

Vol 5

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# MISSIONS



MISSIONARY INSPIRATIONS, ASPIRATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FRANSALIANS

## **A happy family in a MSFS Mission in Brazil**

**Paróquia Menino Deus**  
Guabirota, Arquidiocese de Curitiba, Brazil



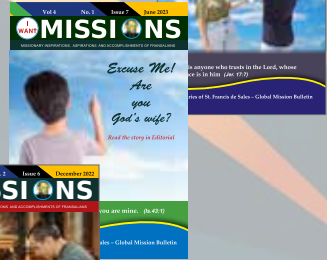
**Blessed is anyone who trusts in the Lord, whose  
confidence is in him (Jer. 17:7)**

**Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales – Global Mission Bulletin**

Our Mission as MSFS  
is

Compassion  
Affection  
Passion &  
Dedication

all for Christ.



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*So many have come to me that I might serve them, leaving me no time to think of myself. However, I assure you that I do feel deep down within me, God be praised.*

*- St. Francis de Sales.*

## *Fiducia supplicans*

I hope you are familiar with these words: *Fiducia supplicans*. It means “supplicating trust”. This is the Pope’s latest document giving the clerics permission to bless same-sex couples. The document was published on December 18, 2023.



There are different types of responses to this document from around the world. In some parts of Europe and America, all greeted it with great applause. But most bishops’ conferences in South America, Asia, Africa and the Eastern Churches, have a different stance on this document. Some very orthodox Catholics have strongly condemned this document, saying that it is the work of the devil.

According to the civil law of most African countries, living together as partners between people of the same sex is a criminal offense. Therefore, the Church cannot in any way violate these civil norms.

Who is right and who is wrong? Who teaches the right thing?

How do we respond when we meet people who are the so-called LGBTQ? We know that it is not the will of God for people of the same sex to live as partners. If everyone does this, humanity will perish. If our parents had done so so, we wouldn’t be here today. If someone belongs to this group, whose fault is it? The whole society is to blame. As Pope Francis said: “Who am I to condemn them?

The document *Fiducia supplicans* is a clear sign that the Church is a family in which everyone has a place. If “sinners” have no place in the Catholic Church, where should they go?

If we don’t take care of them, who will take care of them?

This is the essence of the document *Fiducia supplicans*. When a cleric blesses a same-sex couple, he is not blessing their marriage, but rather he is blessing each person so that they may experience God’s grace, mercy and loving care for them through the Church, the caring Mother.

In our pastoral and missionary apostolate let us have the mind of Christ.

*Every sinner has a future and every saint has a past.*



Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS

(johnsonmsfs@gmail.com)

MISSION *Ad Gentes* in

# DAHANU

Maharashtra, India

*"I have come that they may have life, and that they may  
have it abundantly." (Jn: 10/10)*



## Introduction

The purpose of MERMIER ASHRYA CENTRE, Dahanu is to SHARE the BLESSING of GOD which we are blessed with (health, wealth, and knowledge, etc.) and implant the reign of GOD among the people of Warli tribe who have not heard of Jesus and the KINGDOM OF GOD. Warlis Tribes are an (Adivasi) indigenous tribe who live in the mountainous, coastal, and bordering regions of Maharashtra and Gujarat states of India. Dahanu is a tribal taluka (subdivision) of the Palghar district of Maharashtra which is again recognised as a tribal district bordering the state of Gujarat. Thus, our Dahanu mission is located at the main heartland of these tribal people surrounded by mountains, rivers and the coastal belt. This mission thus is the actualization of our founder, Fr. Peter Mermier's evangelical dream, "I WANT MISSIONS".

Fr. Joe Rebello a veteran missionary and visionary along with Bro. Boniface Lopez was inspired to start a hostel in 2004-05, for boys who after the completion of their High School wish to continue their further education. In 2007 Fr. Prabhakar Chakranarayan took the leadership to start supportive classes for the school children and tailoring course for the dropout girls.

In 2013, a new team was appointed under the leadership of yet another dynamic and veteran Missionary and social worker Fr. Daiy Sebastian who initiated to blend spirituality and social work. His focus was to introduce and GIVE JESUS to the tribals through various activities of the centre. The centre began to reach out to more and more people by way of attending to the small yet significant needs and requirements of the local people, such as, attending to the needs of the sick, old people





and widows, providing cooking gas connection, saving scheme for housing, motivating the children to complete their schooling and further education, assisting financially for the higher studies, etc. In order to understand the significance of these initiatives and the missionary work of the MSFS Confreres it is important to have a brief background of these people of Warli Tribe.

#### **A Brief note on Warlis:**

*Adivasis live in the forest (undeveloped area and did not have the advantage of development that came later) and they are simple and modest in attitude but have self-respect.*

Warli tribal people are such adivasis (indigenous tribe). They are simple, faithful, sincere and straight forward people, not easily disturbed, non

expressive and silent in their behaviour. It is very difficult to get a response from them, while talking to them; they always face downward to the ground (they don't talk much). At the same time they are so free, expressive and jovial in the company of their own tribal people, but not with outsiders. They have been exploited socially, sexually, religiously, economically and politically by the rich and the politicians. Warlis are timid and shy in nature, so frightened of politicians, government officers, police, landlords and any outsiders. *It is said that they face tigers so easily but not outsiders and above mentioned people.* None of them have a criminal mind or involved in robbery. Warlis are backward and poor for three reasons. They are such as non-exposure to outside world, alcoholism and lack of education.



## POLITICS

For the last 60 years the entire area (local bodies) was ruled by the Communist Party of India [Marxist] but lately Shiva Sena and BJP have taken control of the area. Still CPM is very active and vibrant in some villages. There isn't much political rivalry and violence in the villages.

## EDUCATION

The tribals remain backward in formal and as well as non-formal education for various reasons.

- Since parents are not educated there is no one to inspire them to be educated.
- There are number of factories who offer unskilled jobs to the children, therefore parents send their children to such factories rather than the school as it fetches little more income to the family.
- The tribal culture is to be always free, free from any time table, sitting in the class room or home work, etc.
- There are very few individuals or NGOs or Government Organizations to motivate and

guide the children to be educated and to choose relevant streams of study.

- The older siblings look after the smaller children and graze the cattle [cows and goats]. They do not have money to educate their children.

## RELIGION

Warlis are **Animists** and they believe that plants too have souls. Among the trees Umber tree is most sacred and they will not use it as fire wood. A branch of Umber tree is a necessary ritual property for the marriage ceremony. But today one could see the photos of Laxmi, Ganapati, Saibaba and other Hindu gods in the families as well which is due to the influence exerted by the BJP and their employers, as they see these statues in their work places.

## ECONOMY

From time immemorial Warlis are food gatherers from the forest and they are not farmers. They also do not own much land, most of them own a very little land, say few plots in which rice is cultivated. The product may not last for more than 3 months. Lately



some families have started cultivating vegetables. Most of the land is owned by forest department, landlords and for a long period they were contract labourers. After Independence the government enacted laws to protect the Adivasis – “Tillers own the land”. Therefore most of them got few plots of land as their own.

Once upon a time all the land belonged to the tribals but the land was taken from them and given to the Parsis who could pay the taxes to the government. Since tribals did not have the money to pay the tax the **sons of the soil** became **landless**.

Because of lack of means of income many women and men take up work which is cheaply paid in the factories such as balloon, spoons, plates, bangles, imitation jewellery, gum and other stationeries. All these workers have to work almost 10 hours and are paid weekly. These factories were pushed out from Mumbai for environmental and health issues and high cost of labour. The tribals are continuing to tolerate all the atrocities done to them in different forms for the sake of livelihood and employment.

## **MIGRATION**

A number of men go to the sea in the fishing boat; they have been taken by the owners of fishing trolleys as contract labourers.

A number of families work as bonded labourers in brick making industry. Very often they leave behind their children with their grandparents, relatives or in the Ashram schools.

