



# PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

## INDIA MUMBAI PROVINCE (INM)



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### THE WAVES

When we think of 'wave', we usually picture a line of water moving across the surface of water or a curling wall of water moving in from the ocean to crash on the beach. Wave in its common sense especially in the summer brings in excitement in the minds of people as it brings in nostalgia of the sea, holidays and relaxation. Wave also means to raise one's hand and move it from side to side as a way of greeting someone, telling someone to do something or adding emphasis to an expression. In physics, a wave is a disturbance that travels through space and matter transferring energy from one place to another. There are lots of waves all around us. Sound is a type of wave that moves through matter and then vibrates our eardrums so we can hear. Light is a special kind of wave that is made up of photons.

But in recent times, the word 'wave' brings in aversion and generates fear in our minds as it is linked with COVID -19 pandemic and its mass destruction.

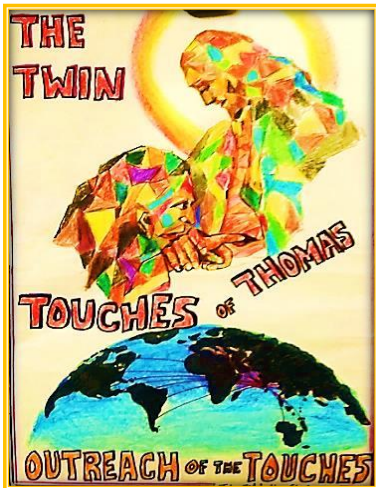
So, all this brings us to one single concept of wave i.e. movement. Everything in the Universe is in constant movement because of the forces in the Universe. But the way it moves, the speed with which it accelerates, the course it takes, the direction it sways, the aftermath that occurs, etc. describes it as a tsunami, whirlwind, conservation, equilibrium etc.

Our life and mission revolves in and around the society in which we live. And being in it, we also experience various waves and movements. As we are settling down in the new academic year and in our communities, there will be waves and movements which we need to acknowledge and integrate them to live purposeful life. Many factors that are involved in these waves will shape our ultimate destiny provided we cautiously navigate the waves of life.

According to the experts, we are right now going through the Second Wave of Covid-19 pandemic. The First One was much milder and we heard about some 'numbers' of casualties. The Second One is stronger and has more casualties - people whom we knew suddenly gone. The Third Wave, the experts predict can be worse if we don't take control of it by being cautious in our movements and strictly following the SOPs.

SOPs are significant signposts which direct us to cautiously navigate the waves of life. We Catholics have many such signposts. We call them Saints. During this month we have the opportunity to journey with a few of them - St. Thomas the Apostle, St. Maria Goretti, St. Bonaventure, St. Mary Magdalene, Sts. Joachim and Anne and St. Ignatius of Loyola. These saints teach us that our earthly pilgrimage is a great adventure towards union with Christ, the Beginning and the End of our journey.

We learn from the saints that each one has his/her role to play before we crash on the shore of destiny. Some are called to be forerunners and pioneers. They lead the way quietly and when some others take the same route they silently move on to newer ways. They may remain in the background for a while as there is no desire in them for self-proclamation and self-glorification. But the beauty lies in the fact that they find newer ways to pioneer as they have graciously left behind the old things and moved on with their life.



Fr. Stan Swamy SJ who so well pioneered the cause of the deprived and marginalized people by organizing and supporting various movements for the welfare of the poor people has moved on and has become a 'Movement' himself to waken us to the life threatening and love impeding moves of the present dispensation and he motivates us to take the banner of truth, justice and reconciliation and be a part of the 'Stan Swamy Movement' so that we may attain the destiny bequeathed to us before we pass on the torch to the generation to follow.

We also learn the lesson of reaching out from our own Apostle of India, St. Thomas, whose feast we celebrated recently as the first 'Indian Christian Day and Yesu Bhakti Divas', who crashed on to our shore, gave his very best and sacrificed his life to bequeath us the good news. It was a great wave, a daring movement from his part from one part of the world to the other for the sake of his Lord and God. He teaches us that ultimately what matters is God's mission and other things need to take their rightful place to usher in God's reign in our lives and in the world.

