



INM-KMJ-CIR 34/14-2019

PEACE TO MEN OF GOOD WILL

DECEMBER 2019

Dear Confreres,

As we enter December, the last month of 2019, we bring to a close a year of both warm and cold memories, all of which are still fresh in our minds. Thankfully, **the Season of Advent invites us to be hopeful! To be hopeful is to be peaceful. To be peaceful is to be serene.** In this Circular, I wish to reflect with you on the need to nurture a calm and gentle attitude in our day to day lives, which can help us to become Salesians at peace with ourselves and capable of being loved by both our confreres and our beneficiaries.

The Hustle and Bustle of our daily lives

Most of us have come to believe that high stress, constant anxiety over tasks and work and life and social anxiety is all a part of the modern way of life. Most people just don't feel a sense of peace, of calm, of serenity, throughout their day. Changing your environment now and then can certainly help, but you can't control the things that happen to you much of the time, and you certainly can't control how other people act! The only thing you can control is your response — and this response matters. You can respond to the same event with anxiety or anger, or you can respond with peace and calmness. What is the opposite to a calm and serene mind? A dissatisfied mind. A needy mind. One with a negative inner world. In contrast, **the serene mind is a contented mind.** A mind full of appreciation and gratitude. A mind that knows that it is fulfilling its potential. A mind that is filled with wisdom and understanding. A mind that is healing for others. A mind that can weather all storms.

Calmness has a deep and natural appeal. Most of us long to be more patient, unruffled, at ease and capable of reacting with quiet good humour to life's setbacks and irritants. But if calmness is an ocean, most of us are still in the shallows. **Many of the things we become angry about are neither random nor vain.** The things we worry about are obscure yet critical signals about what may be amiss in our lives. We should not try to deny or neuter anxiety or rage,



but learn to interpret it more skilfully. **Every failure of being calm can be analysed in order to reveal something worth knowing about ourselves.** Every worry and frustration, every episode of impatience or burst of irritation has wisdom to yield to us, so long as we take the trouble to interrogate it. We need to look more carefully and slowly at our own agitation, with the aim of clarifying our underlying concerns. We need to know how to triumph over moments of exasperation and emotional distress.

Developing a Habit of Calmness

Many people rush through their mornings, starting the day out in a stressful rush. All of us need to learn to wake up early, which means that we also need to go to bed early! We are fortunate to start every morning with Lauds and meditation, followed by the Holy Eucharist. What a blessing! **When we**

begin the day by opening the door of gratitude, we set the tone of our day. Gratitude leads us to feeling safer. It begins with appreciating the simple and everyday things, the things that we often take for granted, de-value or don't even notice. **Have you ever found yourself only realising the value of something after it has gone?** We can then move into appreciating our own strengths and values, and the opportunities each new day brings to learn, grow and express the best in ourselves. If we are able to achieve this then we would have already taken a giant leap into the realm of serenity!



Many times, when we are faced with stress, we have unhealthy responses. Instead, we need healthy ways to cope with stress, which will come inevitably. **When you notice stress, watch how you cope with it, and then replace any unhealthy coping habits with healthier ones.**

Often during the day, many things happen which are not too much to our liking. We need to learn to watch our response. When something stressful happens, what is your response? Some people jump into action — though if the stressful situation is another person, sometimes action can be harmful. Others get angry, or overwhelmed. Still others start to feel sorry for themselves, and wish things were different. Instead of reacting and jumping straight in, take a breath, hold back, observe and discern. **Observe without judgement.** This enables us to not over-dramatize and discern what is needed or the solution. We may even, for example, discern that the person pushing our buttons is in that moment, our teacher and not our enemy. That they are revealing to us something about ourselves that we hadn't seen before and that will enable us to strengthen our serenity. Therefore, **watch your response because it's an important habit to cultivate.**

Many times, the response is to take things personally. If someone does something we don't like, often we tend to interpret this as a personal affront. Some people even think the universe is personally against them! But the truth is, it's not personal — it's the other person's issue that they're dealing with. **We need to learn not to interpret events as a personal affront,** and instead see it as some non-personal external event (like a leaf falling, a bird flying by) that you can either respond to without a stressful mindset, or not need to respond to at all.



