



# PROVINCIAL CIRCULAR

## INDIA MUMBAI PROVINCE (INM)



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FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

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### LIVING IN HIS PRESENCE

Ordinary time has come to an end with the dawn of yet another Advent season. This fact itself demonstrates that Advent season is exceptionally important and special for us. Pope Francis in his Angelus address on the first Sunday of Advent said, “Let us bear this in mind: God is ... always there — he is concealed in the commonest and most ordinary situations of our life. God does not come in extraordinary events, but in everyday things. Further, he urged the congregation of our torpor and let us Let’s ask ourselves: am I am I alert, am I awake? Do in daily situations, or am I overwhelmed by things?”



Our life is cluttered with our attention, distracting energies, and blinding us to the big picture. Money only goes so far. Technology can only do so much. Medicines have a short shelf life. All of our human resources are limited. God alone, the inexhaustible source of all that we need, offers them to us in abundance through his beloved son whom he sent into the world as our saviour.

too many things demanding our focus, draining us of our

God is always calling us to take a deep look into the broad range of our life and become aware of His ever abiding presence during this Advent season and prepare ourselves to encounter him in his first coming in history, in his second coming in grace in the daily events and realities of our life and in his final coming in power and great glory. Advent is a season of heightened awareness whereby we are called on to live in the awareness that God is continually gifting Himself to us and inviting us to abide in his presence. But, quite often, we do not respond as we ought, as we are oblivious to his presence. “He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him (John 1:10-11).

The fact is not that we are unconcerned or apathetic or lazy. The problem is that we pay scarce attention to our inner spirit and our inner selves. This spiritual blindness is spoken of in Biblical language as darkness or night. And what do we do in darkness? It is customary, in all cultures and societies, during this time to sleep. We sleep because we want to shut down, tune out and turn off. Prophet Isaiah calls us to climb the top of the mountain and look for the Lord’s yearning to awaken in us the awareness of His presence in our lives and in the circumstances that surround us. In other words, He is calling us to rise above our daily worries, concerns and anxieties in order to introspect and examine whole of our life with all of its peaks and valleys. This is possible only if we view things in Christ, the Light of the World. “For

with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.” (Ps. 36:9). Therefore, like David, we must consciously expose ourselves to the light, the divine light, while marching forward in faith.

But can we march on being aware of his presence? Yes, we can....if we take time and make space. Can we track the writing of God’s finger in the light and shadow days of our existence, in good times and in bad? Yes, we can, if we can tune in to God’s presence and grow in familiarity with Him, encountering Him daily at the Eucharist. If we purify ourselves through the Sacrament of Reconciliation we can eagerly look forward to welcome Him with joy. Reading the Word of God daily and meditating would be yet another ideal practice that can help us gain divine insights into the events of our life. Spending extra time in thoughtful reflection and quiet prayer would be an ideal way of sharpening our sense of God’s presence in our lives. Loving and serving others and caring for God’s creation are other spirited ways of awakening ourselves to the divine presence.

God’s promise to be with us, incarnation, in our midst, is deeply entwined with our everyday life, in good times and not so good times. Advent is that gracious season which can transform us into ‘faithful and creative disciples’, if we are willing to respond to His call in every circumstance and opportunity of our life. Therefore, let us live consciously knowing that we are, as T.S. Eliot described, “Distracted from distraction by distraction”, but, let’s live being deeply aware of his presence in our midst as Emmanuel - ‘God with us’.

- INM Leadership Team

## CONCLUSION OF THE GENERAL VISITATION



The General Visitation of our province which commenced on 2 November 2022 with a prayer for the success of the Visitation has come to a close on 22 November 2022 with a meeting with the Provincial Council. Both the Visitors, Fr. Jose Antunes Da Silva and Fr. Augustine Pusha Anbu expressed their joy and satisfaction over their visits to the designated communities and meeting the individual confreres. They have appreciated the good work being done by our

confreres for the good of the people through various ministries. We also would like to thank the Visitors for their efforts and the troubles endured to travel and adjust with various inconveniences to visit all the communities and express Society’s care and concern for our confreres. We appreciate their presence with us for three weeks, their encouragement and guidance.

