

INM-KMJ-CIR 31/09-2019 LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD! SEPTEMBER 2019

Dear Confreres,

Greetings from Citadel! We are in the month of September when we will be celebrating important liturgical commemorations: Saint Mother Teresa (Sept.5th), Our Lady of Good Health (Velankanni) on Sept. 8th, Saint John Chrysostom (Sept. 13th), Saint Cornelius & Cyprian (Sept. 16th), the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Sept.14th), Saints Andrew, Kim & companions (Sept.20th), Saint Padre Pio (Sept.23rd), Saint Vincent de Paul (Sept. 27th) and Saint Jerome (Sept.30th). In this Circular, I thought of reflecting together with you on our **Neighbourhood Ministry**, with reflective inputs from Fr. Edwin Vasanthan and Fr. Francis Bosco, who have wide and varied experience in this ministry.

INTRODUCTION

The neighbourhood is the basic building block of human civilization, whether in a big city, small town or suburban community. It's also the place where you can have the most influence in making a better world. A neighbourhood evokes a great sense of pride for all those who contribute to it. As an individual, you already know you can Create the Good in countless ways, but when you work together as a group, there's no limit to the impact you can make on your community. I have come to believe that the local neighbourhood might be the most effective and powerful tool we have today that can impact the quality of our lives. Today, we should all do all we can to activate our neighbourhoods by encouraging neighbourhood associations, empowering neighbourhoods to positively impact the community, and provide a framework and support for grass-roots projects. Organized neighbourhoods can connect people through the use of technology for staying in touch and sharing information. We can work together and plant more trees, organize awareness on social issues and share our talents by offering special classes and workshops.



INM Neighbourhood Ministry – Historical Background

The six Salesian missionaries led by **Fr. George Tomatis SDB** started their mission in 1906 at Tanjore in the "St. Francis Xavier Orphanage" with six inmates. The number of inmates rose to 30 by the end of the same year. There was a steady rise of numbers in the coming years. In 1909, the Salesians took up the direction of St. Bede's Orphanage at Santhome. From then on, the Salesians went on to establish various mission centres to educate and empower the poor young people. It was on the 8th of February 1934 that the Province of India was divided and the new Province of South India or that of St. Thomas the Apostle came into being with Fr. Eligius Cinato as the first Provincial. From then on, we have seen several interventions taken on behalf of the poor and today we have seven Provinces carved out from the original Province of South India (Chennai, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Panjim, Trichy, Sri Lanka). This is all due to the passionate foresight of people who responded to the needs of the place and established mission stations to evangelize, educate and empower the poor of the area.

A new awakening started in the year 1991 with the New Vision of the Chennai Province, in reaching out to the poor, to the rural and tribal villages. Thanks to the Salesian pioneers who were trying to evolve strategies on the lines of Don Bosco's Charism to organize the exploited young workers and to humanize the social structures. In the early nineties, formation communities were animated by Salesian and non-Salesian activists. There was a visible change. The young brothers were filled with zeal and passion for the poor and the downtrodden. Assignments and Thesis topics were chosen on the subaltern issues! Commissions for Contextualization and Social Action brought in new air to breathe. The life struggles of the poor towards justice became the topic of normal conversation. During the holidays live-in experiences in the tribal and the Dalit villages introduced brothers to the all-important ministry of community building and right based approach. People oriented ministries were initiated by the Salesians. New rural and tribal presences were taken up at Maranodai, Cuddalore, Tiruvannamalai, Thalavadi and Kadambur, to initiate people-based ministries. Tribal woks at Jawadhi, Kotagiri, Thalavadi and Kadambur laid foundations for the young priests to get into the struggles of the Tribals. Dalit empowerment ministries at Veeralur and VIA-Polur prepared young priests to involve in Dalit empowerment programmes. The offshoot uprisings of People Movements and Forums - Thurumbar Iyakkam, Sakthi Pengal Iyakkam, Kotagiri Joint Forum for Education, had great impact in discerning the Salesian ministries in the Chennai Province.

Unfortunately, in the recent past, the immense interest of the Salesians in the life struggles of the poor people is gradually reducing and visible signs of mild struggle to venture into such ministries is becoming evident due to many factors. People are caught up with the regular formal works of the house that they have no much time and energy to reach out to the poor neighbourhood.

