

JUNE 29, 2023 | SG AB2 12

MSFS



CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES
OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES



21st GENERAL
CHAPTER

My Dear Confreres,

Benedictus Deus! Happy Feast of Saints Peter and Paul!

The XXI General Chapter (GC) 2025 was convoked on January 24, 2023. We have already started participating in the GC through a simple prayer for its preparation. We are just 19 months away from the General Chapter. Let me share a few thoughts on the procedures of XXI General Chapter for our clear understanding:

THIRTEEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT GENERAL CHAPTER 2025

Do you know?

01

What is a General Chapter?

Every Province in the Congregation has a Provincial Chapter/Congress for the members of the Province. When it is a question of all the perpetually professed members that compose a religious congregation, we speak of a General Chapter. *"It is a forum that collectively reads the signs of the times and discerns the working of the Holy Spirit" (Art. 191).* A Provincial Chapter addresses what concerns the religious life and apostolates of a Province. The General Chapter deals with what concerns religious life and apostolates of the entire congregation with a focus on the charism and vision of the Founder. *"... it is a true symbol of the underlying unity of the Congregation, of every member's participation in, and concern and love for, the life and activity of the entire Congregation" (Can.631/1)*

02

Why is General Chapter so important?

"... a General Chapter is the most important event in the life of the Congregation" (Art. 194). "The General Chapter is the supreme legislative and teaching authority in the Congregation" (Art. 191). What makes GC an important event is the MISSION of Christ.

Every religious congregation exists for the mission of Christ and the Church. The mission is the oxygen of MSFS life. "To live mission in God's way as consecrated persons, we need the breath of the Spirit, who oxygenates our consecration, who widens our tent, ..., who rekindles the missionary fire in us" (Pope Francis). When we evaluate the ways we live our charism, the way we decide about the focus of our apostolates, the use of our resources for the mission, the way we live our religious vows in community, what we do is not for ourselves but for the mission of Christ and the Church.

03

What is the venue, date, and theme of the XXI General Chapter?

The General Chapter will take place:

- in STELLA MARIS, MSFS Provincial House, Visakhapatnam, INDIA
- from February 01 - 14, 2025
- on the theme: **"... I CHOSE YOU" (John 15:16): MSFS, LIVE YOUR CHARISM**

04

What is the rationale for the choice of the theme?

"The General Chapter 2019 reflected on the theme: **"MSFS - Wake up to the Basics."** The Chapter invited us to wake up to the four fundamental areas, such as, *'the History of our Congregation, the Spirit of our Founder Servant of God Fr. Peter Marie Mermier, Our MSFS Charism, MSFS Constitutions, and General Directory.* A General Chapter does not end with its concluding ceremony. The last day of the Chapter marks the beginning of the Chapter in action that continues until new orientations are set before us in the context of the next Chapter. The basics of our consecrated life (mission, community life, MSFS-ness, and Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales) are embedded in these four fundamental aspects of our life in the Congregation. The General Chapter entrusted to the expert committee the task of preparing the study papers which would provide a ground for our assessment, reflections, and follow-up, to thereafter work out the means for educating the entire Congregation.



06

What are the ongoing challenges we face?

Any established system resists change and wants to maintain its *status quo*. When there is high resistance to the norms of religious life and abandonment of its values, it is important to look at the root of the phenomenon. For example, there is a growing tendency of polarization in Provinces based on region, caste, tribe, race, and nationality. Some of the observed ongoing challenges are:

- The virus of polarization based on region, caste, language, nationality, and color of the skin is a threat to the international and missionary identity of our Congregation.
- There are many cases of social media attacks, anonymous letters, and tarnishing of the dignity of individual confreres that have disgracefully ruined the life of a few confreres.
- We are aware of tendencies to neglect religious and community life at the expense of priestly and parochial ministry, an independent lifestyle attuned to the diocesan way of life, confreres' discovery of their vocation to be diocesan priests and subsequent abandoning of religious life, especially after serving a few years in advanced countries.
- It is not only an emotional crisis but also a disappointment in community life. The concrete daily living of religious life rarely matches the values of MSFS life.

