



SGAB-03/2013

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

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SUPERIOR GENERAL TO ALL THE MISSIONARIES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

My dear brothers in the Lord,

I greet you in the joy of Christmas season and in the hope of another spirit-filled New Year 2014!

The season of Advent has just begun and we will be listening to the preaching of John the Baptist in our Liturgy of the Word in preparation for the joy of welcoming Jesus, the Savior of the world. John the Baptist goes into the desert in quest of a mission-vision plan for his ministry where he faces aloneness, boredom, dryness, aridity, in his own naked and vulnerable self. But he returns with a message with clarity and authenticity that reveals a totally surrendered man. He is free from his own agenda and his own religious and cultural system and attachments. He wore a garment of camel hair and he lived on locusts and wild honey. This is not the costume and food habit of someone from a priestly class. His father and mother were of the priestly class (Luke 1: 5- 6). John presents to us what it means to blend a Mystic and Prophet, and invites us to embrace the mystic and prophet in each of us by embracing our own naked and vulnerable self and revealing ourselves as totally surrendered men of God.

Year 2013 is almost ending. We have had grand celebrations of our 175th Jubilee of our Foundation in almost every Province and in every Local Community, and the celebration of the Year of Faith at different levels in our places of ministry. We re-visited our past and remembered our pioneering missionaries in the Jubilee Year.

Year 2013 has been, I believe, a year of blessings and challenges, light and darkness, good and bad, life and death, right and wrong, attractive and non-attractive, success and failure. We have further grown, this year, in our awareness that everything has different sides, levels, perspectives and potential problems that it carries along with. We have grown in our awareness that life is a paradox and YOU and I are living paradoxes. A paradox is something that appears to be a contradiction, but from another perspective it is not a contradiction at all. As I write this circular and as you read it, YOU and I begin to see already the paradox or apparent contradiction within yourself and myself. If you can hold and forgive this contradiction within yourself, you can normally do it in everywhere and in everyone else. If you cannot do it in yourself, you will probably create and project conflicts and contradictions everywhere. Hold, recognize, and forgive the contradiction with its tension within until it transforms you.

The Jubilee Year 2013 has sufficiently clarified to us our heritage, charism, and identity as MSFS. Our missionary heritage and our identity are profoundly linked. One who forgets his roots does not know who he is. The better connected we are to our missionary roots and the more deeply we understand our Salesian spiritual tradition and the spirit of our Founder, the better we will understand ourselves and our identity as MSFS in the body of Christ.

Year 2014 is at hand. I invite us all to understand our past and our founding Charism better and deeper so that we may go forward into the future with renewed zeal and fervor. We need to build our future together. What shall we focus on 2014?

A. Let me propose SEVEN themes for your prayer, reflection, discernment, and implementation for the coming year:

1. Tension between Charism and Structure

Tension between our founding charism and our present structure is a great opportunity to go back to the roots. The rich heritage that was transmitted to our Congregation was the thorough missionary imprint according to the heart of our Divine Savior and the spirit of the 'Apostle of Chablais'. The apostolate of Parish mission for the renewal of Christian faith was the founding charism of our Congregation. The first group of preachers, attracted to the parish mission of Father Mermier, felt the need of a community to support their spiritual life and apostolate. Father Mermier declared: **"I am totally dedicated to mission work, to the hallowed and noble purpose of our Savior who, as the first Missionary, is the leader of every mission"**. Today, we are almost 1300 confreres in the Congregation including the scholastics. We have branched off into almost 26 countries in the world with our missionary spirit and dynamism. Unfortunately, there are less than 3% of our confreres engaged in preaching parish missions or retreats for the renewal of Christian Faith, the founding charism of our Congregation. This is a disturbing statistics for us to work upon.