We also would like to thank all the In-charge persons: Superiors and LCF Coordinators for meticulously planning and organizing the various aspects of the visitation and seeing to it that the visitation at the local level proceeds smoothly. We would like to gratefully recall the service rendered by Fr. Scaria Pannackal, Fr. Moncy Xavier, Fr. Raja Reddy and all the confreres at Soverdia House for making all the necessary arrangements for the comfortable accommodation of all the Visitors and taking care of their needs and travel arrangements.

After the official visitation of our province concluded on 22 November 2022, the Provincial/Regional/Mission Superiors had a joint meeting with all the Visitors of the sub-zone along with the Procurator General, Fr. Peter Dikos on 24 November 2022 at Soverdia House, Andheri. During the meeting various aspects of our mission were discussed especially intercultural life in the provinces and communities, exchange of formators within the sub-zone, OTP programme in India and collaboration among research institutes just to name a few aspects.

## PARISH DAY CELEBRATION SACRED HEART CHURCH, ANDHERI



The Sacred Heart Church, Andheri celebrated Parish Day on Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> November. A perfect mood was set for the long-awaited Parish Day celebration; celebrated after two long years with all the grandeur, glamour and glitter combined with grace. The gloom and grim of the Pandemic were replaced with the enthusiastic, energetic and engaging endeavour in preparation for the Parish Day. The Holy Eucharistic Celebration at 5 pm in the Church ground was officiated by His Lordship Bishop John Rodrigues, accompanied by more than 30 concelebrants. A meaningful entrance procession starting with the PPC members of 36 communities representing their respective zones and offering flowers, made everyone feel one as a parish community. The beautiful backdrop with the theme “Celebrating Life as God’s Family”, a thought provoking homily by Bishop John, colourful lights on stage and all around, crystal clear sound and beautiful fountains at the entrance added grandeur to the celebration. The cultural program began at 6:45 pm with the Parish Anthem followed by words of welcome by Fr. Innocent Fernandes, the Parish Priest. The Sunday school children performed a beautiful musical skit titled 'Are You Living or Existing?' - a question we all have on our minds! It comprised of dances and songs along with drama. The energetic, enthusiastic parish youth, “YOUTH FULLY ALIVE” lit up the stage with a short hilarious performance titled ‘After-life Court.’ The senior citizens too entertained the audience with the adapted skit, ‘The Autumn Leaves Night Nursery School.’ Beautiful dances by the couples made everyone refresh their memories and dance to the rhythm of the songs. The clergy team surprised all with their super dance performance! A Souvenir was released by Rev. Fr. Richard Mathias, Provincial Superior, to mark the Parish Day celebration. A live performance by ‘The Two Girls and a Guitar’ put us all in a festive mood making everyone to groove to their music and singing. Fr. Ciril D’Souza thanked everyone who contributed to the success of this mega event. This beautiful celebration ended with ‘The Family Meal’ which has always been a time of bonding between families and communities; sharing and Celebrating Life as God’s Family.

## YOUTH ANIMATION PROGRAMME UCDC, BANDRA



UCDC arranged a youth animation session as part of the educational up-liftment programme for 65 migrant youth from the Bandra region. The youth consisted of 9<sup>th</sup> standard to college-going students. They gathered at St. Theresa’s school at 06:00 a.m. and registered their names. Two buses departed at 07:00 am for Lonavala. The youth were very enthusiastic and excited. After reaching Don Bosco school in Lonavala, Fr. Xavier Devadas gave them a warm welcome. He enjoys working with young people who are dealing with addiction and challenging circumstances. He is also deeply committed to protecting creation. Fr. Xavier animated the group for about one and a half hours. He said that in the universe all are masterpieces of God. No one is made a duplicate, all are unique. He gave an example of mango seed, claiming that it has the ability to grow into a tree in its entirety. Similarly each individual has the ability to develop and mature. The hard work of the adolescent period will bear fruits. Destiny is in each one’s hand. Either you put in a lot of effort and have a good time for the rest of your life, or you choose to have fun and do the dishes. Each person has the option and choice.





