



# MISSIONARY SISTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS (MSMHC)

**St. Joseph's Province, Tezpur**

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*Dated: 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 2026*

My Dearest Sisters,

Greetings from the Provincial House, Tezpur!

I am writing these few lines on the eve of the solemnity of St John Bosco, father of our Salesian Family, to help us reflect on his life, ministry and spirituality. Don Bosco (1815-1888) was born into poverty in Becchi, near Turin, Italy. Orphaned at two, he endured harsh treatment from his half-brother but found support from his devoted mother, Margherita. Despite financial hardships, John pursued his priestly vocation, supporting himself through various jobs while studying. A recurring childhood dream revealing his life's mission - caring for abandoned youth - shaped his entire ministry. He was ordained in 1841.

Don Bosco discovered his calling among the destitute boys of Turin's industrial slums. In 1846, he founded the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, providing a home, a chapel, a school, and recreational space for abandoned and at-risk youth. His work expanded rapidly, with workshops teaching trades, boarding houses, and schools. By his death, his institutions served thousands of young people across Italy and beyond.

Recognizing the need for continuity, he founded the Society of St Francis de Sales (Salesians) in 1859 and, together with St Mary Mazzarello, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in 1872. These congregations formed the nucleus of the vast Salesian Family.

Don Bosco's educational philosophy, the Preventive System, revolutionized youth work. Rejecting the repressive methods common in his era, he proposed education grounded in reason, religion and loving-kindness. He believed in preventing misbehavior through presence and engagement, and by creating environments where young people felt loved and valued, rather than punishing wrongdoing after the fact.

Central to this system was the concept of *assistance* - a loving, fatherly presence among young people, sharing their lives, games and interests. Don Bosco emphasized treating youth with dignity, appealing to their reason and cultivating their innate goodness rather than breaking their spirit through discipline.

Don Bosco's spirituality was profoundly Christo centric and Eucharistic. He promoted frequent Communion and Confession, revolutionary practices in 19th-century Catholicism. His tender devotion to Mary Help of Christians characterized both his personal prayer and his congregation's identity. He built the basilica in her honour in Turin, which became a centre of Marian devotion.



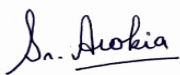
His spirituality was eminently practical - “work and temperance” was his motto. He insisted on joy, famously stating, “Serve the Lord with gladness” and “A saint who is sad is a sad saint indeed.” He combined contemplation with tireless action and supernatural faith with shrewd practicality.

Don Bosco’s vision extended beyond religious congregations. He founded the Association of Salesian Cooperators (1876) for laypeople who shared his mission. Today, the Salesian Family comprises over 30 officially recognized groups, including the Volunteers of Don Bosco (VDB), past pupils’ associations, and various lay movements. This family model enables people of diverse vocations - religious, clergy, married, single - to participate in the Salesian charism according to their state in life, creating a worldwide network united in serving youth and the poor. Our congregation, founded by one of his sons, Venerable Bishop Stephen Ferrando, is an integral part of this vast family, and we draw our charism and spiritual sustenance from him.

Canonized in 1934, Don Bosco’s educational system endures through the global Salesian Family, serving millions of young people. His vision - that every young person matters, deserves love, and has the potential for goodness - remains revolutionary, offering hope to vulnerable youth worldwide. Let us thank the Lord for the gift of St John Bosco to the church and to our congregation, whose legacy we continue in our ministries. Wishing each of you a very Happy feast of Don Bosco.

Placing each of you, our communities, and our entire province under the watchful maternal mantle of Mary Help of Christians, St John Bosco, and Venerable Stephen Ferrando,

In union with Jesus and Mary Help of Christians,



Sr. Arokkiya Mary  
Provincial Superior

