

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:

Fraternal greetings! I greet you in the joy and peace of Christmas for a blessed New Year 2016. In the midst of our pressures and challenges of life and ministry, Christmas reminds us that God meets us where we are and not where we should be. We do not have to give up our frail human nature in order to know God. We must simply turn away from evil and its inclinations.

1. YEAR OF MERCY

We are in the Year of Mercy, announced by Pope Francis, as an extraordinary Jubilee, placing God's mercy at its centre. We are reminded of our call as MSFS to be missionaries with compassion and mercy toward God's people and our own community members. I recall the words of St. Ambrose: "Where there is mercy there is the Spirit of the Lord, where there is rigidity, there are only His ministers". Without the Lord, we (priests/religious) become rigid, and this is the danger for the people of God. We shall strive to be pastors with compassion like St. Francis de Sales, and not more functionaries.

2. YEAR OF FORMATION FOR MISSION OF MERCY AND COMPASSION 2016

In our Congregation, I am glad to announce with the consent of the General Council that we are celebrating Year 2016 as "MSFS Year of Formation for Mission of Mercy and Compassion" -combining the Year of Mercy and Year of Formation. I invite all of us to make this Year 2016 as a year dedicated to intensify our efforts on renewing our FORMATION PROGRAMS AND ON-GOING FORMATION PROGRAMS in tune with the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and with the missionary charism of our Congregation.

3. HOW DO WE CELEBRATE THIS YEAR?

Based on the decisions of the General Council Meeting and on the Extraordinary Regional Formation Forum Meeting, I suggest the following guidelines for the celebration of the Year of Formation for Mission of Mercy and Compassion:

(i) LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL

- Inaugurate the Year of Formation 2016 and close the Year of Consecrated Life for Mission 2015 with an hour of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament on or before January 24, 2016
- Local Superiors/Rectors/Novice Masters will animate the inaugural adoration with reading from the Chapter 5 of our Constitutions (Our

Formation for Mission)

- Make sure that the theme of the Year – MSFS FORMATION FOR MISSION OF MERCY AND COMPASSION – is displayed in all our communities and centers
- Be advised that every Local Community and confreres will daily spend half hour in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament
- Recite the special prayer prepared for the Year of Formation for Mission of Mercy and Compassion in all our Local communities as a sign of our solidarity for renewal.

(ii) APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY LEVEL

- Conveners of Apostolic Communities will include salesian and other relevant themes for on-going formation during the meetings.

- Monthly Recollection on themes for the Year of Consecrated Life for Mission is to be continued if not completed

(iii) FORMATION HOUSES

- The approved guidelines of the Extraordinary Regional Formation Forum Meeting (Bangalore) 2015 will be followed up for MSFS brothers and Formators in the Formation houses.
- All our Formation Houses internationally are encouraged to adapt the same guidelines in their respective contexts.

(iv) PROVINCE LEVEL

- Organize the Province Annual Retreat of the Year 2016 – 2017 focusing on Mercy and Compassion toward the disadvantaged and those in periphery, Forgiveness and reconciliation, Healing of

wounds, disunity, and strained relationships in our communities and Provinces, and in our Congregation.

- Ensure that every confrere participates in the Inter Provincial Ongoing Formation Program organized at the Congregational level.
- PCICs of Formation will monitor the implementation of the guidelines of the formation policy and approved proposals of the Extraordinary Regional Formation Forum Meeting 2015 (December 18 – 19, Bangalore).
- Appointment of the newly ordained priests to missions for three years as part of the continued formation in mission is to be insisted and continued.
- Provincial Circulars will highlight the Year of Formation for Mission of Mercy and Compassion and the initiatives and activities undertaken in the Province.

4. YEAR OF FORMATION: TIME TO GO TO OUR ROOTS

We cannot lose our roots. Our roots help us to remember who we are and where the Lord has called us. Let me share with you an anecdote shared by Pope Francis: Years ago in the Society of Jesus, there was a good priest, good, young, and a priest for two years. He became confused in his vocation and spoke with his Spiritual Father and with his Superiors and said: 'I am going, I can't anymore, I am going'. Pope Francis (not Pope then) knew this priest's mother, a very humble woman, and said to him: 'Why don't you

go to your mother and speak to her about this confusion in your vocation?'. He went, spent the whole day with his mother, and returned changed. His mother gave him two spiritual 'slaps' and put him on his place. He went forward from then on because he went to the root. Year of Formation is time go back to our spiritual roots of our families and Congregation, to the prayer taught by our mothers, and our formation years especially in our minor seminary and novitiate where we learned the basics.

NEWS AND EVENTS IN THE CONGREGATION

5. A NEW REGION IN THE NORTHEAST INDIA PROVINCE

A new REGION comprising of Upper Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Nagaland is established under the Northeast India Province on September 15, 2015. The new administrative unit is in view of animation of confreres and administrating of the missions in the geographically vast Northeast India Province.