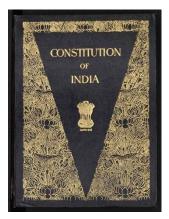


Given the above scenario of our current situation, at this juncture we feel the need to analyze our own context and our mission. There is no doubt that we need schools, colleges, parishes, technical institutes etc. These are institutions through which we serve our people. Through these institutions, we have the possibility to reach out to the neighbourhood. **Each community should understand that it is a part of a neighbourhood. Its mission is to build the neighbourhood community with a culture of the**

Gospel values. This is the core message of *Evangelium Nuntiandi* by Pope Paul VI. To evolve effective strategies to achieve this goal, we need to learn much from our people and our context. **Our value system and success indicators must change to be in tune with the Gospel values and not that of the market. We should realize that we are not the centre of the mission. The local public are the centre of the mission. The ultimate responsibility to decide the shape of their culture and destiny depend on them.** We together with other interested groups share in the mission of the community building. It is a privileged and shared mission to animate the community (public) towards common objectives and activities to arrive at them.

Such a mission demands a deep and committed bond between the Salesian and the public community. We should set models for transparency and commitment that will promote mutual trust and solidarity. We must become partners in the mission and not masters in the name of providing services. The community of people must understand clearly its resources, opportunities, weaknesses, threats and viable strategies to achieve the common goals. The whole community should make explicit their commitment to achieve the common objectives.

GC 26, Article 104 calls for a **change of mentality and structures among Salesians**, asking them to move "from the care of the victims of injustice to networking to combat the causes of injustice." This wants us not to stop with fire-fighting work of taking care of the victims of injustice, but to combat the causes of injustice. One of the strongest tools of our warfare against the human rights violations is education. The slow but steady work of conscientization and education of the future generations in human rights and responsibilities is our way.



Central to India's great Constitution is the notion of equality, fraternity, justice and liberty. The term 'human rights' was legally defined in India in 1993 by the Protection of Human Rights Act, which encompasses the four fundamental rights: right to life, the right to equality, the right to liberty and the right to personal dignity as enshrined in the Constitution.

The concept of the right to life has expanded to include the right to health, to education, to shelter, to food, to water, as well as the right to not to be tortured, nor to be sexually harassed and the right to privacy. **The second central principle is the right to equality.** The other day, when I went to Trichy for the funeral of the brother of Fr. Sagayaraj, they showed me a wall that separated the Dalit community and the rest of the society. It was

a shocking experience for me. **There is inequality even in death!** In a society stratified by a system of caste, there are necessarily lower castes and out-casts. In a male-dominated society, it is women who have never been given equal opportunities. It is for these people, the Constitution calls for affirmative measures, which we know as reservation policy. For those who do not enjoy an equal status, either based on their gender or caste, provisions of advancement are provided. When these reservations are denied, not only is the right to equality denied, but the status of human rights as a whole is restricted. Thus, in all our schools and institutions, it is our duty to uphold the mandate of equality.

Right to liberty and right to dignity is actualized when the right to life and right equality are upheld. In the 90's India came up with the National Human Rights Commission which was followed by National Commission for Women, the National Commission for Minorities and then the National Commission for Scheduled Castes Schedule Tribes. Today we have the National Commission for the protection of Child Rights as well as the commission for persons with disabilities and the Right to Information. Today we have the POCSO (The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) of 2012. We need these institutions to be led by people who have passion for human rights. Our task is to keep alive these institutions to ensure rights for the victims.

In our Province Frame of Reference for Social Ministry, the Vison states: "We the Salesians of Chennai Province, guided by the Spirit and Charism of Don Bosco to be the witnesses of the radical approach of the Gospel, go in search of the poorest of the poor, especially youth in our ministry, accompany to empower the powerless to become worthy of their entitlements by engaging as partners in the journey towards self-realization and in creating a just and equitable society in collaboration with the Salesian Family and like-minded people."

