



MISSIONS



MISSIONARY INSPIRATIONS, ASPIRATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FRANSALIANS



Corona or no Corona our Mission continues!

Rev. Deacon Romnick S. Civico MSFS

administering baptisms at

Our Lady of Sacred Heart Parish, Citihomes Molino,
Molino 4 Bacoor Cavite, Philippines

Dear Respected Reader,

Thank you for blessing this mission magazine

I WANT MISSIONS



Fr. Moises Goma Supiada MSFS
The first MSFS Priest from Mozambique
Ordained on August 8, 2020

**Missionaries do promote
Vocations.**

Please see page 22 ff.

Relax & Read *I want Missions*.
Rejuvenate yourself.
Reach out to the Missions.
Be a true missionary, striving for
self-transformation and being an
agent of transformation



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Our God has POWER over CORONA Virus.... So let us pray.....

Almighty God, we know that everything is in your sovereign control. We ask that you keep the Coronavirus from continuing to spread. Father, we seek your wisdom and accompaniment every moment of our lives. Be with people making decisions that affect the lives and future of our families, communities and nations. We pray that they communicate clearly, truthfully, and calmly. Bring your protection upon those in health care profession, as they work with patients. Take away the fear, anxiety, and feelings of isolation from people receiving treatment or under quarantine. Give them a sense of purpose in pursuing health and protecting others from exposure to the disease.

Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Editorial

There is no bad time to preach the Good News!



This is the second issue of the Fransalian Global Mission Magazine, *I want Missions*. The second issue is possible because of the genuine acceptance given by you for the first issue. I am grateful to God, the Almighty who is the source of every good and who enabled us to launch this mission magazine. I thank Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvetil MSFS, the Superior General of the MSFS and the entire General Curia and the Provincial Curia of the various provinces and the entire Fransalian Family along with the Fransalian Associates, for the appreciation and encouragement given to this venture. My sincere gratitude to all the contributors who by way of sharing their convictions and ideas made the magazine a source of inspiration. And to you, my beloved reader, you who holds this magazine in your hand right now, may I express my sincere gratitude for your keen interest in reading and promoting this magazine.

COVID-19 -has been part of every sphere of our life during the year 2020. But we must acknowledge that there were still tougher times in the history of humanity. According to what our patron St. Francis de Sales taught us, the present time and its trials is in the permissive will of God. We do not know the “why” of it. Perhaps it is not for us to know, either.

Preach the Word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favourable or not (2 Tim.4:2). A missionary cannot expect the circumstances of his work, to be always favourable. **The global pandemic of Corona has affected our programs, but not our good will.** Nothing can deter us from our commitment. No virus can keep us confined to our homes. My sincere appreciation for all the retreat and renewal centres in our Congregation and the all the confreres in PMP forefront who rising to the occasion, spread the Good News to millions via online. Today we are *Missionnaires sans frontières* - missionaries without borders.

Let us continue to preach the Gospel for **there is no bad time to preach the good news.**

With this wish and prayer, I am delighted to present this second issue of I WANT MISSIONS.

May the year 2021 be a year of blessing for everyone.

God bless every missionary!



Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS
General Secretary for MSFS Global Mission

THE SIX PIONEERS FROM SAVOY TO INDIA

A Journey into the Unknown - 1845

It was 175 years ago, in the year 1845 when the young MSFS family was just six years old, the founder Fr. Peter Mermier took the bold step of sending six confreres from France to India! Six MSFS to India! That was as if almost half of the Congregation was moving to India! The oldest among them was 44 years old and the youngest just 26 years old. It was certainly a leap into the uncertain!

On June 5, 1845, 6 Missionaries of St Francis de Sales embarked in Bordeaux for a long crossing of 3 months. The ship's name was "Courrier de l'Inde".

23 passengers, including 16 priests (4 MEP for Pondicherry, including Mgr Dépommier from Thones, Savoy, future Bishop of Coimbatore, and eight Jesuits for Madurai).

August 19, stopover in Mauritius, visit to Jacques-Désiré Laval (Spiritan Missionary, beatified in 1979).

This trip would take them to Pondicherry (September 8, 1845), and later to Yanaon and Visakhapatnam (February 1846), the goal of their trip and the starting point of a long and beautiful missionary adventure.

Fr. Jacques Martin MSFS

Fr. Martin was the Superior of the batch, was 43 years old as he sailed to India. He was a priest for 18 years, during which he has been preaching 70 parish missions and 32 retreats. He was also famous for his talents as an architect, who build some churches in Savoy, plus 3 houses for the MSFS Congregation: La Feuillette, Mother House at Annecy (1837), Notre-Dame de la Gorge and Les Allinges (1840), two shrines to Our Lady and to St Francis de Sales. He was the first to die in India, very soon after his arrival (Yanaon, 5th May 1846).

Fr. Jean-Marie Tissot MSFS

Fr. Jean-Marie Tissot left Savoy at the age of 35. He also has been preaching, around 20 missions during his 9 years as a priest in Savoy. Second Superior of the Indian Mission from 1846. Later on, he became the Vicar Apostolic of Visakhapatnam (1863), and then the Bishop of the same diocese (1886). He was a participant in the Vatican I Council (1870). He is the one who has been living in India the most long period, 45 years.

Fr. Jean Thévenet MSFS

Fr. Jean Thévenet left his country at the age of 28, the younger among the four priests. He also was a renowned mission preacher during his two years as a priest in Savoy. He is the one who convinced Fr. Mermier, the Founder, to request from Rome the permission to get a mission territory overseas. He built the church at Aurangabad, where he was the parish priest, then Nagpur cathedral and Kamptee church.

Fr. Joseph Lavorel MSFS

Fr. Joseph Lavorel was 44 years old on the day of the departure. In 1837, he was bursar of the diocesan Minor Seminary, La Roche-sur-Foron, and wanted to join MSFS; the Bishop himself recommended him to Fr. Mermier through a letter. Due to eyesight problems, he had to leave Kamptee where he was parish priest and got back to Savoy for one and a half years (December 1855-June 1857). He died on bullock cart during a visitation.

Bro. Sulpice Fontanel MSFS

Bro. Sulpice Fontanel was the youngest member of the whole batch (26), who made his religious profession one day before the departure from Bordeaux. Very simple and humble man, talented in gardening and cultivation. He wrote to Fr. Mermier (1849) "you will certainly agree that I'm the one who is struggling the more to learn the language here in India". He was staying at Yanaon, and died at Sammalkoth from cholera, after 15 years in India.

Bro. Pierre Carton MSFS

Bro. Pierre Carton left for India at the age of 40. He was an experienced carpenter who has been helping Fr. Martin in many constructions. He is the first lay Brother of MSFS Congregation. During the forced stay at Pondichéry, he spent his time copying a Tamil dictionary. He died in Visakh after only five years in India.

The letter of Fr. Mermier (23.05.1845), Founder of MSFS, to the batch leaving for India. Excerpts.

My dear confreres, Here we are entirely in the hands of Providence, at the orders of the Sovereign Pontiff (.), subject to Father Martin whom I have appointed and still appoint as director of his confreres and brothers, with all the powers that I have then given, in accordance with our Rules and Constitutions which put us entirely at the disposal of the local Ordinary. Your vocation is very great, you cannot get an idea of the repercussions it has aroused in the diocese. I discovered in this resonance a disposition of divine mercy, which thereby wants

to make us understand the importance of the enterprise and the sublimity of our vocation, as well as our obligation to work towards our perfection. I must add that your departure (..) is also, and fortunately, the occasion of many and fervent prayers for the Missionaries. On our part, until your arrival in Vizagapatam or Pondicherry, there will be a Mass for our dear pilgrims every day, in addition to the special prayers. Go on! What happiness and what consolation to leave as a family! Go in the peace of the Lord, into the hands of Mary, in the care of the holy angels, Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales! Go, happy pilgrims, carry wherever you pass the peace, the blessing that the Divine Pastor attaches to your mission.

Marking this golden moment in the history of Indian Church and Society and the MSFS Family, every MSFS Community all over the world, planted six sapling each in honor and memory of this great six men army.

TOWARDS

CHRISTMAS AS A “MISSIONARY FEAST”

Message from the Assistant Superior General



My dear friends, readers of “I want Missions” and friends of Fransalians,

Every year, we celebrate in the Catholic Church the “World Day of Mission”, on the last but Sunday of October, because the month of October is dedicated to the missions (opening with the feast of St Theresa of Child Jesus, Patroness of Missions).



But, what about the feast of Christmas, that we are about to celebrate? **“God has sent His only begotten Son”**, says St. John. The word “mission” comes from the latin “mittere”, which means “to send”. So, behind the story of the baby in the crib, there is a purpose. **“God so loved the world that He has sent His only begotten Son”**. The first mission is that one, God sending Jesus to us, out of love, for our salvation, to bring us eternal life.

