

Provincial Circular

FMA PROVINCE OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS KOLKATA (INC)

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My dearest Sisters,

Prayerful greetings for a very holy and fervent Season of Lent!

As we step into the month of March, we are entering into a holy ground and begin marching forward through the desert of forty days towards the celebration of the solemnity of the Resurrection of Jesus. Our holy mother the Church gives us two most powerful intercessors to accompany us during this month, St. Joseph and Our Lady. The Church dedicates the entire month of March to St. Joseph and urges us to pay special attention to his life and example. Again Lent's austerity is interrupted as we solemnly keep a feast in honor of the Annunciation, a feast that commemorates the most sublime moment in the history of time.

Holy Season of Lent

Lent is marked by a time of prayer and preparation to celebrate Easter. The 40 days of Lent are connected with the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry by facing the temptations that could lead him to abandon his mission and calling. Today we use this period of time for introspection, self examination, and repentance. The Lord is inviting us to turn to him during the next forty days so that he can pour the gifts of his love, mercy and grace upon us. He promises that if we take up his invitation everyday in prayer, our faith will grow and our lives will change. We will find an inner strength from the Holy Spirit to help us overcome temptation and sin. Because he cares for us, he will prick our consciences when we face temptation. And he will help us to be ever more kind, patient, and loving. Let us therefore look for ways that the Spirit is moving us and urging us to stay close to him. For this, we need to set aside time for prayer, for it is in daily prayer that we can tap into God's grace. As St. Paul says, we have to try to "put away the old self" of our former way of life and "put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4: 22,24).

Pope Francis in his message for Lent reminds us that "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Rom 8:19) and that the path to Easter therefore demands that we renew our life through repentance, conversion and forgiveness, so as to live fully the abundant grace of the paschal mystery. This "eager longing", this expectation of all creation, he says, will be fulfilled in the revelation of the children of God, that is, when we enter decisively into the "travail" that conversion entails. Following the invitation of our Holy



Father let us not allow this season of grace to pass in vain. Let us ask God to help us set out on a path of true conversion. Let us leave behind our selfishness and self-absorption, and turn to Jesus' Pasch. Let us stand beside our brothers and sisters in need, sharing our spiritual and material goods with them by fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

May Mary our Mother and St. Joseph accompany us and help us to live concretely the Lenten commitments proposed by every community and lead us along the path of Salesian holiness, for the sake of those to whom we are sent and for our own.

Feast of St. Joseph (19 March)

The feast of 19 March invites us to meditate about Saint Joseph, Our Lord Jesus' legal and foster father. Because of that function which he performed in regard to Christ during his childhood and youth, he has been declared Patron or Protector of the Church. The Gospel does not record a single word from him; his language is silence. It was his attention to the angelic voices which spoke in his sleep; it was that prompt and generous obedience which was demanded from him; it was manual labour, in the most modest and fatiguing of forms, which earned Jesus the reputation of being "the son of the carpenter" (Mt. 13, 55). There, is nothing else known of him, and it might well be said that he lived an unknown life, the life of a simple artisan, with no sign of personal greatness.



But that humble figure which was so near to Jesus and Mary, he who was so intimately connected with their life and so closely linked with the genealogy of the Messiahs as to be the fateful and conclusive representative of the descendants of David (Mt. 1, 20), is revealed as being full of significance if we look at him attentively. He is seen truly to possess those qualities which the Church attributes to him in her liturgy, which the devotion of the faithful also attributes to him, and which gave rise to a series of invocations that have taken the form of a litany.

The Gospel describes St. Joseph as a *Just Man* (Mt. 1, 19). No greater praise of virtue and no higher tribute to merit could be applied to a man of humble social condition who was apparently far from being equipped to perform great deeds. A poor, honest, hardworking, perhaps even timorous man, but one with unfathomable interior life and total commitment! Total commitment to Mary, the elect of all the women of the earth and of history, never his wife physically, and total commitment to Jesus, who was his offspring only by legal descent, not by the flesh. He had the burdens, the responsibilities, the risks and the labours surrounding the holy family. St. Joseph, in other word, is the model of those humble ones that the Church raises to great destinies.

