



PROVINCIAL Circular

Salesian Province of Chennai (INM)



INM-KMJ-CIR 71/01-2023

The Grace to be Graceful

JANUARY 2023

Dear Confreres,

Wishing you a Grace-filled New Year 2023! We are indeed grateful to the Almighty for having given us this New Year. It is up to each and every one of us to make use of all the opportunities that will come on our way during this year to spread the message of peace and love to all those around us in our community mission.



The Province of Chennai is delighted that our dear Rector Major Rev. Fr. Angel Artemide has announced **Rev. Fr. Don Bosco Lourdusamy, as the new Provincial of INM for 2023 - 2029**. As we are all aware, Fr. Don Bosco has been the Vice Provincial of our Province for the last six years and has vast experience in the administration, animation and governance of the Province. During his tenure as Vice Provincial, he has also taken unique care of the Youth Ministry and Formation Sectors. Fr. Don Bosco is a man of action, while also being a man who can make a positive difference in the lives of others. Donning the responsibility of Provincial, will certainly bring to the forefront, his sense of commitment and dedication to the confreres

and mission. We wish him abundant blessings and graces for his good health and we are sure that guided and protected by Our Blessed Mother and his patron St. John Bosco, the Province of Chennai will continue to scale new heights of glory while our Salesians grow in holiness and religious fervour. We are sure that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Fr. Don Bosco Lourdusamy will do his best for the confreres and the mission of our Province. **The date of the Installation of the New Provincial will be on 4th February 2023**. More details about the same will be communicated to you soon.

In this first Circular for the New Year, I would like to reflect with you on the importance of being graceful in our day to day lives. As we are at the start of a new calendar year, yet in the middle of the academic year, it is not easy to be polite, calm and in control of our emotions with all people at all times. And so, for this we need **"The Grace to be Graceful"**.

Who is a 'Graceful' person?

"Grace" comes from the Latin word "*gratia*", which means **"God's favour"**. That indefinable quality which, rather than being something granted by divine inspiration, is something inside us and which we can easily bring out. It isn't unattainable, however—far from it. **Living gracefully is pretty simple and definable**, and, it has nothing to do with being physically graceful.

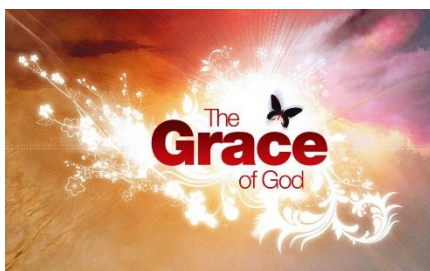


‘Grace’ isn’t the prayer you say before meals. It’s the way to live! ‘Grace’ has two main definitions. It can refer to elegance and poise. But it can also mean decency or honour. Both of these aspects can be helpful to us, especially the latter. Let’s consider each in turn. A graceful person, in the first sense, **is one who is unruffled, someone who can deal with trials and tribulations without breaking step**. This can be a distinct advantage in relating to other people. It can help put them at their ease and help them have confidence in us and what we are trying to do. Having the poise of inner calmness can also work wonders for our blood pressure, our ability to cope with pressure and thus keep stress at bay. It therefore has benefits all round. Some may see it as a quality that some people are born with, while others have to learn how to do without. However, in reality, it is a skill (or set of behavioural skills) that **can be developed over time**. There is no reason why people cannot learn to develop poise and grace if they are prepared to make the effort and to develop the self-awareness involved.



Be grateful when things are going your way. Be graceful when they don’t. All of us need to optimise our **‘gracefulness quotient’**? The first sense of ‘grace’ is therefore a matter of skills. The second meaning, by contrast, is a matter of values. Being graceful, in our second sense, is about **committing ourselves to a value position that involves being respectful, treating people with dignity and thereby being a decent and honourable person**. Of course, much of this derives from our upbringing, the ways in which we are taught right and wrong and other aspects of our culture. But, while cultures are very influential, each of us has our own role to play in shaping how we behave and how we treat one another. We need to take ownership of our ‘grace’.

What is particularly interesting is that, if we look closely enough, we can see important links between these two different meanings of ‘being graceful’. **The more poise we have, the more confident and self-assured we can be**, and therefore be in a stronger position to treat others with dignity and respect, as we will have less baggage of our own to get in the way. Similarly, the more we treat people with dignity and respect, the fewer problems we will have and the more respect we will get in return. That will then put us in a stronger position to adopt an elegant and self-assured approach to our lives, to have the poise that comes with grace.