And then, the Gospel of the Christmas Night Mass speaks of **Angels**, whose name means “messengers” : the Angels in the heaven of Bethlehem are like missionaries proclaiming this good news : *“Behold, I’m announcing a good news. A Saviour is born tonight in the city of David. He is Christ, the Lord”*

The **shepherds** –poor, marginalized and despised people- are the first beneficiaries of this good news ; they receive it with some fear, but then they immediately move to the crib *“Let’s move to Bethlehem to see what happened, what the Lord made known to us. They made haste, they found Mary and Joseph, with the new-born child lying in a manger. And they were telling about what they heard of that child ... and when they left the place, they were going on praising and glorifying God”*. Such a good news touches the heart of the shepherds, it makes them move, and later, they will become missionaries as well.

Sometime after Christmas, we celebrate the feast of **Epiphany**, which means “manifestation” : the Magi coming *“from the East”* and following the star are supposed to be three (because of the three gifts mentioned in the Gospel : gold, incense and myrrh), representing the three continents known in the 1st Century : Europe, Asia and Africa. Is it not a missionary feast as well ?

So, dear friends, let us celebrate Christmas and Epiphany with a deep sense of gratitude towards God the Father who gave us His Son, towards Jesus “first missionary and leader in every mission”, and towards the Holy Spirit, who goes on blowing on the Church to move it “to the ends of the world” in order to proclaim the good news of the Love of God for every human being and for the Creation.

I wish you a blessed Christmas, and a Happy New Year 2021 !

Fr. Yves Carron MSFS, Assistant general



JAQUIER BABA

of Mali-Ghogargaon, Maharashtra, India

A missionary Giant

(1867-1947)

Fr. Guerin Jaquier MSFS, popularly known as *Jaquier Baba*, was born at Bernex, Savoy, France, on September 14, 1867 in a simple farmer's family. He was ordained priest at the same place on December 21, 1890. The first three years of his priesthood he worked in Savoy Diocese, France.

He was a zealous and enthusiastic priest; he loved to be religious priest and missionary and so he joined MSFS Congregation in July 1895 and made his first profession. He chose to work in the Missions of India. Hence, he started his journey towards India and reached Mumbai on December 3, 1895. Then he went to Nagpur and studied English at SFS School, Nagpur. Later, he was appointed for the Marathi Mission in Marathwada namely Mali-Ghogargaon. He went to Sagamner and stayed there for five months to learn Marathi. On November 19, 1896 he entered Mali-Ghogargaon as assistant Priest to Rev. Fr.

Marian Thomas. He worked enthusiastically and won over the hearts of the local people. He started preaching, teaching prayers, Bible etc. and tried to stop the social evil practices in the society in Mali-Ghogargaon and the nearby villages.



Fr. Santosh Salve MSFS

In June 1897 he was appointed the Parish Priest of Mali-Ghogargaon Mission. Then he mounting on Horse-Cart, took up the up-hill task and worked for the poor, weak, needy, destitute, marginalized and disappointed farmers. He went to every village around and near-by places, preached the Good News, taught Catechism of the Church and baptized them. He worked tirelessly for the upliftment of the people and built many schools, churches, catechetical centers and dispensaries. The unique church of Mali-Ghogargaon is one of the great and long-lasting structures which was completed by him in 1902. From 1915 to 1921, he worked courageously and faithfully at the Rahata and Borsar Missions. He was a true missionary, those days he travelled only on the Horse-cart and Bullock-cart. He went through many painful hardships. As a result, he fell ill and had to return to France in 1926 for





the hearts of the faithful. His tomb in Mali-Ghogargaon has become a place of pilgrimage. On May 20th every year there is great celebration in his memory. Many people – not only Catholics but also people of other denominations and faiths – come to participate in the feast. Many miracles are attributed to his powerful intercession. People have developed a tradition to carry handful of mud from the area around the tomb of Jaquier Baba. In deep faith many people consume the mud in small quantity and experience miracles of healing and wellbeing. Many people have testified that he is a powerful intercessor for those with the problems of infertility. Besides, on the 20th of every month there are special prayers and devotions in honor of Fr. Guerin Jaquier.

the treatment. In 1929, he returned to India, Mali-Ghogargaon and started his Mission work with full swing and enthusiasm. He was one of the most well-known missionaries of his time. In 1944 his health again deteriorated and had to rest for a little long time. Until that time there were 6700 Baptisms registered in Mali-Ghogargaon Mission and 4500 at Borsar Mission.

In 1947 he became very weak and was unable to move. In March 1947 he was confined to his bed and was spending time in prayer for the people. He was given the Sacrament of anointing the sick on the Easter Sunday that year. That was his last Easter with the people of his own. On May 20, 1947 at the age of 80, Fr Jaquier went to his heavenly abode. He was buried near the Church. It is already 73 years since this missionary giant departed from this world. But he left sweet and soothing memories in

Mali-Ghogargaon is located in the Catholic Diocese of Aurangabad in India. The diocesan authorities in collaboration with the MSFS has already taken some initiatives to popularize this devotion and to pray for the beatification of Fr. Guerin Jaquier MSFS.

Our Salute to the Great Fransalian Missionary!!

Jaquier Baba!!!

It is already 73 years since this missionary giant departed from this world. But he left sweet and soothing memories in the hearts of the faithful.

Message from

Rev. Fr. Ashish Maske

the Present Parish Priest of Malighogargaon

Christ the King Church, Malighogargaon is one of the oldest parishes in the Diocese of Aurangabad. It was late Rev. Fr. Marian Thomas who worked in the mission from 1892-1896 and began the work of evangelization here. This was carried forward by a zealous MSFS French missionary named as late Rev. Fr. Gurien Jacquier and now known as *Jacquier Baba*. He worked during 1896-1915 and 1929-1947 completing a total of 37 years in the mission. His presence in the mission was very fruitful as he learnt well, the language of the people and adopted to their culture. He won the hearts of the poor and rich of the place. Initially working for the poor, downtrodden and marginalised of the society could mean to confront in the challenges of the society like casteism, untouchability, superstition etc. With his spirit of endurance, Fr. Jacquier did succeed in his pastoral work, catechising and baptising the people of the place. The tall towering church of almost 200 feet high is the outcome of his hard work.

Working as a priest in this unique mission is a privilege, as I do feel the vibrations of his missionary spirit.

The mission is endowed with the pastoral activities of the church along with the shrine of Our Lady of Velankanni, The Mission Primary School, St. Joseph High School and

the Junior College. Several children of the poor and marginalised of the locality and nearby places of the parish do find their shelter in the Boarding run by the Parish. Overall, the mission has been a great success in enhancing God's kingdom and serving humanity in this part of Marathwada. Certainly, the credit goes to God the Almighty who has worked through the instrumentality of the great missionaries like Fr. Jacquier and is still working through many more priests, religious and lay faithful.

Over the years, people have developed great faith in the intercession of Fr. Jacquier. His tomb has become a holy place of attraction for many devotees. I do find the divine spirit of God working in the intercession of Fr. Jacquier. People who come at his tomb pray earnestly



Fr. Ashish Maske MSFS

for their intentions and carry the mud from the pit nearby his tomb. It is the belief of the common people that the mud in the pit has some touch with the holy remains of Fr. Jaquier. That is how they are able to experience the miraculous divine power of God. People flocking to this holy place have experienced their ailments getting cured, the childless women bearing children and the various intentions of the people getting fulfilled.

Testimonies

- Mrs. Vaijanti Raju Raut gave a testimony of getting healed of Cancer during the year 2019-2020.
- Mrs. Rajashree Bhrahmane testified that she was blessed with a child after she sought the intercession of Fr. Jaquier in 2000.

Ultimately, I praise God for inspiring the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales to work in the peripheries, and in the remotest parts of the world and give Divine experience to humanity even after their earthly death.

I praise God and thank Fr. Jaquier...

Rev. Fr. Ashish Maske
Parish Priest,
Christ The King Church, Mali -Ghogargaon



Built under the guidance of Jaquier Baba, this Church now 120 years old!



The cart used by Jaquier Baba



PRAYER

In honor of
FR. GUERIN JACQUIER MSFS

(Prayer approved by the Bishop of Aurangabad)

O Loving God, our Heavenly Father, We are grateful to you, for having chosen, set apart and appointed Fr. Jacquier Baba, a Fransalian Missionary. You filled his heart with your love and zeal for the salvation of souls, to love and serve all . You endowed him with a generous and loving heart to preach your Good News to the poor, needy and marginalized.

Abba Father, we praise you for it was your Divine Will that he was to leave France and come to, Mali-Ghogargaon, Marathwada to care for the social and spiritual upliftment of the last, least and the lost. He sowed the seeds of Christianity and gave love, mercy and compassion of Christ to all.

O God, You commissioned him to carry out your mission of preaching, praying, healing and building your kingdom in their hearts. O God, we thank you, for inflaming his heart, with your Love and with Love for our neighbors, through which he went on a horse-cart, without counting his comforts to make Christ known for the first time to many.