We have many good guidelines in the Frame of Reference for Social Ministry. The challenge as I see it is to perceive the needs of the poor people around and look for mission initiatives which should be well received by the Province as part of the mission of the Province and not just left at the mercy of Projects! We need to self-sustain our ministries. This is possible when we make all our works part of the Province mission although the initiative could come from some charismatic individuals. To give life to these ventures, Salesians have to be aroused by a deep faith in the Lord of the mission who has called us to be his true and loving disciples. It is only when we are deeply connected to the Lord in humble prayer, do we gain the energy needed to keep alive the mission. Individual initiatives must eventually must become Province initiatives in order to ensure continuity of the mission. Let me suggest some practical ways to achieve this aim.

SOME PRACTICAL WAYS IN GENERAL TO MAKE THE NEIGHBOURHOOD A BETTER PLACE

Before we enter into the neighbourhood ministry itself, here are a few ways to cultivate and reinforce that great sense of neighbourhood pride, while also making our Salesian community a better and safer place to live.

Know the neighbours in your neighbourhood. This cannot be emphasized enough. Do you live next to an elderly couple that stays home, but sometimes needs help? Or is there a teenage driver in the family? Are there small children who can't afford to go to school? Knowing these things helps you be aware of who is in your neighbourhood.

Walk around the neighbourhood. It sounds simple, but it is a great way to meet neighbours and get to know your neighbourhood while getting a little exercise too! Each of us is responsible for our neighbourhood. It makes a huge difference to know your neighbours and be able to talk to them.

Keep your neighbourhood clean. Most people are less likely to litter where they don't see litter already! You can help stop littering in your neighbourhood by taking away the litter that attracts it. Our communities can also organize monthly clean-ups in the neighbourhood, with the help of our students. This will give an awareness to those around us as well as to make our presence more meaningfully felt! In short, we need to be the kind of neighbour we would want to have! Offer assistance to a neighbour in need.

SOME PRACTICAL SALESIAN WAYS TO BETTER OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

We as Salesians must evolve our mission and formulate our action plan from this perspective. Hence, we propose some initiatives like the following to be taken up by each community in the places we are present. We need to move around as representatives of the local public and we can do so since we are a religious group. Therefore, lay people will be drawn to accompany us in whatever we do.



1. Visiting the families of the neighbourhood. This is very basic and essential element in initiating any ministry in the neighbourhood.

2. **Dialogue with various interest groups** like Welfare Associations, teachers, Government officials, retired officials and teachers, artists, journalists, social, environmental and legal activists. Invite them 3. **Visit the Government schools and colleges** in the locality and establish good rapport with the teachers and the youngsters.

4. Assess the standard of services rendered by the public institutions and the problems faced by them.5. Gradually form a public forum of interested persons and strengthen it.

6. **Initiate public discussions on important issues** and get the right people to clarify issues. We must take care not to irritate the public with our foreign tuned ideas.

7. **Gradually assist the general public to evolve common objectives** and action programmes where each group will clearly specify its contribution including our own.

8. A lot will depend on the type of **genuine leadership** that will emerge in the process and the capacity of the public forum to demand quality public services from various Government departments.

9. **Province level and Community level animations** should spell out the type of services the local communities will render to the public and the Province will ensure such commitments are maintained in spite of change of personnel every year.

10. While **selecting and training formation personnel** and when sending individual confreres for studies and academic qualifications, the Province will keep this focus in mind.



Deliberations of the INM Provincial Chapter 2019

Before I conclude, let me remind you once again of the Deliberations of our INM PC 2019 with regard to Neighbourhood and Social Ministry, **and my personal observations** in this regard:

1. Organize adequate number of pastoral and social exposure

programmes and workshops for the formees and follow them up with a process of reflection. (D) At the Team Visit, it was a joy to see that number of programmes are planned in the SEPP.

2. Be involved with the formees in the Youth Ministry and in the ministry for the poor in the neighbourhood. (R) This is not only for Formation Houses, but for all our Salesians in all our communities.

3. Prepare a definite **Formation Plan** (academic and practical) to make our young Salesians into youth specialists and passionate youth workers, with a particular love for poor youth, and not just people who will fit into our institutions. (D) The Province is working on this and hopefully after the General Chapter this will be approved by the Provincial Council.