Jesus’ astounding ‘Graceful’ origin

“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28). John 1:14 tells us, *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* Notice how Jesus Christ is characterized here—as “full of grace and truth.” Many have recognized “grace and truth” here as a reference to a phrase

used repeatedly in the Old Testament in describing the character of God, often rendered “mercy and truth.” The Hebrew for “mercy” in this phrase, though, has a broader meaning. It’s the word *hesed*, which was mentioned earlier in relation to grace. It has the sense of lovingkindness, goodness, steadfast love, covenant faithfulness and devotion.

Amazingly, the God described this way in the Old Testament was not just the Father but the One who as God interacted with mankind—the Word who became Jesus Christ. The Word, through whom God created all things (**John 1:1-3; John 1:10; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2**), became a human being. We see here that the grace and truth that characterizes God came to us in the form of a flesh-and-blood

man living among us. Jesus Christ is the perfect example of this grace in action. May we all follow His example in every way!



Don Bosco, the Grace-filled Saint

Saint John Bosco, whom we celebrate this month, is one of the most 'charismatic' of saints, endowed with many gifts, which he offered to God in a long and varied life, and in so doing offering us one of the most exemplary and endearing models of the priesthood. Let us imbibe his words seriously as we celebrate his memory: *Let us regard those boys over whom we have some authority as our own sons. Let us place ourselves in their service. Let us be ashamed to assume an attitude of superiority. Let us not rule over them except for the purpose of serving them better. This was the method that Jesus used with the apostles. He put up with their ignorance and roughness and even their infidelity. He treated sinners with a kindness and affection that caused some to be shocked, others to be scandalised, and still others to hope for God's mercy. And so, he bade us to be gentle and humble of heart.*

Don Bosco was loved no end by his "rascals" as he used to call them. Whenever anyone asked him the secret of such success, he would reply, *"I always try to win them over with kindness and love."* He spent what little money he had, his time, his most extraordinary talents and his health all to help them out. If there's one undeniable fact about human nature, it's that we all want to be happy. We crave joy—infinite, endless joy.

The problem is, we often look for happiness in all the wrong places, leaving ourselves frustrated and miserable. The plethora of wildly popular self-help online websites show that we are hungry for guidance on how to live well. Don Bosco was a man who experienced many trials, but who also lived a life full of gladness and joy. He was so happy that he could hardly contain it. "Dear friend," he wrote to an associate, "I am a man who loves joy and who therefore wishes to see you and everybody happy. If you do as I say, you will be joyful and glad in heart." So how did St. John Bosco find real happiness? Here's his recommendations for living a grace-filled life:

Live for God alone – Give God the greatest possible glory and honour Him with your whole soul. If you have a sin on your conscience, remove it as soon as possible by means of a good Confession.

Be a servant – Never offend anyone. Above all, be willing to serve others. Be more demanding of yourself than of others.

Be careful in your associations – "Do not trust those who have no faith in God and who do not obey His precepts. Those who have no scruples in offending God and who do not give Him what they should will have many fewer scruples in offending you and even betraying you when it is convenient for them."

Be humble – Be humble. Speak little of yourself and never praise yourself before anyone. He who praises himself, even if he has real merit, risks losing the good opinion of others. He who seeks only praise and honours is sure to have an empty head fed only by wind... will have no peace of soul and will be unreliable in his undertakings."

Carry your cross – Carry your cross on your back and take it as it comes, small or large, whether from friends or enemies and of whatever wood it be made. The most intelligent and happiest of men is he

who, knowing that he is doomed to carry the cross throughout life, willingly and resignedly accepts the one God sends him.

The most joyful of all people are the saints—men and women like St. John Bosco. They were truly and lastingly happy because they had discovered the secret that holiness is real happiness. And they want us to discover it too.

Practical Tips to be a Graceful Person

Everyone has challenges in life, but not everyone handles them well. And many of us look back on some of our life's most difficult moments and wish we had handled them with just a little more refinement. We all have moments where we don't love how we responded to a situation or how we acted. Many of us are emotionally out of control, lacking presence of mind, allowing life to take us on an emotional roller coaster where we feel crazy and at the mercy of our life situations, people and emotions.

