



## The Conference of Major Religious Superiors of Sri Lanka (CMRS)

*Rooted in Gospel Values A Transforming Collective Force to Effect A  
Healed, Reconciled, Humanized, Integrated Sri Lanka*

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# ANNUAL REPORT

## CONFERENCE OF MAJOR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS SRI LANKA (CMRS) 2011 - 2012

*Your Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Spiteri, Apostolic Nuncio*

*Dear Sisters, Brothers and Fathers,*

At this Annual General Meeting of the CMRS, I am pleased to place before you the Annual Report for 2011 – 2012. Your Excellency, we are privileged in deed to have you with us today, as you do every year without fail. This is a sure sign of your concern and paternal care for us Religious in Sri Lanka. Though there are several occasions in which we meet you, your presence and exhortation at the Annual General Meeting is of special significance to us and we cherish these memories.

This year has been rather an eventless year, yet packed with different activities including several programs organized by the Committee for Religious Formation (CRF) and exposure program for Post Advance Level Students of the North and South organized by the Committee for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and the Healing and Reconciliation Programme for the CMRS.

### **1. The National Scene**

At the national scene, out of the many concerns that affect our nation and plaque the life of the poor and the marginalized, we have singled out two issues to address ourselves. The first is the continued struggle of the internally displaced persons due to the presence and expansion of the high security zones. Still there are those who cannot return to their own land and hence continue to live in make shift tents or in the jungle under the trees. Having taken up the matter with His Eminence, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, through his good offices, we have invited the honourable Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development Mr Gotabaya Rajapaksa, to seek his intervention. Unfortunately this has to be cancelled since we are not meeting with the Bishops tomorrow.

Second is the continued deterioration of the relationship between the Judiciary and the Legislature and or the Chief Executive. Since there are different points of views and varying opinions, once again through the good offices of His Eminence, we have invited President's Counsel Mr Shamil J. Pererato address us on the Present Crisis of the Judiciary in Sri Lanka. Being better informed we may be able to take suitable action to help the nation in this very important issue. This too had to be cancelled due to the same reason as above.

We must admit that, other than these, we Religious as a collective body have not been involved in any meaningful way in the various issues and problems that confront the nation at this present juncture.

## **2. THE NEW CMRS VISION, MISSION AND ACTION PLAN**

It must be stated here that all the ten programmes organized by the CRF was based on various aspects of the new CMRS Vision and Mission statements in order to transmit the same to the various target groups. In these ten programs, three one day programs were also included where all the religious of the area, Colombo, Kandy and Vavuniya were invited to share with them the new Vision and Mission.

Other than this as the outgoing Ex. Co. last year had envisaged in the action plan which was approved by the entire CMRS body, Regional Units of all Religious were formed in the Dioceses of Jaffna, Kandy, Badulla, Ratnapura, Chilaw, Mannar, Kurunegala, Trincomalee and Colombo including Kalutara and Negombo. Regional Units in other dioceses are planned in the coming weeks and months and we hope to complete forming them in all the Dioceses of Sri Lanka before June 2013 so as to invite the coordinators of all these units for the midyear live-in of CMRS.

## **3. CMRS MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES 2011 – 2012**

### **A. CMRS MEMBERSHIP**

The CMRS membership has increased by four women's Congregations and we have included the Cistercian Monks after having consulted His Eminence, under whose care they come presently. Thus the CMRS has a total membership of 59 which includes 18 Clerical Congregations, 04 Non - Clerical Congregations, 32 Apostolic Women's Congregations and 05 Contemplative Women's Congregations.

We thank the following members who were actively contributing to the activities of CMRS and left CMRS this year since their term of office ended in their particular congregations:

Fr. Rohan Dominic CMF, who has been an Ex. Co member during 2007-2008 and President from 2009 to 2011, Sr. Immaculate Joseph HC, who has been in the CMRS Ex. Co in 2004, Vice President in 2005 and President in 2006, Sr. Lorretta Armugan SP who has been elected General Councillor and Fr. Don Bosco CR.

We welcome the following members who replaced them: Fr. Joy Mariarathnam CMF, Sr. Victorine James HC, Sr. Merlyn Fernando SP and Fr. Godwin Niles CR.

