



CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

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SUPERIOR GENERAL TO ALL THE MISSIONARIES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

My dear Confreres:

I greet you, in the joy of the Lord, a very Happy Feast of our heavenly patron St. Francis de Sales who is given to us as our model by Father Mermier.

This year is important to us as we celebrate the Year of Consecrated Life and the Year for Mission. We have chosen the theme **“Our Consecrated Life for Mission”** for the entire Congregation. All the Provinces and Units of Administration and Formation Houses in the Congregation have designed and distributed different ways of effecting a missionary transformation in our Congregation in the spirit of the Founder.

The Mission Forum, in consultation with other Forums and all the Major Superiors, has planned a road map for the Year 2015 with a mission-thrust. I appreciate the confreres who sent their well reflected proposals for a meaningful celebration of 2015. I thank the Mission Forum and the General Secretary for Mission, Fr. Agnelo Fernandes, for reading the signs of the time and developing appropriate steps to celebrate our consecrated life for mission in true MSFS spirit. I invite all the Major Superiors and General Secretaries to follow up with the desired plan at the Province level and Congregational level.

1. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND MISSION

- The theme for the Year is: **“OUR CONSECRATED LIFE FOR THE MISSION”**
Please make sure that the theme of the Year is displayed in all our communities and centres
- We inaugurate this Special Year in our Congregation with an hour of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament on January 23, 2015
- Pray the Congregational prayer prepared and distributed in the Congregation as an expression of our unity and trust in the Lord to look forward to our future with hope
- Animation of all confreres on religious life and mission through the proposed 12 themes of monthly recollection

- Confreres who are not in living in communities be advised to spend one hour before the Blessed Sacrament praying for the entire Congregation on January 23, 2015
- Be advised that every Community and Confrere will spend half hour in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament
- Organize at Province level essay competition, quiz competition, skit competition, drawing competition, and declamation competition for seminarians in the formation houses based on a given missionary data
- Each of our Theologates conducts a symposium on mission and MSFS
- The appointment of the newly ordained priests to missions **for three years** as part of their formation in mission. First three years is part of pastoral formation in the missions
- Mission territories are integral part of the Province. Transfers and appointment to the mission units should be like any other transfer
- Members should be free and willing to move to any territories of the Province. Every Province strengthens its mission units
- Confreres can be appointed anywhere in province including the frontier missions
- Rotation of appointments from institutions to missions /parishes and vice versa after a certain period of time in particular ministry.
- Every Province will spare two confreres every year for the African mission
- We need to have Mission thrust Vs Institution thrust
- After completion of their terms in General or Provincial Administrations, they are appointed for a certain period of time in mission centers before taking any other assignment
- Requirement of pastoral exposure and ministry as one of the requirements for those appointed/elected in General/Provincial Administrations or as Rectors and Formators in formation houses

2. NEW RELEASE

‘SERMONS OF FATHER MERMIER: On Consecrated Life, Word of God, and Mother Mary’ (Ed. By Fr. Adrian Duval, MSFS and Translated into English by Fr. Antony Mookenthottam, MSFS) is a new book that will be released on January 24, 2015 in Bangalore. I thank Fr. Antony on behalf of the entire congregation for making available to us a special treat from our Founder in this year of our consecrated life for Mission.

3. SPIRITUAL DIRECTORY OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

After completing his studies at Clermont College in Paris, Francis moved to Padua, Italy to study Law and Theology in the second oldest University town in Europe. Student life in Padua was challenging for Francis as it exposed him to wild, tough, and confusing atmosphere. He was concerned about his spiritual life and he developed a simple,

practical, and down to earth program to help him live in the world without being of the world.

Francis called his spiritual exercises 'Rule of Life' which is a great help to fight worldliness that afflicts us today. Worldliness, both material and spiritual, creeps into religious life and communities in many ways:

- Hiding behind the appearance of piety, one seeks not the Lord's glory but one's own glory and interest
- Becoming an Inspector or Administrator rather than being a servant in our ministry
- Living by the spirit of the world rather than the spirit of Jesus
- Missionary fervor is replaced by profit-oriented, self-promoting, competitive ministries whose beneficiaries are not the poor and disadvantaged anymore

The goal of the Spiritual directory is to help us develop an interior attitude that helps us recognize the presence of God in all things, people, and situations and thereby demonstrate the spirit of the Gospel in our ministries. The Spiritual Directory will be made available to all of us shortly for our personal use in living the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales.

