

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:

Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year to you! With joy and hope, may I share with you a message for Christmas and the New Year, Our Plans for the Year 2018, certain specifics to prepare for 20th General Chapter in 2019, and other events in the Congregation.

1. O COME, LET US ADORE HIM, CHRIST, THE LORD!

- We are given a fresh chance at each Advent to discover our deepest hunger for God. Prophet Isaiah, known as the prophet of Advent, emphasizes the hunger and hopes of the people of Israel for a messiah throughout this liturgical season. Our longing for God is at the heart of the preparations for Christmas. Advent is a time to make space for Jesus to birth in our lives.
 - The baby Jesus, we see in the manger, is silent, still, humble, poor, and hidden. He is hidden beneath the appearance of the swaddling clothes that wrapped him. This attitude of hiddenness is important for us to discover our hunger within us for God. To discover our longing for God and to see him, who became human, requires of us to find time to withdraw ourselves from the sight of people, go unnoticed, and hidden like Mary and Joseph.
 - We need to withdraw from all that solicits our attention, our energy, and our time into the hiddenness of baby Jesus in the manger. We need to grow in silence, stillness, humility, poverty, and in the virtue of hiddenness. Ultimately, all that satisfies our hearts' desires is to adore Him in the manger and to adore Him before His Eucharistic face in the sacred host every day. To adore Him, our Saviour, we need to be content to position ourselves where we are not seen, known, appreciated, or praised. He is a hidden God. "Truly with you God is hidden, the God of Israel, the Saviour" (Is. 45:15).
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○ **O Come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!**

We shall turn the year 2018 into a turning point in our lives by regularly seeking the Eucharistic face of Christ, hidden beneath the appearance of the sacred host, in the tabernacle. We shall make the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass 'the sun of our existence' (SFS) and of our community life, illumining each day with its brightness.

2. YEAR 2018 AS THE YEAR OF LOCAL COMMUNITY

THEME: 'REVITALISING MY LOCAL COMMUNITY: SPACE FOR COMMUNION AND MISSION'

With the consent of the General Council, I am glad to declare Year 2018 as the YEAR OF LOCAL COMMUNITY with effect from January 24, 2018 through January 23, 2019. The theme of the Year 2018 highlights one of the four pillars of our MSFS way of life envisioned by Fr. Mermier.

In keeping with the theme of the General Chapter 2019: 'MSFS, WAKE-UP TO THE BASICS', we focus on communion in Local Community for mission (and apostolates). I request every confrere in the community and the Local Superior to work on the following objectives:

- My role in revitalizing the local community
- Various dimensions of community as "space"
- Building Communion in community
- Community for Mission and apostolates

Guidelines for celebrating the Year of Our Local Community are:

- In the early part of 2018, the Provincials will convoke Local Superiors Forum Meeting
- The meeting will be a day/days of animation and formation for the Local Superiors based on the Province statutes, Constitutions, General Directory, call of General Chapter 2013, and the Church documents on consecrated life
- The meeting can also finalize the different ways of celebration of the year in the Province
- Ensure that half hour adoration before the Blessed Sacrament becomes part of community life
- Each Province Forum/Local Community can also suggest to the Provincial the different ways of celebrating the theme at the level of the Forum/Community
- The Provincial Administration will finalize the different ways of celebrating the Year of our Local Community and send a copy of the same to the Asst. General for information to be shared with the rest of the Congregation

3. LOGO FOR THE 20th GENERAL CHAPTER – 2019

We have an official LOGO for the upcoming General Chapter highlighting the Basics of MSFS life and the theme of the Chapter. May I remind the Major Superiors to kindly request all Superiors of Local Communities and Rectors/Novice Masters of Formation Houses to display this LOGO in our Provincial Houses, Formation Houses, and Local Communities? My sincere appreciation and gratitude to Fr. Albert Fernandes for designing the LOGO!



