

STATUTES OF MARY MATHA PROVINCE INDIA

Introduction

Mary Matha Province has been a mission territory under the Joseph Province, Kerala. After being Custody for 28 years, it was raised to a Vice-Province on 30th January 1997 and to a Province on 13th June 2008. The life activities of the Province are to be governed by certain norms besides the Word of God and our Constitutions. Under the directive given by General Minister, these statutes are to be discussed and approved by the present Provincial Chapter. These statutes will assist the friars in observing the Rule and Constitutions of the Friars Minor Capuchin faithfully.

I. Life of Prayer and Penance

Art.1. We are called to cultivate the spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all temporal things should contribute that we may become true followers of *St. Francis, Who was seen not so much as praying as having totally become a prayer* (Cf. Const. 45.7). Due importance is to be given to the life of prayer and penance in our life; hence the following norms are to be observed:

1. That all the friars faithfully hold fast to the two periods of common prayer (Const.50.2). Where demands make it impossible to have the Evening Prayer in the fraternity, at least morning hour of prayer has to be kept up
2. For deepening and strengthening the personal and communitarian dimensions of contemplation, the friars are encouraged to spend a few days of prayer and reflection in solitude and silence in a conducive place.
3. In order to make our life of prayer more relevant to the life situations, Indian methods of and meditation and meaningful celebration of national festivals and local feasts are to be encouraged.
4. All the friars are expected to spend one day in a month for recollection and review of life, the mode of which may vary depending on the local situation. However, once in three months the friars of a particular zone shall come together for an experience of prayer and fraternal sharing. In such zonal meetings, the reading and reflection on our constitutions and the renewal of profession are highly recommended.
5. In our prayer life due importance is to be given to the Word of God.
6. All the friars are expected to make an annual retreat. They may participate in the annual retreat organized by the Province or in the retreat in the Major Seminary at Janampet. (Is participation in the diocesan retreat sufficient?)
7. As Franciscans, we should consider penance as the hallmark of our life.

Solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, commitment to one's duty and devotion to silence, moderation in the use of things etc. are some of the forms of expressions of our life of penance.

8. Taking into account the example of our father St. Francis, and drawing inspirations from our Constitutions (Const. 103.1-3), special seasons and days (e.g., advent, lent, Fridays, days in preparation for the feast. of St. Francis, Immaculate Conception etc.) are to be observed as days of penance.

II. Vocation Promotion

Art.2. Every brother who comes to us is a gift from the Lord. Concern for vocations should become characteristic of all of us, and it arises above all from the brothers' awareness that they themselves are living and offering to others a programme of life that is extremely rich in human and gospel values. We are to work together earnestly to foster vocations out of a desire to carry our God's design according to our charism (Const. 15.1, 2).

1. There shall be a vocation director to co-ordinate the work of vocation promotion. Vocation Promoters and the various local fraternities are to assist him in this task.
2. The students of the Major Seminary at Janampet are to cooperate in the task of vocation promotion (?)
3. The minimum qualification required of the candidates aspiring for our *way* of life shall be S.S.C/H.S.C., passed. However in very special cases, exceptions may be made with regard to candidates for non-clerical life.
4. In the selection of the candidates their family background has to be inquired into, and a letter from the parish priest of the candidate is to be obtained. Care should be taken that "Family background" does not become a convenient excuse for not paying sufficient attention to SCs and STs.
5. Normally, the candidates are to be selected from the vocation camps conducted by the Province. However in special cases a candidate may be selected after a few days of his living in one of our fraternities, preferably in the Minor Seminary.

III. Formation

Art.3. Formation is the development of the brothers and fraternities in such a way that our life may daily become conformable to the Holy Gospel under Franciscan spirit according to the requirement of places and times. Formation has to be integral, mission-oriented and with an option for the poor. It consists

of initial and on-going formation (Const. 22.1.2).

1. Initial formation will be same for clerical and non-clerical candidates and it shall be together.
2. There should be a minimum of four years of formation prior to the Novitiate

for the S.S.C./H.S.C. candidates and a minimum of three years for the Intermediate candidates. In special cases two years of formation will suffice for the Intermediate and Degree candidates.

3. In order to strengthen the Franciscan values acquired in the Novitiate, a Post-Novitiate formation is to be introduced, the mode of which is to be worked out by the Formation Definitory.
4. The Philosophy course together with graduation shall be for three years. In the case of non-clerical brothers, there shall be a minimum of one year of philosophical formation.