The Extraordinary General Chapter studied and approved the research papers on the basics of MSFS life and clearly defined for us what our CHARISM is. The next step is to live our Charism. Fidelity to charism is basic to consecrated life. Charism is the soul of the congregation. A dialogue between our charism and our present-day apostolates and living of religious life is the focus of XXI General Chapter. Hence the theme of the GC is: **"I chose you": MSFS, Live your Charism.**

05

What is the mission of the General Chapter?

Canon 631/1: In an Institute the General Chapter has the supreme authority in accordance with the constitutions. It is to be composed in such a way that it represents the whole institute and becomes a true sign of its unity and charity. Its principal functions are:

- To protect the patrimony (the charism, mind, disposition, spirit, and purpose of the Founder and traditions of the Institute at the time of its ecclesiastical approval) of the Institute
- To foster appropriate renewal in accord with the patrimony (charism)
- To elect the supreme Moderator (and his Curia)
- To deal with matters of greater importance and to issue norms that all are bound to obey
- To examine the state of the Congregation and to promote unity and *synodality* for the common good



- There is a feeling of isolation among young and senior confreres. Though there is a standardized style of religious community life, hearts are not touched and transformed to live in the spirit of the Constitution and charism.
- Increasing number of exlaustration, departures, allegations of inappropriate and scandalous behavior, deteriorating missionary spirit, the craze for ministries in developed countries, and less interest in the poor and mission countries
- Considering the observance of religious vows as a matter of maintaining a public image rather than accepting it from pure religious motives and as a response to a call to celibate life.



07

There is a need for a solid spiritual life and fidelity to the charism. Consecrated life is experiencing a difficult period. Irregular cases and violations of boundaries of consecrated life are on the increase. We often have to seek the intervention of a dicastery to heal the situation. Personal conversion to return to faith in God, fidelity to community life and charism, ministering to the poor, leading a life of poverty and simplicity, obedience to legitimate superiors, and embracing celibacy as a call and not as an appendix to religious life is all means to live a meaningful consecrated life.



Who takes part in a General Chapter?

The following confreres take part in a General Chapter with the right to vote:

- *Ex officio Members:* The Superior General, the Assistant General, the General Councillors, the General Bursar, the Provincials/Vice-Provincials, and the Regional Superiors.
- *The elected Delegates from the Provinces/Vice-Provinces:* These delegates are to be at least equal in number to the above members and have to be proportionate to the numerical strength of the perpetually professed members of the various Provinces/Vice-Provinces.
- *Participants:* The Coordinator of the Delegation Superiors (or communities) in Germany & Austria and Delegation Superiors in other territories are invited as participants of the General Chapter without the right to vote.

08

How do we elect the Delegates to the General Chapter?

We follow the amended articles of the General Directory during the Extraordinary General Chapter 2022. The provinces/vice-provinces elect their delegates and their substitutes in proportion to the number of perpetually professed members at the time of the elections as follows:

- 1-20 no delegate
- 21-50 One delegate
- 51-100 Two delegates
- 101-200 Three delegates
- 201 and above Four delegates

The cut-off date to begin the process of election for the Delegates to the General Chapter will be July 15, 2023.

09

What is the method of election?

The election of delegates and their substitutes takes place within six months after the convocation of the General Chapter to allow them ample time for thorough preparation for the Chapter.

The cut-off date for determining the eligible candidates will be the date of the notification of the election of delegates issued by the Superior General.

The election of one or more delegates is made by the College of Electors of the Province/ Vice-Province through a secret ballot, either by paper ballot or E-voting. At the first ballot, an absolute majority is required. After the publication of the results of the first ballot, at a second ballot, only a relative majority suffices.



10

How do we prepare for the General Chapter?

We let ourselves be challenged in our journey as Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales by studying and reflecting on the basics of our call to live the charism of Father Peter Mermier. We have four research papers on the *History of the Congregation, The Spirit of the Founder, Our Charism, and MSFS Constitutions and General Directory*.

These four papers compiled into a 'core sourcebook' (to be passed on to the entire congregation through monthly recollection and PowerPoint presentation) will help us prepare for the XXI Ordinary General Chapter (GC) 2025.

The awaited 'core sourcebook' will be critically and reflectively studied by all Province communities (apostolic communities or local communities) with practical applications from September 2023 to September 2024. In this way, the GC 2019 will pave the way for GC 2025. The reflective questions are to be used for sharing and the responses to the questions are to be submitted to the Provincial's office. The collated reports from all the communities are to be forwarded to the Secretary of the Superior General.