We can't always choose the situations we find ourselves in or the people we are with, but we can always choose our attitude. When we can see that we can always choose our attitude, that we are free to always choose an attitude that sustains and protects us, we experience real freedom. We might choose to stay calm, to take it easy, to be more assertive or to be more courageous. We become free to choose to maintain our serenity or not. **Serenity grows out of a deep sense of inner security.** Our deepest security is grounded in our first identity. We have layers of identity, from our social identity to our physical identity to our spiritual identity. Our spiritual identity is the deepest of all. It is rooted in, 'I, the eternal being'. We need to spend some time exploring our spiritual identity until we recognise that **we are all unique, valuable, non-competing and that we have nothing to prove.**

Serenity is a Personal Choice

We all want serenity, that elusive state of calm that we think belongs solely to Tibetan monks, Yoga instructors or Mystic minds. **People with serene minds are better prepared to enjoy life.** Their small problems remain small and don't become magnified into huge catastrophes. And when real crises arise, they react with steady, clear thinking. However, **serenity isn't achieved without effort.** Just as we need proper exercise habits to have healthy bodies, we need good mental habits to have peaceful minds: minds that are always occupied.



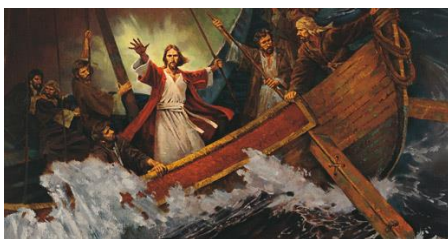
Most often than not, we lose our peace of mind when we tend to LABEL or LIBEL others. Often the former is done unconsciously while the latter is done consciously. If you use terms to describe people—and you believe that they cannot change—then your life can be stressful. Every time that someone treats you badly, you take that as evidence that they are a bad person, and not just that they are a possibly good person who just happened to do a bad thing. **If you are able to think about people's personalities in a less fixed way, perhaps that would decrease your overall stress.** Labelling isn't always a cause for concern, and it's often very useful. It would be impossible to catalogue the information we process during our lives without the aid of labels like "friendly," "deceitful," "tasty," and "harmful." But it's important to recognize that the people we label as "rich", "poor" and "simple," seem richer, poorer or simpler merely because we've labelled them so! Labels are helpful on canned goods but generally harmful on us. Many negative labels stick like glue throughout our lives. There is a difference between labels and libel. Some labels puff us up; most beat us down. The labels create an exclusion zone that allows us to disregard or even hurt others. **Labels detract from the reality and humanity of those around us.** But the Gospels won't let us live in such isolation. It demands that we treat others as people, not products. The label that defines us best is simply the beloved children of God. Peace to men of Goodwill! To be a peacemaker therefore requires that we release our own resentment and bitterness. Peacemakers are indeed blessed, because as they refuse to accept violence, division and hostility between people.

The terms 'Libel' or slander mean a false statement made by one person about another. In libel, the statement is made in writing. In slander, the statement is made verbally. Historically, libel has been considered the worse of the two, presumably because it's much more difficult to make printed falsities disappear. Often in our daily lives, this can happen, when **we make statements about confreres without pausing to think if they are true or well-intentioned.** Such false statements can certainly take away our serenity and make us lose our inner peace, causing us instead to become agitated and disconcerted.

Don Bosco and Serenity



Pope Francis in one of his writings to the Salesians said, "You Salesians are lucky because your Founder, Don Bosco, was not a saint with the face of "Good Friday", sad, long-faced, morose ... But rather from "Easter Sunday". **He was always joyful, welcoming and serene despite the thousand labours and difficulties that besieged him every day.** He brought the joy and care of the true educator to all the boys he tore from the streets, boys who found in Valdocco an oasis of serenity and the place where they learned to be "good Christians and honest citizens".



