



MISSIONARY SISTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS



St. Joseph's Province, Tezpur

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My Dearest Sisters,

With hearts overflowing with gratitude to the Lord and to Mary Help of Christians, I greet each of you with deep affection and joy. As I write my first circular letter, I am profoundly thankful to God for the opportunity to serve and walk alongside you in our common mission. I express my gratitude to our Mother General and her council for the confidence they have placed in me, and I earnestly pray that I may prove worthy of their trust.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you who graced the installation ceremony with your presence, prayers, and warm wishes. Your presence was a tangible expression of the communion that binds us as a province, and your good wishes have strengthened my resolve to serve you with dedication and love. I am deeply grateful for your encouragement and assurance of cooperation. This collaborative spirit gives me great confidence as we embark on this new chapter together.

I express my deep gratitude to Rev. Sr. Asha Paul, our outgoing provincial, and her council. Sr. Asha Paul has been a gift to our province. Her humility touched everyone who worked with her; she never sought the limelight but quietly served with gentle strength. She was a good listener, always making time to truly hear each of our concerns and joys. She motivated us through her example of dedication and faith. With compassion and wisdom, she understood our struggles. Her prayerful approach to leadership showed us that effective administration flows from communion with God. She was loving and caring, treating each of us as a beloved daughter of God. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the members of the outgoing provincial council for their dedicated service and collaborative leadership alongside Sr. Asha Paul. We thank you dear Sr. Asha Paul and the council members, for your faithful service and pray for God's abundant blessings upon you.

I wish to acknowledge the newly constituted provincial council, which has already begun its animation work with enthusiasm and commitment. Together, we are united in our desire to accompany each community and every sister in living our consecrated life more authentically and in radiating the joy of the Gospel in our mission fields.

A Three-Fold Vision for Our Province

As we look ahead to the next three years, the provincial council proposes a comprehensive framework for our province. This vision encompasses three essential dimensions: the **personal**, the **community**, and the **apostolic**. These three tiers are interconnected and mutually enriching, forming a holistic approach to our renewal and growth as missionary religious.



i. The Personal Dimension: Nurturing the Inner Life

At the heart of our consecrated life is our personal relationship with the Lord. Our effectiveness as missionaries stems from the depth of our union with God and the authenticity of our personal conversion. Therefore, I propose four key areas of focus for each sister:

Spiritual Formation encompasses our prayer life, daily engagement with the Word of God, devout participation in the Eucharist, and faithful practice of our Salesian devotions. Our founder, Bishop Stephen Ferrando, exemplified this dimension throughout his life. From his childhood in Rossiglione, he developed deep piety and devotion to Our Lady. During his novitiate at Foglizzo, his novice master, Don Giulio Barberis, noted that piety was the predominant virtue that drew the attention of those who lived with him. **“On piety, he based his life and activities.”** Even amidst the horrors of World War I, while serving as a soldier, Bishop Ferrando maintained his prayer life with remarkable fidelity, entrusting himself and his companions to the protection of the Madonna. Let us follow his example by making prayer the foundation of all our activities.

Psychological Growth involves developing self-awareness, emotional maturity, and healthy coping skills to navigate stress, failures, and challenges. It requires cultivating deep personal conviction in our vocation and mission. Bishop Ferrando demonstrated remarkable psychological maturity throughout his life. His superiors testified that he distinguished himself for maturity of judgement, balance and equanimity of character, prudence in obedience, and humble and docile submission. When faced with the unexpected summons to serve in World War I, which temporarily shattered his dream of early priesthood, **he accepted the change with resignation and determination**, seeing God’s will in **every circumstance**. His ability to maintain hope and trust in difficult situations is a model for us all.

Intellectual Development calls us to commit to **daily reading** and to cultivating **reasoning skills**. Knowledge enriches our ministry and enables us to respond more effectively to our people’s needs. Bishop Ferrando, though not of outstanding natural intelligence, demonstrated great diligence in his studies and consistently displayed clear, strong intelligence, a sharp memory, perseverance, and a strong capacity to grasp concepts. His **commitment to learning** enabled him to lead a vast diocese effectively and to address complex missionary challenges with wisdom.

Physical Well-being reminds us that we are stewards of our bodies, temples of the Holy Spirit. A **balanced diet** and **regular exercise** enable us to serve the Lord with energy and vitality. Our bodies are instruments in our mission, and we must care for them responsibly.

ii. The Community Dimension: Building Authentic Relationships

Our community life is the visible witness of our consecration and the environment in which we grow in holiness. At the community level, we emphasize **authentic relationships**, **mutual support**, and **enriching dialogue** among members of our province. Bishop Ferrando was deeply loved by his companions for his simplicity, goodness, sincerity, and fun-loving nature. His **calm disposition**, **friendliness**, and **cheerfulness** made him someone others naturally sought out. He built community through his example of respect, obedience, and loving service. During the War, he demonstrated extraordinary loyalty to his comrades, even risking his life to rescue a wounded soldier, carrying him



for miles on his back to safety. Jesus reminds us: “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). Let us build communities characterized by genuine care, sacrificial love, and joyful communion.