Let us take St. Joseph as our model of humility and obedience to God's will. Let us call upon him for the whole world, for our country and its forthcoming elections, trusting that the heart of the humble working man of Nazareth, now overflowing with immeasurable wisdom and power, will bless all humanity with a singular and precious fellow-feeling.

Feast of the Annunciation of Mary (25 March)

On the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we bow down in awe before the event upon which our Christian faith is founded. On this day, we celebrate the very moment that Jesus our Lord, in all humility, was conceived in the womb of a humble virgin. And in celebrating this unfathomable mystery, we celebrate the miraculous power of the Holy Trinity. We also celebrate, of course, the humility and unblemished beauty of the human person chosen to be the receptacle of this miracle – the Blessed Virgin Mary. And through this choosing of her, we are brought to the foundation of our relationship with our God.



This moment can be seen in the context of creation itself, whereby ‘the Spirit of God moved over the waters.’ (Genesis 1:2). It was then that the creative Will of God the Father issued forth, becoming active through the Word, the Logos. And the Spirit breathed life into creation. With the Annunciation, we find the very same thing. The creative Will of the Father is manifested into being through the Word. This is brought about by the action of the Spirit, breathing life into the pure waters within the Virgin’s womb. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. There is nothing more profound. Yet, whilst incredibly profound, the Annunciation also depicts great humility. Mary is seen completely taken aback, humbled before the Angel of the Most High. And our God, Who endowed us with autonomy, freedom of choice, awaits Mary’s consent. Nothing can be demanded of her. So it is, with God’s respect of human free will. For without our consent, God cannot act through us. He cannot be mediated into the world. We must be open to His will. This is the beauty of our relationship with God and respectively with our neighbour. Each person is free to give, to love. And Mary, although somewhat frightened, was wholeheartedly open to the Father. Her heart was willing to give, without compromise. For through her immaculate nature, she wants nothing other than to be in accord with His Will, His Love. Therefore, she said ‘Yes’, in this most profound and perfect act of obedience. It is to this she calls us, inviting us to imitate Her. Let us therefore imitate Mary’s sensitivity to the Word of God, her ‘yes’, her fidelity, which brings joy, happiness and blessing to the whole world.

World Gratitude Day (26 April)

This year, the feast of world gratitude day will be celebrated on 26 April, 2019 in Bellflower, California in Mary Immaculate Province in the United States. The theme proposed by our Sisters is taken from the words that are at the base of the Statue of Liberty, symbol of the people of the United States: ***“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”***(Emma Lazarus). The slogan chosen is: ***“I entrust them to you”*** which echoes in our heart the entrustment made to Maria Domenica Mazzarello, a reminder to sow hope and trust in the hearts of people and the young, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.



Let us unite ourselves with the entire Institute in expressing our affection and gratitude to our Mother, bond of communion and center of unity (C 116), for her untiring self-giving, for being the sign of the Father's love, for being a guide who directs the journey of the Institute with wisdom and courage. In preparation for the feast, let us offer her the gift of our prayers and sacrifices. Each community can decide upon a common prayer to be said in one of the community moments of prayer beginning from 25 March.

Convocation of the General Chapter XXIV

I am glad to communicate to you the great news that our Mother General Yvonne Reungoat, in her circular No.985 has officially convoked the General Chapter XXIV, according to Article 138 of the Constitutions. It will begin in Rome at the Generalate on 18 September 2020. She has appointed Sr. Chiara Cazzuola, the Vicar General as the moderator of the Chapter. The theme is, "***Do whatever He tells you (Jn 2: 5), Generative communities of life in the heart of modernity***".

Condolences - Let us pray for our dear Departed:

- † Fr. Stephen Tapan Khan, parish priest of St. Mother Teresa's church, Dum Dum who passed away on 14 February 2019.
- † Sr. Susanna Korah's Cousin brother Mr. Mathew (90) who passed away on 24 February 2019

Prayers requested for:



Let us accompany our dear Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukayil, the visiting Councilor who has initiated her Canonical Visitation in our Province with our prayers.

Dear Sisters,

As we begin our Lenten journey tomorrow let this moment be a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving; opening, receiving and rejoicing and a journey that moves us towards the cross therefore let us give up, take up and lift up.

Yours affectionately in Our Lady,

Sr. Rose Ezarath FMA
(Provincial)