We also welcome the new members Fr. Sylvester Perera of the Order of Cistercians and Sr. Marigladys Sanchez TC, Capuchin Tertiary Sisters, who were present at the September Quarterly Meeting, and the three whom we have not met still, Sister Libanos Ayle Testma CMS - Comboni Missionary Sisters, Sr. Ildegarde - Benedictine Sisters of Our Lady of Montevergine, and Sr. Magdalene Peter - Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyons.

### **B. MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION**

#### **a) AGM 2011**

The last Annual General Meeting was held on 30th November to 1st December, 2011 at Tewatte Retreat House. On the first day after a brief presentation of the New CMRS Vision and Mission for further deepening of the same, the Action Plan prepared by Ex. Co. was presented, discussed and approved. The Following reports were submitted:

- Report on Sister Formation Programme by Sr. Rubika AC, Dean Sister Formation
- Report of the CRF Programs by Sr. Malathie Dassanayake PH
- Report of the JPIC & Brief Sharing on JPIC Plans for 2012 by Fr. Sunil Rupasinghe SSS
- Financial Report by Bro. Denzil Perera FSC

The second day morning the Apostolic Nuncio His Excellency Archbishop Joseph Spiteri graced the occasion and delivered his message after the report of the CMRS President Fr. Rohan Dominic CMF.

At the second session in the morning the following members were elected for the new Executive Committee for 2012-2013:

Fr. JeyarajRasiah, SJ – President  
 Sr. Deepthika Silva, SCJM – Vice President  
 Bro. DenzilPerera, FSC – Treasurer  
 Sr. AntonetteGomez FMM – Committee Member  
 Sr. MalathieDassanayake PH Committee Member  
 Fr. Sunil Rupasinghe, SSS –CommitteeMember  
 Sr. Bernadette Fernando, SCC to continue to be the Executive Secretary.

Along with this, appointments of members for Committee for Religious Formation, Committee for JPIC, and the Various National Commissions were also made.

#### **b) Annual Meeting of the CBCSL and CMRS**

Following the AGM, the Annual CMRS – CBCSL meeting was held from 1<sup>st</sup> December evening to 2<sup>nd</sup> December noon. Following the minutes of the previous meeting, as a matter arising from the minutes, the Joint Commission of the CMRS and the CBCSL was discussed and accepted. His Eminence, being in charge of the Religious kindly consented to meet the CMRS Ex. Co. before every Bishops' Conference meeting and present the concerns of the CMRS to the Bishops' Conference.

On the second day, His Lordship Most Rev. Vianney Fernando shared on the visit to South Africa on a mission to learn about the process of Reconciliation that is followed there. Following which His Excellency Geoff Q.M. Doidge, High Commissioner for South Africa in Sri Lanka was invited to share his views on "Truth and Reconciliation with first hand information.

#### **c) Quarterly Meetings**

This year, as usual we had 3 quarterly meetings.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Meeting was held on 15<sup>th</sup> March at ISFA hall at De La Salle House Mutuwal. Before the meeting, the renovated Secretariat was blessed by Fr. JeyarajRasiah, SJ.

At the meeting we had some input sessions on "**Post – War Challenges in Democratization and National Reconciliation: The Way Forward for Sri Lanka**" organized by Fr. Theodore Fernando SJ, Senior Lecturer at the Open University of Sri Lanka.

Dr. MahimMendis (Dean of the faculty Humanities and Social Sciences at the Open University of Sri Lanka and Spokesman, Federation of University Teachers Association, FUTA) spoke on "**Required Post War Mind set for citizens to be in Harmony with Democracy**". Following him Ms. Sheila Richards, (Former Executive Director of the NeelanTiruchelvam Trust) spoke on "**Towards Meaningful National Reconciliation: Unity in Diversity of Interests**".

- The second Meeting was held during the Annual Live In Programme at Eymard Campbell Retreat House Hanwella 4<sup>TH</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> June. We had a Workshop on Healing and Reconciliation conducted by Fr. Anthony Pillai SJ.