iii. The Apostolic Dimension: Innovative and Collaborative Ministry

The apostolic life of our province calls for innovative, collaborative approaches to effective ministry. We are called to respond creatively to the signs of the times whilst remaining faithful to our charism. Bishop Ferrando exemplified this perfectly. As a pioneer missionary in Northeast India for over forty years, he faced enormous challenges in a vast diocese encompassing the entire present-day region. His missionary zeal, coupled with practical wisdom, enabled him not only to evangelize but also to establish numerous schools and institutions, and ultimately to found our own Congregation. His life reminds us that authentic missionary work springs from **deep prayer**, requires personal **sacrifice**, and demands **creative responses** to local needs. Like him, we must be willing to spend our lives for the betterment and progress of those we serve.

A Holistic Approach to Renewal

These three levels ensure a holistic approach to renewing our province. We recognize that **personal conversion** strengthens community life, which in turn energizes our **missionary effectiveness**. They are not separate compartments but interwoven dimensions of our one consecrated life. As we grow personally in holiness, we become better community members. When our communities are strong and loving, our apostolic work bears abundant fruit.

The witness of St Francis de Sales, whose spirit permeates our Salesian charism, beautifully teaches us this integration. He reminds us, “**Be who you are and be that well.**” He further counsels, “Half an hour’s meditation each day is essential, except when you are busy. Then a full hour is needed.” This wisdom shows that prayer is not separate from our active life but it’s very foundation. Don Bosco, our father and guide, echoed this when he taught, “Work and temperance will make you healthy and strong.” Quoting St Francis de Sales, he reminded his spiritual children, “**Do everything through love, nothing through constraint.**” These words illuminate the path of integration: our prayer life sustains our work, our community life is animated by love, and our apostolic zeal flows from our union with God. Let us be authentically who we are called to be: missionary sisters of Mary Help of Christians, women of prayer, community, and mission.

Practical Plans for the Month

To help us begin implementing this vision, I propose the following practical commitments for this month:

- Spending **quality time in prayer** each day, **reading and reflecting on the Word of God** with an open heart, allowing it to **transform** us.
- **Reading a book** for at least **fifteen minutes each day** can nurture both mind and spirit. We could read about the life of our beloved founder, Bishop Stephen Ferrando, whose example continues to inspire and guide us. His life of prayer, sacrifice, missionary zeal, and love for the poor is a treasure we must study, cherish, and emulate. As we come to know him better, we understand our identity and mission as Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians more deeply. Similarly, we could draw on our congregation’s literature, such as the **Constitutions and Regulations** or **letters from the**



Generalate, to deepen our spirituality. The **Word of God** and the lives of saints, such as **St John Bosco**, **St Francis de Sales**, and other Salesian saints, are also important for our spiritual nourishment.

Let us begin with these simple yet significant practices, integrating them into our daily routine with consistency and love.

Lent - A Season of Transformation

The holy season of Lent is a precious gift of grace through which the Church lovingly invites us to prepare ourselves for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery. As consecrated persons, Lent calls us in a special way to enter into the journey of Christ with deeper faith, renewed interior freedom, and generous availability to God's grace.

Lent is fundamentally a time of conversion - a call to return to the Lord with all our hearts. Through the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we are invited to purify our intentions, detach ourselves from whatever distances us from God, and grow in greater simplicity of life. This season urges us to examine our personal and communal living, our fidelity to prayer, our quality of relationships, and our commitment to the mission entrusted to us. It is an opportune time to rekindle the zeal of our first call and to renew our joy in religious consecration.

I encourage every sister to make sincere efforts toward deepening her personal prayer life, especially through meditation on the Word of God, the Eucharist, and moments of silence. Let our communities become spaces of reconciliation, mutual understanding, and supportive accompaniment, where charity and patience are lived concretely. May we also give special importance to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, allowing the Lord to heal, renew, and strengthen us interiorly.

A Journey Together

Dear Sisters, as we begin this journey together, I assure you of my prayers, support, and availability. I rely on your cooperation, prayers, and generous response to the Lord's call. Let us **walk together** in **humility** and **trust**, **supporting** one another, **celebrating our joys**, and **bearing** one another's burdens.

May Our Lady Help of Christians, our Mother and guide, intercede for us and lead us deeper into the heart of her Son. May Venerable Bishop Stephen Ferrando, our founder and father, obtain for us the grace to be faithful missionaries in his own heart. May the Holy Spirit, the soul of our consecration, renew us daily and make us **instruments of God's love** in the world.

Placing each of you, our communities, and our entire province under the watchful maternal mantle of Mary Help of Christians,

In union with Jesus and Mary Help of Christians,



Sr. Arokkiya Mary
Provincial Superior

