**THE MESSAGE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR**

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GOD IS BORN ALSO AMONG THE “DIFFERENTLY-SKILLED” CHILDREN OF AGARTALA

Merry Christmas to all of you friends of the *Salesian Bulletin* and of Don Bosco’s charism.

I’m writing this greeting to you a few hours after returning to Rome from visiting Nepal and the Salesian province of Shillong in beautiful Northeast India.

There I met with my Salesian confreres, the laity, the members of the Salesian Family, our FMA sisters, and our Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC). These sisters serve in a center for boys, girls, adolescents, and young adults in Agartala who are “differently-skilled.”

They totally captivated my attention when in the Holy Mass on that day about 45 of these boys and girls, deaf mutes, were in the front pews of the church and “sang” all the songs with sign language, following the Sister who stood in front of them, signing the lyrics of the songs for them. I was moved to see how they sang making signs, how they paid attention and concentrated, and their expressions of happiness.

I prayed with faith. I prayed with them and for them.

The following morning we were able to visit them at their home: the Bishop Ferrando Rehabilitation Center of Agartala in the state of Shillong. The Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians [an Official Group of the Salesian Family founded by Venerable Bishop Stephen Ferrando, SDB, in 1942 in Guwahati, India] serve 150 boys and girls from the Tripura region. Among these, about 62 live in the house with the sisters. During the visit, they performed for us a traditional “Hojagiri” dance. It was impressive to see everyone dance, and dance to the rhythm of a music that they don’t hear as do we, but they do “hear” and listen very well with their other senses. Another youngster, a gymnast, surprised us with her high level of skill. The most beautiful things of all were her sensitivity, joy, smile, expressions of gratitude in her sign language, and her prayer for us.

I thought about those little miracles that they make happen. They are trained. They are happy. They prepare for life. Several of their schoolmates, who preceded them years before, have finished their studies at the university. In that house I felt at every moment the presence of the Lord, the fraternity of the Sisters that becomes self-giving and service, and the joy of those children and adolescents who are grateful to the Lord, grateful for what they’re receiving in life. And I watched, observed, and felt gratitude in the depths of my heart.

So it is, once again, that I’ve been able to verify, as before in Nepal or in Siliguri, that God continues to write beautiful life stories in those in whom He is present. He is born in so many hearts.

I learned some signs in those few hours – enough to greet them, to tell them that I enjoyed everything, and to thank them. It felt good and I felt that we should thank the Lord for the gift of Don Bosco and of this, his Salesian Family, because we all add to it, even if but a little – but everything is for the good.

With this letter, dear friends, I want to help you to see those little, though great, “miracles” of education and salvation.

Therefore, this Christmas I proclaim again that the Lord is present among all of us (whether we are very aware of it or not so much), and He becomes Life, first and foremost, among the most humble and simple, like the children of Agartala.

I promised these children by signs that I would pray for them and ask other people to do so. They thanked me; their look said it all, and their smile reached deep inside me.

It's Christmas, dear friends. It’s a time of salvation, today and forever, but we receive it as an evocation and Life in a special way at this time.

Together with the “differently-skilled” children of Agartala, we wish you a Merry Christmas – a happy birthday for Baby Jesus, who is Love for all of us.

With affection,

Again, Merry Christmas!

Don Angel