At this meeting we had to elect an Executive Committee member to replace Fr. Sunil Rupasinghe SSS who resigned due to health reasons. The name of Fr. Rohan Silva was proposed and unanimously accepted.

- The Third Meeting was held on **20<sup>th</sup> September 2012** at the CMRS Secretariat. At this meeting an important decision was made by the entire body concerning the following, the request being presented in writing by the EX. CO.:

“There are times that individuals and groups request the CMRS to make a statement concerning some national issue. When the Major Superiors are contacted only very few respond and hence we are unable to proceed. We request that the CMRS entire body empower the Executive Committee by 2/3 non-secret majority vote to make a statement on such occasions. The CMRS Executive Committee too will act on the basis of a 2/3 majority either by email or by telephone call.” This request was voted for unanimously.

At the same meeting the Women’s Group and Men’s Group met separately to discuss the following:

#### Points discussed by the Women

- English Program for Sister Formees (September – November 2012)
- The New Dean for 2013
- Sister Formation Program 2013 – The importance of getting at least 50% of the Lecturers to be Women – Religious
- New members for Sister Formation animation team
- Importance of forming the younger generation of Women Religious giving them academic qualifications and formation for Leadership.

#### Points discussed by the Men

- Document on Sexual Misconduct - prepared by the CBCSL to be sent to Rome
- Reasons for non - participation in the CRF Program by Priests and Brothers
- Suggestions for CRF Program specially for the male members - Priests and Brothers
- Following proper protocol for ordination to diaconate and priesthood.

**d) The Joint Commission Meetings** mentioned in the CMRS Statutes came to its existence this year. (The Joint Commission is a special mixed body, made up of three Bishops for the CBCSL and the full membership of the Executive Committee of the CMRS. This is a Commission envisaged in Essential Elements Ch. II, 43 and MutaeRelationes No 63 Vita Consecrata 50. It should meet three times a year to treat matters of mutual concern to the CBCL and CMRS. )The CMRS Executive Committee had three fruitful meetings with His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith as he is the President of the National Commission for Seminaries, Clergy, Religious and Secular Institutes. They were held just prior to the CBCSL meetings 17<sup>th</sup> April, 14<sup>th</sup> August and 27<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

e) Regular **Executive Committee Meetings** were held before the Quarterly meetings and before Meeting His Eminence

f) Similarly regular **Missio Scholarship Board** meetings were held to screen applications for scholarships.

g) The same way, National Commission for Seminaries, Clergy, Religious and Secular Institutes meet regularly to discuss major issues. The participation of all members of religious was very encouraging.

**h) World Day of Prayer for Priestly and Religious Vocations**

For the World Day of Prayer for Priestly and Religious Vocations this year the various activities for the entire nation was organized by Frs. Sunil Rupasinghe and Rohan Dominic as requested by The National Catholic Commission for Clergy, Seminaries, Religious and Secular Institutes. Since the prepared materials did not reach certain Dioceses, they could not use them but had their own celebrations. For the coming year too Fr. Sunil Rupasinghe had accepted the responsibility of organizing the same once again requested by the same National Commission.

i) Fr. Jeyaraj Rasiah, SJ and Sr. Malathie Dasanayaka, PH participated at a Symposium organized by the FABC commission for Consecrated life on “Consecrated Life towards Collaborative Role in the Mission of the Church in Asia”. The symposium was held in Hua Hin, Thailand from 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Before the symposium proper in consultation with the EX. CO. a paper was presented from Sri Lanka on **Positive Experiences and Success Stories of Collaboration, Conflicts and Challenges and Expectations / Recommendations Regarding Collaboration** on the various levels between Religious and Bishops, between Religious and Diocesan Clergy, between Religious and Laity and among Religious themselves. We are happy to note that of the final recommendation and proposals presented after the Symposium, in Sri Lanka, many of the aspects are in practice such as joint Commissions and National Commissions in which the Bishops, Diocesan Priest Laity and Religious work hand in hand.

**4. CMRS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BISHOPS**

We continue to maintain very cordial relationship with individual Bishops and with the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Sri Lanka (CBCSL). There are many activities in which the CMRS is involved to ensure the contribution of Religious in the building of the Kingdom of God in Sri Lanka.