O Lord, we praise you for giving Fr. Jaquier the gift of healing and answering our petitions with the consumption of a little mud at his tomb. (Please place all your petitions here)

O Lord we thank you for granting our prayers and petitions through his powerful intercessions. We pray earnestly to raise Fr. Jaquier to the Altar of the Lord to be counted among your holy Saints.

We make our prayer in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen.

Our Father.. x, Hail Mary ... x 3, Glory be...x 1

Jaquier Baba.... Intercede for us (3 times)

THE ROSS HILL SHRINE

Visakhapatnam, India

A Missionary Heritage

Shrine – the Sign of Hope

The city of Visakhapatnam is in the State of Andhra Pradesh, India. It is surrounded by Eastern Ghats and faces Bay of Bengal on the east. The entrance channel that leads to Visakhapatnam natural harbour, is situated between two hills, namely, Dolphin nose Hill and Ross Hill. The Ross Hill is situated in the city facing the Sea of Bay of Bengal. Dolphin nose Hill is in the sea on the other side of the entrance channel. On the highest point of the Ross Hill, one finds a beautiful church dedicated to Our Lady. It is the Marian Shrine and one of the most famous shrines in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Today the shrine is known with many names, such as - the Ross Hill Church, the Hill Chapel (*Konda Gudi* – in Telugu), the Mary Matha Shrine (*Kanya Mariamma konda* – in Telugu) and Visakhapuri Mary Matha Shrine. Pilgrims come to this sanctuary from all walks of life, irrespective of caste, color, creed, culture and language especially from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Orissa, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Majority of the pilgrims are Hindus and Protestants, besides Catholics and Muslims. They come to the shrine to pray, and to honor the Blessed Mother. As the days and years go by, the shrine

turns out to be “spiritual hub of the north-eastern Andhra Pradesh” and a significant Marian Shrine and Pilgrim Centre.



The name: Ross Hill

Fr. Dola Velangani Rao MSFS



The hill is named after an English Judge, Mr. Ross, who owned part of the hill and built his residence there. Fr. Francis Moget writes, “Around 1850, an English Judge, Mr. Ross, purchased the hill and built a bungalow on its summit, expecting to spend the rest of his life in quiet retirement. Losing his eyesight, he returned to England. The new owner, Captain Mappen, didn’t remain long as several members of his family fell ill. He sold it to a Hindu Merchant who couldn’t find a tenant as the place was held to be unhealthy and the house haunted. He put it for sale.”

When Bishop Tissot of Visakhapatnam came to know of the Ross hill property is kept for sale by the Hindu merchant, without hesitation, the bishop bought it in 1866 for Rs. 700/-, "paid through a gift of Rs. 1000 to the mission, amount collected through the sale of needle work items made by Mother Justine and her orphan girls." Soon he left for Europe after giving the instructions for building the shrine. The vicar general Fr. Richard saw to the necessary repairs of the house. He erected an altar and dedicated the Chapel to Our Lady of Hope. He blessed the Chapel on 15th August 1866. Thus, a bungalow built by Mr. Ross as his residence became inauspicious to him, but for others became auspicious abode of the Mother of God.

Protection of Mother Mary from Natural Calamities

In those days, cyclones were not unusual. There were cyclones in 1870, 1874 and 1876 all of which damaged the new Ross Hill Chapel to the discouragement of Fr. Richard. The cyclone in 1876 was strong enough to bring to naught the improvement carried out during the past six years. Witnessing the damage done to the town, Bishop Tissot went up the Ross hill on the next day of the cyclone and made a vow to replace the old statue in the chapel by one of Our Lady of Sacred Heart in order to obtain from our heavenly mother the grace of protection from the effects of such dangerous storms in future. This prayer of the holy bishop seems to have been heard, for since that day, though the town experienced cyclones, none did great damage.

World War II – Bishop Rossillon’s Vow

During the World War II, on April 6, 1942, the Japanese tried to raid over the town of Visakhapatnam, which made Bishop Rossillon to ask for the intercession of Our Lady and he took a vow that if the city is protected from the Japanese raids, he would lead his faithful in procession to Ross Hill Chapel. His prayers were heard and there was no further raid. Being faithful to the vow he made, the bishop took his faithful in a solemn "Thanksgiving Procession" to Ross Hill Chapel on 10th February 1946. Monsignor Baud, the then Co-adjutor Bishop, reminded the faithful of the vow taken in 1942 by Bishop Rossillon and of the intercessory power of Our Lady.

Ross Hill Area – Symbol of Religious Harmony



There are three hills at the entrance channel leading to harbor in Visakhapatnam, having three religious places. On the first hill is built a Mosque, on the second hill (Dolphin nose hill), a Hindu Temple, and on the highest, a Catholic Church on Ross Hill as the sanctuary of our lady of the Sacred Heart. nevertheless, never was there any religious tension or conflict.

The Ross Hill area is truly a symbol of Religious Harmony.

ROSS HILL – A Spiritual Resort for Everyone

In 1972, Bishop Gopu Ignatius officially entrusted the care of Ross Hill Shrine *“ad perpetuum”* to the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales. Since then Ross Hill was the spiritual epitome of the MSFS in Vizag Province and to many other religious congregations. Every Provincial Administration spared no efforts to make the Hill a better spiritual harbor. Every year as many confreres as possible participate in the annual feast and the connected celebrations.

Other religious congregations too without fail commit themselves for the organization and participation in the major events at Ross Hill. There are regular spiritual and renewal programs offered at the Ross Hill. There are spiritual books and devotional music CD published on a regular basis under the auspices of Ross Hill Shrine. The MSFS family can be proud of ever providing with the best personnel to preserve, enhance and to dispense this great spiritual patrimony entrusted to the Congregation.

Our Tasks Ahead

A Shrine is one of the best places of

evangelization. No matter whatever development, be it spiritual or material, yet there will be a lot to do keeping in view of the present context. A shrine should be able to offer God-experience to every pilgrim who comes up the hill. It is a place of encounter with the divine. Ross Hill shrine is blessed with beautiful scenic beauty and it attracts tourists too. Every tourist will not go down the hill without entering the



In 1972, Bishop Gopu Ignatius officially entrusted the care of Ross Hill Shrine

“ad perpetuum” to the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales.

Church and that makes him come in contact with the Lord. The Shrine has been a spiritual wellspring for all the pilgrims. It has to be kept up. Basic facilities are to be provided for the pilgrims always. There is a dire need of priests specialized in Spirituality,

Psycho-Spiritual Counselling and Family Apostolate. A good and spacious museum is yet to be materialized as per the present day standards and this sort of museum should not only exhibit the epoch-making history of the shrine, but also the display of the testimonies with offering they made in fulfillment of their vows made and also the History of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, who toiled hard from the beginning to develop the shrine in all aspects. Ross Hill should always be *“pilgrim-friendly”* shrine. The provincial administrations and local shrine administrations should continue work in close collaboration.

Conclusion

Ross Hill Shrine is the first shrine entrusted to the Fransalians in India. Its place in the history of the Church in India, and significantly in Andhra Pradesh, is part of the divine plan. It is destined to be a spiritual hub in the City of Destiny. It is not a man-made shrine to serve selfish motives. God willed it to be the place where all people experience peace, harmony and serenity and find

themselves in Him and find meaning in their lives seeking solutions for their problems in life. The number of testimonies that simple pilgrims give to us are truly vouch for the powerful intercession of Our Lady. The holy hill always gives a new experience of God each time a pilgrim goes up the hill. Our sincere prayerful gratitude to all those who toiled hard from the beginning to this day and to those who would toil in the days to come.

Dear Reader, it is my humble prayer and wish that, you who now hold this Mission Magazine and read this article on Ross Hill, one day in your life's pilgrimage, may direct your steps by the grace of God to the top of the Ross Hill and experience the Divine Blessings.

For more info please visit: www.rosshillshrine.org

The Call of the XX General Chapter 2019

Heeding the exhortation of Pope Francis, all Provinces and mission units will initiate more ministries directed to families, and those on the periphery, rural areas, and economically poor.

Implementation: Provincial Superiors & Provincial Councillors in Charge of Mission.

Directives on Mission No. 6

REV. FR. ANTONY MOOKENTHOTTAM MSFS

A MAHATMA with a Vision and Mission

Fr. Antony the Spiritual and Intellectual Giant

With the sincere awareness that I can never contain in words the greatness of the one about whom I am going to write these few lines, I would present Rev. Fr Antony Mookenthottam MSFS as a Missionary who was a Visionary, a Fransalian who was a Mahatma. As I thank God that I was permitted to encounter in my lifetime a flawless legend whose inspirational life has touched thousands of people, including Priests, Religious and Laity, I am deeply pained in my human fabric to withstand the incessant tweak of pain that transpires out of the sheer feeling of loss and helplessness. The versatile manner with which he has endeared himself to people from every walk of life, expose vividly the grade of nobility and the range of impact this nonchalant personality has aroused in the hearts of those who had the privilege to encounter him. Fr Antony Mookenthottam *has touched the humanity by being Human-like St Francis de Sales his role model.*

“Spirituality is not learned by flight from the world, or by running away from things, or by turning solitary and going apart from the world. Rather, we must learn an inner

solitude wherever or with whomsoever we may be. We must learn to penetrate things and find God there.” These words of Meister Eckhard aptly fit well into the life of Fr Antony Mookenthottam.