Still some families find money for the daily expenses by collecting fire wood from the forest and selling it to the families or tea shops.

## **HOUSES**

The houses are built with mud and available wood/bamboos and the wall is made of Karvi sticks or strong grass with mud paste. The roof is resting on fabricated cement polls from the shop. Lately few people have made houses under the Housing scheme of government, walls with bricks and roof of asbestos sheets.

## **VARIOUS PROJECTS AT MERMIER ASHRAYA**

### **1. Education:**

We motivate and support the children through daily coaching and supportive classes, thus helping them to be educated not only till school but also till graduation level.

*We also provide Education aid (Scholarship for school going children).*

### **2. Women empowerment through tailoring and other activities.**

Our place is known widely for our services for Tailoring classes and the students come to attend these classes from even distant villages. We have an average 30 students for every batch. (Two batches in a year of six months each). Two instructors are employed to take responsibility for training the students.

### **3. Accompanying and encouraging boys from neighbouring villages for graduate studies by offering them hostel facilities, time for studies and counselling.**

A cordial, loving, supportive relation and respectful approach to a batch of 18 students in the year



2013-14 brought a new image to our institute, since then, ex-students and present students are promoting students to the hostel.

Last three years we have experienced that lot of students come to take admission. Due to lack of infrastructure, finance and inability to give personal attention, we take only 50 students.

4. **Gym Facility:** - We have a fully equipped gym to keep our hostel youth and the surrounding youth fit and it also serves to keep the youth away from various addictions.
5. **Evangelization to the tribals:**  
We promote evangelisation by bringing tribals to JESUS through house visits, conducting prayers, gospel sharing, etc.
6. **Reaching out to the needy, poor and widows.**

Regularly, we help 30 widows and poor families. We provide free and safe drinking water from Ashraya, and provide refilled gas cylinders to the needy families.

## 7. Housing Project

Making a decent roof over one's head have been the most natural and normal desire for humans since civilisation began. This may have been true even before. However, this has been a distant dream and many of these people have been left behind without a proper shelter and you can see them if you come to Dahanu. *We intend to assist 100 plus families to build some decent houses.*

8. **Celebration of national festivals:** We celebrate all the national festivals for the National Integrity.
9. **Conducting exposure programs:** We also organise exposure tour

for the youth and the people to have more skill based learning. The farmers are guided in organic cultivation and make use of the latest technology in farming.

**10. The centre is blessed with three committed groups** – Children’s Army, Fransalian Youth and Couple’s Association.

**11. Warli Painting:** We encourage, promote and create jobs for the women/girls in making rosaries, imitation jewellerys and warli painting.

### **Eucharistic Adoration**

Everyday Mermier Ashraya community has four hours of Adoration (2 hours in the morning and two hours in the evening) individually and as a community spend time before the Blessed Sacrament. *It is awesome to see that 40 to 60 tribals (non-baptized) take part in the Adoration in the evenings.* The community believes that we get the strength, vision for the future, perseverance and the resources both human as well

as financial, needed for our apostolate among the tribals from the Adoration. Christ continues to attract many more people to Himself at this very centre. After all, our mission on earth is to make the image of God known to the people with whom we are engaged. The Bible says that Jesus is the exact likeness of God, the visible image of the invisible God (2 Cor 4/4). Our humble effort through various good works is to make known Jesus. *Living JESUS and Giving JESUS.*

### **Conclusion**

It is always exciting time for us at Mermier Ashraya. We wake up every day fresh, chasing our dreams along with our tribal brothers and sisters, of seeing their children educated, having a decent income and their houses fully furnished. The edifying life style and missionary spirit of our confreres who lead a life of the spirit and spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and Father Peter Marie Mermier, will actualise all our dreams for the tribals in Dahanu.

*(Contributed by Mermier Ashraya Community, Dahanu.)*



***Fr. Daiy Sebastian MSFS, Fr. Joseph Rebello MSFS and Fr. Jerome Jayraj MSFS***

# Romero – Prize 2023

**Romero Prize goes to a FRANSALIAN Missionary!**

*Rev. Dr. Sen Vellakada MSFS*

The prestigious Romero Prize goes to an Indian for the first time. The Romero Prize instituted by the Austrian Catholic Church for human rights promotion, developmental activities and missionary engagement was awarded to Fr Dr Sen Vellakada MSFS on 24 November 2023 in Klosterneuburg, Austria. The award carries a cash award of 10.000 Euros, a citation and a statuette of St Oscar Romero. The prestigious award is named after the famous martyr Saint Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador.



Fr Sen Vellakada is a member of the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales (MSFS), also called the Fransalians and has been working in the Central African Delegation (Chad-Cameroon) since 2017 as Rector, Bursar and project coordinator. Fr Sen has been selected for bringing “joy and education to the marginalized children in Chad and Cameroon”, stated the organizers appreciating the work and life of Fr Sen in Central Africa. Fr Sen is a native of Paramba in Kasargod District in Kerala, India He holds a doctorate in pastoral counselling from Vienna University. He is also the founder of Agape Austria, an



*Hearty Congratulations, our dear Fr. Sen*

NGO which works to promote education and human rights in Chad and Cameroon. After visiting the projects of Fr Sen in Chad the organizers and Agape Austria agreed to further strengthen the partnership with the Chad-Cameroon Delegation of the MSFS for the benefit of the people in this poorest part of the world.

# Age Barrier for a Missionary? A Myth !!!

## 60 Years a Missionary Priest

### Rev. Fr. Abraham Mullenkuzhy MSFS

*Words of appreciation and affection by  
Fr. Thomas Kochalumchuvattil and others.*

### Introduction

“There is a conspiracy of making me older than actually I am,” was the opening remark of Rev. Fr. Abraham Mullenkuzhy MSFS on his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday thanksgiving speech. **In the life of a religious missionary**, the idea of age barrier has often cast a shadow over the service of individuals in their later years. However, this notion is far from the truth, as exemplified by the commendable life of Fr. Abraham. I had the unique experience of starting the philosophy programme in Lumen Christi Institute (LCI) with him in September 2010, when he was already 73 years of age. Most of the priests and the religious whom I have known, when they reach the age of sixty or above, think of retiring from their active involvement in any serious activities/apostolates. Here is Fr. Abraham, even at the age of 86, continues to serve as a shining example for all, that age should never be a limiting factor or a barrier for one’s commitment to religious and missionary vocation. In this article, I put together experiences of various people (especially his students: seminarians, formators and lay students), who have shared with me their impressions and the continuing inspiration they have received from Fr. Abraham.

A missionary does not call or choose himself rather he is called and chosen by Christ to do everything in love, for love, and of love. Should age be a barrier for a missionary disciple of Christ? The answer is 'No'. When it comes to serving God, age is just a number. A perfect example of one who have gone against the limitations and dictates of age is Fr. Abraham. He has served and continues to serve the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Francis de Sales with honor and distinction. He has served the congregation and the church as an educator, missionary, rector, vice-provincial, provincial, and as a general councillor. The legacy of Fr. Abraham is often measured by his profound leadership skills, philosophical knowledge and wisdom that he has imparted in the hearts and minds of many. Being in the vineyard of the Lord for sixty solid years, he still believes that age cannot hinder him from performing his missionary responsibilities. Here below is the impression shared by one of the students who did formators course at LCI.

### **A Committed Missionary**

“Fr. Abraham is a missionary in Africa and in particular way serving as a Professor at Lumen Christ Institute, Maji ya Chai, Arusha. Though aged, he is young at heart and a model in the style of life that he lives. Fr. Abraham is a humble, simple, gentle, prayerful, dedicated and hardworking priest who lives his vocation by walking the talk. In him I saw the characteristics of a true missionary, that is humility, simplicity, gentleness, generosity, resilience, and sacrifice. Always ready to give himself fully for the good of others. Through the life of Fr. Abraham, we discover the truth that age is not a limit to what God can do with us. We only need to be ready to respond to Gods call like Abraham, Moses, Noah and many others in our time.