4. Work on a process of formation to help our young Salesians at various stages of formation to have **deeper experiences of God and to become men of God who are in touch with the poor.** (R) All Rectors/Leaders, Confessors and Spiritual Directors will have to ensure that this is highlighted as often as possible in various forums.

5. Make sure that **the best team of formators** with a passion for Christ, passion for the young and the poor is provided for the formation houses in order to form Salesians who will be genuine educators and apostles of today's youth. (R) While the Province is making every effort in this regard, it is also good to remember that **every Salesian is a Formator! So, every Salesian must take care to be a genuine educator and an apostle of the young!**

6. Ensure that those who are working in different ministries especially youth ministry and social ministry will **share their experiences** in the formation houses on a regular basis to create a passion for youth and the poor. (R) This is very important because shared experiences are lived experiences and this will serve as a very good foundation and inspiration for our young Salesians.

7. Let every confrere be available for the rural/tribal/YaR ministries in the Province. The Provincial and his Council will facilitate confreres to work in these ministries for at least 10 years at different intervals. (R) Availability of confreres for these types of ministries must also be accompanied with sincere interest, novelty dedication and commitment, to ensure satisfaction and continuity.

8. Keeping in line with the policy of CBCI, TNBC; TNPCRI on Dalit Christians, we should admit all the Catholic Dalit students in our Educational institutions and hostels from the next academic year (June 2020), offer special concession and motivate them with remedial classes for higher education. The Rector and his Council will ensure the implementation of this policy. (D) I firmly exhort that this be accomplished in all our institutions.

9. To enhance our Youth Ministry, every community will organize family visits to all the youngsters of our institutions, parishes and youth centres. This will be ensured by the Rector in coordination with the sector heads while planning the SEPP (within six months from the date of approval) of the community. (D) This has to still be incorporated in the SEPP of many communities and I exhort the Rectors/Leaders to kindly do so at the earliest.

10. In our preferential option for the poorest of the poor (Dalits, Tribals, Thurumbars, Gypsies, Slum, YaR children etc.,) of our neighbourhood, **the Rector and his Council** with the help of the DBSARC will device a comprehensive plan to **reach out to them in view of their holistic education and pastoral care.** (R) This too will need to be planned and executed systematically at least by December 2019.

11. As one of the prominent religious congregations in Tamil Nadu, let every Salesian community strive to **promote a corruption free society** and thus bear witness to the values of truth and justice. Wherever possible let us be part of anti-corruption movements like 'Makkalpaathai'. (R) This also will need to be planned and executed systematically at least by December 2019.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of the **Social Ministry Review Meeting held in Citadel on the 29th of August 2019**, the following Lines of Actions were proposed.

1. Ensure in all our social ministries involvement and participation of the Lay Collaborators.

2. The Youth Ministry Coordinator (YMC) in every community of our Province will play a key-role in focusing and strengthening the Social Dimension in our Youth Pastoral Animation in all our presences.

3. Formation and participation of People's Forum in all our presences to enhance our reach out to the poorest of the poor in all our presences should be given due importance.

4. A comprehensive study will be made to give awareness on revival of Agriculture in the rural areas together with the rural youth.

5. Addressing the problem of substance abuse by the young will be a priority.

6. Strengthening the DBSARC Team with more Salesian and lay personnel.

7. Extending the Human Rights Education to all our presences in the Province.

8. In order to strengthen the social ministries of the Province, coordination between the DBSARC and SURABI will be enhanced.

While the Province will certainly address the last five lines of actions in the coming months after they are discussed in the Provincial Council, the first three proposals can already be implemented in all our communities with immediate effect. Being upright citizens demands that we don't just wait around and depend only on our Government or the Congregation to improve our neighbourhood! Let us get to know our neighbours and our neighbourhood ourselves and prove that even today, we can work together, care about each other, and serve as positive examples especially for our deserving youth who are and who need to become the bright future, we all hope for!



NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

Rector Major's Visit to INM

Dear Confreres, as you are aware, we are very happy to **welcome our dear Rector Major** to our Province. The official invitation is attached with this Circular. Kindly plan in advance and ensure that all Salesians, Salesian Family Members and our youth participate in the respective events scheduled in the various regions during this visit.

HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS TO REV. BRO. FRANCIS CHINNAPPAN SDB

Bro. Francis Chinnappan SDB of our Province has been invited by our Rector Major as Observer for the GC28. We sincerely thank the Rector Major for this privileged moment for INM and for Bro. Francis himself. We heartily congratulate Bro. Francis and wish him a very meaningful experience in the General Chapter.



ADIEU DEAR FR. CEDRIC BOUT SDB

Father Cedric Bout dies at 101

His last hours

On the 15th of August, 2019, the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, in the early hours of morning, Fr. Cedric Bout who was sleeping in an easy chair fell down as the chair tilted. His head hit the ground and was bleeding. His fingers too were slightly injured. Mr. Karuppiah, his care taker who was sleeping nearby

heard father crying for help. He switched on the light and tried to make Father stand but he was not able to do so. He was carried to the chair and made to sit. Then Mr. Karuppiah woke up Bro. Joseph Das, Fr. Bout's neighbour and he rushed to his room and found Father dazed and shivering. He was rushed in an ambulance to nearby Ayesha Hospital where his wounds were attended to. The doctor found that the injuries were not serious but to rule out any internal injury, CT scan of his head was taken. There were no internal injuries. Since Father was running a fever, he was put on drips. We were all sure, including Fr. Bout, that he would be discharged the next day. But Father was complaining even from the time of his fall that the right side of his hip was paining. Hence an x-ray was taken which revealed a fracture of the bone near the hip. The doctors alerted us about the situation. Fr. Provincial accompanied by Fr. Mark went to the hospital and met Dr. Paul Ayyakutty, an experienced Orthopaedist who explained the condition of the patient. He gave two options: to leave things as they were which would make Father bedridden for the rest of his life with its own complications or operate on Father, remove the fractured part and replace it with a metal substitution which will enable Father to eventually stand and walk. Fr. Provincial had to take a quick decision as things may get complicated if we did not do the operation immediately. The Doctor further explained that the tests showed Father had 65% of his heart functioning and he had no other complications. Fr. Provincial, after much discernment felt that it was better to operate than confining him to bed for the rest of his life. So, it was agreed that the operation would be down the next day. Father was operated the next day morning and the post-operative x-ray showed that the operation was successful. But difficulties started when father came out of the effect of anaesthesia. He started twisting and turning and was highly irritable. The doctor was afraid that such a behaviour may affect the operated part. They were also afraid of giving any strong sedation due to his age. Fr. Mark and Br. Joseph Das went to see his in the evening of the same day and father seemed to be sleeping. The next day, early in the morning, Father became extremely violent and pulled out the tubes attached to him and also disturbed the operated part. The hospital called us saying that father was serious. Fr. Provincial, Fr. Mark and Fr. John Bernard rushed to the hospital. But just as they reached the ICU ward suddenly Father Bout shouted aloud and then slumped. The doctors found that his heart beat has stopped and they tried to revive him but was of no avail. Fr. Bout had passed away. Fr. Bernard then immediately anointed him.

The Funeral

On 17th Morning a mass was celebrated at 10 a.m. at the Citadel Chapel where the body was kept. Fr. Xavier Packia, the Province Economer presided over the Eucharist. Fr. Raphael Jayapalan gave the introduction and Fr. Edwin George, who was the erstwhile Rector of Citadel preached the homily

highlighting the admirable qualities of Fr. Bout which endeared him to all in the community. Several of the confreres, who had come to attend the meetings organized for the day and was subsequently cancelled, concelebrated. The domestic workers who had in several ways took care of Fr. Bout too participated in the mass. Several people known to Father came to pay their respects to him during the whole morning and afternoon. In the evening the body was taken to the Rinaldi Juniorate nearby and another mass was celebrated. Fr. Provincial presided over the mass and also preached the homily. Fr. Don Bosco the Vice Provincial and Rector of the Citadel gave the introduction. A large number of confreres from the city houses concelebrated. Religious sisters from different congregations, members of the Salesian Family and other lay people participated. The body was kept in the Rinaldi Chapel for the night and it was taken to Don Bosco, Tirupattur early morning the next day. At 5 p.m. the funeral mass was celebrated. His Excellence Most Rev. Dr. Soundararaju Perianayagam SDB, Bishop of Vellore presided over it. Most Rev. Dr. Malyappan Chinnappa, Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore, also joined the celebration. A large number of priests from Tirupattur and Vellore region concelebrated. Fr. Provincial gave the introduction. Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga, the Regional for South Asia preached the Homily. There were confreres representing the Province of Trichy on whose behalf Fr. Theophilus conveyed the message of condolence. Bishop Soundararaju expressed his condolence on behalf of the Diocese of Vellore for the services he rendered in the diocese. The Regional conducted the concluding ceremony after which the body was taken in procession to the cemetery for burial.