Art.4. Regency is a period of non-formal formation, during which the brothers are called upon to experience the concrete realities of life and to deepen their own Franciscan commitment. They should be encouraged to live with the poor and the marginalized, and gain a workable knowledge of the tools for analyzing society. Taking into account the existing situation of the Province and the needs of the local fraternities, a programme for regency has to be gradually worked out by the Formation Definitory. But it should be kept in mind that regency is first and foremost for the formation of the regents.

Art.5. The Theology course shall last for four years. In the case of non-clerical brothers, there shall be a minimum of two years of theological formation.

Art.6. Our formation has to take into account the various dimensions such as, inculturation, evangelization and the pastoral needs.

1. Our formation has to be Indian in its content and structure. In order to inculcate Indian values such as renunciation, hospitality, silence, dhyana, ahimsa etc., a greater emphasis should be laid on the assimilation of Indian thought. The study of Sanskrit has to be encouraged.
2. Formation should be oriented towards the task of evangelization.
3. Our formation should be geared towards training the brothers to be effective ministers of the Kingdom. The newly ordained priests should be given also opportunities to be trained under experienced parish priests. After a period of three months of such practical experience they should come together to share and reflect on their experience under the guidance of an animator.

Art.7. As the growth of the Order depends on the quality of the friars we should adopt strict norms in the process of promotion of the candidates at the

various stages of formation. The reports of periodical assessment of the brothers are to be sent to the Provincial by the Rectors and guardians of the regents.

Art. 8.

1. The final profession of those brothers who undergo the complete course of Philosophy and Theology shall be at the end of their second year Theology course. However, the non-clerical brothers may make their final profession after a minimum of five years after their simple profession.
2. An intensive preparation shall precede the final profession.
3. In general, the final profession of the whole batch of friars shall be held together in one of our houses. In case of the non-clerical brothers, it may be held individually in their own parishes or in the nearby fraternities with due solemnity.
4. Option for the clerical or non-clerical status has to be done before the first profession.

Art. 9. The aim of on-going formation is the spiritual renewal and cultural and professional updating of the brothers.

1. On-going formation could be organized at various levels such as age, batche and ministry.
2. Retreats of various types, seminars, get-together of batch-mates etc. are to be arranged at the Provincial level.
3. There should be some programmes arranged for the newly ordained priests for three consecutive years, so that they can deepen their theological understanding and pastoral experience.
4. Post-graduate studies and professional training may be undertaken by the clerical brothers after their ordination, and by the non-clerical brothers after their final profession, taking into account the need of Province.
5. Friars are recommended to attend the refresher courses conducted in various places for the sake of updating themselves.

Art. 10. Vijnananilayam, our Major Seminary at Janampet, has grown to be a big centre of formation for the Capuchins as well as for the non-Capuchins. Therefore it enjoys a special status in the Province and will be governed by its own statutes.

IV. Our life in Fraternity

Art. 11. As brothers given to each other by the Lord and endowed with different gifts, let us accept one another with a grateful spirit (Cons. 84. 1). Fraternal life is the backbone of a Franciscan community. Hence, all the members of a community should endeavour to promote fraternal life.

1. In order to review our life and activity local chapters should be held, at least once in three months, a report of which is to be maintained in a book.
2. The friars shall not undertake projects big or small, even when asked by the diocesan authority, without the prior consent of the community and the Provincial. The projects belong to the local community, and the community appoints a capable friar to look after the project in consultation with the Provincial.
3. The zonal meetings of the friars should be held at least thrice a year.
4. All the friars shall have a get-together once a year at the Provincial level at a convenient place and time.

V. Our Life in Poverty and Simplicity

Art. 12. Evangelical poverty embraces availability in love for and in conformity with the poor and crucified Christ, who came to serve, and leads to solidarity with the *oppressed* in their struggle. We have to make use of temporal things of this world with gratitude, by sharing them with the indigent and, at the same time, by giving an example of the proper use of things to people who desire them excessively (Const. 59. 5,7).