I was very much touched by the life of Fr. Abraham and in particular his zeal to work among and with the young ones, that is the Priests, the Seminarians and Formators. As one among those who were at Maji ya Chai attending Formation course, Fr Abraham was a model for us in his dedication and love for God and neighbour. He is a man of silence, deeply spiritual and intelligent. We used to call Him 'our Babu'. Thanks to Fr. Abraham for his exemplary life as a Missionary. May God continue to grant Him good health of body and mind and more years to serve Him as a missionary. Being a man of few words and great wisdom , I have learned that a true witness of God is not only the one who speaks much but the one who lives the Word. We are called to witness the love of God through our life not our words.”

**Sr. Pricila Damiani FDCC**

## An Exemplary Priest

Fr. Abraham was ordained on 21st September 1963. A third-year seminarian at LCI shares his experience:

"His spirituality begins with presence, not absence. Not the absence of material goods but the presence of Christ. His friendship with Jesus fully present in the Eucharist is deeply personal and he recalls and rephrases the words of St Augustine: "Our hearts are restless O Lord until they rest in you." This is a maxim that has shaped and continue to shape his priestly life. He is one such hero of faith worth emulating. His simplicity of life, his life of prayer and ascetism, his passion for the Eucharistic celebration are gifts from God. To many he remains to be a model of pastoral integrity, authenticity, transparency, and dignity. He has distinguished himself as a great pastor, an uncommon shepherd and outstanding religious leader."

*Bro. Paschal Wangala MSFS.*



## An Inspirational Teacher

One of Fr.-Abraham's most profound roles has been that of a teacher. His vast knowledge and wisdom have enriched the lives of countless students, religious, brothers, and fathers. Even in his later years, he continues to inspire and educate, proving that the role of a teacher knows no age. Besides, till date, he keeps a great sense of humour. Many of those who have encountered him would certainly not fail to acknowledge his gift of transmitting knowledge in a way that all can understand and assimilate. On 21st September 2023, I received an email from one of Fr. Abraham's former students, and I quote below what he wrote in his mail which beautifully captures how students feel and admire him.

Respected sir,

I refer to the Sacerdotal Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Rev.Fr. Abraham Mullenkuzhy MSFS on 21st September. Kindly communicate my hearty congratulations to Fr. Abraham sir on his felicitation today. Me and my batchmates are indeed very glad to know this and we came to know of the same only today. Though we could not make it to the function, we convey our best wishes and prayers for his good health and happiness.

Me and my friends are students of SFS high School, Nizamabad, Telangana, India, till 1977 and Father was our principal. He also used to teach us Biology and General Maths. He was an excellent teacher and administrator, and we could grasp the subject well in his classes and had only to do a little bit of revision later. Our school under his leadership has produced many bright students who went on to become Central Services officers, Doctors, Top Executives in Banks, and successful businessmen. He was a great gentleman and inspiration for all of us.

I retired as Deputy General Manager of Indian Bank and many of our batchmates are very well settled in our lives contributing to the society. We never forget to collect sweet memories of the school and his influence in our lives and are extremely thankful to him.

With warm regards and best wishes  
*Mr. Najeeb Ullah Khan*

## A Formator Par Excellence

Formation is an integral part of religious life. One of the diocesan seminarians writes: "Fr. Abraham is the most incredible formator I have ever met. He is a communitarian, simple, prayerful, punctual enthusiastic and optimistic person. Someone who does not know him might ask; how does he cope with the younger generation with such an age gap? The answer is very precise; 'Knowledge...Knowledge...Knowledge.' He seeks knowledge day and night. One characteristic that remains outstanding in his life as a formator is his ability to connect with his formees. He understands that relationship will always demand personal input, initiative, and pursuit. He believes that if one is not willing to move towards other people, the people will not move towards him because a man that has friends must show myself friendly and he is a friend indeed."



*Bro. Stephen Mgulunde (Archdiocese of Tabora).*

## A Ture Fransalian

A heart that is not on fire cannot set other hearts on fire. Like St. Francis de Sales, our patron and Fr. Mermier, our founder. "Father Abraham's life is a shining light of kindness and love. Throughout his long and dedicated journey in religious missions, he has consistently embodied these virtues, leaving a lasting impact on those fortunate enough to know him, including me. This also explains his compassion for all. His love is not limited to actions but extends to mentorship and guidance. His ability to offer wisdom and support to those in need is a testament to his genuine concern for the well-being and spiritual growth of others. He understands the transformative power of love and kindness, and he shares this understanding generously. His life serves as a reminder that virtues are ageless and have the power to heal, uplift, and transform lives as many have testified. He is truly a Fransalian!"



*Bro. Dehezo Tsasse Christian MSFS*



## An exemplary Religious

Another seminarian shares his heart: “Father Abraham is a living testament to the fact that age does not equate to diminished physical abilities. He maintains an active lifestyle, engaging in daily sport activities, which not only keeps him healthy but also inspires others to live vibrant lives in service to the divine. His going about clearly indicates that beside the community time schedule, he does follow a personal one. He is an archetype of punctuality and would hardly miss any common activity. In his old age, Fr. Abraham lives as a youth, in fact, and challenges the young seminarians he lives with at Lumen Christi institute. Fr. Abraham reads books and newspapers more than all the students do and follows a strict and regular timetable. In fact, he is a living Immanuel Kant, looking at whom we can easily correct our watches.”



*Bro. Charles Arinde MSFS.*

***“Mercy to the needy is a loan to God and God pays back those loans in full”  
(Prov.19:1).***

These words ring out in my heart when I pen down the short message about our dear Rev. Fr. Abraham Mullenkuzhy who is an excellent shepherd. His unassuming simplicity is beyond words. He is a man of caliber with magnanimity. His calm and serene presence ignite a unique feeling of joy in everyone who encounters him. He has always a fatherly love and concern for everyone. Father Abraham is a person who never complains about anyone or anything, a person who looks so serious but cracks a lot of jokes. He finds the positive elements in every event. Never says ‘no’ to any help requested.

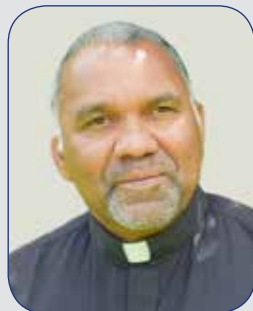
We can be sure that he never hurts anyone with words or deeds. I would say as he lived years of consecration to God, the heaven rejoices over him, a person holy and human. He has inspired thousands of people through his classes and interactions and above all by his outstanding personality. Even his silence inspires! He is really a Salesian as his life is marked with humility, simplicity and gentleness. This is what I experienced him from the time of my novitiate in 1995-1996. He is an exemplary and a duty minded teacher. I remember, those days in we were able to make him laugh with our broken English, as he gave us some classes in spoken English. And we are fortunate that even in Africa, we are blessed with his presence. God bless you our beloved Father Abraham.



*Sr. Sheeba John DSFS*

## Conclusion

Martin Luther King Junior once said; “Life is a journey, if you cannot run at least walk, if you cannot walk at least crawl so long as you keep moving.” Every human being is moving towards his or her destiny. The most important thing is to move constantly however slowly it may be. Father Abraham’s life is a resounding testimony to the fallacy of the age barrier in religious missionary work. His continued service, dedication, and commitment to his faith and community at the age of eighty-six is a beacon of hope for all. In the realm of religious missionary life, it is the heart, the wisdom, and the unwavering spirit of service that truly matter, proving that age is but a number when one’s calling is deeply rooted in faith and devotion.