"Every Province must make efforts to have a Renewal/Spirituality Centre to promote and strengthen Parish Missions and other ministries. The Provinces with scarcity of members must form Retreat Teams/designate one or two members for renewal ministry" (Call of General Chapter 2013, p.20)

2. Love for the Inner reality of the Congregation

There is often a temptation today to evaluate our Congregation and our identity in an external and superficial way. We are tempted to value the riches of having prestigious institutions and professionalized ministries, the honor of being esteemed by others, and the pride of being influential in the society. We are tempted to compare ourselves with other religious congregations and end up in self-pitying. We need to go beyond the external and superficial. We need to promote among us and others a sense of love and appreciation for the inner reality of our Congregation: the values of our missionary heritage, our spiritual traditions rooted in St. Francis de Sales, the self-sacrificing spirit of our pioneering missionaries, the wealth of human resources and the possibilities of missionary expansion. Pope Francis has brought in a new style of openness and simplicity to the Vatican. He said he wanted to see a 'Church that is poor and for the poor'. He has urged all members of clergy to leave their comfortable palaces and get out among the poor and needy. Pope Francis gives us a model to discover and love the inner reality of the Church. Let us embrace the inner realities of our Congregation and the Church.

3. Fraternal Community

Father Mermier wanted the members of the Congregation, both in Europe and in India, to live as one community with a sense of belongingness. He was convinced that religious life lived in community was indispensable for mission work. When the first six missionaries came to India, they were held up in Pondicherry for almost four months as the Vicar Apostolic of Madras refused to give them canonical faculties. This is what Father Jacques Martin, the Superior of the Indian community, wrote to Father Mermier on January 9, 1846 from Pondicherry: "... ***On the first of each month, we read our rules, examine our resolutions and practice fraternal correction.... I do nothing without consulting them. We are strong because we are well-united. This union of hearts is a great grace***". General Chapter 2013 stated: '***Our religious life and missionary commitment is lived in a local community and through community-based ministries***'.

Fraternal community demands that we listen to each other with mutual respect even when there are opinions of disagreement. Community life is the greatest witness to our missionary work. ***The communities must be symbols of reconciliation, harmony, and peace to every Christian community. Young confreres should transcend all regional and national prejudices and barriers and come forward to form teams and work together in interstate and international communities as brothers, a witness which the world badly stands in need of*** (Father Antony Mookenthottam, 'MSFS: Toward Third Millennium' in 150 Years MSFS on Indian Soil, p. 334).

4. Exercise of Authority and Witness

There are personal experiences of superiors and the use of their authority that are sometimes traumatizing. There are also personal experiences of young confreres approaching religious life with difficulties in accepting authority. There is a wide range of behaviours in religious communities, ranging from those who almost always accept to those who systematically refuse and oppose any proposal. The exercise of authority requires of superiors a personal and pastoral relationship with the members of the Community. We need some reflection on how to exercise authority and how to accept authority. Authority demands from the superior an attitude of stepping back so that others can grow and it involves accompanying the members of the community with the voice of the Lord and with a personal approach. Confreres look for role models and exemplary religious in the authority of the superiors. It is true that our model of authority is connected to fraternity (equality, respect, service, and dialogue) but paternity is an important role of a superior. It is important to use the word 'Father' in relation to Superior. Authority as value and the exercise of authority are to be distinguished.

5. FRANCIS EFFECT' on our Consecrated life as MSFS

Person of Pope Francis has caught the imagination of almost all of us. He has demonstrated to the world a new way of being Pope, not as a strategy but as a spontaneous expression that is coming from his heart. We are challenged, I believe, by his courage to speak out the essentials of the message of the Gospel and to speak out the nature of the Church more and more as a 'horizontally structured Church' and less and less as a 'vertically structured Chruch'. What is really new in his leadership style? People of Buenos Aires tell us that "Pope was always like this". What is new is his position? The position does not change him but he changes the position. This is an invitation to all of us in our religious life. The basics remain the same: simplicity, authenticity, humility, not all knowing, close to God and close to the truth. Pope

Francis invites us to a new mind-set of life-witness and simplicity. He said: "***The first reform must be the attitude. The ministers of the Gospel must be people who can warm the hearts of the people, who walk through the dark night with them, how know how to dialogue and to descend themselves into their people's night, into the darkness, but without getting lost. The people of God want pastors, not clergy acting like bureaucrats or government officials***". Our vocation is to look at and see the world from the periphery as people of God see and show us the periphery.

