

Sanctuary in the Pinardi Chapel. On Easter Sunday 12 April 1846, Don Bosco moved his Oratory to the Pinardi shed.

Dear Confreres, Members of the Salesian Family and Collaborators,

Happy Easter! Jesus is risen! Alleluia!

In these times of grief and trials, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the source of our living hope (cf. 1 Pt 1:3-9). Easter confirms to us that the love with which Jesus gave up his life on the cross is greater than every form of suffering, sickness, and pandemic.

In many ways, the pandemic has changed the way we experience being Church! However, the core message of the Good News, the love of God and the victory over death shines through and strengthens our resolve to rise again.

While it is true that the celebration of liturgies has undergone much change in this time of pandemic, is it not also true that our celebration of Easter this year (in the time of Corona Virus) is actually closer to the celebration of the first resurrection Sunday?

Comparing our experiences of these days with that of the apostles we find:

- a) In these days of lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic, we are all constrained to stay in our homes. Where were the apostles on the first Easter morning? They too were huddled together in a closed room (cf. Lk 20:19)!
- b) Very few of us are able to personally assist at Mass on this Easter Sunday. How many disciples went to witness the resurrection on that first Easter Sunday? Mary Magdalene and a few women went to the tomb (no crowd)... and even they, initially, on seeing the empty tomb could only think that the body was stolen by someone. In the Gospel of John, Mary tells Peter and John: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him" (Jn 20:2, cf. Jn 20:15).

c) In these days, while we remain closed up in our homes, only one or two go out to get the supplies. Is the situation any different from the apostles huddled in a closed room while only Thomas was out? (cf. Jn 20:25).

d) On this Easter Sunday, even though we are celebrating Easter (resurrection from the dead), we are still gripped by fear of sickness and grieve over death caused by Covid-19. It is a little over three months since this thing has gripped us!

What about the apostles on that first Easter Sunday?

They too were in the grip of fear and grieving the death of Jesus. We know that, on that Easter Sunday, while some remained closed in rooms out of fear, other disciples were running away from Jerusalem to villages like Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13)! Their hopes were shattered: “But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place” (Lk 24:21)!

Yes, on this Easter Sunday, the day we celebrate the destruction of death, we are still in the grip of fear of death and sickness!

Ironic; but true!

In such a situation it is difficult to shout “Alleluia the Lord is Risen!” Our spontaneous shout is more like that of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus: “Lord, the one you love is sick!” (Jn 11:3) or like the apostles in the boat tossed by the storm: “Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?” (Mk 4:38). Our tear-filled prayer is similar to that of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane: “My Father, if it is possible may this cup be taken from me” (Mt 26:39).

God, in allowing the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus has taught us that He does not always win over evil by miraculous interventions. He, sometimes, allows suffering, death and burial - even of His dearly beloved Son in whom He is well pleased! But in the resurrection of His Son, God shows that He is able to transform our failures into victories, and our sickness and death into new life.

The Paschal mystery we celebrate is not just the resurrection. It is a Solemn Triduum that comprises three realities, namely, suffering, death and resurrection.

This is what Jesus taught us when he said to Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, *though he die, yet shall he live*; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn 11:25-26). Yes, though we may die, we shall live; though we may fail, we shall be victorious. With faith strengthened by Jesus we shall soon be able to stand up and profess our faith in the resurrection of the dead, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting for you, for me, and for every one of our dear ones who have suffered or died in this pandemic.

And finally, as we suffer through the fire of Corona Virus, let us remember the example of the three young men: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. God did not miraculously put off the fire in the furnace. Instead, God put an angel (Jesus) in their midst [King Nebuchadnezzar saw a fourth one like the Son of God in their midst (Dan 3:25)]. They came out victorious.

Our victory depends not on the fires that we have to face but on *who* is there with us in facing the fires. Who accompanies us? Let the Son of God who experienced resurrection be our companion in facing all fires. It is He who keeps assuring us: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn 11:25-26).

Like the father who brought his child for cure to Jesus after the transfiguration, we too, facing the virus pandemic might be tempted to say: “If you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us” (Mk 9:22). However, we need to be quick learners like that father, to correct ourselves and say: “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief” (Mk 9:24).