*Fr. Thomas Kochalumchuvattil MSFS*

**Save the dates!**

### **PMP – Parish Mission Preaching**



#### **Annual National Gathering and Prayer days**

(for the confreres who are engaged in the preaching ministry)

October 21 to 25, 2024

Venue: MSFS Provincial House, Silapathar, Assam  
(Dibrugarh Province)

Arrival on October 21<sup>st</sup> evening Departure on October 25<sup>th</sup> morning

#### **PMP Training Program – Phase II**

(only those confreres who participated in the Training session Phase I at Charis Bhavan in **November 2023**)

November 25 to 30, 2024

Venue: Harmony, Uchgaon, Belgaum, Karnataka  
(Pune Province)

Arrival November 25<sup>th</sup> evening, Departure 30<sup>th</sup> afternoon

*Details awaited!*

**Kindly say a small silent prayer of blessings on these programs.**

# 35 years!

## in a mission land

*An interview with Rev. Fr. Sunny MATTATHIL MSFS*

*Fr. Sunny hails from India. He went to Africa as scholastic and to this day, he is a happy missionary, religious and priest in Africa.*



*Tumsifu Yesu Kristu! Milele Amina!*

**Dear Father, Can you share something about your person, your vocation history and family background?**

*I am called Fr. Sunny Kurian Mattathil MSFS, belonging to the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, commonly known as Fransalians. I was born in the year 1966 in Kerala, south India. My Father is late Mr Kurian M.V. Mattathil and my mother is Mary Kurian and now she is 83 years old. I have one brother who is called Thankachan married and having 3 children and at home. I have 3 sisters. The elder one is a religious nun and she called Sr. Jolly (S. A.T), and my younger sisters are called Daisy Shaji and Santymol Joshy. Both of them with their families are settled in Australia.*

**As a missionary one must be open to explore the unknown. He should master the language of the people, and learn their cultures and customs. Respect them and appreciate the good things in them. We should not impose or force another culture on them.**

**-Sunny M**



**Could you please share something about your call to be in the MSFS Congregation ?**

*After completing SSLC, (Class X in India) I had the desire to become a priest but I did not know where to join. Hence I approached my assistant parish priest called Rev. Fr. Joseph Puthumana of Cherpunkal Parish and consulted with him about my desire to become a priest. He advised me to go to S.F.S Seminary Ettumanoor and to meet the vocation director. I met with Fr. James Manjackal MSFS and Fr. George Koottinal MSFS who interviewed me and asked me to wait for the reply. Meanwhile one of my friend and neighbour took me to Bharananganam St. Thomas Missionaries society Ujjain mission seminary Ambara, for an interview. I passed the interview and was selected to join them. But somehow the day I received letter of invitation to join St. Thomas Missionaries my mother advised me to go to Ettumanoor seminary and I met with Fr. Jose Parappillil MSFS who was the vocation director and got my admission letter and the joining*

*instructions. I joined S.F.S. Seminary Ettumanoor in June 1980 and was studying for Visakhapatnam Province. On December 15, 1984 together with my companions we made the First Profession at Salesanum, MSFS Novitiate, Vizag. After philosophical studies at Suvidya college Bangalore, Karnataka the options came to join the African mission.*

**Now you are 30 years old as a priest. What is priesthood for you?**

*As for me, I love my Priesthood. Priesthood for me is a vocation to serve the Lord and his people. It is a call from the Lord Jesus Christ to be his disciple. It is a sublime vocation, a personal call from God. I was edified by the missionary zeal and enthusiasm of our pioneer missionaries who were zealous in the missionary activities in our parishes, especially the late Fr. Devasia Kuzhupil MSFS, late Fr. Mathew Chavely MSFS (May they enjoy eternal rest), Fr. Augustine Mangatt MSFS and Fr. Thomas Kochuparampil MSFS. I was inspired by their zeal for mission work and facing a lot of hardships,*

like constant malaria, bad roads still using motorcycles to go to villages through muddy and slippery roads and coming back tired sharing their experiences meeting people hearing their problems and trying to console and solve them at times financially supporting them through their sacrifices and living a simple life. Also, priesthood is an opportunity to serve the people of God, the poor, downtrodden, and less fortunate and help them like Jesus who humbled himself and emptied, taking the form of a servant. Priesthood is also for me, a vocation of holiness and sanctity. **There is a lot of joy when we serve.** Priesthood has a lot of challenges in today's world but still, it is indeed a noble vocation.

**You were one of the first ones to reach Tanzania as a scholastic. Can you share some of the memories of your life in the Seminary in Tanzania?**

I reached Tanzania together with my companion Fr. Alexander Singarayan MSFS accompanied by the late Rev. Fr. Devasia Kuzhuppi. He was the leader of the team of the pioneers who came to Tanzania on December 31, 1987. In 1989, after my Philosophy and Degree studies at Suidya College Bangalore, I opted to come to Tanzania. I was well received. I joined the Kiswahili language course for 3 months at the Pastoral centre run by the White Fathers at Kipalapala, Tabora. Within one month, I got bad malaria I first experienced a very high fever head ache, and body pain which I never experienced before. I was a bit disheartened. but I survived. Then I joined St. Paul's regional seminary at Kipalapala for my 4 years of Theology. **My companions used to tease me as wifaa which means imported.** But soon I got acclimatized with the customs and language slowly I could cope with. But now and then I was getting malaria fever and had to be admitted to Ndala Mission Hospital for



treatment. During weekends we could visit Tabora town and during holidays our fathers used to come from Itaga parish and take us to the parish for exposure. Food was a big challenge without pilipili we could not feel any taste for food and also Ugali and Maharage Beans were not tasty at all but slowly we became one with the culture and customs of the seminary atmosphere.

**When you opted for Africa what was the response from the family, companions etc?**

I did not get any problem from my parents. They in fact encouraged me. My batch mates aback in India, all discouraged me and advised me not to go to Africa. Most of my friends are from North East province and Vizag Province. But I persevered and continued. One of the problems those days, was communication. **We had no mobile, not even the landline phone.** We used to send letters by post and the reply would come after two months. Those days, we were going for home leave only after 3 years!

**You have spent 35 years now in Africa. Any unique experience you like to share from your missionary life? Are you really happy to be in Africa? Challenges you had?**

Yes, now I have spent 35 years in Africa, beginning as a seminarian and later from 1993, as a priest and missionary. The time went very fast. I could not imagine I spent so long time. It was a rich experience of a

happy and sad life. I feel happy to come to work in Africa as a missionary of St, Francis de Sales. After Ordination I was appointed as Assistant parish priest at Lububu parish with Fr. Mathew Chavely my parish priest and Fr. Pius Kochuparampil as companion. **The life as a priest was always full of thrill and enthusiasm.** I learned driving and got the driving license and started going to villages for Holy Mass and village visits, retreats during Lent, family visits, house blessings conducting burials, and the sacraments etc. We used to have recreation together playing cards, etc. We started playing volleyball and basketball in the Aspirant's house and parish premises. At times during the night, sick calls come to take the patient to Nzega or Ndala Hospital, especially delivery cases. At times on the way the woman gave birth (due to the rocky roads and shaky drive) and we used to come back without reaching the hospital. I had also an accident at Kigoma when we went to visit the CMC sisters and Vincentian fathers there. I used to wonder about children collecting water from the roadside in small buckets - muddy and dirty water - taking home. I felt pity for them. Using solar energy for lights and the Kerosene fridge, showing Christian movies to the people in the open space, also was a unique way of preaching indirectly to people who are pagans and catechumens. On feast days there were hundreds of Baptisms, First Holy Communion, Confirmation etc which also gave satisfaction to the missionary life.

**I am very happy to work in Africa as a missionary.** If my health allows even until death. From the time of ordination until now I have always been placed in different parishes starting from Lububu, Itaga, Kahama Mbulu, Isaka, and Mjimpya in Dar es Salaam, Also I worked in Uganda in Agururu parish for 6 years and again back to Tanzania started Lukobe parish and now I am appointed at St. Francis



de Sales Parish Kashishi as pastor. The biggest challenge I faced in my priestly life was rejection from some of the Leaders in one of the parishes, although I dedicated my whole self for the development of that parish. Such experiences are very painful for a missionary in an alien land. Of course, Jesus did not promise his disciples a bed of roses but a share in his bitter cup. You will be hated by everyone because of me. (Mt.10:22).