4. A RESOURCE-BASE ON FR. MERMIER FOR THE YEAR FOR MISSION

Upon the request of the General Council, Fr. Noel Rebello, General Secretary for Formation, is in the process of compiling a Resource Base on Fr. Mermier: His Time, The person, The Visionary, The Creative Missionary Commitment, Pioneering evangelization at home and abroad, Servant of God, Testimony of his Contemporaries, Reflections from his writings, and his Legacy. This is a going to be a valuable material for our missionary animation and for our continued search to re-capture the spirit of our Founder. Each Province will appoint an Animation Team with representative from each Forum who can guide and animate the Province community at different levels. I thank Fr. Noel for this laborious task to research and compile relevant materials for our use in short time. I invite Provincials to use the materials in the Provinces.

5. MSFS PROFILE: CORE IDENTITY OF A FRANSALIAN

We have been working on a PROFILE as directed by the General Chapter 2013 on different ministries and on confreres engaged in these ministries: The profile of a MSFS Parish and MSFS Pastor, Profile of a MSFS Formator and Formee, Profile of a MSFS Principal, SFS School Student and Teacher, Profile of a MSFS Social and Innovative Minister, and the Profile of a MSFS Bursar and Procurator. The Profile will help us to be focused and committed to our assigned ministries. The Profile will be made available to you shortly. I appreciate and thank all the General Secretaries and General Bursar for presenting the final draft of the profile in consultation with respective forums.

6. MSFS WEBSITE

Our new website is inaugurated on January 1, 2015 as www.msfstoday.org with different features and a special domain for confreres only. The id and password 'for confreres only' domain will be given to you for you to surf on information on MSFS confreres and on those matters strictly for confreres. I thank Fr. John Peter (Sr.) for his hard work in coordinating and designing an excellent website with several features. More features are to be added to the website in the coming months. Your suggestions are appreciated.

7. MISSION DEVELOPMENT OFFICE IN THE YEAR FOR MISSION

- ❖ MDO has set a target of enrolling sponsors for 1000 disadvantaged children from the MSFS Missions. The sponsors are requested to make a minimum contribution of € 10.00 per month or € 120.00 per year per child. A profile of the child with a photograph will be given to the sponsor. An annual progress report of the child will be sent to the sponsor.
- ❖ Providing safe and clean drinking water to villages. MDO has set a target of providing safe and clean drinking water to 100 villages in MSFS Missions. The cost of an open well and a hand pump is estimated approximately at € 2000.00. The MDO will launch a campaign to enroll as many sponsors as possible. A minimum contribution of € 100.00 is requested
- ❖ Appeals for the support of scholastics from the needy provinces and missions. MDO has set a target to find sponsors for 200 scholastics. The cost of formation for a scholastic is estimated approximately at € 2000.00 per year. MDO will seek a minimum contribution of € 100.00 from as many sponsors as possible
- ❖ Appeals for Mass Intentions for confreres in the missions who need mass intentions. The MDO has set a target of collecting 15000 Mass Intentions
- ❖ Appeals for Legacies, Endowments and Gifts towards a Global Fund for the Missions. MDO has set a target of contacting 100 potential donors

Your collaboration to these projects is much appreciated. MDO as the official "Mission Procure" of the Congregation requests the whole-hearted support and collaboration from each and every confrere to effectively implement the proposed Action Plan.

8. CHANGE OF EMAIL ID

Please note the change in my email id: avmsfs@gmail.com (personal) office: superiorgeneralmsfs@gmail.com.

9. REGIONAL FORUM MEETINGS

Mission Forum, Education Forum, Formation Forum, Social Apostolate and Innovative Ministries Forum, and the Stewardship Forum had the Regional Forum Meetings (RFM) in India in the months of October – November 2014. Forum Meetings were well attended with great participation. The proposals and reflections from RFM were carried over to the

PIF-PEA meeting with the General Curia and then over to the General Council meeting for further follow up and implementation. I thank all the RF Members and the General Secretaries for your active participation and valuable contribution.

10. TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PROVINCIAL CURIAS IN INDIA (Nov. 25 - 27, 2014)

General Administration organized a three day training program for all the Provincial Curias in India, Provincial of East Africa, Mission Superiors of Africa Forum (MSAF), and LCI Representative with input sessions on missionary culture and religious life with a missionary thrust. Bishop Francis Serrao of Shimoga Diocese, Fr. Jerry sj from Chennai, and Fr. Philip Thomas MSFS from NVSC Pune were the resource persons who prepared the participants to move away from shallowness to certain depth in religious life. The sessions were challenging, motivating, focused, and uplifting with a practical bent based on the Apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, 'Joy of the Gospel'. The Superior General, Assistant General, General Secretaries and General Bursar in their sessions underscored:

- ✓ Roles and functions of the Provincial, Admonitor, the Councilors, and the Bursar;
- ✓ the spirit of the new governance and handling of the juridical concerns in the Province,
- ✓ the functions of the different Forums and the challenges experienced
- ✓ how to exercise administrative responsibilities in the spirit of the new governance through the Forums

There were 48 participants who attended the program in Vinayalaya. I thank Fr. Jayseelan, the General Secretary, and Fr. Joshy Thazhathukunnel, the Superior of the Community in Vinayalaya for the excellent organization and accommodation.

11. MEETING OF PIF-PEA, MSAF, LCI Rep. AND GC IN BANGLAORE

The Provincials of India, Provincial of East Africa, Mission Superiors of Africa Forum, Lumen Christi Representative, and General Curia members had a joint meeting to discuss: MSFS Africa Vision 2020, LCI as Common Venture, Financial Support to LCI, and strengthening the Mission Units of the Provinces in the African continent.

The Joint meeting of the PIF-PEA and General Curia discussed and deliberated on strengthening of African Units, developing a Financial Accountability Structure for Transparency (FAST) in the Provinces and communities, Inter-Provincial Collaboration, Formation concerns and Inter-Province Postulancy Program, Ten Year tenure in the developed countries, Financial Support to LCI, Mission Thrust at all levels of administration and appointments, Role and Functions of Provincial Councilor In Charge of Forums, Common Mission Animation Center in India, and a Permanent Base for the general Secretariat in India.

12. SIXTH GENERAL CURIA/COUNCIL MEETING

Sixth General Curia/Council Meeting held in Vinayalaya, Bangalore from December 01 – 07, 2014 debated on various topics that bind us together as consecrated men to live in fidelity to the spirit of our Founder for the mission of the Lord. Grounding the discussions upon the spirit of the Constitutions and the General Chapter 2013 directives, the Council has clarified certain stance to be taken at congregational level:

- ❖ Mission thrust is the need of the hour in all areas of our life
- ❖ Global Mission Thrust instead of multiplying Provinces
- ❖ Financial Accountability Structure for Transparency on all sources of income and expenditure in various communities and institutions
- ❖ Inter-Province collaboration in Formation
- ❖ Defining the roles and functions of Provincial Councilors for better animation and administration
- ❖ Celebration of the Year of 'Our Consecrated Life for Mission'
- ❖ Evaluations of the Regional Forum Meeting and General Secretariats
- ❖ Publishing of Spiritual Directory and Resource material on Father Mermier, and Translations of Sermons of Father Mermier
- ❖ Strengthening mission units in Africa with more human resources
- ❖ Evaluation of the Congregational Retreat
- ❖ LCI Arusha as a common venture of the Congregation requires personnel on the staff
- ❖ Importance to spiritual animation, religious life, and community life
- ❖ Base for the General Secretariat in Hyderabad, India

13. WUG MEETING IN ANNECY

Major Superiors of the Western Provinces (Franco – Swiss and England), Brazil, USA Vice Province, and the Coordinator of the Delegation/Local Superiors of GAH will meet with the General Curia in Annecy, France. The objectives of the meeting are:

- ✓ to report and to evaluate the major apostolates in the Provinces and mission units of the Congregation
- ✓ to rejuvenate the missionary fervor
- ✓ to address the immediate concerns of the Units of WUG

General Curia Members:

- ✓ Arrival in Annecy on May 9, 2015 (by evening) and Departure on May 22, 2014 (after breakfast)

WUG members:

- ✓ Arrival on May 11, 2015 (by evening) and Departure on May 16, 2015 (after breakfast)

Schedule of the Meeting:

May 10, 2015: General Curia meets with Confreres of Franco Swiss Province in Major Apostolates

May 11, 2015: Provincial Curia of Franco Swiss Province meets with General Curia

May 12 – 14, 2015 (till lunch): Joint meeting of General Curia & WUG

May 13, 2015: Key note address by Rev. Fr. Emile Mayoraz, MSFS

May 14 (after lunch) – 15, 2015: Pilgrimage to the MSFS Spiritual heritages

May 16 – 21, 2015: General Curia/Council Meeting

14. COORDINATOR IN GAH

Fr. Silvester Ottaplackal is appointed the Coordinator of the Delegation/Local Superiors Forum in GAH for a period of three years with effect from January 24, 2015. We wish Fr. Silvester all the best in his new responsibility.

15. THANKS TO ALL THE PROVINCES FOR SUPPORTING VISAKH PROVINCE

Cyclone HUDHUD had devastated a good number of buildings and properties in Visakhapatnam city and around. In response to an appeal made to all the Provinces in the Congregation for immediate help to address the tragic situation, all the Provinces generously came forward in solidarity with Visakhapatnam Province to provide timely support and comfort. I thank all the Major Superiors for your generosity and good will beyond expectations to support Visakh Province financially in time of great need. This is indeed an expression of our MSFS-ness.

16. WE COMMEND TO THE LORD

We honor and pay our tribute to our dear confreres Fr. Paul Iramana, Fr. Mathew Mundamattam, Bro. John Maruthikuzhiyil, and Fr. Paulswamy who have gone to their eternal reward. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord!

17. TRIBUTE TO FR. S. L. PAUL

The Diocese of La Crosse, USA informed us that Fr. Paul Sankoorickal (Fr. S. L. Paul), at the age of 80 and a priest for 55 years, died on December 19, 2014. Fr. S. L. Paul was a MSFS priest until 1992 when he was incardinated to the diocese of La Crosse. He continued to help our missions in Africa and India until his last days in a big way and we are grateful to him for his love for missions. We commend him to the Lord with hope in the resurrection.

18. 'POPE WATCH'

'I dream of a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything so that the Church structure can be suitably channelized for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation'

'We have one sheep. We have lost the 99. We must go out; we must go out to get them. We only have one, we are a minority. Do we feel the fervor, the missionary zeal to go out and find the other 99?

'Overcome the spiritual cancer of gossip! We all gossip. We hurt one another with our gossip. In gossip, I make the other small while I feel great. We are Christians of good manners with bad habits. What happens in gossip? We supply misinformation, we engage in defamation, and we slander by saying things that are not true. Keep quiet if you do not have anything good to speak about others'.

19. CARING FOR THE SICK AND SENIOR CONFRERES

Attention and care for our elderly confreres who are sick and home bound in our communities involves our gratitude and respect for them. They need to be cared for with compassion of the Gospel which accompanies them in time of need and provides concrete help. There are sick and elderly confreres in our communities who are alone and who offer their sufferings for the Church and pray for others. Pope Francis calls them 'saints of daily life'. We lift up 'our saints of daily life' in our daily prayer. I request all the communities and confreres to give them due care and attention through our visits and compassionate care for them.

