

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 joy of the Lord whose mercy continually draws our hearts to him!

1. 400th ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATISE

Our hearts gradually begin to realize the total nothingness of all that is not God. The Spirit in us uses this realization to draw us back to the Merciful Father. St. Francis de Sales, in his **Treatise on the Love of God**, reminds us that 'God is God of the human heart'.

2. SFS: DOCTOR OF THE LOVE OF GOD

In the early years of 17th century, Francis sat down at his desk, with a quill pen in his hand, to write down in the style of his time about the great love of an infinite God for each and every human being, which became a masterpiece in spirituality, the '**Treatise on the Love of God**'. We celebrate, this year, the 400th anniversary of this great work of our Patron.

3. HOW DO WE EXERCISE OUR LOVE FOR GOD?

In his **Treatise**, SFS explains two principal ways by which we exercise our love for God: affective love and effective love. Affective love joins us to God's goodness. We find pleasure in him and are filled with good desires and spiritual impulses. Effective love enables us to serve God. We receive the ability not only to do God's will courageously but also to accept and embrace all that comes from his good pleasure.

4. BE ENRICHED ...

For Francis, in order to be happy we must live in such a way that among all types of love, love of God should 'wield the sceptre'. Francis blesses every reader in the preface of his masterful work: "**May God bless you, my dear reader, and enrich you with his love.**"

5. REQUEST TO ALL MAJOR AND LOCAL SUPERIORS

I earnestly request all the Major Superiors, Regional Superiors, Delegation Superiors, Mission Superiors, Local Superiors, Conveners of Apostolic Communities, and Superiors of Formation Houses to have a full day dedicated to studying and sharing from the Treatise on the Love of God. Let us be enriched by God's love through the writings of our Patron.

6. 450th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES (1567 – 2017)

We are progressing in our long cherished dream of having a regular **MSFS SALESIAN SPIRITUALITY PROGRAM in Annecy** for our confreres from all the Provinces. Close to the tomb of St. Francis de Sales and to the mortal remains of Father Peter Mermier, we, as a congregation, can grow deeper in our spirituality and in our MSFS identity. Father Mermier wanted us to have our roots in Annecy, no matter how far we branch out or how old we grow. We hope to start this program as a souvenir of the 450th birth anniversary of our Patron in 2017. I thank Fr. Yves Carron and Team for exploring the possibilities of running the program.

7. RE-CLAIM OUR MISSIONARY IDENTITY

General Chapter 2013 and Triennial Mandatory Meeting 2016 reiterated that the thrust and identity of our Congregation is MISSION. Pope Francis has been constantly reminding us that the major crisis in the Church today is identity crisis. We have forgotten, **WHO we are and WHAT we are called to do as the Church**. It is not so much **the Church has a Mission** as that **the Mission has a Church**. The question that should challenge us is: Have we essentially forgotten our missionary calling? Have we contended ourselves with maintenance, education, and service?

8. CHALLENGE FOR MSFS TODAY

Our challenge today is to move away from being **maintenance Congregation/Province to missionary Congregation/Province**, to move away from priestly tradition of maintenance and administration to prophetic and exodus tradition of entering into geographical and existential peripheries of society. The vision of Pope Francis for the Church, in line with the Vatican II, has clarified the identity of the Church today. ***“I want people to go out! I want the Church to go out to the street. ... The parishes, the schools, the institutions, exist to go out! If they don't go out, they become NGOs and the Church can't be an NGO.”***

9. LEADERSHIP IN THE CONGREGATION

If the Congregation has to move into the peripheries and has to be missionary, we need confreres who can be leaders and not just managers and directors. A Missionary Church is one that goes out from itself toward the existential and geographical peripheries (Pope Francis). A maintenance church can do very well by having a manager at the top with management and organizational skills. A true leader is not only in name or in office but someone who leads with vision and passion for the mission of the Church: “make disciples of all nations” (Mathew 28: 19).