In the second part of the session, he said that human beings tend to find happiness in material things. Some people abuse alcohol, drugs, and smoking. God frequently provides a chance for us to proceed in the correct direction. He claimed that people have the propensity to find happiness in things. You have the choice to make your life better by getting on the horse. Two people in alcohol and drug rehab shared their personal stories with the youngsters. They claimed that nothing in this world truly brings us joy and peace. Ramesh (name Changed) said that he was working for MNCs (Multinational Companies) and had a lot of name, fame, and money. Over the years, he used all of his income on alcohol and drugs. When he realized that this sort of living was not giving him real peace, he decided to come to Alcohol/Drug rehabilitation at Lonavala. He testified saying that even though one is addicted, he/she still has the chance to make changes in one's life. But one should have the self-awareness and the willpower to come out. Fr. Xavier concluded by saying that life is a gift given to each of us. Ms. Preeti Lakra, a college student, thanked Fr. Xavier for the inspiring sessions. In the afternoon, the youth visited the famous Karla Caves. The Karla Caves is a Buddhist Monastery dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The youth were really amused by seeing the sculpture and art. The trip to Don Bosco, Lonavala was a success and the youth returned to Mumbai very delighted.

## **THERESIANS CELEBRATE CHILDREN'S DAY**



Everyone has an opportunity. This was once again confirmed on Children's Day at St. Theresa's High School, Bandra. This was the first Children's Day celebration after the Pandemic. All the students came in their celebratory coloured dresses to enjoy their special day. On this occasion it was turn of the Teaching and non-teaching staff to showcase their talents and entertain and pass on meaningful messages to children. The Theresian staff left no stone unturned. There was maximum participation of the staff in performing dances, songs, skits, etc. The students were overwhelmed seeing their teachers' performances. The Pre-primary had a Magic Show as special event of the day. At the conclusion of the event, the students relished the snacks served and went home satisfied with the message to live as good human beings.

## **CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY**

Children's Parliament (Bal Sansad) is a concept to empower children and prepare them to participate in a democratic process. The efforts are going on by the SVD in Mangaon and Mhasala taluka to train children to sensitise their issues and present them to the concerned government departments. There are twelve children's parliaments or bal sansad formed and strengthened. A seventeen-member representation from twelve villages met the Mangaon Block Development Officer, Mr. Y.M. Prabhe; post that they also met the Tashildar, Smt. Priyanka Kamble. This exercise was undertaken to make the children aware of their right to approach government officials and advocate for their rights. The children raised the issues of safe drinking water facility, quality education etc. This is the first of its kind social advocacy initiative by children themselves. The



children were happy with the learning experience as both the Block Development Officer and Tahsildar encouraged them to approach the government offices.

## **UNBOUND CONFERENCE 2022**

### **PRARTHANA NIKETAN, KADUTHURUTHY**



A two-day UNBOUND conference was held at SVD Prarthana Niketan, Kaduthuruthy from November 5-6, 2022. The conference aimed at fostering inner freedom and confidence in the participants who were unknown to many types of bondages in their lives. Unbound conference is a simple way of deliverance from the clutches of evil which many are not aware of. The deep concept of this ministry was first developed by Mr. Neil Lozano, a lay man from U.S.A. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> conference held at Prarthana Niketan during the last 3 years. Presence of 120 participants gave a special impact to this event and their experiences were unique in many ways. Dr. Joseph Thomas and Dr. Celine Joseph from U.S.A who are fellow ministers with Neil Lozano were the key resource persons. Each session of the conference guided the participants to attain the inner-freedom to realize and experience that everyone is very special and valuable as a child of the Heavenly Father. The conference helped all the participants to realize this truth and many testified that they could personally and deeply experience the boundless love of God our Father. This conference without a shade of doubt, made the spiritual life of each participant richer and healthier. This two day event offered opportunities to all to receive Unbound Prayers from gifted and talented ministers. This conference owes its success to the divine wisdom shared by Fr. Titus, Director, SVD Prarthana Nikethan and his team, and the selfless and sincere efforts made by Dr. Joseph and the unbound team. The conference succeeded to clearly demonstrate the way of achieving the joy of pure inner freedom and the grace of Jesus to execute authority over the evil spirit. This special occasion paved the way for forming a team of trained persons who can pray for persons in need of complete liberation from many of the unknown burdens and struggles.

