
STUDI

KRISTU JYOTI COLLEGE, BANGALORE: THE HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SALESIAN INSTITUTION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BANGALORE¹ - Part II²

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The establishment of Kristu Jyoti College at Sannathammanahalli near Krishnarajapuram, Bangalore, in 1967 may be considered a point of arrival for the Salesians from more than one perspective. Firstly, it was a point of arrival from the perspective of the theological formation of the clerics, which, as has already been narrated in the first part of this paper³, due to a number of factors, had a very chequered evolution until it reached Bangalore. Secondly, it was a point of arrival as it heralded a clear shift in the constitution of the Salesians in India from being a predominantly European missionary group to a majority Indian body, something which was clearly reflected both in the composition of the teaching staff as well as that of the students. At the time of the inauguration of the College, the teaching staff was completely constituted

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¹ The Roman Catholic Diocese of Bangalore was erected on 13th February 1940 by Pope Pius XII and elevated to the rank of Metropolitan See on 19th September 1953, with the suffragan sees of Belgaum, Bellary, Chikmagalur, Gulbarga, Karwar, Mangalore, Udipi, Mysore and Shimoga. The first bishop was Msgr. Maurice-Bernard-Benoit-Joseph Despartures, MEP (1940-1942). He was succeeded by Msgr. Thomas Pothacamury (1942-1968). The two other Archbishops whose administrative period will be referred to in the course of the elaboration of this paper are Msgr. Duraisamy Simon Lourdasamy (1968-1971) and Msgr. Packiam Arokiaswamy (1971-1986); https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Archdiocese_of_Bangalore. (4.9.2018).

² Archives referred to and their abbreviations:

AAB = Archives of the Archdiocese of Bangalore
ACS = Atti del Capitolo Superiore - Acts of the Superior Chapter; from January 1966 Atti del Consiglio Superiore - Acts of the Superior Council
AKJCB = Archives, Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore
ASC = Archivio Salesiano Centrale (Roma)
SAS = Scheda Anagrafica Segreteria (Sede Centrale Salesiana - Roma)

³ Cf RSS 71 (2018) 255-305.

by Indian Salesians who were qualified abroad and the student body was made up of those drawn from the different parts of the country with the sole exception of cleric Joseph Forte, a Maltese missionary⁴. Further, it was also a pointer to the changed attitude of the Archdiocesan authorities, which had thwarted all the earlier efforts to come to the city, insisting all along on the inconvenience of having the Salesians in Bangalore but who, with the passing of time, from the early 1960s, had begun to manifest a more welcoming attitude.

Kristu Jyoti College, built and launched on its mission of theological formation of the Salesians in the whole of India, was envisioned and realized in a fast-changing post-colonial world which was throwing up daunting challenges for the Church and consecrated life in general and for the Salesian Congregation with its professed goal of catering to the young and the needy in particular and that at a time when newly independent India was seeking to find its place in the comity of nations. The challenge before the nascent institution was nothing short of the arduous and it set about realizing its goal of forming Salesian priests suited for the times, drawing on the evident vibrancy in the Church and in the Congregation in the context of the Second Vatican Council and that of the 19th and 20th General Chapters of the Society of St. Francis de Sales. Thus, seen in perspective, Kristu Jyoti College, which would evolve a typical form of priestly formation adapted to the times and the context of India will also become, in effect, a point of departure.

1. A World in Transition

The post-World War II years witnessed an unprecedented period of peace in Europe marked by hitherto unknown economic growth which in turn gave rise to social and ideological tensions which had an unavoidable impact also on the Church and consequently on religious life.

1.1. New Political Equations

The Second World War and the years that followed dramatically altered the social, political, economic, cultural and religious equations in the world.

⁴ Joseph Forte was born at Paola, Malta, on 4th April 1938. He came to India as a cleric in 1960 and made his first profession that same year. He was ordained in 1969. He returned to Malta in 1996 and is presently in the community of St. Alphonsus, Sliema, Malta. Cf L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 313; SAS.

The western domination of the world came to an end with decolonization and there arose a new tussle for world domination by the two post-War groupings viz., the Western Capitalist Bloc inspired by the United States of America (U.S.A) and the Socialist Bloc led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R). While these two power blocs engaged in a subtle form of one-upmanship around the world and ushered in the Cold War Era, there arose a third group of nations viz., those of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)⁵ consisting mostly of the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa, which advocated a middle course without any formal alignment with either of the two blocs which were engaged in an attritional struggle for world dominance lasting for more than half a century (1947-1990)⁶.

1.2. Economic and Technological Progress

However, in the 1960s, in the United States and in a resurgent Europe, which had overcome its post-war woes, thanks also to the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan⁷, one begins to witness profound social transformations and the emergence of a new culture. This emerging culture, thanks to the new means of social communication, had its impact also on the rest of the world. Further, the conquest of space, the new technologies and the development of the human sciences opened up new vistas and imparted a sense of increased power to man.

1.3. Social Upsurges Involving Youth

There was witnessed also an increase in ideological fissures in the face of the social problems and the issues related to the situation in the so-called

⁵ The architect of this movement was Vengalil Krishnan (V.K.) Krishna Menon, the Indian Ambassador to the United Nations (1952-1962) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V._K._Krishna_Menon. (12.9.2018).

⁶ The reference is to the end of the Second World War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The attacks on the wall began on 13th June 1990 and led to its complete demolition in 1992; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Wall. (1.4.2019).

⁷ Truman Doctrine refers to the plan envisaged by President Harry Truman of the United States to strengthen and provide aid to Europe which was threatened by the U.S.S.R. This plan which was formulated in March 1947 was backed up in economic terms by the Marshall Plan of June of the same year when the U.S. Secretary of State, General George C. Marshall, announced a plan of providing massive financial aid to Europe and prevent it from falling an eventual prey to possible overtures from the U.S.S.R. The financial aid was to be distributed through the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC); <https://carleton.ca/ces/eulearning/history/europe-after-wwii/the-reconstruction-of-europe/>. (27.3.2019).

developing countries. The more vulnerable in this emerging scenario were, as always, the young, whom Don Bosco had referred to as "that portion of human society, which is so exposed and yet so rich in promise"⁸. The simmering discontent of the young with the society, which they felt was unwilling to change and eager to cling on too assiduously to "traditional values", broke out in the West in the 1960s with student protests and rallies calling for a change in attitude and approach on different fronts. The Civil Rights protests in the U.S., the hippie movement, the Anti-Vietnam War Movement etc. were but expressions of the profound dissatisfaction and the disillusionment of the young. In fact, there was witnessed the emergence of a new youth phenomenon characterized by a typical mentality and much diffused attitude: rejection of the past, criticism of the existing institutions, desire for freedom – including from what was considered "parental control" –, and new forms of dressing influenced by the pop-culture ushered in by the likes of Elvis Presley, the Beatles and others. Evident were also several disquieting aspects in this new youth culture viz., voluntary marginalization (hippies), drug addiction and delinquency. Since 1968 was the year most defined by these tendencies and movements, it is referred to as *The Year that Changed History* and the youth involved and affected by these tendencies came to be known as *The Children of 1968*⁹.

2. The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church too was challenged to come to terms with the changes that affected the world in the post-colonial period. In fact, the Catholic Church which had spread to different parts of the world thanks to the active promotion of it by some of the colonial powers, was now, with the changed circumstances, challenged to redefine herself. Her response to this challenge was the Second Vatican Council (11th October 1962 to 8th December 1965) which was in effect a comprehensive effort on her part to renew and update herself in the various spheres of her life and activities. The two more important of the conciliar documents which defined her life and mission and which appeared exceptionally in keeping with the aspirations of the faithful of the time were *Gaudium et Spes*, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in*

⁸ *Biographical Memoirs* (BM) II, p. 35 quoted in the first article of the Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales.

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/observer/gallery/2008/jan/17/1>. (12.9.2018.).

the Modern World, (7th December 1965) and *Lumen Gentium, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (21st November 1964).

However, the post-Conciliar period which was characterized by an extraordinary surge of ideas and initiatives, brought challenges of its own. Openness to the world, involvement in establishing social justice, dialogue with cultures and peoples raised great hopes for its future along with expected fears among those who were challenged to live a new way of being Christian in the post-colonial and post-conciliar world. The “contestations” or protests taking place in the world found its echo also in the Catholic Church and manifested themselves in different ways in various parts of the world leading to tensions and often, rigid positionings between the “traditionalists” and the “progressives!”.

The post-Vatican II period proved to be crucial also for religious life, as in the wake of the Council and its new vision of the world, there was a visible and steady decline in the number of religious vocations especially in the Western World.

Post-colonial India, given its great plurality of races, languages, and religions, its composite culture and its evident economic disparity and poverty¹⁰, would prove to be the ideal testing ground for initiating the wide vision of adapting to cultures and openness to the plurality of beliefs and thoughts initiated by the Second Vatican Council. However, this was not also without typical challenges thrown up by its history and its immediate context of independence.

¹⁰ The poverty which had become quite endemic in different parts of the country must be attributed to the long period of colonisation with the colonial powers channelling its resources – including human resources – to its industrial and military requirements. Cf https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Famine_in_India. (30.3.2019). Before the effective colonisation of India by the British, India under the Mughals, was the largest economy in the world at the beginning of the 18th century, producing about a quarter of the global GDP. It was the desire to be associated with a vibrant economy which would bring with it definite economic benefits that made the European powers in the first place to establish various companies like the British East India Company, the Dutch East India Company etc. which in turn would become true colonisers. Cf Angus MADDISON, *The World Economy. Vol. 2. Historical Statistics*. Paris, OECD Publishing by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2006, p. 643. The Table 8b. Share of World GDP, 20 countries and Regional Totals, 1- 2001, shows that India had the highest GDP in the world at 24.4% while Great Britain had but 4.2% and the Netherlands 1.1%. The continent-wise break-up shows that the three Asian Countries – China (22.3), the rest of Asia (10.9) excluding, Japan (4.1) together with India had a whopping 57.7 % of the world trade while that of Western Europe was 21.9%. At the end of the colonial period c. 1950 the situation for India and the other Asian countries was quite pathetic: China- 4.5% and India- 4.2%; https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/the-world-economy_9789264022621-en#page643. (13.9.2018).

3. The Indian Context

Perhaps the lofty ideals of the Second Vatican Council, especially with regard to *accommodata renovatio* or adaptation and renewal as well as cultural and religious dialogue were not as relevant in any other part of the world as it was in India. Twenty years before the inauguration of Kristu Jyoti College in 1967, the country had become independent through a non-violent struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. This had put an end, with some exceptions¹¹, to foreign domination and led to the birth of India as a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic. In this newly emerging context of India, foreign missionary activities in general came under the scanner of the government despite the fact of the country having a “secular” Constitution.

3.1. *Perception of the Catholic Church in Independent India*

Although Christianity existed merged into the socio-cultural and religious context of the Tamil Country in the Southern-tip of the Indian sub-continent from about the middle of the first century¹², missionary activities started only with the landing of the Western Latin Portuguese sailors under Vasco da Gama at Kappad, near Kozhikode, Kerala on 20th May 1498¹³. The Portuguese who were motivated primarily by commercial interests and had but vague ideas of a country with its multi-cultural and pluri-religious context, began to impose the Catholic religion in the enclaves they created for themselves along the coast. Understandably enough, the missionary groups which followed in the wake of the colonization process began to engage in evangelization on the one hand and to combat the ancient group of St. Thomas Christians on the other considering them to be heretics¹⁴. Hence, in the minds of the Indians in general, with

¹¹ The French territories in India were ceded in phases – October 1947, May 1950, and November 1954. However, the de jure union of these territories with the Indian Union will take place only in 1962 when the French Parliament ratified the treaty; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_India. (30.3.2019). Similarly, the Portuguese possessions which were taken over by India in a military action in December 1961 will however be recognized by Portugal only in 1975. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portuguese_India. (30.3.2019).

¹² Cf A. Mathias MUNDADAN, *History of Christianity in India*. Vol. I. *From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*. Bangalore, Church History Association of India 1989, pp. 21 to 36 for an understanding of the Origin of Indian Christians and the apostolate of St. Thomas.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹⁴ It is also important to note in this context that the only contact which Western Christianity had with a culture or religion outside Europe was that with the Muslims and this was in the context of the on-going conflict with the Muslims in its effort to reconquer the Iberian Penin-

the exception of that minuscule percentage which had the advantage of informed study and reading, Christianity came to be identified with the West and as a remnant of colonialism. This perception of Christianity prevailed despite the fact that Great Britain which emerged victorious in the colonial race and gained control of the country for about 190 years, considered tampering with the religious sentiments of the Indians to be detrimental to their primarily commercial interests¹⁵. It is also to be conceded that all through India's struggle for independence, and in some cases several years after that, the Archbishops of the three Presidency cities of India viz., Calcutta¹⁶, Bombay¹⁷ and Madras¹⁸ were foreigners as was the Bishop of Shillong, the single diocese in the very sensitive region of the Northeast¹⁹. Besides these, Goa, which in 1947 was still a Portuguese colony and which only in 1961 would be absorbed into the Indian Union, also had a non-Indian as its Archbishop²⁰.

sula from the latter and then during the nearly 200-year old crusades (1095-1292). The emergence of Portugal as an independent kingdom must itself be viewed in this context. Cf A. M. MUNDADAN, *History of Christianity in India...*, I, p. 234. Naturally enough, the Portuguese continued with their vicious antagonism to Muslims even in India, especially along its coast where the Muslims had a high profile commercial presence, without being in any way competent enough to understand the nuances of a land with a pluri-religious and multi-cultural background and where although the majority of the population was Hindu, the rulers were mostly Muslim. Cf Joseph THEKKEDATH, *History of Christianity in India*. Vol. II, *From the Middle of the Sixteenth Century to the End of the Seventeenth Century*. Bangalore, Church History Association of India 1982, pp. 64 ff., 308, for an understanding of the circumstances leading to the imposition of the Latin Regime on the St. Thomas Christians of India.

¹⁵ The 190 years are calculated from the Battle of Plassey (1757) which saw the defeat of Siraj-ud-Doula of Bengal, something which proved decisive for the subsequent British dominance in the North, to 1947, the year of Indian independence. This period had also two distinct phases with the first being that of the East India Company governing the territories under its control through a Governor-General from Plassey to the First War of Indian Independence which the British refer to as the Sepoy Mutiny (1757-1857) and that of the British Crown directly administering its Indian possessions through a Viceroy (1857-1947).