JESUS, THE SERENE SON OF THE FATHER

Let us take a look at the serenity of Christ as is depicted in the various narrations of his life in the Gospels. The best moments that bring out the serenity of Jesus is during the Lenten Season, when we see that He truly is the incomparable Christ. He depicts serenity. He is serenity. He gives us serenity. **He is our source of serenity, and we see it all throughout His life.** Picture **Jesus asleep in the boat** while His creation is storming outside, and then think about how Christ awakens and serenely calms His anxious disciples' fears. **Think about the 5,000 and more hungry people clamouring around Jesus and how He maintains in perfect composure.** He doesn't get stressed. **Think about Jesus when He receives the news that His dear friend Lazarus is terminally ill,** he has no meltdown. He's not detached. He's not emotionless. Jesus weeps at the tomb of Lazarus. He cares deeply for His friends

who've just lost their brother and friend, but **He's not out of control**. He's still composed and serene. Think about Jesus when He stands before the Jewish rulers, before Pilate, before Herod at His trial. **He is always a picture of perfect calm dignity**. He is reviled; He's falsely accused; He's persecuted, but He holds His peace—the serene Saviour.



Another glimpse of Jesus' serenity that I think is an exquisite one, is found in one verse in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 26 that shows us such a rich picture of His serenity. The context is that this is the night that **Jesus ate the Passover meal** with His disciples in the upper room, what we call the Last Supper. As the meal ends, and the disciples prepare with Jesus to leave the upper room, Jesus knows that **He is shortly going to be arrested, going to be**

betrayed, and that His closest friends and disciples, the ones He just had dinner with, the ones whose feet He just washed, the disciples He just served, they're all going to abandon Him. And yet, **he serenely washed their feet!!!** So, **our circumstances don't govern our serenity**, but it's amazing to see Jesus modelling serenity when life was embracing Him the hardest. It's been over the centuries true of many of His followers. **It's an amazing thing you can see in Saints** as they are being persecuted, as they're being martyred, in some cases, in the big and little challenges of life, the big and little crosses. They are singing in the shadows, **modelling a composed and serene spirit, imitating their Beloved Serene Saviour!**

CONCLUSION

The Theologian-Philosopher Reinhold Niebuhr is thought to have composed the **Serenity Prayer**, commonly quoted as follows: "**God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference**". The intention of the Serenity Prayer is to bring peace, faith, and certainty to the mind and heart of those seeking God's support. It asks God for the wisdom and ability to gracefully accept "what is," (what cannot be changed) and for the willingness to manifest, with God's support, that which is in one's highest good. **A serene heart is what the Psalmist had when he prayed in Psalm 131:**

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvellous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me (vv. 1–2)

So how can we sing in the midst of the shadows, in the shadow of the cross, in the midst of darkness and grief and turmoil going on around us? I would remind us of that wonderful verse in Matthew chapter 11, the words of Jesus, where He said:

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (vv. 28–30).

There is a link between the humility of Christ and the serenity of Christ. **You can't have a serene heart if you don't have a humble heart**. So, He says, "Come to me . . . learn from me . . . I am humble." With that humility comes a serenity and the rest that our hearts long for. The humble heart that accepts all of our Father's dealings as wise and good will be a serene heart—a heart at rest. When trials come, don't forget there is someone who can bring you peace. Peace may not always come as it did that long-ago day on Galilee—the storms and winds may not be replaced by perfect calm. Instead, when

*God grant me
the Serenity
To accept the things
I cannot change;
Courage to change
the things I can;
And Wisdom
to know the Difference.*



we hasten to call on the Master and allow Him to bear our burdens, our peace may come in small reminders of His love and care, giving us strength to get through the storm.

All we need to remember that Christ not only calms the physical seas, but He can also calm the seas within our minds and souls.

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

Conclusion of INM Extraordinary Visitation

The Province of Chennai is profoundly indebted to our Regional **Rev. Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga SDB** for having spent nearly six-months in our Province for the Extraordinary Visitation. He was serene, focused and methodical during his visits to all our communities. On behalf of the Province, I sincerely extend my immense gratitude to him for this noble service rendered to our Province on behalf of our Rector Major. **Kindly note that the Conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation will be on 3rd January 2020 in Citadel at 3 p.m. All Salesians are invited to attend. All Rectors and Leaders will be present. Prior to the Conclusion, the Regional will have a meeting with the Provincial Council on the 3rd of January 2020 at 9 a.m.**

CONSULTATIONS

The Consultation Forms for INM Vice Provincial, Economer, Provincial Councillors and Rectors, (2020-2023) are attached with this Circular. It is important that every confrere participates actively in this Consultation process as highlighted by our Rector Major: "Take for instance the Consultation, all confreres are asked to participate in. If every member answered with serenity, with only the welfare of the community in mind, he would make a valuable contribution to the choice of suitable confreres for the various 'services' to the community. **There should be no taking the easy way out by abstention, no personal feeling that are purely human or factious.**" (ASC No. 272) **May I request all of you to return these Consultation forms to me, confidentially and in a sealed envelope, duly filled, by 31st December 2019.** Thanking you in anticipation for your responsible participation in this process of discernment for the good of the Province.