Therefore, the code words are Waves and Destinies. And the buzz word would be Precaution!

- INM Leadership Team

## **FAREWELL AND INDUCTION ST. THERESA'S CHURCH, BANDRA**



Having served St. Theresa's Parish during the last six years, two years as assistant parish priest and four years as parish priest, Fr. Jolly left for Institute of Indian Culture, Andheri East on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 to take up his assignment as a full-time Mission Secretary. Though the churches are still shut for public Eucharistic celebrations, Fr. Jolly was given a fitting farewell during the online mass on 13<sup>th</sup> June.

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it, said Thelma D'Silva, the Vice President of PPC welcoming the new parish priest, Fr. Henry D'Souza on the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2021. By professing the faith and taking the oath of office in the presence of Fr. Reuben Tellis, the Dean of Bandra deanery, Fr. Henry took over as the 18<sup>th</sup> parish priest of St. Theresa's parish. In his homily, the dean urged the parishioners to collaborate with Fr. Henry as he shoulders the responsibility of shepherding the people. In the absence of the parishioners owing to the pandemic, Fr. Jolly, the outgoing parish priest, presented Fr. Henry with a heart-shaped bouquet, saying the heart represented the hearts of all the parishioners. Thanking the outgoing parish priest and the parishioners who were watching the

induction ceremony online, Fr. Henry promised the parishioners to give his time, energy and his heart to build a vibrant spiritual community with mission awareness.

## FR. PETER – THE LIGHT OF THE NATURE



Fr. Peter Verhaelen SVD – a great missionary from Germany, through his work and passion for the mission, has left bequeathed us lots of memories to cherish. This year as we celebrate his birth Centenary, we the Goan SVDs along with our benefactors and friends decided to have various events in fond memory of Fr. Peter. On 16<sup>th</sup> June – we had organized an event of planting the trees in memory of Fr. Peter. Fr. Peter always had a close relationship with the nature which was also part of

his spirituality hence we took the initiative to plant 100 trees by the members of the SVD family (Fathers and Brothers), benefactors and people closely associated with SVD seminary Raia. The event was held from 4-6 pm and was blessed by various local dignitaries: MLA, Sarpanch and other people who were chosen to plant a tree in memory of Fr. Peter.

We began the event by thanking God through a short prayer service conducted by our seminarians. Fr. Alexio, the Rector of Patriarchal Seminary, Rachol concluded the event with a final prayer. Fr. Loretto SVD, a missionary to Ecuador and Br. Vincent garlanded the portrait of Fr. Peter and did *aarati* as a sign of respect. Shortly after, we relived our old memories of Fr. Peter with some cherishing words from Fr. Joaquim SVD, Rector of SVD Seminary, Raia along with a beautiful song which was written and sung by our SVD minor seminarians. Our MLA, Mr. Reginald also shared a few thoughts about Fr. Peter and thanked the SVD family for giving the people a fresh and free environment, with a lush green atmosphere. After the short introductory program, instructions were given by the Rector and each person was allotted a specific place to plant a tree. Our brothers and workers helped the people to plant a tree and this event gave people a unique experience. After which, all the guests on the way home collected their snacks and took away ornamental or fruit trees which were kept to carry home and plant at their respective homes in memory of Fr. Peter and so, the event came to an end. The whole event was blessed by God with a shower of rain and all the efforts of the SVD family led to the success of this meaningful event. It is not only Fr. Peter and his love for nature alone that we cherish in our hearts but, we also follow the last words inscribed on his tomb, which says “we walk in the light which he passed on”.

## PANDEMIC RESPONSE SSS, PUNE

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has been more severe and fatal than the first wave. The front-line workers too were at a higher risk in the second wave. As the stringent restrictions gradually eased in June 2021, Sarva Seva Sangh, Pune launched several activities in response to the second wave of Covid-19 and for the prevention of a possible third wave.