¹⁶ Mgr. Ferdinand Perier S.J. appointed Coadjutor Archbishop to Mgr. Brice Meuleman on 11th August 1921, succeeded the latter on 23rd June 1924 and remained in office till 12th August 1960; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_Perier. (27.3.2019).

¹⁷ Mgr. Thomas Roberts S.J. was appointed Archbishop of Bombay on 12th August 1937 and remained in office till 4th December 1950; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Roberts_\(bishop\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Roberts_(bishop)). (27.3.2019).

¹⁸ Mgr. Louis Mathias S.D.B. was appointed on 25th March 1935 and remained in office till 1965; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Mathias. (27.3.2019).

¹⁹ Mgr. Stephen Ferrando was born in Italy in 1895 and did his elementary schooling in the Oratory of Valdocco, Turin. He came to India as a young priest in 1923 and in 1934 was nominated Bishop of Krishnagar from where he was transferred to the See of Shillong in 1935. He went back to Italy in 1969 and died there on 20.06.1978 at the age of 83. L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 297.

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Archdiocese_of_Goa_and_Daman. (27.3.2019).

The fact of the Archbishops of the more important and influential dioceses in the country being foreigners and that there was a sizeable number of foreign bishops and missionaries elsewhere in the country, caused the Government of India to place curbs on the entry of new Western missionaries into the country. Restrictions were placed also on the activities of those who were already engaged in missionary activities especially in the more sensitive areas of the country like its northeastern region. This must have been motivated by the fact of the Christian hierarchy, which on account of its many educational and other institutions, had a considerable influence on a significantly broad segment of the population across the country.

3.2. *Curbs on the Entry and Activities of Foreign Missionaries*

The Government of India, already a couple of years after Independence, became quite strict in its approach to foreign missionaries. This was evident from the words of Dr. Katju, India's Minister for Home Affairs and Law, when he told Parliament, that while everyone in India was free to propagate his religion in its secular space, the Government of India did not want people from outside to come and propagate their religion. In fact, in response to a question of foreign missionaries coming to India he stated: "If they come here to evangelise, then the sooner they stop doing it the better"²¹.

However, this must not be considered an arbitrary move on the part of the newly constituted Indian Government, but as an approach already in evidence during the Government of the East India Company and that of the British Crown²². In the context of the Second World War the missionaries, including the Salesians were, considered "enemy aliens" and sent to internment camps with some of them being even expelled from the country²³.

²¹ From the Guardian Archive India: From the Archive, 17 April 1953: India warns missionaries "no evangelising, no politics"; <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2013/apr/17/india-religion-christian-missionaries-1953> (14.9.2018).

²² Until the renewal of the Charter Act of 1813, the British East India Company had blocked the entry of missionaries into India and it will be discouraged also by the British Crown after what it called The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 as it was considered by them to be the result of a perceived threat to Hindu and Muslim culture on account of the missionary activities in the country; https://www.indianetzone.com/37/religion_missionary_activities_british_india_british_india.htm. (3.4.2019).

²³ Cf Joseph THEKKEDATH, *A History of the Salesians of Don Bosco in India from the Beginning up to 1951-52*. Bangalore, Kristu Jyoti Publications 2005, I, pp. 694 ff. This speaks of the situation after the Second World War when several of the "enemy aliens" were not granted permission to stay on in India and were repatriated or permitted to move into Portugal-ruled Goa.

In fact, a look through the list of foreign Salesian missionaries to come to India from the mid-1950s shows that their number had come down to a trickle with just 2 each from 1956-58, 5 in 1959, 2 in 1960, 0 in the years 1961-63, 4 in 1964, 2 in 1965 and 2 in 1966. However, even this trickle practically dried up all together from the year 1967, which, incidentally is the year of the inauguration of Kristu Jyoti College. As a matter of fact, between 1967 and 2001, though five European missionaries did come to work in the Province of Madras, they actually were engaged in apostolic activities in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), while several of those who had come in earlier left the country owing to various factors²⁴.

This, added to the already scarce vocations in the West, would prove an issue to be dealt with especially in the Northeast – a region considered by India to be a highly sensitive area on account of its very long and often porous international borders and where a significant number of European missionaries were rendering their services²⁵.

3.3. A Significant Meeting

The diffidence of the Indian Government with regard to the missionaries was well brought home to the Salesians as well as the Church in India in general, when there took place an interview between Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan²⁶, the Home Minister of India, and a delegation of bishops headed by Mgr. Hubert Rosario SDB²⁷ and consisting of Archbishop Angelo Fernandes²⁸ and Fr. Partrick D'Souza²⁹, at the Ministry of Home Affairs at 2 p.m. on 21st August

²⁴ Cf L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, pp. 313-314. The missionaries were Bro. Garniga Gabriel (1972), Fr. Giaime Joseph (1993), Fr. De Barros Robson (2000), Fr. Huy G. John B. and Fr. Klosowski Adam (2001). *Ibid.*, p. 314.

²⁵ India has a 15,200 Km international border which it shares with 7 countries and is the third largest international border in the world (after China with 22, 147 kms and Russia with 20,017 kms.). Further, India shares 7515 kms. of its international border with seven countries (if Pakistan Occupied Kashmir – POK – is also taken into account) which number is one of the highest in the world; <https://knowledgeofindia.com/international-border-of-india/>. (13.9.2018).

²⁶ Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan was the Minister of Home Affairs in the First Indira Gandhi Government from 1966 to 1970. Cf https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Indira_Gandhi_ministry. (30.3.2019).

²⁷ Archbishop Hubert Rosario (1919-1994) was the Bishop of Dibrugarh from 1964 to 1969. He was made the Archbishop of Gauhati-Shillong in 1969 and died as Archbishop of Shillong on 30th August 1994; www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bdrosario.html. (13.9.2019).

²⁸ Mgr. Angelo Fernandes was the Archbishop of Delhi from 16th September 1967 to 27th January 1991; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelo_Innocent_Fernandes. (30.3.2019).

²⁹ Fr. Patrick D'Souza was the Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) at the time; m.daijiworld.com/viewExclusive.aspx?nid=2227. (30.3.2019).

1967. The meeting was held in the context of the restrictions placed on the presence and activities of foreign missionaries. The more relevant excerpts of this frank conversation between the two parties given below are by themselves quite indicative of the mood that prevailed in New Delhi at the time.

“Mr. Chavan: “Yes. I am unduly frank with you. The decision has been taken. We do not want to be unsympathetic. But you must get reconciled to this that sooner or later all missionaries will go. Take it from me, we want all missionaries out. This should be a help to you to indianise faster. You must take a realistic appraisal of the situation. Why don’t you hurry up with indianisation? If they were Indian priests there, whatever they do we would have to accept it!”.

Archbishop Angelo: “Whatever sort they be!”.

Mr. Chavan: “Even if they are rotten we have to put up with them. You must hurry up with indianisation”³⁰.

The minister was obviously insisting on an Indian Church in an Independent India.

3.4. *Salesian Reading of the Indian Situation – Challenges and Possibilities*

The fact that the Salesians were also aware of the changing dynamics in the country is evident from a letter of Fr. Casarotti, the Provincial of Gauhati, to Fr. Fedrigotti dated 15th May 1967 when he spoke of the need of administrative changes among the Salesians in India taking into account the altered political situation. He said that there was a need to pass on the responsibilities to Indians. The two reasons he advanced were the following: i) the Indians numbered about half the number of the confreres and ii) it was difficult to find “Europeans of quality”. He went on to say that the choices had to be of the best quality and that it was going to be difficult to realise this ideal situation. Besides, the political situation called for the presence of an Indian in order to be able to move around in Assam. This letter is also indicative of the fact that in the minds of some of the Europeans in the North there was still a lingering prejudice against those from the South:

“The Europeans, and that especially of the older generation, will be happy if it is not someone from the South but from Assam and has grown up with them...”³¹.

The Salesians in India had, therefore, to take into account a number of factors in continuing their mission in the country and that too in the typical

³⁰ ASC F183 *Guwahati* – Correspondence with D. Fedrigotti dated 1957-1967.

³¹ *Ibid.* Letter to stimato padre of Fr. Casarotti dated 15.5.67. Provincial Office – Don Bosco School, Guwahati (Assam), India, Festa di Maria Regina.

post-Vatican context. They were hence challenged to have a synthetic approach, which inevitably called for a fine balance between their Christian and Salesian heritage on the one hand and on the other, the Indian context, which called for inculturation and indianisation, inter-religious and inter-denominational dialogue, catechesis and human promotion – all seen in the viewpoint of the youth, the constitutive Salesian perspective.

The typical Indian context, in fact, could arguably be considered one, which in its core, was open to the workings of the Spirit as embodied in the Rg. Vedic injunction: *Let noble thoughts come to me from every direction*³² and the Maha Upanishadic view of the “whole world being a family”³³. However, the traditional values of acceptance, coexistence and hospitality which the missionaries had always experienced in the country, had to be balanced with the rightful stirrings for an Indian identity which was becoming increasingly evident during the last stages of the struggle for national independence and continued into the post-independence era. In such a context, the Salesians in India were challenged to articulate conversion without alienation, assumption without repudiation and synthesis without syncretism³⁴. Understood in this way Kristu Jyoti College was not only a point of arrival but was eminently also a point of departure as it strove to usher in a new form of priestly formation in keeping with the expectations of the post-conciliar Church and in line with the expectations of independent India.

Further, though there was a crisis of vocations in Western Europe and America – with the Rector Major being constrained to make an appeal for priests to work as missionaries in South America³⁵, the situation was quite different in India. The Salesians, especially given a steady rise in the number of vocations particularly in the traditional Christian pockets in the South, were slowly yet steadily moving into what could be considered, the golden period of their history with an adequately prepared formation personnel quite capable of providing a training in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and in the light of GC 19.

³² *Aano bhadra krtavo yantu vishwatah* (Rg. Veda 1.89.1.).

³³ *Yasudhaiva kudumbakam* (Maha Upanishad 6.71.75).

³⁴ Dominic VELLATH, *Salesian Theological Formation in India*, in L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 261.

³⁵ Morand WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni tra storia e nuove sfide*. Roma, LAS 2000, p. 455.

4. The Salesian Congregation

The present study, which deals with the period of the inauguration (1967) and consolidation of the studentate of theology of the Salesians in India at Bangalore until the restarting of the theologate of Mawlai in the academic year 1976-77, has to be situated in the above-narrated context of the World, the Catholic Church and Independent India. The convocation and progress of the 19th General Chapter at a time when the Second Vatican Council was still in progress, and the 20th Special General Chapter which was convoked in line with the provisions of the *motu proprio Ecclesiae sanctae*³⁶, naturally had an impact both on the envisioning of the college and its own “period of formation”. A particularly significant aspect to be noted during this period is that of the Congregation having sensed the impact which a world in transition was having on its mission as well as that of it being blessed with three Rectors Major who, in varying degrees, had a first-hand experience of the Vatican Council and had experienced the breath of fresh air which had entered the Church with the Council.

Further, it is pertinent to point out that, as if on cue, the 19th and the 20th General Chapters were held in totally new settings – the former at the newly constructed *Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano* (PAS) and the latter at the newly inaugurated *Casa Generalizia* at Via della Pisana, 1111, Rome. The choice of these new venues could itself be considered symbolic of the desire of the Congregation to emphasise the need for a new beginning to engage a world posing new challenges to its mission.

4.1. Nineteenth General Chapter

Even as the Congregation had moved into the second centenary of its existence, it presented a very healthy picture with a truly global presence and with a steady growth in numbers. However, the more perceptive among the members were not at the same time blind to the emerging new situations in the world and in the Church in general especially as evidenced from the Second Vatican Council, which would not in anyway leave the Congregation unscathed. Undoubtedly, the 19th GC was the beginning of a new approach spurred on by

³⁶ *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, meaning (*Governing*) of the Holy Church was issued by Pope Paul VI on 6th August, 1966 and contained clear directives on the manner of implementing the Vatican Council especially as regards the conciliar documents *Christus Dominus* (*On the Pastoral Office of Bishops*), *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (*On the Life and Ministry of Priests*), *Perfectae Caritatis* (*On the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life*), and *Ad Gentes* (*On the Missionary Activity of the Church*).

the evident change in approach demanded by the Second Vatican Council. However, the 19th General Chapter was itself but a Chapter in transition as, just an year after its conclusion, the *motu proprio Ecclesiae sanctae* called for General Chapters to be held by all the religious institutes in order to adopt suitable ways and means of implementing the decrees of Vatican II especially *Perfectae Caritatis*, which dealt with the up-to-date renewal of religious life. This naturally shifted the focus from the implementation of the directives of the 19th Chapter in the present to planning the Special General Chapter in the future³⁷. Nevertheless, the planning for the Theologate in Bangalore will take place in the context of GC19 and those responsible for the theological formation of future Salesians could not but take seriously into consideration the proposals of the Chapter.

4.1.1. The Convocation

Already at the beginning of the year 1964, Fr. Ziggotti had written to the members of the Congregation expressing his desire and hope to have the Chapter in the newly constructed *Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano*, Rome. He also informed them that he had, after consulting the Superior Chapter, requested the Holy See for the required authorization to anticipate GC 19 from August to April³⁸. This was to avoid possible inconveniences which could arise due to the ongoing schedules of Vatican II. The proposed change of dates would help to hold it between the third and fourth sessions of the Council³⁹. The Holy See approved of the proposed change and the 19th General Chapter of the Salesians was inaugurated in the *Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano* on 8th April 1965.

4.1.2. A Chapter in the Context of the Second Vatican Council

The Chapter will be held literally in the invigorating and transforming context of the Second Vatican Council and significantly three Salesians who

³⁷ ACS 305 (1982) 10. Fr. Viganò with the benefit of hindsight stated that the chapter members “certainly felt the first flush of the great conciliar event... and although in general people had only a fairly limited perception of the demands of the council... still the chapter members breathed something of its freshness... and set in motion a general process of updating through the treatment of such topics as religious life, spiritual direction, the Salesian brother, and the beginnings of new structures of government” (the Superior Council, Regionals, vicars, and better participation in Chapters). *Ibid.*

³⁸ ACS 234 (1964) 13-14. The *Atti del Capitolo Superiore* will from January 1966 be known as *Atti del Consiglio Superiore*.

