is a journey of reconciliation. I would therefore like to offer a brief reflection on the theme of **RECONCILIATION, NOT REVENGE**, as we live and work together as confreres in our respective communities during this Holy Season of Lent.

Revenge is articulated in the book of Genesis, chapter 4, by Cain, the first-born son of Adam and Eve. “Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. “Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘where is your brother Abel?’ “[Cain] said, ‘I do not know; Am I my brother’s keeper?’” Feelings of revenge come easily to us human beings, and we are all familiar with the tendency to give tit for tat or an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Feelings of revenge emerge when someone wrongs us, hurts us, betrays us. For most of us, acting out of vengeance may never go beyond the fantasy stage; our rational mind and our moral sense kicks in, and we say, let it be, and move on with life. But some find it really hard to control the urge for vengeance. Humanity has taken a long time to come to grips with problem of revenge. In ancient times, revenge was unlimited. Then about 1700 years before Christ, Hammurabi, the Babylonian ruler, put a limit on revenge with his new law: “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”. This law of limitation on vengeance was a great step forward and it became the ethic of the Old Testament (see Exodus 21:23-25). However, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” was not the whole of Old Testament ethics, for it also says, “If you enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; if he be thirsty, give him water to drink” (Proverb 25:21). But in the New Testament, Jesus abolished outright this law of vengeance and established the spirit of non-retaliation and reconciliation (see Mat 5:38-42).



Reconciliation, as initiated by **Joseph** in Genesis, chapters 37–50, is something we all can imitate. Initially, Joseph takes revenge on his brothers for throwing him into a pit and selling him into slavery. His pain was sufficient to make anyone want to take revenge. **Judah**, however, courageously approaches Joseph. He makes it clear that, if he and his brothers don’t return home with Benjamin his father will be grievously hurt. Joseph is overcome with emotion. “*I am your brother Joseph*” he says, “*he whom you sold into Egypt*”. With that Joseph and his brothers have an emotional reconciliation—Joseph weeps and embraces his brothers.

Judah’s courage in approaching Joseph allowed Joseph to move away from revenge toward reconciliation. That powerful but simple caring gesture reached underneath Joseph’s rage and led him to reveal his identity. We like Judah can approach the other, and like Joseph we can forgive when our anger has cooled down. God used Joseph mightily, but as often is the

case, that comes with great suffering. Joseph was mistreated, slandered, and betrayed by his own family. But at the end of it all, he learnt how to forgive others!

There is much to learn from Joseph's story. All families experience strife at one point or another. There might be a distancing of siblings, a child angry at a parent, or a parent angry at a child. It's important that we move past this angry distancing toward reconciliation.

As educators, we have warnings concerning Jacob's favouritism and the effects that can have on other children as seen in Joseph's youthful pride and his brothers' envy and hatred and we have a clear picture of God's faithfulness. He does not forsake His children, even in the midst of suffering: *"the Lord was with Joseph"* (Genesis 39:3, 5, 21, 23).



In life, we may find ourselves in many distressing circumstances, and some of them may even be unjust, as were those in Joseph's life. However, as we learn from the account of Joseph's life, by remaining faithful and accepting that God is ultimately in charge, we can be confident that God will reward our faithfulness in the fullness of time. Who would have blamed Joseph if he had turned his brothers away when they were in need? Nevertheless, **God desires that we exercise mercy above all other sacrifices** we may offer Him in our lives (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13).

Perhaps most profoundly, Joseph's story presents amazing insight into how God powerfully works to overcome evil and bring about His plan. Joseph again reassures his brothers, offering forgiveness and saying, **"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good"** (Genesis 50:20). **Man's most wicked intentions can never thwart the perfect plan of God.**



It is no accident that Jesus' final request of his disciples was, **"Remember Me"** – not love me or trust me or care for me – but, "remember me!" **We cannot love or trust or care for that which our memory fails to bring to us. The capacity to remember is essential to our being human.** Still it is also the cause of so many things that spoil our interpersonal relationships. **What we remember makes a difference. Grudges and vengeance take root in bitter**

remembrances. Abuse flourishes in soil nurtured by hatred. Love and affection take root in sweet remembrances. Hope flourishes in soil nurtured in recollections of goodness.

While retrospection is a conscious process, we should not be deceived into believing that it is always a voluntary process. You may choose after 20 years to return to your alma mater with friends you haven't seen in as many years. The decision to return is voluntary, but, oh how involuntary is the flood of reminiscences when you step into your old classroom! Therefore, **reconciliation is a decision that you take in your heart**, said Ingrid Betancourt. **Those who refuse to forgive are saying, "I'm above God."** The words of Sir Winston Churchill still echo in my mind: **Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen! Because, I AM my brother's keeper!**

Let us not forget that it is the Lord himself who places us in our communities and it is HE who gives us brothers to love! Our communities can become places of unity, peace and harmony only if we are able to forgive one another just as Jesus himself did. He not only forgave his enemies on the Cross, but he also found excuses for their behaviour! "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). As we go through this Lenten Season, let us remember that no one is perfect! So, let's resolve to reach the Paschal Table in fraternal fellowship and communion, by not being vengeful in our dealings with our confreres or staff or students, but by being forgiving and magnanimous in our dealings so that we will be able to accompany one another joyfully as the Risen Christ at Easter will dawn on us all!



Taking this opportunity to wish you all a Very Happy Feast of St. Joseph, the humble Spouse of Mary! May he inspire us to be simple, hardworking and obedient to God's will in all our endeavours.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,

Fr. K.M. Jose SDB
Provincial

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Place: Chennai 600010