

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



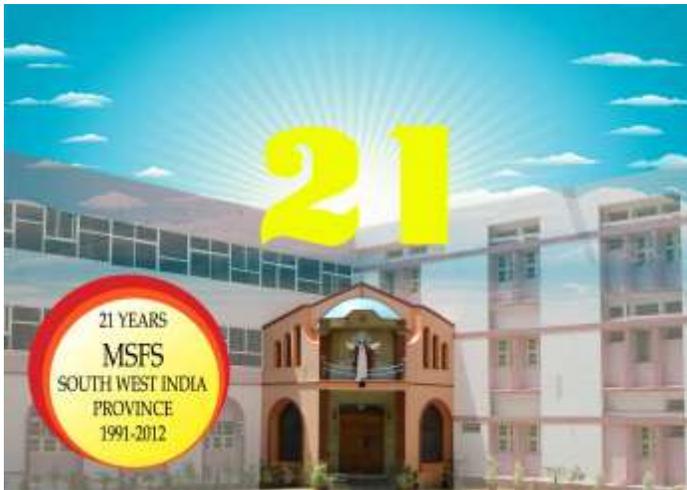
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Circular AB/10

July 06, 2012

My dear Confreres,



Fraternal greetings and prayerful wishes from Vinayalaya. The South West India Province has completed 21 years as a Province family. We celebrated our 21st anniversary of the Province on July 3rd during the Constitution retreat. We thanked the Lord at the Eucharistic celebration for all the blessings that we have received and that God's people have received through our ministries. We started as a Province with nearly 52

confreres and 4 religious communities in 1991 and today we are 210 priests and 70 scholastics, 16 novices, and 80 candidates. We have 36 communities and we have missions in Karnataka and Kerala in India, the Philippines, Chad and Cameroon, Germany, France, Austria, Italy, and America. The Lord has done great things and praised be His name. We give a standing ovation to our Former Provincials and their Administration, to all our confreres who have contributed to the growth and development of various ministries in the Province. We remember our benefactors and well-wishers who have supported us through their resources and prayers. Each one of us can be proud of our accomplishments for the Kingdom of God through His grace. I thank you all sincerely for what you are and what you continue to do for our Province family and to the Church at large. "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. It is His purpose that we proclaim His plan of salvation to all" (**Constitutions, Prologue, e**). Let us continue to stand united in heart and mind and go forward with the determination that we are going to be MSFS God wants us to be.

We are at a privileged time in the history of our Province with our rich human resources and opportunities for diverse ministries. The huge challenge before us today is to return to the basics of community life and religious life as enshrined in our Constitutions. We

need to re-affirm the centrality of the person of Jesus and the Eucharist in our communities. We need to accept the motivation of Christ as our own motivation in our mission. We need a constant renewal and conversion to community life to realize our call to consecrated life. Without community life, religious life becomes false and impotent. We will continue all our efforts to strengthen our community life for the effectiveness of our mission. We will dwell on the truth that no weapon formed against our religious community life can prosper.

1. Constitution Retreat on Community Life

The last and final constitution retreat on community life is scheduled from August 6 – 10, 2012 at Vinayalaya. So far 82 confreres have participated in the last three annual retreats and we have 48 confreres more in India to attend this mandatory retreat. Please make sure that **everyone without any exception** will attend the next retreat no matter what. The annual retreat in the Province is a spiritual event that renews the religious life and ministries in the Province. Please register your names with Fr. Prince if you have not yet registered.

2. Apostolic Community Meeting

Apostolic communities are organized to strengthen the fraternal unity among different local communities and individual confreres and to strengthen the religious life of the members. The conveners of apostolic communities make sure that you call regularly apostolic community meetings. Where conveners are transferred or completed three years of service, you may elect a new Convener and get the approval from the Major Superior. The apostolic community meetings are wonderful opportunities of support and encouragement for us in our pastoral ministry.

3. Salaries of our Confreres

In recent years, the communities in the Province have been including the salaries of the members as income of the community while making the budget. The quantum of the salaries and the number of salaried members in a community varies from community to community in our Province, resulting in a lot of disparity in the income to different communities. In order to address this matter the Provincial Administration has decided to revive a good practice we had in the Province before. It is decided that henceforth all the salaries of our confreres will be channelized into an independent account operated by the Provincial Bursar. The communities will function on budgetary proposals made taking into account the actual situation of the respective community and approved by the Provincial, independent of the salaries of the members. This is to ensure the pooling together of the income received from the services of our confreres for the common needs of the Province as decided by the Provincial. The Provincial Bursar will provide all the assistance needed in putting this decision into practice.