6. From Annecy to India and From India to Africa

'The congregational focus on the Mission in Africa is the urgent need. In this regard, Inter-Province collaboration and pooling of resources are called for' (Call of General Chapter 2013, no.17, p.16). From the time of the foundation of our Congregation, Foreign Missions had a huge place in the big plan of Father Mermier. He expressed his desire to go to Africa and he was even ready to go to Liberia. But the territory of Visakhapatnam was entrusted to the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales. So the first wave of Missionaries was heading from Annecy to India from 1845 and today Indian mission has developed into six Provinces in India and one Province in East Africa, with other mission units in different countries and with Indian confreres in other Provinces. The second wave of missionary journey has already begun from India to Africa since 1989. We have nearly 150 MSFS today in the vast mission continent of Africa, engaged in pastoral ministries scattered over nine countries. The spirit of Father Mermier and the hard work of the pioneering missionaries rooted in the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales continue to set on fire the hearts of many young Missionaries from India to move on with the mission of the Lord. We look forward to many more young confreres to be trained and equipped for missionary life in Africa. Each Province in India is requested to make earnest effort to identify and promote young and dynamic missionaries to energize the missionary focus of the Congregation to Africa in the coming years. Scholastics can already respond to the clarion call 'I want Missions' and prepare their MSFS vocation for missions in Africa.

7. Our roots are in Annecy and will always be in Annecy

We have definitely grown as a Congregation and we have been thanking the Lord throughout the Jubilee Year and we will continue to thank the Lord for the blessings. What define the nature of our Congregation are the two words: **Missionaries** and **St. Francis de Sales**. We are Missionaries and St. Francis de Sales is our model and source of inspiration and spirituality. Today we can almost say that the Congregation is 90% Indian as majority of the members are from India. Indian confreres are almost in every Province. Congregation has a strong presence in India. The growth of the Indian Provinces is phenomenal. Annecy to India and India to Africa has been the double movement of the Congregation in the past 175 years. Does the demography of the Congregation today make it an Indian Congregation? Does it mean our Congregation is Indian? The words of our beloved Founder remind us: "***The house of the Congregation is at Annecy close to the tomb and relics of its illustrious and glorious protector and patron. It is from there, as from a centre, that the Congregation hopes to extend itself in the diocese and even further if it pleases the sovereign Master of the Harvest to bless it and give it growth***" (Memoir of 1839, title VIII). No matter where the members come from and no matter how far and wide we stretch out, our roots are in Annecy and we are **Missionaries** and **of St. Francis de Sales**. We want to be fully missionaries in nature and be rooted in Annecy in the spirit of our Founder.

B. VISITATION OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL TO SOUTH EAST INDIA PROVINCE

I had the great joy and privilege to be in the vibrant Province of South East India from September 02 – October 05, 2013 for my canonical visitation. South East India Province has a total number of 166 professed members of whom 120 are ordained priests. They are scattered over 35 different dioceses inside and outside India. It was an enriching experience to meet with 89 confreres in 37 communities and parishes of the Province. I hope to meet those confreres who are away from the Province territory as time and opportunity permit me. I thank each one of the confreres sincerely for their warm welcome, hospitality, and concern. I thank Rev. Fr. Dharmaraj, the Provincial and his team of Councilors for organizing my visitation with meticulous planning and meaningful animation and celebration.