4. PREPARATION FOR 20th GENERAL CHAPTER 2019

To backtrack on what has been done so far:

- 20th General Chapter 2019 begins on February 01, 2019 through February 13, 2019 at MSFS PROVINCIAL HOUSE IN GUWAHATI, ASSAM, INDIA
- THREE REFLECTION PAPERS are already sent out to all the confreres through Provincials with a Power Point presentation of the same
- The REFLECTION PAPERS are also published in a booklet form and sent out to Provinces
- The Preparatory Committee for General Chapter (PCGC), consisting of **Fr. James Pattarkalayil**, **Fr. Dola Velangani**, and **Fr. Daiy Sebastian**, is collating the Proposals from Individual Confreres, Provincial Administration and General Administration, and 19th General Chapter 2013

NEXT STEP:

From January 2018, these Reflection Papers are to be studied individually, in Local Community, and in Apostolic Communities. Local Superiors and Conveners of Apostolic Communities will facilitate the group study of Reflection Papers. The suggested schedule and methodology for Apostolic Communities to study and collate the report is as follows:

PART 1: January – February 2018

The Apostolic Community Convener will facilitate the study of **REFLECTION PAPER 1 and the PROPOSALS FROM GENERAL CHAPTER 2013**

- The Provincials will send by **March 15, 2018:**
- The collated report on **Reflection Paper 1** gathered from all the Apostolic Communities in the Province to the Secretary of the Superior General at secretarymsfsrome@gmail.com, and
- The collated study report on the **Proposals from the General Chapter 2013** to the Convener of PCGC at pattarjam97@googlemail.com

PART 2: March – April 2018

- The Apostolic Community Convener will facilitate the study of **REFLECTION PAPER 2 and the PROPOSALS FROM PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**
- The Provincials will send by **May 15, 2018:**
- The collated report of **Reflection Paper 2** from the Province to the Secretary of the Superior General, and
- The collated report on **Proposals from the Provincial Administration and General Administration** to the Convener of PCGC

PART 3: May – June 2018

- The Apostolic Community Convener will facilitate the study of **REFLECTION PAPER 3 and the PROPOSALS FROM INDIVIDUAL CONFRES.**
- The Provincial will send by **July 15, 2018:**
- The collated report of **Reflection Paper 3** from the Province to the Secretary of the Superior General, and
- The collated report on the **Proposals from Individual Confres** to the Convener of PCGC
- PCGC will send its findings on collated proposals with a prioritized list to the Superior General by **September 05, 2018**

- **June 15 – August 20, 2018:** Election of Delegates to 20th General Chapter 2019
- **August 24, 2018:** Submission of the names of the *Capitulants* to the Superior General
- **September 04, 2018:** Appointing of the *Pre-Capitular Commission* and the Secretary General of General Chapter 2019

DECISIONS, NEWS, AND EVENTS

1. FR. MANI MALANA

After having consulted with the confreres in Australia, with the recommendation of PIF and with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to appoint Fr. Mani Malana as the Coordinator of MSFS in Australia for a term of three years with effect from January 01, 2018

2. FR. JOSEPH AMALRAJ

After having consulted with Delegation Superiors in GAH, with the recommendation of PIF – PEA and with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to appoint Fr. Joseph Amalraj as the Coordinator of MSFS Delegation Superiors Forum in GAH with effect from January 24, 2018

3. FR. SILVESTER OTTAPLACKAL

On behalf of the General Administration, I sincerely thank Fr. Silvester for his leadership to the Delegations and to Delegation Superiors in GAH during the past three years.

4. SALESIAN PROGRAM ANNECY (SPA)

On behalf of the General Administration and Provincial Administration, I express sentiments of appreciation and gratitude - to Fr. Yves Carron, Provincial of F-S Province, Fr. Samuel Devaraj, the Local Superior, MSFS Proupeine Community, and the entire Province family - for organizing and facilitating the Program. On behalf of the participants of SPA, Fr. Isaac John writes:

The long cherished dream of the Congregation, 'Salesian Programme Annecy (SPA 2017)' with the intent to deepen the knowledge of St. Francis, Fr. Mermier, and the congregation was actualized from 5th October to 16th November, 2017 in Maison du diocèse, La Puya, Annecy by the director and primary resource person Fr. Yves Carron and team. The first of its sort in the history of the congregation turned out to be an enriching and enthralling experience with regard to its exploits of the rich cultural heritage of Annecy, intriguing insights, erudition and exposure for the five participants from five provinces, namely Frs. Thomas (EA), Philip (NE), Issac (NGP), Timson (SW) and Adaikalarajan (PUN). Six week's packed programme included Salesian accompanied retreat, visiting places of importance in the life of St. Francis, Mermier and Congregation, pilgrimage centres, an in-depth study of our patron, founder, history of the congregation, Introduction to devout life and a scientific study of Treatise on the love of God.

