



INM-KMJ-CIR 14/04-2018

APRIL 2018

Dear Confreres,

Affectionate greetings from the Provincial House! I wish you a very Joyful Easter! May the Peace and Joy of the Risen Lord fill our hearts and our communities so that we may truly experience the effect of the Resurrection not only during the Easter season, but every day of our life.

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With this Circular, I wish to conclude my brief reflections on the *Strenna* for 2018—namely, on our need to cultivate the art of listening and accompaniment. An important moment when we educators should exercise the art of “listening and accompaniment” is the time of admission of students in our educational institutions. One can see anxiety and worry written large on the faces of both students and parents who queue up at the school. Anxious parents want to admit their children in our schools, but they also know that it is not easy, because far too many apply, and the management cannot at any rate take in all of them. As Educators what is our attitude towards their plight? How can we really “listen” to them and “accompany” them through this difficult phase of entry into our schools? What can we do to help them out?

The Church and Education in India



The Church’s contribution to education in India is truly amazing and praiseworthy. We can rightly be proud of the fact that the first-ever school outside of Europe was founded in India -- the Santa Fe School in Goa which was started in 1540 by the Franciscans. In 1542 it was taken over by St. Francis Xavier and in 1548 it was raised to the status of a college and renamed St. Paul’s College. Soon more missionary schools appeared in

other parts of India: at Vasai in 1546, in Cochin in 1549, at Punnaicayil in Tamil Nadu in 1567, and in Madurai in 1595. The first-ever English-medium school in India was started by Fr. Ephrem de Nevers, a French Capuchin priest, in 1642 within the precincts of Fort St. George, Chennai.

However, it was only during the British rule (1757-1947), and particularly after Macaulay’s 1835 decision in favour of introducing English education, that education began to spread in a somewhat organized manner in India.

To the Church also goes the credit for promoting girls' education in India. The first-ever girls' school in the country was opened by the missionaries in 1819, while the first-ever girls' school by the government came up only 31 years later, in 1850. Similarly, the first-ever school for technical training in India was also introduced by the Church as early as 1842. Today the Catholic Church runs over 1500 technical and vocational training institutions in the country.

At the time of Independence (1947), only 14% of the population was literate and only one out of three children were enrolled in primary school. After the Independence, the Church in India lent its full support in taking education to the masses. According to the CBCI Survey on Catholic Education, in 2005, the Catholic Church in India had 20,370 educational institutions, 59 per cent of which were in rural areas serving the poor and marginalized sections of the society. Only 23 per cent of the students in Catholic institutions were Catholics; gender-wise, 54 per cent of students were girls; income-wise, 42.5 per cent belonged to the poor-income group (Below Poverty Line), 32.5 per cent to the lower-income group, 18.3 per cent to the middle-income group and only 6.7 per cent to the higher-income group. These figures are certainly encouraging. I believe these figures are true also with regard to all our schools in the province.

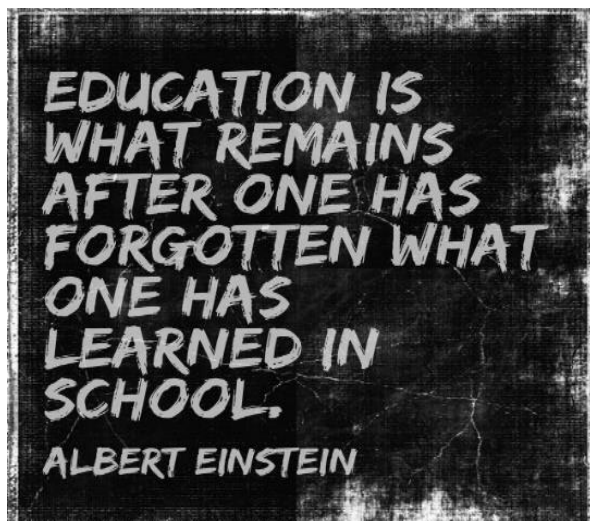
Popularity of the Catholic School



There is no doubt that Catholic schools are among the most sought-after by the general public in India. There is a huge rush for admissions particularly from non-Christians. Even though Catholic schools exist primarily to educate Catholic children, they welcome all who genuinely seek to be part of the life of the school and wish to share in a vibrant, well-resourced learning environment, based on Catholic faith and values.