### Public Awareness on Covid-19 and Importance of Vaccination



In the first week of June posters and handbills containing basic information on the prevention of Covid-19 infection, the importance of vaccination and post-Covid complications were developed and printed. From the 9<sup>th</sup> June, public awareness activities began by making announcements, distributing handbills and displaying posters in public places in Pune city. A virtual training was conducted for social workers,

community workers and volunteers of different NGOs and civil society organizations on the same with

the help of Dr. Ashwini Deshpande. The digital copies of posters and handbills were also circulated through social media among hundreds of people. Thousands of people in Pune and other places in Maharashtra are becoming aware and are getting vaccinated as a result of this initiative.

### **Free Counselling and Group Sessions for Parents, Youth and Children**



The second wave of the pandemic caused a lot of stress and trauma to several individuals and families. Many people also became depressed due to stringent lockdown, loss of livelihood and related reasons. To address these issues Sarva Seva Sangh initiated free counselling (virtual and over the phone) for needy poor people who undergo depression, traumatic experiences and boredom due to the pandemic situation with the help of a group of professional counsellors. Virtual group sessions are also conducted for parents, youth and children on time management and stress management during the pandemic and also a contextualized career guidance session with the help of *Jidnyasa*, an organization involved in counselling parents and children. These sessions are attended by several parents, youth and children.

### **Mental Health Activities**

The extended lock-downs and restrictions cause boredom and mental distress in people, especially among children and adolescents who are compelled to remain within the four walls of their houses due to the pandemic situation. To address this problem Sarva Seva Sangh initiated various activities using virtual platforms, namely art and craft activities, origami, magic show, showcasing children's creativity etc. There is an overwhelming response from hundreds of children and adolescents from poor and lower-middle-class families by participating and presenting their creativity.

### **Capacity Building Using Oximeter and Thermometer**



The families living in street situations do not have easy access to basic health facilities, especially when they have Covid-19 symptoms. Realizing this issue, Sarva Seva Sangh provided digital oximeters and thermometers in many street settlements. Two or more volunteers from each settlement were taught how to read oximeters and thermometers and lead people with symptoms to the nearby public health centre or government hospitals. Seventeen oximeters and thermometers were procured and one or two are provided to eleven street settlements depending on the size of the settlement. One of the members of our Lay Partners' group, Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW), Pune helped in training the SSS team to train the volunteers.

### **Dry Ration**



The first and the immediate response in the second wave of the pandemic was to provide ration to the needy families who lost their source of income due to loss of livelihood caused by the stringent lockdown. In collaboration with the Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW), Pune who pitched in with funds and volunteers, procurement and distribution of dry ration to the needy people began from mid-May 2021. Some of the members of DDW-Mumbai too supported with a lot of funds for this cause. Nearly 300 families who live in street situations, families with HIV, daily wagers and people who lost livelihood are supported so far with ration.

### **Positive Parenting**

Parenting is the key factor in the healthy and holistic development of children. In this pandemic-hit world children are among the worst hit and so positive parenting is very important. To educate parents, especially those in the periphery, a poster in Marathi containing important aspects of healthy parenting is

developed and circulated, both in hard copy and soft copy. It would hopefully improve the quality of parenting which will result in better development of children. We were happy to see a lot of good effects of these initiatives among children, youth and parents, especially from economically and socially poor families who are often left out.

## ST. ARNOLD'S DEGREE COLLEGE, ANDHERI



The new academic year 2021-2022 began on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021 with lots of enthusiasm. The Inaugural Address was given by Dr. Navin Punjabi, the Vice Principal of H.R. College on “Enhancement Skill for Making a Place and Space for oneself.” On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021 an Orientation Lecture was given by Fr. Dr. S. M. Michael, the Rector of the College on “Science and Commerce Meet in Building an Integral Human Being”. This marked the beginning of the classes with all earnestness.

The College celebrated World Environment Day on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The students were made aware of the importance of preserving the environment our planet earth. A group of students undertook the project of planting trees in the college premises. They also painted a certain portion of the College wall with symbols of Environmental Preservation. The college students were very enthusiastic about doing this group work. During the previous academic year 2020-2021, due to the lockdown, the classes were held online, the students could not meet physically with teachers and their classmates but the College Management took the initiative to organize various activities to remain connected with the students.