4. Common Education Policy of our Educational Institutions in the Province

Our Provincial Chapter had asked the Provincial Administration to appoint a core committee on education to assess and monitor the functioning of our educational institutions. While appointing the core committee, it became obvious that we should first evolve some common policies and practices for all our educational institutions so that they can be systematically and effectively assessed and monitored. Having been mandated by the Provincial Administration, the Core committee on Education had held several discussions and made a draft of a common policy of education for all our educational institutions in the Province so that we can evolve a common Fransalian culture of education in our educational apostolate. This draft was introduced in the education forum and was studied at every unit level. The draft was further modified taking into consideration the proposals received from different units. The final draft is now approved by the Provincial Administration. This document will be made available to all the members soon. A part of these policies has been already promulgated along with the last circular demarcating the role and functions of Manager, Principal and Administrator. All our educational units are requested to articulate these common policies in accordance with the actual situation of each unit and present the policy statement for each educational unit to the Provincial by the 30th of November 2012.

Fr. Thomas Payttukandathil has reached France on June 25, 2012. He is designated to be appointed for ministry in the Franco-Swiss Province.

Fr. Manu Kumbidiamakal is appointed the Acting Principal of S.F.S. College, Hebbagodi with effect from June 5, 2012

Fr. Vinoy Valachathinakathu has reached Italy on July 1, 2012 to begin his language course in preparation later for his licentiate in Scripture from **Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem.**

Fr. Balavendra Jacob has secured first class in Masters in Pastoral Management from JDV Pune. **Congratulations!**

Fr. Jerome has successfully defended his doctoral thesis on **“The New Forms of Consecrated Life according to Canon 605 with particular reference to India.”** **Congratulations!**

SFS School Srinivaspur secured 100% result after the re-valuation. **Congratulations!**

Fr. Mathew Kalathungal's appointment as Head of the Department of Missiology at St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore is extended for a term of three years with effect from June 1, 2012

Fr. Wilson Kottam's service as Principal of St. Joseph College of Communication in the Archdiocese of Changanacherry is extended for one more year with effect from June, 2012

Fr. Aneesh Palathadathil is pursuing a three year diploma course in Mechanical Engineering in Karnataka State Open University.

Bros. Enthunkal Aneesh and Thuruthipallil Jose have reached Bonlieu, to begin their theological studies at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

5. Regional Formators' Seminar at Vizag in the month of September

The Regional Formation Forum (Councillors in Charge of Formation, the Conveners, and the Provincials of all six Indian Provinces with the General Secretary of Formation) will meet in Stella Maris, Visakhapatnam for the First Regional Formation Forum Meeting from September 1 – 4, 2012.

6. Provincial Vicar

Fr. Jose Parappillil will be the Provincial Vicar during my absence from July 7 to August 4, 2012. Please contact the Provincial Vicar in case of urgent consultation and other needs.

7. SFS Seminary, Ettumanoor was reopened on June 5, 2012 with 30 students: 10 third year students and 20 second year students. The First Years came on June 15. They were formally received into the seminary during the Sunday Mass when a copy of PRAY ALWAYS was given to each one of them and praying over them. There are 21 first years. Some of them were home sick in the beginning but now they seem to have adjusted to the seminary life. On June 22 the Provincial along with Fr. Jose Parappillil, the Provincial Admonitor, Fr. Benny Koottanal, Councillor in charge of Formation paid us a visit. During the community meeting of the Fathers, Fr. Benny, quoting the constitution, reminded us of the necessity of being committed to the work of formation. The Provincial reminded us of the importance of community life and brought to our attention some relevant portions from the latest circular dealing with THE GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL SUPERIORS AND COMMUNITIES. The following day (23.6.2012) during the Mass, presided over by the Provincial, the 10 third year students were formally initiated into Postulancy and during the Homily the Provincial spoke of the significance of the Rite and further reflected on the Gospel of the day.