## **DIWALI CAMP**

### **UCDC, BANDRA**



The Diwali camp was organized by the Urban Community Development Centre (UCDC) in collaboration with Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW). The students' registration and breakfast marked the start of the day. 145 migrant students from 1<sup>st</sup> standard to college going students participated in the camp. The camp's main goals were to foster friendship and social skills, instill the principles of responsibility and teamwork in participants, help them discover new hobbies and boost their self-confidence. The students were divided into 6 groups. Each group was asked to choose a name for the group and a leader. All group members received flags, and they were instructed to march past the hall while carrying their flags. Ms. Sarita Yadav from UCDC staff conducted yoga for the students. Fr. Sundar Magimai from the St. Theresa's Parish, being well experienced with youth ministry, led most of the events. DDW members Susan, Andrew, Anupama, Jane, and Celine all contributed to the success of the event. Mr. Ernest and Mr. Joseph Coutinho the



Governing Body members of UCDC were present for the event and encouraged the students. They also distributed sweets and biscuits to the students. The entire event was coloured by a Rangoli competition and a variety of games. Ms. Zenobia a choreographer taught beautiful dance steps to the students. Lunch and tea were served to the children. The Diwali camp was successful, and the children departed the quadrangle of St. Theresa's school beaming with joy.

### **PARTICIPATION IN JANTA DARBAR**



As part of Social Advocacy the SVD staff in the person of Fr. Richard Quadros and the staffer, Mahesh More met the Guardian Minister of Raigad District in a Janta Darbar held on 31.10.22 at Alibaug. An eight-point document viz. approach roads to tribal villages, potable water supply, prevention of forest bush fire, local level employment opportunities for poor tribals to curb distress migration, prevention of child marriage, formalisation of forest land

rights etc. and the challenges faced by the poor especially the tribals were presented before the minister. As part of the follow up the concerned government departments are in touch with the SVD staff to address the issues.

### **FAMILY GATHERING OF PRAGATI SELF HELP GROUP**



Pragati women's Self-Help group from Lalmati slum, Bandra decided to have a family gathering and picnic at their monthly meeting. Following up on the decision, around fifty members travelled to Vasai by a reserved bus on 30 October 2022. The catechist Mr. Vijay prayed for

the day's success. Men, women, and children sang hymns throughout the journey, thanking God for all His blessings. On arriving at Vasai Fort all had their breakfast. As the group was travelling to Vasai for the first time, they were thrilled to see the Fort. When the group arrived at SVD Shishyalaya, Fr. Salate, the Rector of the Seminary, Fr. Nickson, and Fr. John gave them a hearty welcome. Mass was celebrated with Fr. John Lugun being the main celebrant. During his homily, he highlighted the value of having good family life. It is the love that unites everyone. Lunch was served to everyone after the Mass followed by dance and get-together. Later in the evening, all proceeded to Bhuigaon beach, where everyone had fun. The Pragati Self-Help group members deserve all the credit for this lovely family get-together.

### **EFFORTS TO PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE SARVA VIKAS DEEP, MANGAON**



Sarva Vikas Deep (SVD) has been instrumental in creating a network of village leaders in Mangaon and Mhasla talukas of Raigad district. To this effect earlier the SVD had done extensive research on 'Understanding the Causes of Child Marriage: its Implications and Interventions among Katkari Community' in collaboration with the College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan's research department. The village leaders met in two different zones

to discuss the issues that plague them. During the month of October, the village leaders took an initiative

to adopt a resolution for preventing child marriage at the Goregaon and Nizampur zone levels. As part of the immediate deterrent, they have kept a fine and non-cooperation to such marriages that impinge the growth of children.