- 1 As friars minor, it is our duty to live a life of minority in accordance with our Franciscan tradition. Taking into consideration our Franciscan charism, let us live in solidarity with the poor and oppressed in their struggle. Let us adhere to a simple way of living.
- 2 All the fraternities shall prepare a yearly budget well in advance to each financial year and submit it to the Provincial Definitory for approval. The community should fix a percentage of the house income to be spent on charitable works. Every fraternity shall make it a point to send monthly returns to the Provincialate.
- 3 Provincial budget shall be prepared by the Financial Commission and be submitted to the Provincial Definitory
- 4 In normal cases a guardian is authorised to spend Rs. 5000/- (?) for a single purpose without consulting the House Council and a sum of Rs. 20,000/- after consulting the House Council. In all other cases, community has to obtain permission from the Provincial. This however, does not apply to the houses of formation.

5. In case of purchase of vehicles and other articles costing more than the amount sanctioned by the Provincial and his Definitory, a fresh proposal is to be discussed by the fraternity, and then submitted to the Definitory for its approval.
6. Whatever emoluments or gifts in cash a friar receives for his ministry shall be handed over to the local guardian for the use of the community.
7. After one's Journeys or doing any purchase, all account of one's expenditure shall be given to the treasurer or to the guardian.
8. Personal bank accounts are not permitted for friars. If in some special cases a personal bank account is necessary it should be opened only with written permission of the Provincial and his Definitory. The account has to be opened as a joint account.
9. There shall be no alteration of the existing building (i.e., any addition or breaking down done by the local guardian/principal of a school/parish priest/local community) without the written permission of the Provincial, who may grant it only after consulting his Definitory.
10. In establishing the houses we should take care that they are simple and in accordance with our local conditions.
11. The dress and life style of the friars should be in tune with our Franciscan simplicity.

Vi. Administration

Art. 13. Our fraternity led by the Holy Spirit is an integral part of the Church. It has to contribute to the building up of the Church in love by various offices and ministries (Const.109.1).

1. The Provincial together with his Definitory governs the Province, and the local guardian with his assistants governs the local community. In tune with the Gospel and Franciscan way of life, the governing authority is to be seen as service, and the superiors should consider themselves as animators.
2. The Provincial Definitory should meet at least four times a year (Const. 134. 1).
3. The Provincial should hold the pastoral visitation twice in a triennium. Besides the fraternal visitation, he should make himself available to the communities and individuals as often as needed.
4. The transfers and changes of office are to be done by giving the letters of

obedience.

5. The following are the important commissions to be appointed by the Provincial and his Definitory after consulting the prospective members:

Commission for Formation

Finance Commission

Education Commission

Commission for Pastoral Work

Building Commission

Justice, Peace, and Ecology Commission
Commission for Social Work

It may be advisable that the report of the commission meetings be made available to the friars. This however is left to the discretion of the Provincial and Definitory.

6. It is required that the brothers keep the Provincial informed of their absence from their community, if it is for more than two weeks.
7. A house chronicle has to be properly maintained by every community.
8. At the time of visitation the Provincial should go through the accounts, sign the chronicle, local chapter reports and the accounts.

Art. 14. Chapters hold an important place in our life. They shall be celebrated as special occasions of renewal and fraternal communion; and they have the primary authority (Const. 124,1).

1. Until otherwise decided, the Provincial Chapter shall be held by universal suffrage. That is, all the finally professed members of the Province shall participate in the Chapter. However, observers from the student community of the simple professed may be invited.
2. For the election of the Provincial and Definitors, the majority of votes needed is 1/3 of the votes polled. However, if in the first scrutinies the required majority is not obtained, in the third scrutiny an absolute majority will be enough. If in the third scrutiny the required majority is not obtained, the two leading brothers may be selected and voted upon. If a tie is the result, the one who is senior by profession shall be elected. If their profession is on the same day, the one who is senior by age shall be preferred.

VI. Apostolate

Art. 15. Our fraternity in obedience to the Spirit of the Lord fulfils a debt of service to all people bringing the Gospel in word and deed (Const.144.4). As Franciscans we are bound to be at the service of the people. All of us should engage ourselves in useful apostolate, in order to serve the people and support

the community.

1. The local fraternities should take keen interest to establish the SFO (Secular Franciscan Order) units in their dioceses, and the Provincial and Definitory should appoint a Provincial Spiritual Assistant.
2. Preaching is an important apostolate of ours, and as many friars as possible shall engage themselves in this apostolate. A friar could be appointed to co-ordinate the mission of preaching.
3. Our Social Apostolate: It is in tune with the Franciscan vocation to engage in social apostolate, but there should be a typical Franciscan outlook in our ministry. In handling money we should maintain sincerity and transparency. Yearly accounts should be submitted in time. The transfer of finance from one project to another is forbidden.
4. Taking into account the demands of contemporary society, new forms of apostolate such as Mass Media, Youth Ministry, Prison Ministry, Literacy Programmes, Ministry to the Abandoned etc., could be adopted.