Fr. Jose Maliekal, Rector

8. Sannidhi-The New Minor Seminary

It was a long felt desire of our confreres in the Province to start a minor seminary in Karnataka. This desire of the confreres became a reality on June 17, 2012 as the new minor seminary at Sannidhi was inaugurated with a batch of 24 students from different parts of Karnataka. The event was witnessed by Fr. Noel Rebello, the General Councillor in charge of Formation, Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil, the Provincial, Fr. Benny Koottanal,

Councillor in charge of Formation, MSFS confreres and the representatives from the nearby religious communities. Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil presided over the Eucharistic Celebration, invoking God's abundant blessings on our young brothers and Fr. Noel Rebello motivated the students through breaking the Word. Fr. Noel exhorted the students to LIVE Jesus and entrust everything to the care of Mother Mary. After the Communion Fr. Provincial gave the Bible, Prayer book (Pray Always) and rosary to all the brothers as a sign of welcome and initiation to the minor seminary

Fr. Balavendra Jacob, Rector

9. Inter-Provincial Minor Seminary:

On June 15, 2012 the day of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Phase II of Minor Seminary to attend to the formation needs of the candidates who join the Congregation after Completing Std. XII of the School System was initiated temporarily in the campus of PSI Seva Bhavan, Malur (Kolar District, Karnataka). Fr. Noel Rebello, the General Councillor in-charge of Formation began the Eucharistic Celebration at 5:00pm and offered the Mass for the Rector, Fr. Sebastian Vellarmkunnel and Procurator, Fr. N.A.Clean and 32 candidates belonging to six Indian provinces along with the six Indian Provincials namely, Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil, Fr. A. Dharmaraj, Fr. Jacob Karamakuzhy, Fr. Francis Thadathil, Fr. Simon Paicat and Fr. Vincent Lourduswamy and few confreres from Kolar Apostolic Community. The programme ended with a photo session at 7:00 pm and thereafter dinner was served to all the members present for the programme.

Fr. D. Jeevan Prasad

10. New Religious Community of MSFS at FIDESIndia and NEST, Kengeri

“For more effectiveness in community living and for guidance in the apostolate entrusted to the confreres at FIDESIndia and NEST,” with the permission of the Superior General a new religious community of MSFS at FIDESIndia and NEST, Kengeri was constituted on June 16, 2012. Fr Henry Jose was officially installed as the Superior as per the rites prescribed. In the Eucharistic Celebration Fr Abraham Vettuvellil, the Provincial stressed the importance of community life for a religious. He said “the formation of the new community would certainly enhance the better functioning of the various ministries.” The Eucharistic celebration was followed by a short felicitation program by the children in the NEST. The function was well attended by a number of our confreres from the Apostolic Community and also by religious from the neighboring areas.

Bro. Jijo Manjackal

11. Mission Week, SFS Church, Hebbagodi

The mission week began on June 25 and concluded on June 31, 2012. It was a daily evening programme wherein the faithful would gather in the church by 6 p.m. and one or two of the religious congregations in the parish would present 10-15 minutes about their challenging lives in the mission areas or countries in the world. After which a movie each

was screened on the lives of missionaries or saints or martyrs who died for Christ and the Gospel. On the final day i.e., Saturday, 31/06/2012 the last day of the MISSION WEEK, Rev. Fr. Moses, the dean of the place offered solemn mass at 5 p.m. and distributed the certificates for all the Altar servers who attended the Altar Server's Camp in April and were certified by the bishop to serve at any church in the diocese. The faithful as well as the religious appreciated the event as it would foster vocations and make people aware of their evangelical duty to preach and live the Gospel. The event concluded by 6. p.m.

Fr. Subin Puzhakkara

12. S.F.S. School, Kannur

We have purchased 82.5 cents of land near our school facility at Kannur to satisfy the requirements for NOC from the State Government and affiliation from CBSC.

13. Change of Address and Phone Numbers

Fr. Josey Ponnambal

St. Thomas Church
Vikas Vani Junction, Thengode P.O.,
Kakkanad, Cochin- 30, Kerala
Mob: 9497094385

Fr. Jose Kokkandam: 9481782570
Fr. Jaison Kollarayath: 9947407454
Fr. Lalu Thadathilankal: 9591458488
Fr. Pangi Raj: 9538167049
Fr. Joseph Pulpara: 9844393823
Fr. Valliamthadathil George:
8762686278

Fr. Maliekal Jose: 8281312899
Fr. Thomas Anchanickal: 9747475731
Fr. Balavendra Jacob: 8105439481
Fr. Jacob Parappally: 8281151948
Fr. Joseph Kannadom: 9448936896