³⁹ The third session of Vatican II was from 14th September to 21st November 1964 and the 4th session was from 14th September 1965 to 8th December 1965.

were to head the Congregation during the period covered by this study viz., Fr. Ziggiotti, Fr. Ricceri and Fr. Viganò were able to participate in it for varying periods and that in different roles⁴⁰.

Fr. Ziggiotti, the Rector Major, who was inducted as a member of the Commission for the Religious was impressed by his experience of the Council as he stated that it was something which was a call to the “priests, religious and the laity called to the apostolate to correspond more and better to their vocation”⁴¹. Further, through the letters published in the Acts of the Superior Chapter, he kept the Congregation informed of the proceedings of the Council⁴² and the great expectations of the Church with regard to the same⁴³.

In fact, the Second Vatican Council in progress had a determining impact on the way the Chapter was conducted as Fr. Ricceri, who was elected Rector Major on 27th April 1965 during the course of the Chapter, himself would later state:

“During the work of the Chapter one had the clear feeling that all those who were present were looking anxiously towards the Ecumenical Council Vatican II. The ambience of Rome has evidently nurtured this climate of the spring-time tension, full of promise”⁴⁴.

Fr. Ricceri, who had participated in the last session of the Council was fully aware of the need for the Congregation to carry forward the Salesian charism in faithfulness to Don Bosco and in keeping with the signs of the

⁴⁰ Don Ziggiotti participated in the first session (11th October to 8th December 1962) and in the second session (29th September to 4th December 1963). Fr. Ricceri had participated in the final session of the Council and had also taken part, along with some members of his council, in the Inter-Provincial Meetings of Europe (Como, April 1968), Asia (Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore July 1968) and Latin America (Caracas, May 1969). Cf M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, p. 449. Likewise, Fr. Viganò, chosen as the expert of the Episcopate of Chile and as a member of the Council, had participated in the reflections which eventually led to the formulation of the Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* and the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* dedicated to the contemporary world. He was also one of the prominent figures at the Special General Chapter (1971-1972) and was elected the Councillor for Formation. Cf *ibid.*

⁴¹ ACS 229 (1963) 6.

⁴² ACS 223 (1962) 7-9. “Il Concilio Ecumenico e lo studio dei problemi moderni”; ACS 228 (1962) 3-11 where he spoke of his experiences at the first session of the Council.

⁴³ “Nel 1962 speriamo che la Divina Provvidenza conceda di portare a compimento il desiderio vivissimo di tutta la cristianità, con una folgorante assise, mai veduto nei secoli, alla presenza dell’intero Collegio Cardinalizio, di migliaia di Vescovi, Prelati, Dottori e Padri, sotto la guida del Pontefice, riuniti allo studio dei massimi problemi dottrinali e disciplinari per il bene universale della Chiesa di Dio. Quale spettacolo per il mondo dei cattolici e dei non cattolici: «di unità, di universalità e di fraternità» come disse il Sommo Pontefice!” ACS 223 (1962) 7-8.

⁴⁴ ACS 244 (1966) 5-6, trans. from the Italian original.

times. In fact, in his first interview as Rector Major he stated that what he intended to do was

“to go forward with Don Bosco alive today, in order to respond to the needs of our times and the expectations of the Church”⁴⁵.

This approach was later paraphrased as: “With Don Bosco and with the Times!”.

However, he would later admit that although GC 19 was not yet able to understand fully and to implement effectively the new thinking in the Church, it still was a step forward for all those who participated in the Chapter, and through them for the whole Congregation, to breathe the atmosphere (of the Council)⁴⁶.

4.2. *A New Approach in a New World*

The first hundred years of the Congregation may be considered a period when the overwhelming tendency was to remain faithful to the charism of the founder and to guard against any deviation which could eventually subvert its originality. Such an approach meant also that there was not the desired level of openness to the ideas and developments outside the immediate Salesian ambience and this was evident up to and inclusive of GC 18. This was particularly so in that area of the specific apostolate of the Salesians viz., service to the poor and abandoned youth as may be seen from the words of Fr. Pietro Braido with reference to the 18th GC (1958):

“It did not seem to be one which feels the deep transformations that occurred in the previous six years. With regard to the oratories, the use of social media and entertainment, and even more, the boarding schools, the speeches were almost identical to those of the previous chapters, reflecting echoes of the regulatory provisions made in the 1920s and later”⁴⁷.

The 19th General Chapter, forced by the prevailing circumstances, was to change tack and prove itself more open to the world and willing enough to seek information even in areas beyond the traditional boundaries.

⁴⁵ “Con don Bosco vivo, oggi, di fronte alle esigenze del nostro tempo e alle attese della Chiesa” as quoted in Egidius VIGANÒ, *Don Luigi Ricceri, sesto successore di don Bosco*. Roma, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco 1989, p. 13 (Mortuary Letter).

⁴⁶ ACS 305 (1982) 10.

⁴⁷ Pietro BRAIDO, *Le metamorfosi dell’Oratorio Salesiano tra il secondo dopoguerra e il Post-Concilio Vaticano II (1944-1984)*, in RSS 49 (2006) 319.

4.3. *Endorsing Modern Trends*

The general world situation indicated also that there was an increasing need for specialisation and higher levels of competence in order to be effective in the apostolate among the young. Fr. Ricceri made an appeal in this regard when he said

“By now every manifestation of our activity claim qualified people in the field of theology, liturgy, philosophy, education, science, technology, instruction, art, recreation and management”⁴⁸.

It was this awareness which had come into the Congregation that made it to invite 19 “experts” including two coadjutors to the Chapter⁴⁹.

4.4. *Significant Developments at the 19th General Chapter*

Some of the decisions of the Chapter were indicative of the realization of the members that there needed to be a certain change in approach at various levels at what was evidently a critical period in the history of the Congregation. Accordingly, the more important areas which were addressed may be enumerated as the evaluation of the functioning of the structures in the Congregation at the various levels⁵⁰; updating of the formation programme as well as the insistence on having qualified personnel to impart the required level of competent formation at various levels and in various subjects⁵¹; the need for the redi-

⁴⁸ ACS 244 (1966) 5, trans. from the Italian original.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 357-366 for the list of the participants and the commissions with the name of the experts.

⁵⁰ At the level of the Superior Council which till then was called the Superior Chapter and which will further evolve into the General Council of today, the number of members was increased from five to nine with the introduction of the Councillors for Formation, for Youth Pastoral, for Apostolate for the Adults (Cooperators, Past Pupils, Propaganda, Information on the Salesian Works and Means of Social Communication) and the six Regional Councillors each entrusted with a group of provinces in a particular geographical region. Each of these regions were to have a “Regional Conference” presided over by the Regional Councillor. Similarly, at the provincial level, directives were given to have a Vicar of the Provincial, an increase in the number of his councillors, and the setting up of various provincial delegations and commissions comprising of experts. At the local level the communities were exhorted to collaborate with the Rector for the realization of the common mission and the rectors were reminded of their duty of being more than anything else the spiritual and educative animators of those entrusted to them. Membership in the house council was opened up also to the coadjutors and the need for the formation of the Rectors was also highlighted. Cf M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, pp. 439-440.

⁵¹ Cf ACS 244 (1966) 4-5 for the exhortation of Fr. Ricceri on the need for qualification in various areas.

mensioning of the works with the call for their external and internal reinforcement which in concrete called for the simplification of the larger houses and the reduction in the number of the smaller presences⁵²; setting up of the Centre for Youth Pastoral indicating the need for all the Salesian educational initiatives having to be motivated by a pastoral impulse and the need for a General Councillor for this important sector⁵³; and finally, in keeping with the spirit of the times and as expressed in the official documents of the Church like *Mater et magistra* dealing with the social question, *Pacem in Terra* directed towards the world of work and *Inter Mirifica* dealing with social communication, the Salesians were exhorted to a more meaningful involvement in the world. Further, they felt themselves challenged to diversify their involvement in the adult world by having a more visible and constructive social involvement and that especially in the world of work and that of social communications without, however, moving away from their traditional involvement with the Cooperators, the Past Pupils and others of the Salesian Family⁵⁴.

4.5. Some Areas of Special Concern

Given the specific nature of the Salesian apostolate directed primarily towards the young, it is thought that a special reference be made to two of the earliest and still prevalent forms of Salesian apostolate viz., boarding schools and oratories which were undergoing very perceptible changes.

4.5.1. Boarding-Schools⁵⁵

The traditional boarding schools which served the interests of the “poor and abandoned boys” who in the context of the unprecedented migration of the young from the villages to the cities fueled by the Industrial Revolution,

⁵² Cf M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, p. 443.

⁵³ The changing focus on the Salesian apostolate in keeping with the times was the insertion under the term “apostolate” of six new areas: parish ministry, adult catechesis, family apostolate, lay teachers’ formation, working class ministry, and social communications. A new term, “Youth Ministry” was also introduced and Fr. Gaetano Scrivo was elected the General Councillor for Youth Ministry. However, the pre-conciliar “youth apostolate” mentality linked to the boarding schools was still shared by a majority of the participants at the Chapter. Cf Sabino FRIGATO, *Educazione ed evangelizzazione. La riflessione della Congregazione Salesiana nel Postconcilio*, in Andrea BOZZOLO - Roberto CARELLI (edd.), *Evangelizzazione e educazione*. Roma, LAS 2011, pp. 70-72.

⁵⁴ M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, p. 445.

⁵⁵ ACS 244 (1966) 107-112.

had no other place to go to and who would fall willingly into the regimented system, albeit based on Salesian loving kindness, was found to be increasingly irrelevant or incompatible with the desire for freedom of the youth of the 1960s⁵⁶. Indeed boarding-schools appeared to be quite anachronistic in the changed welfare landscape of the West.

That the Congregation was quite aware of the diminishing relevance of the boarding-schools was evident from the fact that in his presentation of GC 19, Fr. Ricceri omitted the term “boarding-schools” and insisted more on the oratories and on education, especially professional education⁵⁷. This was indeed a significant departure from tradition, given the fact, that the GCs from IX to XIX had all described boarding schools or schools with an attached boarding as one of the primary settings for youth apostolate⁵⁸.

4.5.2. Oratories and Youth Centres⁵⁹

With the prevalence of the increased use of the Mass Media and the change in recreational facilities with the emergence of well-organized clubs of a social, cultural and recreational nature, the older form of oratories, run along a well tried and tested path, were found to be increasingly irrelevant. This challenged the Salesians with having to search out new ways of running oratories and youth centres. They were also called upon to deal with the increasing number of non-Christian believers and non-believers attending the oratories and youth centres in a genuine spirit of dialogue⁶⁰.

4.6. *Climate of the Chapter*

In general, the climate in which the Chapter was held, may be characterised as one of “contestation” which in effect was a reflection of the general

⁵⁶ Studies made at the time showed that 72% of the Past Pupils in Italy would have preferred an education in a family context with an average level of parenting instead of a well-organized boarding set-up with competent educators. The negative aspects highlighted with regard to the education imparted in the boardings were an unrealistic preparation for life, suppression of personality, compulsory religious practices, excessive discipline and a lack of preparation to engage in meaningful relations with the complementary sex. Cf Pier Giovanni GRASSO, *La Società Salesiana tra il passato e l'avvenire. Risultati di un'inchiesta tra ex allievi Salesiani*. Roma 1964, pp. 45-152. [Edizione extra-commerciale riservata].

⁵⁷ ACS 244 (1966) 11-12.

⁵⁸ Michal VOJTÁS, *Reviving Don Bosco's Oratory, Salesian Youth Ministry, Leadership and Innovative Project Management*. Jerusalem, STS Publications 2017, p. 18.

⁵⁹ ACS 244 (1966) 134-140.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

situation which was prevailing both in the world and in the Church of the time. Thus, GC 19 witnessed creative polarised tensions between those advocating adaptation to the new challenges facing the Congregation and its mission of service to the young and those who were ardent advocates of fidelity to the original charism of Don Bosco – something, which had been a constant throughout the history of the Congregation. This situation caused the Rector Major to make impassioned pleas for “unity in diversity”⁶¹, and to indicate “dialogue” at various levels being the better way of solving issues⁶². This general climate of polarised contestation will continue to prevail also during and after the Special General Chapter and will be evident also in the early years of Kristu Jyoti College.

5. Salesian Congregation between GC 19 and GC 20

Looking back at GC 19, and with the benefit of hindsight, in 1991 Fr. Juan Vecchi, the then Rector Major, stated:

“The GC 19 did not have a satisfactory operational translation [...]; the mentality and the operational practice did not experience major changes at the grass-root level of the Congregation”⁶³.

This was on account of the fact, that soon after the Chapter was concluded, Rome, through the Decree *Eclesiae Sanctae* (6th August 1966) asked all the religious congregations to prepare for a Special General Chapter in order to realize the required level of adaptation and renewal along the lines of *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life (28th Oct. 1965).

5.1. A Period of Crisis

The crisis in vocations in the West with increasingly nuclear families accompanied by a consumerist attitude and other allied factors, which impacted

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 315-316. Here in his exhortation to the members of the General Chapter on 7th May 1965, the Rector Major insisted on tolerance and respect for the views of others in order to maintain “unity in diversity”.

⁶² Cf ACS 248 (1967) 3-33. In his letter, dated Turin, 31st January 1967, he spoke at length of the need to dialogue at various levels in the Congregation.

⁶³ Juan Edmundo VECCHI, “*Pastorale, educazione, pedagogia nella prassi Salesiana*”, in *Il cammino e la prospettiva 2000, Documenti PG 13*. Roma, SDB 1991, p. 10.

so negatively on religious life, had its inescapable impact on the Salesians and their works. Thus the Congregation which had reached an all-time high of 21,614 members in 1967, which incidently was the year *Kristu Jyoti* began functioning, saw a fall of about one-fifth in 1977 as in real terms the number tumbled down to 16,599⁶⁴. This was owed to the fact that for the first time in the history of the Congregation, there was a noticeable fall in the number of new entrants and simultaneously a noticeable increase in the number of those leaving it.