On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021, a Mentoring and Career Counselling Session was organized for the students by the Rotaract Club of Andheri. This was followed by mentoring of the students for careers like – CA, CMA,



CS and Banking. The College also collaborated with two other Colleges of Mumbai and organized an online Panel Discussion on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. It is termed as an international bill of rights for women as it sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. CEDAW is very important for the youth of today as they are the eyes and ears for

monitoring the dignity of women. The discussion was attended by more than 200 participants.

The results of Semester II were declared recently and the overall passing percentage was 97 % for B.Com - I and 92% for B.Sc. - I. We hope to achieve our goal of ‘Excellence’ during this current academic year.

The members of the College Development Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2020 had presented an application to the University of Mumbai to begin the new self-financing courses such as B.Sc. (IT), B.M.S., & B.A.F. at our Degree College. This application was accepted by the University and the College was given the permission to begin the above courses from the academic year 2021-2022.

We thank the members of the Degree College Council, College Development Committee and all those who collaborated with us in obtaining this important approval. We wish every success in completing the important formalities with the University and beginning the new courses.

## 365 DAYS OF CONTINUOUS AA MEETINGS

### SSS, ANDERI



Sarva Seva Sangh, Mumbai, created a unique history and record of sorts by conducting Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) fellowship meetings, starting from June 10, 2020 continued till today and still counting, at its premises. What makes it more unique and venturesome is the fact of the situation of the whole world today. The pandemic is at its worst striking mode with the second wave and getting nervous about a third wave in India now. All the AA meetings in

the metro city of Mumbai and its suburbs are shut; alcoholics and sober alcoholics are desperate and fretting, or better said, in anguish and agony. Albeit the Virtual AA meetings that are readily available online for the alcoholics, they are far from imparting any solace and hope for the alcoholics who will miss the three pillars or legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous, viz. recovery, unity and service.

Replying to a telephonic request from the Animator of the Literature group that has been holding its meetings on two days of the week at Sarva Seva Sangh, the Director of the Centre, consented to hold physical meetings at its premises. All the necessary precautions by strictly adhering to the Pandemic Protocols are put in place, the venue got ready for the first meeting during the Lockdown on June 10, 2020, coinciding with the Founder's day. Hardly anyone perceived that it would mark the beginning of a long journey of continuous meetings for consecutive 365 days and still counting. June 10 is celebrated all over the world by members of Alcoholics Anonymous as the Founders Day as on this day that Dr. Bob, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous had his last alcoholic drink. Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Sarva Seva Sangh, Mumbai began its AA group as integral part of its Substance Abusers Project in 2005. Fr. Felix Jones SVD, who was the founder/director of Sarva Seva Sangh, Mumbai, contacted Mr. Prakash Mahajan, who was an active member of AA group functioning at Holy Spirit Hospital, Andheri. An outstanding qualification of Prakash is that he is well-versed in the literature of AA. So Sarva Seva Sangh group started as AA Literature group, in which he conducted classes on Big Book, and other scores of books and literature of AA. Our current celebration of 365 days of continuous meetings has its roots from our humble beginnings. "A day for congratulations for thanksgiving and for celebration" – these words spoken by Dr. Bob, co-founder of AA Fellowship, on the occasion of 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AA Foundation on June 10, 1945, re-echoed and spread its aura all around the surroundings of Sarva Seva Sangh, Mumbai, on this day.

For many years, AA Sarva Seva Sangh group used to have meetings on Thursdays only while there are 6 other groups functioning on other days of the week in the close vicinity. From 2018 onwards, the frequency of meetings was increased to two days in a week. Towards the end of 2018, a Night Vigil was conducted. What became the big reason of the thumping success of the Night Vigil was the serene atmosphere and lush vegetation ambience and the space around the cottage of Sarva Seva Sangh. On the heels of the surpassingly successful Night Vigil, Sarva Seva Sangh AA group was gearing towards another big event in 2019, when unfortunately the pandemic broke out and the ensuing months of lockdown. Despite the stressful and formidable period of the Pandemic, Sarva Seva Sangh AA fellowship draws many alcoholics to sobriety and wishes them a lifetime sobriety and good health and prosperity to their families.