14. Let us pray for the Departed



Rev. Fr. Jacob Pathupallil (1927-2012)

Rev. Fr. Jacob Pathupallil, was born on June 5, 1927 at Pala, Kottayam, Kerala. He joined Palai Mission Home in the year 1946. He completed his philosophical and Theological studies at St. Joseph's Apostolic Seminary Aluva, Kerala. He had his novitiate at Margoa and made his First Religious Profession in the MSFS Congregation on May 14, 1952. He was ordained a priest on March 18, 1956 at St. Joseph's Apostolic Seminary Chapel, Aluva, Kerala by Rt. Rev. Joseph Attipetty of Varapuzha diocese. For the past 56 years as a priest he has served the church and the Congregation both as a pastor and a formator. On June 4, 2012 he had a Cardio-respiratory arrest and left to his eternal reward at 7.00 am. He was laid to rest at the Gnanapuram cemetery.

I request all those who have not fulfilled the suffrages, to do the same at the earliest (Const. No 118; General Directory No. 98)

Let us pray for **Anama Uthuppan** (92 yrs), grandmother of Fr. Majish Vallisserikettil who passed away on June 21, 2012.

Sr. Annie John FCC, sister of Fr. George Chirayil passed away on July 4, 2012. She was 77 years old.

My Program:

July 7 – 24: Visitation of Confreres in Germany and Austria

July 25 – August 4: North American Syro – Malabar Convention in Atlanta, USA

August 4 -8: Vinayalaya, Bangalore

August 9 -11: Karnataka Regional Conference of Religious in Dharward

Salesian Thought:

“As long as you live you will always find something of yourself to renounce... We must not grow weary in this work, for we ought to begin and end the spiritual life with the renunciation of our self - will”

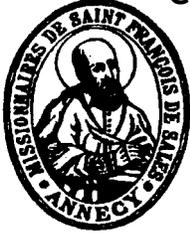
St. Francis de Sales

Fraternally in Christ,



Fr. Abraham Vettuvil MSFS
Provincial Superior

(Please find below the Circular of Rev. Fr. Superior General to all the members of the Congregation)



CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

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15th June 2012
Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

LETTER FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL TO ALL THE MEMBERS

My Dear Confreres,

I am glad to greet you today when we celebrate the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is a feast dear to the MSFS. This Feast liturgically and through the symbol of the icon of the Most Sacred Heart makes the Salesian spirituality Christ's own plan and will for each one of us. On every First Friday of the month, the tradition of our Congregation obliges the Superior General to offer the Eucharist and pray for the Congregation. It is my honour and privilege to remember you today and offer you and all your works in the mission as our sacrifice of joy and worship to God. Everything done in love and for God's glory, however small and however difficult, contributes to the building of the reign of God amidst us. Be joyful wherever you are! Be joyful in doing what is entrusted to you! Your work is ours and our work is for the growth of God's people and for His glory. Do continue to grow in your commitment wherever you are and remain ever joyful. I wish you a Happy Feast.

FR MERMIER, OUR FOUNDER 150th Death Anniversary: 30th Sept 2012

The Year 212 and the year 2013 are important years for the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales. On 30th Sept 2012 the Congregation

will celebrate 150th anniversary of the death of the Founder, Fr Peter Mary Mermier. On 24th October 2013 the Congregation will complete 175 years of its foundation. These two events are signposts reminding how far we have travelled , the legacy we have inherited and the responsibility that rests on our shoulders to pass on the authentic legacy to a new era and to a new generation .Every historical moment is full of challenging possibilities and precious opportunities. For us MSFS these two moments are invitations to deepen our renewal and rootedness in the Founder and widen our horizons of missionary being and availability.

"I want mission" was the sole desire of the Founder and that desire summed up his desire for *"Christ the first missionary leader in every mission "* and his yearning *" to live in a community of brothers"* for mission . That clarion call was the expression of his missionary zeal, a continuation of the living of Salesian spirituality of the Apostle of Chablis, in the crucible of priestly and missionary apostolate. Therefore a phrase, like *"I want mission"* coming from the mouth of our Founder, is loaded with meaning. Its face value defies the density of thought it embodies. It startles us with the three fold demands of our MSFS identity: to live in a religious community, to be Salesian to the core and to be generously available for the missions.