5. PARISH MISSION PREACHING TEAM (PMP TEAM)

Mermierian Parish Mission Preaching Team in India had its follow up seminar in MSFS Provincial House Guwahati from November 13 – 17, 2017. The Team is working on a 'MSFS MERMERIAN PARISH MISSION PREACHING MANUAL' as an official manual for our use to strengthen our efforts to revive the foundational apostolate of parish mission preaching started by Fr. Mermier. I request every Province to set apart two confreres totally free for this ministry until it takes roots and becomes once again a tradition in the Province/Congregation.

6. JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION

We have already prepared the draft stating the objectives, composition, and functioning of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Congregation. I request all Provincials to appoint Justice and Peace Commissioner latest by December 31, 2017 and report the names to the Superior General. General Secretary for Social Apostolates and Innovative Ministries will organize a training Program for the Commissioners after we have the names of Commissioners.

7. CAUSE OF FR. MERMIER

- ■ On January 24, 2017, the Cause of Fr. Mermier was officially re-opened during the Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Msgr. Yves BOIVINEAU, Bishop of Annecy.
- ■ The tribunal has been constituted, Fr. Yves CARRON, the Provincial of Franco-Suisse Province as the Postulator of the Cause, Fr. Pierre Marie MASSON, The Chancellor and Judicial Vicar as the Episcopal Delegate, and Fr. Marcel VEYRAT, as the Promoter of Justice.
- ■ As per law, all the writings of Fr. Mermier, published and unpublished, manuscripts have to be censored by two theologians. However, in the case of Fr. Mermier's writings, in his time none of his writings were published. Therefore, we have only the unpublished writings and manuscripts of Fr. Mermier. When we opened the cause for the first time in 1993, the writings were given to one well-known Redemptorist theologian Fr. Théodule Rey-Mermet. He died in 2002. However, he has given his report. Another theologian is yet to be assigned
- ■ Prayer Cards for the Cause of Fr. Mermier have been printed and distributed in the Visitation Basilica, all the MSFS parishes and schools.
- ■ All the writings of Fr. Mermier are being digitalized.
- ■ We are in close contact with Jöelle MERMIER, the fifth generation niece of Fr. Mermier. She gathers from time to time some of the important historical documents related to Fr. Mermier.
- ■ We are gathering the list of names and witnesses who know about Fr. Mermier and who have received the graces and blessings through the power of his intercessions. In the coming months, we will be having the tribunal hearings of these witnesses

On behalf of the entire Congregation, I express our gratitude to Fr. Yves Carron, the

Postulator, Fr. K. Thomas, the Vice Postulator, Fr. Thumma Mariadas, the Promoter, and all the Vice Promoters in the Provinces for their contribution to the cause of our dear Founder, Fr. Peter Mermier.

8. CHANGE OF TELEPHONE NUMBER IN VATICAN HOUSE

The new telephone number for MSFS House located near Vatican on Via del Mascherino 46/2 is: **00 39 06 688 01 022**. Please note that this is the number to contact Fr. Augustine Mangatt, the General Bursar and Superior of the Local Community in Rome.

9. FOR OUR MEDITATION:

St. Francis de Sales on Incarnation:

Below is a very enlightening passage from St. Francis de Sales' *Treatise on the Love of God* where he teaches that the primary reason for the Incarnation was *not* the redemption of fallen man from sin, but that God willed the Incarnation first and foremost in order to “communicate Himself” to a creature in a most perfect way: “in such sort that the creature might be engrafted and implanted in the divinity, and become one single person with It”. To this created nature, namely the Sacred Humanity of Christ, God “destined that incomparable honor of personal union with His Divine Majesty, to the end that for all eternity it might enjoy by excellence the treasures of His infinite glory.” (*TREATISE ON THE LOVE OF GOD Book II, Chapter IV*)

**“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.
Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you.” Lk 2: 10-11**



Live Jesus!

Fraternally in Christ,

Father Abraham Vettovelil, MSFS
Superior General