Peter and the apostles were like us today. Even after the resurrection of Jesus they remained closed in their rooms for a while. During that time they were strengthened by the visits of the resurrected Jesus in their closed rooms. He imparted peace to them (Jn 20:20). They were accompanied in prayer by Mary our Mother (Acts 1:14). They prayed for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We too, strengthened by the presence of Jesus in our homes, strengthened by the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and the gift of the Holy Spirit, shall return to shout without fear! “Alleluia! Christ is Risen” and we shall be present to the young with new life and vigour.

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THANK YOU TO FR. MARIA AROKIAM KANAGA, *General Councillor for South Asia Region*
(2008-2020)

Words can't express the gratitude that we owe to Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga who led our region from the front. He has been our able leader for the past twelve years, leading 2927 of us in our 417 communities spread across India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Kuwait, UAE and Yemen. Commissions, networks and inter-provincial institutions have been strengthened and new ones formed in the past twelve years. Blessed with a creative mind and oratory skills, he led our region with vision and fortitude. He inspired and initiated many new interventions on behalf of youth in our region. He has spearheaded achievement of greater unity among the provinces and visibility of our Salesian works. For the inspiring leadership of the past twelve years we are immensely grateful to Fr. Maria Arokiam. We wish him God's choicest blessings as reward for all he has done in God's vineyard and assure him our prayers as he continues his Salesian ministry in our midst.

Together with Fr. Maria Arokiam we thank also the 24 Provincials of the SPCSA who served during the twelve-year period and the various network and commission leaders and all their collaborators for the selfless service to the South Asia Region.

THANK YOU TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL (2014-2020)

As a region, we would like to place on record our gratitude to the Rector Major and the General Council of the last sessennium.

In a special way we would like to express our gratitude to those who have completed their service of animation in the General Council. Fr. Francesco Cereda, ably led us as the Vicar of the Rector Major and earlier as the Councillor for the Formation Sector. We are deeply indebted to him for the 18 years of leadership in the General Council. We thank Fr. Fabbio Attard, Fr. Guillermo Basañes, and Fr. Filiberto Gonsales, who have served as Councillors for various sectors.

Along with Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga who was the General Councillor for the South Asia region, Fr. Americo Chaquisse (Africa and Madagascar), Fr. Tadeusz Rozmus (Central and North Europe), Fr. Stefano Martoglio (Mediterranean), Fr. Timothy Ploch (Interamerica), Fr. Natale Vitali (America South Cone), and Fr. Klement Vaclav (East Asia-Oceania) have completed their service in the General Council. A big thank you to each of them.





CONGRATULATIONS TO GENERAL COUNCIL (2020-2026)

Congratulations to our Rector Major Rev. Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime on his second mandate as the 10th successor of Don Bosco and to Fr. Stefano Martoglio, the former regional for the Mediterranean region who has been elected as the new Vicar of the Rector Major.

Congratulations to all the newly elected General Councillors of the Sectors and Regions.

Please note that institutional emails have been introduced for all the General Councillors. Please use them for future communication. Personal emails will also be available as in the past.

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THANK YOU TO VALDOCCO COMMUNITIES

We are deeply indebted to the four Salesian communities at Valdocco. During the General Chapter and more especially in these days of lockdown due to the pandemic, we have experienced the joy of being an international family. Valdocco is our “Casa Madre”. We have been blessed with the opportunity to pray and reflect long in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, at the altar of Don Bosco, in the Pinardi chapel, St. Francis de Sales chapel, in “Casa Don Bosco” and the rooms occupied by the early Salesians, the General Council and the Rectors Major.

While Valdocco as “Casa Madre” is special for every Salesian, our experience of hospitality here has made it very special. The confreres here have been exceptional in their generosity and kindness. The concern and care they extend to all of us stranded here is truly Salesian and we have all been humbled by the experience. May God recompense each of the confreres at our Valdocco communities.

God has been merciful and the protective mantle of the Blessed Mother has kept each member of the community and the General Chapter safe.

SPCSA NEWS

The major events planned are indicated below. In May there will be SPCSA Assembly and Council meetings. After the meetings, the plan for the year will be updated.