The sequence of our several General Chapters in the past and the themes chosen have attempted to bring to our realization the threefold dimensions of our charism without which no Fransalian can be an MSFS . Rightly so, as Vatican 11 points out to us the sure way for renewal of religious congregations to vibrate with new energy for the modern times is to return to the sources , to the hearts of their founders , be re-anointed with the original spiritual founding experience and be inserted into the stream of culture of the time. This backward journey to go forward, the inner journey to the heart of the founder to lay solid foundation of unity in mission today comes as a result of a profound love and appreciation for the founder, the father of the religious family. To make this journey we need not wait for the founder to be canonized. Those of us who do not esteem the holiness of our founder will never start the process of renewal because we will not have the courage to make the journey to our sources. Therefore, the 150th death anniversary of our Founder must instill in us a very personal, intimate and filial

relationship that cherishes the Founder and his heart in which the Holy Spirit had instilled the gift of the charism of our Congregation that we share with him.

Our Congregation, like any living organism has its story of growth and decay to tell. We would be failing in truth if we were to point out only the growth dimensions of our personal and collective life. There are signs in us of being buffeted by winds of materialism and secularization; signs of wavering in fidelity to our commitments. Thus, what is essential to be an MSFS fails to glow in its simplicity and brilliance. I would say these temptations are not surprising when we get stuck in the way of understanding our “way of life” as handed down to us by our Founder and which had its origin in the gift of the charism that God gave to him. Falling afresh in love with our vocation as MSFS is the only way to be joy-filled MSFS.

The temptation to own the positive and deny the negative or blame the negative on others would be a simplistic approach to finding a remedy. Each of us are the part of the problem as well as the part of the solution. Deep collective humility will lead us to finding the right responses to the challenges of starting afresh to be vibrant MSFS in today’s world.

On the occasion of the 150th death anniversary of our Founder, let me place before you a few personal reflections that may assist us to return to our roots and have the strength that is needed for renewal

FR MERMIER, A MAN OF MISSIONARY ZEAL

Passion for the Gospel and for humans was an outstanding quality of Fr Mermier from the time of his early priesthood days. Heightened sensitivity to the situation of the people who were indifferent to God after the French Revolution increased in him a creative determination to respond to it with a programme of parish missions to bring back the fervor in faith in the people. The zeal was manifest in his hard work that prepared meticulously the parish missions, the homilies and other programmes to ensure a concentrated effort that would enable the Holy Spirit to make its way to the hearts that had gone cold and indifferent to God and to matters of faith.

Zeal for the salvation of others made him zealous for his own soul. Thus he ensured personal fervor in prayer and in the study of the Scriptures and Morals. His zeal in missions was persevering till the goal was reached and he would not give up that easily. When response was not forthcoming, he and his companion would stop a while the preaching of missions and retire to a chapel to implore before God for the people. The example of the praying missionaries touched the people to the core and they opened themselves to the grace of conversion. Care and attentiveness to persons made him find solutions that were not stereotyped but those suiting each individual.

Fr Mermier was enthusiastic in all that he did and wherever he went, with incurable optimism. This spirit was so striking to the local bishops that, when there was a most difficult situation to be attended to, they did not hesitate to ask Fr Mermier to handle it. And handle he did with the greatest trust in the Providence of God. Our acceptance of the educational apostolate began when the Bishop of Annecy asked the Missionaries to infuse new spirit of renewal for which they were known in the deteriorating institution of the College of Melan. Due to great insistence of the Bishop, Fr Mermier dared to accept the educational apostolate ensuring that it would be a springboard for the missionaries to infuse the spirit of renewal of faith in the young minds and hearts of the children. Zeal looks out for creative solutions to hopeless situations. And that is what the Missionaries did when they took over the college of Melan that had badly deteriorated administratively as well as academically.

Recapturing passion for what is entrusted to us will go a long way in making us profess as sons of Fr. Mermier in the Church. Zeal and ardour, fervour and enthusiasm in prayer, in communications, in relationships, in preaching the Good News, in attending to daily chores of life, in facing a difficult problem, in finding the appropriate response to a formidable challenge, are the mermerian reflexes that we need to cultivate to make the missionary zeal of our Founder an ever present reality at the service of the mission today. Zeal means to come alive with attentive care in every moment and in every task with a heart filled with divine presence and the love of God. Nothing is too small for zeal not to notice its potential. Nothing is too great for zeal to be over-awed by its immensity.

