

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES OF ST. 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 name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope this Circular finds you well, and that you are experiencing the renewing power of our risen Lord and Savior.

Let me focus on the need to create *unity in difference* in our communities and apostolates as we encounter mounting polarization and division all around us.

1. VIRUS OF POLARIZATION TODAY

We are living in an age of serious global problems and conflicts. Instances of polarization, exclusion, hostility, and violence are escalating among nations, religious groups, and politicians to resolve conflicts. We see the growing tendency to look at the 'other'- who comes from another country, state, culture, religion, caste, region, with differences in the color of skin, language, and social class, - as a 'threat', giving them the status of an enemy. Our differences tend to turn into competition, threat, hostility, jealousy, and violence. This virus of polarization based on nationality, culture, religions, caste, color of skin, language, and social background seem to permeate our way of thinking, feeling, and acting in the present world.

Even priests and religious are not immune from this way of polarization. We hear about conflicts, hostility, groups, fights, and even the evil of murder among priests and religious. Such polarization is against the universality of the Church and the international character of our Congregation. Differences in thinking and opinions should not stop us from celebrating our Faith and Religious Life but should be considered one of our greatest riches. "... God our Father, has gathered us from various tribes, languages, cultures and nations (cf. Rev. 5:9) to live as brothers united in heart and mind" (MSFS Constitutions, Prologue, e).

2. SAME SPIRIT CREATES DIVERSITY AND UNITY

Pope Francis, in his homily on Pentecost Sunday, spoke about how the Holy Spirit made the disciples 'a new people' and created in them 'a new heart'. On the day of Pentecost, Holy Spirit rested on each of the disciples in the form of 'tongues of fire' and they began to speak in other languages (Acts 2: 3-4). **The Spirit rested on each and then brings all of them together in fellowship. The same Spirit creates diversity and unity.** Holy Spirit, in this way, forms a new, diverse, and unified people, the Universal Church. The model we need today in the World, in the Church, and in our Congregation is a model that strengthens *unity in difference*.

3. NEW PEOPLE

To grow into a *new people with unity in difference*, we need to resist the temptation of *diversity without unity and unity without diversity as Holy Father puts it:*

Diversity without unity happens “when we want to separate, when we take sides and form parties/groups, when we adopt rigid and airtight positions, when we become locked into our own ideas and ways of doing things, perhaps even thinking that we are better than others, or always in the right”. The clear examples of *diversity without unity* are formation of groups and clicks based on language, region, color, nationality, caste, tribe, etc. Belongingness to this or that group over and above our belongingness to the Congregation results in *diversity without unity*. This is a temptation that we are called to fight in order to allow us to be brothers and sisters in Christ.

Unity without Diversity happens when 'unity becomes uniformity, where everyone has to do everything together and in the same way, always thinking alike. When unity leads to uniformity, there is lack of freedom. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3: 17).

4. BELONGINGNESS TO THE CONGREGATION

As a Congregation we are growing in number spread out in 28 countries with different cultures, lifestyles, traditions, and language. Our communities are becoming more international and intercultural in all the Provinces. *Unity in difference* should become our model in community life and apostolates. To be men of communion requires of us to accept responsibility for unity among all, to wipe out gossip and prejudices that sows seeds of discord and poison of envy. We need a heart that feels that we belong to one MSFS family and our identity comes from our belongingness to the Congregation. We need to make conscious efforts to accept and respect confreres from other culture, nationality, language, region,

background etc. Our prayer is for the grace to leave our personal preferences aside and embrace our MSFS identity and our belongingness to God.

5. NEW HEART

The risen Lord said to his disciples: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them” (John 20: 22-23). Jesus does not condemn his disciples for having betrayed, denied, and abandoned him. Instead he grants them the spirit of forgiveness. The first gift of the Lord to his disciples is the Spirit. The Spirit is given for the forgiveness of sins. We need to understand that people are always going to hurt one another. Even good people hurt each other. With our different temperaments, backgrounds, and differences in our processing of information, we step into the toes of others. Religious life in community will never be free from conflicts and hurts. Jesus knew it all and that is why for him, to achieve union is through forgiveness, and not through avoiding hurts and conflicts. Genuine community life is possible where there is forgiveness.

As Pope Francis puts it: *'Forgiveness is the glue that that holds us together as a community. Forgiveness is the cement that binds the bricks of the house. Forgiveness gives hope; without forgiveness the Church is not built up'*.

6. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- 'Forgiveness is the glue that holds us together as community'. How can we use the gift of forgiveness to build up a renewed community life?
- How prepared are we to live our consecrated life in an international and intercultural community for the mission?
- What is my attitude toward confreres and people from other nationality, state, region, culture, language, caste, and color?

DECISIONS, NEWS, AND EVENTS

A. Fr. MATHEW THAZHATHUKUNNEL: PROVINCIAL OF EAST AFRICA

After having consulted with the confreres of East Africa Province and with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to appoint Fr. Mathew Thazhathukunnel as the Provincial Superior of East Africa Province for a term of three years with effect from July 15, 2017. On behalf of the General Administration, I sincerely thank Fr. Mathew for his commendable service and accomplishments in Lumen Christi Institute as the Director.

