

MISSIONARIES OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES

Fransalians - Province of East Africa

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Provincial Circular EAP- JK.52

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Asanteni sana !!

Beloved Confreres and friends,

This is my last circular to you in my capacity as the Provincial. The first circular was on July 18, 2011. Six years ago, on July 15, 2011 when I assumed the office as the Provincial Superior of the MSFS East Africa Province, one thing I was sure of was that one day or another a similar July 15 would come, when I can hand over the office to someone who is to assume the same office. *And behold it is here.* God willing, tomorrow, **Rev. Fr. Mathew Thazhathukunnel MSFS** will assume the office as our new Major Superior. It is a blessing for us that in his person we have a new shepherd.

It was a time of grace

By the grace of God I have been carrying the baton of this office of servant leadership for the past six years. All that I need to say can be said in these words: *It was a time of grace.* As the Fransalian family of East Africa, we have journeyed together a long way. Every one of us was an essential part of this journey. God was with us, even when He appeared to be absent. It is only the Grace of God that has brought us to these moments in our lives. Let us be people of gratitude to God for all that He was to us, He is to us and He will be to us. We have received from His fullness and are blessed with grace up on Grace (ref. Jn.1:16).

Words of Gratitude

It is now my turn to thank you all. May I begin with **Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvelil MSFS**, our beloved **Superior General**, together with the General Curia members. It was a very good time of working under the guidance of the Superior General. Sure, we had some times moments of difficulties, disagreements, misunderstandings. But nothing prevented us from relating to one another at the heart level. As a good father, Fr. Abraham always sought the best for us. The encouraging and supportive guidance from the members of the **General Curia** always made me feel strengthened in the tasks. In the same way I express my sincere thanks to all the **fellow provincial superiors** - of the past and present. Our regular communications and moments of interactions at PIF-PEA, TMM Meetings were channels of strength. Over the past we experience the enhanced collaboration between the East Africa Province and other Provinces. We can see that the thick wall of "Province" is thinned down to a positive neighbourhood fence whose gate is always kept opened. We experience in many levels inter-provincial collaboration resulting from "congregational" thinking and identity.

Today, East Africa is a fertile ground for evangelization thanks to the openness and generosity of the **Civil Governments** who accept missionaries and allow the works of evangelization. This is not something to be taken for granted. Our missionary presence in EA has been always in the context of the Local Church. I would fail in my duty if I do

not thank all the **Local Ordinaries** and our fellow priests and religious for being with us and blessing us in our works of living and sharing the Good News. It is my honour to mention these names in this circular to express our sentiments of gratitude to them, for it is with their blessings and consent we are missionaries in this continent.

- His Eminence Polycarp Cardinal Pengo, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- His Grace Paul Ruzoka the Archbishop of Tabora, Tanzania
- His Grace Josaphat Lebulu the Archbishop of Arusha, Tanzania
- His Grace Emmanuel Obbo A.J. the Archbishop of Tororo Uganda
- His Lordship Salesius Mugambi Bishop of Meru, Kenya
- His Lordship Joseph Ludovic Minde the Bishop of Kahama, Tanzania
- His Lordship Telsphore Mkude the Bishop of Morogoro, Tanzania
- His Lordship John Oballa Owaa, the Bishop of Ngong, Kenya
- His Grace Antony Muheria, Administrator, Machakos Diocese, Kenya (*now the Archbishop of The Archdiocese of Nyeri Kenya. Our Sincere Congratulations*)
- His Lordship Eusebius Nziguwa the Auxiliary Bishop of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- His Lordship Prosper Lymo the Auxiliary Bishop of Arusha, Tanzania

I also acknowledge the blessings we receive from the Bishops of the Dioceses in Europe and USA and India where our confreres are working. In the name of the East Africa Province, I thank each of them and pray that the Almighty God bless them with all the graces needed for their task of leading the flock according to the mind of Christ.

And to you **my beloved Fathers and Brothers**, you were my greatest strength. What we have today in our East African Mission is the result of your whole hearted commitment. It was always my prayer for you that no one is lost. God kept each one of us safe; kept us as the apple of His eye (Ref. Zechariah 2:8). He has given us protection from the snares of evil. We are still the faithful sons of the Mother Church. We experience the bond of relationship as members of the Fransalian family. Sure we had our personal differences and we have encountered moments of difficult discernments. Yet nothing deterred us from relating to each other. We worked together as members of the same family in unison and harmony. I am really proud of you my dear Confreres. You have proved yourselves to be men of God, deeply spiritual and manifesting a great interest for the task of evangelization. Trusting in his divine providence, many of you have taken various initiatives, for the development of our mission. The spiritual and the material development that we have achieved speak of the truth that God will not abandon any one who trusts in Him and who makes every effort for the glory of God and for the benefit of the people of God.