FR MERMIER'S SOUL OF THE APOSTOLATE WAS PRAYER AND SALESIAN SPIRITUALITY

Fr Mermier was very much aware of the spirit of activism that could easily supplant missionary activity in his newly found missionary congregation. Hence the constant insistence on fostering of interior life. Hence the constant reminder by the Founder of "the one thing necessary: *"Here is the specific remedy for all our illnesses, for all our spiritual weaknesses. Here is the answer to all the objections, to all the practical doubts which arise all along our sad pilgrimage. Here is the safe harbor against the storms which stir up around us, the temptations of the devil, and the scandals of the world and the attractions of the passions. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his soul? Love God with one's whole heart, with one's whole soul, with one's whole spirit, with one's whole strength and love the neighbour as one self. Here is the one thing necessary, here is the missionary, here is the apostle, here is the happiness, the true happiness, the unique happiness of the human person in the world"* (Letter to Jean Thevenet 28th July 1852)

The missionaries of the Congregation Fr Mermier founded are to be contemplatives in action, mystics of God's love. Their apostolates are to transmit that contemplative experience to others and further deepen it.

According to Fr Mermier through prayer a missionary retains the health, freshness and affectivity of his being. Without prayer, we turn into an arid desert, emaciated persons that invite weakness and sickness. The works of such a missionary communicate weakness and sickness rather than abundance of life in Christ. He dares to say that the activity of a man who does not pray is harmful for mission and promotes death. *"What happens to the missionary activity of a priest who is not a man of prayer?..... His is a barren ministry, without an effect, even harmful: it is a ministry of death which instead of enlightening blinds, instead of healing, kills. But the ministry of one who prays is a ministry of life; it is virtue, it is the power of God, it is divine ministry. It is Jesus Christ in the midst of men."* (Letter to Jean Thevenet, 28th July 1852)

Prayer is the first soul of the apostolate of a missionary. Every generation, every moment of history will have to keep echoing these powerful sentiments of the Founder and be converted to it on a daily

basis. Carrying forth the missionary project of Fr. Mermier demands that we remain rooted in prayer, grow in profound communion with Him, live in His presence so that when we are asked to be present in the critical moments of people's lives, be it in the birth of children, marriages, sicknesses, counseling,, reconciliations, deaths we shine forth as assuring and comforting presence of Christ Himself.

The second soul of the Apostolate (if we may call it a second soul) is the practice of Salesian spirituality. No spirituality, according to Fr Mermier, is so all-embracing and so pastorally effective as the practice of Salesian spirituality. *“Our Founder, Father Peter Mermier, presents to us St Francis de Sales as our Patron and model. Living the spirit and spirituality of St Francis de Sales in our mission is the Charism that gives identity to our Congregation and is its distinguishing mark”* (ref: Const 7).Therefore our Founder wants us to become more like Christ after the example of St Francis de Sales (ref. Const 8) He challenges us to be another St. Francis de Sales in our times. Just as SFS saw in the disfigurement of humans the disfigurement of God, just as he found in false doctrines of his time, slackening of faith and unfounded fear to draw near to a compassionate God , just as he saw fragmentation within and among themselves and indiscrimination in the name of class , gender and positions (ref. Const 5) , Fr Mermier wants us to critically and sensitively look at our modern situation of materialism and secularism , violence and terrorism, and invites us like SFS to be innovative and creative at the service of the Gospel.

Being all things for all and with a profoundly human approach, with humility and simplicity, confidence and firm gentleness, welcoming attitude and hospitality, apostolic zeal and joyful holiness missionary approaches will gather people of all nations and cultures into God's family, God's own kingdom. (ref. Const. No. 8)

Living Salesian spirituality renders the smallest details of our life evangelical and has evangelizing effect .Having assimilated the Salesian spirituality, Fr Mermier echoes the familiar strains of Salesian spirituality of love in his writings and in his advice and counsels:

“We do a lot in doing a little, if we do it for God and as He wills “(Fr Mermier)

“The love of God turns everything into gold” (Fr Mermier)

“There is no need to live a long life, but simply to live well what we have
“(Fr Mermier).

“Nothing is impossible to God. He can do anything He wills. He enjoys choosing beings that are damaged, weak, and of little worth, so as to confound the argumentative, the stubborn and the presumptuous, to do great things with nothing.” (Fr Mermier).