To be a 'Graceful' person essentially means that you know who you are and accept this fact. Only then will you be able to make the necessary adaptations to yourself so that you will be comfortable with who you need to become.



1. Be Mindful: In order to find and express your inner elegance, you first have to envision yourself as a graceful person. To start this change, you have to begin thinking of yourself in the way in which you wish to be perceived. Once you start this thought process, everything else will fall into place. *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians 4:6)*

2. Be Graceful: When you think about displaying an inner elegance, gracefulness is one of qualities to express this. When you are graceful you move slowly, have a positive but quiet confidence about your aura and you think and speak with poise, charisma and dignity. You are deliberate in who you are without being pushy. *God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble. (James 4:6)*

3. Be Gracious: Do not have tantrums or play emotional games. You do not need to manipulate persons or situations to get what you want. Being in control and owning who you are is what draws love and opportunities to you. When you show you have self-control and are emotionally intelligent, you are viewed as smart and in control.

4. Be Grateful: Perhaps most important rule is this: be grateful. It might seem a strange thing to do but being grateful for everyone you have in your life and then reflecting that outwards will be not only a fantastic step for all those around you, it'll make you graceful. The most graceful people in the world are the ones who are centred in the moment and able to be grateful for what is going on in your life. *I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. (Romans 16:17)*

5. Be Innovative: Use your intelligence and be dynamic in your speech, neatness, and in your complicated simplicity. As a Salesian, use all the intricacies of your formation, which brings out your charisma, aptitude, goodness and lovability.

6. Be Clear: Do be not afraid to be yourself. A big ego is not part of your plan and nor do you need to court attention and this is exactly why you will get it. Express yourself politely but precisely to confreres who will certainly pay heed to you if you are graceful. When you are clear about whom you are, your inner grace shines through.

7. Be Yourself: Do not expect or go in search for others to take care of you emotionally. You must have the confidence, courage, and motivation to be self-sufficient. To truly possess this quality and not have it be an act, you have to walk your talk. You have to be passionate about your Salesian life, your individuality, and also your ability to love. When you embody this, you can give yourself totally to the mission without losing your own ground, your passion for your religious life and the achievement of the community vision. Always remember that when you love yourself, you can love others better! Being good to yourself and accepting yourself is in no way shape or form arrogance or narcissism: you're not in love with yourself, you just LOVE yourself, and being a graceful person is all about accepting yourself for who you are and choosing who and what you choose to be. There's a lot of talk about inner beauty and how everyone is beautiful, but you don't HAVE to be beautiful at all, inside or out, if you don't choose to be so. Start to treat yourself with kindness and compassion and you'll see a massive change.

Conclusion

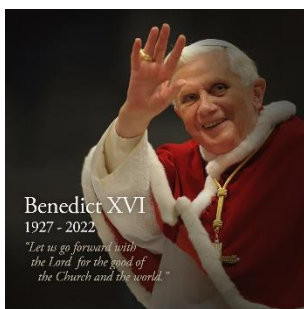
But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it (Ephesians 4:7). In the end, being graceful is more than just being kind or chilled out or happy or all the time. Being graceful, or adopting a graceful attitude, is about both dealing with anything life can and will throw at you, and dealing with it with the best tools available to you: kindness to yourself and to others, taking time to be conscious and in the moment, being aware of the good in your life, and choosing to act with that in mind.



Practising these rules on a daily basis is tricky. Some days we are angry and unfocused and some days we are graceful. **Jesus Christ gives us the preeminent example of grace in action.** He increased in grace or favour with God and others (**Luke 2:52**), being a recipient of His Father's blessings as well as the One the Father used to bless the whole world. In this, Jesus set an example for us to follow. *"My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:8).* All of us are to be both recipients of God's grace and instruments of God's grace to others, developing the same mindset He had. The Apostle Peter instructed the faithful, *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10).* Let us then *approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).* *May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord (2 Peter 1:2).*

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has returned to the Father's House.