Fr. Benny Koottanal MSFS



Fr Antony held firm in a graceful manner the art of living that befits the life-style of a follower of St Francis de Sales. His ability to see God in “smaller things of the world”, especially in the weak and fragile endeared him to be a friend of the poor. Beyond the limits of age, his adaptability to be a child with the children, a youth with the young, a grown-up with the middle-aged and an elderly to his contemporaries and to enjoy those palpable moments with substantial impact was colossal. **The death of Fr Antony Mookenthottam is an equally a death warrant for the MSFS:** Until today You and I enjoyed the physical presence of a ROLE MODEL for our Religious Life, particularly for our FRANSALIAN WAY OF LIFE. It is time that we own up the responsibility to live his message truly in our personal life.

A brief historical Note

Fr Antony Mookenthottam MSFS was born on February 28, 1931 to Mr Thomas Mookenthottam and Mary, at Narianganam, Pala, Kerala. He completed his schooling at St Mary Magdalene's Primary School and St Mary's High School. He joined the minor seminary at Mission Home, Kanjikuzhi, Kottayam in June 1947. He completed

philosophy studies at Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamalle, Chennai from July 1949 to April 1952. He completed his novitiate at Margao, Goa from 1952 to 1953 and made his first profession on May 27, 1953. He completed theological studies at Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamalle, from 1953 to 1957. He made his perpetual profession on May 27, 1956. He was ordained a priest on April 27, 1957.

Appointments:

Salur Mission, from 1957 to 1958

Assistant Parish Priest, Gnanapuram, 1959

Parish Priest, Gnanapuram, from 1959 to 1963

Assistant Parish Priest St Anne's cathedral, 1963

Correspondent, St Antony's H. S. Visakhapatnam, from 1964 to 1965

General Councillor of the MSFS Congregation from 1965 to 1974

Doctorate in Theology from Fribourg, Switzerland, 1972-1978

Staff in Ishvani Kendra, Pune, from 1979 to 1980

Rector, Vinayalaya, from 1980 to 1982

Professor at St Peter's Pontifical Institute Since 1980-1997

Provincial, Visakhapatnam Province, from 1982 to 1985

Parish Priest, Hebbagodi, from 1991 to 1993

Director, Indian Institute of Spirituality, from 2003 to 2005

Editor of Indian Journal of Spirituality, from 2003 to 2005

Provincial Councilor in-charge of Formation, 2003 to 2006

Professor of Suvidya College from 1984-2019

Member of the Staff and Spiritual Guide in Suvidya College from 1987-2019

Professor and Spiritual Guide in IIS from 1990-2019

The above mentioned *Curriculum Vitae* of Fr Antony Mookenthottam does not fully expose the nifty person he is. The versatility that makes him different from others was his unique convictions and constant desire to attain perfection.

A Synonym for Serenity

St Francis de Sales wrote: **Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset.** Fr Antony never lost his inner peace even when the waters were turbulent around him, even when storms raged. He held on to his Lord, whom he knew to the surest guide and holder of his destiny. All who came to him experienced him as an epitome of the little virtues of St Francis de Sales, such as, Gentleness, Humility, Patience and Simplicity.



Missionary at the Service of the MSFS Congregation

His readiness to be at the service of the MSFS Congregation led him to the remote missions of Visakhapatnam and the citadels of power and authority in the Congregation. He was a Missionary, a Parish Priest, Professor, Provincial and General Councilor of the MSFS Congregation. He opted to go as a pioneering Missionary to the Chad-Cameroon Mission in Africa

when the South West India Province took up this mission. He had a vision and dreams for the MSFS Congregation and he accomplished it by becoming the change he wished to see in the Congregation.

A Visionary who dared to think differently

What is the factor that prevents you from being happy? It is the MIND. The mind is both the problem and its solution. Transform the mind, transform your thinking and you will turn out to be a visionary. The visionary mindset of Fr. Antony Mookenthottam was vividly notable in his far reaching plans for the future of the Congregation. Some of the daring steps that he took and implemented had lasting impacts in the life of the MSFS Congregation in India. The North East Mission, Suvidya College, Philosopate at Nilambur, SFS Publications, Indian Institute of Spirituality and SFS Parish at Hebbagodi were the fruits of the vision of Fr. Antony. Some of the reformations and renewal he brought into the Formation as well as Administrative policies had telling impact in the life of the future generation of the MSFS.

A Priest for Others

Being imbued with the spirit and spirituality of St Francis de Sales Fr Antony became another Francis de Sales for our times. He radiated serenity in his appearance, gentleness in approach and equanimity of mind. Fr Antony was immensely patient with his Spiritual Directees. His spiritual acumen and his deep-seated convictions had rippling effects in the

lives of all those contacted him. Many Religious Congregations invited him to be their spiritual guide and confessor, to preach retreat or to help them in the formation of their future members. He helped many fledgling Congregations to write their Constitutions and gave guidance and directions to them. He helped them to set their vision and mission in clear perspectives.

Fr Antony Mookenthottam the *Guru* & *Shishya* (the teacher & disciple)

Fr Antony was an authentic Catholic Theologian and Spiritual Guide and at the same time a genuine Indian Seeker and Guru. As a *Guru*, he taught with authority. As a *Shishya* he learnt with deep humility. His unflinching loyalty to the Catholic Doctrine and teaching was harmoniously blended with his desire to be rooted in the Indian spiritual search and experience for God. The blend comes because of the profound experiential acknowledgment of Jesus as the Truth, the Way and the Life. Grounded and rooted in this experience, he could see the limits and limitations of cultures and cultural expressions through which the action of Spirit of God is manifested. He could also detect the historical factors that can easily cage the authentic Catholic, Ecclesial teachings and Spirituality. Therefore, both a Westerner as well as an Indian can find Fr Antony a reliable and trustworthy companion



in their philosophical or theological journey to God.

Source of his Humanness and Compassion

Reading, writing, learning, teaching, guiding and experiencing made Fr Antony very profound and compassionately human. But that depth of life was expressed in simplicity of lifestyle as well as of writing. **He did not yield to the temptations to verbosity and relied on simplicity and clarity of expression. He was not interested in making impressions but in conveying directly a message he wants to give.** In social company his discreet, caring and attentive presence communicated and influenced more than words could. The number of books and articles that he has written are vivid examples of a person who oriented his search to praxis, distinct from a mere

armchair theologian. His exceptional intensity in studying St Francis de Sales led to the translation of the Spiritual Classics of St Francis de Sales from French into English. Yet one of the most popular books he has written is the innovative writing of the Book *The Formative Biography of St Francis de Sales*. It is a great example of a writer who writes a biography of this great Saint not only for the admiration of but also for imitation by the readers, so that they too may be other St Francis de Sales.

Our Tasks ahead

Yes, a great era of the MSFS Congregation has come to standstill with the demise of Fr. Antony Mookenthottam. The vacuum is being felt amidst us. The young, middle-aged and the old among us are well aware that the absence of Fr Antony will have a telling impact in our lives hereafter. But are we here to give up? How are we going to hold high the values of this MAHATMA? We know that we cannot

fill in the shoe that Fr Antony is leaving behind... but still, our commitment to the little virtues he practiced, our sincerity to our Priesthood as he lived it, our intensity to study St Francis de Sales and to live Salesian lifestyle and our willingness to be TRUE MISSIONARIES who are at the service of the Church with integrity and honesty will be small but great steps to do justice to the saintly persona of Rev. Fr Antony Mookenthottam.

We shall pay our tribute to Fr. Antony Mookenthottam:

Our Dear Fr. Antony,
You were a universal person
who embodied the Eastern and Western Perception
of life. You were a wise man with both human and divine
wisdom. You were a man of prayer, who looked for God both
in heaven and on earth. You were a Spiritual Giant who guided
many Priests and Religious to the stability of their vocation. You
showed us in actuality the greatness of our Patron Francis de Sales.
Adieu dear Father... until we meet in heaven.

***Fr Antony Mookenthottam has touched the
humanity by being Human-like St Francis de Sales
his role model.***

**Many Religious Congregations invited him to be their
spiritual guide and confessor, to preach retreat or to help
them in the formation of their future members. He helped
many fledgling Congregations to write their Constitutions
and gave guidance and directions to them. He helped them
to set their vision and mission in clear perspectives**

The Role of Missionaries in Nurturing Vocations

“Jesus went up to the mountain and called those he wanted and they came to him. So he appointed twelve, whom he called apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mk 3: 13-15). A disciple is called to live, learn, experience, be transformed and possessed by Jesus. These come through constant union and communion with him. When he is sent out, a disciple has to proclaim his experience of Jesus as saviour, redeemer and liberator from the clutches of sins because he is set-apart for this purpose. Setting-apart in scripture is referred as ‘consecration’. A disciple (missionary) consecrates himself and God sanctifies him. Therefore the primary apostolate of a missionary is to bear witness to his consecration, fostered through prayer and penance (cf. Code of canon law, canon 763). Evangelization or apostolic action always proceeds from intimate union with God (cf. canon 675 §2). The consequence of intimate union is that the missionary is imbued with an apostolic spirit and apostolic action is animated by religious spirit, the love of God and his people.