The focus of my visitation was **evaluation, renewal, and reinvigoration of the life and apostolates in the Province.**

I am pleased to note the following areas of growth in the mission and planning of ministries entrusted to the South East India Province:

- Most of the confreres (almost 95%) expressed their deep satisfaction and contentment in their MSFS vocation and identity. There is a sense of belongingness to the Congregation among the confreres. They expressed their sense of pride in being MSFS.
- The Parish Churches and Presbyteries are well constructed and furnished in almost all the centers even where the Parishes are not entrusted with us by the Diocese on a long term basis. MSFS are present in almost all the dioceses in Tamil Nadu. Most of the bishops have expressed their appreciation for the pastoral ministry of our confreres.
- Basic Christian Communities under the pastoral care of our Confreres are flourishing in many of our parishes. Our Confreres, in many parishes, share the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales with parish community through preaching and teachings.
- All our schools are well located, serving the lower middle class and the middle class and the disadvantaged students in the society. 'Friendly Home 'with the ministry to the disadvantaged children in the society is picking up well. Residential School at KOLI HILLS for the tribal children is growing and bringing hope to many children of the locality.
- Apostolate of education in the Province has gained momentum offering quality education with a Fransalian flavor. The developed schools and developing schools are placed in strategic places where we have opportunities for creative and innovative ministries.
- A dynamic preaching team is emerging and there are a number of confreres who are passionate about proclaiming the Word of God and going around parishes with the ministry of renewal of Christian faith like Father Mermier and our pioneering missionaries.
- Social Apostolates and Innovative ministries (like Community Development Program, Scientific Farming , Legal Aid, KalaiUlagam, Media and Communication Center, Family Animation Center, ITI with job oriented programs for young people who have dropped out from school) are able to address the social and cultural issues with great impact on the society.
- Province has taken initiative to support the needy Provinces like Brazil and East Africa by sharing with them confreres who are ready to render service in the overseas mission territories. I wish and encourage the Province to continue supporting the

needy Provinces as per the understanding in the Congregation. I thank the Administration for thinking congregationally.

Let me also highlight a few challenges to be addressed in the Province:

During my visitation I made it a point to spend at least 45 minutes personally with every confrere before meeting with them in their own Local Community. Personal meetings and community meetings helped me clarify with confreres about quality of religious life, community life, and apostolic life. Confreres shared with openness and clarity their interest to make the Province family a better place to grow in their MSFS vocation and apostolic life for the mission of the Church. Some of the challenges to be addressed are:

- Local Communities are to be constituted immediately wherever it is not done. Every member should belong to a Local Community with a Local Superior. Regularization of community life with community activities, prayers, meals, and community meetings is to be insisted on, for an MSFS way of life.
- Province needs to focus on building up community life and religious life based on our Rule of Life and General Directory. Identify confreres who are good at Formation and spiritual animation and get them trained for the spiritual animation and Formation apostolate in the Province
- Regional prejudices and barriers are to be addressed by the confreres to live together and work together as one religious family of Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales.

C. VISIT OF THE ASSISTANT GENERAL TO THE SOUTH EAST INDIA PROVINCE

Assistant General, Father Thumma Mariadas, visited the South East India Province from September 28 through October 03, 2013 with the ***specific responsibility of animation, evaluation and monitoring***. This visit was planned purposively to be timed to coincide with the last lap of the Canonical visitation of the Superior General, so as to supplement and complement his visitation, so that we arrive at a comprehensive overview of the life and mission of the Province. He had meetings in 5 apostolic communities – Vaniyambadi, Pudukkottai, Pondicherry, Chennai and Virudhnagar. All the meetings were well-attended, and actively participated in. Thanks to the efforts of all conveners of the apostolic communities, and all the local superiors and communities that hosted the meetings. The evaluation of the communities by the communities with the subsequent collated report and the reports of the Superior General and the Assistant General are shared with the Province as a document with practical Orientations and Directives. Follow up of the visitation is planned to ensure animation and implementation.