5.2. *Initiatives of the Rector Major*

In an effort to have a better understanding of the Congregation in view of the Special General Chapter, as GC 20 was referred to, the Rector Major undertook several journeys to different parts of the world and held Inter-Provincial meetings in Como for Europe (April 1968), in Bangalore for Asia (February 1968)⁶⁵ and in Caracas for Latin America (May 1969). He also paid attention to the animation of the Congregation through his writings which were fully in line with the mind of Vatican II and of Pope Paul VI dealing as they would with a variety of topics like proclamation of the faith, dialogue, renewal, crisis of vocation etc.⁶⁶. In a very volatile situation when there were also a certain “confusion of ideas”, which could easily give rise to extreme and even dangerous attitudes, Fr. Ricceri insisted on “courage in making decisions and consistency in our lives”⁶⁷. Further, inspired by the event of the beatification of don Rua on 29th October 1972, he invited the Salesians to a total, integral and fecund faithfulness in imitation of the first successor of Don Bosco, who was so noted for his legendary fidelity to the founder⁶⁸.

Faced with a situation pregnant with the “confusion of ideas” and with some of them of an extremist and dangerous kind, Fr. Ricceri insisted on a “courageous and balanced openness in tune with the teachings of the Vatican Council and of Pope Paul VI”⁶⁹.

⁶⁴ Cf *Elenco Generale della Società di S. Francesco di Sales 1967*, pp. 35-327 and *ibid.*, 1977, pp. 39-256. Cf also the comparative table presented by Fr. Viganò in his: *La Società di San Francesco di Sales nel sessennio 1978-1983*. Roma 1983, p. 215 for an idea of the losses of the other orders and congregations during the same period.

⁶⁵ The meeting in India was held to coincide with the official inauguration of *Kristu Jyoti* College to which reference will be made in the course of this paper.

⁶⁶ Cf *La parola del Rettor Maggiore*. 9 vols. Torino, Ispettorica centrale salesiana 1967-1977 quoted in M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, p. 449.

⁶⁷ ACS 250 (1967) 13, 18.

⁶⁸ Cf ACS 268 (1972) 24-25.

⁶⁹ M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, p. 449.

Thankfully for the Congregation, it was blessed with an enlightened leadership during the period leading to the Special General Chapter, during the course of the Chapter and in the years that followed in the person of Fr. Ricceri and after him in that of Fr. Viganò⁷⁰. While the former, as has already been pointed out, insisted with the Salesians that they engage themselves in a “courageous and balanced opening to the world”, the latter pointed to fidelity, courage and enthusiasm as the required response to the challenges facing the Congregation⁷¹.

6. The Special General Chapter

The 20th General Chapter of the Salesian Congregation, meant to realize the “*accommodata renovatio*” called for by the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* of the Second Vatican Council, was held at the newly opened generalate in Via della Pisana 1111, Rome, on 10th June 1971 and lasted an unprecedented 7 months with 202 participants representing 73 provinces and including 12 *observers* and 4 *experts*⁷².

It was at this Chapter that for the first time in its history, the Rector Major, who, thanks to his visits and especially thanks to the Inter-Provincial Congresses he had presided over in Como, Bangalore and Caracas, presented the *Report on the State of the Congregation*⁷³, a practice which continues to this day.

As was only to be expected in the prevailing circumstances, this Chapter too, like GC 19, lived through very “lively” and at times tense moments on account of the involved debates between the “traditionalists” and the “progressives” with the former insisting on fidelity to the hallowed traditions and the latter calling for changes in keeping with the times. There were also calls for unity on the one hand and of decentralization on the other, or even that of a centralised authority on the one hand and that of co-responsibility on the other⁷⁴.

⁷⁰ The reference is to Fr. Aloysius Ricceri, who was elected Rector Major by GC 19 and his successor, Fr. Egidio Viganò (1977-1995) who too had participated in the Second Vatican Council and was elected the General Councillor for Formation by GC 20.

⁷¹ M. WIRTH, *Da don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, p. 466.

⁷² Cf *Capitolo Generale Speciale XX della Società Salesiana, Roma 1971*. Torino, Lit. E. Gili (s.d.), Allegato 8, pp. 605-611 for the list of participants, observers and experts.

⁷³ Cf *Capitolo Generale Speciale, Allegato 3, pp. 565-583 for the Relazione generale sullo stato della Congregazione. Capitolo generale speciale – Roma 1971*. Torino, Lit. E. Gili (s.d.).

⁷⁴ M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, p. 451.

6.1. *The More Significant Developments at the Chapter*

If one were to study the results of the *accomodata renovatio*, realized by the SGC, the great changes which followed within the Salesian communities between 1965 and 1977, will become evident⁷⁵. The more salient aspects of these may be enumerated as the governance of the Congregation more along the lines of animation with the relations between the superiors and the confreres becoming more simple and informal, an increased level of the sense of the community and better communication as well as dialogue at various levels – congregational, provincial and local. These, in turn, were facilitated by such factors as the presence of the Regional Councillors in the General Council, the *consultation*, especially at the time of the appointment of the superiors and that of others to responsible positions and the decentralization effected by the setting up of the regions which facilitated a better adaptation of the Salesian charism to the cultural and social context of a given region.

6.2. *Some Salient Contextualized Aspects*

The aspects considered significant in the context of this paper fall mainly in the areas of formation, evangelization and dialogue as well as schools and oratories.

6.2.1. Area of Formation

In the area of formation it must be noted that some novitiates and studentates had to be closed on account of the lack of vocations or on account of the difficulty in overcoming the various internal tensions. Among other things, Don Ricceri deplored the tendency to forget the Salesian charism in some of the formation houses, presence of worrying doctrinal deviations, “protests or contestations”, and the lack of responsibility on the part of some of the formators⁷⁶.

Though there was a crisis of vocations in Western Europe and in the Americas – with the Rector Major being constrained to make an appeal for

⁷⁵ A clear idea of this impact may be had from Francis DESRAMAUT - Mario MIDALI (edd.), *La comunità salesiana*. (Leggiuno, 28-31 agosto 1972). (= Colloqui sulla vita salesiana, 4). Torino-Leumann, LDC 1973.

⁷⁶ M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, p. 453.

priests to work as missionaries in South America⁷⁷, the situation proved to be quite different in the Asian countries, especially India. There were evident signs of an increase in vocations, thanks to the policy of recruiting local vocations and the setting up of the required infrastructures in different parts of the country already from the 1940s. Sufficient attention was paid also to the formation of those who would later be tasked with the animation of the formation communities. This will be evident in the case of Kristu Jyoti College itself where Indian Salesians trained in Europe during and in the post-Vatican II period will be entrusted with the task of the theological formation of the Salesians for the whole of India.

6.2.2. Evangelisation and Dialogue

There were also challenges with regard to evangelization which were affecting the Church as a whole as also the Salesian Congregation in the wake of the respect for cultures, other religions and the need for dialogue insisted on by the Second Vatican Council⁷⁸. The fundamental question was on how evangelization was to be carried forward in the post-colonial period. The relevance of this question came to the fore as during the colonial period, the proclamation of the Gospel went hand in hand with an assertion of racial and cultural superiority and the claim on the part of the missionaries to possessing the “fullness of Truth”. There was also a significant fall in the number of missionary vocations in Europe and this went hand-in-hand with the decrease in missionary enthusiasm. Questions were also openly raised on the validity of the missions of the classical type of an earlier era and on whether or not it were more urgent to deal with issues of underdevelopment and hunger before thinking of “converting people to Christianity!”.

The Special General Chapter insisted that in the face of these very real and fundamental problems what was called for were new attitudes, new competencies and new orientations. What was required was to establish a better link between evangelization and development and human progress and to promote the various local cultures and languages, stimulate people’s participation and to make the Gospel message relevant to the local context⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 455.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 454-455.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

6.2.3. Schools and Oratories

There were also serious efforts at redimensioning schools and oratories especially in the West with the introduction also of co-education⁸⁰ and encouraging the greater involvement of the laity. In keeping with the social context, there were very meaningful attempts at inserting the Salesian charism in the more difficult areas, greater social involvement on behalf of the marginalized and drug addicts and different forms of collaboration with associated government and civil institutions⁸¹.

The Salesian Studentate of theology at Bangalore, meant for the whole of Salesian India, which was started in the context of the Second Vatican Council, will prove itself to have been influenced in no small measure by the general historical context of its birth and the spirit of the *accomodata renovatio*, which had its unmistakable impact on its formative years. Attention will be paid to realize a formation in the spirit of dialogue with cultures and religions, meaningful involvement of the laity, collaboration with the government – all not without the tensions associated with the understandable change in concepts and approach, which had come about in the wake of Vatican II and the SGC.

7. Kristu Jyoti College – A Point of Arrival

If the Salesian studentate of theology at Bangalore was a point of arrival as far as the theological formation of the Salesians in India was concerned as has already been described in the first part of this paper, it was also equally a point of departure in keeping with the changing world, ecclesiastical, Indian and congregational climate. The more important factor which facilitated the coming of the Salesians to Bangalore was however, the change in the attitude of the Archbishop which led to a renewed correspondence between the Salesians and the Archdiocese and the realization of a long desired objective.

7.1. *A change in attitude of the Archbishop of Bangalore*

Archbishop Thomas Pothacamury of Bangalore, who was not in favour of having too many religious congregations in the city and who for various

⁸⁰ Cf COSIMO SEMERARO, *Coeducazione e presenza salesiana. Problemi e prospettive*. (Toulon, 30 ottobre - 2 novembre 1992). (= Colloqui internazionali sulla vita salesiana, 16 – Nuova serie, 5). Leumann (Torino), LDC 1993.

⁸¹ M. WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni...*, p. 454.

reasons was not in favour of the Salesians coming into the Archdiocese, eventually changed his stance. The change in his attitude and the increasing friendliness he manifested towards the Salesians was evident from the fact of his having visited *The Retreat*, Yercaud, and having celebrated the community mass on 24th May 1952, the feast of Mary Help of Christians⁸².

In his autobiography, Fr. John Med, the then Provincial of the Province of Madras, narrates an interesting incident about how the Archbishop himself, and that to the former's great surprise, invited the Salesians to Bangalore.

“Once while at Kotagiri, I met the Archbishop of Bangalore, Mons. Pothacamury, when he came over to have some rest. In the course of our conversation, he casually mentioned, “Why don't you come to help us in Bangalore?” I replied jokingly, “But you do not want us. We hear that you keep the pictures of Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians in the Archbishop's House to keep the Salesians away”. He took it well and said, “I will be happy if you come to Bangalore”. He promised also to ask the parish priest at Krishnarajapuram village, just adjacent to Bangalore, about acquiring a plot for us. Taking him at his word we also contacted the parish priest, who eventually helped us in acquiring the land beside the Bangalore-Madras Highway, The land belonged to seven different owners. Six of them agreed, but the one right in the middle of it all was very reluctant. Fr. Dabove⁸³ managed to settle the matter amicably”⁸⁴.

It was in fact a casual conversation, which finally led to the Salesians coming to Bangalore after a long wait of 40 years, since the time when Fr. Ricaldone during the Extraordinary Visitation to the fledgling Salesian presence in India in 1927, expressed his desire for a Salesian presence in Bangalore.

7.2. Renewed Correspondence

Naturally enough, the very welcome attitude of the Archbishop towards the Salesians led to a flurry of correspondence between them and the archdiocesan authorities.

⁸² Joseph THEKKEDATH, *A History of the Salesians of Don Bosco in India from the Beginning up to 1951-52*. Bangalore, Kristu Jyoti Publications 2005, II, p. 1020.

⁸³ Fr. Emilio Dabove was born in Italy in 1903 and made his first profession in 1927. He came to India in 1932 and was ordained in 1939. He died on 31.12.1981 at the age of 78. L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 302.

⁸⁴ Sebastian Jose AERIMATTATHIL (ed.), *In His Name. Fr. John Med Recounts His History*. Dimapur, Don Bosco Publications 2005, p. 90.

7.2.1. Letter of Fr. Med to Archbishop Pothacamury

After his return to Madras from Kotagiri, Fr. Med, seeing the favourable stance of the Archbishop, wrote him a letter, which in a way, picked up the thread of the correspondences from where his predecessors had left off.

“Your Grace,

With great pleasure, I still remember the two occasions when I saw your Grace lately: in Kotagiri where Your Grace was for holidays and in Vellore where I saw you in the hospital. I hope that Your Grace is completely well now and we shall certainly pray for you so that God should preserve you well and healthy.

In both of those occasions, Your Grace spoke to me about finding some land in Bangalore. Before it was not possible as our superiors were contrary to such undertaking but of late, they encouraged me to buy some plot of land for our future theologate.

It is with this end in view that I write this letter asking Your Grace to be so kind as to give us your permission to take this step and give us already in advance the permission to establish in your Archdiocese our *Domus Religiosa* intended especially to be a House of Studies. I shall be very grateful to Your Grace for this permission. We have inquired about possible places and they can be obtained but before giving a definite word I would beg Your Grace to give us your consent.

I can assure Your Grace that we shall pray for you now and also in the future and shall try to repay the kindness which Your Grace was always so ready to show to us all, and to me in particular. Kindly bless us also and our intentions,
Your Grace’s obedient Son in O.L.

(Sd.) J. Med

Salesian Provincial”⁸⁵.

This letter, apart from indicating the fact of the by now cordial relations that existed between the Archbishop and the Salesians and in a special way with the provincial Superior, Fr. Med, indicates also some other pertinent aspects: i) that the Superiors were not in favour of starting a studentate of theology in the South till the Indo-Chinese War forced the students of theology out of Mawlai and to Kotagiri; ii) that Archbishop Thomas Pothacamury had health issues at the time of writing this letter, something which made it necessary for his Auxiliary, Mgr. D.S. Lourdusamy, soon to be made Coadjutor Archbishop of Bangalore owed also to the continued ill-health of the Archbishop, to take up the correspondence with the Salesians in the question at issue and iii) that the Salesians were quite solicitous about being faithful to the normal procedures associated with establishing new presences in a diocese.

⁸⁵ AAB – SDB, RF -37. Vol. II (1963-1967). Letter dated 80-C Broadway, Madras-1 (S. India), 9th January 1963.

7.2.2. Letter of the Auxiliary Bishop to the Provincial

Since the Archbishop was in retreat, it would in fact be Mgr. Lourdusamy, the Auxiliary Bishop, who replied two days later. The letter was very cordial and was dated Archbishop's House, 20, Miller's Road, Bangalore – 6, 11th January 1963.