In advising us to be another SFS, he himself strove to live this ideal and has left us the inspiration of a life that was suffused with the perfume of Salesian spirituality.

FR MERMIER’S LOVE FOR MISSIONS ABROAD.

“Missions abroad” after “parish missions” was one of the first missionary loves of our Founder. He was absolutely clear what he meant by “missions abroad”. He concretized the desire by opting concretely to go to Africa. Due to historical and ecclesiastical reasons, he welcomed and accepted the mission in India. India and Africa in the times of Fr Mermier, and what India and Africa needed evangelically in those times, were the predilection of Fr Mermier. He remained focused on it by way of investing human and material resources. We wonder why more missions were not started in Europe. Perhaps, that was not for his Congregation at that time. God has His plans through other congregations and Orders to take care of the evangelical needs of the people. He was convinced his family of the congregation was for situations like that in Africa and India.

When we try to interpret what Missions abroad mean for MSFS today, we need to be sensitive to the desire that was in the heart of Fr Mermier. The desire to go to Africa or to India in the heart of Fr Mermier was a symbolic gesture of reaching out to human situations and brokennesses of people as found in Africa and India of his time. Now that our congregation has taken roots in places like India, Africa, Brazil, England, France and Switzerland, and is in the process of taking roots in other developing and developed world, the question uppermost in our discernment would be to which situations does the Lord call us today and how can we remain faithful to the heart’s yearning of our Founder. In the Church’s eagerness to launch into the second evangelization, what would be the response of the Congregation to an

invitation that comes from the Bishops of affluent countries which were traditionally Christian and which face the onslaught of secularization? Are we prepared to offer ourselves as agents of renewal of faith as was Fr Mermier? What needs to be done to give an effective mermerian and Salesian response? Where should be our primary missionary thrust? How do we gear our formation initial and ongoing to that thrust? How do we situate our secondary missionary thrust within the primary missionary thrust? Questions such as these need a collective discernment inspired by creative fidelity under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Discernment in this direction needs to be addressed by every confrere and contribute to the final discernment by the General Chapter.

“Missions Abroad” for Fr Mermier, during his life time was in India and later in England. From the vast Indian territory entrusted to it, within the history of 175 years, the Congregation has sowed efforts that have borne fruits by way of establishment of at least 12 local churches (dioceses).The effort was sworn in sweat and blood, in courage and daring, in hope and in joy, in total disinvestment and utter generosity.

The mission to go to England was accepted by Fr Mermier during his lifetime. He knew well that renewal of faith in a country that did not appreciate Catholicism would be the right response of an MSFS. To foster genuine dialogue in faith and proper conversion to Jesus, the Lord and Savior by living the spirituality of St Francis de Sales would be the reason for our presence in such a country of that time. The English Province has completed 150 years of its existence , another milestone of a “mission abroad “ and of which we can be proud for having given exemplary missionaries that established the presence of the Congregation on the English soil.

From England the confreres started a community of MSFS in USA, which existed as an American Mission for a long time and from which we have now a USA Region . The American Mission gave us local American vocations and also absorbed confreres from Europe and India.

“Mission Abroad” found a new expression on new frontiers of Brazil in 1926 when our confreres landed there to be at the service of the local church and to implant the Congregation. The missionary zeal of the confreres that landed in Brazil from France and Switzerland and later

from India was exceptional and their efforts to foster local vocations did give us local vocations. Tirelessly they worked for the local churches .The beautiful cathedral of Caçador built by our confreres is a fitting symbolic monument of the decades of mission of renewal of faith that they carried in spite of the upheavals in religious congregations after the Second Vatican Council.

A further missionary impetus started 24 years ago when the confreres of Visakh Province landed in East Africa to fulfill the dormant yearning of Fr Mermier to serve in Africa .This missionary movement was followed in subsequent years by confreres of North-East province in South Africa and Namibia; the confreres of South-West Province in Chad, Cameroon, and Philippines; the confreres of Nagpur Province in Mozambique. A team of confreres from Franco-Swiss Province and Indian provinces launched a missionary project in Chile in 1994.

The chequered early history and saga of events and happenings of each of these missions is a tribute to the humble effort of the sons of Fr Mermier to say in deed “I want Missions” .We need to recapture these missionary reflexes of our early missionaries who were so close to the spirit of Fr Mermier, and live it in our days. Thus history will continue to bear witness to the legacy of Fr Mermier as lived and expressed in his spiritual sons of today.