Vocation: Divine–Human Interaction



Vocation is central to understanding the relationship between divine initiative and human response. The Latin term “*vocare*” means to call someone,

to summon and to invite. The Sacred Scripture from the beginning to the end draws heavily upon the notion of vocation or calling to describe God’s interaction with humankind. Humankind was



Fr. Athmas Kerketta MSFS

called to dwell in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15) and faithful are beckoned or called to enter the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2). Thus vocation is an interpretation of God’s interaction with creation/humankind. It is a call to be God’s partner. The partnership between God and humankind is expressed in covenant relationship: ‘I will be your God and you will be my people’. God the Creator called Israel into a covenant relationship, a deep interpersonal relationship. Jesus’ mission can be described as the calling of humankind to God.

Jesus identified Apostles to Continue The Mission

Jesus himself identified the prospective apostles and invited them to follow him saying, “Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20; Lk 5:1-11). He called the twelve disciples to him, named them personally and gave them authority to drive out the unclean spirits and to heal the sick. He instructed them to go and proclaim the kingdom (cf. Mt 10:1-15; Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:12-16). Jesus also appointed seventy-two

other disciples to continue his mission to the nations of the earth (cf. Lk 10: 1-16). He trained, encouraged, and assured them of his presence on their mission, "I will be with you always until the end of the world" (Mt 28:20).

Apostles Chose their Successors

Apostles on their part to continue the mission, chose their successors like Barnabus (Act 4:36-37). The apostles and elders together chose Judas and Silas to be companions of Paul and Barnabus in their mission (cf. Act 15: 22-41). Paul chose Timothy and Silas (cf. Act 16: 1-8) to be his companions and successors.

Paul identified Local Leaders and Entrusted The Mission

Paul identified Lydia, Priscilla and Aquila and Appolos. Lydia after her baptism played a good role in the early Church (cf. Act 16: 14-15) especially inaugurated the Church in Philippi. In fact that marked the beginning of Christianity in Europe. Priscilla was an important missionary

who played a decisive role in the early Church. She is named as Prisca in the epistles (Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19, 2 Tim 4:19) and Priscilla in the Acts 18:2-26. She and her husband Aquila provided hospitality to Paul when he was thrown out of Thessalonica and humiliated in Aerographs in Athens. When Paul went to Ephesus, capital of Asia Minor, Priscilla and Aquila accompanied him (Acts 18:18) and continued their missionary activities there. In Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria came. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. He knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila explained way of God to him more accurately. Later he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus (Acts 18:24-28). Paul writes about Priscilla and Aquila in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 16:19) and to the Church in Rome (Rom 16:3-5). Priscilla and Aquila were close associates and supporters of St. Paul in Corinth, Ephesus and Rome, just as Lydia was in Philippi.



Vocation is a gift from God. We need to recognize, respond and nurture vocations.



Four MSFS Scholastics were ordained Deacons and eight MSFS Deacons were ordained to priesthood on October 1, 2020, at St. Francis de Sales Parish, Mkuza, Tanzania.

Missionaries identify Prospective Candidates

The missionaries in the mission and work of evangelization need to identify the prospective candidates in schools, hostels and parish community etc. A missionary speaks of wonder of God. He appreciates the good qualities and characters of the people of parish community. He animates parents, teachers, leaders and elders that they may encourage their children to be future missionaries and leaders of the community.

Life of Dedication and Commitment Attracts Youngsters

The youngsters of present day are attracted by the life of dedication and commitment of missionaries. Today there are many challenges to the life of commitment and dedication. The missionaries face

the hostile environment, rejection even threat to their lives from both within and without, but they remain firm. As St. Paul tells, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For we are convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angel, nor rulers, not things of present, not things to come, nor power nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8: 35-39). This is an inspiration as well as challenge to young men and women.

Missionary Encourages Native Leadership

Jesus identified the apostles to continue his mission in the world. The apostles

chose their successors. Paul identified the leaders and entrusted to them the mission. Today the missionaries are to identify and encourage children of the soil to become leaders and saviours of their own people and land. It can be compared to a relay race. In the relay race the baton is passed on from one to the other to continue the race, in a similar manner a missionary must pass on the baton of mission to natives. The native leadership should be encouraged to continue the noble task of mission and evangelization.

Missionary Method of Nurturing Vocations

A missionary, gripped by the spirit of God, proclaims his experience of God to known and unknown people, culture, region and language etc. The first apostolate is bearing witness to his consecration. The result of such witness

is creation of warm relationship with people. The missionaries nurture the vocations from indigenous community by life witness of commitment and love for the people and mission. Divine initiatives, through human instrumentality, inspire the people to join the company of a missionary in the work of evangelization. Thus, the work of evangelization is carried forward by not only the missionary but the 'children of soil'.

Inspiring MSFS Missionaries

In the missionary congregation of St. Francis De Sales and other religious institutes, we have many inspiring and outstanding missionaries, who inspired the many young people by their exemplary life of dedication and commitment to religious and priestly life. Some of the inspiring MSFS are- Fr. Jean Baptiste Benistrand from Francin



Eight MSFS Scholastics made the final profession on September 30, 2020 in Shillong, India

Savoy, came to India in 1848 and died in 1881. In Kamptee he took classes for possible seminarians. Thus, he fostered and nurtured many vocations to priestly and religious life. From India we have the example of Fr. George Vayalil (1899-1987), Fr. Abraham Puthenkalam, (1928-1983), Fr. Elanjipuram Varghese (1931- 2016), Fr. Devasia Kuzhuppil, 1924- 2013, Fr. Francis Moget (1920- 2005), Fr. Alexander Kottam (1931-2016) and there are many others who have worked at grass root level and have nurtured the vocation to priestly and religious life.*

Missionaries walk The Path of Martyrs

A missionary always preaches wherever he goes. He not only evangelizes but also forms the evangelizers. This is the reason today we have many religious institutes, societies of apostolic life and secular institutes in different parts of the world. Some of the missionaries have ventured into even hostile circumstances, places and suffered martyrdom. According to David Barrett's statistics, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1989: Christian martyrs have increased from 35,500 in 1900 to 270,000 in 1980, to 325,800 in 1989. Within the span of 10 years, in 2000 it was projected that the numbers of martyrs would reach 400,000.** Oft repeated statement, **'the blood of the martyrs is the fertile ground for Christianity'** is true in the life of missionaries and evangelizers.

Conclusion

The missionaries nurture the vocations to priestly and religious life by life of integrity, moral conviction and firm faith, total commitment and dedication, and an unfathomable love for the people and mission. The joyful witness of priests and religious united to Christ, happy in their ministry, fraternal unity and zeal for evangelization are first and most convincing factors in nurturing and growth of vocations. It appeals as well as challenges the young men and women to commit them to the service of the Church.

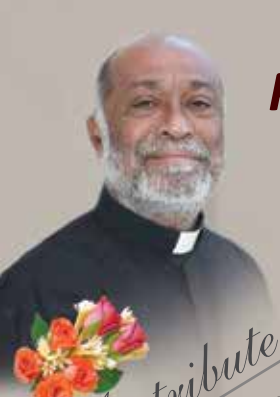
Vocation is the realization of the Father's plan of salvation. The missionaries/evangelizers build the community by means of proclamation of word, celebration of sacraments and leading the people to God. Vocations are born from the response of living Christian community where genuine divine-human relationship exists.

References

*Cf. Francis Moget, *Shepherds for Christ*, (Bangalore: Indian Institute of Spirituality, Rajajinagar, 1994; Antony Mookenthottam (ed), *150 years MSFS on Indian Soil*, (Bangalore: S.F.S. Publications, 1996).

**Cf. P. Kealy, *Mission, Spirituality of Mission*, in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey, (Minnesota: the liturgical Press, Collegetown, 1993, pp. 660-661.

The missionaries nurture the vocations from indigenous community by life witness of commitment and love for the people and mission.



Padre Babu - The Grandpa Priest

Fr. Mathew Chavely MSFS (1949-2020)

A tribute to

Our Padre Babu

When Fr. Mathew Chavely came to St. Francis de Sales Parish, Ngurdotto Archdiocese of Arusha, Tanzania, as the Parish Priest, he was called by Children *Padre Babu*. *Babu* in Swahili means *Grandfather*. Later for the whole village, among the young and the old, for people of all faiths and denominations Fr. Mathew became our *Babu wa Imani* (Grandfather of faith).