Catholic educational institutions in India have always been rated very high and esteemed not only for their high academic standards, but also for the sound moral and spiritual values they inculcate and the open and secular outlook they foster. In admissions, preference is given not only to Catholics but also to the economically and socially disadvantaged sections of society.

What is special about Don Bosco Institutions?



We Salesians have been recognized in the Church in India for our service in the field of education. As a religious congregation totally dedicated to the welfare of the young and the poor, we should be seen as people who strive to give 'the best to the least', giving the best of education to the poorest of the poor. This concern for the 'least', should be evident in the creative ways we help the children of the 'least' to get into our educational institutions as well as into other Catholic institutions. This is the point I would like to insist upon in this circular. In this context, we must continually ask ourselves: Do our ethos, our policies of

admission and retention of students sufficiently embody the Church's teachings on the 'preferential option for the poor'? To put it another way: would the poor feel out of place on our campuses? Or, do our institutions give the impression that most of our students come from affluent backgrounds?

Catholic children have a right to be educated in Catholic schools



In fact, Catholic schools exist precisely for that. They should not feel that in spite of being Catholics, their *admission is a Mission Impossible!* Rather, both they and we should make it a *Mission Possible!* Therefore, it is important to ensure that Catholics are never denied admission. Catholic families want their children to study in Catholic schools because they know we place importance on a broad range of values associated with the Catholic Faith – moral and social values, discipline, safe environment and a sense of belonging to society.

Preferential Option for the Poor

As an expression of our concern for the Catholics and the poor in time of admissions, I propose the following lines of action to be taken by every one of our educational institutions:

1. Create admission preferences for the economically disadvantaged.
2. Foster social and educational environments that are conducive to learning, especially for the economically disadvantaged students.
3. Involve the faculty, the Salesian community and even the PTA in the admission process.
4. In our unaided (self-financed) educational institutions, no Catholic should be refused admission if he/she is ready to pay the prescribed fees. Even in these institutions, there should be certain provisions for fee concessions and scholarships for the deserving Catholics and the poor.
5. The public should be made to understand that our educational institutions do not accept any donations in time of and in view of admissions. A statement to this effect should be displayed in the premises so that those who come for admissions know it. It should also be clearly mentioned in the prospectus and application forms issued to parents.

Planning for the New Academic Year 2018-19

It would not be wrong to say that many children in our institutions, especially those coming from poor backgrounds, have difficulty in learning and coming up to the expected standard of performance. *Are we really doing a service for the poor or a poor service?* Hence, appropriate measures should be introduced to help such deserving students. I give below some time-tested practical tips for Salesian educators to keep in mind when we have students from various backgrounds in our classrooms:

1. Assign work requiring a computer and internet access or other costly resources only when we can provide in-school time and materials for such work to be completed.
2. Propose ways to make parent involvement affordable and convenient by providing transportation, on-site student-care and time flexibility.

3. Give students from poor backgrounds access to the same high-level curricular and pedagogical opportunities and high expectations as their wealthy peers.
4. Teach about classism, consumer culture, environmental pollution and other injustices disproportionately affecting the poor, thus preparing new generations of students to make a more equitable world.
5. Keep school supplies (uniforms, notebooks, text books, stationery, clothes) and other necessities handy for students who may need them, finding quiet ways to distribute these resources to the needy ones.
6. Develop curricula that are relevant and meaningful to our students' lives and draw on their experiences and surroundings.
7. Seek ways to get our students into gifted and talented programs, to give them other opportunities usually reserved for economically advantaged students and to keep them from being assigned unjustly to a second level.
8. Continue to reach out to parents even when we feel they are being unresponsive; this is a very important means to establish mutual trust.
9. Challenge our own confreres and the staff when they stigmatize poor students and their parents, reminding them of the inequitable conditions in our schools and classrooms.
10. Challenge yourself, your biases and your own prejudices by educating yourself about the cycle of poverty and classism in and around our own institutions.