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28). I believe that as St. Paul says, it is the missionaries who plant the seeds of faith and others who water them and it is God who gives the growth. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow (1 Cor 3:6).

So, in whatever happens to us, I believe, it is purely God's protection and guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is God's providence that what we are now as a province with all the expansions in East Africa.

**How do you see the missionary fervor of our Congregation in the context of your life today?**

Well, the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales have made a tremendous impact in these 36 years working in East Africa. We could touch the life of the people imparting to them the faith and morals of the Catholic Church. We could educate many through our educational institutions, forming young seminarians

to become better persons and citizens. We could succeed to a great extent in fighting the evils of witchcraft and some other unhealthy practices. People who lived with us always cherish good memories of our Pioneer Missionaries who served them for many years. The Congregation has taken root in the African soil. Many young candidates are joining our missions. We have increased in good number now. I feel we must expand our missionary work to other African countries like Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan etc.

We notice today that there is reluctance from some in going to the rural missions. Many wish to work only in established and well-to-do parishes. But the need to reach out to more unknown and interior places to establish missions and bring Christ to them is our task which we should not forget. **We should not be afraid to go to the peripheries.** Young people should show more genuine interest to learn the local languages.

**What do you think are some of the qualities that a missionary should have?**

First and foremost a Missionary should be a man of God. We should remember that a missionary is a disciple of Jesus. One should be rooted in God through prayer and sacraments. This is the foundation for harmonious community life too.

As a missionary one must be open to explore the unknown. He should master the language of the people, and learn their cultures and customs. Respect them and appreciate the good things in them. We should not impose or force another culture

on them. **A missionary should not be choosy.** He should get his missionary call from God and following the spirituality of our patron like other St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Peter Mermier we should have the same zeal for the salvation of souls. Missionaries should also look after their health and do physical exercises, when they are young so that a disciplined life will help them to work more efficiently and effectively. A missionary should be properly equipped with sufficient knowledge and studies through ongoing formation. A missionary should be a person of true convictions. One should be simple and approachable. One should have the capacity to listen to the other with genuine interest. We have great examples from the life of our Founder Father Peter Mermier and St. Francis de Sales, our Patron.

**Any final word of message for the reader of this MSFS Global Mission Magazine?**

I sincerely thank God for this chance to share with you about my humble missionary exposure. Thank you all for your prayers and support in our missionary endeavours. Let us continue to proclaim the Good News of salvation to all nations. I request your prayers and blessings for all the missionaries.

Ahsanteni sana

Mungu awabariki!

Fr. Sunny Mattathil MSFS  
[sunnymattathil25@gmail.com](mailto:sunnymattathil25@gmail.com)

**Commit your activities to the Lord, and your plans will be established. Proverbs 16:3**



# MSFS PRESENCE IN THE USA

**Introduction:** We are called MSFS or Missionaries of St Francis De Sales or Fransalian Missionaries. It is an international Pontifical Missionary Religious Order. We are serving in 33 countries currently spreading the love of God.

It was founded in France on October 24,1838, by Servant of God Rev Fr. Peter Marie Mermier, under the patronage of St. Francis De Sales. His main goals were Evangelization, preaching missions, and Education of the youth. The first batch of missionaries were sent to India, They were team of seven out of

which one priest and a seminarian died. The remaining five started the missionary work. They have landed on the east coast of India a place called Pondicherry, from there they moved to Yanam, from there they moved to Visakhapatnam on February 19, 1845.

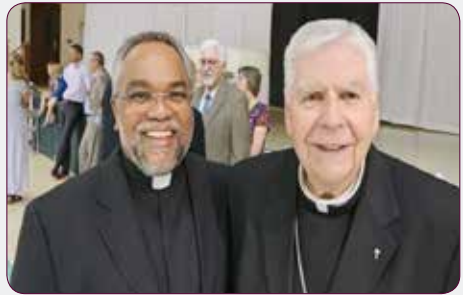
Now we are almost 1,400 priests all over the world and hundreds of seminarians, working in 33 countries and in five continents. We the Fransalians began with a mission of renewal and development of faith communities in the church, being involved in parish missions, retreats, spiritual directions, and other





pastoral concerns. Pastoral work and lifestyle always characterized the Fransalian spirit of simplicity, gentleness, optimism, and availability in the service of the local church.

**MSFS Presence in USA:** There has been a desire to implant the congregation in USA. Several attempts have been made way back from 1935 but it was not successful. In 1949 Fathers Basil Luyet and Grorod visited several bishops but there was no success. Fr. SL Paul arrived in 1949 began his ministry. In 1968, Superior General, Fr. Adrian Duval, decided to establish a mission and commissioned the provincial of England. Fr. Wadron arrived in the USA on December 6, 1968 but he could not get parish. He moved to Atlanta and met the archbishop. He assigned Fr. Gill to St. Joseph parish in Athens, Georgia. In February 1970 the English province decided that Atlanta would be favorable location to establish a foundation. Archbishop Thomas A Donnellan entrusted the care of St. Patrick's Church, Norcross, Georgia. On July 3, 1974 Archbishop entrusted the pastoral care of St. Lawrence Church, Lawrenceville, Georgia. Fr. Ken Bayer the first American MSFS was ordained in September 1975. In November 1974, Fr. Zacharias Mannukuzhimpil, then provincial of Visakhapatnam province, commissioned Fr. Kurian Aranjilil and Fr Augustine Tharappel to establish a house of MSFS in USA. Fr. Gus was student in St Mary's University at that time the archbishop Francis J Fuery the Archbishop of San Antonio



gave Fr Augustine his approval for establish a MSFS community in the archdiocese, a house was opened. Superior General Fr. Adrian Duval made a visit and encouraged to pursue to establish a community. The project was abandoned in 1976 due to lack of personnel. Fr. Gus completed his studies and went back to India then Fr. Kurian also returned to India.

In 1975, MSFS were offered a house in secluded woods by a widow of Ed Barton. Men from St. Lawrence Church built a house in honor of Fr. Basil Luyet MSFS. Who had died in 1968. Villa Luyet was established as a Novitiate, and a place for preparing possible candidates for the seminary in 1995 and Fr. Joe Mendes was appointed as a vocation and formation director.

The desire for implanting the congregation in USA began to materialize more fully and in reality, when Fr. Ken Bayer, Fr. Martin Kopchik, Fr John DeVore and Fr John Tiernan from USA joined the congregation and were ordained priests. Many MSFS confreres served and continue to serve in Atlanta Archdiocese from different provinces.

In 1990 the American Mission of the congregation became an autonomous mission directly under the authority of the superior general with Fr Ken Bayer as a mission superior. In Nov 1990 Fr. Joseph Mullakara came to American mission, In 2000 Fr. Abraham Mullamkuzhy and Fr Mathew Thayil came to this mission. They both went back to India in 2001.

**2007 Establishment of the USA Region:** On July 3,2007, on the feast of St Thomas the Apostle, the Missionaries of St. Francis De Sales, USA Region, was inaugurated, and Rev Fr. Augustine Tharappel was elected and installed as the first Regional Superior. September 17-20, 2007, The first regional assembly was held at Wellspring, Tyler, Texas.

**Establishment of the USA Vice-province:** The 1st Vice-Provincial of USA Vice Province was Very Rev Fr. Augustine Tharappel (2013-2016). On July 3, 2013, Very Rev Fr. Augustine Tharappel was elected and installed as the first Vice Provincial of the newly established USA Vice-Province. July 3,2013 the first Fransalian parish for the Vice-Province “Prince of Peace Catholic Church”. White house, Texas. August 26-30, 2013, The First vice provincial congress, along with the annual retreat, was held at Wellspring, Tyler, Texas. July 1, 2014 St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, Sugar Land, Texas, was entrusted to the Fransalians.