“Dear Fr. Provincial,

His Grace the Archbishop is in due receipt of your letter, dated 9th January 1963. As he is in retreat at present, I am penning these lines on his behalf.

His Grace says that you are quite welcome here and gives you hereby, with great pleasure, the required permission to establish in this Archdiocese of Bangalore a «domus religiosa» of your congregation, intended especially to be a house of studies. A formal permission to this effect in a well-drawn-up document will be issued later. His Grace strongly advises you to locate this house outside the present city limits.

Along with His Grace I too extend to your congregation a hearty welcome to this Archdiocese.

Whenever you come over to Bangalore to make arrangements for the purchase of the plot of land and other such things, you will be our honoured guest here at the Archbishop's House. You may stay here with us as long as you like (and) we shall make you feel quite at home with us and shall try to help you in all possible ways. With best wishes and special blessings both from His Grace, the Archbishop, and myself,

Yours devotedly in O.L.,

(D.S. Lourdusamy),

Bishop Auxiliary & Vicar General”⁸⁶.

The above letter is quite revealing inasmuch as it underlines yet again the concern of the Archdiocese not to have too many religious houses within the then city limits and insists that the Salesians locate themselves in the periphery. The letter is particularly cordial and Mgr. Lourdusamy, as will be seen also in the later part of this work, will always remain a good friend and benefactor of the Salesians.

7.2.3. Letter of Fr. Dabove to the Auxiliary Bishop

The next correspondence with the Archdiocesan authorities in this connection was that of Fr. Emilio Dabove, the economist of the Salesian Province of Madras. He had come to Bangalore to scout for a suitable place and with the help of the parish priest, had located and bought one at Sannathammanahalli.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* The letter was dated Archbishop's House, 20, Miller's Road, Bangalore – 6, 11th January 1963.

The letter is written from 80-C Broadway, Madras-1 and is dated 30th June 1963.

“My Lord,
I reached here last night and this afternoon I shall go back to my country place. Before leaving I feel I need writing these lines to express my gratitude to Your Excellency for all the understanding, condescension and kindness shown to me when I was up (there) in connection with our foundation at Sannathammanahalli. After saying this, I have not as yet spoken of the help Your Excellency has given ...I cannot express it here. I feel confident that the Salesians will at all times and in all circumstances cooperate with the Pastors of the Diocese. We shall also pray for you, my Lord, that God may grant you all the graces your Lordship needs in discharging your duty. That the duty is heavy, I know. The more therefore, I am pledged to pray for you.
I am also writing to V. Rev. Fr. Gratian⁸⁷. He has been very helpful out of purely genuine good will and I naturally go out in sympathy to him because of the difficulties he had in rendering us the help he did.
Our Provincial is shortly going to Bangalore to meet His Grace and thank him. I have acquainted him with the position and the permission and blessing given by His Grace to our foundation. Needless to say, he was happy about it. I trust it will be possible for him to meet your Lordship.
Craving blessing, I remain,
Yours devotedly in C.J.
(Sd.) Dabove”⁸⁸.

Fr. Dabove is full of praise for the assistance which Fr. Gratian, the parish priest, had rendered him during his visit and says that he was writing to express his gratitude before he moves out to his *country place*, which is a reference to the very extensive farm which the Salesians had at Sagayathottam of which Fr. Dabove was then the rector besides being the provincial economist. The letter is indicative of the good relations which would prevail between the Salesians and the local parish priests and the Archdiocesan authorities in the years to come.

7.2.4. Letter of the Provincial to the Auxiliary Bishop

The next letter of the Provincial is dated 23rd June 1964. This is obviously because in the meantime the required steps of identifying and buying

⁸⁷ Fr. R. P. J Gratian was the parish priest of St. Anthony’s Parish, T.C. Palaya, www.bangalorearchdiocese.com/?pageid=761. (14.9.2018).

⁸⁸ Fr. Dabove, the then Provincial Economist, was also at the same time Rector of Don Bosco, Sagayathottam. Cf *Elenco Generale della Società di S. Francesco di Sales, 1964...*, II, pp. 502 e 510.

the land were completed. This letter is, in fact, a request for the promised formal permission to start a *domus religiosa* in Bangalore and said that he had been faithful to the indications given by Mgr. Lourdasamy in his earlier letter.

“Your lordship,

Some time ago I requested His Grace the Archbishop of Bangalore for a letter permitting us to open a DOMUS RELIGIOSA in the Archdiocese of Bangalore which should be a House of Studies. Your Lordship replied on behalf of His Grace giving a temporary permission and promising regular permission in (the) future.

Your Lordship is aware that we have now purchased a large plot of land at Sannathammanahalli which is away from the city limits in that newly developing area. As we would like to start the work, I ask now Your Lordship to be so kind as to send us a regular letter permitting us to erect a Salesian DOMUS RELIGIOSA in that locality. I shall then be able to send a regular request to Rome for the canonical erection of the house.

Assuring Your Lordship of all our esteem and requesting your paternal blessing I remain,

Your Lordship's obedient Son in O.L.

(Sd.) J. Med

John Med SDB

Salesian Provincial”⁸⁹.

Sannathammanahalli was about 16 kms. from the city centre and was only about 2 kms. from the town of Krishnarajapuram which was on the Old Madras Road and hence well connected by both train and bus services⁹⁰. The extent of the land purchased in the beginning was 35 acres and to these were added 5 more acres, thanks to the considerable help rendered by Fr. Gratian⁹¹.

7.2.5. Auxiliary Bishop to Provincial

The Auxiliary Bishop responded with a formal letter which confirmed the permission given the previous year.

⁸⁹ AAB – SDB, RF -37. Vol. II (1963-1967).

⁹⁰ The area had begun to develop with the setting up of some industrial companies like *The Chemical, Industrial, Pharmaceutical Laboratories* (CIPLA - 1935), *The Hindustan Aircraft Company Limited* (HAL -1940), *The Indian Telephone Industries* (ITI - 1948), and a host of other smaller companies. Today it is well within the city limits and is part of the Bangalore City Corporation.

⁹¹ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, *From the beginning up to june 1975*, p. 1. In the years that followed, the Salesians bought more land from different owners till the total extent of the land in their possession reached about 52 acres and 50 cents.

“Very Rev. and dear Fr. Med,

Sub: Permission to open a «DOMUS RELIGIOSA» at Sannathammanahalli, Bangalore.

I am in receipt of your letter dated 23rd June '64, asking for a formal, regular permission to erect a Salesian «Domus Religiosa» at Sannathammanahalli.

It is true that in answer to your previous letter of 9th January 1963, I wrote to you on 11th January 1963, on behalf of His Grace, the Archbishop, welcoming you to Bangalore and permitting you to have a house of studies here. You were then advised to locate this House outside the city limits. Accordingly, I am glad, you have purchased a plot of land at Sannathammanahalli which is far enough from the present City limits.

Hence, I confirm hereby the permission given last year which you may now consider as definite and formal, and make necessary arrangements with Rome for the Canonical erection of the House.

With all good wishes and special blessings for the success of the project,

Yours devotedly in Our Lord,

Bishop Auxiliary”⁹².

This was incidentally the last letter on the subject written by Fr. John Med as he had by then completed his term as Provincial. However, after a break of about eight months, Fr. Aloysius Di Fiore, the new Provincial, contacted Mgr. D.S. Lourdasamy, who in the meantime, on 7th March 1965, had become the Coadjutor Archbishop of Bangalore.

7.2.6. Correspondence between Fr. Di Fiore and the Coadjutor Archbishop

In his first letter to the new Coadjutor Archbishop of Bangalore, Fr. Di Fiore introduced himself as the successor of Fr. Med, and went on to invite him to lay the foundation-stone of the new building to be constructed.

“Your Grace,

May I introduce myself as the new provincial of the Salesian Province of South India. My predecessor, Fr. J. Med, whom you know, has been sent to Assam as the Novice Master.

My first duty is to thank Your Grace for all the goodness you have shown us and your invaluable help to secure a site in Bangalore for our Theologate. May Almighty God reward you for this act of charity. Rest assured of our daily prayers.

We are planning to lay the Foundation-Stone of our theologate on the 25th of March at 4.00 p.m. Since Archbishop Thomas is not well, I invite Your Grace to perform the ceremony of the blessing and laying of the Foundation-Stone of this institution. As a great Benefactor of ours and the Coadjutor Archbishop of Banga-

⁹² AAB – SDB, RF -37. Vol. II (1963-1967). The letter is dated 3rd July 1964. Cf also ASC F392, letter of Rev. D.S. Lourdasamy, Bishop Auxiliary to Very Rev. Fr. John Med S.D.B. (copy).

lore, You have the first claim to this function. May I hope Your Grace will be able to comply with my request? We shall be immensely happy and grateful if You will accept.

I am sorry I have not yet had the opportunity of meeting Your grace personally; but I hope to do so in the near future and pay my homage in person.

Thanking you most cordially and asking a big Blessing on myself and my work, Devotedly Yours in C.J.

Fr. L. Di Fiore

P.S. I shall be grateful if You will send me an answer to “Salesian House”, Tirupattur, N.A. Dt., where I shall be till 13th inst”⁹³.

The Archbishop responded on 8th March 1965 promising to be present despite his heavy schedule and expressing his hope of meeting Fr. Di Fiore soon.

“I am also very happy to know that the blessing and laying of the foundation-stone for your new Theologate here in Bangalore has been fixed up for the 25th of this month at 4.00 p.m.

Though I have a crowded programme on that day, I shall make myself available to perform the ceremony.

Once again I welcome your congregation to this Archdiocese with open arms and assure you of my prayers and other assistance that is in my power.

Looking forward to the pleasure of meeting you here before long,

I remain,

With all good wishes and a special blessing,
Coadjutor Archbishop of Bangalore”⁹⁴.

As indicated in the post-script of Fr. Di Fiore’s letter, the Archbishop wrote to Salesian House, Tirupattur and when the former reached there, he was pleasantly surprised to find the Archbishop’s letter on his table. Fr. Di Fiore replied immediately expressing his great happiness at getting the latter’s very prompt reply and also giving a hint of the long wait the Salesians had to endure before they could finally come to Bangalore.

“Your Grace,

I was so exceedingly happy when last night I reached Tirupattur and found on my table your kind letter of (the) 8th March.

I have no words to express my gratitude to Your Grace for having accepted to bless the foundation-stone on the 25th of this month at 4.00 p.m. By the way, if Your Grace thinks that 4.30 p.m. would be more convenient, we are still in time to change it. In this case please let me have just a line in reply to Don Bosco Orphanage, Katpadi Extension, N. Arcot Dt., where I shall be till the 15th instant.

⁹³ AAB – SDB, RF -37. Vol. II (1963-1967).

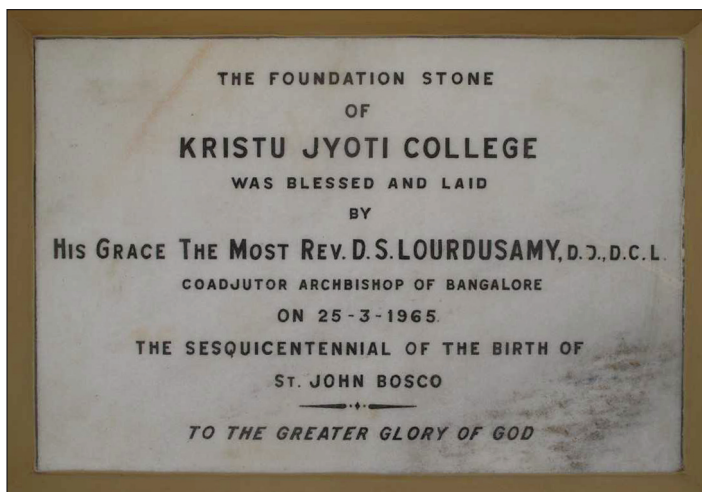
⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

My heartfelt thanks for your words of encouragement and affection. It is so nice to see that we are so welcome to Bangalore, a thing which we could not get for many years...”⁹⁵.

The letter gives evident indications to the fact that the Salesians were indeed happy to have the opportunity to begin their studentate of theology in Bangalore after the decades-long efforts expended to have a presence there.

8. Laying the Foundation-Stone

The foundation-stone of the future studentate of theology was blessed and laid on 25th March 1965 at a function presided over by Mgr. D.S. Lourdusamy, the Coadjutor Archbishop of Bangalore. On that occasion he expressed his joy at having the Salesians in the Archdiocese saying: “I welcome you with open arms!”⁹⁶.



⁹⁵ *Ibid.* The letter is written on the letter-head of Broadway but with the addition, Camp: Salesian House, Tirupattur, N.A. Dt. The letters of Fr. Di Fiore from different places and his requests to the Coadjutor Archbishop to forward his replies to the addresses indicated by him points to the heavy schedule of the Provincial of Madras who had communities in the then states of Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamilnadu besides a community at Negombo, Sri Lanka. The Province will give rise in due course to the Provinces of Bombay (31st January 1972), Bangalore (19th March 1979), Hyderabad (24th April 1992), Tiruchy (25th March 1999), Panjim (15th June 2007) and the Vice-Province of Sri Lanka (15th August 2004).

⁹⁶ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, p. 2.

After the ceremony Fr. James Oreglia⁹⁷, the Secretary of the Province, wrote a letter to the Coadjutor Archbishop thanking him for his kindness and appreciating the generosity shown to the Salesians. The fact that he refers to the new institution as *Sacred Heart College* is significant and indicative of the fact that the name of the institution had not yet been decided upon. The name *Kristu Jyoti College* will be finalised only at a later stage as will be indicated in the course of this paper.

“Your Grace,
Fr. Provincial, Very Rev. Fr. L. Di Fiore, is flying this afternoon to Bombay on his way to Rome.
He wishes to thank Your Grace sincerely for your great kindness to us all and for all the appreciation Your Grace so generously showed of our little work in India. Your Grace will find the Salesians always at your disposal, ready to follow your lead in the work for the salvation of souls.
Fr. Provincial has also directed me to send to Your Grace the enclosed estimate of the Sacred Heart College with request to send it to the Sacred Congregation along with the plans of the new College.
With the deepest sentiments of my personal devotion and gratitude and asking Your Grace’s blessing, I am,
Yours respectfully in C.J.
Fr. James, SDB
Secretary”⁹⁸.

The Coadjutor Archbishop responded on 2nd April ’65.