Conclusion

Right from the start, the life and activity of Don Bosco manifested *welfare, social and pedagogical characteristics*. For Don Bosco the prerequisite for a true and real educational project consisted of concern for the basic needs of young people: food, clothing, shelter, security, work, physical and mental development, social inclusion, a minimum of values, etc. **Then came the true and real education of the young for the promotion and expansion of the cognitive, affective and ethical dimension:** competence for decision-making, ability to assume moral and civil responsibilities, indispensable basic culture and professional competence, conscious and coherent religious commitment, etc. It is quite true that today the commitment to education and the tasks of the educator are increasingly difficult to realize and to verify.

Today, in order to practise the Preventive System, there is the need for maximum involvement, with its accompanying moral responsibility, of all the “operators” of education, who in their various capacities, influence the education of the young and their ability to make choices for life: parents, teachers, educators, administrators at all levels, school organizers, associations for cultural, sport and leisure time activities. Listening to and accompanying our youth, especially in our institutions involves the following:

1. **A motivating presence:** one that infuses enthusiasm, encouragement and is optimistic. The presence of the educator infuses in the child a thirst for knowledge through the tactful use of queries, experiments, and exposure to new and educative environments.
2. **A personal presence:** The presence of the teacher is such that each child feels known, loved and accepted. This is more essential when relating to children having different levels of intelligence, who are weak, handicapped and underprivileged.
3. **An incarnational presence:** Loving what your students love has an important purpose: seeing the world through their eyes will make them want to experience the world and the values you live by.

4. **A creative presence that is open to the joy of discovery.** Life is too rich, too precious, too varied to be experienced between the fine print of cold textbooks or within the walls of the classrooms. Being open to discovery means being ready to try new ways, new solutions, and new ideas. Risk is a necessary ingredient of all creative learning.
5. **A preventive and corrective presence:** Students are apt to forget rules. Being there with them would help prevent exposure to harm. Furthermore, timely reminders do help. But these reminders must be respectful of the offender. Accusations, name-calling, sarcasm, lecturing, moralizing and generalizing are to be avoided. Faults are best corrected by being reasonable, polite, factual, firm and to the point. If corrections do not work, it is usually the manner in which corrections are given that are often to blame. But there could be other reasons such as frequency, timing, tact and context that may have to be looked into.

Finally, let us not forget that a presence that instils fear of punishment does more harm than good! This is humiliating and can be manipulated dangerously by an educator who lacks self-esteem. Punishments are often merely of short-term benefits to satisfy the teacher's need to take control of a difficult situation. They rarely prove to be helpful in the long run. In his letter to his Salesians, Don Bosco advised: *“My sons, how often in my long career has this great truth come home to me! It is so much easier to get angry than to be patient, to threaten children rather than persuade them. I would even say that usually it is so much more convenient for our own impatience and pride to punish them than to correct them patiently with firmness and gentleness.”* (Letters of John Bosco, 201)