	Date Month, Year	Venue	Organizing Network	Programme
01.	27 – 30 May 2020	Bangalore	SPCSA	SPCSA Assembly, Council
02.	10, 11 June 2020		DB Tech	Executive Body Meet
03.	12, 13 June 2020		DB Tech	ITI Principals Meet
04.	16 June 2020	New Delhi	DBYA	DB Accreditation & Assessment Board Meet
05.	20 June 2020	New Delhi	DBYA	DBYA Network Meet
06.	24 June 2020	New Delhi	DBYA	Child Protection Policy – National Consultation
07.	3 July 2020		DB Tech	Management Committee Meet of DB Tech
08.	4, 5 July 2020		DB Tech	Governing Body Meet of DB Tech
09.	9 July 2020	Mumbai	DBYA	Directors / Incharge of Oratories / Youth Centres Meet
10.	17, 18 July 2020	INK	Boscom	BOSCOM - Annual Executive Body Meeting
11.	17, 18 July 2020	New Delhi	DBYA	Educational & Cultural Dimensional Provincial Coordinators Meet
12.	18, 19 July 2020	INK	DBYA	LAF Southern Zone Programme
13.	21 – 25 July 2020	New Delhi	YaR	YaR Leaders' Orientation Programme
14.	25, 26 July 2020	Bangalore	DBYA	Forum for Textbooks for Catechetical Formation
15.	25, 26 July 2020	ING	DBYA	LAF North Eastern Zone Programme
16.	1, 2 August 2020	INP	DBYA	LAF Western Zone Programme
17.	8, 9 August 2020	INH	DBYA	LAF Central Zone Programme
18.	14 August 2020		DB Tech	Executive Body Meet
19.	18 – 20 August 2020	Bangalore	DBYA	Young Priests Meet
20.	27 – 30 August 2020	Yercaud	SAFC	SAFC Meet
21.	1, 2 September 2020	Delhi	DBYA	New Youth Pastoral Delegates Meet

Installation of the New Provincial (INC)

The installation of Fr. Joseph Pauria as the new Provincial of the Calcutta Province is scheduled for 31 May 2020.

SPCSA - Personnel:

- A special word of thanks to **Fr. Albert Johnson** (INT) who is completing his term as Rector of the SPCI house. In order to facilitate transition he has kindly consented to continue as SPCSA Secretary for one more year even as he works from his Province of origin.

- Our gratitude is also due to **Fr. Vincent Thamburaj** (INT), who is completing his work as Assistant Director of Bosconet and National Job Placement Coordinator. Thanks to Fr. Vincent and to the Province.
- **Fr. Santharaj Ubaharam** (INT) former Economer of Tiruchy Province is joining Bosconet as its Assistant Director. We are grateful to him and to the Province for offering this help to our regional efforts.
- **Fr. Maria Lawrence** (INM) has kindly consented to continue for one year as the Regional's secretary. He will have his office at Sacro Cuore, Rome. Thanks to Fr. Lawrence and to the Province.

Conclusion

You have already received much news from the General Chapter through the well written circulars of our Provincials. Even though short, the General Chapter reflected on a topic that is absolutely crucial to our identity and mission as Salesians. We shall look forward to deepening our reflections after the Rector Major publishes the details in one form or another.

Under the leadership of Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga, our region has flourished in the last twelve years. With the grace of God, the intercession of our Blessed Mother, and the guidance of our father St. Don Bosco, we look forward to further growth and renewed ministry on behalf of the young in our region.

In these days many of us from the region who are here at Valdocco have spent time in brainstorming sessions to generate ideas to carry forward and revitalize our ministry in the region in the light of the discussions at the 28th General Chapter and the various strategic planning meetings that have been conducted in the South Asia Region. These and other input from members of our Region will be placed at the disposal of the SPCSA Council to guide us in prioritising our strategies for the next six years. By the time the SPCSA meets next, we hope to have also the six-year plan of the Rector Major and the General Council to guide us. Confreres and members of the Salesian Family and our lay collaborators are invited to send in suggestions in view of the SPCSA meeting, now scheduled for the end of May. You may kindly send your suggestions to asiasud@sdb.org The Salesian family, together with its young collaborators is a formidable force in the region. As Pope Francis in his message to the General Chapter advised, let us dream big and help to realize the dreams of our young people.

Once again, Happy Easter! May the Risen Lord fill our hearts with the same zeal for souls that warmed the heart of Don Bosco.

Fr. Biju Michael, sdb

General Councillor, South Asia Region - asiasud@sdb.org

