



CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES OF MARIANNHILL•

MTHATHA REGION•

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27th January 2025

Dear Confreres

I greet you all and I wish you well for the year ahead. It is my prayer that the Lord will grant us good health, protect us from all harm and guide us in all our endeavours. There are so many challenges in communities that we serve and in the world in general. As missionaries we are called to understand the reality of the people we serve/minister to and give them hope otherwise we risk being irrelevant or just mediocre. It is critical to understand and be up-to-date with the issues in our pastoral context and be both innovative and impactful in our responses. This, we can only do successfully when we are in communion with the Lord and each other (ref. John 15:4-6). So I pray for a good year 2025 for all of us and that we continue working together to strengthen our Unit and render support to all those in need.

Regional Assembly:

At the Regional Council meeting held on the 16th of January 2025, a decision was taken not to have a Regional Assembly on the 1st of February as per tradition. In taking the decision, the Council was guided by article 26 of the Provincial Directory (currently in use) and other factors. However, the Council resolved to organise an assembly during the winter break, if the need arises.

Celebration of the Presentation of the Lord:

Since the 2nd of February will be on a Sunday, the Council took the decision to celebrate the Feast of the Presentation on the 1st of February 2025 instead. This will allow Parish Priests to travel back to their respective Parishes and be available for their pastoral duties on Sunday. In addition, it will allow students to travel back to school on Sunday and be ready to resume lectures on Monday.

Perpetual Profession:

Frts S'busiso Michael Hlophe CMM and Munsebi Ruben Mumene CMM will make their final vows on the 1st February 2025. Six Fraters in temporary vows will renew their vows.

Novice Simon Munken Ta-Otwi will make his first profession at Mariannhill Monastery on the same day. Let us accompany these young confreres with our prayers and guide them appropriately on their journey. Postulant Felix Kidega will be received into the Novitiate for the 2025 intake.

Recollection Day:

There will be a recollection for the whole community on the 31st January 2025. The recollection will start at 2pm and conclude at 4:30pm. Bishop Thulani Victor Mbuyisa CMM will facilitate the recollection and will be the Presider on the 1st February 2025. I appeal to all of you Confreres to make yourself available for this important event of the community. It might be more convenient to arrive early and join the community for lunch. There will be a social/braai for the community in the evening after the recollection, kindly be there (Donations are not only welcome but highly appreciated).

General Work Visa Application:

Applying for a General Work Visa for the first time in South Africa has become a complicated, expensive and frustrating exercise. Many factors contribute to this, as the Department of Home Affairs seems to be inconsistent and changes regulations unexpectedly. In the past those who completed their theological training at St Joseph's Theological Institute could change from study visa and apply for the general work visa while in the Country. This is no longer the case. Fr Joel had to leave South Africa in haste in June 2024 to apply for a general work visa and has been stuck in the DRC to date. Just a few days ago, his application was rejected and very flimsy reasons were given. Now he has to start the whole process afresh. Deacons Fredrick Njoronge and Raphael Chambula have also gone back to their respective countries to apply for the general work visa. It is vital to have all the required documents together and to ensure that all details contained therein are accurate before submission. This is the sole responsibility of the applicant and hopefully, it will help to mitigate any further complications.

Bro Stephen Frommelt Youth Development Centre

On the 18th of November 2024 the Regional Council approved the Constitution of the Centre and members of the Board (the Board consists of six members namely: the chairperson; vice-chairperson; secretary, treasurer; 2 members and centre manager as a co-opted member). The Constitution is designed in such a way that the Chairperson will always be the sitting Provincial/Regional Superior and major decisions will always be done with the approval of the Council. I have submitted the application for the registration of the Centre as a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO). This will secure the legal status of the Centre and place it in a position to confidently engage and collaborate with other like-minded organisations in its efforts to empower the youths. The management of the Centre has committed itself to produce a quarterly newsletter in which details of the activities of the centre are narrated, accompanied with photos. This is a way to keep donors and stakeholders informed about the centre's activities. A detailed report will be presented to the Regional Assembly as well.

Praying for Deceased Members:

Dear Confreres, this serves as a reminder to all of us, to pray for our deceased confreres at our daily celebration of the Eucharist and other community prayers. Each one of us should have a copy of the *Necrologium* (if you do not have a copy, please get one from my office), a book which contains details of our deceased confreres, let us use this book and try to be faithful in praying for the deceased confreres.

Congratulations:

I congratulate Fr Joakim Pinji CMM who has successfully completed his Post-Graduate Diploma in Project Management. This is a milestone Ntate, and I encourage you to continue building on this firm foundation.

Welcome Back:

Welcome back to the Confreres who have arrived from their home leave: Bro Bernard Isanda CMM who arrived on the 6th January 2025; Fr Wenceslaus Wangila CMM arrived on the 25th January 2025; Frts Daniel Ndabezihle Ndlovu CMM and Geoffrey Sikwesa CMM arrived on 23rd January 2025.

As I conclude, I wish to encourage all of you Confreres to do your best in your various ministries and to enjoy the work you are doing. When you encounter challenges of any nature, please do not suffer alone in silence, but open up and share so that we can help. Let us keep each other in prayer. Together We Can!

Sincerely Yours in the Lord,

Fr. Dr. Gideon Sibanda, CMM

Regional Superior-Mthatha