The Holy See Press Office announced that the Pope Emeritus died at 9:34 a.m. on Saturday 31st December 2022 morning in his residence at the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery, which the 95-year-old Pope Emeritus had chosen as his residence after resigning from the Petrine ministry in 2013. As of Monday morning, 2 January 2023, the body of the Pope Emeritus will be in Saint Peter's Basilica so the faithful can pay their respects. Pope Francis will preside over the funeral of the Pope Emeritus on 5 January at 9.30 CET in St. Peter's Square. Pope Emeritus had on Wednesday 28th December, in the afternoon, received the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick in the Mater Ecclesiae monastery at the end of Holy Mass. The late Pope Benedict specifically asked that everything - including the funeral - be marked by simplicity, just as he lived his life.

INM ORDINATIONS 27.12.2022

The portals of Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur opened up to the joyous occasion of the Priestly Ordination of nine Deacons on 27th December 2022. It was indeed a proud moment for the Salesian Province of Chennai which gathered around these confreres to celebrate and thank God for the gift of these vocations. His Excellency Bp. Singaroyan, the Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Salem presided over the ordination ceremony which was conducted with dignity and fervour. Around 1,500 people, including Salesians, priests, religious, well-wishers and family members of the deacons had gathered to partake of the celebration – to thank God and to receive His blessings through the new priests. After the Holy Eucharist, the new priests were honoured. Rev. Fr. Don Bosco, the Provincial-Designate for the Salesian Province of Chennai was also honoured. I sincerely thank Fr. Don Bosco, Fr. John Alex, and the Sacred Heart College community for the organization of this memorable event. May St. John Bosco and our loving Mother Mary help our newly ordained priests to witness and bear fruit in abundance through their priestly and pastoral ministry.

Salesian Family STRENNA 2023



The parable of the yeast, chosen as the theme for Strenna 2023, is a parable of great evangelical wisdom and pedagogical and educational relevance, expressing the nature of the kingdom of God that Jesus lived and taught. There are various theological interpretations of this passage. The Rector Major of the Salesians Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, who is the Father and Center of Unity of the Salesian Family, after a phase of consultation and discernment with the Salesian Family Leaders, experts and members of the General Council, today unveiled the theme and

guidelines of his Strenna message for 2023: "AS THE YEAST IN TODAY'S HUMAN FAMILY. The lay dimension in the Family of Don Bosco."

In his presentation, Fr. Á.F. Artime immediately specifies that this Strenna will have two target groups: not only all groups of the Salesian Family but also "young children, adolescents and older youth wherever Don Bosco's Family is to be found in the world," because, he explains, "in the light of what most characterizes our pedagogy and spirituality, we intend to help children, especially adolescents and young people, to discover that each of them can be like the leaven of which Jesus speaks." At the same time, "for Don Bosco's Family it aims at being a clear and thought-provoking message directed to discovering the lay dimension"; and specifically for consecrated members of the Salesian Family, it is an invitation to be "leaven in the dough of the bread of humanity" and "to live alongside one another, allowing ourselves to be enriched by evangelical secularity."

Leaven, an element also used metaphorically by Jesus to present the Kingdom of God to the apostles, is "the only living ingredient," that element that is used in small quantities but that "has the ability to influence, condition and transform the whole batch of dough," says the Rector Major. This is why the text proposes that every member of the Salesian Family and young people should be leaven in the world, spreading the Word and the Kingdom of God just as leaven transforms the dough of bread. The Rector Major's reflection also draws attention to the importance of the work of the laity in the works of the Salesian Congregation, recalling that "well over 99 percent of the Church is formed by lay people... Imagine how the proportion increases if we consider and embrace the whole world: the laity are the dough as well as the leaven of the Kingdom."

Here is the link with the full text with the initial guidelines for the Rector Major's Strenna message for 2023: <https://www.bosco.link/RetorMajor/79656>

Strenna Dissemination in INM

The Strenna Dissemination will be on the following days for all the Salesians and Salesian Family members. Kindly ensure that you plan and make yourself available to participate actively on any of the dissemination days, preferably in your respective region itself, which will be from **5 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

18.01.2023 – Don Bosco, Katpadi Region

19.01.2023 – Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur Region

20.01.2023 – Holy Spirit Church, Pondy Region

21.01.2023 – Citadel, Chennai Region

23.01.2023 – Citadel, Chennai Region

INM Provincial Community Day

The Provincial Community Day will be on **17th January 2023, in Don Bosco Shrine, Ayanavaram**. The program will be as follows:

10.30 a.m.	–	Holy Mass
12 noon	–	Felicitation
01.00 p.m.	–	Lunch

The contributions from the communities this year will go towards the development of the Don Bosco Mission in Kadambur.