It was a daily scene to see him in the evenings holding his Rosary and walking on different streets of Ngurdotto village. When people saw him, they were delighted, for they saw in him, a man of prayer, a man of faith and a man of God walking.

Son of Mother Mary

Fr. Mathew Chavely had a special devotion to the Mother Mary. It was the first experience for us to have the Rosary Procession with the statue of Mother Mary, reaching each house of the faithful and even non-Catholics. Whenever we had prayed Rosary in the Church, it was an inspiration to see him praying, kneeling and praying all the mysteries of the Rosary. Sometimes when the faithful approached him with some issues, after listening to them, he would say authoritatively. *Please pray these number of Rosaries for this intention and you would see miracles*. And it was true.

In many cases, people testified that when they prayed Rosary as instructed by *Padre Babu*, they often wondered where their problems vanished! In Ngurdotto we the

Catholics are living intermingled with other denominations. Most them do not have any devotion to Mother Mary. It was very often a challenge for us to talk about Mother Mary amid other denominations. After the coming of Fr. Mathew, he instilled into our feeble hearts courage to speak aloud about Mother Mary. Fr. Mathew used to say. *Mary is our Mother. Why should we be ashamed or afraid to pray through our Mother to Jesus? I am proud to be a Catholic*, he would say.



Mrs Dominica Andrea

A Man of Faith

In the person of Fr. Mathew, we found a man of deep faith. His faith was manifested particularly in the devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist. We also had regular adoration of the Eucharist, Eucharistic procession etc. One unforgettable experience in our parish was taking the Monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament to every family. The whole family would sit around the Most Holy Eucharist and pray. If there are any issues in the family, the priest would listen to them and pray over the members and give the Eucharistic blessings. This had lot of transformative effects. There were many instances of reconciliation among the family members and the neighbours – even among the non-Catholics.

A Loving and Caring Father

Padre Babu loved the faithful. Everyone could approach him. He met people even

out side office hours. He never discouraged people with his words or actions. There was in him the quality of imparting hope even in the so-called hopeless situations. When the children were to be admitted to Kindergarten, he introduced the system of taking them to Church and praying over them. Then before going to the school, the priest himself would hold the tiny hand of the child and make the child to write a few alphabets and the word Jesus. These are indeed memorable experiences of the parents as well as for the children.

spiritual matters. His preaching was very simple. He spoke of the ordinary things in life. The season of Lent had special significance to him. He insisted on giving with a generous heart. However, he was always against imposing unnecessary financial contributions from the part of the faithful. His office table or his room was mostly in mess with so many things, but when it came to taking time for prayer and listening to people, he always had time. He did not have much personal possessions. His life style was very simple, and he disliked the luxuries. Whenever he was given some gifts in terms of cash, he used it mostly help the poor children for education, for the treatment of the poor people etc.

A Man of Community Life

Very often in our missionary journeys, Fr. Mathew used to share the joy of being a religious priest, and he was always happy to live with other fathers in the community. He welcomed guests and entertained them with love and care. Even other fathers would agree that Fr. Mathew had real love and concern for the members of the community. He always appreciated other fathers and encouraged them. He was a person who really found joy in the growth of the young confreres.

The Unexpected Departure

When Fr. Antonysamy Robert MSFS, our present Parish Priest, informed us about the sudden death of our dear Padre Babu, we could not believe it nor accept it. Many of us literally cried even to drain the last of drop of tears in our eyes. I heard many people telling; *if he were to die in Tanzania, his burial would have been a mega event beyond our imagination. Then we could visit his tomb and pray through his intercession, for he was a saint on earth when he was alive and now, he is a saint in heaven.* Yes, I firmly believe that we have a strong and reliable intercessor in the person of Fr. Mathew.



Fr. Mathew – The Human Being

Fr. Mathew was not the kind of person who because of his holiness distanced oneself from the ordinary people. Everyone could enjoy the company of Fr. Mathew. When he was happy, he laughed and made jokes. When he was sad, he did not hesitate to share that he was unhappy. When he had some doubts and apprehensions, he expressed them. Like any of us, he enjoyed all the legitimate pleasures in this life, and he was always grateful to God. At the same time, he set great examples of mortifications and self-denial. He loved telling jokes and making others happy. At times his subtle expressions are in the forms of jokes but also giving some vital message to the persons concerned.

A Person of Detachment and Simplicity

Padre Babu was more concerned about

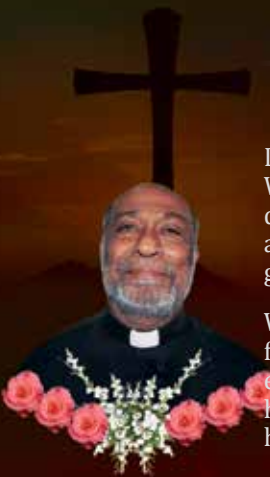


A Prayer from My Heart

Dear God! We thank you for the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales. We thank you O God, for their readiness to accept the challenging and difficult missions in the peripheries of the society and the Church, and thus bringing them to our parish of Ngurdotto. We thank you for giving St. Francis de Sales as the Patron of our Parish.

We thank you for the person of our dear *Padre Babu*. We thank you for every word that he uttered while here on earth. We thank you for every sermon he preached. We thank you for the love and care that we have experienced from him. We thank you for the all the sacraments he administered throughout his missionary life in Africa.

Lord grant our dear Fr Mathew Chavely, eternal rest. Lord, bless him and make him a powerful intercessor for us that we may walk the paths of holiness and reach you our God, in the fullness of time. **Amen**



Fransalian Missionary and Salesian Spirituality

A Series on the Qualities Required of a Missionary Today: Inspirations from St. Francis De Sales

by Fr. Johnson Pathiyil MSFS

Read from Issue **No. 3**

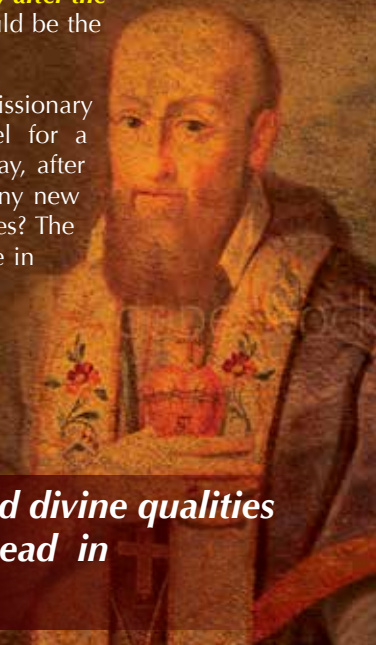
To be a missionary is a universal as well as a particular vocation. For the MSFS it is a call in addition to the call to religious life and priesthood. **To be a Missionary after the example of St. Francis de Sales**, should be the dream and goal of every Fransalian.



St. Francis de Sales, the seventeenth-century missionary and visionary is still the outstanding model for a Fransalian. What makes him special even today, after about 425 years? Has not the Church found any new saint to inspire the new generation missionaries? The main reason why St. Francis de Sales is unique in

the field of mission or evangelization is that he possessed certain qualities extraordinarily, compared to his contemporaries. These qualities of him have inspired very many people to become great missionaries and saints in the Church. Besides, many Missionary Congregations have accepted St. Francis de Sales as their patron.

Fr. Johnson Pathiyil explores the human and divine qualities required of a Fransalian Missionary..... Read in "I want Missions" from Issue No. 3.



Being a Missionary in Europe Today

Challenges and Perspectives

Personal background

It is a matter of great joy for me to write these lines in this issue of "I want Missions", sharing some of my experiences of being a "Missionary in Europe".

I was ordained a priest 27 years ago and I worked 16 years in Northeast India and the last 10 years I had been working in the Diocese of Bamberg, Germany. By the grace of God, all these years of priestly ministry were very enriching experiences for me.

In this short article, I attempt to highlight certain aspects that touched me while being a missionary in Germany.

Necessity of Integration for a Missionary

The expectations of landing in a first World had mixed reactions. Basically, it is matter of getting acquainted with language, European history and culture, mentality, food habits, mannerisms, driving, etc. The more one takes time to plunge into the situation and get acquainted, one remains as a drop of water on the leaf.



The leaf is hydrophobic. So the droplet forms into a spherical shape to minimize contact with the surface of the leaf. If not integrated a foreign missionary remains a STRANGER to his folk. He is just there. But his presence has no effect, nor his absence will be felt.

As a foreigner, if a missionary is not really and totally integrated into the culture and core reality of the life of the people, one always remains a stranger to the German Church and Society.

Therefore, the integration is very important for a lively and meaningful existence. To this end, going out of one's way is very important.