Retreat for Clerics December 28th 2019 to January 2nd 2020

As given in the INM Annual Program, this year, the First Retreat of our Province will be for all our INM Clerics (excepting Pre-Perpetuals and Perpetuals) from **December 28th 2019 to January 2nd 2020 in DBTC KAVARAPETTAI.** Kindly be present on the 27th night. A vehicle will be arranged from Lourdes Shrine Perambur after the Ordination Ceremony. Fr. Dominic Matthews will be the Preacher. Kindly see the attached name list of Clerics who are supposed to attend.

Retreat for INM Salesians in their first 5 years of Priesthood/ Brotherhood

The Retreat for those in their first five years of Priesthood/Brotherhood will be from **11–16 January 2020 at DBYAC Ennore.** Fr. Don Bosco Lourdusamy will be the Preacher. Kindly see the attached name list of Clerics who are supposed to attend.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 10.12.2019

DBSARC is organising the recital of the Preamble of the Indian Constitution in the Assembly on 10.12.2019, the International Human Rights Day. Bookmarks containing the Preamble both in Tamil and English are being printed at SIGA and will be sent to all our institutions. I exhort all the various

sectors of our communities (Schools/Colleges/ITIs), to actively participate in the **Creative Contest 2019**, conducted by DBSARC, to promote Human Rights.

St. Francis Xavier - The Fearless Missionary For Christ

St. Francis Xavier was noted for the simplicity of his lifestyle and for his tireless missionary zeal. Arriving in Goa in 1542, Francis found the Portuguese Catholics notoriously cruel to slaves, living in concubinage and neglectful of the poor. He tried to combat this by devoting himself to helping the poor and sick and zealously encouraging people to live a good life, but he found the behaviour of the Portuguese officials and traders' one of the most difficult things to bear. Yet he continued with enthusiasm. He was a man consumed with a divine impatience, a saint in a hurry. Let us ask St. Francis Xavier to give us that thirst for souls and daring spirit to work for Christ.

Feast of Bl. Philip Rinaldi & Salesian Brotherhood Day

On 5th December we commemorate Blessed Philip Rinaldi, who was Rector Major from 1922 to 1931. He was beatified on 29 April 1990 by Pope John Paul II. He is the Founder of the Secular Institute of the Don Bosco Volunteers. We wish all our Brothers and we pray for more vocations to the Salesian Brotherhood, especially this year as we pray the Novena to Bl. Artimede Zatti.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception, as all doctrine that deals with Mary, is centered on her motherhood, as Mother of God. She is an essential part of the equation for salvation and for redemption that Jesus Christ has given to us. Prior to the actual conception of Jesus, she is proclaimed "full of grace" by the Angel at the Annunciation. Therefore, we celebrate Mary's unique role, her cooperation with God in the mystery of redemption, in the Word made flesh. We celebrate her uniqueness of being conceived without original sin. God preserved her through the redemption of Christ from the moment of her conception. We see her tremendous cooperation with God every moment of her earthly life. Mary is the one who shows us how to live lives of holiness. In the teaching of Vatican II, the Council Fathers refer to Mary as the one who helps us to know how to live holiness. We are called to have true devotion to Mary. We are called to receptivity, to openness, and to humility to receive the Word of God, that the Word may be made flesh within our lives. It is most appropriate that we celebrate this feast during the Advent season in which we prepare for the coming of Christ. We celebrate His birth and we await His second coming. Mary shows us, through her obedience, through her trust in God, how to be holy. She is what God wants for every human person, to respond to His call.

ADMA: Canonical Erection of Ayanavaram and Perambur Associations

We are happy to announce that according to the CIC, Can. 312- 317, regarding the privileges of the Salesian Congregation and n. 7 of ADMA's Rules and Regulations, the canonical establishment of the Association of Mary, Help of Christians of the Local **ADMA of DON BOSCO – AYANAVARAM** will take place on the 8th of December 2019 and the Canonical establishment of the Association of Mary, Help of Christians of the local **ADMA of OUR LADY OF LOURDES SHRINE – PERAMBUR** will be on 24th January 2020. I sincerely thank Fr. Selvanathan Benjamin SDB, the Provincial Delegate of ADMA for the interest and dedication which he has shown in this ministry. My congratulations also to the Rectors of both these communities for the support given and to members of the local ADMA for generously coming forward to join this noble endeavour.