D. MEETING OF THE S.E. INDIA PROVINCIAL CURIA AND GENERAL CURIA IN TRICHY

Provincial Curia of the South East India Province and the General Curia met at the Provincial House, Trichy after the visitation of the Superior General and the Assistant General from October 7 through October 8, 2013. The objective of the Meeting was to make a self-critical and objective evaluation of the various ministries, centers, and institutions to ascertain their evangelical efficacy (Orientations #2, MSFS General Chapter 2013). The Provincial Councilors, Bursar, and the Provincial presented reports on the apostolates of Mission, Formation, Education, Social Apostolate and Innovative Ministries, Stewardship, and Religious Life and Community Life in the Province. General Curia members responded to the reports and

evaluated the quality of apostolates and religious life in the spirit of the General Chapter, Provincial Congress, General Directory, and our Constitutions. A critique on the accomplishments and areas of improvement in the apostolic and religious life in the Province in the light of the reports from the Provincial Administration and General Curia helped us understand the Province and prepare a focused plan to address the concerns. Father Noel Rebello, General Secretary of Formation, is entrusted with the responsibility of further following up and animating the Province in the light of the focused document.

E. MEETING OF PIF – PEA AND GENERAL CURIA IN TRICHY

Seven Provincials of PIF – PEA and the General Curia had an intensive two day evaluatory meeting in MSFS Provincial House, Trichy on October 9 – 10, 2013. The meeting began with presentation of reports by the Provincials based on the implementation and the steps taken toward implementation of the Directives of the General Chapter and the action plan of the Provincial Congress. Common concerns in the Indian Provinces and East Africa Province were discussed to bring clarity and unity to the principles and rationale of the decisions and implementation of the directives of the General Chapter. The decisions of the PIF – General Curia meetings were taken up in the General Curia Meeting and they are integrated into the decisions of the General Council. I sincerely thank all the Provincials for their hard work and active participation in the two day productive meeting. The meeting ended with a pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Vailankanni and a celebration of the Holy Eucharist dedicating the entire Congregation to our Lady of Good Health.

F. GENERAL CURIA MEETING

The fourth General Curia Meeting was held in MSFS Provincial House in Trichy from October 12 through October 16, 2013. The five day meeting was a time of evaluation, study, discernment, and decision making. The General Council also addressed clarifications and permissions sought from different Provinces and studied the orientations and directives of the General Chapter in view of implementing them.

G. SOME DECISIONS BY SUPERIOR GENERAL AFTER GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING IV

1. Father George Panthanmakal: is appointed the Provincial of the North East India Province for a term of three years with effect from January 24, 2014. Father George has been a religious for 33 years and a priest for 25 years. He is currently serving as the Rector/President of Suvidya College, Bangalore. With his excellent academic accomplishments, vast experience in teaching and seminary formation, spiritual insights, personal and salesian qualities, and his deep trust in God's grace, the North East Province can rely on him to address the challenges in living the MSFS vocation in the Province with its administrative units in Africa and Europe. God Bless your new ministry in service of the Province!

2. Father Antony Dharmaraj: is re-appointed the Provincial of South East India Province for a second term of three years with effect from January 24, 2014. On behalf of the entire Congregation, I wish you our prayerful support in guiding the Province.

3. New Provincial Administration of Franco-Swiss Province

Fr. Yves Carron: Provincial Superior, **Fr. Jean Paul Fournier** (Provincial Councilor and Admonitor), **Fr. Binoy Kidangathkarot** (Provincial Councilor), **Fr. Daniel Bouchet** (Provincial Councilor), and **Fr. Jean-Paul LE TUE** (Provincial Bursar)

4. New Vice – Provincial Administration in USA

Fr. Augustine Tharapel: Vice – Provincial Superior, **Fr. Luke Kalarickal** (Councilor and Admonitor), **Fr. Joseph Mullakkara** (Councilor), **Fr. TomyPuliyampattayil** (Adviser), **Fr. Santy Kochupurackal** (Adviser), and **Fr. Joseph Pottammel** (Bursar)

5. Mozambique Delegation

Fr. Petrus Kullu: Delegation Superior, **Fr. Sebastian Annaikandathil** (Adviser), and **Fr. Renjit Tirkey** (Adviser and Bursar)