- a) The Annual Joint Meeting of the CBCSL and CMRS is an opportunity to reflect together matters of mutual interests and relevant issues and topics that affect the life and mission of the Church in Sri Lanka.
- b) We welcome the functioning of the National Catholic Commission for Clergy, Seminaries, Religious and Secular Institutes. There are Major Superiors and non-major Superiors in this commission and our contribution is much appreciated in the Commission.
- c) As mentioned above the Joint Commission is established and the CMRS Ex. Co. meets with His Eminence before every Bishops’ Conference and we are happy to note that our concerns are taken up at the Bishops’ Conference, presented by His Eminence.

- d) The CMRS is represented in all the Catholic National Commissions. Two members of the CMRS represent the religious in each National Commission. It is a concrete expression of the participation and the contribution of the religious in the mission of the Church in Sri Lanka and the sign of collaboration between the CBCSL and CMRS.
- e) Our prayers and wishes to His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Ponniah, the first bishop of the newly established Diocese of Batticaloa.
- f) Our prayers for the repose of the soul of Late Bishop L. R. Anthony, former Bishop of Trincomalee-Batticaloa, who passed away on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012.

## 5. FORMATION ACTIVITIES OF THE CMRS

### A. COMMITTEE FOR RELIGIOUS FORMATION (CRF)

Formation activities of the CMRS are organized and coordinated by the Committee for Religious Formation (CRF). The committee consists of the Vice President of the CMRS as ex-officio Chairperson and other CMRS members and non-CMRS members. This year all the ten programs organized by the CRF was very well attended due to the hard and efficient work of Fr. Napoleon Sipalay (June) OP who is its secretary. Sr. Deepthika Silva SCJM as chairperson of the committee coordinated all the activities of the committee. The following programs were conducted this year:

#### a) CRF Programmes 2012

**i) For Young Religious** (within 5 years of final vows - sisters and brothers) on “Rooted in the Gospel values” with Fr. Gerard Rosairo, OMI as resource person from 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

**ii) One Day Program For All Religious** on “Rooted in the Gospel values, a transforming collective force, to effect a healed, reconciled, humanized, integrated Sri Lanka.” With Fr. JeyarajRasiah, SJ as resource person, it was conducted in Colombo, Kandy and Vavuniya.

**iii) For Teachers and Administrators** on the theme of “Transforming ourselves to become catalyst of transformation” with Fr. Mervin Fernando as resource person from 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

**iv) For Community Animators (Superiors)** on the same theme as above with Sr. Rose Fernando, FMM as resource person, from 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012.

**v) For Religious over 60 years** on “Trust building among us to become a sign of communion” with Sr. Cynthia Mendis, PH as resource person from 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

**vi) For Formatorson** “Transforming ourselves to become catalysts of transformation” with Fr. JeyarajRasiah, SJ as resource person from 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

**vii) For Religious between 50-60 years old** on “Trust Building among us and becoming a sign of communion” with Sr. Cynthia Mendis PH as resource person from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4 October 2012.

**viii) For Leadership Teams** (Provincials and Councils) on “Transforming ourselves to become catalysts of transformation” with Fr. MariathasSelvaratam, OMI as resource person from 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

**ix) For Religious Priests** (within 5 years of ordination) on “Catalysts for Transformation “ with Fr. MariathasSelvaratnam OMI as resource person from 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012. Since there were only few priest signed up, this program was opened for Brothers and Sisters before final vows.

**x) For Novices** on “Transforming ourselves” with Sr. Jocita, RGS as resource person from 20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2012.

All programs were subsidized by the generous contribution of our regular benefactor. The 2013 programs are already ready and the brochure will be distributed soon.

**b) Sister Formation Programme**

The CMRS wishes to express our deepest gratitude to Sr. Rubika AC who completes her term as Dean of Sister Formation. We also express our gratitude to Sr. Carmela AC for allowing her to serve in this capacity. We welcome Sr. Virginia Daniels, SCJM as the new Dean and we wish her well. Thanks to Sr. Deepthika Silva, SCJM who made her available for this task.