INM ORDINATIONS

You are Specially Invited

The Salesian Province of Chennai (INM) is immensely glad to invite you to thank God and rejoice at the Priestly Ordination of Seven of her Sons this year.

Your fraternal presence and fervent prayers on this auspicious moment in the life of these Salesians will be a great blessing and encouragement to them.

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Seven Deacons to be conferred the Sacrament of Priesthood by

Most. Rev. Dr. George Antonyamy, DD
Archbishop of Madras - Mylapore

On Friday, 27th December 2019 at 5.30 p.m.
Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, Perambur, Chennai.

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Albert Antonyraj
As your Servant and Witness
28th Dec. 2019 10.30 a.m.
Mary Help of Christians Church,
A. Kattupadi, Vellore.

Santhana Arul Nicholas
More of Jesus and Less of me
28th Dec. 2019 5.30 p.m.
Our Lady of Refuge,
Don Bosco Youth Centre,
Broadway, Chennai - 108

Philominsamy Jerome
Be Strong and Courageous
28th Dec. 2019 5.00 p.m.
Our Lady of Perpetual
Succour Church,
Sammupillai Nagar,
Cuddalore.

Anthony Kishore
I am with you wherever you go
29th Dec. 2019 5.00 p.m.
St. Theresa's Church,
Kasimedu.

Sekar Chinnappan
I have come to Serve
28th Dec. 2019 10.30 a.m.
St. Joseph Church,
Narasingapuram, Vellore.

Simolin Ferk
The one who does the will of the Father
31st Dec. 2019 10.00 a.m.
St. Sebastian's Church
Madathavilal, Villukuri (Po)
Kanyakumari Dt.

Gnana Xavier
To Share His Love
28th Dec. 2019 5.30 p.m.
Our Lady of Lourdes Church,
Multukadu, Chennai ECR.

BOSCOM NATIONAL MEETING

BOSCOM South Asia is holding its National Level Meeting on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee with a Seminar on “Effective Communication of Gospel Values through the Media” in Dimapur Province on 5 and 6 December 2019. I will be attending on behalf of the Province.

CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES

New Jesuit Provincials - We convey our sincere wishes and prayers to the new Jesuit Provincials: **Rev. Fr. L. Jebamalai Irudayaraj SJ** as the first Provincial of the soon to be established Jesuit Province of Chennai and **Rev. Fr. Stan SJ** (Hyderabad Province). We are happy to note that Fr. Stan SJ successfully completed his Doctoral Studies in Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur. We wish them the very best as they carry out their responsibilities and assure them of our fervent prayers.

New Bishop of Palayamkottai - We rejoice to extend our hearty congratulations and send our prayerful greetings and best wishes to **Rev. Msgr. Antonysamy Savarimuthu** (59) who has been appointed by His Holiness Pope Francis on November 20, 2019, as the Bishop of Palayamkottai.

Award of “Ambassador for Peace” - We feel proud to congratulate our dear and **Most Rev. Thomas Menampampil SDB, Archbishop-Emeritus of Guwahati** for his unique contribution to the society as a messenger of peace. He is being conferred the award of “Ambassador for Peace” by the Delhi-based International Human Rights Council on December 9, 2019 in New Delhi in the presence of invitees from all over the country and abroad. One of the earlier recipients of the Award is the Dalai Lama among many other internationally known figures.

Successful completion of Doctoral Studies: We heartily congratulate and wish **Fr. John Borg & Fr. Satheesh Xavier** on the successful accomplishment of having attained their Doctoral Degrees in the recent past. We wish them all the best in their future service to the Province.

Heartfelt Condolences

Mrs. Lourdu Mary, the younger sister of Fr. Maria Selvam passed away on November 6th 2019.