6. Mission Institute, Prayer and Renewal Center, and Permanent Base for the General Secretariat in India

In response to the directive of the General Chapter 2013 to have a Mission Institute at the National level in India, the General Council has developed a concept to have a modest structure in such a way that it will offer three facilities: Mission Institute, House of Prayer, and Permanent base for the General Secretariat. The Mission Institute envisions language courses both for ministries in India and outside India, training programs in mission culture and missionary life, cultural and pastoral preparation for ministries in the MSFS missions, Mermerian Resource Centre, training in Parish Missions, Regional Forum Meetings, Congregational Meetings, Ongoing Formation, and Animation Programs of the different Forums and Secretariats. House of Prayer is meant to provide space for confreres, who look for silence, prayer, personal renewal, directed retreat, and small group update programs for personal and professional growth for ministries. Base for the Secretariat essentially takes care of the residence and offices of the General Secretaries in India. With the help of the Provincials of India Forum, we are still working on a central location for the Project.

7. Mission Development Office (MDO)

Mission Development Office is a body that is constituted by the Superior General of the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales with the consent of his Council to mobilise resources human, material and financial to assist the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales all over the world especially in mission territories in their mission work which consists of faith formation, leadership formation, humanitarian and developmental and educational works for the poor and marginalised people.

It has been a long cherished dream of the Congregation to have a Mission Procure at the Congregational level. It was also the directive of the General Chapter to have a Mission Procure. Considering its wider scope and objectives we have re-named it **Mission Development Office**. As we already have a recognized non -profit organization (under the name **Associazione Missionarai di Sales, ONLUS**) which is Congregations' own legal body for mobilization of resources on behalf of the missions,

MDO can already have its civil and juridical status in Rome. Based in Rome with its office at **Via del Mascherino 46/2**, MDO looks forward to opening its branches in other countries where there is scope for contacts and fund raising for our mission. Details on its functions and dynamics will be made available to you shortly.

8. Director of Mission Development Office

Fr. Thomas Cherukat: is appointed the Director of the newly constituted Mission Development Office for a term of three years with effect from November 15, 2013. With his experience and expertise in Administration, Missions, life and history of the Congregation in different continents, contacts, language skills, and enthusiasm for the Project, the Congregation banks on his leadership in establishing the newly constituted Mission Development Office. I thank Fr. Cherukat for his willingness and availability and I thank the Provincial Administration of South West India Province for relieving him for this phenomenal task ahead.

9. A Day with the Founder

All the Major Superiors are requested to start with the cooperation of the Local Superiors **A DAY WITH THE FOUNDER** in all our Local Communities every month. Some of the suggested ways are: conducting a thematic prayer service or liturgical celebration, symposiums, presentation by one of the confreres on Father Mermier, and presentation on the Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and its impact on Father Mermier and our pioneering missionaries. You are welcome to introduce your own ways of sharing input with the community. The objective of the DAY WITH THE FOUNDER is to re-capture the spirit of our Founder in our apostolates and personal lives.

10. Ranchi Medical College Project

Father Joseph Malayil of Pune Province is designated to the office of Father Mario D'Souza, who will be relieved from the office on December 02, 2013. We thank Father Mario for his pioneering efforts with Cardinal Telsphor Toppo of Ranchi to initiate the Project. At the request of Cardinal Toppo, Provincials of India Forum has designated Father Joseph Malayil to continue the ministry there.

11. Local Community, Delegation and Coordinator of Delegation in GAH

Local Communities are constituted in Germany-Austria-Holland (GAH) and Local Superiors are appointed by the respective Provincials with effect from December 1, 2013. The Provincials, with the consent of their respective Council, will appoint the Delegation Superior of the 'Delegation under each Province in GAH' (after due consultation through secret ballot) with effect from 24th January 2014, on the feast of St. Francis de Sales. All the Delegation Superiors along with the representatives of the Provinces that do not have enough confreres to have a Delegation in GAH, will be formed into a 'Forum' who will elect the Coordinator/Chairman/Chairman of the Forum. The elected confrere, at the request of the PIF chairman with the consent of the PIF, will be appointed by the Superior General as the Coordinator of the Delegations in GAH.

