

XIX PROVINCIAL CHAPTER INDIA-GREAT BRITAIN-IRELAND PROVINCE

13 - 21 January 2023

Communiqué: 01

The 25 Participants of XIX Provincial Chapter of the India-Great Britain-Ireland Province arrived at Carmel Haven, Pune, on Saturday, 13 January, 2023, at 06:00 p.m. The Chapter members then welcomed Most Rev. Fr Domenico Soliman, the Superior General of the Society of St Paul, Rev. Fr Johnson Vattakunnel, General Councillor and Rev. Fr Joby Mathew, Provincial Superior, as they arrived at the Chapter venue.

The inaugural Eucharistic celebration was presided over by the Superior General. During the entrance hymn, the participants proceeded to the altar holding a flag each representing all communities and various apostolic & formative activities of the Province.

The Superior General, in his homily, reminded the participants that “these will be intense days of confrontation, discernment and a time of choices” and that “listening to each other” is very essential for personal transformation and renewal of mission. Explaining the healing miracle of the paralytic (Gospel of the day) who was brought to Jesus by lowering him through the roof, Father General drew a comparison between the four friends who wanted to do some good for their friend, and our Founder who wanted to do some good for the people of his time. He challenged the participants to do something for those who do not know Christ by renewing the “apostolic thrust, not each one alone but together, as a body, as a community, as a collection of different generations”. He concluded his homily saying, “The effectiveness of the mission depends on faith, and the mission expresses the quality of our relationship with Jesus Master”. The homily, already translated into English, was readout by Fr Vattakunnel.

The day ended with a sumptuous welcome dinner.

The second day (14 January 2023) of the XIX Provincial Chapter began with morning prayers led by Fr Saju George. It was followed by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, presided over by Fr Joby Mathew, the Provincial Superior of the India-Great Britain-Ireland Province. Before the mass, he requested all Chapter members to extend their right hand and bless and pray for him. He then exhorted the members to begin with an open mind and willing heart to start afresh and infuse new life into the province.

In his homily Fr Joby compared the lives of St Devasahayam (whose memorial is on this day) and St Matthew and shared two lessons from their life to inspire all members of the Province to live the Pauline Vocation more powerfully. The two lessons are: their ability to give up their comfort zones and go out; their ability to rise above all distinctions and promote mutual respect.

The morning session began at 08:45 a.m. with the lighting of the lamp, invoking the light of Christ to enlighten all participants of the Chapter. The Superior General, The General Councillor, The Provincial Superior, Fr Joseph TC (senior most member in the Chapter), Fr Francis Xavier (youngest member in the Chapter), Br Richard V (representing the Brothers) and Fr Varghese Alengaden (resource person) lighted the lamp.

Thereafter, Fr Joby Mathew welcomed all the Chapter members and presented them with the Chapter kits, as each of them presented their proof of election as delegate to the Chapter. Then, he asked the assembly to suggest two names for actuaries, two names for scrutineers and one name for communication in-charge for the Chapter. Fr Jose Mathew and Fr Joshy Joseph were appointed as actuaries and Fr Francis Xavier and Fr Aneesh Peediyekal were appointed as the scrutineers and Br Thomas EJ was appointed as the Communication in-charge of the XIX Provincial Chapter.

The next item of the day was the inaugural address by Fr Provincial. In his 25 minutes long address, he exhorted all members to think big and ambitiously in order to plan a programme for the coming four years of his mandate and for the future. He also invited everyone to leave behind the setbacks and failures, look ahead with confidence, and work as one team.

The inaugural address was followed by recollection and reflection on "New Wine in New Wine Skins" led by Fr Varghese Alengaden. The session ended at 7.35 pm.

On the third day (15 January 2023) of the XIX Provincial Chapter, Fr Robert Correa conducted the morning prayer, and the Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Fr Saji Anthony.

The day's work began at 09:00 a.m., Fr Varghese Alengadan, the resource person, gave an input session on the formulation of the vision statement. Then, the assembly was divided into 5 groups to formulate the vision statement for the Province. After discussing it in their respective groups, each group came up with a draft. In order to incorporate the different vision statements into one, a core committee was formed. At the end of the session, on behalf of the assembly, Fr Prithviraj thanked Fr Alengadan for his enriching experience and reflections.

In the afternoon session, Fr Sajith Cyriac was elected as the Chapter Secretary with an absolute majority. Subsequently, Fr Joseph TC was elected as the Chapter Moderator with an absolute majority. The Chapter Core Committee, comprising the President, Chapter Secretary, Chapter Moderator, one of the Actuaries (Fr Jose Mathew) and Fr Johnson Vattakunnel, was formed, who in turn would plan the Chapter proceedings for each day.

The day's activities ended at 8.00 pm with the Eucharist adoration conducted by Br Richard Vallikatt.

On the fourth day (16 January 2023), Fr Augustine Kanachikuzhy who celebrated his 37th Ordination Anniversary conducted the morning prayer followed by the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by Fr Prithviraj Philip. In his homily, Fr Prithviraj highlighted the need for genuine love for self, others and our life and mission. He reiterated that the need of the hour is personal care and mutual trust, which would make us better persons and apostles of Christ.

The Chapter session began at 9 a.m. and the first draft of the "Vision Statement" was presented to the assembly for discussion. The Vision Statement was generally accepted and later it would be discussed if needed.

Thereafter, Fr Sajith Cyriac, the Chapter Secretary, welcomed the XIX Provincial Chapter animator Rev. Fr Dr Jacob Parapally MSFS. In his address, Dr Parapally shared his reflections on the theme of this Provincial Chapter and the implications of the same in the deliberations and discussions for redefining and reviving the charism in the missionary context of India-Great Britain-Ireland Province. He exhorted the gathering not to be reactive people but proactive in the life and mission of the Congregation.

Fr Joby Mathew, the Provincial Superior, opened the discussions on various concerns of the province. He reminded the Chapter members to keep the secrecy of the Chapter. Fr Provincial exhorted the members to discuss issues with openness, freedom and without fear. He reminded the Chapter members about the collective responsibility in implementing the decisions taken in the Chapter. The topics discussed on the day were spiritual life and charism and community life.

During the evening session, Fr Provincial informed the assembly that Fr Dominic D'Silva was appointed to take up the responsibility of periodic Chapter Communiqué to be sent to the Secretary-General as well as to the website of Province.

The day's programme ended at 8.00 p.m., with the Eucharistic adoration conducted by Fr Sunil Varghese.

On the fifth day (17 January 2023), Fr Vincent Carmelbhan led the morning prayer, and Fr Joshy Joseph presided over the Eucharistic celebration.

At 09:00 a.m. the Chapter members commenced their activities of the day. At the outset, the Chapter Secretary explained the need for a drafting committee, and the same was immediately formed consisting of the Provincial Superior and a member each from five groups which was already formed for the Chapter deliberation.

Now, the assembly took the themes of the Vocation Promotion and the Formation for its deliberation. After the common presentation of opinions and viewpoints from different communities of the Province, the members worked in groups which was followed by common sharing. During the discussion, Fr Aneesh Antony, the Director of Formation, explained to the assembly some of the pressing issues in the formation sector.

Afternoon session was dedicated to discuss and to discern activities of the apostolic sector. This session also used the same methodology of group discussion and common sharing. Fr Sebastian Thomas shared with the rest of the assembly his experience as the Director General of the Apostolate and the general scenario of the apostolic sector of the Province.

The day's programme came to an end with the Eucharistic Visit conducted by Fr Joseph Tirkey.

Carmel Haven, Pune
18 January, 2023

Fr Dominic Savio D'Silva, SSP