The Goodwill of Germans

At the very outset I must admire the goodwill of the Germans. Their capability to adapt, their helpfulness, tolerance, cleanliness, punctuality, civic consciousness etc. are wonderful. For them "business is business". Their concept of "work is work; free time is free time" is praiseworthy. Nothing to chances, everything goes as planned. Naturally the Corona crisis had a very bad impact in this aspect. Many of the plans misfired. They are very generous especially when they know their money is well utilized. They keep the promised word. Their sense of perfection and precaution is excellent. That goes hand in hand with the saying "Prevention is better than cure". The care they take to prepare for a presentation of function is commendable. The concept for a programme begins quite in advance, workout and articulate meticulously, prepare enough trials before the performance. This has advantages as well as disadvantages. The advantage is the perfection, disadvantage is the problem of absence of spontaneity and adaptability.

Germans are a celebrating community, love music and concert, enjoy Beer. Football is an integral part of their life.



Fr. Jimmy Mathirampuzha MSF

Vehicles are considered to be status symbol. Vehicle lobbies with all the possible models in the world and expressways with unlimited speed brings madness in the transport world. The timely fitness checking for the vehicles keep the conditions tact. Surely my talent in music was very helpful to integrate with the community. The evening signing practices with the elderly people of the different villages and the playing of the musical instruments in a Band "Jubilate Deo" gave me a lot of fun, joy and opportunities of integration.

Situation of Faith

All over Germany when we make a journey, the steeples of the Churches are main attraction. The first impression is that of a deep religious life. 55% of the German population belong to Christianity. According to the German Bishops Conference, only 10 percent of registered Catholics attend church on Sundays. Churches are seeing fewer Baptisms, Marriages, Ordinations etc. Here the members of the Churches have to pay 9% income as church taxes. This was introduced in the year 1919 to counter the financial aftermath of the separation of church and state. The church tax helps to maintain the parishes, church employees and other church properties. Germany is one of the countries where a certain amount of strenuous rule on Church tax exists. This is not very much. However, this is pointed out as one of the reasons for many believers to discontinue to be the members of the Church.

The strong influence Secularism has watered down the deep concept of Faith. Added to this, the nuance of freedom in the 60s has only added fuel to Feuer. The internet revolution and the small families had also created havoc in the Family ambience. The uncontrollable urge for new and changed life situation has only given rise to frustrations. The strong sense of independency, egoism, clamouring for the rights etc have only

paved way for the beginning of the cracks in the social life. Consequently, this has resulted in the disintegration of the family bonds. In nuclear families one misses a lot of basic trainings like sharing, understanding, tolerance, acceptance etc, that are necessary for the building up of a stable society. So much so, the parents are helpless in many of the situations to cope with the challenges of upbringing the children especially as teenagers.

CNA Deutsch (Catholic News Agency- German) has pointed to the fact that 90 percent of German Catholics avoided going to church on a Sunday in 2019. Around 270,000 left the Church during 2019 year, while only 2,330 joined. According to the new figures, the number of Catholics in the country fell from 23 million in 2018 to 22.6 million in 2019.

The Necessity of Renewal of Faith

The need of the time in the deep renewal of faith. By and large there is hardly any Mission Preaching organized at the parish or diocesan level. When one asks about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, life after death and the practice of faith, the results are alarming. Here one can easily observe the overall weak interest in the practice of the religion, the almost empty churches, with mostly only senior participants in the liturgy, the conversion of many Churches into Concert halls and watering down the practice of faith with lame excuses. The realities are really alarming. The political tactics in the refugees too remain as an impending scene of faith crisis. The development of Science, the programs from the government in terms of health insurance and pension gives a sense of life without the need of God. With advancement of secularism, the policies and plans of the government water down the God-Concept and Sacramental life. In this context, the Church is pressurised to have creative ways of

renewal as the need of the time and the task of the believers.



The light of faith must continue to burn and spread

Struggles of a foreign Missionary

With my background of faith and civic experience in India, I had a great shocking effect. The beginning years of my life in Germany were very difficult. It had taken time to contain the reality. For example, in the beginning when I experienced a lively Christmas Service in the Church and after the service the whole Campus is empty was a speechless experience. The attendance of the Services for all the important solemnities were encouraging comparing to the regular services. The burials of the ashes of the dead person was something unusual for me. Because in India it was practiced mostly only by Hindus. The Sacrament of Confession is almost getting outdated. In the beginning, with scanty knowledge of the language, unfamiliar culture and traditions were crating uneasiness. The climate and the strenuous rules played with. However, the understanding of the people was very encouraging and overwhelming. From day one, they had only encouragements to shower on you

regardless of the shape of your language. During the whole course of my stay here, I enjoyed my Pastoral Team work. Germans are known for the paperwork and discussion culture. The Team sittings and other prolonged discussions especially where we do not have to contribute is extreme boring. Naturally duty demands our presence for the meetings! The concept of letting you free and not mixing up with the issues too is praiseworthy. One great finding that I learned is say *NO* when you must say no and to say yes, when I must say *YES*.

Cooking and Sickness !!

With no “ABC” of cooking experience to integrate to kitchen culture where one has to cook the food for self is a herculean task. Naturally the food habits and stress has also donated me prestigious sickness like Diabetes, Cholesterol, backpain etc. In matter of sickness, though with all the qualified medical facilities here, in situations of minor illnesses, except in emergency, to get an appointment with the Doctor takes time till the worst agonies are over. Being sick and cooking simultaneously is another challenge which has to swallowed in as a bitter pill.

A Word of Gratitude

As I conclude, I have no word to thank God for this wonderful experience in Germany. It was a great experience of faith. Despite the cultural difference and the difficulties of the language, I could experience the caring hand of the Almighty as my support. After many years when I look back, I can see how with patience, hard work and great trust in God my *Yes* to the Lord is being fulfilled.

Some of the German idioms or maxims are very interesting and practical:

What one does not know, makes him not heated up.

Duty is Duty, Drink is Drink.

Questions are free. So, asking is better than walking like a fool.

God knows everything, but the neighbour knows more.

After 60 years, if one has no pain when he wakes up, he is dead.



Fransalians in Zambia

Our Magnificat to the Lord

The Catholic Church in Zambia is just 128 years old. The *Missionaries of Africa* and the Jesuits have been the pioneers along with Spiritans and the Franciscans. Presently there are 11 dioceses with two archdioceses. As of now, 73 religious men and women congregations are engaged in evangelization and renewal of faith of the people. The Church in Zambia has grown through evangelization. However, a vast territory remains un-evangelized with ample scope for evangelization activities.

At the invitation of Rt. Rev. Clement Mulenga SDB, Bishop of the Diocese of Kabwe, Fransalians came to Zambia in the year 2013. We are very grateful to the Salesians of Don Bosco for facilitating our entry into Zambia. It was Fr. George Chalissery SDB the then Provincial Superior of the Zambia Province of Salesians. The Congregation entrusted this new mission to the Pune Province. The three pioneers were Fr. Jude Thadeus MSFS, Fr. Amal Arockiaswamy MSFS and Fr. Britto Michael Selvam MSFS. Accompanied by the then Provincial Superior Fr. Vincent Lourdeswamy



they landed in Zambia on August 21, 2013, in Lusaka, Zambia. (On August 21, 1567, our patron St. Francis de Sales was born!).



Fr. Jude Thadeus MSFS

The newly erected mission territory of Liteta covering an area of 50 KM radius with 12 outstations was entrusted to the missionaries for evangelization and pastoral care of the people. The mission was placed under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales and named as St. Francis de Sales Parish, at Liteta on October 5, 2014.

In the year 2016 at the invitation of the then Archbishop of Lusaka Most. Rev. George Telespore Mpundu, the missionaries extended their service in the Archdiocese of Lusaka and a new mushrooming community was entrusted to the missionaries for pastoral care and development. In a year, the mission grew well, and it was established as the new St. Gabriel Parish at Meanwood – Ndeke in the year 2017.

From 2017 a drastic change came in

the approach of the missionaries who have been fully involved in the renewal of faith of the people through pastoral care activities in the parishes. Following the footsteps of the founder preaching ministry for renewal of faith and evangelization became one of the major approaches of the mission through New Evangelization method.

The missionaries established (NESZA) New evangelization School in Zambia and started using creative methods in the renewal of faith. Through this approach, the missionaries predominantly use kerygmatic methodology in seminars, workshops and retreats that uses experience-based dynamics for a deeper God experience and deepening their faith. This ministry began specifically for lay people, however, in no time more and more religious men, and women found themselves attracted to it. A good number of priests also continued to come for deeper faith experience.



In order to facilitate the availability of religious articles, the mission also has started a religious articles shop at Liteta. Through this ministry, the mission continues to make religious

articles available to the people which otherwise were not available, and what was available was highly expensive. A lot of Bishops, priests and religious along with lay people are highly appreciative of this ministry. The Christians look at this as a great contribution of Fransalians to the Church in Zambia. This ministry has benefited even people and religious from the neighboring countries like Zimbabwe, Botswana, Congo and Namibia.