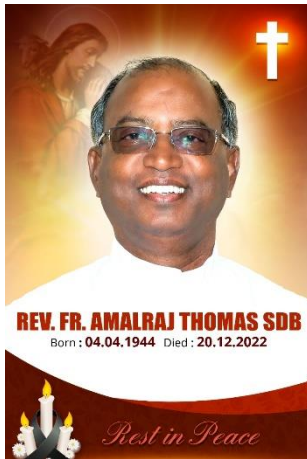
INM Annual Retreats

The INM Annual Retreat schedule for 2023 has already been communicated to you. Kindly ensure that you plan your program so as to be able to participate meaningfully in any one of the Province retreats. The consolidated list will be ready by 10th February 2023.

BOSCOREE 2023

Assam Don Bosco University campus at Tapesia, on the outskirts of Guwahati city hosted the 14th National Boscoree from 29th December 2022 to 3rd January 2023. The six-day program designed under the theme “Save Our Planet Home” provided an opportunity to the young scouts and guides to experience and learn various activities of adventure, skills and discipline with sessions based on the theme to spread the message and translate the thematic activities into action, making and sustaining a green and clean environment. As the Salesian Province of Guwahati is commemorating the Centenary of the Arrival of the first Salesian Missionary (1922-2022) in North East India, the 14th National Boscoree 2022-23 is a part of the Centenary Celebration hosted by the Salesian Province of Guwahati. We congratulate all our scouts and guides from our Province who participated in this event under the guidance of our Salesians and lay animators.

Farewell dear Fr. Amalraj Thomas SDB



Six months ago, it was on 21st July 2022, went to the Rector's office at about 10 a.m. and told him that he was not feeling that well, was finding difficult to breathe and was perspiring. He was looking very dull and immediately the Provincial and Vice Provincial were notified and he was rushed to Kaveri Hospital. The doctors found that on the same day at about 8.30 a.m., after breakfast, Fr. Amalraj had suffered a diabetically related silent heart attack. Hence, he was hospitalized and for three days and was in the CCU. After some days, he came back to the house and once in a month he was going for check-up. While his health condition was improving little by little, in the course of time he had lost almost 10kgs in these months.

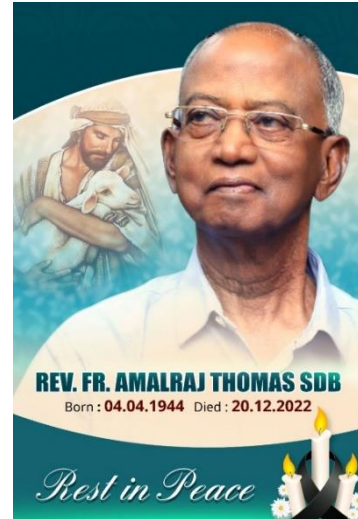
On the day before his death, he had an appointment with the doctor, but the doctor was away on an emergency call, attending to another patient. Hence Fr. Amalraj returned without meeting the doctor. The appointment was rescheduled for the next day, 20th December. However, when he had not come out of his room, we found that he had already gone to meet the heavenly doctor, after suffering a massive heart attack early in the morning. A requiem mass was offered in the SIGA community on the 20th evening. With a solemn funeral mass on 21st December 2022, well-attended by Salesians and Salesian Family members, Fr. Amalraj Thomas was laid to rest in Don Bosco cemetery, Tirupattur.

Fr. Amalraj Thomas was an illustrious Salesian in the Province of Chennai. He has been a renowned formator and leader of many communities. Fr. Amalraj Thomas was a member of the Rinaldi Juniorate (SIGA) community for the past five years. He was a spiritual director of the students and spiritual father of the community. During his first three years he was a teacher of Catechism for our college students, and was very creative and innovative in teaching Catechism through media and other means of communication. The boys enjoyed his classes and he used to share with the Rector about the boys. He was always available for confession and spiritual direction for the hostel boys and other neighbouring religious communities. He was happy and serene in this community. He used to participate in all the community activities like prayer moments, gatherings, meals, outings, etc.