- **VIII. Evangelization**

Art. 16. Mindful of our Lord's command, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded "and lo, I am with you always, to

the end of the age" (Mt, 28:18-20). Our Order accepts as its own the responsibility of spreading the Gospel that belongs to the whole Church. It regards and takes on this missionary work as one of its principal apostolic obligations (Const. 1744).

Evangelisation is the call to proclamation of the Good News and to the building up of the Kingdom of God in its various dimensions. Taking into account the conditions of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, the following could be taken as our guide lines:

1. In order to commit ourselves to the task of evangelization, it is recommended that the friars engage themselves in the proclamation of the Word of God, especially in areas where it has not been proclaimed.
2. The new priests and the students of theology are to be given opportunities to be initiated into the work of evangelization.
3. Each fraternity should make it its priority to reach the Good News to as many new villages as possible.
4. For the better co-ordination of the work of evangelization, a mission

secretariat has to be established.

IX. Holidays and Travel

Art. 17. As all of us stand in need of holidays, and we have to undertake many travels along the length and breadth of the country, we may do so with due permission.

1. The guardian may grant permission to his brothers to travel within the territory of the Province and, for the purpose of regular classes or ministry, anywhere in the country.
2. Every finally professed brother is entitled to have three weeks of holidays every year. The brothers in the initial formation can have two weeks of holidays.
3. Non-clerical brothers after their final profession, and cleric brothers after their priestly ordination may, go home for one month leave.

X. Maintenance of Friars and Friaries

Art 18. As children of the eternal Father, putting aside anxious care, let us place our confidence in divine providence and entrust ourselves to His infinite goodness (Const.63.1). Therefore placing our trust in the providence of the Lord, let all the friars together with the superiors be responsible for the maintenance of the fraternities and the Province.

1. The maintenance of the friars and major repairs of the houses are to be undertaken by the Provincialate. The construction of the new houses should be under the supervision of the Building Commission and any alteration in the approved plan has to be sanctioned by the Definitory.
2. An inventory of all the articles of the house should be maintained, and it should be handed over to the new animator on taking charge.
Every priest friar of our Province will celebrate six Masses per month for the intention of Provincial Minister. This is to facilitate our annual contribution to the General Curia and International College and to cover the expenses of the Provincialate.

XI. Suffrages for the Deceased

Art. 19. Our deceased friars, relations and benefactors have an intimate union with us. Although they are dead we are bound to keep them in our memory and pray for them.

1. One Holy Mass shall be offered by every fraternity on the death of Roman Pontiff, General Minister and former General Ministers, General Definitory, and former General Definitors who represented us and former Provincial

Ministers.

2. One Holy Mass by every friar shall be offered on the death of friars working in the Province, including the novices and the tertiaries. So also on the death of the parents of the friars working in our Province.
3. For our benefactors, living or dead, the fraternity could offer one Holy mass every year.
4. A Holy Mass shall be offered for the deceased friar on his death anniversary by the fraternity where he served last.

These statutes are to be approved by the Chapter. In case of doubt, the Provincial Definitory is authorized to offer clarification.

PROCEDURE OF CONDUCTING THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

The Chapter

1. The Provincial Chapter of the Mary Matha Province of Andhra Pradesh-Orissa, ordinary or extraordinary, shall be celebrated by universal suffrage. Both Ordinary and Extraordinary Chapters follow the same procedure except that the Ordinary Chapter will have an additional procedure of election of the Provincial Minister and his Definitors.

The Pre-Chapter Preparations

2. The Provincial Minister convokes the Ordinary Chapter of the Province three months before the date fixed for the Chapter. He may convoke an Extraordinary Chapter with the permission of the General Minister. It is appropriate that the General Minister or his Delegate preside (Const. 133.11).
3. The Provincial Minister also makes known the precise dates on which the Chapter will be celebrated, the time of arrival of the vocals and the time of departure and the things to be brought along.
4. The Provincial Minister and his Definitors shall appoint a Pre-Capitular Commission three months before the Chapter.
5. The Commission shall animate the Province spiritually, and consult all the friars regarding matters that concern the life activity of the Province in order to prepare the agenda of the Chapter.
6. The agenda thus prepared is to be submitted to the Provincial Minister and his Definitors at least six weeks before the Chapter.
7. The Provincial Minister with the consent of his Definitors publishes the agenda to the Province at least one month before the Chapter.

