

MSFS - MISSIONARIES OF ST.FRANCIS DE SALES
SOUTH-WEST INDIA PROVINCE



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SWIP Circular BK/20

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My dear Confreres,

Fraternal greetings to you from Fr Benny. On this day of the solemnity of “**All Saints**” I wish each of you a very happy feast. At the same time I would like to reflect with you our vocation to be saints in our times by living faithfully our holy vocation to Priesthood. Let us introspect and see the crisis that we are facing in this regard.

CRISIS OF PRIESTHOOD: WHAT IS MY IDENTITY?

J. F. Power’s novel, *Wheat That Springeth Green*, published in 1988, is a flawed fiction in several respects, but at least it ends on the right note for a story about a priest. Having fled his stressful parish, Fr. Joe Hackett relents and returns. These are the book’s final words: “when Dave called after him, ‘Where is it you’re stationed now?’ Joe shook his head and kept going, calling back, ‘AT THE CROSS”

I consider the statement of this fictional Priest as a true story of the Crisis of my/your identity as Priests today. Engrossed by the cumbersome power of our ‘office’ as Priests, sometimes even battered by the supra-human personage embalmed on us, many of us begin to experience the conflict between the ‘ideal-self’ and the ‘real-self’. In this convulsive fight between the real and the false we seem to have lost sight of the ammunitions that we need to possess in order to sustain the energy and vigour of encountering our identity in Christ’s Priesthood. We need to affirm



just like the young priest in the “*Thorn Bird*” says: **I am called by God for a special ministry, but I am a human being, not a supernatural being.**

My dear Confreres, our ‘questionable life’ in the contemporary world as ‘Priests of Jesus Christ’ is abounded by our own unpreparedness to address issues that we face as human beings. When we set before ourselves lofty and ideal life-style like that of a “Holy Priest” we should first sit down and count the cost of it. Ideals that are set without calculated preparedness will only lead to frustrated and interrupted attempts at unreachable zones leading to further humiliation and consequent dejection.

The fundamental question that we, as MSFS Priests, need to ask ourselves today is: **Am I sufficiently prepared to be a Holy Priest?** *Our Superior General* in his circular No. 16 mentions about some of the challenges that we need to address in our ongoing journey as MSFS Priests. They are: Alarming growth of heightened Individualism, Crisis of Identity as Missionary Priests and Cooling of fervour growing out of deteriorating spirit of religious life and missionary spirit. It’s high time for us to have retrospection to resurge the source of our Priesthood: JESUS CHRIST.

St. Francis de Sales beautifully depicts in his writings the human and divine dimensions of our priesthood. He says, when God called ABRAM he changed his name to ABRAHAM, meaning thereby he is the *Father of Multitudes* (Gen 17/5). When God called SARAI he changed her name to SARAH that is *Mother of all Nations* (Gen 17/15). But Francis de Sales says, when Jesus called SIMON he did not change his name, instead he added one more name to it: PETER. Thereby Francis de Sales says, if Simon symbolizes weakness and frailty, Peter is the solid rock, the *Cepha*, on which your vocation will be founded. **Yes, My dear Confreres,** in everyone of us there is **Simon(ness) and Peter(ness).** We are weak and fragile, but we are made strong in Jesus Christ.

Our Identity as Priests is built on the rock of Jesus Christ. *St. John Paul II* repeatedly said: Priests are “configured” to Christ. This configuring enables them to act in *persona Christi*, which means acting with Jesus’ salvific love and taking up His cross. In his 1992 document on the priesthood, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I Will Give You Shepherds), the Pope said that a priest’s commitment to serve his people should be modelled on Christ, whose service to humanity reached fullest expression in “his death on the Cross...his total gift of self in humility and love.” I welcome each one of you, my dear Confreres, that we redefine our IDENTITY AS PRIESTS in Jesus Christ.

CONGREGATIONAL RETREAT AT POONDY, TAMIL NADU

From the 8th of October 2017 to the 13th an important Congregational Retreat was organized for the General Administrations and all the provincials of India and East Africa as well as for the USA Vice Provincial and the Regional Superior of Dibrugarh Region. The retreat was organized at the Marian Pilgrimage Center, Poondy. This well-prepared and well-reflected retreat was conducted by the selected team of seven MSFS Confreres from various Indian Provinces under the leadership of Fr. Mario D'Souza. The retreat was centred on the theme: **Walk the Way; Live the Grace**. All the preachers prepared the retreat very reflectively inculcating the Biblical, Salesian, Congregational Spirituality and nuancing it in the context of our Charism and Ministry. After the retreat there was a critical evaluation of the retreat by all the participants and suggestions were proposed for further improvements. In short, it was a grace-filled time of spiritual and fraternal togetherness.