One of his strong points was his regularity in life style, he was a disciplined and organized person, very diligent and committed to his duties. He was very kind and available to those who came to meet him. He was also very much concerned about the community and the mission and would always come out with his feedback and suggestions. He was very fond of books and was generous to share the best of his books to the Rector's office. Almost every day he used to come to look for some books and also to have an informal chat with the Rector. He loved shopping and every now and then would bring bottles of pickle and snacks to be shared with the community members. He had a special liking for games and he would enjoy watching the oratory boys playing football. In a gist, Fr. Amalraj presence was very fraternal and inspiring, and we were blessed to have him. Our heartfelt condolences to Dr. Joseph Selvaraj and Mr. Thamburaj, the elder brothers of Fr. Amalraj Thomas. May he enjoy eternal happiness.

Fr. Amalraj was dearly loved by his mother and his father. They offered him generously to the Salesian Congregation as priest. He was called fondly as *Ammu* by his brothers and sisters, being the last child in the family. He received much love, and he gave the same love to all people till his last breath. Here are some good qualities that we witnessed while he was with us:



1) He was a Noble Person. As innocent as he was, he kept his simplicity in his priestly life. He was a leader for many years in different communities of our Province, he never reacted against anyone who went against his opinion, he loved them and paid great attention to their views. He never spread any wrong messages about anyone; he always loved them.

2) Childlike Attitude: He will always meet the Rector with the polite word RECTOR can I meet you, he was very regular with Rendiconto (a Talk with Rector). In his meeting with the Rector, he was always open, and he shared everything in the true spirit of a Salesian.

3) Faithful to his Prayer Moments: He never missed the prayer moments of the communities or his personal prayers. He always said to his confreres: I have learned this spirit of prayer from my parents from a very early age. He would not go to bed without saying the rosary, and encouraged the boys to do the same. He had a great devotion to Our Lady and the Holy Eucharist.

4) Leadership Qualities: He was Rector for 22 years in different communities (formation houses, parishes, youth centres, etc.). He gave importance to all confreres, divided the work equally, made them work happily, and appreciated them after their work. He taught them how to work as a team as one united family.

5) Passion for Reading: He had a huge collection of books, and he donated them to the formation houses and the houses with requirements. This habit of reading books and newspapers kept him updated on things that were happening around him. He encouraged others, also in the same manner, to cultivate the habit of reading books.

6) Accompaniment: He is always found with young people, and he was very particular about being with them during the moments of prayer and recreation (prayer, picnics, and tournaments).

7) Friendly and personal Relationship with Students: People loved to hear their names being called by Fr. Amalraj Thomas who always had special love for young people and the confreres. He was fantastic mentor and formator and he was a cheerful giver with his talents and time.

We are proud of Fr. Amalraj for the life that he lived and the good example he left for us to follow as the true son of Don Bosco. May the spirit of Fr. Amalraj give us courage and strength to live our lives authentically. MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE

Rest in Peace

Heartfelt condolences to the Provincial and confreres of INS Province at the demise of **Cl. Pynshngain Hahshah SDB** on 18th December 2022.

Mr. Antony Sundarraaj (81), brother of Fr. Solomon Kolandaiswamy went to his eternal reward on 19th December 2022. May he rest in eternal peace.

Mr. Arkiadoss (58), elder brother of Fr. Martin Raj Arokiasamy, died on 29th December 2022. Our deepest condolences to the bereaving family.

Our prayerful sympathies to the Provincial and confreres of Dimapur Province at the passing of Rev. **Fr. R. Tharakan Mathew SDB** (88) on 3rd January 2023.

Conclusion



We celebrate our country's Republic Day on 26th January, commemorating the enactment of the Constitution of India, which occurred on January 26, 1950. Freedom is not to be free from any ruler but to be free from all oppressions whether they are physical, social, political, psychological or intellectual. Let us see a dream at this Republic Day: One Nation, One Vision, and One Identity. As we also celebrate the feast of our Father and Founder Don Bosco on the 31st of January, we remember that the

secret to the success of Don Bosco the Educator was his intense spirituality, an inner energy which made of the love of God and neighbour an inseparable unity for him. This is a fundamental element of Salesian pastoral action and is based on the Gospel. We his sons carry on his legacy of helping the poor and marginalized to live better lives and build brighter futures through our sacrificing service for them.

Wishing you a very happy feast of our Father! May he continue to bless and guide us every day.

Yours truly in Don Bosco,

Fr. K.M. Jose SDB
INM Provincial



Date: 04.01.2023.

Place: Chennai – 600010.