NEWS FROM INM

REPORT OF INM RECTORS/LEADERS MEETING – By Fr. Dominic Matthews SDB

The meeting of all the INM Rectors & Leaders was held in Citadel on 17th March 2018. The theme was **“Authority in the Salesian Congregation is SERVICE”**. In the first part of his introductory session, with the help of a powerful PowerPoint presentation, Fr. K.M. Jose, the Provincial stressed on Animation and Governance. He said Rectors/Leaders need to have a 3-D attitude - **Dialogue** but also to Listen, to **Discern** but also to Learn and to **Decide** but also to Live. We must embrace all members in our community without writing off anyone. In the second part, he listed out the Province policy of **DECENTRALIZATION** where responsibilities of the Provincial are shared with the Vice Provincial and the Economer which comes into immediate effect. He announced the visit of the Rector Major to INM from **October 16th to 19th 2018** and said we will work out the logistics in due time. He then went on to enumerate 25 tips for Rectors/Leaders and gave them each a copy of the same. After the coffee break, the Rectors/Leaders assembled at 11 a.m. for **an interactive session** moderated by the Vice Provincial Fr. Don Bosco. All the Council Members were also present.

The afternoon session witnessed an evaluation of 2017-18 which was followed by a session by Mr. S. Jyothi Kumar who gave a brief presentation of Provident Fund (PF), Pension and Insurance Policies of the Government. This was followed by a **detailed presentation of the Financial State of the Province** by the Economer Fr. Xavier Packia. The Economer enumerated a 40-point printed handout on how it is the duty of the Rector/Leader to ensure good administration of the community.

In his concluding talk, Fr. Provincial said **leaders who can be ‘collaborative’ in their leadership will be successful in guiding the community mission.** To bring about discipline, each one of us must be self-disciplined. We need to radiate positive energy towards negative confreres. Our Salesian Constitutions give us a profound way of living community life as a family. Every community must plan and prepare well the Annual Plan of the entire community mission inclusive of all sectors. He thanked all the Rectors/Leaders present for the leadership they provide in the communities and once again reminded them that **to lead means to serve.** The meeting then concluded at 4.30 p.m. with a hymn to Don Bosco.

INM VOCATION CAMP 2018 – By Fr. Desam Chinnapparaj SDB

INM Vocation Camp 2018 is scheduled from **2nd May to 22nd May 2018** at **Don Bosco, Tirupattur.** Rev. Fr. Don Bosco, Vice Provincial will deliver the inaugural address on 3rd May 2018 and Rev. Fr. K.M. Jose, Provincial, will preside over the Thanksgiving Eucharist and conclusion of the Camp on 22nd May 2018 in the presence of the parents of the candidates. The candidates will leave after lunch on 22nd May 2018. May I request all the confreres to pray that, these candidates may discern well with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. I would like to thank in advance the community of Don Bosco, Tirupattur, for making all the necessary arrangements for the successful conduct of this INM Vocation Camp 2018.

GENERAL CHAPTER - GC 28



SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO
Journeying with the young

Our beloved Rector Major Rev. Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime has officially convoked the 28th General Chapter of the Salesian Congregation with the theme “***What kind of Salesians (do we need) for the youth of today?***” The Chapter will reflect on the profile of the Salesian Today and of Tomorrow, so that he is able to give the best possible answers to the young by his life and work, especially to the poorest and most needy in the Mission that naturally we do not carry on alone, but in a shared responsibility with the laity. The Chapter will also address a number of important legal questions so that we can help the Salesian Mission to which we are called to live today. The Rector Major has appointed **Rev. Fr. Stefano Vanoli**, the Secretary General of the General Council, as the **Moderator** of the Chapter. The Chapter will take place at Valdocco (Turin) from 16 February 2020 to 04 April 2020. We congratulate Fr. Stefano Vanoli the Moderator and wish him all the best in this significant service which has been entrusted to him.

84th ANNIVERSARY OF DON BOSCO'S CANONIZATION



Today 1st April marks the eighty-fourth anniversary of the Canonization of our dear father Don Bosco. Pope Pius XI proclaimed John Bosco a Saint on 1 April 1934, on Easter Sunday, at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of the Redemption. The picture shows the large number of people who took part in this memorable event. Let us rejoice and be glad as we continue to strive to be faithful sons of our dear Father Saint John Bosco.