**2nd Vice Provincial of the USA Vice province:** Very Rev Fr. Tomy

Puliyampattayil, MSFS (2016-2019): July 3,2016 Very Rev Fr. Tomy Jospheh was elected and installed as the second Vice Provincial of the USA Vice Province at Wellspring in Tyler, Texas, by the outgoing vice provincial Fr. Augustine Tharappel. August 22-26, 2016, The second vice provincial congress, along with the annual retreat was held at the Montserrat retreat House, Dallas, Texas. During the congress a decision was made to relocate the provincial house to Loganville, Georgia.

**We have taken up some parishes on a long-term basis:**

1. On June1, 2018 Holy Spirit Church, Jacksonville, Florida.
2. On July 1, 2018, St John the Evangelist, Holy Cross Church, Immaculate heart of Mary Church, San Antonio, Texas.

**Second Term of Office of the Very Rev Fr Tomy Joseph:** On July 3,2019, he was re-elected and took charge at Fransalian house in Loganville, GA. The third Vice provincial congress, along with the annual retreat was



held at the Ignatius House Jesuit Retreat Center in Atlanta, Georgia. On September 11, 2019, we celebrated 50 years of our presence in the USA.

**We have taken up some more parishes on long term basis:**

1. St. Mary Our Lady of the Snows, Michigan On July 1,2020.
2. St. Ephrem Catholic Church, Sterling Heights, Michigan on July 1, 2020.
3. The Good Shepherd Church, Hope Mills, NC on June 28,2021.
4. Prince of Peace Church, Great Bend, Kansas on July 6,2021.
5. St. John Neumann Church, Lilburn, Georgia on July 1, 2022.

**The 3rd provincial of USA vice province;** Father Anthony Bonela was elected and appointed as the provincial of USA vice province. I was installed on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, at St. Marguerite d'Youville Catholic Church, Georgia. The fourth vice provincial congress was held from August 9-12, 2022 along with the annual retreat at Montserrat retreat center in Dallas.

We have taken another parish on long term basis that is St John the evangelist catholic Church, Diocese of Sacramento, California. It was given to our care on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

We are currently 86 priests from ten provinces including USA. 68 of them are from Nine provinces and 18 belong to USA Vice province. We have been working in 27 dioceses, 8 archdioceses and 19 dioceses, 15 States. We have well established retreat center in Tyler, Texas, Fr. Augustine Tharappel is the director. We have our provincial house located in 3887 Rosebud Rd, Loganville, GA, in the same compass we have provincial office, Ave Maria Spirituality center, and a Clergy home. MSFS has been present in the form of ministry almost 54 years. At present we are now organized and entrusted as MSFS Vice Province, an administrative unit of the congregation in the USA. We need your prayerful support for our continued growth and fulfilled mission in the USA and abroad.

*Fr. Anthony Bonela, MSFS  
Provincial of the USA vice Province*

**We are now 84 priests, from 10 Provinces  
of the Congregation, present in 24 dioceses  
in the USA.**

# **PMP** Training Program for the confreres

**Phase I - November 18 to 28, 2023**

**Venue: Charis Bhavan, Athirampurzha, India**



**I**t was a felt need in the Congregation to revive and rejuvenate the Parish Mission Preaching and re-evangelization activities. The primordial apostolate was Mission Preaching, as envisioned and initiated by our Holy Founder Father Peter Mermier. The first phase of the training for the Parish Mission Preaching was held from November 18 to 28, 2023 at Charis Bhavan, Athirampuzha, India. There were 31 young confrères from the seven Indian Provinces who participated in the program.

The key resource person was Rev. Fr. James Manjackal MSFS. Others who shared their wisdom and experiences included Fr. Austin Joy, Fr. Justin Panachickal, Fr. Kurian Karickal and Fr. T C Jose.

In this first phase, the focus was on the quality of the preacher, the matter being preached and the general guidelines for the preaching ministry.

The program included input sessions, interactions, homiletics, common celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, Eucharistic Adorations, Sessions of inner healing, infilling of the Holy Spirit and endowing the confrères the renewed mandate to preach the Word and to work for the salvation of the souls. On November 23 as Memorial Day, the participants visited the MSFS cemetery at Ettumanoor. They paid homage to the departed confrères and remembered especially Fr. George Vayalil MSFS, with whom began a new Chapter in the missionary movements from Kerala. We also remembered the great missionary dynamism and the vision of late Fr. Devasia Kuzhuppil MSFS.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to the MSFS Community at Charis Bhavan and to all who were fervently praying for the blessings of God upon this program.



## Sharing from some of the Participants



### Learning and Rejuvenation

The Program was well animated by Fr. James Manjackal MSFS. The PMP training program began with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by the Assistant general Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS, during the homily he gave us insights about our priestly journey and the vocation that we are blessed with. Fr. James Manjackal MSFS dealt in different topics regarding our missionary life and the principles that motivated us to be an exemplary missionary. Fr. Kurian Karickal MSFS the superior of the community who gave us sessions regarding the temptations that we face commonly in our priestly journey and the methods for overcoming those temptations. We were enriched by Fr. Austin Joy MSFS who dealt regarding the qualities of our priestly life and things that are to be noted in this priestly journey. Fr. Jose Thottukadavil MSFS and Fr. Justin Panachickal MSFS shared with us their God experience and vocation stories. We had also healing service and anointing sessions One day we had an outing to SFS Seminary Ettumanoor, Bharananganam and Ramapuram We also prayed at the tombs of our departed confreres at SFS Ettumanoor. As a whole it was a time of learning and rejuvenation. My sincere thanks to all. Live Jesus.

*Fr. C. Britto Clindon MSFS*

### Divine encounters in the human beings



Attending the PMP training program last month was my best ever experiences. We were 31 priests from seven Indian Provinces . The program was well organised by Rev Fr. Johnson, the Assistant General of the MSFS congregation and the General Secretary for the Missions. We had sessions on different topics animated by different priests. Some of them shared their life experiences which were so inspiring and motivating ones. Some of them shared their depth reflections based on the holy scripture. We experienced God in our living together as brothers.

Right from the day one, I felt so lucky enough to be part of this program. More importantly, to meet and talk with our international preacher Rev Fr. James Manjackal. I heard of him but never meet face to face. He was the main resource person who shared the Word of God with us and from his talks and life I learnt a lot though it was only for 10 days. I was also happy to meet my companions and friends after a gap of six or seven years. The get together of this kind will definitely help and boost our religious life.

*Fr. Elvis Kharkongor MSFS*



## Something which we cherished a lot !

We had 10 days of PMP training program, organized under the competent leadership our beloved Assistant Superior General Rev. Fr. Johnson MSFS, at Charis Bhavan. There were 30 participants from all the seven Indian Provinces. The main resource person for the program was Rev. Fr. James Manjackal MSFS, belonging to South West India Province. He being a global preacher tried his best to pour out his charismatic preaching experiences, miracles etc. Fr. Austin Joy, Fr. Kurian, Fr. Jose and Fr. Justin also helped us with few sessions. Each participant had an opportunity to preach and had evaluation as well. Overall impression, it gave us a taste of charismatic preaching and retreat. It in fact, challenged us to quip ourselves to be a good preacher. We had a day out as pilgrimage. **The Venue:** very much fitting- prayerful atmosphere, convenient - facilities and provided with varieties of delicious food. As a whole, we indeed profited a lot. Looking forward for the follow up with various resource persons. Sincere thanks to Fr. Johnson Kallidukil, for his painstaking efforts to organize such an event for the young confreres.

*Fr. Emmanuvel Sathish MSFS*



## A crucial step

The Parish Mission preaching programme held at Charis Bhavan left a profound impact on all participants. The meticulous organization of the event was evident, creating a conducive environment for reflection and internalization. The talks delivered were remarkably effective, emphasizing the primary focus on being enlightened by the spirit to subsequently illuminate those seeking Christ. The ambience harmonized seamlessly with the program's essence, allowing ample time for introspection.