It is my joy to thank all the **faithful in our parishes, the children/ students, parents and staff** in our educational institutions, domestic staff in our communities. Each moment of causal visits or canonical visitations, they have shown genuine love and concern for me which I understand as their expression of love and concern for the Fransalian family. God bless their generosity.

In most of our educational institutions/ social apostolate we are blessed with the services of **women religious as our collaborators**. I appreciate them sincerely for

their wonderful and committed presence. Together with them, I also thank their Major Superiors who made these collaborative efforts possible.

I also remember with deep sense of thanks **all our benefactors**, mission friends, Friends of St. Francis de Sales, different organizations and donor agencies who do support us in our missionary presence in East Africa. May God bless their generosity!

Some Reflections on our mission here on earth

There is nothing permanent in this world, except changes! Everything changes except the One who authored all things and designed all the changes. The Ultimate - the God who does not change. He has neither the past nor the future. He is just there always! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). For in him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28).

Looking into our lives we can realize that except the future, everything is history, even this circular! Moment after moment we sink into the history. There is nothing that we can do to prevent this reality from taking place. Everything changes into the past. Then the logical question is: Where is the present? There seems to be hardly anything that we can call "present". The present is just a fraction of a moment - that is just in our hands... one fraction after another. What I do in this fraction, which is in my hand - in my power - at the very present moment, is what decides what kind of a history, I am going to leave behind. Can I do something in this fraction of moment before that too becomes part of my past?

The life that IS - is already a WAS - before, I place a full stop at the end of this sentence. There are no identical moments in our lives. Every moment is different from one another. But some moments of the past we remember more than the other. It all depends how we handled those moments, before they just slipped into the history.

It is my sacred duty to recall to mind, the wonderful ways in which God in his eternal plan sends persons who are instrumental in making us and the mission entrusted to us in the way it is today. Each of you has played certain definite role in my life - in the context of my life and mission as MSFS in East Africa.

I feel deeply connected to many in an invisible and inseparable cord of spiritual and emotional link. If God has planned these moments in our life, he has made preparations for it, involving so many persons and situations in the past. My beloved confreres and friends, this very moment in your life – moment of reading this circular would not have been in your lives if not for hundreds and thousands of people who have blessed you and me in their own manner. Once again, my sincere thanks to all dear confreres and friends who blessed our mission.

The Past we cannot change! But we can change the past of our future !

This is possible provided we are ready to mark every moment at our hand with the indelible seal of genuine love! Then we will have a past of good memories. No matter what has taken place in our life, we can firmly believe that there is the mark of genuine love in every moment. This genuine love is nothing but the presence of God. When every moment of our life is marked by the graceful presence of God, there is nothing in our lives that would make us sad or desperate. There are failures in our life, but we are never defeated. There were painful moments in our lives, but we are not bitter about them. There were people who may have apparently hated and opposed us, but they are never our enemies. There are times we are blocked but we are never stuck, for the Lord is with us. With St. Paul we too can confidently say: *We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We do not know what to do, but we do not give up. We are*

persecuted, but God does not leave us. We are hurt sometimes, but we are not destroyed. (2 Cor 4:8-9).

This stand is possible when every moment of our life is marked by genuine love. Let us imprint every moment with seal of love... then there is nothing that can go wrong in our lives. In the eyes of the world you may be a failure, you may become a laughing stock to those around you, you may not have the eloquence to make others convinced, yet if there is the anointing of love for every moment that is with you, you are already in the golden book of God. Yes, God goes with us in our journey as missionaries. Let us continue to trust him. If not for the blessings of God, his accompaniments and guidance, we would not have been where we are today. It is God who guides our destiny.

Perfect example for imperfections

I cannot say with conviction that I have anointed every moment with genuine love. But one thing I can assure you is that my every moment, I felt anointed by God through the instrumentality of you, my beloved confreres together with you my friends and well wishers and others who loved and cared. Even in those situations that seemed to be apparently hard and challenging, I see the holy hands of God at work. When God manages the operation, nothing goes wrong. With a humble heart I must acknowledge that not all things were perfect with me. Sure, I was not a perfect Provincial. Perhaps I serve as a perfect example for imperfections ! There must have been moments I disappointed you; moments where I did not reach up to your expectations; moments of being hard or indifferent; moments of misunderstanding etc. For all such moments I humbly ask you to forgive me and to bless me.

As I come to the end of my term of office as the provincial superior of the MSFS in the East African province, I would like to say with all my heart THANK YOU. *Asanteni!!*

Remember:

Changes do take place.... That is not in my power

Anoint every moment with love That is in my power.

May God bless each one of us.

Asanteni sana! Kwa heri!

Entrusting each one of you in the loving and caring hands of God,

Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS

(Provincial Superior MSFS East Africa Province)

**Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

1 Thess. 5:16-18