SUMMER PROGRAM FOR THE STUDENTS OF THEOLOGY

This year the Province has initiated an additional formative experience for the First and Second year students of Theology. I thank the Social Commission Sector for volunteering to organize this for our brothers. The on-site experience offered is based on a practical analysis of Social Expo Concepts. This includes visits to major issue-based NGOs in Tamilnadu with a view to bring about MSC – Most Significant Changes in Development, Empowerment and Democracy. Our brothers will have grass-root level interactions with Movements based on Anti-corruption, Eco Concern, Migrant Youth, Human Rights, Domestic Violence, etc. From the feedback coming in so far, the brothers are having a very meaningful participation in this Social Sector Experiment.

FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE PRE-SYNODAL MEETING OF YOUNG PEOPLE



The Pre-Synodal Meeting of Young People released its document on Saturday, 24 March 2018, in the Vatican. The document is the fruit of this meeting of more than three hundred young people from around the world, in Rome from 19

to 24 March, and the participation of 15,000 young people engaged online through Facebook groups. Lorenzo Cardinal Baldisseri (Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops) presented the document and stated that it is one of the sources of the *Instrumentum Laboris* (Working Document) for the Synod of Bishops 2018.

The document is “a synthesized platform” that expresses “the reflections of young people of the twenty-first century from various religious and cultural backgrounds”. These young people urge the Church to view these reflections “as an expression of where we are now, where we are headed and as an indicator of what she needs to do moving forward.”

The document has three parts:

- a) The Challenges and Opportunities of Young People in the World Today: The Formation of Personality; Relationship with Other People; Young People and the Future; Relationship with Technology; Search for Meaning in Life
- b) Faith and Vocation, Discernment and Accompaniment: Young People and Jesus; Faith and the Church; The Vocational Sense of Life; Vocational Discernment; Young People and Accompaniment
- c) The Church's Formative and Pastoral Activity: The Manner of the Church; Young Leaders; Preferred Places; Initiatives to be Reinforced; Instruments to be Used.

As Educators of the Young, I exhort all of us to read this document (attached with the Circular) in order to get a glimpse of the desires and views of our young people and to get involved in their lives both in the real and virtual worlds.



CONDOLENCES

The veteran missionary Fr. O.V. Abraham, SDB who was the oldest Salesian in the Province of Guwahati was called by the Lord for his eternal reward on 14.03-2018 at the age of 94. He served a number of years in our Province at Sacred Heart College, Don Bosco, Tirupattur and Don Bosco, Pannur. Our condolences to the Provincial and confreres of ING.

Mr. Samynathan (78), father of Fr. James Samynathan passed away on March 6th. The funeral was held on 7th March at Our Lady of Refuge, Siruthanur.

Mr. Paulraj, brother-in-law of Fr. Antonyraj Chinnappan died on March 10th.

Mr. Mahimai (24), brother of Bro. Edward Pethal Chinnappan died on March 10th. The funeral was held at Gedilam on March 11th.

Mr. Raja (58), brother of Fr. Don Bosco passed away on March 12th. The funeral was held on March 13th in Vinnarasi Madha Church, Kandikuppam.

Mr. Maria Das (80), brother of Bro. Joseph Das and Fr. Jesudas passed away on March 24th. The funeral was on March 26th in Santhome Cathedral.

Mr. Francis Xavier, father of Bro. Simolin, died on 30th March in Chennai. The funeral was held on 1st April in K.K. District.

Mrs. Josephine Maria Das (74), the sister-in-law of Bro. Joseph Das and Fr. Jesudas passed away on March 31st. The funeral was on April 2nd in Santhome Cathedral.

We pray for the repose of these departed souls and extend our heartfelt condolences to the confreres and their bereaved families.

I wish you all a grace-filled Easter Season! May HE continue to fill us with HIS peace and joy in the coming days and weeks as we seek to do HIS will in our lives!

Yours affectionately,

Fr. K.M. Jose SDB
Provincial

Date: 02.03.2018

Place: Chennai 600010