While the input sessions were commendable, a suggestion for future improvements would be to incorporate diverse perspectives by inviting individuals from various walks of life to express their expectations from a preacher. In addition, encouraging participation from both lay and religious preachers as resource persons could foster the exchange of innovative ideas, enhancing the overall preaching experience. The program's well-structured organization instilled a sense of contentment, reaffirming the meaningful investment of time. Ultimately, the Parish Mission Preaching Programme proved valuable, fostering a deeper understanding of our relationship with the Lord – a crucial step in bringing others closer to God.

*Fr John Genot MSFS*



## Importance of the inner disposition of the preacher

With a focus on defining the qualities of an effective preacher, exploring the ideal disposition for preacher, and outlining steps for achieving success in preaching, the PMP program provided valuable insights for all of us the new members of PMP. We had intensive sessions by Fr James Manjackal MSFS, who was the main resource person, Fr Kurian Karickal MSFS, and Fr. Austine Joy MSFS. We were also enriched and inspired by the life sharing of Fr. Justin Panachickal MSFS and Fr. Jose Thottukadavil. All highlighted the importance of the preacher's inner disposition. The program provided practical guidance to enhance our effectiveness in preaching the Word of God. We had prayers of inner healing, deliverance and anointing. The days ended with homilies by the fathers and brotherly corrections given by the confreres.

The Parish Mission Preaching at Carish Bhavan was deemed a success, with positive feedback from fathers, highlighting its transformative impact. Fathers expressed gratitude for the practical insights provided and the initiative taken by Fr. Johnson to train preachers to strengthen the preaching ministry of our congregation.

*"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction." 2 Tim 4:2*

## PMP - Our legacy



It was ten days program arranged by Rev. Fr. Johnson Kallidukil, with the intention to bring young priests and fill them with the spirit of Fr. Mermier. It is responsibility of every member of congregation to carry out legacy our founder left to us. During this course may fathers had shared their views about preaching. Lot of inputs and tips were given for preaching. This program helped me in my priestly preaching ministry and it was good opportunity for young generations to get involved in preaching. I am able to practice what I learned in these days.

Main thoughts that attracted me are: we should become aroma of Christ, Evangelisation is part of priestly life, constant preparation is needed to be good preacher, and the dignity of priests. Suggestions would include that program could be for seven days; resource persons can be different with already prepared topics; the program can be arranged more often. We appreciate and congratulate Rev. Fr. Johnson for gathering young priests and helping them to understand the value of preaching in our congregation. Let us all continue in the spirit of Fr. Mermier and become effective preachers.

**Fr. Gorremuchu Kiran MSFS**





## Aroma of Christ

The ten days programme went on well under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Johnson Kallidukil who was with us as a constant companion and as a loving father.

We were happy to meet and listen to Rev. Fr. James Manjackal MSFS - a Missionary of Mercy - a great global preacher and lover of the Word of God. He encouraged us to have the "Aroma of Christ" and to thirst for the Word of God. He taught that personal sanctity is a non-negotiable element to be a missionary.

Talk on Fr, Peter Mermier and PMP, was a fruitful session by Fr. Johnson Kallidukil. He said that mission preaching is all about going after the lost ones. He encouraged us to be spirit filled preachers of the Word.

Fr. Kurian Karickal MSFS gave us inspiring talks on, "how to be an effective preacher, and common temptations of a preacher". Fr. Austin Joy MSFS spoke about the means to be effective preacher and the sense of the sacred for a priest. Testimonies by Rev. Frs. T C Joseph MSFS and Justin Panachickal MSFS were really heart touching. The entire programme was really inspiring and enriching LIVE JESUS.

*Fr. Lijo Philip MSFS*

## Be a lover of the Word of God



The 10-day programme was organised well under the guidance of Fr. Johnson Kallidukil who was with us as a constant and companion and caring father. The main resource person of the programme was Fr. James Manjackal (Missionary of Mercy) a renowned preacher, and lover of the Word of God. What I liked his most was his preaching Life Sharing experiences. He spoke to us with conviction and challenged us to come out from our comfort zone. I was really touched by his vast knowledge of the Scripture.

Fr. Kurian Karickal talked on, how to be an effective preacher, and common temptations of a priest. Fr. Austin Joy taught us about the characteristics of effective preaching, and the sense of the sacred. He spoke with conviction and his vast knowledge on the Word of God really inspired all of us. Others who shared the valuable insights include Fr. Justin and Fr. TC Joseph. What I liked the most was every evening we were given five minutes of preaching and it was beneficial. The entire programme was really inspiring. May our Patron St Francis de Sales and our Founder Servant of God Fr Peter Mermier help us to LIVE JESUS.

*Fr Luke Tanti MSFS*



## Real Family life

Dear Father, first and foremost I thank you all, for arranging this program for the young priests, particularly giving me a chance. The resource person's experience, and his way of preaching was a kind of inspiration for me, and it also gives me a call to be a preacher. If we listen a second time to the same person, it would be a mere repetition, so therefore next time when the program is arranged, it would be nice if we arrange different resource persons for different days, with material, more pertaining to or about our Founder and the first six missionaries only and specifically. For, that would be more of inspiring and enhancing, and all the more to preach in Salesian way and manner, because, that would identify us, as an MSFS and stand out as unique Fransalian way of Preaching.

With regard to the place, organization, and the ambience, they are really commendable. You are particularly, extremely concerned about us and our health. With regard to the transport and the Fathers there as well, were really caring and concerned, a heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all of them in Charis Bhavan community.

*Fr. K. Periyanyakam MSFS*

## Preaching ministry: A call to stand firm



The PMP Training Program in Charis Bhavan was a beautiful experience young MSFS confreres living together and praying together for 10 days. We were 31 of us from all the 7 provinces of India. We had spiritual rejuvenating input sessions, tips and a long retreat, time of solace with Spirit filled days. Rev. Fr. James Manjackal MSFS, a well-known global preacher led the young minds with a new spirit of Christ. "I Thirst" is the central theme of seeking the souls for the Lord. His personal encounter with God's providential care amidst hardships; source of strength amidst loneliness of life of rejection has inspired and urged us to prepare ourselves to stand firm in and go out as vibrant preachers of the Word of God.

Charis Bhavan served as an apt place of this event. We had great time with the inmate fathers of the community who had taken very great care of us. After long time once again we could see confreres of our own acquaintance growing fervently in the preaching mission, accelerating us to develop and design our own passion for the mission of the Church entrusted by Christ.

*Fr. Sateesh Kumar MSFS*



## To be a Spirit filled Preacher

The Inputs from the PMP training had helped me to have a clearer and deeper conviction that the foundation of Parish Mission Preaching should be through the Holy Spirit. And to allow Holy Spirit to work in me it demands from me a life of sanctity, sincere self-denial and total detachment from sinful attachment firmly every single day. At the end of the training, it convinced me that all kinds of planning and techniques we follow in preaching will not be productive if I am a priest without the Spirit of the Lord. Personally, I had benefitted a lot in terms spiritual renewal (*the atmosphere was a kind of retreat*), being exposed to various preachers' testimonies and experiences.

I am sincerely grateful to all those who took initiative in conceiving such an amazing effort in trying to instill in us our original mission as MSFS. LIVE JESUS

*Fr. Standfort Stephen MSFS*

## An inward journey



“Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15).. We were 31 young and energetic MSFS priests from across the Indian provinces participating in this PMP program. It was a deep spiritual journey to know oneself and the unconditional love of Father that has to be shared among His people. The more hours were utilized in sharing the personal experiences of the resource person, the well-known preacher Rev. Fr. James Manjackal MSFS, that edified all of us and deep within us a feeling was being created that the world is in need of God's Love and His message of salvation. I appreciate the organizing team our Superior General Rev.Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil MSFS and Assistant General Rev. Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS for organizing PMP program 2023 to encourage young confreres to continue the preaching ministry of our Founder Fr. Peter Mermier. We hope to carry out the parish mission preaching joyfully. Hopefully, the PMP program also will avail an opportunity for various resource persons including the laity, bishops, diocesan priests and the religious nuns in the future. Live Jesus.