## **FOOD KITCHEN PROJECT ST. THERESA'S CHURCH, BANDRA**

Food kitchen is a community outreach project of St. Theresa's parish, initiated and started by the parishioners in 2015 under the leadership of Fr. Bernard Rodrigues, the then parish priest and Fr. Jolly, the assistant parish priest. Initially, the food kitchen started serving food once a week for thirty people, but gradually the number of beneficiaries as well as the frequency of service increased to three times a week. The miracle is that the food kitchen, since its inception has never lacked funds to feed the hungry people. Having witnessed this humanitarian activity, and inspired by this compassionate ministry, more and more people, including the non-



Christians come forward to contribute toward this project. As a result, during the last three months, in the present lockdown, one hundred and thirty people are fed daily. Moved with compassion for the jobless and hungry people, one generous parishioner came forward to donate food for three days a week, making it six days a week in the last one month. It is indeed very touching to see some people lining up for food one hour before the service, most of

whom are street dwellers. Every evening eight to nine volunteers from the parish, observing the Covid protocol, joyfully do the service of distributing the food packets at the gate of St. Theresa's church. The service begins with a prayer, thanking the donor and the grace before the meal.

## **INAUGURATION NEW ACADEMIC YEAR ST. JOHN'S MISSION SEMINARY, CHANGANASSERRY**



St. John's Mission Seminary, amidst COVID-19 crisis, was able to enjoy the company of each other during these difficult months. The brothers who had gone home for holidays returned by the middle of June and started their regular Plus one and Plus two classes on 25<sup>th</sup> June. The hard work and constant effort of our Vocation Promoter, Fr. Mathew Chennakkudy yielded fruits by admitting 10 vocations, to be nurtured to work in God's vineyard.

They all arrived between 18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June. On 27<sup>th</sup> June, we had our new academic year inauguration with the Holy Eucharist in the morning and welcomed them with a cultural programme in the evening. Thus, St. John's community consists of 6 third years, 7 second years and 10 first years, guided and encouraged by 6 fathers. We have 4 brothers now, waiting to go to Palda on 24<sup>th</sup> July. Even when the world is suffering from this pandemic, we gratefully acknowledge the providence of God in keeping us all, safe and sound.

## **APPOINTMENT: SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR DDW-PUNE**

On the recommendation of LCF Pune and in consultation with the President of the Disciples of the Divine Word-Pune, we have appointed Fr. Gregory Arockiam the Spiritual Director of our Lay Partners' group. Fr. Gregory has played an important role in the process of forming and nurturing this new group. We believe that through his vast experience in spiritual direction he will animate the members to be rooted in the Divine Word and the Arnoldus spirituality and empower them to live spirit-filled life as individuals and as a group and be effective missionaries.

## CONGRATULATIONS



On 5 July 2021, we received the wonderful news of the appointment of Fr. Anthony (Tony) Paschal Rebello SVD as the Bishop of Francis Town, Botswana by our Holy Father Pope Francis. Fr. Tony was born on 18 March 1950 in Nairobi, Kenya and was ordained as the first Goan SVD priest on 10 May 1977. Following his ordination, he exercised his pastoral ministry in India and later obtained a degree in Bachelor of Education. He was awarded the licentiate in Spiritual Theology by the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

After completing his studies since 1981 he has been serving as a missionary in various countries of Africa - Botswana, Kenya and Angola and Antigua. Presently he is serving as the parish priest of the Holy Cross parish in Mogoditshane, Botswana. All of us in India Mumbai province rejoice with Fr. Tony and thank God for this wonderful leadership ministry God has given him at this time of his life and we believe it is a fitting recognition of his loving, joyful and committed missionary service to the church, to the African countries where he was born and served. We congratulate Fr. Tony and pray for God's abundant blessings on his new mission and pray that keeping with his giftedness he may continue to be a shepherd after the very heart of God.