This congregational retreat will be preached to every province during the next one year. Our next annual retreats in the province will be Congregational retreats as a preparation for the General Chapter 2019. **It is mandatory for all the Members of the Province to participate in one of these retreats.** The dates of the next annual retreats in our province are the following: **2018 July 9-13 in Charis Bhavan** and **2018 October 15-19 in Indian Institute of Spirituality (IIS)**. I request all of you to organize your programs accordingly and make sure of your participation in this retreat.

PIF-PEA-GC MEETING AT MSFS PROVINCIAL HOUSE TRICHY

From the 14th of October 2017 to the 16th the Meeting of the **Provincials India Forum** (PIF) and **the Provincial of East Africa** (PEA) together with the **General Curia** (GC) was organized in Trichy at the MSFS Provincial House. The objectives of this meeting were the following:

1. To clarify the Principles that should govern our decisions
2. To check whether we follow the already laid down principles
3. To strengthen our resolve to animate the respective provinces and units
4. To share our challenges
5. To initiate the preparations for General Chapter 2019
6. To articulate our resolve to think congregationally

This meeting of the General Administration with all the Major Superiors evaluated the effectiveness of our MSFS way of life. It also provoked us to evaluate the effectiveness of our ministry as animators charged with MSFS identity taking into consideration the objectives of the General Chapter XX in the year 2019. As all of us are well aware, the **Superior General in his circular No. 16 proposes the Objectives of the General Chapter XX as following:**

- To review the implementation of the directives and decisions of the General Chapter 2013 in the areas of **Consecrated Life in the Community, Mission, MSFSness and Salesian Spirituality.**
- To evaluate thoroughly the basics of consecrated life as lived in local communities and apostolates in the Congregation.
- To reflect on the current challenges in religious life and apostolate of different units in the Congregation.
- To draw up necessary measures/solutions for the appropriate renewal of religious life of the members
- To give specific orientations and guidelines for the future.

The Superior General gives specific clarity regarding the next General Chapter: **The General Chapter is not simply the business of a group of elected and ex-officio members who are called Capitulants (...) the Chapter is a community exercise of every Confrere in the Congregation** (SG-AB-16). Therefore it is a clarion call for each one of us to participate in this great and holy event of our Congregation with utmost attentiveness and agility. The Superior General has directed us that following modules have to be initiated at the province level to have the full-fledged involvement of every member of the Congregation in the forth coming General Chapter.

- a) **Three Apostolic Community Meetings shall be specially convoked between January 2018 and June 2018 to study different topics proposed by the General Curia and the Pre-Capitular Commission.** The dates and timings of these Apostolic Community Meetings shall be proposed to you in the course of time. **I request all the Conveners and Secretaries of the Apostolic Communities to be agile regarding these meetings and communicate it in time to the members as it is intimated to you.**

- b) I request all of you to take extra effort in availing personal time for the reflection of your own religious life today. Have we gone dampened in our spirit as religious and priests?

I take this opportunity to appreciate and thank the Superior General and his Curia for the animation and orientation given during the time of this meeting. I welcome each one of you my dear Confreres to engage ourselves in constructive steps **to recapture the Basics of our Congregational life through Community life, Mission, MSFSness and Salesian Spirituality.**

FRANSALIAN ASSOCIATES: GUIDELINES

My dear Confreres, the Superior General, in collaboration with his team, has brought out a book of Guidelines for the Fransalian Associates. **Fransalian Associates** are men and women who embrace the vision and spirituality of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales. These guidelines provide a base and directives for both the Missionaries and the Associates to clarify and strengthen their bond. This booklet explains the role of the Missionaries and the Associates in order to respond to their core identity.

In all our centres we are encouraged to form Fransalian Associates instructing them of the basics of our Spirituality and helping them to grow in the spirit and spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. I request all of you to read through this booklet to educate yourself and to act on it. We have already dispatched the copy of this booklet to each confrere. If any of you have not received the copy of the booklet on **Fransalian Associates: Guidelines** please contact Fr. Santhosh Pereira, Provincial Secretary and secure a copy of it.

NEW PROVINCIAL CURIA OF NAGPUR AND PUNE PROVINCES

The Provincial Congress of Nagpur and Pune Provinces have elected the following persons to be in the Provincial Administration. On behalf of South-West India Province I congratulate them and wish them all the very best.