8. The liturgy during the Chapter should be inspirational, dynamic and complementing the various themes of the Chapter. Therefore the Provincial Minister and his Definitors appoint a Liturgical Commission one month before the Chapter. The Liturgical Commission prepares a well-planned liturgy and other prayers for the Chapter, and distributes roles to the friars concerned ahead of the Chapter.
9. Provincial Minister and his Definitors appoint a secretary and a vice-secretary to the Chapter in advance so that these two can function from the very beginning of the Chapter. They keep a faithful record of the proceedings of the Chapter.
10. The secretary and the vice-secretary may be assisted by two helpers who, at the direction of the secretary, will see to the arrangements of the Chapter hall, sound system, the distribution of relevant papers and documents to the vocals, etc.
11. The Provincial Minister and his Definitors appoint moderators one month before the Chapter. The moderators shall study the agenda thoroughly, so that they can moderate the discussions efficiently.
12. Provincial Minister and his Definitors may invite, if they deem it necessary, observers to attend the Chapter. They may also invite experts to animate the Chapter especially during Extraordinary Chapters.

Opening Session

13. The opening session of the Chapter shall commence with a prayer which shall be followed by:

- Roll call
Welcome address by the Provincial Minister
- Inaugural address by the President of the Chapter
Acceptance of the time-table prepared by the Provincial Minister and his Definitors
- Proposal and acceptance of two scrutineers, the Drafting Committee and the notary
- Approval of the agenda and fixing the day of elections, and
- Other information of interest **Procedure of**

Elections

14. There shall be an hour of prayer before the commencement of election.
15. Br. General Minister or his delegate presides over the elections.
16. The members of the Elective Provincial Chapter who are vocals proceed to

the election of the Provincial Minister and the Definitors on the date decided by the Chapter.

17. The vocals elect the Provincial and the Definitors by secret ballot.
18. The election of the Provincial and the Definitors are by absolute majority.
19. The outgoing Provincial Minister has passive voice in the election of Definitors (cf. Const.133.4).
20. The notary of the Chapter and the two scrutineers assist at the election process.
21. If a scrutineer or the notary gets three or more votes, a new person is chosen from the vocals to replace him.
22. The scrutineers, after collecting the votes, in the presence of the one who presides over the Elective Chapter, count and ascertain the number of the votes that each friar receives.
23. After the verification by the President, the notary will announce the number of votes each one has received. A minimum of three votes is required for a name to be mentioned.
24. If after the first ballot no one obtains an absolute majority, a second ballot is cast immediately. If this second ballot is inconclusive, the third and final ballot is cast. In this ballot only the two persons who had received the highest number of votes will be eligible for election and a relative majority of votes suffices.
25. In case the third ballot is inconclusive on account of a tie, the senior by profession is declared elected. If they had professed on the same day, the senior by age is declared elected.
26. After the election of the four Definitors, one of them is elected as the first Definitor. The second, third and fourth Definitors will be in the order of election.
27. The procedure of election shall be as follows:
 - Prayer
 - Roll Call
 - Election of the Provincial Minister

* A short break if the Chapter so decides

- Election of the Definitors and the first Definitor
 - Confirmation of the election by the President
 - Greeting the new team
28. The newly elected Provincial exercises his office as the Delegate of the Minister General until his election is confirmed
29. All proceedings of the election are to be accurately recorded by the notary. The records are to be signed by the notary, the scrutineers and the one who presides over the Elective Chapter. One copy of this record is to be sent to the Minister General and another is to be preserved in the Provincial archives.
30. The Provincial Minister and the Definitors make the profession of faith and take the oath of secrecy on the following day of the Chapter during the Eucharistic celebration.

Closing of the Chapter

31. The last session of the Chapter shall be reserved for:
- The finalization of the Resolutions and Recommendations to be voted upon for approval
 - Concluding talk by the President of the Chapter
 - Vote of thanks by the Provincial Minister
32. The Chapter is concluded with a hymn to our Patroness Mary Matha. *This procedure for conducting the Provincial Chapters is to be approved by the Extraordinary Provincial Chapter of 2009, held at Enikepadu from.*