Mrs. Jayaseeli, mother of Fr. Satheesh Xavier went to her eternal reward on November 10th 2019.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the Provincial and the confreres of Shillong Province at the demise of **Fr. Paul Vadakumpaden SDB** on 18th November 2019. In his death we have lost a great Missionary, an efficient professor of Theology and a Scholar.

Mr. Sathianathan (78), elder brother of Bro. Arokiasamy died on November 24th 2019.

REST IN PEACE DEAR BISHOP JOSEPH ANTONY SDB, D.D.

In the morning of 29th December, we received the news of the death of Bishop Joseph Antony at Don Bosco, Perambur where he had been staying since his retirement from the Diocese of Dharmapuri. He was suffering from dementia for quite some time and he was unable to recognize people who came to visit him. On 29th morning he started having difficulty in breathing which became acute and he was anointed at once. After a short struggle he passed away. His mortal remains were taken to Lourdes Shrine, Perambur in the evening where Mass was celebrated for the repose of his soul. His Excellency, Most Rev. Dr. Lawrence Pius, Bishop of Dharmapuri presided over the Eucharistic Celebration. The Vicar-Generals of the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore and a large number of Salesians concelebrated. The Bishop expressed his gratitude to the Salesians who looked after Bishop Joseph Antony after his retirement from the Diocese and he also said that as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Dharmapuri Bishop Joseph Antony laid the foundation on which they are building the diocese and they are grateful for his contribution. Very Rev. Fr. Amalraj, the Vicar-General conveyed his condolences on behalf of the Archbishop and the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore. Fr. Tharsius Arockiasamy, the Rector of Don Bosco, Perambur, gave a brief account of his last hours and paid rich tribute to the dear departed. After the mass the body was kept in the Church for people to pay their tribute till 9 p.m. after which it was taken to Dharmapuri where the funeral mass was celebrated. Six Bishops and a large number of priests including the Provincial, the Vice Provincial and the Economist concelebrated. After the last rites he was buried in the Cathedral compound.

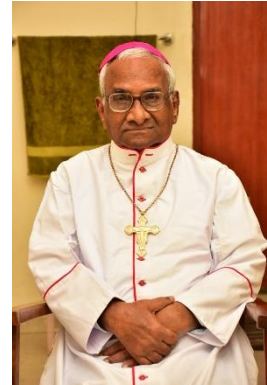
Bishop Joseph Antony was born on 04/10/1935 in Royapettah, Chennai, to Mr. J. Samuel and Mrs.



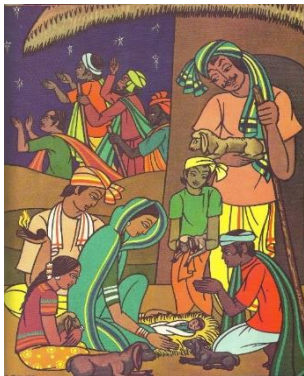
Mary Samuel as their third child. He joined the Aspirantate at Tirupattur in the year 1949 and completed his High School studies and his Intermediate. He did his Novitiate at the Retreat, Yercaud and made his First Profession on 24th May 1956 in the same house. He completed his Philosophical Studies in 1958 and did his Practical Training at Our Lady of Refuge, Broadway, Chennai. He did his Theological studies at Sacred Heart College, Mawlai and later at Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri and was ordained a Priest by Bishop Padiyara of Ooty on 24th April 1965.

He had worked as a priest at Dominic Savio, Tirupattur, Our Lady of Refuge Broadway, and Don Bosco, Gandhinagar, Vellore in different capacities. He did his Spirituality Course in Teresianum, Rome, in 1972-73 and on his return from Rome was appointed as Rector of St. Joseph's home, Katpadi. He was then transferred as Rector of Don Bosco, Gandhinagar. At this time, he also became a Provincial councillor. He then served as Rector of Don Bosco, Tirupattur, Parish Priest of Tagore Nagar, Pondicherry, Rector of The Retreat, Yercaud, Rector and Parish Priest of Ayanavaram Parish, Chennai and finally as Rector of Refuge Broadway, Chennai. He was then appointed Bishop of Dharmapuri Diocese in 1997 and served the diocese till 2012 when he retired.