Nagpur Province:

1. Fr George Kurickal msfs - Councillor cum Admonitor
2. Fr Patras Tirkey msfs - Councillor
3. Fr Anthony Amaladoss msfs - Councillor
4. Fr Lalit Tigga msfs - Councillor
5. Fr William Athony msfs - Provincial Bursar

Pune Province:

1. Fr Johnson Gonsalves msfs - Councillor cum Admonitor
2. Fr Santosh Salve msfs - Councillor
3. Fr Tony Prem Anand msfs - Councillor
4. Fr Valerian Carvalho msfs - Councillor
5. Fr A. Nelson msfs - Provincial Bursar

BLESSING AND INAUGURATION OF THE NEW MSFS HOUSE (MOTHER OF COMPASSION FAMILY CENTRE) AT KATTAPANA

MSFS Congregation has made its formal presence in the high range region of Kerala by inaugurating and blessing the first community house at Kattapana on 2nd October 2017. The solemn inauguration of the new MSFS House was done by the Provincial of South West India Province, Rev Fr

Benny Koottanal in the presence of Rt. Rev. Dr. Sebastian Thekethecheril Bishop of Vijayapuram, MSFS confreres, priests, religious, Friends of Fransalians and neighbours. After the inauguration of the House, Bishop Sebastian Thekethecheril, blessed and consecrated the house. During the Holy Eucharist he appreciated the presence of the MSFS in this region as there is a need for the spiritual and pastoral assistance to people.

GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS AT SFS SEMINARY ETTUMANOOR

SFS seminary Ettumanoor celebrated its Golden Jubilee in all its grandeur on 04 & 05 October 2017. The splendid concluding celebrations were marked with the presence of Rev. Dr. Abraham Vettuvellil, the Superior General, Most Rev. Dr. Sebastian Thekethecheril, Bishop of Vijayapuram, Rev. Fr. Benny Koottanal, Provincial of South-West India Province, Rev. Fr. George Panthanmackel, Provincial of North-East India Province, Rev. Fr. Mathew Thazhathukunnel, Provincial of East Africa Province and a large number MSFS confreres. On 04 October at 10.30 am was the informal gathering of the Alumni that took up certain deliberations towards forming an Alumni association for the seminary. The same day at 3 pm Golden Jubilee Arch was blessed and

inaugurated, which was followed by the office of the dead at the renovated cemetery to pay tribute to the guiding lights of the seminary. During the official inauguration of the Alumni at the seminary Fr. Benny Koottanal the Provincial Superior spoke about the mind of the province in forming an Alumni and how it can be a powerful instrument in



ensuring collaboration at a larger circle of friends. At 6 pm was the public gathering which was attended by people from different walks of life. The following day on 05 October Concelebrated thanksgiving Holy Eucharist was presided over by Rt. Rev. Dr. Sebastian Thekkathcheril during which the newly renovated chapel was blessed and opened for prayer and worship. The jubilee celebration was an event to renew the missionary dynamism and the fraternal bond among the members of this traditional house of formation.

BLESSING AND INAUGURATION OF THE SCIENCE BLOCK AT SFS DEGREE COLLEGE, HEBBAGODI



The blessing of the Science Wing of the College was held on the 24th of October, 2017 at 12 pm. The day combined a twin celebration – the Foundation Day of the MSFS and the 450th Birth Anniversary of St Francis de Sales, the Patron Saint of the College.

Rev. Fr. Benny Koottanal, the Provincial of the South West India Province and the General Manager of the College was the chief guest. He initiated the gathering into a time of prayer and blessed the newly constructed Science Wing – including the Physics and Chemistry Labs as well as the Cabins built for the Faculty Members.

In his address, the Provincial commended the efforts of the College Administration in building up the College and exhorted all the Staff Members to always give their 100% commitment to the cause of the College, which in turn was a great service to the nation.

BLESSING AND INAUGURATION OF THE NEW BLOCK OF SFS PUBLIC SCHOOL, HEBBAGODI



On October 24, 2017 a solemn inauguration and blessing of the new block was held in the presence of Rev. Dr. Benny Koottanal Provincial and General Manager, Rev. Fr. Joshy Manager, along with other dignitaries. Ceremonial welcome was accorded to

all the dignitaries at the main entrance of the school building. The prayer service and blessing of the new block was conducted by Rev. Dr. Benny Koottanal. Two books Cardinal Book of Directions-1 and 2, which elaborates the entire academic year's curricular and co-curricular programmes were released by Rev. Dr. Benny Koottanal. In his address, Rev. Dr. Benny, lauded the efforts of the Principal, staff and students for taking the school to greater heights. He also urged students to hone and sharpen their talents and potentials not only to carve a niche for themselves or bring laurels to school but also to bring glory to the nation.