“Dear Fr. James,
Your letter of 29th April to hand together with the enclosed estimate of costs. When Father di Fiore handed over to me the appeal to Rome for help, I had no time to open the envelope and scrutinise at leisure if all the required papers were there. I had the impression that only the estimate of costs was wanting; but just now I note that a covering letter to H.E. the Internuncio has not been included, Now that Fr. Provincial is not there, you will do well to prepare and sign this letter on his behalf and send it on to me. Therein you should mention the purpose of the appeal for help and request His Excellency to kindly forward it to Rome with his strong recommendation. On receipt of this covering letter from you, I shall forward all the papers to him with my own recommendation...”⁹⁹.

⁹⁷ Fr. James Oreglia was born in Argentina in 1916 and made his first profession in 1933. He was ordained in 1941 and came to India in 1947. He returned to Argentina in 1988 and died there on 15.09.1996 at the age of 80. Cf L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 310.

⁹⁸ AAB – SDB, RF -37. Vol. II (1963-1967). The letter is dated Provincial House, 80-C Broadway, Madras-1, 29th March 1965.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

On receiving this letter, Fr. James forwarded the relevant documents on to His Grace on 5th April 1965 with a note of thanks for “all the paternal kindness used with us”¹⁰⁰.

Thus, the stage was now set for starting the construction and move on with the rest of the work to realise the cherished desire of the Salesians for an adequately furnished and staffed house of theological formation in India and to have a presence in Bangalore.

9. Construction

The plan for the building was drawn up by Fr. Peter Maggioni SDB¹⁰¹ and the construction entrusted to the contractor, Mr. T.J. Thomas, a past pupil, who had earlier seen to the completion of Dharmaram College. The work began almost immediately after the laying of the foundation-stone although there were some hitches which called for a change in the original plan of the building.

9.1. *Change of Plan and the Phased Completion*

The original plan for the building, which appears to have been based on the dormitory model, was altered when it came to be known that GC 19 had taken the decision to provide the students of theology with single rooms¹⁰². Hence, in September 1965, an alternate plan was prepared and the entire construction planned to be completed within a five-year period. However, given the urgency of having to move out of Kotagiri, which had but inadequate facilities for a studentate of theology, it was planned to have the rooms to accommodate the students got ready by June 1967 at the start of the academic year. But seeing that even this plan might not materialise, it was decided to have

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Fr. Peter Maggioni was born in Milan, Italy on 27.03.1909. He came to India in 1933 as a novice and made his profession that same year. He was ordained in 1940 and died in Madras on 22.10.1983 at the age of 74. L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 303; SAS.

¹⁰² Cf ACS 244 (1966) 61-62. This number of the Acts of the Superior Chapter published the Acts of the 19th General Chapter, held in Rome from 8th April to 10th June 1965. Chapter IV of the First Part of the capitular documents deals with the Studentates of Theology. No. 6 of the seven proposals made by the commission (pp. 61-62) reads as follows: “Students of theology should be given individual rooms in view of the quiet indispensable to whoever has the duty of a life of intense study and interior recollection”.

the opening only for the second semester in November although some of the important structures like the College Chapel, the library and the auditorium would not still be ready¹⁰³.

9.2. *The Ecclesial Environment of the Theologate*¹⁰⁴

At the time of the coming of the Salesians to Sannathammanahalli, there were but two ecclesiastical institutions in the immediate locality viz., the parish of St. Anthony and the convent of the Sisters of St. Anne, Bangalore, founded by Mgr. Étienne-Louis Charbonnaux in 1859¹⁰⁵. The parish also had a piece of land in the Kowdanahally Village and another at Basvanapura.

9.2.1. St. Anthony's Parish and St. Anne's Convent

Sannathammanahalli, which was mentioned by Fr. Med as the place where the Salesians had bought land to build their studentate of theology, will, in later years, be referred to as Thambuchettyur and still later as Thambuchettypalaya (T.C. Palaya) a name which it still holds. The name was changed from Sannathammanahalli to Thambuchettyur to honour Sir Trichinopoly Rayalu Arokiasamy Thambuchetty¹⁰⁶, a Christian, who made a grant of the village to the Christians of the locality about the year 1890. In addition, in 1900, Sir Thambuchetty gave to the Mission the *Seminary Villa*¹⁰⁷ and donated a substantial portion of the total of more than 38 acres to the Sisters of St. Anne, Bangalore, for building a convent, a school and a dispensary¹⁰⁸ al-

¹⁰³ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ It is felt that a rather detailed description of the location of the Theologate within the parish limits of St. Anthony's Church, Thambuchettypalaya is necessary in order the better to understand the general narration.

¹⁰⁵ Cf https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Étienne-Louis_Charbonnaux. (29.3.2019) for information on Mgr. Charbonnaux and on his founding the Congregation of St. Anne, Bangalore.

¹⁰⁶ After the Rendition of Mysore which took place in 1881, T.R.A. Thumboo Chetty (1837-1907) was nominated ex-officio Senior Member of Maharaja Chamarajendra Wadiyar's Council and then was appointed one of the three judges of the Chief Court of Mysore and went on eventually to become its Chief Judge in July 1890 thus becoming the first Indian to hold the title. When Sir K. Seshadri Iyer was the Diwan of Maharaja Chamaraja Wadiyar and during the minority of his successor Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV when his mother Kempa Nanjammani Vani Vilasa Sannidhana acted as the Regent, Thumboo Chetty officiated as the Diwan on five occasions (1890, 1892, 1893, 1897 and 1900); <https://sites.google.com/site/thumboochetty/>. (31.3.2019).

¹⁰⁷ The present site of the school – a field of 375 ft. by 189 ft. AAB Section: City Parishes (CP) file no. 46: St. Anthony's Church, Thambuchettyur.

¹⁰⁸ The land is in Survey No. 48/5, 49/5, 51.

though the ownership remained with Mgr. Basl̄e of the Diocese of Mysore¹⁰⁹. However, since at the time of the registration of the land, the Sisters of St. Anne, Bangalore, were under the direction of the Good Shepherd Sisters, the said property was registered in the name of Sr. Paula of the Good Shepherd Convent¹¹⁰.

In 1902, a small mud church was built in this land and in 1906, the care of the Christians was entrusted to the Mysore Mission of the *Missions Étrangères de Paris* (MEP) or the Paris Foreign Missionary Society as it was known in the English-speaking world. In 1911, a new church was built by the MEP missionaries¹¹¹ and a presbytery added in 1925.

9.2.2. Lands at Basvanapura and Kowdanahally

At Basvanapura, situated about 2 Kms. from T.C. Palaya, the parish had a burial ground for the use of the Catholics of the Basvanapura and Seegahalli villages¹¹².

¹⁰⁹ Mgr. Augustin-François Basl̄e MEP was the Bishop of Mysore from 1910-1915. The said lands being in the name of the Bishop of Mysore and not under that of the Archbishop of Bangalore, has to be understood from the fact that the Diocese of Mysore was the “Mother Diocese” from which was born the Diocese of Bangalore which, eventually with its growth and pre-eminence at different levels, became the Archdiocesan See. In fact, Mysore was made a Vicariate Apostolic on 1st September 1850 with Mgr. Étienne- Louis Charbonnaux as the first Vicar Apostolic (1850-1876). With the establishment of the Indian Hierarchy in 1886 it was made a diocese. Cf Thomas ANCHUKANDAM, *Catholic Revival in India in the 19th Century. Role of Mgr. Clement Bonnard (1796-1861)*. Bangalore, Kristu Jyoti Publications 2006, p. 542. The Diocese of Bangalore was formed by the bifurcation of Mysore in 1940 and eventually became the Metropolitan See on 19th September 1953, with the decree *Mutant Res (Things are changing)*; www.bangalorearchdiocese.com/?page_id=792. (15.9.2018).

¹¹⁰ AAB – CP- File no. 46 St. Anthony’s Church, Thambuchettyur. Declaration signed by P. Arokiaswamy, Archbishop of Bangalore and by John D’Souza, Notary Public. Cf also letter of Sr. Anne Josepha, Mother Superior of St. Anne’s Convent, Thambuchettyur dated 13.7.1967.

¹¹¹ The official site of St. Anthony’s Church, T.C. Palaya refers to Fr. Gabier MEP as the one who constructed the church in 1911. However, since such a name does not appear in the Index of the MEP missionaries who worked in the Mysore Mission, the reference could be surmised to be to Fr. Théodore GERBIER MEP who died in Bangalore on 5.7.1911. Cf www.oocities.org/athens/2960/mep2.htm. (28.3.2019).

¹¹² The cemetery measured 4 guntas (10 cents) and was situated in S. No. 16/13 of Basvanapura Village which at the time was an assessed wasteland measuring 8 acres, 22 guntas, karab 6 acres 20 guntas, nett 2 acres 2 guntas with an assessment of Rs. 1-8-0. Seegahalli, was a gomal (free pasturing) land. Cf *Extract of the notes prepared by Mr. I Anthony Swamy, the then District Survey Officer, Bangalore District, Bangalore and submitted to His Grace Dr. Thomas Pote (tha) camury, Archbishop of Bangalore on 20th June 1955*. AAB Section: City parishes (CP) File no. 46, St. Anthony’s Church Thambuchettyur. It is also to be noted that when searching through AAB file Our Lady of Lourdes Church – CP- 43 for the purpose of writing this paper, no documents other than the sales deeds were found.

On 1st Oct. 1965 two acres of land for the future church in the Kowdanahally village, Krishnarajapuram Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, was purchased by the Archdiocese for building a Church, schools, dispensary etc. to benefit the people of Kowdanahally as well as the surrounding villages. The Archdiocese placed this newly acquired property under the jurisdiction of St. Anthony's Parish, T.C. Palaya and in due course the Holy Family Church, Ramamurthynagar will be erected there with the collaboration of the Salesians as will be seen in the later pages of this narration¹¹³.

The Salesians, the second religious congregation to come to the area, will not only be a witness to the process of development which will be realized there in the years that followed but will also contribute significantly and in different ways to that development.

10. The Immediate Preparations

In July 1967, in order to speed up the work of construction, Fr. Di Fiore, the Provincial, asked Fr. Channoux¹¹⁴ and Bro Tofoli¹¹⁵, to go to Bangalore. It was also decided to hold the annual retreat of the year and the meeting of the rectors in the new building. On 14th September, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Fr. Di Fiore blessed the temporary chapel and celebrated for the first time the Holy Eucharist in the campus. It was in effect a thanksgiving Eucharist and Fr. Di Fiore thanked the Lord for all His many graces and for the work that had been realized and invoked His blessings on all those who had helped to realize the project¹¹⁶.

On the last day of the Rectors' Meeting held from 15th to 17th September, the Book for the Chronicles of the house was solemnly handed over to Rev. Fr. Anthony Mampra, the first Rector of Kristu Jyoti College¹¹⁷.

¹¹³ AAB Holy Family Church Ramamoorthynagar (Ramamurthynagar) File CP- 43 which has the Property Document, Trust Deed and also the estimates of the church which was then put at Rs. 1, 35, 899.46.

¹¹⁴ Fr. Raimondo Chanoux was born at Pon-Bozet, Valle d'Aosta on 23.1.1915. He came to India in 1936 as a novice and made his first profession in 1937. He was ordained on 12.12.1947. He returned to Italy in 1985 and died at Ivrea on 19.10.2003 at the age of 88. L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 306; SAS.

¹¹⁵ Bro. Giovanni Toffoli was born at Sernaglia della Battaglia, Italy, on 26.2.1915. He came to India as a novice in 1937 and made his profession in 1938. He died at Tirupattur on 26.11.2002 at the age of 87. L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 307; SAS.

¹¹⁶ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

The name of the institution was also discussed at this meeting and from among the many names that were suggested, the final choice was between “Viswajyoti” and “Kristu Jyoti”. Eventually, it was “Kristu Jyoti” (Christ the Light of the World) which was preferred by the majority¹¹⁸.

11. Canonical Erection and Critical Views

After the required correspondence between the Provincial and the Major Superiors in Rome, Kristu Jyoti College was canonically erected and that in an atmosphere of contestation regarding the grandiose structure and conveniences which quite some thought to be not consistent with what was up to then considered the accepted way of forming future priests.

11.1. *Towards Canonical Erection*

Seeing that things were proceeding according to plan, Fr. Di Fiore wrote to the Rector Major, Fr. Luigi Ricceri, saying that he desired to have the inauguration of the new theologate at Bangalore on 21st June 1967. He also said that he was enclosing the permission for the same of the “Auxiliary Bishop of Bangalore” since the Archbishop was no more in a position to govern the Archdiocese. He further added that he hoped to have the decree of erection in time so that he could proceed without any problems¹¹⁹.

Subsequently, the Rector Major wrote to the Holy Father requesting permission for the canonical erection of a salesian house at Sannathammanahalli, Bangalore, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and belonging to the Salesian Province of Saint Thomas the Apostle of Madras – India. He also clarified the scope of the to-be-erected institution when he said:

“The above-mentioned house will be meant primarily as a studentate of theology for those aspiring to be Salesian priests in India, and for other works in conformity with the Salesian Constitutions”.

He also added that the Provincial of Madras had already got the permission of the local ordinary¹²⁰.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ ASC F392, letter of Fr. Luigi Di Fiore, Provincial, dated 27 April 1967, to the Rector Major, dated Salesian Provincial, 80-C. Broadway, Madras-1, 27 April 1967. Di Fiore states his desire to have the inauguration of the new theologate in Bangalore on 21st June 1967.

¹²⁰ ASC F392, letter of Don Luigi Ricceri (in Italian) to the Holy Father dated Torino, 2 maggio 1967.

The Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide gave its *nulla osta* on 8th May 1967¹²¹ as did the Sacred Congregation for the Religious two days later¹²². After having got the necessary permissions, the Rector Major effected the canonical erection of the new studentate of theology on 24th May 1967¹²³.

The stage was thus set for a well- planned studentate of theology for India after the very arduous experiences of the previous thirty years of what could be considered a tenuous existence in different places and under varying satisfactory conditions.

11.2. Differences of Views

Already during the meeting of the Rectors of the Province held in the building under construction (15th-17th September 1967), when most of them were having the first glimpse of the structure, there were differences of views vis-à-vis the structure and its intended goal.

Some felt that training future priests in “too convenient” a setting might make it difficult for them to adapt to the demands of the challenging life of a missionary. However, there were others who commented on the need to provide the necessary facilities “in keeping with the times”. They also felt that the easier access to professors and libraries and varied forms of organized apostolic and cultural activities available in Bangalore, together with the tranquility of the single rooms would give the students a better priestly and religious formation in keeping with the needs of a post-Conciliar Church¹²⁴.

Besides the Salesian circles, the majestic stone structure out there in that underdeveloped area of Bangalore, soon became a much talked about subject also in the ecclesiastical circles of the time with many considering it a “counter-witness” while at least an equal number believed it to be “futuristic!” The fact remains, however, that fifty years ago, with Bangalore being far from what it has become today, the spacious and beautiful building with individual rooms meant to serve as a “seminary” could not stand unnoticed or escape comments.

Whatever the comments and whoever the persons making them, the Salesian studentate did what it was most accustomed to do for the past 30

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, Note of the Under Secretary of the Propaganda Fide to the Holy Father, Prot. No. 2259/67. Dated 8th May 1967 (copy).

¹²² *Ibid.*, copy of the letter of the *Sacra Congregatio de Religiosis*, prot. N. 12893/67.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, Prot. N. 124/67, dated 24 May 1967, the decree of the canonical erection of the house by the Rector Major.

¹²⁴ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, pp. 3-4.

years: it moved on – from its five-year huddled existence at Kotagiri to the more inviting ambience of Kristu Jyoti College.

12. A New Beginning in Bangalore

On 23rd October after the first-term exams of the academic year 1967-68, the shift from Kotagiri to Bangalore was initiated. The community left in two batches. The first batch of 16 brothers from the Northern provinces, with Fr. Paul Puthanangady leading them, left at 2.30 p.m. and after visiting the houses of Yercaud, Tirupattur and Katpadi along the way, reached Kristu Jyoti College at 8.30 p.m. on 26th¹²⁵.

The second batch, consisting of all the rest, started the trip at 7.30 a.m. on 24th and before heading out of Kotagiri went to bid a final farewell to all the close acquaintances and friends at Kotagiri, passed through Wellington to meet the Provincial, who had just concluded his spiritual retreat, as well as the Salesian Sisters. They also paid a visit to the Bishop of Ooty, under whose jurisdiction Kotagiri lay, to bid adieu to His Lordship and proceeded to Mysore where they reached at about 8.30 p.m. and lodged for the night. The next day, 25th October, after Mass in the Cathedral and after having visited the places of interest in Mysore like the zoo, museum, palaces etc. the group reached Kristu Jyoti College late in the evening. Before retiring to bed they went to the chapel, to say a hearty “Thank you” to the Lord and to sing the “Salve Regina” before retiring for the night¹²⁶.

The next day, after the arrival of the first batch, once the compline was prayed, the first official goodnight to the community was given by the Rector. The Rector, Fr. Anthony Mampra’s words were significant and very apt on the occasion:

“Our beautiful door at the entrance serves two purposes – to let people come in and enable them to go out. During the years of theology we ought to remember (that) we will be going out, our entrance has the only purpose of going out to our future fields of mission and preparing ourselves for it!”¹²⁷.

The first community of Kristu Jyoti College consisted of 10 staff members (8 priests and two coadjutor brothers) and 64 students (4 in the fourth year,

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4, entry of 23.10.1967.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, entry of 24 & 25.10.1967.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5, entry of 26.10.1967.

21 in the third, 24 in the second and 15 in the first) belonging to the then three provinces of India (11 from Guwahati, 9 from Calcutta and 44 from Madras). The fact that all the professors and all the students with the sole exception of Cl. Joseph Forte, were Indians, was clearly indicative of the dynamics of change that the Salesian Congregation in India was living through¹²⁸.

Together they set about the task of creating an ambience which would help prepare all those who would enter the theologate to go out to their future fields of mission fully equipped to face the challenges associated with a world, a Church, a Congregation and an India in transition.

13. Blessings and Inaugurations

Due to unavoidable circumstances, the College was blessed twice – once “unofficially” by the Provincial in November 1967 and yet again “officially” in February 1968 by the Archbishop in the presence of Fr. Ricceri. The unofficial blessing took place on account of the fact that the Rector Major could not be present in November 1967 when the second semester was starting and there was the need to inaugurate the building before the classes could begin. Since the date of the Asian Congress of the Salesians within a couple of months was already announced, the confreres were sure that a more elaborate inauguration could be held in a couple of months.

13.1. “Unofficial Inauguration”

On 3rd November at 4.30 p.m., there took place the formal reception for the Provincial who was coming on his first official visit to the community and for the “unofficial inauguration” of the “domus religiosa”. Present on the oc-

¹²⁸ The staff, both teaching and non-teaching, consisted of the following: Fr. Anthony Mampra, Rector and Professor of Moral Theology and Pastoral Theology; Fr. Thomas Thayil, Prefect, Professor of Church History & Patrology; Fr. Paul Puthanangady, Catechist, Professor of liturgy, dogma; Fr. Mathew Maruvathrail, Prefect of Studies, Professor of dogma; Fr. Longinus Nazareth, Councillor, Librarian, Professor of Sacred Scripture; Fr. Sylvanus Lyngdoh, Confessor, Professor of Scripture; Fr. Thomas Pazhayampallil, Confessor, Professor of Moral Theology, Canon Law; Bro. John Toffoli, in-charge of the farm and Bro. Mathew Mulangananickal, (M.O.) *factotum*. AKJCB- Chronicles, vol. I, pp. 5 & 6, entry of 26.10.1967. The first and only non-Indian teaching member of the staff of Kristu Jyoti would be Rev. Fr. Orestes Paviotti, an Italian, belonging to the Gauhati Province, who joined the staff as Confessor and Professor of Sacred Scripture in the academic year 1969-1970. He went back to Mawlai when the theologate there was reopened in 1976. Cf College Calendar 1969-1970 in ASC F392.

casation were the Parish Priest, the Rector of St. Peter's Seminary, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese, the Vice-Rector of Dharmaram College and representatives of the Redemptorists, Holy Cross and Carmelites (Carmelaram). The inauguration was followed by a tea party, benediction service and a variety entertainment. The significance of the presence of these eminent persons is to be taken note of, as *Kristu Jyoti* will, especially in the years immediately following its foundation, have a very collaborative relationship with the other religious congregations in the city as well as with the local church.

13.2. *Visit by the General Councillor for Formation*

Fr. Archimede Pianazzi¹²⁹, the General Councillor for Formation, came for a visit on 12th February, 1968, about a week before the Rector Major was to arrive for the official inauguration. During his stay, he gave two goodnights and a conference to the staff and students which stressed the importance of intellectual formation for a priest and made reference to the actual situation of the Church and of the Congregation.

During the conference for the staff and students at 9.30 a.m. on 13th February, Fr. Pianazzi spoke of the spirit of "triumphalism" and of "anti-triumphalism" which was rampant everywhere, including in religious institutes. He exhorted his listeners to avoid both these extremes. Then he passed on to the "crisis" affecting the world, the Church and the Congregation and said:

"(the crisis) should not frighten us because in every crisis there is an opportunity and because crisis is a sign of life. We should welcome changes that are necessary but not make changes on our own initiative. The old-timers see a heresy in every change but the «moderns» deny the very idea of heresy all together! In our attempt to seize hold of the new we should not throw overboard everything that is «old» or everything that has been accepted so far. The Church is still the Church of God. The Congregation is still the one founded by Don Bosco and Don Bosco still remains our precious treasure"¹³⁰.

This was obviously a reference to the situation prevailing in the society, the Church and the Congregation to which reference has been made in the

¹²⁹ Fr. Archimede Pianazzi was born at Zocca, Italy on 30.11.1906. He made his first profession in 1923 and came to India in 1925. He was ordained in 1930 and eventually became the Provincial of Calcutta in 1950. In 1951, he was transferred to Madras as its Provincial. In 1958 he was elected Prefect General of Studies and Member of the Superior Council and in 1965 as the Councillor for Formation. He died in Rome on 10.12.2000 at the age of 94. L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 298; SAS.

¹³⁰ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, pp. 25-26.

earlier part of this article. Then he went on to speak of the *Biographical Memoirs* and asserted:

“It is a historic[al] work, though not written according to the laws of critical history”¹³¹.

Later in the evening, during his goodnight talk, Fr. Pianazzi spoke of the prevalence of “groupism” in every sphere of human interaction:

“But every group must have laws in order to ensure success and development. This is true also of the Salesian Congregation. It too has its laws and rules. These rules no individual may disobey or attempt to change on his own authority. A change can be brought about only through the legal channels; otherwise he will only be attempting the life of the group¹³². But if the individual insists in having his own way, (if) he wants to make changes as he likes, then he must get out of the group, otherwise he will destroy the group”¹³³.

This was yet again a reflection of the difficult situation in which the Congregation found itself as it was preparing itself for the Special General Chapter and the differences of views on various issues, which were becoming increasingly evident. In fact, he exhorted the community to prepare for the Chapter through prayer and by making suitable suggestions¹³⁴. The next day, 14th February, at 7.30 a.m. Fr. Pianazzi left for Yercaud to visit the novices and the students of philosophy¹³⁵.

13.3. *Official Inauguration – Setting Priorities*

The “official inauguration”, despite some lack of clarity in the beginning¹³⁶, took place on 24th February 1968 on the occasion of the Asian Con-

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹³² The text is quoted as it is entered in the chronicles. What is intended must be that he will be destroying the group.

¹³³ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, p. 26.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ AAB – SDB, RF 37, vol. II (1963-1967). Letter of Fr. Mampra, Rector Kristu Jyoti College to Very Rev. and dear Fr. Aloysius (it is to Fr. Di fiore) dated 2.11.1967: “One of our fathers who met His Grace, the Archbishop in Rome, wrote to me that His Grace was under the impression that we will be having the official inauguration of the studentate on 21st December. Fr. Provincial had agreed with His Grace on that date, I believe. But since the Rector Major and 3 major superiors from Turin were due to visit us in the month of February, they had decided to postpone the inauguration for that occasion. I was sure Fr. Provincial had informed His Grace about that. In case there was any oversight, when you write to His Grace, please mention it so that His Grace may not cancel any appointment on 21st...”.

gress of the Salesian Bishops, Provincials and Vice-Provincials along with the Rector Major, Rev. Fr. Luigi Ricceri and some members of the Superior Council¹³⁷.

13.3.1. Arrival of the Rector Major

Fr. Ricceri, had scheduled his trip to India in connection with the Inter-Provincial Congress for Asia which was decided to be held at the newly built and convenient Kristu Jyoti College immediately after its inauguration. This was also an opportunity for the Rector Major to evaluate the situation for himself and to exhort both the staff and the student community to live up to the expectations of the Church and the Congregation and that in line with the vision laid out in the documents of Vatican II.

13.3.2. Welcoming the Rector Major

The chronicle of the house describes the arrival of the Rector Major at 2.30 pm on 19th February in the following words:

“2.30 p.m. Very Rev. Fr. Rector Major drives into the campus accompanied by his own secretary, the Provincials of Madras and Japan and the Rector of Don Bosco Matunga. The Rector Major is garlanded and greeted by the college band and welcomed by Fr. Rector in the name of the institution. Replying to the speech, Fr. Rector Major expressed his immense joy in being able to visit the institutions of India. But then he says: “It is not the external buildings that I am come to admire but you, my dear confreres and sons”¹³⁸.

After the personal introductions and the refreshments that followed, in order not to tire out the visitors, no other event was scheduled for the day till evening, when the Rector Major gave the goodnight.

13.3.3. Initial Exhortations of the Rector Major

During his stay at the College, the Rector Major addressed the community on several occasions and referred to the context of the meeting for which he had come to Bangalore as well as the importance of the theological formation to be imparted by the new institution.

¹³⁷ ASC F392, has a photograph of the bishops and the provincials of the Orient around the Rector Major during the Congress held at Kristu Jyoti College in 1968.

¹³⁸ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, pp. 27-28, entry of 19.2.1968.

In the evening of 19th February, addressing the community during the goodnight talk he said:

“As one of you put it, my presence in your midst is a dream realized. It is like the dreams Don Bosco had of India – dreams which are full realities today. We have chosen India for this conference not only because India is the geographical centre of Asia but it is also the centre of Salesian activity in Asia. In India we chose Bangalore as the venue because this is a studentate of theology. Theologates are not problems for the Congregation but they are its glory, its future, its hope. The conference to be held here is very very important for the future of the Congregation especially in Asia, in India. As we shall be supported by the rich experience of our revered bishops and provincials, we also request your cooperation, chiefly in the form of valuable prayers”¹³⁹.

Concluding the goodnight, the Rector Major said that he was looking forward with joy to concelebrating the Eucharist on the morrow.

On 20th February, concelebrating with three bishops and 30 priests, the Rector Major preached the homily during which he addressed himself mainly to the participants of the meeting.

“You are gathered here from all the leading nations of Asia in order to take part in a conference that will exert an influence on the entire Salesian world, but particularly the confreres and institutions in the Asian continent. Of John the Baptist we read: “He was not the light, but only a witness to speak for the light”. This indeed is our mission – a witness to speak for the Light. Let us be witnesses wherever we may be, in our schools, parishes, clubs and oratories. Every Salesian house must be a home, a family, it shall be so if we have love one for another, if we practice charity. Today as we celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, let us pray that our conference may bear abundant fruits; let us also pray that our institutions be real homes, sanctuaries of love”¹⁴⁰.

In the evening, concluding the well-prepared academy, complete with a Naga Dance and an Indian Orchestra – indications of cultural adaptation – which won the praise of all the visitors, the Rector Major lauded the talents that he saw displayed on the stage:

“Wonderful talents I see here. But remember they must be channelled aright. Music, art, painting are all means of apostolate for the Salesian. They will prove very useful wherever you may be posted. Hence, such talents must be cultivated as much as possible. But do not forget: your first duty is and should be study and personal formation. That is the most important and most necessary. Next to that, all other talents. Congratulations and thank you”¹⁴¹.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29, entry of 19.2.1968.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30, entry of 20.2.1968.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31, entry of 20.2.1968.

Fr. Scrivo, the Councillor for Youth Ministry, who gave the goodnight after the night prayers which followed the academy, himself exhorted the gathering, as true Salesians, to nurture a genuine love and concern for youth.