Homage

Fr. Cedric Bout SDB was the oldest Salesian in India living to a ripe age of 101! During his almost 80 years of Salesian life, he has served the Province in several capacities: good leader, effective educator, able administrator, efficacious propaganda in-charge, lovable confessor etc. The qualities that many Salesians admired in him were: his deep-rooted God-centeredness, a man afire with love for God, love for Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, Don Bosco and his love for souls. Fr. Bout was a shining light through his good works and glorifying God. He was a true and faithful son of Don Bosco by his hard work and disciplined life. Another eminent quality of this extraordinary son of Don Bosco was his remarkable spirit of detachment and simplicity of life seen in his living ambience, clothes and food habits. The word 'comfort' had no place in his dictionary. Fr. Bout's simplicity of life was coupled with the sensitivity towards the poorest. He was a Salesian who loved the poorest people. Finally, a notable quality was his attention to Evangelization, bringing God's love to people. "The best way to proclaim, is a way of being; The best way of teaching is a life of witness." He had been spreading the message of God's love through pictures, medals and leaflets during his walks and visits to people around the Citadel campus Fr. Bout was a wonderful model of Salesianity in many ways and a great inspiration to many people from all walks of life in so many ways. May he enjoy his eternal bliss with all the Saints in Heaven!

REST IN PEACE

Mr. Arockiasamy (87) elder brother of Archbishop Emeritus A.M. Chinnappa SDB passed away on August 4th 2019.

Mr. Felix Amalraj (46), the nephew of Fr. Edwin George SDB, died of a massive heart attack on August 5th 2019.

Heartfelt condolences to the Provincial and the Salesian Sisters of INM FMA Province at the passing of **Rev. Sr. Soosai Maria Theresa FMA (INM)** who went to her eternal abode on August 11th 2019 and Rev. Sr. Glorina FMA (INM) who went to paradise on August 20th 2019.

Sincere condolences to Fr. Sagayaraj Philominathan SDB who lost his nephew's wife **Mrs. Deepa Anand (38)** on August 14th and **Mr. John Bosco (51)**, his younger brother who died on August 25th 2019.

Rev. Fr. K.J. Joseph SDB of Shillong Province passed away on August 26th 2019.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MAMMA MARY!



On September 8th we celebrate the Nativity of Our Lady. For us in Tamilnadu, we also rejoice as we celebrate the Feast of Velankanni and Our Lady of Good Health. Scripture does not give an account of Mary's birth. However, the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James fills in the gap. This work has no historical value, but it does reflect the development of Christian piety. According to this account, Anna and Joachim are infertile but pray for a child. They receive the promise of a child who will advance God's plan of salvation for the world. Such a

story, like many biblical counterparts, stresses the special presence of God in Mary's life from the beginning. Mary was born to be the mother of the Saviour of the world, the spiritual mother of all men, and the holiest of God's creatures. Because of her Son's infinite merits, she was conceived and born immaculate and full of grace. Through her, Queen of heaven and of earth, all grace is given to men. Through her, by the will of the Trinity, the unbelieving receives the gift of faith; the afflicted are tendered the works of mercy; and the members of Christ grow in likeness of their Head. In Mary all human nature is exalted. This is all true in a magnificent way in Mary. **If Jesus is the perfect expression of God's love, Mary is the foreshadowing of that love. If Jesus has brought the fullness of salvation, Mary is its dawning.**

Fr. K.M. Jose SDB Provincial

Date: 01.09.2019 Place: Chennai – 600010