10. 'NOW GO DO IT'

We are slowly unpacking the true innovation of the Vatican Council II. **It is about recalling the Church's deepest missionary identity**. The central theological insights of all 16 conciliar documents can be summed up into: **The Universal call to holiness and The Universal call to Mission**. The call to Holiness and Mission is rooted not in ordination or in religious profession but in baptism. This was revolutionary **and it goes back to our Patron's understanding of Christian life**.

From the Council Fathers and 3 Popes (Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI) who were part of the Council to Pope Francis, all have played an essential role in pointing out our missionary identity. Few days after the election of Pope Francis, there was an image on the Internet that showed John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis with a caption for each under their photographs:

John Paul II: **THIS IS WHAT WE BELIEVE**

Benedict XVI: **THIS IS WHY WE BELIEVE**

Francis: **NOW GO DO IT**

11. INVITATION TO ALL YOUNG MSFS

We need young confreres who can 'go do it'. We need young MSFS who can lead and not follow, who can be missionaries and not remain doing maintenance job. We need confreres who can first get out of the box to take a look outside the box and then think outside the box. Today, we need MSFS who will re-discover our missionary identity and place the mandate given by Christ and the charism given by our Founder at the heart of everything we do. "As the Father has sent me so I send you" (John 20:21).

DECISIONS, NEWS, AND EVENTS FROM THE CONGREGATION

12. Fr. YVES CARRON: FRANCO–SWISS PROVINCIAL

After having consulted the confreres of Franco–Swiss Province and with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to appoint Fr. Yves Carron as the Provincial Superior of F-S Province for a third term of three years with effect from August 01, 2016.

13. Fr. TOMY PULIYANAMPATTAYIL: NEW USA VICE PROVINCIAL

In consultation with members of the Vice Province and with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to appoint Fr. Tomy Joseph Puliyanampattayil as the Vice Provincial of the USA Vice Province with effect from July 03, 2016 for a term of three years.

14. Fr. AUGUSTINE THARAPEL

On behalf of the General Administration, I sincerely thank Fr. Augustine Tharapel for his gentle but firm leadership to the USA Vice Province first as Regional Superior and then as the first Major Superior of the Vice Province. We appreciate and value your commitment and guidance to the evolution and growth of the Vice Province amidst challenging situation.

15. NEW TEAM IN THE USA VICE PROVINCE ADMINISTRATION

Fr. Davis Chackaleckal: Councilor and Admonitor

Fr. John Peter Arul: Councilor

Fr. Mathew Elayadathumadam: Advisor

Fr. Sunny Punnakuzhiyil: Advisor

Fr. Joseph Pottemel: Bursar

Please accept our hearty Congratulations and prayerful wishes. I thank you for accepting this responsibility on behalf of the Congregation.

16. PARISH MISSION PREACHING MINISTRY

The Parish Mission Preaching (PMP) Committee (**Fr. Jean Paul Fournier, Fr. Jose Parappillil, Fr. Reji Kizhakethalackal, Fr. Jeyakumar A. under the leadership of Fr. Agnelo Fernandes**) met in Bangalore from

August 22 – 24, 2016 to study the Mermerian concept of PMP Ministry (foundational charism of our Congregation) and to prepare a possible PMP module for our times. The committee will offer a Training Program for the PMP teams of Asia and Africa in November 2016 at White House, Chinna-Waltair, Visakhapatnam. Fr. Jean Paul Fournier, representing the Western world on the Committee, has submitted a module, which will be suitable to the context of the western world. I invite all the Provinces and Mission units to get involved in the dynamics of PMP for initiating Parish Mission Preaching Mission as envisaged by Fr. Mermier.

17. CONGREGATIONAL RETREAT 2017-2018

The proposed Congregational Retreat is being designed in view of deepening our mission and salesian identity and in preparation for the General Chapter XX in 2019. The Retreat Core team consisting of - **Fr. Mario D'Souza (Convener), Fr. Binu Edathumparambil, Fr. Francis Thadathil, Fr. Suresh Babu, Fr. Austin K.S., Fr. Joby Kurikilamkattu, and Fr. Stephen Avlu – under the guidance of Fr. Thumma Mariadas, the Assistant General** will continue to work on the dynamics of the Retreat. They are requested to animate the first retreat to the Preaching Team, Provincials, and General Curia from October 7 through October 13, 2017. This retreat will be presented to the entire Congregation from October 2017 through October 2018.