20. VISITATION TO NAGPUR PROVINCE (OCTOBER 26 - NOVEMBER 16, 2014)

The Superior General and the Assistant General visited Nagpur Province in the months of October - November and concluded the visitation with a Joint meeting of Provincial Curia with General Curia at Nagpur Provincial House on November 20 - 21, 2014.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Personal meetings with 87 confreres in 25 Local communities, common meeting with Candidates in the Minor Seminary, Meeting with the Novices, Community meetings in 25 Local Communities with an agenda of deepening community life, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with the Local Communities, Mass, Prayers, and Meals with the confreres in the communities were the features of the visitation.
- ❖ Provincial was personally present with me and participated in the Local Community meetings and Adoration.
- ❖ I look forward to meeting with confreres in Mozambique Delegation and in Europe and those who are away from the territory of the Province due to pastoral commitment and specialized studies at the time of my visit to respective places.

- ❖ Animation of Local Communities with the roles and functions of Local Superior
- ❖ Time of Eucharistic adoration with confreres in the Local community
- ❖ Time spent with the regents, novices, postulants, and aspirants in formation houses
- ❖ Sharing with the confreres on the thrust of General Chapter 2013 and the need for disseminating the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and the spirit of Fr. Mermier
- ❖ Listening to the confreres and to their valuable suggestions for improvement in the life and mission of the Province

STRENGTHS OF THE PROVINCE

- ❖ Almost all the Confreres expressed their sense of belongingness to the Province and to the Congregation, their family spirit and sense of unity, willingness to come together for all occasions and cooperation for all common activities
- ❖ Many confreres expressed their feelings of encouragement and satisfaction to see some growth evolving in the Province in the form of new missionary undertakings and strengthening of existing ones
- ❖ There is enthusiasm, eagerness, and keenness among many young confreres to do something and make themselves resourceful and confident
- ❖ There is an awareness among many confreres of the need to grow, update, and claim the MSFS identity in a responsible way
- ❖ There is a felt need among many confreres for spiritual and religious renewal in the Local communities and Province community
- ❖ Province is a melting pot of different cultures, tribes, States, and ethnic groups with a great sense of fraternity to accept each other
- ❖ Cultural strength is a great advantage for missionary undertakings
- ❖ Apostolate of education with high ranking and financially self-sufficient schools that are able to contribute to the educational apostolate of the Province in a big way
- ❖ Success on the side of the administration to tap the financial resources from schools for the mission of the Province
- ❖ Hospitality, concern, and care received from confreres during visitation was touching; prior preparation with planning for the visitation was visible in the Local Communities
- ❖ Local Communities are established and every confrere belongs to a Local Community with a Local Superior
- ❖ Most of the confreres are in the apostolate of education and there is a feeling of equality, and no feeling of differentiation or superiority-inferiority feeling
- ❖ More stability in the Administration and a system is falling in place; confreres begin to feel the welcome move by the Administration especially in the pooling of financial resources from income generating communities and institutions to the Province and its mission
- ❖ Some of the young confreres show boldness and courage in their undertakings and responsibilities

- ❖ Senior confreres' care, guidance, and interest in Junior confreres is appreciated and praiseworthy
- ❖ Numerical and geographical/missionary growth in the Province is visible and appreciated
- ❖ There are mission centers with lots of opportunities and scope for real missionary activities of evangelization and re-evangelization
- ❖ Opportunities for Innovative ministries and social apostolate are existing in different centers
- ❖ Mozambique Delegation has challenged many confreres in growing in their mission awareness and spirit; Delegation is supported and is picking up with regular flow of confreres and resources to MOZ

CHALLENGES IN THE PROVINCE FOR GROWTH

- ❖ Many confreres expressed their anxiety and dissatisfaction over the situation that the Province lacks Pastors and Missionaries who can take leadership in the existing missions and parishes; Shallowness and lack of effectiveness in pastoral ministry
- ❖ Confreres feel that the Province is far behind in the field of pastoral and social apostolates, spiritual animation through preaching and renewal programs, and dissemination of salesian spirituality
- ❖ Development on material side especially in the field of education is excellent but 'we need good pastors for good parishes and we need missionaries who can reach out to the people in the villages'
- ❖ A spiritual animation center or a retreat center is an immediate need of the province
- ❖ Scattered missions with vast geographical distance from community to community is a disadvantage for effectiveness of mission and for visits and animation of communities
- ❖ Social apostolate and Innovative ministries are almost nil in the Province
- ❖ Lack of security in mission centers and abundance of security in educational institutions is indicated as one of the reasons for unwillingness to go to difficult missions and accepting transfers
- ❖ Province needs to set a trend in equipping confreres with sufficient resources for diverse ministries
- ❖ Tendency among a few confreres to be satisfied with the minimum and remain mediocre missionaries is a challenge in the Province
- ❖ A good number of confreres never had a parish or mission life ... and there is an implicit division felt among confreres into three classes like rich, middle, and poor depending on their assignments
- ❖ The future MSFS need formation for mission that will equip them to live the charism of the Congregation in the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and in the

missionary vision of Father Mermier; Theological formation has to address this need