6. Fr. EMMANUEL MAPPILAPARAMBIL: NEW REGIONAL SUPERIOR

After having consulted the confreres of the Region and with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to appoint **Fr. Emmanuel Mappilaparambil** as the first Regional Superior of the Region for a term of three years. The Region will come into

existence on January 20, 2016 as the Regional Superior takes charge of his office.

7. REV. FR. BENNY KOOTTANAL: NEW PROVINCIAL

After having consulted the confreres of Southwest India Province and with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to appoint Fr. Benny Koottanal as the Provincial Superior of the Southwest India Province with effect from January 24, 2016 for a term of three years.

8. Rev. Fr. JOSE KUMBLOLICKAL

On behalf of the General Administration, I sincerely thank Fr. Jose for his leadership, commitment, and guidance to the growth of the Province and Confreres during his term of office as Provincial.

9. OPENING A NEW MISSION IN SWAZILAND

The Southern African Region is expanding its mission territory to the Kingdom of Swaziland, which is a sovereign State and part of Southern Africa. The pioneering team, **Fr. Augustine Parampuzha and Fr. Francis Hwun**, will reach Swaziland in February 2016 at the invitation of the Bishop of Manzini to learn the language and take up St. Philip's Parish. We wish our members of Southern African Region and pioneering confreres God's blessings for the MSFS presence in the new country.

10. TRIENNIAL MANDATORY MEETING (TMM) 2016

TMM is a statutory meeting of all the Major Superiors in the Congregation and the General Curia, three years after the General Chapter, for a mid-term evaluation of the 'Call of the General Chapter 2013'. This meeting is scheduled to take place at Lumen Christi Institute, Arusha, Tanzania from May 14 – 18, 2016. There will be meeting of Mission Superiors of Africa Forum (MSAF), LCI Staff, PIF – PEA, and General Curia prior to TMM. Please contact Fr. Johnson Kallidukkil, Provincial of East Africa Province, for clarification and travel plans for the participants.

11. APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY IN ROME

An Inter Provincial Apostolic Community is established in Rome gathering the Local Communities in Rome and Sicily with Fr. Jose Cherianthara as the Convener.

12. APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURE FOR TRANSPARENCY (FAST)

To ensure financial accountability and transparency, all the Provinces are expected to set up FAST. A common structure for all the Indian Provinces has been already prepared and approved by the General Council. The new system comes into effect from the financial Year 2016.

13. MSFS HOUSE IN HYDERABAD

The new General Secretariat House in Hyderabad is taking shape with an additional floor, which will also provide space for a Resource and Research Center on

spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and the charism of Father Peter Mermier. It is a modest house that accommodates General Secretaries with their offices and with a facility to organize Salesian and Mermerian resources available from all the Province communities and to disseminate Salesian Spirituality.

14. MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSE (MOOC)

The Salesian Center for Faith and Culture at De Sales University (USA) is offering a Massive Open Online Course during the 2016 Lenten season, from February 10 – March 13. The course happily coincides with our Year of Formation. The course will delve into such topics as Salesian Pedagogy for Devout Life, Living out the Will of God, and Everyday spirituality Every Day. The course is entirely free and all you need is Internet connection, time, and determination. Please grab this opportunity to update yourself in salesian spirituality. You can sign up and get more details at: www.desales.edu/salesianMOOC.

15. MSFS STATUS 2016

STATUS 2016 will be released on January 01, 2016. Fr. Jayseelan, Secretary for Social Apostolate and Innovative Ministries, is the contact person for STATUS. May I suggest that all Major Superiors ensure that every confrere gets a copy at the earliest.

16. PRAYERFUL TRIBUTE TO DECEASED CONFRERES

- **Fr. John Bosco Khakha MSFS (53)**, of North-East India Province died of cardiac arrest on July 9, 2015 at Udalguri, Assam.
- **Fr. Ladir João Brondani MSFS (48)**, Brazil Province, died on August 1, 2015, in Brazil.
- **Fr. Baptist D'Souza MSFS (53)** of Pune Province died on August 19, 2015 in Pune, India.
- **Fr. Gerard Gill MSFS (87)**, of English province, died on September 10, 2015 at Sacred Heart Residence Dublin.
- **Fr. Gerard Van Hooren (89)** of Franco-Swiss Province died on October 11, 2015.
- **Fr. A. Antony Savary Raj (32)** of Southeast India Province died on October 13, 2015.
- Wishing you once again Merry Christmas, Peaceful New Year, and a blessed Year of Formation for Mercy and Compassion.

Live Jesus!

Fraternally in Christ,



Father Abraham Vettuvellil, MSFS
Superior General

"God is as Good and Merciful when we are weak and imperfect as when we are strong and perfect"

- St. Francis de Sales