18. MSFS RETREAT CULTURE

The document on MSFS Retreat Culture is being studied in all the Provinces, which will help us to utilize responsibly this spiritual event in our Province life for personal and collective growth in our MSFS way of life. After receiving comments from confreres in all the Provinces, we will begin to evolve a Retreat Culture in the Congregation.

19. SPIRITUAL DIRECTORY OF SFS

Spiritual Directory of St. Francis de Sales is an expression of the worldview of St. Francis de Sales whose teachings we have chosen to follow as we seek to **LIVE JESUS** in our present day. Spiritual Directory will help us to accept, internalize, and pursue divine values, amidst challenges arising from our responsibilities, limitations, and struggles to live our commitment. The draft is now being studied in the Provinces and I look forward to your feedback before we finalize on the dynamics of the Directory.

20. FRANSALIAN ASSOCIATES/FRIENDS

The final draft on the Guidelines for Fransalian Associates/Friends is in progress. The draft will be sent to you for your review and comments before final approval is given. Once again, I request every Province to constitute 3 units of Fransalian Associates/Friends of Fransalians in your Province (if you have not done yet) with a MSFS Coordinator. Please make sure that one meeting of each unit is held before December 31, 2016.

21. CAUSE OF OUR FOUNDER

Our Team of Vice – Promoters, under the guidance of Assistant General and Chief Promoter Fr. Thumma Mariadas, is really dedicated to the cause of our Founder with a renewed fervor. We are waiting for the appointment of Fr. Pierre – Marie MASSON, a diocesan priest of Annecy who is also the Chancellor of the Diocese, to lead the diocesan level of inquiry on the cause of Fr. Mermier. I thank Fr. Yves Carron for contacting the Bishop of Annecy and identifying a priest of the Diocese of Annecy to re-open the dossier at the diocesan level.

A new prayer (in English) for the beatification of Father Mermier is approved for our use. I invite all the Provinces to circulate this prayer (with vernacular translations if needed) on a Souvenir with the picture of Father Peter Mermier on the other side.

22. INTER PROVINCE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR GRADED FORMATION

Preparatory Committee for Graded Formation (PCGF), consisting of **Frs. P.M. Joseph, Jolly Chackalackal, Sibichen Panthanmackel, Kannikai Nathan, Lawrence Jeyaraj, and Santhosh Chavarnal**, is appointed to draw up a comprehensive MSFS '*Ratio Studiorum*' (A graded Program of Formation) for the successive stages of Formation. The Graded program will take into account a detailed prospectus for VOCATION PROMOTION, MINOR SEMINARY/POSTULANCY, NOVITIATE, PHILOSOPHY, REGENCY, THEOLOGY/FINAL PROFESSION, and ON-GOING FORMATION. Fr. Noel Rebello, the Secretary for Formation assisted by two Provincials - Fr. George Panthanmackel and Fr. Benny Koottanal – will collaborate with the Committee to complete the task entrusted to them.

24. SCATTERED MSFS UNITS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND THEIR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Those Provinces, having confreres scattered in different countries with a temporary contract, are requested to spell out their vision for those units along with the vision for respective confreres engaged in ministry there. On recommendation of the General Administration, I request and encourage Provinces to consider launching into frontiers missions in one of the South East Asian countries, Spanish speaking countries, and Northern Italy.

25. DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS OF GENERAL CURIA

October 03 – 04, 2016: Provincial Curia of VIZAG meets with General Curia in VIZAG

October 06, 07, and 08, 2016: PIF – PEA meet with General Curia in VIZAG.

October 10 – 19, 2016: GENERAL CURIA MEETING at MSFS HOUSE in HYDRABAD

26. INTER PROVINCIAL LOCAL COMMUNITY

A new MSFS Inter-Provincial Local Community in German Speaking Switzerland - with Assistant Superior General as the immediate Major Superior for all matters of religious life and community life and the Provincials of respective Provinces of Confreres as their legitimate Juridical Authority - is established.

27. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM FOR TRANSPARENCY (FAST)

We have an approved financial accountability system in the Congregation for effective and transparent financial administration in every unit/community in the Congregation. Under the guidance of General Bursar, I request all Provincial Bursars and Local Bursars to fall in line with the newly developed accountability structure.

28. BOOKS PUBLISHED BY MSFS AUTHORS

Congratulations to you for your hard work and efforts!

1. Gospel Meditations for Lent: Coming Home to the Father: Fr. A. Santhiyagu

2. Joy to the World: Advent-Christmas Meditations with St. Francis de Sales: Fr. A. Santhiyagu

3. **Way of the Cross (Tamil):** Fr. S. Alexander
4. **Feast day Homilies in Telugu:** Frs. Sesetty Mariadas and Dominic Savio
5. **A Spoonful of Honey Vol. III:** Fr. Baviri Suresh Babu
6. **A Spoonful of Honey: Spiritual Thoughts of St. Francis de Sales (A Compiled Version):** Fr. Baviri Suresh Babu
7. **A Journey with St. Francis de Sales:** Fr. Baviri Suresh Babu
8. **Understanding of God, Man and the Universe - Upanishadic Perspective:** Fr. Francis Stephen
9. **Decoding Pope Francis: the Man, the Pastor, the Missionary:** Fr. Alphonse Arockiaswamy
10. **Walking with Saint Francis de Sales:** Fr. Henry Jose Kodikuthiyil
11. **Live Jesus (English) 'Vive Jesus' (Malayalam):** Fr. Mathew Kalathil
12. **Passionate for Jesus and Satan – Crafty & Creepy:** Fr. Kurian Karickal
13. **Daivathe PranayikkanKazhinjirunnenkil (Malayalam):** Fr. Kurian Karickal
14. **Vanchakante Panchathanthrangal (Malayalam):** Fr. Kurian Karickal
15. **Vachana Madhurayathilekku (Malayalam):** Fr. Kurian Karickal
16. **Veezhum Mumbu Vineethanavuka (Malayalam):** Fr. Kurian Karickal
17. **The Accent: Exploring the Path to a Rejuvenating Life:** Fr. Binu Edathumparambil
18. **Joy of the Gospel, (Bible Diary):** SFS Publications, Indian Institute of Spirituality, Bengaluru.
19. **Way of the Cross for Today -** Fr. Jacob Parappally
20. **The Meaning of Jesus Christ: An Introduction to Christology -** Fr. Jacob Parappally

29. PRAYERFUL TRIBUTE TO OUR GREAT MISSIONARIES

- **Rev. Fr. John Rodrigues** of Brazil Province, 87 years old, expired on May 13, 2016.
- **Rev. Fr. G. Dominic Savio** (48 years old), of South-East Province, Died in an accident on July 01, 2016.
- **Rev. Fr. Jose Thenganakunnel** of North- East Province (66 years old) expired on July 16, 2016.
- **Rev. Fr. Melchiades Dalgado** of Nagpur Province (87 years old) expired on July 24, 2016.
- **Rev. Fr. Alexander Kottathil** of Vizag Province 85 years old, expired on August 07, 2016.
- **Bro. George Clement Anthony** (23 years old), of Pune Province died on August 29, 2016.
- **Rev. Fr. Annem Joji Reddy** (33 years old) of Vizag Province died on August 31, 2016.
- **Rev. Fr. Sayu Cheruvil** (52 years old) of Nagpur Province died on August 31, 2016.

Eternal rest grant unto them Lord! Let perpetual light shine on our beloved brothers!

I wish you all a very happy Feast of Mother of Compassion and a Happy Founder's day!

LIVE JESUS!

Fraternally in Christ,



Father Abraham Vettuvellil, MSFS

Superior General

"Generous minds do not amuse themselves with the petty toys of rank, honor and titles. They have other things to do. Such things belong only to idle minds. Those who own pearls do not bother about shells, while those who aspire to virtue do not trouble themselves over honors."

St. Francis de Sales