VISITATION OF THE ASSISTANT GENERAL TO OUR PROVINCE

My dear Fathers, the Assistant General of our Congregation Rev. Fr. Thumma Mariadas Reddy will be making his official visitation to South-West India Province from January 13 to January 24, 2018. He would be visiting all of us in our Apostolic Communities. **Please make sure that all of you organise your programs such a way as to ensure your participation in this mandatory meeting.** I request all the conveners of the Apostolic Communities to organise this meeting in consultation with your secretaries and the rest of the members. The module and the guidelines regarding this visitation shall be sent to all the conveners, who in turn shall pass it on to the members of their communities. **On behalf of the South-West India Province I extend a hearty welcome to our Assistant General.** The meetings will be held as listed below:

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|------------|---|-------------------------------------------------|
| 13-01-2018 | - | Trivandrum Apostolic Community (Morning) |
| 14-01-2018 | - | Ettumanoor Apostolic Community (Afternoon) |
| 16-01-2018 | - | Kannur Apostolic Community (Morning) |
| 17-01-1968 | - | Mysore Apostolic Community (Morning) |
| 18-01-2018 | - | Shimoga Apostolic Community (Afternoon) |
| 19-01-2018 | - | North Karnataka Apostolic Community (Morning) |
| 20-01-2018 | - | Kolar Apostolic Community (Morning) |
| 21-01-2018 | - | Hebbagodi Apostolic community (Afternoon) |
| 22-01-2018 | - | Bangalore North Apostolic Community (Afternoon) |
| 23-01-2018 | - | Meeting with the Provincial Administration |
| 24-01-2018 | - | Feast of SFS, Mass at Vinayalaya |

ON-GOING FORMATION PROGRAM

Once again I remind all those who have been ordained between 2000 and 2008 to participate in the Seminar and on-going formation. It will be held at Vinayalaya from **16th to 18th November 2017**. **It is a mandatory gathering for renewal and study.** Please organise all your programs such a way that you can participate in this important program.

SECOND ANNUAL RETREAT AT INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY, BENGALURU

My dear Confreres, I thank all those who attended the second annual retreat conducted at IIS from the 09th to the 13th of October 2017. Altogether there were 59 participants. The retreat was a great experience for all the participants. I thank the IIS & Vinayalaya community for all the preparations to create right ambience for the retreat. I also thank Rev Fr. Maria Antony for guiding the retreat with subtle and thought provoking reflections. 15 Confreres of our province have not participated in the annual retreat. I request those Confreres to participate in any other retreat and report it to the provincial's office.

TRANSFERS AND APPOINTMENTS

- **Fr. Thomas Anchanickal**- Appointed to the community at Batheri with effect from November 01, 2017.
- **Fr. Shajan Manickathan** – Appointed as Novice Master with the approval of the Superior General with effect from November 01, 2017.
- **Fr. Jose Edassery** – Appointed as Superior of MSFS House Batheri with effect from November 01, 2017.
- **Fr. Bobby Puthenparambil**- Elected and Appointed Convener of Kannur Apostolic Community.
- **Fr. Shino Puthussery**- Elected and Appointed Secretary of Kannur Apostolic Community.

OBITUARY

- **Mr. Mariappa** aged 77, maternal grand father of Fr. Sudeep Andrews died on October 19, 2017.
- **Mr. K.O.Varkey Pezhumkattil** aged 86, brother-in-law of Fr. Mathew Kozhupakalam died on October 24, 2017.

We assure you, dear Confreres, the remembrance of your dear one in our Holy Mass and Prayers.

MY SCHEDULE

My dear Confreres, please do take note of my program schedule. Different from the previous circular, each new circular would bring in additional changes in my programs as per the need. Please do organize the visitation and other common meetings/programs according to the latest communication.