- ❖ The missions in the tribal belt (where there are catholic population) need special attention with boarding schools for children as evangelization through boarding school education is an effective model there followed by other congregations(attempts are already made but need to be pursued aggressively)
- ❖ Young confreres after ordination are to be strictly sent for missionary life in the mission in view of pastoral experience and love for mission work in the spirit of our Congregation
- ❖ Appointment of newly ordained priests to formation houses has been generally evaluated as a failure
- ❖ Very important to identify and train formators; the greatest challenge is to find qualified, holy, and committed formators who are role models
- ❖ Vocation promotion needs screening and quality check in view of animating our apostolates and existing missions
- ❖ It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the Divya Jyoti Ashram (minor seminary) in Latapara; As the seminary is going to celebrate Silver Jubilee soon, the statistics show that the outcome so far is that only 15 to 20 students of this seminary are ordained MSFS (which is less than an average of one priest a year)
- ❖ Gap between dependent confreres/communities and self-sufficient confreres/communities is visible and disturbing for many confreres
- ❖ Certain things and practices seem to be superficial and shallow in communities and real religious values and principles of religious life are not pursued; a craze for personal wants, independence, personal plans, and interests paralyses efforts for renewal
- ❖ Proper orientation and animation of religious life are needed in communities and the Administration needs to empower the Local Superiors

PROPOSALS

- **Ensure that competent persons are appointed in the missions and formation houses**
- **Implement strictly the congregational policy of pastoral experience to the newly ordained confreres under the supervision of pastors who are able to guide them in pastoral care**
- **Prioritize Mission and Formation and social apostolate for the next three years; Formation at all stages needs evaluation and monitoring**
- **Ensure that Major Superior coordinates with Local Superiors the areas of animating community life, regular community prayers, monthly Community meetings, animating apostolates, monitoring of financial transactions, insistence on transparency and presentation of monthly financial statement in the community meeting by the Local bursar**

- Develop a mechanism to monitor the implementation the Province Statutes, Action Plan of the Provincial Chapter 2014, and Directives of the General Chapter 2013 (Each PCIC can be delegated to monitor the implementation in his respective forum)
- Orissa-Jharkhand mission centers need attention in order to make a transition from maintenance-focused ministry to people-focused ministry
- Allocation of human and financial resources to neglected missions that are entrusted to the Congregation by the Dioceses for evangelization
- Immediate steps to be taken to present our charism through salesian spirituality center, retreat center, and parish preaching mission
- Consistent efforts from the PCICs to visit periodically their respective units entrusted to their animation and familiarize with different centers and accompany confreres involved in apostolates
- To have Kamptee Parish or any Mission as a heritage for MSFS in Nagpur Province in this Golden Jubilee Year

I thank Father Jacob Karamkuzhyil, the Provincial and his Administration for their leadership and animation that they have just started. The Province is already on the move to tide over the challenges with clear focus and determination. I thank Fr. Jacob and Fr. Shijumon for accompanying me and giving me a tour to every mission and every community in the Province. I thank my confreres for their cordial and fraternal hospitality I enjoyed from every confrere and every community in the Province.

The Joint Meeting of the Provincial Curia and the General Curia concluded in Nagpur Provincial House after the visitation of the Superior General and the visit of the Assistant General reviewed and prioritized the religious and missionary life of the Province.

Salesian thought:

"Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset"

Wish you all a very Happy Feast of our St. Francis de Sales!

Yours Fraternally in Christ,



Father Abraham Vettuvellil, MSFS
Superior General

January 20, 2015

LIVE JESUS