## ONGOING FORMATION PROGRAMME FOR THE YOUNG CONFRERES

The Governing Body of the SVD India Sub-Zone in its online meeting held on 16 June 2021 has proposed to organize a three day online ongoing formation programme for the young confreres of India Subzone in two batches.

First Batch: Dec. 6 - 8, 2021 for 1-5 years of ordination and final profession group

Second Batch: Dec. 9 - 11, 2021 for 6-10 years of ordination and final profession group

More details of this programme will be shared by the Sub-zonal Mission Secretary, Fr. Ronald Pereira in due course. Our young confreres are requested to take note of the respective dates and attend this programme. Since the programme for both the batches is going to be the same, if a confrere cannot attend the applicable batch can join the convenient batch.

## VOCATION PROMOTERS TEAMS

Following up on the recommendation of our recent Provincial Chapter 2021 we have identified confreres from respective communities who could team-up and collaborate with the Vocation Promoter and contribute their time and energy for effective vocation promotion. In the Provincial Council online meeting held on 24-25 June 2021 while deliberating on this matter we recognized that it is not feasible to have a member from each community on the team and hence decided to form a team of 3-4 members for each state and accordingly, in consultation with the communities and the Vocation Promoters we have formed the following teams.

Goa : Fr. Michael Pereira and Dn. Aaron Dias

Karnataka : Fr. Praveen Aranha, Fr. Thomas Sequeira and Fr. Richard D'Almeida

Kerala : Fr. Mathew Chennakudy, Fr. Jacob Mulavarikkal, Fr. George Mepurath and Fr. Jose George

Maharashtra : Fr. Nickson Gabru, Fr. Sandesh Patil and Fr. Cyril Edward



## **PROPOSAL FROM SANGEET ABHINAY ACADEMY**

On behalf of Sangeet Abhinay Academy, Mr. Walter Saldanha, the Chairman, has presented a proposal to handover the rights and assets of Sangeet Abhinay Academy to the Society of the Divine Word – India Mumbai Province. As you are aware the handing over of rights and assets is necessitated because of the deteriorating health of Fr. Charles Vas, the founder and present director of the Academy.

After having carefully deliberated on the proposal in the Provincial Council online meeting held on 24-25 June 2021 and having sought the legal advice from the experts we have decided to accept the donations. Following are the broad Rights and Assets of Sangeet Abhinay Academy on as is where is basis: Intellectual Rights of Hymns, Bhajans and Lyrics and Scripts, Assets and Awards and Recognitions. All these will form part of Gyan Ashram. We have amply made clear to the Trustees that we have no intention of taking over the Trust or amalgamating it with the Society of the Divine Word and hence they are advised to dissolve the Trust following due legal procedures.

### **19<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER 2024: THEME AND CONCERNS**

In preparation for the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter which will take place in the summer of 2024 Fr. Superior General through a letter dated 18 June 2021 has invited all the confreres to actively participate in the process right from the beginning and hence requested to do the following two things:

1. Present two major concerns that the Province feels the General Chapter should address taking into consideration the last General Chapter deliberations and the present pandemic situation that is affecting the world and shaping our life and mission. These concerns should be of a universal character so that they are relevant to the entire Society and to our religious missionary mandate in the contemporary world.
2. Based on the two concerns, we are also requested to propose a theme for the General Chapter.

Hence in the Provincial Council online meeting held on 24-25 June we decided to request each community to hold a meeting and deliberate on the said matters and send us the two major concerns and a theme to our office by 31 August 2021.

Furthermore, we are informed that the sesquicentennial (150 years) celebration of the foundation of the Society of the Divine Word is in 2025. Thus, the forthcoming General Chapter assumes a greater significance in the history of the Society.

**In the Divine Word**



**Richard Mathias SVD**

**Provincial Superior-INM**

***'Rooted in the love of the Father and led by the Holy Spirit into the Mission of Christ'***

**- INM Vision Statement**