*Fr. Surjit Barla MSFS*

**Our sincere thanks and appreciation to  
the Charis Bhavan Community.**

# MSFS at KNOCK

## “KNOCK” – IRELAND’S INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC AND MARIAN SHRINE

‘KNOCK’ is an international Eucharistic Marian Shrine in the Irish county of Mayo. ‘KNOCK’ is the world’s only Eucharistic Marian Shrine, spanning 100 acres of land and employing over 100 people. On the evening of 21st August 1879, a heavenly Apparition occurred at the gable wall of the Parish Church when Our Lady appeared in the company of St. Joseph and St. John the Evangelist. Unique to the Knock Apparition was the presence of the Eucharistic Lamb in front of a Cross, standing upon an altar and surrounded by angels. The Apparition lasted for about two hours, and 15 official witnesses gave their testimonies to a Commission of Enquiry in October of that year. Unlike in most other Marian apparitions, the Virgin Mary was silent the entire time

and did not offer any sort of message or prophecy.

The witnesses saw the Blessed Virgin Mary dressed in white robes, her hands and eyes turning toward heaven in prayer. On her head was a gold crown, and where the crown fitted the brow, a single golden rose. On her right, bowed respectfully towards her, was St. Joseph. He appeared older, his beard and hair were grey, and, like Our Lady, he was barefoot. John the Evangelist, vested as a bishop, stood to Our Lady’s left, wearing a small mitre. He held an open book in his left hand and the lines and letters could clearly be seen in its pages. He appeared to be preaching, but no voice was heard. He stood so that his back was neither turned to the Virgin



nor to the Lamb upon a simple plain altar. Behind the Lamb was a Cross. The witnesses watched and prayed for over 2 hours, and though they were wet, they noticed that no rain fell on the Apparition or on the gable.

Two separate Commissions of Enquiry would subsequently examine the Apparition Witnesses. The first Commission sat in 1879-80, and the second Commission in 1935-36. Knock Shrine is honoured to have been officially recognised as an international Eucharistic and Marian Shrine by Pope Francis through the Pontifical Council for New Evangelisation in March 2021. Since the Apparition on 21st August 1879, pilgrims and visitors from all corners of the world have been welcomed to Knock Shrine. Pope John Paul II visited Knock in 1979, saying that he was coming "as a pilgrim." Mother Teresa spoke at the Marian Shrine in 1993 about the sacredness of the human life of the unborn. Furthermore, Pope Francis visited on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2018 as part of the celebrations in Ireland for the IX World Meeting of Families. About 1.5 million people visit the Shrine annually, making it a common destination for Catholic pilgrims in Ireland.

The Shine has Daily Masses and Rosary, Confessions, a Professional Counselling Centre, a Youth and Family Animation Centre, programmes for the Priests, etc. It has the presence of religious congregations like Capuchins, Vincentians, Mil Hill Missionaries, Carmelite, and a Fransalian. The programmes of the Shrine are live-telecasted on Facebook and YouTube daily, and special liturgical and paraliturgical events are held around the year following the Liturgical calendar.

I have been serving at the Shrine for the last six months. The Shrine is like an Oasis in the desert. Have had the opportunity to help people who approach the confessional, counselling and spiritual direction. Preaching the Word of God at daily mass also touched many lives and gave me a nourishing experience of exercising my priesthood. I look forward to God showing and opening up new possibilities of serving Him in the Shrine soon. Fr. Richard Gibbons, the Shrine's rector, says, **"It is a place of hope, peace, and reconciliation."**

*Fr. Issac John MSFS*





## Qualities of a Missionary Inspiration from St. Francis de Sales

Series No. 6

### Mistrust of Ourselves Total Trust in God

We hear very often people saying to have trust in yourself. “Be confident”, someone would say to us to assure us that we can do everything well. Although it is a modern way of thinking, one should also have a thorough retrospection of oneself as to how much one can trust oneself. When it comes to trusting oneself, it is always challenging because our human nature can sometimes betray us.

Francis de Sales speaks about the importance of having confidence in God. In the life of St. Francis de Sales, he trusted himself very little. One incident in his life would explain that. Bishop Peter Camus explains this in the following words:

“St. Francis de Sales was once obliged to pass by the town of Geneva. In this journey, he exposed himself too much. Peter Camus mentioned the circumstances to several persons in his presence; Francis de Sales blamed his own imprudence but said nothing of his servants, who led him through so much danger under the idea that no one would dare to injure him. “Well, Pater Camus, “all that would have happened would have been that the populace would have assassinated

you, and from a confessor, you would have risen to be a martyr”. “But how can you tell, Francis de Sales replied, “that God would have so blessed me, that I should have been endued with faith and constancy necessary to obtain the crown of martyrdom?” “I conjecture,” said Peter Camus, that you would rather die a thousand deaths than renounce your faith?” I know, said Francis de Sales, that it would be my duty to do, but I am no prophet; though I know what I ought, I know not what I actually should have done. St. Peter was as resolute as could be, and yet you know that the voice of a servant overthrew his resolution. Blessed is the man who feels and fears his own weakness, who relies not on himself, and places all his trust in God.

When he strengthens us, we can do all things; without him, we can do nothing”.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his writings, St. Francis de Sales emphasizes the importance of putting one’s trust in God. Less trust in ourselves and more trust in God. One



1 Jean Pierre Camus, *The Beauties of St. Francis de Sales, Bishop and Prince of Geneva: Selected and Translated from the Eritings of John Peter Camus* (London: Longman, 1829). 9-10.

of the favourite spiritual books which Francis de Sales often referred to was the *Spiritual Combat* by Lorenzo Scupoli (1530-1610). This book tremendously impacted St. Francis de Sales and his spirituality.

According to Lorenzo Scupoli, distrust of oneself is an essential factor in the spiritual warfare. It is a matter of surety that without this distrust of oneself, one neither attain the desired victory nor be able to fight against and defeat even the smallest and weakest of one's passions.<sup>2</sup> "You must be firmly convinced in your mind that this is the case, for, through our natural conception, we are too prone to make a false estimate of ourselves. Although we are absolutely nothing, we persuade ourselves that we are something, and presume without the slightest foundation on our own strength".<sup>3</sup>

Scupoli proposes four things so that one may acquire self distrust.

- Meditate upon and recognize your own vileness and nothingness.
- Seek from the Lord with fervent and humble prayers this self-distrust seeing that it is His gift.
- Live in continual fear of yourself, of your own judgement, of your great proneness to sin and of the countless enemies against whom you are utterly powerless.

2 Lorenzo Scupoli, *Spiritual Combat: How to Win Your Spiritual Battles and Attain Inner Peace* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2002).

3 Scupoli.

- As soon as you have had any fall, enter at once more deeply and more consciously into the consideration of your own feebleness.

Does it not sound too negative? But wait, Francis de Sales will give us a solid reason why we should distrust ourselves. According to Francis de Sales, "the more we feel ourselves miserable, the more we have occasion to put our trust in God, since we have nothing to rest on, to enable us to put our trust in God".<sup>4</sup>

Mistrust of ourselves originates from the awareness of our imperfections. The advantage of mistrusting ourselves is that it will enable us to throw all our confidence in God and wait on his mercy.<sup>5</sup>

Our spiritual journey as missionaries should be accompanied by the confidence we put in God. We must cast ourselves at the feet of the Lord, realizing how much we are in need of his mercy and grace. The Lord is the shepherd who comes in search of us and carries us on his shoulders, especially when we are broken and feeble. What is required of us is to allow ourselves to be carried by him and rest on his shoulders.



**Fr. Johnson Pathiyil  
MSFS**

4 St. Francis de Sales, *Courage in Chaos: Wisdom from Francis de Sales*, ed. Kathryn Hermes (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2012), 64.

5 St. Francis de Sales, *Courage in Chaos*.

*Joyfully Yours !*



**Do you know the secret of  
my JOY?**