12. Corrections in the General Directory

General Chapter 2013 approved certain corrections in the General Directory and some minor language errors in the Constitutions. The corrected and approved text is already circulated to all the confreres for immediate implementation.

13. Father Agnelo Fernandes in Arusha

Father Agnelo is assigned to the community of Lumen Christi Institute, Arusha in his capacity as the General Councilor and General Secretary in charge of Mission. He will animate and guide the Mission Forum of East Africa Province and other Administrative units of the Congregation. He will also monitor and animate other Forums of Apostolate in the East Africa Province and other units of the Congregation under the guidance and instruction of General Secretaries of other Forums. He will join the LCI community in the first week of December 2013.

14. Revised Fransalian Formation Policies and Guidelines 2013

It was pointed out at various Formators' Forum Meetings that Formation guidelines approved by the General Chapter (2001) have not been implemented with due respect and seriousness. A fresh and vigorous implementation of the same is suggested by the members of Formators' Forum in the recent meetings. The revised guidelines will be placed in the hands of the every Formator and Formee shortly in order to help everyone assimilate the spirit of these guidelines at every stage of Formation. In each local community there will be sufficient copies for the reference of the members. I thank Fr. Noel Rebello, the General Secretary of Formation, for his hard work in updating the Formation Policies and Guidelines and in making it available to us.

15. Status 2014-2015

The latest edition of the MSFS -STATUS will be released on December 31, 2013. I thank Fr. George Parampukattil and Fr. Jayaseelan (General Secretaries) and Fr. Philip Valakudiyil (IIS Bangalore) and Fr. Ebin Christopher (Rome) for their alertness and team work in getting the STATUS ready on the New Year's Eve.

16. Congregational Retreat 2014 – 2015

As announced earlier, all the Provinces are requested to have the Congregational Retreat (from May 1, 2014 through May 30, 2015) on the theme: **RE-CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF OUR FOUNDER**. Please make sure that all confreres attend this Congregational retreat. The Retreat Preparation team has been preparing the Retreat talks and resources since September 2013 and the retreat will be preached from February 2014. All the Major Superiors are requested to contact Father Agnelo Fernandes (Coordinator of the Congregational Retreat) for confirmation of the dates in your respective Provinces and units. The retreat is named as **CONGREGATIONAL RETREAT: RE-CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF OUR FOUNDER**.

17. Vision – Mission Plan

Preparation of the vision-Mission Plan of every Local community and its Apostolate in the Provinces, Region, Delegation, and Mission has come a long way. This is an important exercise undertaken to highlight the history of each centre with its vision and mission in order to guide the apostolates of the community with continuity and responsible planning for the realization of its vision. I request all the Provincials to complete the compilation of content and submit the copies in a file form to Fr. Jayaseelan, the Secretary of Innovative Ministries, who will use a common and scientific format to arrange the data for final copy. The accepted date of submitting the compiled document in the file form is May 31, 2014.

18. Delegate of the Superior General in Suvidya College

Fr. Francis Thadathil, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Governing Body of Suvidya College, is appointed the Delegate of the Superior General to constitute and guide the Local Community of the professed members of Suvidya College, Bangalore.

H. FORUM MEETINGS WITH THE GENERAL SECRETARIES

In the month of September 2013, Visakhapatnam, Pune, and South West India Provinces had Province Forum meetings with the General Secretaries organized by the Provincial-Councilor- In-Charge (PCIC) of the respective Forums. Social Apostolate and Innovative Ministry Forum Meeting was re-scheduled due to Father Jayaseelan's inability to travel after his knee surgery. The Forum Meetings were well attended and the Forum Meetings emphasised on the salesian and mission context of our various ministries. The new Governance of our Congregation gives great importance to the Forum Meetings as a forum to critique and improve the quality and effectiveness of our Apostolates from the grass root level. Each Forum is working on different profiles: Profile of an MSFS Parish and MSFS Pastor, Profile of a MSFS Formator, Profile of a MSFS Principal, Manager, and Administrator, and School, and Profile of MSFS in Social Apostolate. I appreciate the hard work of the PCICs and the General Secretaries.