## **SPECIAL EVENING WITH HOPE AND LIFE CELL SACRED HEART CHURCH, ANDHERI**



The Celebrating Life Organising Committee (CLOC) of Sacred Heart Parish, Andheri, together with the Clergy Team, organized a special evening on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2022 for the members of the Hope & Life Movement and other parishioners whose loving spouses are resting with the Lord. The homily by Fr. Tony Menezes, during the Eucharistic celebration, was very inspiring and down to earth. “Life’s greatest burden he said is not having any burden at all. “Give” is the

keyword...God gave us His only son to give us life in abundance. In giving to others do we receive; God’s love is unconditional and in sharing His love do we gain love in abundance”.

After the Eucharistic celebration, we were divided into color-coded groups and the games we played brought us out of our seats and made us think on our feet. The compere for the evening was full of vigour and the CLOC Team made sure that not a single person was left out. There were over 80 attendees. Some have become used to living with the loss of their spouse and have gracefully accepted the change while others are still coping with their spouses gone for less than a year. Interacting with people with similar experiences makes a lot of difference. Our Parish Clergy team was present all through, interacting with everyone personally. People were relaxed with all the fun and frolic that CLOC had planned for us. Some lone elderly were very happy to be a part of this celebration of life, to meet, talk and enjoy one another’s company.

To organize an evening like this needs a lot of commitment and numerous hours of planning. Our gratitude goes to our Clergy Team and CLOC for thoughtfully organizing the event for the Hope and Life members and other parishioners. Our Parish truly believes in implementing the Archdiocesan Vision statement of “No One in Want”. Many of the attendees agreed with me that CLOC did their best to give us a memorable celebration. After the games, the Leader of the Hope & Life Cell of the Parish thanked everyone followed by the Grace before meals. The delicious fellowship meal and a takeaway token of a fridge magnet with a beautiful prayer on it were greatly appreciated by one and all.

## **CHILDREN’S DAY OR BAL DIVAS**



Sarva Vikas Deep (SVD), Mangaon has been commemorating children’s day or Bal Divas with an objective of creating opportunities for children to excel in their talents and grow in self-confidence by asserting their rights and recognizing their duties. This year the Bal Divas programme was organized on 19 November. The children participated in the programme with enthusiasm as they danced and delivered speeches. The program was well organised and it was compered by the staffers of the SVD and five internship students from Nirmala Niketan, College of Social Work, Mumbai. The occasion was



graced by Pramod Shinde - Agricultural Officer of the Krushi Vigyan Kendra and Dhanaji Jadhav - Headmaster of Ashokdada Sable Vidyalaya and Junior College.

## **‘EPHPHATHA’ ONE-DAY RENEWAL PROGRAMME**



Proverbs: 30:5: “Every Word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him” A grace filled and integrated spiritual renewal programme was started on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022 at SVD Prarthana Niketan, Kaduthuruthy. It is a one day event on every 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month and is continued regularly ever since. The programme includes recitation of rosary, praise and worship, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, proclamation of the Word of

God, celebration of the Holy Eucharist, prayers for the physical and emotional healing, the sacrament of reconciliation and counselling sessions. In the present time where faith is being questioned and mistaken, ethics and morals are redefined in relative terms, consumerism, comfort, unhealthy competition and power play are becoming the norms of the day, this programme is an answer and invitation towards reawakening the light of faith. This programme is also beneficial for the parents to make them realize where they have faltered in raising the new generation in true Christian faith, tradition and values. Therefore, it is an attempt to bring back God’s words to the center stage of Christian life and families which can impact the lives of the faithful with its healing and empowering grace. The last One Day convention was held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022 from 09.30 am to 03.30 pm. More than 100 people participated in it. The response to the programme has been quite encouraging as more people are attending the programme and benefitting from it.

## **OFFICIAL RECOGNITION DISCIPLES OF THE DIVINE WORD - PUNE**

The Disciples of the Divine Word – Pune, a Lay Associate Group of our province formed on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020 has grown in stature in the past two years by imbibing the missionary charism and spirituality of St.