The core sourcebook will provide us with 12 modules which will also help us have 12 monthly recollections from September 2023 to August 2024.

We will also prepare a uniform PowerPoint presentation on the core sourcebook for presentation and our education. The elected delegates of the General Chapter/Provincials will help the Province community in studying the papers and preparing for the Chapter.



11

What are the important dates to be noted?

- XXI Ordinary General Chapter February 01-14, 2025
- Election of the GC Delegates from July 15 – July 30, 2023. Provincials will start the process of election of the Delegates based on the articles of the Constitution and the amended articles of the General Directory (amended in the General Chapter 2013 and Extraordinary General Chapter 2022). The election will be conducted electronically.
- Names of the GC Delegates are to be submitted to the Superior General by July 31, 2023
- Core sourcebook for study, reflection, and prayer from September 2023 through September 2024
- Twelve Monthly reflections on the sourcebook from September 2023 through August 2024
- Capitulants report to the venue (Stella Maris, VIZAG) on January 31, 2025
- Closing day of the General Chapter February 14, 2025
- Departure: Anytime on February 15, 2025



12

How shall we start our preparation for the 21st GC?

- Keep praying the prayer to prepare for the OGC 2025
- Actively take part in studying the core sourcebook and monthly recollections and contribute to the group discussions
- Write your dreams and vision for our beloved congregation and share them in the apostolic community meetings, and present them in the reports that will be carried over to the General Chapter.



LOGO EXPLAINED



CHAPTER



The C stands for CHAPTER and the SEVEN Elements

Christ: the Head of everything, Call: our Vocation, Consecration: Our Religious Life, Communion: Our Community Life, Commitment: Our Obligation
Community: The people entrusted to our care

GENERAL



The G stands for GENERAL. These seven elements together help the General chapter in the process of Discussions, Deliberations Discernment, and Decision-Making which would guide us to live our Charism. Living Charism in fullness demands all these elements.



XXI for 21st

The symbolic XXI means 21st Chapter; a Religious Community, as well as the Holy Trinity.



CHRIST

Christ: the head of everything



CHRIST & THE PARTICIPANTS

The blue line on the right side of the circle – the head of Christ – implies our need to be connected to Christ in the entire process of decision-making.



APOSTOLATES

The group of persons represents those among whom we exercise our apostolates.

DECISIONS, NEWS, AND EVENTS

1. Fr. Jose DEVASAHAYAM is appointed the Provincial of Brazil Province for a term of three years with effect from June 10, 2023. Congratulations and prayerful wishes to your ministry of leadership to the Province.

2. Fr. Jagannathan GNANADURAI: On behalf of the Congregation, I express sentiments of gratitude and appreciation to Fr. Jagannathan for serving the Province as Provincial during the past 3 years. Thank you!

3. Fr. James PANTHALANICKEL is appointed the Provincial of East Africa Province for a term of three years with effect from July 15, 2023. Congratulations and prayerful wishes to Fr. James as he assumes office.

4. Fr. Mathew THAZHATHUKUNNEL: On behalf of the congregation, I thank Father Mathew for his leadership of the East Africa Province and the Mission Superiors Africa Forum for the past 6 years. Thank you!

5. Fr. Saji PUTHIYAKULANGARA, General Secretary for Formation, is appointed as the Director of the Mission Development Office with his residence in Rome with effect from June 25, 2023. Prayerful wishes to Fr. Saji!

6. Fr. Thomas CHOZHITHARA: On behalf of the entire congregation, I thank and appreciate the incredible contribution of Fr. Thomas to MDO. He has brought visibility and dynamism to MDO as an MSFS Global Agent and Congregational NGO for supporting our missions. I place on record his initiatives and vigilant animation of the Province MDOs to reach out to the needs of the mission with deep sensitivity. Thank you!

7. Fr. AGNELO FERNANDES

On behalf of the entire congregation, I thank Fr. Agnelo for his active presence and contribution to the formation program at Lumen Christi Institute. The past few years of his service to LCI have brought lots of blessings to the formation program and other animation programs at the Institute. As Fr. Agnelo returns to his mother Province of Nagpur, we wish him God's blessings for his future ministry.