I. LOCAL SUPERIORS FORUM MEETING

Pune and South-West India Provinces had the Local Superiors Forum Meeting organized by Father Agnelo Fernandes. Local Community and Local Superior play a vital role in the on-going MSFS formation of each confrere. It is in and through our relationships in the religious community we discover ourselves, our strength and weakness, our ups and downs, and our blessings and our shadows. The Forum Meetings helped the Local Superiors understand the vocation to community living, basic requirements on the part of every community member, on-going self –formation to community living, some do's and don'ts for Local Superiors, the principles of LIVE JESUS SALESIAN PROPHETIC LEADERSHIP, and the Profile of a Local Superior.

J. REGIONAL STEWARSHIP FORUM MEETING WIH GENERAL BURSAR

RSFM was organized by the General Bursar on October 5, 2013 in Vinayalaya, Bangalore. The Six Indian Provincial Bursars were present for the meeting with the General Bursar. The meeting re-visited the role of the Provincial Bursar, discussed the guidelines to be given by the Provincial Superior to the Provincial Bursar and guidelines about projects

exceeding over ten million Indian rupees. The Profile of a Provincial Bursar is under preparation to define the role and functions of the Bursar.

K. HOMAGE TO FR. GEORGE O'SULLIVAN, FR. PHILIP D'SILVA, FR. PRABHUDAS, FR. IGNATIUS PUTHUR, AND FR. JOSEPH THAYIL

We remember with sentiments of gratitude and appreciation our beloved confreres who left us in the recent past. Their death is indeed a painful loss. We have happy memories of each one of them who committed their lives to different apostolates. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord! Let perpetual light shine upon them.

L. WINNERS OF 175 JUBILEE ESSAY COMPETITION

Theologians:

Lawrence Jayaraj (First), Joseph Charles (Second) and SujithPallassery(Third)

Philosophers:

Raymond Figredo (First), Sanjay Lakra (Second), and Debit Robert Tirkey (Third)

Hearty Congratulations to you for your excellent, creative and relevant essays!

LET ME CONCLUDE WITH THESE THOUGHTS:

"If you feel that you have been unfaithful to the Lord, here is what you should do, for it is important that you do your best to remain faithful to him. Never be surprised to feel deep within yourself that you are weak, infirm, and unfaithful. Remember that God has seen things far worse than these. He is so good and so merciful. He will never cast us out nor abandon us in our wretchedness, but rather give us more grace and do everything possible for our well-being and redemption. That is why I say that our miseries are the throne of his mercy" (Tissot: *The Art of utilizing our Faults according to St. Francis de Sales*, p.68).

"The priest is the instrument for the forgiveness of sins. God's forgiveness is given to us in the Church, it is transmitted to us by means of the ministry of our brother, the priest; and he too is a man, who, like us in need of mercy, truly becomes the instrument of mercy, bestowing on us the boundless love of God the Father. Priests and bishops too have to go to confession: we are all sinners. Even the Pope confesses every 15 days, because the Pope is also a sinner. And the confessor hears what I tell him, he counsels me and forgives me, because we are all in need of this forgiveness. Sometimes you hear someone claiming to confess directly to God... Yes, as I said before, God is always listening, but in the Sacrament of Reconciliation he sends a brother to bestow his pardon, the certainty of forgiveness, in the name of the Church"

(Holy Father Pope Francis)

Wish you a graceful Advent journey, Merry Christmas and a productive New Year,
Fraternally in Christ,



Father Abraham Vettuvelil, MSFS
Superior General

November 30,
Feast of St. Andrew, the Apostle

LIVE JESUS!