“To be a Salesian priest means to be a priest of the young. As the youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow we must strain every nerve, undergo any sacrifice in order to train and educate the young according to the spirit and system of Don Bosco, our Father and Founder. ...The Church needs the Youth and the Youth needs the Church!”¹⁴².

At 11.30 a.m. on 22nd February, the Rector Major, when addressing the staff and students of the College told them:

“You are the Congregation of tomorrow, you are the cynosure of all eyes, the centre of attention and anxiety. Take to heart the renewal (rinnovamento) of the Council and be interiorly renewed. Strive to be essentially priests, friends of souls. Be real men of maturity, not trying to destroy everything of the past, not discussing everything, not believing only in your opinion. Do not think you can solve all problems, even those laboriously tackled by the Council and the Chapter. Learn to listen. Try to have a serene and respectful attitude towards the solutions of the Council. Remember, maturity is not registered in the birth certificate. Be detached from earthly things. Live supernaturally “invisibile tamquam videns...” (= as seeing the invisible). Study hard. Don Bosco was a man of study. It is the 8th sacrament of the priests... prepare yourself to work for youth, not only to instruct them, but to educate them”¹⁴³.

13.3.4. Luncheon at the Archbishop’s House

At mid-day on 24th February, the Rector Major, bishops, members of the General Council and the provincials participated in a luncheon hosted by the Archbishop. It was an official and meticulously planned event with the table marked with the names of all the dignitaries¹⁴⁴. After this gesture of cordiality and esteem on the part of His Grace for the dignitaries come together from different parts of Salesian Asia, the group returned to the College to prepare for the official inauguration planned for the evening.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 32, entry of 22.2.1968.

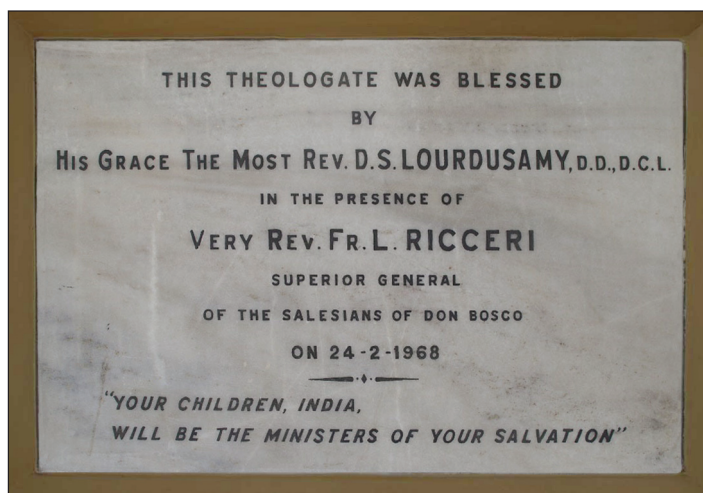
¹⁴⁴ The dignitaries in order of importance as given in the file were: 1. ABp. D. S. Lourdasamy, 2. V. Rev. Fr. Ricceri; 3. Abp. Mark Gopu, 4. Bishop Ferrando, 5. Bishop Morrow, 6. Bishop Carretto, 7. Bishop Marengo, 8. Bishop David, 9. Bishop D’Rosario, 10. Rev. Fr. Pianazzi (Major Superior), 11. Rev. Fr. Scrivo (Major Superior), 12. Rev. Fr. B. Tohill (Major Superior), 13. Rev. Fr. Dell’Angelo (Provincial), 14. Rev. Fr. Jellici (Provincial), 15. Rev. Fr. Cassarotti (Provincial), 16. Rev. Fr. Di Fiore (Provincial), 17. Rev. Fr. Cogliandro (Provincial), 18. Rev. Fr. Massimino (Provincial), 19. Rev. Fr. Stroschio (Provincial), 20. Rev. Fr. Ruzzedu (Provincial), 21. Rev. Fr. Mampra (Local Rector). AAB, RF 37, vol. III, (1968-1975).

14. Blessing and Official Inaugural Function

The much-awaited official inauguration and blessing of the College by the Archbishop took place at 5 p.m before a sizeable gathering of priests, religious, friends and well-wishers. The ceremony started in the lobby of the College and began with a para-liturgical inaugural function which included the lighting of the *Kuthuvilakku*¹⁴⁵. In the homily, which followed the veneration of the Bible with garland, flowers and light in the traditional Indian way and the celebration of the Word of God, the Archbishop dwelt primarily on “Kristu Jyoti”, the name of the College

“God is Light. The first thing He created is Light. Christ, His Son is Light. He Himself said: “I am the Light of the World. With Christ, the Church too is Light; and so is every Christian”¹⁴⁶.

The Prelate concluded his homily, praying that the students formed in Kristu Jyoti College may be true lights, in word and deed, to thousands, both far and near.



¹⁴⁵ The traditional sacred oil-lamp made of bronze which is lighted at the beginning of any function as a symbolic invocation of the divine. This was also a visible sign of inculturation and was doubly symbolic given the name of the institution viz., Kristu Jyoti = Christ the Light.

¹⁴⁶ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, p. 34, entry of 24.2.1968.

The actual blessing of the College which followed was done by all the bishops present on the occasion with each blessing the area assigned to him¹⁴⁷. The hour-long function being concluded, all the invitees gathered for a tea-party. During the tea-party, the Archbishop spoke yet again, this time on a more personal note:

“We are glad to welcome Very Rev. Fr. Ricceri, the Rector Major, into our midst today. I have known Fr. Ricceri already in the synod¹⁴⁸. He was one of the ten elected Superiors General, and that out of hundreds of others. This shows the tremendous trust that was placed in him. We were good friends at the synod and am very glad to welcome him to my Diocese and with him all other Salesians especially the Bishops... We have been acquainted with one another in the Council and also on other occasions. They have been very good and kind to me, considering me as one of their own brothers. I heartily welcome them, my brethren in the episcopate. I give them freedom to do whatever they want in my diocese, of course, sin excepted! Next, I extend a hearty welcome to all the Provincials present here”¹⁴⁹.

Before concluding, the Archbishop praised the staff and students of the College for the marvellous help they were rendering to the various parishes in the diocese and thanked them saying: “*I thank them all for their cooperation and collaboration*”¹⁵⁰.

15. Farewell to the Rector Major

The Inter-Provincial Congress for Asia concluded on 25th morning. During the concelebrated Eucharist, the Rector Major, in his homily made reference also to the Centenary Celebrations of the First Missionary Expedition of the Salesians and said:

“This is your centenary in a very special way. The missions of Assam are among the very biggest of the Congregation. Remember, when Don Bosco thought of going to the missions, the country that was uppermost in his mind was India... The ultimate end of all our apostolate should be “that all may arrive at the full knowledge and acceptance of Christ”¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34, entry of 24.2.1968.

¹⁴⁸ An obvious reference to Vatican II.

¹⁴⁹ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, pp. 34-35, entry of 24.2.1968.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35, entry of 24.2.1968.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

In the afternoon there was a solemn lunch hosted to bid farewell to the Rector Major and the other dignitaries. During lunch short farewell speeches were made by Rev. Fr. Alfred Cogliandro¹⁵², and Mgr. Ferrando, Bishop of Shillong, in which they thanked the Rector Major and all those responsible for the Inter-Provincial Congress, the hospitality etc. In his speech¹⁵³, the Rector Major, described the days spent at Kristu Jyoti College “as days of toil, but also days of comfort and consolation” and added:

“My special thanks to the bishops. I was immensely edified by their example. I feel very small before them. They are a glory to the Congregation. In a very special way I thank Mgr. Ferrando. He is not only a good Salesian bishop but he is also an orator and a writer. I have read some of his articles in the Salesian Bulletin. «If ideas have legs, I should say his ideas have ‘motors’. We are very grateful to him for all the fine sentiments of affection and love he expressed in his speech. Thanks to all other revered Bishops too... In a particular way thanks to the Provincial of this Province, the Rector of this house and the whole community of Kristu Jyoti College. We have enjoyed our stay here in the pleasant company of the clerics. This theologate is one of the best in the Congregation. Some suggested that we shift the Mother House to Bangalore! We would like to show the students our gratitude in a very concrete and precise manner. You are allowed to go for the World Fair at Madras. And now do not forget to apply yourselves to your study. That is of the utmost importance... I repeat what I said once before», You are not a problem to the Congregation- no, you are the centre of attention and interest. Cooperate with your superiors, correspond to their care, and measure up to their expectations.

It is time for us to depart. Every departure is death in miniature. We leave, but we shall not forget you. Pray for us... Goodbye”¹⁵⁴.

Later in the day, at 3.25 p.m., the Rector Major, accompanied by Rev. Fr. Bernard Tohill, Councillor for the Missions¹⁵⁵, and Rev. Fr. Provincial, left for Tirupattur.

¹⁵² Fr. Cogliandro was born in Italy in 1911 and came to India in 1932. He made his first profession in 1933 and was ordained in 1943 in the internment camp. He was the novice master at Kotagiri (1947-1950) before he was nominated Provincial of the Province of San Francisco, USA, in 1950. Later he went to the Philippines where he was made Provincial in 1964. He died in the Philippines on 11.9.1992 at the age of 81. Cf L. KUMPILUVELIL - C. PANACKEL, *A Journey with the Young...*, p. 302; J. THEKKEDATH, *History of Christianity in India...*, II, pp. 968, 1219.

¹⁵³ AKJCB – Chronicles, vol. I, p. 36, entry of 26.2.1968.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁵⁵ Fr. Bernard Tohill, was born at Antrim, Belfast, Ireland on 12.8.1919. He made his first profession on 29.8.1937 at Beckford, England, on 29.8.1937. He went as a missionary to the Chinese Province (CIN) in 1940 and was ordained in Shanghai on 1.7.1948. He was the General Councillor for the Missions for a six-year term (1965-1971). He died in Hong Kong on 21.12.2010 at the age of 91 – SAS.

Thus was concluded the visit of the Rector Major and the inauguration of the College. Fr. Ricceri, was but only the first among the several other Rectors Major, who, during the course of their term, would visit and interact with the students and the staff. The conclusion of the official inauguration of the College will also be the beginning of a series of meetings for various groups which would take place at Kristu Jyoti College in the years that followed.

16. Completing the Structure

Although the official blessing and the inaugural function were gone through, the structure of the College was not yet complete as the College Chapel, the library and the auditorium were yet to be realized. The work on these were carried on and will be completed only about three years later.

16.1. *College Chapel and the Library*

The foundation-stone of the College Chapel was laid at 5 p.m. on 24th Feb. 1968, immediately after the official inauguration of the College. This was done before a packed crowd of priests, religious, friends and well-wishers¹⁵⁶. When the Chapel was completed in 1971, although the solemn blessing was fixed for 28th January 1971, it had to be postponed to Ash Wednesday, 24th February¹⁵⁷. Finally, the actual blessing of the chapel and along with it that of the library took place on Tuesday 23rd February 1971. The entry in the chronicles of the house for the day reads as follows:

“A Red letter day marking the completion of the building of this institution and the consecration of the Chapel. At. 4.30 p.m. His Grace, Archbishop Lourduwamy, commenced the ceremony in the old chapel from where the Congregation went in procession to the new Church. The ceremony went off very well to the admiration of the Archbishop himself and all those present. The ceremony got over at 7.20 p.m.

This was followed by the blessing of the library block by His Grace Archbishop Hubert Rozario sdb, who by happy coincidence was in Bangalore and came over for the occasion.

At 8 p.m. there was a buffet dinner on our lawn between the A and B blocks... there were as many as 200 people in all, mainly priests and religious...

¹⁵⁶ AKJCB, vol. I, p. 33, entry of 24.2.1968.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, entry of 13th January 1971, p. 171. It reads as follows: “Fr. Rector together with Fr. Paul visits the Archbishop to arrange the postponement of the date of consecration of our chapel. Eventually changed from January 28th to Ash Wednesday, Feb. 24th”.

Towards the end Fr. Di Fiore made a very touching speech tracing back the history of this institution and thanking nominating those who helped in its establishment. The new provincial, Fr. P.C. Thomas¹⁵⁸ spoke next, warmly thanking Fr. Di Fiore and his collaborators down the years. He ended by exhorting the students to make full use of the facilities provided therein¹⁵⁹.

The College Chapel, in keeping with the name of the College itself, was dedicated to Christ, the Light of the World.

16.2. *College Auditorium*

The College auditorium, although still incomplete, was used for the first time on 30th January 1970 for the cultural programme on the eve of the Feast of St. John Bosco. Children from the Indian Telephone Industries (ITI) and parish oratories¹⁶⁰ made up the greater part of the audience. On the next day, a public entertainment was held in the auditorium for a group of 250 invited guests from the neighbourhood and from the city¹⁶¹.

For the Feast of Don Bosco, several parish priests were invited for a special festive lunch. The entertainment in the evening, for the invited guests and representatives of the seminaries proved to be quite a success. When the show ended at 9.45 p.m. refreshments were provided and, given the lateness of the hour, the jeep and the car of the College made a trip to ITI colony ferrying some of the guests¹⁶².

With the construction of the structures completed and inaugurated, with a qualified staff in place and with clear authoritative orientations given, Kristu Jyoti College, the studentate of theology for Salesian India, envisaged and realized at a very critical period in history, was set to launch out on its forma-

¹⁵⁸ Fr. Thomas Panakezham (P.C.) was born at Champakulam, Kerala, India, on 27.1.1930. He made his first profession on 24.5.1930 at Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri. He was ordained at "The Retreat", Yercaud on 2.7.1960. After completing his doctorate in theology in Rome, he was made Rector of the studentate of philosophy at Yercaud on 24.5.1970 and on 15.1.1971 nominated Provincial of the Province of St. Thomas the Apostle, Madras. During the 21st General Chapter (1977-1978), he was elected the Regional Councillor for Asia, a post to which he was re-elected twice (1984 & 1990) and remained in office till 22.4.1996. When his third term as General Councillor was completed, he returned to India and was made the Rector of Don Bosco, Aluva, the studentate of philosophy of the Sacred Heart Province of Bangalore where he continued for six years (16.4.1997-15.4.2003) before moving over to Visvadeep, Bangalore in 2003 where he still continues to reside – SAS.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 175 & 176, entry of 23.2.1971.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130, entries of 30 & 31.1.1970.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 130.

tive years and make significant contributions to the Salesian Congregation, the Church and to the poor and needy of the country.

To be continued...