**c) Formation of Formators**

As last year, the Formation of Formators program second part took place during the months of May – July 2012. Being the second part, the program was more intense with more demands on all participants who were required to write a review paper every week on the topic dealt with that week. They were also given some work to do during the intervening months before the next phase in 2013 and they will meet every three or four months to review their progress. The Third phase will take place again during the months of May to July 2013 at the same venue.

**B) Consecrated Life Course for the 4<sup>th</sup> Year Theology Students at National Seminary**

The course on Consecrated Life for the 4<sup>th</sup> Year Theology Students at National Seminary did not take place this year as the National Seminary has decided to have a Course on the Theology of Consecrated Life by one of the regular staff members.

**C) Special Formation Programmes**

***English Course for the Sister formation students***

As informed in the last year report a three months English Course was conducted for the participants of the Sister Formation Programme in 2011. It is conducted by the De la Salle Brothers at Mutwal. The first course was over on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Bro. Augustine Silva FSC was in-charge of the course. Since the outcome was very positive, this year too this course is being conducted for the next batch of Sister Formation Students.

**6. JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION ACTIVITIES OF CMRS**

This year the JPIC committee was revamped requesting each Congregation to send two or more members to participate. Presently there are more members in the committee and they are very active. Sr. Antonett, FMM is the Chairperson and Sr. Nilanthi, FMM the secretary. They had regular meetings to organize their activities.

## JPIC related activities/Trainings

- i. A seminar on “**Spirituality of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation**” was made possible for the CMRS JPIC Group at Nayakakanda based on the CMRS Vision Mission Statement. It was conducted by Sr. Clare Nolan, RGS from the United States. Sr. Rohini Mendis RGS made this possible as she had invited Sr. Clare for a programme in her Province, our gratitude to her for this kind generosity.
- ii. A group of 45 students 25 from the South and 20 from the north were taken to Madhu for three days in an effort to building peace and reconciliation. They had an exposure to Mullikulam where the Internally Displaced Persons are still living under trees in the jungles. They were moved by their plight and wanted the JPIC to do something to provide them with basic necessities. Due to the initiative of Fr. Bienvenido, we were able to obtain some funds for this and we are in the process of obtaining things that they need to be transported to these over 200 families. This exposure was made possible by the generous contribution of Msgn. Robinson Wijesinghe who contributed SL RS. 150,000/= for this purpose.
- iii. Msgn. Robinson Wijesinghe has also contributed SL. Rs. 1000, 000/= to be placed in fixed deposit and to use the interest every year for peace building programs organized by any religious Congregation. The Ex. Co. of the CMRS may decide on the programs when any application is received.

## 7. CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS

### Congratulations

We would like to place on record our congratulations and best wishes to the Holy Family Sisters who celebrated their 150 years in the country and the Jesuits who completed their 50 years as a Province. May the good Lord shower His choicest blessings on all of them to continue the good work in building up the Kingdom of God in this Island Nation.

### Thanks

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of you, who have contributed in many ways for the mission and growth of the CMRS.

Especially I remember the following and express my sincere gratitude:

- a) To the Triune God – for the watchful concern in directing us always on the right path,
- b) To His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Spiteri – for your presence today and all encouragement and assistance always,
- c) To the President and members of CBCSL – for the leadership and collaboration extended
- d) To the Ex Co members – for the co responsibility, cooperation and support, which has been a source of strength for my work. Especially to Sr. Bernadette, for her untiring work, interest shown in the growth of CMRS and for the invaluable assistance and advice given.
- e) To Some of the past Major Superiors – for the continuous contribution towards CMRS
- f) To the collaborators in different fields – for the partnership in programs and projects
- g) All of you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in the Conference – for your support, cooperation, participation and contribution which I privilege to enjoy during this year

## 8. For the Future

As to the future permit me to quote Archbishop Oscar Romero as he prays:

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.  
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is even beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.*

*Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying  
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.*

*No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.*

*This is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted,  
knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.*

*We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation  
in realizing that. This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well. It may be incomplete,  
but it is a beginning, a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.*

*We may never see the end results, but that is the difference  
between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future not our own.  
Amen.*

*Thank you and God Bless you*