Today, the presence of a large number of confreres in Germany, Austria, Holland, the German-speaking Switzerland, Italy, West Indies, Papua New Guinea, Australia and Canada calls for a clear direction and systematic planning for the future. We need to address the concerns of all these missions with the same yearnings of the missionary heart of our charismatic Founder: “ I want mission”. We need to revisit the original missionary intuition of Fr. Mermier in redefining our vision and mission in these countries which will also be an important task of the forthcoming General Chapter.

On 30th September 2012, our Mother Province of Franco-Swiss will celebrate the 150th death anniversary of Fr Mermier at the Basilica of the Visitation, Annecy, where the mortal remains of our Founder rest. There will be a celebration of the Holy Eucharist presided over by the Bishop of Annecy. I invite all Provincials and all superiors to encourage local communities to organize this event in their localities with

meaningful programmes that will manifest our loyalty to our Founder and the gratitude to God for the gift of our charism.

APPOINTMENTS

In the General Council Meeting of April 2012 , with the consent of the General Council the Superior General made the following appointments:

Fr Simon Paicatt is appointed as the Provincial Superior of Visakhapatnam Province for the second term of 3 years beginning from 15th August 2012;

Fr Gilbert Bugnon is appointed as the Provincial Superior of Brazil Province for the second term of 3 years beginning from 15th September 2012.

The following appointment was made by the Superior General on recommendation by the Governing Body of Suvidya College:

Fr George Panthanmackel as the Director of Suvidya Institute and Rector of Suvidya College, Bangalore, India with effect from 24th April 2012

With understanding with the concerned Provincials of the concerned confreres, the following appointments were made by the Superior General:

Fr Varghese Chettupuzhakaren as the local superior of MSFS Local Community in Rome for the second term of 3 years beginning from 1st July 2012

Fr Harris Ebin Christopher as the Secretary of the Superior General for the second term of 3 years beginning from 1st July 2012 and belonging to the MSFS Local Community in Rome.

My sincere gratitude to each of them for their dedication and generosity at the service of the members and the Congregation and wish them abundant blessings of God in their varied responsibilities.

PREPARATION FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER

I wish to give you an update on the preparations for the General Chapter 2013.

The Pre-Capitular Commission has met twice. One of its meetings was with the General Council in April 2012 in Hyderabad. It is intensively engaged in preparing for **collation of the reports, suggestions and recommendations from all the confreres** based on the Preparation outline sent to all the confreres in 2011 and which you are expected to send to the General Secretary either through the arrangements made in groups for study of the three Papers or individually.

The preparations also consist **in identifying core issues and concerns and present them** to the concerned to get their viewpoints and understanding so that the capitulants will have as much knowledge and wide spectrum of alternatives from which the General Chapter can discern the best for the good of the Congregation.

Another way in which the preparation is going on is by gathering statistical, factual and evaluatory **reports from the General Curia members, the Provincials, and other committees** that were appointed for implementing certain objectives that were entrusted to them.

The Superior General, with the consent of the General Council, has also **invited representatives of confreres from those distant "mission units" which are directly under a province or under the General Administration** to participate in the specific sessions and discussions dealing with the particular concerns of those units so that more effective deliberations can take place .

The work of the Pre-Capitular Commission also consists in **organizing the time-table of the General Chapter** so that all concerns get the proper time and attention .The work is already in progress.

Five years after the revised Constitutions and the General Directory came into effect, a number of areas that need redrafting, clarity and amendments have been brought to our notice by confreres and

especially by those who have been in the teaching and animation of our MSFS Constitutions in formation houses and in administration. To study these proposals and others of constitutional nature the Superior General has appointed a committee consisting of **Fr Thomas Kapiliparambil, Fr Ignaci Muthu and Fr Jerome Anthonnappa** to present their work to the Pre-capitular commission.

Our **unity in prayer for the 19th General Chapter** is our daily pleading with God to send His Holy Spirit in the hearts of each and every one of us so that we may know His ways, understand His plans and accept His Will through the discernment processes of the General Chapter. Openness to the Holy Spirit alone will make our General Chapter a spiritual event of far reaching consequences of renewal, communion and missionary dynamism in the Congregation. I invite you to continue to pray with faith and total trust and confidence.

With fraternal greetings and with best wishes
Yours devotedly



Fr Agnelo Agostinho Fernandes, MSFS
Superior General