B. Fr. JAYASEELAN SELVARAJ: PROVINCIAL OF PUNE PROVINCE

After having consulted with the confreres of Pune Province and with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to appoint Fr. Jayaseelan as the Provincial Superior of Pune Province for a term of three years with effect from August 10, 2017. I express my sentiments of sincere appreciation and gratitude to Fr. Jayaseelan for his contribution and service to the Congregation as General Councillor and General Secretary for Social Apostolate and Innovative Ministries.

C. Fr. TOMSON AERATHEDATHU: PROVINCIAL OF BRAZIL

In consultation with the confreres of Brazil Province and with the consent of the General Council I am glad to appoint Fr. Tomson Aerathedathu as the Provincial of Brazil Province for a second term of three years from June 10, 2017.

D. Fr. JOHNSON KALLIDUKIL

On behalf of the General Administration, I sincerely thank Fr. Johnson for his leadership to the East Africa Province as Major Superior for two consecutive terms. We appreciate his commitment, initiatives, and hard work to the growth of the vast geographical territory of the Province amidst challenges and opportunities.

E. Fr. VINCENT LOURDUSWAMY

On behalf of the General Administration, I take this opportunity to thank Fr. Vincent for his leadership in the administration and animation of Pune Province during the past 6 years. We appreciate his dedication and initiatives for the growth of the Province.

F. FR. THOMAS CHOZHITHARA DIRECTOR OF MDO

In consultation with Fr. Johnson Kallidukil, the Provincial of East Africa Province, and with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to appoint Fr. Thomas Chozhithara as the new Director of Mission development Office in Rome for a term of three years with effect from June 01, 2017

G. FR. THOMS CHRUKAT

On behalf of the General Administration and of the entire Congregation, I sincerely thank Fr. Thomas Cherukat for his service to Mission Development Office as its first Director for the past three years. We appreciate his leadership and commitment to the establishment of MDO in the Congregation.

H. Fr. K. THOMAS: CANONIST FOR THE JURIDICAL MATTERS

Fr. K. Thomas, at the completion of his doctoral studies in Canon Law in June 2017, will serve the Congregation as Canonist, besides his office as Vice Postulator for the cause of Fr. Mermier, taking his residence at the Generalate. He will primarily assist the General Administration with juridical cases, archives, and documentation and annually spend a few months in his own Province of Pune. We are grateful to Franco–Swiss Province for sponsoring his studies in Rome and to Pune Province.

I. Fr. AGNELO FERNANDES: GENERAL SECRETARY FOR SAIM

Fr. Agnelo is appointed General Secretary for Social Apostolate and Innovative Ministries to continue with the programs and animation of the Forum during the remaining period of the Administration.

J. DE SALES & MERMIER RESOURCE & ANIMATION CENTER

DSM Resource and Animation Center in Hyderabad was inaugurated on May 13, 2017 in a simple ceremony in the presence of the Members of General Curia, Fr. Joseph Thazhathukunnel and Fr. Suresh Babu, (the Director and Assistant Director), and confreres from our neighboring MSFS communities.

K. NEWLY PROFESSED CONFRERES

We have 49 newly professed scholastics from 5 novitiates of the Congregation in the year 2017. Thirteen (13) more Novices from East Africa Province are expected to make their first profession on July 10, 2017. May God be praised for the newly professed who have joined our MSFS family!

L. COMMITTEE TO STUDY PROPOSALS TO GC 2019

As decided in the General Chapter 2013, General Administration has constituted a Committee that will facilitate the study of the approved proposals from General Chapter 2013. These proposals will be studied at the Congregational level before they are presented to the next General Chapter, as they might involve amendments in the Constitutions and General Directory. You can read these Proposals, published in the booklet “Call of General Chapter 2013” pp. 27-28. **Members on the Committee are Fr. James Pattarkalayil (convener), Fr. Dola Velangani, and Fr. Daiy Sebastian.**

M. FR. SEBASTIAN PALAKUDY: NEW PUBLICATION

Hearty Congratulations to Fr. Sebastian Palakudy who has published catechism text books in Kiswahili for the first time in East Africa! These catechism books will serve as text books for Sunday School children in the parishes. A great contribution to the Church in East Africa!

N. PRAYER TRIBUTE TO A GREAT MISSIONARY

Bro. Antony CHALACKAL, 79 years old, Nagpur Province, died on June 04, 2017

United with you dear Confreres in the Risen Lord and in St. Francis de Sales,

Live Jesus!

Fraternally in Christ,



Father Abraham Vettuvellil, MSFS

Superior General

WISDOM OF OUR PATRON:

**“GOD SEEKS MAN ONLY FOR HIS SOUL,
HIS SOUL ONLY FOR HIS WILL,
AND HIS WILL ONLY FOR HIS LOVE”**

St. Francis de Sales

WISDOM OF OUR FOUNDER:

**“WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF SELF, AN APOSTOLIC
MAN IS LIKE A REED SHAKEN BY THE WIND, A TOWER
BUILT ON SHIFTING SAND”**

Fr. Peter Marie Mermier