As we can see from the account given above, he had held the leadership posts almost all his years as a Salesian priest, being Rector for nearly 24 years and Bishop for 15 years! However, wherever he worked, as a leader he endeared himself as an affectionate person caring for all those under his care. He was generous to a fault and took great delight in giving little gifts to make people happy. Youngsters loved him and he went out of his way to look after their needs. He had also endeared his collaborators, both religious and lay. He ensured that there was Salesian joy and happiness in the Salesian community as well as among the youngsters. He was calm and serene in the midst of problems. As a Bishop he did meet with a lot of undesirable opposition but he never resorted to any vindictive measure but suffered everything with great patience. He had done a lot of constructive work as a Bishop as the pamphlet prepared then by one of the diocesan priests (now Procurator) depicts very well. In his first years after his retirement, he spent most of his time at Don Bosco, Perambur reading the Word of God, meditation and prayer. Later several physical setbacks made him to remain confined to his room where he spent his time in patient suffering. We can boldly say that he had his purgatory already on earth and the Lord has certainly invited his humble servant to his heavenly reward. May his soul rest in peace!



HAVE A SERENE CHRISTMAS as we learn The Language of Love



The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. To condescend means to lower oneself to a level not normally occupied - physically, mentally, or socially. It means to descend voluntarily to the level of another person. And with human beings, this is not always done with kindness. Sometimes there is an air of contempt, snobbery, and haughtiness in human condescension. But there is another side to the use of this word. It also means **to be graciously willing to do something regarded as beneath one's dignity.** This is what God did when He became flesh. With a mysterious mixture of Divine grace and love, He performed the greatest act of condescension of all time and eternity.

However, **the world does not stop because it is Christmas!** To think so is a dangerous illusion because God came into the reality of the world, to change it, not to give us an escape from it. God's love, expressed in the word of Jesus, is not a language of sentiment and cheap comfort but a language fit for the reality of a harsh world of oppression, of cruelty, of injustice and suffering. It has a vocabulary for passion, for anger, for protest at injustice and lament. It is the language of the whole of Scripture. **It is the language lived by Jesus, and it starts in the Manger.** Language is the tool through which we decipher and describe the world. **God's language of love describes each of us, as we are, not as we pretend, claim, simulate or deceive. God's language of love changes us as we use it.** When suffering overwhelms, and all answers seem vain, God's Word is faithful – faithful to those who do not have the strength to hang on to God. This language is spoken even when we cannot receive it.

In this child Jesus, God comes among us physically. God's language of love is a body language: being present as a human amid the joys and terrors of human existence. It is a language that few understood – as we have just heard it read **“the world came into being through Him; yet the world did not know Him”.** This language of love is why the birth of a baby to poor, unknown parents changes the nature of everything. This baby, Jesus, unknown, as fragile as needy, as limited by being a human baby – **this baby, Jesus, does change everything in creation because He is the Word of God who makes it possible for us to learn the language of God's love.**



God's language of love is exclusive. It requires us to forget other languages of hatred, groupism, rivalry, materialism, pride, greed, and so many more. God's love encompasses every aspect of living, and every aspect of knowing God. Jesus the adult spoke it perfectly. **The Baby in the Manger lives it flawlessly before He can speak a word, because by His mere existence He is the Word of God to us.** The Word must be spoken by us on behalf of the persecuted, those people who speak God's language of love in protest and lament as they suffer.

To speak God's love fluently, we must share the heart of God, and we begin to do that through our response to the Baby in the Manger because in Him, unlike us, there is no disconnect between His words and His actions. **We over-promise and under-deliver.** God under promises in the event of Jesus, a small baby born in a stable, but over delivers in giving salvation to the world. **God's language of love is not just for Christians,** or for the comfortable and respectable. **Shepherds learned it from angels.** Shepherds - awkward, often despised, frequently violent, seldom religious in the sense the religious leaders wanted. **Kings came, foreigners and outsiders,** and they **learned the language.**

To follow Jesus is not through compulsion, for he has expressed God's language of love by being a baby, so vulnerable and weak, so easily overlooked. To follow Jesus is not to become dull and tedious, for in Him is light and life more than anywhere else in all eternity. The very heavens shake with the music of His birth. In Him is love spoken and reliable. In Him is a new language that transforms us and all around us, **God's language of love.**

**Wishing you a very Serene Christmas!
May we all learn to live and to speak the Language of Love!**

Affectionately,



Fr. K.M. Jose SDB
Provincial

Date: 02.12.2019
Place: Chennai – 600010