November 2017

November 3	Visitation to Mattannur Community, Apostolic Community Meeting
November 4	Visiting Fr. Thomas Moongamakal in Srambickal, Fr. Paul Aranjanil in Madackal
November 5-6	Visitation to Charis Bhavan
November 6	Visiting Fr. Francis Kizhakkethazhe in Thavalappara, Stay at Atmajyothi, Pattikad
November 8	Participating in the Consecration of Msgr. Joseph Pamplany as Bishop
November 11-12	Recollection for the Diploma Students of IIS
November 12-14	Visitation to Sedam
November 16-18	Meeting of the Confreres from 8-15 years of Ordination in Vinayalaya
November 19	Council Meeting
November 20-21	Visitation to Tejas
November 24	Inauguration and Blessing of the New Building of SFS School, Kengeri
November 25-26	Orientation program for the General Chapter & New Provincial Teams of CSST Congregation, Generalate, Bangalore
November 28-30	Visitation to Snehajyothi, MSFS Novitiate Makkiad

December 2017

December 1-2	PIF & Governing Body Meeting at Suvidya College
December 3	Meeting the Brothers of South West India Province in Suvidya
December 5-6	Mid-year evaluation of the Regents in Vinayalaya
December 8	Rev. Fr. Gabriel Memorial Lectures in Suvidya College
December 9	Recollection for the Diploma Students of IIS
December 10	Visitation to IIS, Meeting the Associates of Fransalians, Evaluation with the Students and Staff
December 11-12	Meeting of the MSFS Formators in Pune on Graded Formation
December 14	Blessing & Inauguration of the New Block of SFS School, Mundargi
December 16	School Annual Day – SFS School (State Syllabus), Hebbagodi
December 17	Council Meeting, Apostolic Community Meeting, Bangalore North
December 19	Keynote Address at the Graduation Day of St. Peter's Pontifical Institute
December 22	School Annual Day – SFS Public School (ICSE) Hebbagodi
December 24-25	Visitation to MSFS House, Kattappana and Christmas with Fr. Jacob

	Thudipara, Mass at Twenty Acre Parish
December 26	Visitation to Adoor – Fr. Babychan and Fr. Mathew Kavithazhe
December 27	Ordination of Dn. Sanoj Plamthottathil at Neduveli, Neyyattinkara
December 28	Ordination of Dn. Noby Kottuppallil at Valiyathovala, Kanjirappally
December 30	Ordination of Dn. Justin Panachickal at Karimannur, Kothamangalam

January 2018

January 2	Ordination of Dn. Simil Devasia at Karunapuram, Thalassery
January 3	Ordination of Dn. Jose Simon, Thuruthippally, Palai
January 4	Ordination of Dn. Abhishek Joseph at P.G. Palya, Mysore
January 6	Ordination of Dn. Sijo Kovilparambil at Ambattupalayam, Chittoor
January 8-21	Visitation to Chad-Cameroon Mission
January 22	Bangalore Apostolic Community meeting with Assistant General
January 23	Council Meeting
January 24	Feast of St. Francis de Sales at Vinayalaya, MSFS Provincial House
January 25	Keynote Address at the Graduation Day of Cluny School Malleswaram
January 27-28	Silver Jubilee Celebrations of SFS Church, Vattiyoorkavu
January 31	School Annual Day – SFS School, Kannur

February 2018

February 2-3	Recollection for the Diploma Students of IIS
February 3	School Annual Day – De Sales Academy (CBSE), Hebbagodi
February 4	Sunday Mass at Chintamani Church, Blessing and Inauguration of the New Community House
February 5-10	Classes for the Post-Graduate Students of IIS
February 13-15	Visitation to Sannidhi, MSFS Minor Seminary Mysore, Meeting the Brothers, Evaluation of the Academic Year with the Staff, visiting other MSFS communities in Mysore
February 18	Council Meeting
February 19	Diaconate Ordination at Tejas
February 21-22	Visitation to SFS Seminary Ettumanoor, Meeting the Brothers, Evaluation of the Academic Year with the Staff

MARCH 2018

March 3	Graduation Day at Suvidya College
March 5	Meeting with Confreres ordained in the year 2016-2017
March 7	Meeting with Confreres Ordained in the year 2015-2016
March 9	Meeting with Confreres Ordained in the year 2014-2015
March 11	Meeting with Confreres Ordained in the year 2013-2014
March 13	Mission Forum Meeting in Kerala
March 18	Council Meeting
March 20	Meeting with Confreres ordained in the year 2012-2013
March 25	Palm Sunday
March 29	Maundy Thursday Liturgy at Gauribidanur Mission
March 30	Good Friday Liturgy at Gauribidanur Mission
March 31	Holy Saturday at Gauribidanur Mission

April 2018

April 1	Easter Sunday – Mass at Gauribidanur Mission
April 21-26	Animating Retreat for the RNDM Congregation, Bangalore Province
April 27	Talk and Mass at Salesian Seminar 2018 at IIS

SPIRIT OF OUR FOUNDER

“The fruit and success of Missionary Ministry depend almost entirely on Prayer and Good Examples.” – Venerable Fr. Peter Marie Mermier

Fraternally,



Fr. Benny Koottanal MSFS

Provincial