At the request of the Bishop of Kabwe, the missionaries are planning to start a boarding secondary school. Though the government is successful in establishing primary and basic schools in most parts of Zambia when it comes to secondary schools, it's a real challenge for the pupils. Sometimes Children travel up to 10 to 12 km to reach a secondary school. Comparing to the number of primary schools, the number of secondary schools are very few, and demand is very high. Finding a good and standard secondary school is another challenge. In order to address this situation in our Liteta mission, the missionaries are preparing to establish a secondary school with boarding facilities. The construction of a preschool at St. Francis de Sales Parish at Liteta has been completed.

In collaboration with a local NGO, Nation Agenda for Social Advancement, the Fransalians at Liteta are engaged in the administration and development of Natemwa Primary school. Fransalians have joined hands with NASAD to eradicate illiteracy and bring new life in rural children of Natemwa.

Challenges

- Growing inflation and falling economy is a severe problem in the area of development.
- Poor road and transportation facilities.
- Addiction to drugs and alcohol.
- People's belief and fear of Witchcraft, Satanism, and such evil practices.
- Poverty that does not allow children and adults to access quality education.
- Expensive higher education.
- Lack of employment opportunities.
- ✓ Ministry to the youth, Children and young adults.
- ✓ Media Ministry. (print media, social media, TV, etc.)
- ✓ Deliverance and healing ministry.
- ✓ Evangelization and spiritual renewal centres.
- ✓ There is a huge demand for medical facilities.
- ✓ Establish and run sustainability programmes for economic development.
- ✓ Hunger eradication programmes.
- ✓ Clean drinking water programmes.

Possibilities

- ✓ Bishops are looking for partnership with Missionaries in areas of evangelization and development.
- ✓ There is so much demand for quality education. Bishops looks for establishment of educational institutions and technical educational institutions.
- ✓ Family renewal ministry, rehabilitation centers for drug and alcohol addicts.

- ✓ Awareness of deforestation and climate change.

Dear Reader of *I want Missions*,

This is my appeal to you.

Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. Mt 9:38

United with you all and the entire Congregation, I entrust you to the hands of the Lord.

Some Testimonies on the Fransalians' Witness in Zambia

How do you say *Thank you* to someone who gives you a second chance at Eternal life? In December 2017, when I joined the new Parish in my area, which had just been given to the Missionaries of St Francis De sales, I asked God for a fresh start. I had been carrying a heavy load of sin from my past, and even though I had been to confession a number of times, I was still drowning in my guilt. I had even accepted some of my suffering to be my punishment for my sins. But through every program I have attended, which has been organised by the Parish, I have experienced God not only as a forgiving Father but a loving Father who loves me dearly.

Before this encounter, I even doubted

if I would receive Salvation, but finally, on 12 July 2019, when I had the rarest opportunity to see and touch live stigmata, my life completely changed. I feel the close presence of God everywhere I go and in my everyday situations. I associate myself with the Woman at the well, the encounter with Christ changed her life and mine has been changed too, and like her, I want as many people as possible to experience this again!!



Ms Marina Zyambo

Ms Marina Zyambo

"Why so downcast, why all these sighs? Hope in God" PSALMS 42:5

Until I attended a Parish Retreat in August of 2017, I entertained sadness at the slightest provocation even amid prayers. I always thought it was okay to be sad because I had problems. During this retreat, I was angered by some accusations; this triggered sadness that I carried for days. Sr. Vimala talked to me about it, reminded me not be sad but take everything to God in prayer. I discovered that I had been unhappy for a long time because I held on to painful experiences of the past. From that day onwards, I began giving my problems or sad experiences to Jesus. I am a happier person, thank you, Lord, for bearing my grief.



Ms Bernadette Mwakacheya

Ms Bernadette Mwakacheya

My names are Samson Chirwa aged 28. I have always had a desire to grow Spiritually more, especially in word and in faith. So, the coming of the Fransalian Fathers (MSFS) was the direct answer from God to my prayer to fulfil my spiritual desires and satisfaction.

From the time the Fransalian Fathers came to Zambia to St Francis de Sales as a Parish, the growth in my faith has been at a speed that cannot be described. And this has been so because of the spiritual focus of our priests and their total consideration of every Christian to remain the citizen of heaven.

I have received really heart soothing messages and exaltation from different teachings of our priests, and I believe it would be of more significant help to the people of Zambia if some more

parishes could be opened here in Zambia for the satisfaction of many people's spiritual hunger and thirst because many people would move from very far places more especially during seminars, retreat and other spiritual activities just to have a touch of Jesus Christ through the preaching of our selfless fathers.

The experience with the Fransalian Fathers has made me to realise that I too can be a missionary disciple in the lives of others. May the Almighty God our Father continue to bless our Fransalian Missionary Fathers.

Mr Samson Chirwa



Mr. Samson Chirwa

New encounter with the Lord,
New experience, Innovative style of walking!!!

My annul retreat of August 2018, was a beginning of a new dawn for me. This is because I discovered a new style of encountering the scriptures, reading aloud for myself and meditating quietly.

The retreat conducted by Fr. Jude and Fr. Sebastian opened my heart to a realisation of experiencing the gospel using all my five senses of touch, smell, feeling, seeing and hearing. Dramatising the Gospels made the whole scripture so much alive. Thus, I began to encounter the Lord and his creation in a new way. It is difficult to put the experience in

word; it was just marvellous and fulfilling to my soul.

I feel I learnt to walk in a new style after that retreat, and my life has never been the same. My encounter with the Lord has taken a new twist because of that memorable retreat which was facilitated by the Fransalians in Zambia.

I am now able to minister to others in my small way with conviction.

Sr. Annie Mwimbe
Franciscan Missionary Sisters of
Assisi(SFMA) Zambia.



Sr. Annie Mwimbe

The Fransalian fathers have been very instrumental since their inception in Zambia and in particular in Liteta Mission. Firstly they have helped in encountering Christ on a deeper level through the so many spiritual programmes undertaken. Secondly, they have easily and quickly adopted to the community through the endless family visitations. Thirdly they are always available to support project works in any way possible. Last but not the least they have exhibited exemplary leadership skills and styles. May God keep renewing their strength as they work for His people and may He bless them.



Ms Chita Chilubi

Ms Chita Chilubi

We Welcome You!

Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (Fransalians), was founded in the year 1838 in Annecy, France by a French priest – Servant of God Fr. Peter Marie Mermier. Today the Congregation is present in 32 countries in all the continents of the world. We have confreres from Europe, Asia, Africa and Americas. Following the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales our patron, we work for the Renewal of Catholic Faith, New Evangelisation, Education of the Youth and Caring for the needy, addressing the social and economic issues, that hinder holistic human growth.

No matter, in what part of the world you are, if you wish to join our humble efforts, you may have various possibilities:

- ✚ Becoming a member of the MSFS Family
- ✚ Becoming a Fransalian Lay Associate
- ✚ By serving as volunteers in our institutions/ projects
- ✚ By Providing us spiritual, moral and material support.

For information, terms and conditions, please contact:
Web: www.msfstoday.org Email: joinmsfs@gmail.com

MSFS Mission Development Office

A Note of Sincere Gratitude!

Our Specific Mission these COVIDays

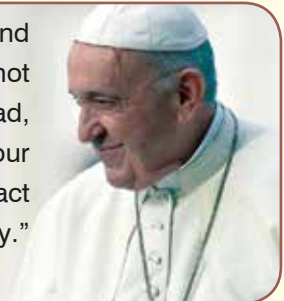
COVID-19 has changed the human history. We are baffled beyond our imagination. There was the need to rise to the occasion. We the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, in our 12 Provinces and several mission units in all five continents and 32 countries support countless needy persons spiritually, emotionally, materially and medically. Many confreres and centres continue to render their spiritual, educational and other services online.

The Mission Development Office, with the assistance of Local MDOs and NGOs, was quick to respond to this emergency. We identified the families and groups who are adversely affected by the lockdown, especially the tribal indigenous people, migrant workers, parentless children and reaching out to them, conducting health and awareness camps, distributing medical kits and sharing with them the needed food materials. Many of these families were deprived of Government aid during this difficult time. Until today, our confreres managed to extend their services to more than 110,000 families. What a solace in distress! We sincerely thank all people of good will who support us in this work of charity. Let us continue to pray for the wounded world for healing, reconciliation and peace!

Fr. Thomas Varghese MSFS, Director,
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“We were created for a fulfilment that can only be found in love. We cannot be indifferent to suffering; we cannot allow anyone to go through life as an outcast. Instead, we should feel indignant, challenged to emerge from our comfortable isolation and to be changed by our contact with human suffering. That is the meaning of dignity.”

Fratelli Tutti, No. 68



I want Missions is the global missionary bulletin of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales - Fransalians, published in June and December every year. It is meant for free distribution for all those who are interested in the mission of Jesus Christ. If you wish to have copies please contact us via:

email: iwantmissions@gmail.com



We serve the Lord with joy!



You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, to work by working; and just so, you learn to love by loving. All those who think to learn in any other way deceive themselves."

~Saint Francis de Sales