8. PROVINCIAL CURIA GUWAHATI

The newly elected Provincial Curia: Fr. George THOMAS (Councilor and Admonitor), Fr. Alois BOROGOAN (Councilor), Fr. Joby MATHEW (Councilor), Fr. John BARMAN (Councilor), and Fr. Santosh CHAVARNAL (Bursar).

9. PROVINCIAL CURIA SOUTHEAST INDIA PROVINCE:

The newly elected Provincial Curia: Fr. Joseph Henry (Councilor and Admonitor), Fr. Sebastian Raj (Councilor), Fr. Charles Michael (Councilor), Fr. A. Edward (Councilor), and Fr. S. Santhanam (Bursar).

10. PROVINCIAL CURIA ENGLAND

Fr. Thomas KULANDAISAMY (Provincial Councilor and Admonitor), Fr. Roy KARAKKATTU (Councilor), and Fr. Terry Mc GRATH - Provincial Bursar.

11. THE AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR OF FRANSALIAN YOUTH '23 – '24

We appreciate and thank our confreres in the Committee for their leadership in celebrating the Year of Fransalian Youth in the Congregation. The names of the committee members are:

1. Fr. John Barman, Guwahati Province
2. Fr. Carlus Barowa, Dibrugarh Province
3. Fr. Christu Raj, South East Province
4. Fr. Bandi Sagar Santhosh Kumar (AP), VIZAG Province
5. Fr. P Sunder Joseph (Telengana), VIZAG Province
6. Fr. Mathew Rodrigues, Pune Province
7. Fr. Gnanamani Simon, Nagpur Province
8. Fr. Francis Indumuli, East Africa
9. Fr. Stanley I. Rodrigues, South West Province
10. Fr. Sujith MSFS, English Province
11. Fr. John Veda, USA – Vice Province
12. Bro. Dimitri DELMAS, Franco Swiss Province
13. Fr. Bhilominraj Britto, Brazil Province

MSFS MAJOR SEMINARIES

1. Eluru, Fr. Murali Balam
2. Pune, Rector
3. Arusha, Fr. Ajeesh Cheeramban
4. Tejas, Rector
5. Suvidya College, Fr. Jayakumar
6. Shillong, Rector

The committee will work in consultation and collaboration with Fr. J. Stephen, the General Secretary for SAIM.

12. OUR NEW MISSION IN CHILE

After suspending the MSFS mission in Chile for almost 10 years, we are opening a new mission in the diocese of TALCA, Chile. We start the mission by August 2023 under Franco-Swiss Province. I thank Fr. Jean-Yves Le Tue, Provincial of Franco-Swiss Province, and Fr. Marco for their initiatives to open a new mission in Chile.

13. PARISH MISSION PREACHING:

PMP Annual National (India) Meeting and Prayer days

The Annual Meeting of the confreres engaged in the parish mission and retreat preaching will be held from October 23 to 26, 2023 at MSFS Provincial House, Nagpur. From every Indian province, five confreres are expected to participate.

14. TRAINING IN PREACHING RETREATS AND MISSIONS FOR THE YOUNG PRIESTS

A training session in preaching retreats and missions is planned for the young confreres of our congregation. From every Province, five confreres are expected to participate. The program is from November 18 to 28, 2023 at Charis Bhavan, Kerala, India. Along with other experienced retreat preachers, Fr. James MANJACKAL MSFS, the veteran retreat preacher in our congregation, will lead the program.

15. SALESIAN PROGRAM ANNECY (SPA) 2023

SPA 2023 begins from September 30 to November 10, 2023. The participants are requested to get ready with travel documents well in advance.

16. FRANSALIAN VALUE EDUCATION BOOK SERIES 2023

FRANSALIAN Value Education book series is one year old. The year 2023 saw the printing of classes 9 and 10 which was kept pending. The entire 1 to 8 textbooks had to be revised in one year. Almost ninety percent of the MSFS schools already subscribed to our books. Few schools are caught up with the Education Board agreement of their respective diocese for one more year. It is informed to all schools that the Fransalian Value Education Book is a Congregational Venture (decision of the General Chapter 2019) and it is mandatory for all Congregational schools. In the year 2023, subscriptions by non-MSFS schools also picked up substantially. Thanks to all those who helped us and gave us their moral support. Thanks to Fr. Jacob for the incredible work!