Arnold Janssen and the founding generation under the care and guidance of our confreres in Pune LCF especially Fr. Gregory Arockiam, Spiritual Director. After having undergone the necessary initial formation the DDW members have meticulously prepared the Statutes of the Association taking into consideration the criteria laid down by the 17<sup>th</sup> General Chapter i.e., commitment to mission, provision for formation of the members, administrative and financial independence and guidelines for financial accountability. After having studied the various clauses and articles of their Statutes, we have approved the Statutes of the Association, and thereby, recognized the Disciples of the Divine Word - Pune as a Lay Associate Group of the Society of the Divine Word, India Mumbai Province. We

thank and congratulate all the 18 members of the group for coming forward to be our Lay Mission Partners and pray for God’s abundant blessings on them and their families. May the Love of Christ impel them to be Rooted in the Divine Word and Committed to God’s Mission.



## TRANSFER OF FR. SHINOY MATHEW



The General Council in its meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022 has transferred Fr. Shinoy Mathew from BOT Province to INM Province. He is assigned to St. Theresa's High School, Bandra and will reside at St. Theresa's Church, Bandra. We extend a warm welcome to Fr. Shinoy to INM and pray that he may continue to enrich our mission and province through his presence and ministry.

## MY PROGRAMMES

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 08 December    | Meeting with Mother General of SSpSAP, Aradhana Kunj, Bangalore       |
| 09-10 December | Visit to the communities in Mysuru                                    |
| 11 December    | Decennial Celebration, Vachana Jyothi, Pilathara                      |
| 12 December    | Counting of first ballot votes  |
| 13 December    | LCF Advent Recollection, Shishyalaya, Vasai                           |
| 15 December    | Dispatching of second ballots   |
| 17 December    | Inter-religious Christmas Get-together, Holy Name High School, Colaba |
| 30 December    | Silver Jubilee Celebration: Fr. Mahipal, Tala                         |
| 02-03 January  | Final Vows and Diaconate, Divine Word Seminary, Pune                  |
| 05 January     | Ordination: Dn. Cranston, Holy Family Church, Marcela, Goa            |
| 07-12 January  | Visit to Communities in Kerala and Provincial Council Meeting         |

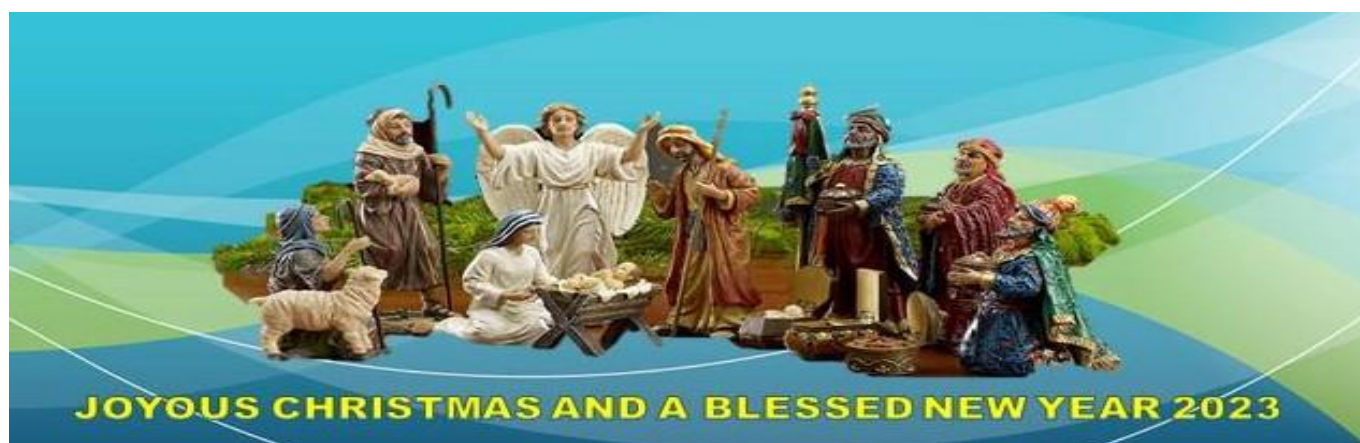
## NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

07 - 12 January 2023

Kerala

**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**