



## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CUSTODY OF MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE**

### **D E C R E E**

Prot. N. 00080/04

The Capuchin presence in Malaysia-Singapore region dates back to the times when two brothers from the single United Capuchin Province of India arrived for a year-long preaching mission in 1954. This was due to the invitation of the late Bishop Olcomendy, Bishop of Melaka-Singapore, to cater to the spiritual needs of Tamil-speaking Catholics in the single diocese of Malaysia-Singapore. Later, with its division into three dioceses, namely, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Penang, Rev. Dominic Vendargon, Bishop of Kuala Lumpur, officially invited the Capuchins to set up a friary in Malaysia. Two Capuchins from the Province of India arrived and they stayed with a diocesan priest in Klang. Their apostolate consisted of preaching and Third Order activities. In the course of time, two more brothers from the same Province joined them in serving the Lord and his faithful. Staying in a building in Port Swettenham, they continued their ministerial life while more brothers arrived to reinforce their missionary ventures.

On 17 September 1962, St. Michael's Friary, Batu Arang, was opened, marking the Capuchin permanence in the region. God's providence, coupled with the blessings of our father Francis, enabled our brothers to carry on their ministry and to extend their services to different parishes such as St. Anne's Church, Port Swettenham and the parish of Klang. On 4 April 1965, the presence was blessed with another friary, Gethsemani by name, in Cheras. The pastoral enterprises of the friars bore fruit. St. Francis of Assisi church, built by the friars, became a parish by means of which they could encourage local vocations to the Order. In the meantime, the single province of India was divided into four new provinces. As the Mission showed clear signs of development and growth it was accepted as a Delegation under the new Province of Tamil Nadu in 1973.

However, the slow but steady growth of the Capuchin presence had to take place amidst thistles of hardship. All Indian brothers who sweated and toiled to implant the Order in that part of South East Asia had to withdraw their mission. In 1987, the last of them left the country after the Government had imposed stricter regulations concerning missionaries. Because of these restrictions it became impossible for brothers from the Province of Tamil Nadu to continue leading the Delegation of Malaysia-Singapore. In view of the changed situation, the jurisdiction was transferred from the Province of Tamil Nadu to the Province of the Philippines in 1995.

By now the seed of evangelisation had germinated and produced fruits a hundred fold. The Capuchin preaching ministry among a few Catholic groups in Malaysia-Singapore, in the fullness of time, paved the way for the implantation of our Order by God's abundant grace. It was now time for the Capuchin Delegation of Malaysia-Singapore to be raised to the status of a Custody under the Province of the Philippines.

Reading the signs of maturity the brothers of the Delegation, at their annual assembly held in May 2001, expressed the wish to raise it to a Custody. In a letter dated 24 July 2001 Br. Artemio Raymundo, then Provincial Minister of the Philippines, officially forwarded their wish to the General Minister and his Definitory. The General Definitory discussed the matter at its meeting in November 2001 and commissioned the Definitory for the SAPCC area to make a special visit connected with the petition (cf. Prot. N. 00727/01). In his report, the General Definitory supported the request to raise the Delegation of Malaysia-Singapore to the status of a Custody of the Order, stating "the time may really be ripe for them be declared as such"(cf. Prot. N. 00013/02). The proposal was endorsed at the 7<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter of the Philippines held from 14 to 18 October 2002, and received the unanimous approval of the SAPCC meeting in Pontianak in 2003. On 25 January 2003, Br. Troy de los Santos, Provincial Minister of the Philippines, on behalf of his Definitory, placed an official request before the General Definitory to elevate the Delegation of Malaysia-Singapore to a Custody of the Order.

The General Definitory, at its meeting on 18 September 2003, after having carefully examined all the aspects of the request and having verified all the prerequisites, decided to raise the Delegation of Malaysia-Singapore to a Custody of the Province of Philippines.

Therefore, observing all canonical provisions,

We, with the consent of the General Definitory, according to the norms of our Constitutions (cf. No.111.1), constitute and declare established the Custody of Malaysia-Singapore, dependent on the Province of Philippines, with all the rights and obligations of a Custody of the Order.

This decree will receive its legal force on 11 February 2004, on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the day of its promulgation.

The boundaries of this new Custody of Malaysia-Singapore, which has Blessed Mary, Mother of God, as its Patroness, will consist of the States of Malaysia and Singapore.

The members of the Custody are :

- the professed indigenous brothers of Malaysia-Singapore Delegation at the time of the erection of the Custody;
- all brothers who, at the time of erection of the Custody of Malaysia-Singapore,

exercise their ministry in Malaysia-Singapore;

- all brothers who will make their profession as members of the Custody;
- all brothers who will be assigned to service in the Custody of Malaysia-Singapore.

In accordance with No. 111.4 of our Constitutions, having considered the consultative votes of the perpetually professed friars now serving in Malaysia-Singapore Delegation, with the consent of the General Definitory given during our meeting of 15 January 2004, we hereby appoint as regular superior and councillors the following friars:

Regular Superior  
1<sup>st</sup> Councillor  
2<sup>nd</sup> Councillor

**Br. Michael Raymond, OFMCap.**  
**Br. David Reegon, OFMCap.**  
**Br. Paul Cheong, OFMCap.**

Furthermore it is established that all friars with perpetual vows are to join in the first chapter of the Custody (cf. Const. No.111.4) to be held within one year. It will be the task of the Chapter to discuss the life and the testimony of the brothers and to prepare a Statute of the new Custody, as well as to specify its capitular and electoral procedures.

Our hearts are filled with praise to God at the birth of a new Custody of our Order; our mind is full of grateful remembrances of the friars of both the Province of Tamil Nadu and Philippines, for their firm commitment to the growth of the Capuchin presence in Malaysia-Singapore. We are also impressed by their zeal to implant the Order in Malaysia-Singapore. The friars of the new Custody of Malaysia-Singapore merit our fraternal congratulations and God's unceasing blessings. We commend them to the loving care of our Brother Francis and Sister Clare whose seraphic spirit, we pray, they imbibe and diffuse in Malaysia-Singapore, securely building the reign of God in that part of South East Asia.

Given in Rome at the General Curia on 17 January 2004.

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Br. John Corriveau, O.F.M.Cap.  
General Minister

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Br. Marek Przechewski O.F.M. Cap.  
General Secretary