17. UPSKILLING TO SCALE UP

General Secretariat for Education, Hyderabad organized the MSFS National Education Seminar on the theme of Upskilling to scale up from May 01 to May 03, 2023. There were seventy-eight participants from different provinces. The Seminar highlighted mainly pedagogical leadership. The key resource person was Mr George Thomas from Udaipur who is an expert on the topic and a person engaged by CBSE for training resource persons. He dwelt on topics like learning outcomes and pedagogies, pupil management and parental involvement, Instructional leadership and growth mindset, and multiple intelligences to acquire life skills. The Councillor in charge of each province presented three best practices for schools. The second day was marked by talks on five different topics such as participatory leadership: A way to sustainable excellence, sensitivity at the workplace, POC SO- Child Rights, School Auditing and Transformational program, and Recruitment policies and Interview Skills. Many of them felt the Seminar gave new priorities and emphasis considering the New National Education Policy. Thanks to the Confreres of Guwahati Province for their hospitality to Confreres who came from other provinces.



18. PROVINCE FORUM MEETINGS WITH GENERAL SECRETARIES

Please note the dates of the Forum meetings:

VIZAG PROVINCE

Sep 02 - 03 Education Forum
Sep 04 - 05 Mission Forum
Sep 07 - 08 Formation Forum
Sept 10 - 11 SAIM Forum

PUNE PROVINCE

Sep 09 - 10 Education Forum
Sep 12 - 13 Mission Forum
Sep 15 - 16 Formation Forum
Sep 18 - 19 SAIM Forum

SOUTHWEST INDIA PROVINCE

Sep 16 - 17 Education Forum
Sep 19 - 20 Mission Forum
Sep 22 - 23 Formation Forum
Sep 25 - 26 SAIM Forum

19. REGIONAL FORUM MEETINGS WITH GENERAL SECRETARIES

Sep 26 - 27

Regional (India) Mission Forum with GS in Pune

Sep 28 - 29

Regional (India) Education Forum with GS in TRICHY

Sep 30 - Oct 1

Regional (India) Formation Forum with GS in VIZAG

Oct 02 - 03

Regional (India) SAIM Forum with GS in Nagpur

Oct 03 - 04

Regional (India) Stewardship Forum with GB in TRICHY

20. SEPARATION FROM THE CONGREGATION

Fr. Jeganathan ARULAPPAN (SEI Province) ceases to be a member of the Congregation.

Fr. Balu DEVANATHAN (Pune Province) ceases to be an MSFS.

We thank and wish them God's blessings in their new undertakings.

21. PRAYERFUL TRIBUTE TO OUR DEAR CONFRERES

Fr. Reddy JOSEPH, (83), VIZAG Province died on January 24, 2023

Fr. Bernard CASZO (90), VIZAG Province died on March 11, 2023

Fr. Cyriac VELIKKETTEL ((83)), NAGPUR Province died on March 24, 2023

Fr. Aloysius KUZHUPPALLIL (58), Southwest Province, died on March 24, 2023

Bro. George ETTACKAKUNNEL (87), VIZAG Province died on March 29, 2023

Fr. Abba M'TOUDJIEL (33), Southwest Province died on April 15, 2023

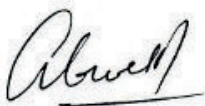
Fr. Jerry MISQUITH (74), Pune Province died on April 30, 2023

Fr. Cyriac NELLIKUNNEL (55), died on June 06, 2023

May the souls of our departed confreres through the mercy of God, rest in peace, Amen!

Those who have not fulfilled the suffrages to do the same at the earliest (Const. No. 118; Gen. Directory No. 98).

Live JESUS,



**Father Abraham VETTUVELIL MSFS
Superior General**

**June 29, 2023
Feast of Saints Peter and Paul**

Don't get upset with your imperfections. It's a great mistake because it leads nowhere - to get angry because you are angry, upset at being upset, depressed at being depressed, disappointed because you are disappointed. So don't fool yourself. Simply surrender to the Power of God's Love, which is always greater than our weakness.

St. Francis de Sales



HAPPY FEAST OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL