

Vol 5

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MISSIONS



MISSIONARY INSPIRATIONS, ASPIRATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FRANSALIANS

We are proud to be Catholics and we are ready to serve the Lord.



Altar servers at St John Neumann

MSFS Catholic Parish in Lilburn, GA USA

Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales – Global Mission Bulletin



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The Lord's eyes are upon those who love him.

Sir. 34:19

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When the world says, “Give up”, hope whispers, “Try it one more time!”

(lesson from the life of the Servant of God Father Peter Marie Mermier)

Apostolate of Presence **Our Obligation**

As Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, we are deeply connected to our inspiration, primarily from St. Francis de Sales, the Patron, and Fr. Peter Mermier, the Founder.

St. Francis de Sales was a 16th century bishop of Geneva known for his gentleness, patience, and deep spirituality. **Fr. Peter Marie Mermier** was a 19th-century priest from Savoy, France, who founded the MSFS congregation with the specific aim of evangelizing in rural areas and among the poor. Fr. Mermier was deeply inspired by the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and sought to emulate his gentle and compassionate approach to ministry. He emphasised simplicity, humility, and dedication to the Gospel in all aspects of life.

As members of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, embodying the inspiration of both St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Peter Marie Mermier means living a life that reflects their values and teachings. Here are some ways we can serve as an inspiration to others:

Gentleness and Compassion: Emulate St. Francis de Sales' approach of gentleness and compassion in our interactions with others. Show kindness and understanding, especially towards marginalised or in need.

Commitment to Service: We should follow Fr. Mermier's example of dedicating our lives to serving others, particularly the poor and disadvantaged. We should engage in works of charity, education, and pastoral care that uplift and empower those we serve.

Living Gospel Values: In our daily life, we witness the Gospel values of love, humility, and peace. Let our actions and words reflect the teachings of Christ and the spirit of St. Francis de Sales.

Community and Fellowship: We foster community and fellowship among those we serve and work with. We build relationships based on mutual respect, support, and shared faith.

Missionary Zeal: Maintain a missionary zeal to spread the Good News and promote justice and peace worldwide. Be proactive in addressing social issues and advocating for the voiceless.

By embodying these principles and values in our lives and ministries, we can inspire others and encourage them to deepen their faith, live with compassion, and actively work for the Kingdom of God.



As you read this magazine, may every article serve as inspiration to exercise a very positive presence in our lives.

Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS
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Message From Superior General

LIVE JESUS

June is a month dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In honoring His Sacred Heart, we acknowledge how much Jesus loves every one of us. He loved us enough to die for us on the Cross at Calvary. The crucifixion of Jesus is the perfect example of God's love as He was spilling blood to reach out to us. The Sacred Heart of Jesus also reminds us that Jesus was entirely single-hearted.

In the Gospels, Jesus sees the human heart as vital, not just for the body, but equally for the soul. The heart is seen as the true mirror of the soul and the x-ray of our intentions. The heart is the deepest center of organizing our lives. Where your treasure is, there your heart also be" (Mt 6:21). Jesus scolded the Scribes and Pharisees at one point and said: "These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me" (Mk 7: 7). "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." (Mt. 5:8). For Jesus, the human heart is the driving force of our will and our capacity to love.

As we grow spiritually, our lives become more centered. Our hearts tend to become purer. Purity of heart is not about moral or psychological perfection but about having one center, one aim, and one purpose in life. As for Jesus, the only thing that mattered was to do the will of the Father, the One he loved above all. The purity of the heart is about overcoming the divisions created by our disordered passions and loyalties that deviate our hearts.

St. Francis de Sales, my spiritual master, meditated on the love of Christ for humanity by gazing prayerfully upon the Gospel images of the Sacred Heart. This image drew him to a personal encounter with him. The image of the Sacred Heart invites us to realize that our hope in this world lies not in the fleeting emotions of our hearts but in the power of divine love.

Bishop Francis was convinced of the human heart's natural inclination and instinct to love. As a newly ordained priest and missionary, he chose to live in the Chateau of Allinges with his cousin. He chose to walk to Thonon every day and meet people. He established a personal relationship with people in their shops, farmers in their fields, and villagers in their homes. The apostolate of relationship and friendship became the foundation of his missionary work.

The heart was the source of his missionary work. "... I have wished above all else to engrave and inscribe on your heart this holy, sacred maxim, LIVE JESUS!" (SFS). May the global mission magazine of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales guide us to love Jesus, live Jesus, and give Jesus to our people in the missions.



Father Abraham VETTUVÉLIL, MSFS
Superior General

Five years of our missionary journey in the

Warm heart of Africa:

Malawi



In the Bible, the number five symbolizes God's grace. We, the Fransalians serving Malawi, have witnessed God's grace amidst us for the last five years. October 17, 2018, will remain a red letter in the history of the MSFS Congregation. The first band of missionaries arrived in the Diocese of Karonga namely Fr. S. Susairaj, Fr. P. Anandaraj and Fr. Nelson Arockiasamy. The mission started in the Diocese of Karonga. After five years of our mission in Malawi, we are blessed with five communities in parishes with 15 confreres. It is a matter of joy to note that our MSFS presence in Malawi is celebrating five years of evangelization.

Within five years, the Fransalians in Malawi have brought the Word of God to several people and touched their lives. The method of evangelization has borne good fruit. We could see the fruits of evangelization through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. Like good shepherds, we go in search of people, converse with them, share their experiences and break the Word of God. Visiting door to door the families, insisting upon

praying the rosary, teaching them the Marian devotions and eating the food of the local faithful have made a huge impact. We constantly visit the outstations and substations and give due importance to their pastoral needs, too. Some of our priests are living with the local clergy, learning from them various nuances of their culture and faith. The cooperation and assistance rendered by the faithful are amazing. They are welcoming and receptive. They love the priests and show enormous interest in their well-being of the priests. For the past five years, the confreres have done well in learning the language and cultures of the people in Malawi.

The life of the missionaries is not a bed of roses. Many of our Fathers live in temporary houses without many facilities. Poor supply of electricity and water is one of the main challenges of our daily life. It is not easy to travel from one community to another and all the prayer centers during rainy season. Our communities are separated by long distances and poor roads. We also serve as the chaplains of the lay movements, youth, secondary



schools and hospitals in the dioceses. We also assist the bishops as consulters and also in the diocesan council of priests in different dioceses. As we celebrate the fifth year of opening our missions in Malawi that god’s will for our congregation be fulfilled.

We always remember to acknowledge the great support and encouragement by Rev. Fr. K. Igancimuthu, the then Provincial and his council members and to Rev. Fr. A. Patrick Jeyaraj, the

Provincial and his council members. Entrusting to the providential care of God and to the intercession of Mother of Compassion and St. Francis De Sales, our Patron, we pledge to commit ourselves to do the will of God. We are grateful to many of our Fathers, though not physically present in Malawi, who take part in this mission through their prayers and support for the developmental projects in our parishes in Malawi. I render my sincere gratitude to them. May God bless our Mission in Malawi.

No	Name of the Mission	Date of MSFS taking up the Mission	Diocese
01	St. Francis De Sales Parish, Livingstonia	05.05.2019	Karonga
02	St. Augustine Of Hippo Parish, Kameme	01.05.2020	Karonga
03	St. Martin De Porres Parish, Ngerenge	13.03.2022	Karonga
04	St. Francis De Sales Parish, Edingeni	14.05.2022	Mzuzu
05	St. Francis De Sales Parish, Manyani	27.08.2022	Lilongwe
06	St. Alphonsus Parish, Masasa	09.08.2024	Mzuzu

Nestled between Zambia, Tanzania, and Mozambique, Malawi is a small, elongated, densely populated country nicknamed “The Warm Heart of Africa.” Malawi has earned its name not only from its warm temperatures and beautiful scenery but also from the warm hearts of its inhabitants.



MSFS Confreeres in Malawi



Fr. Adaikalam Arul MSFS



Fr. P. Anandaraj MSFS



Fr. S. Susairaj MSFS



Fr. S. Maria Arockiam MSFS



Fr. Vimal Raj. S MSFS



Fr. Arun Raj. C MSFS



Fr. M. Level Winner MSFS



Fr. C. Berin MSFS



Fr. P.Arokia Marcel MSFS



Fr. F. Eugene Earnest Raj MSFS



Fr. D. Nelson Arockiasamy MSFS



Fr. K. Nirmal Kumar MSFS



Fr. S. Jerald MSFS



Fr. A. Infant MSFS



Fr. C. Sebastian Robert MSFS



Message from Bishop Ryan

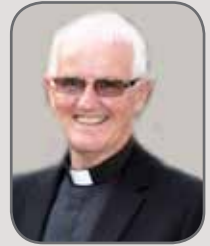


Fransalians in my Diocese

Bishop John Alphonsus Ryan S.P.S

Bishop acknowledges the presence and apostolate of MSFS Confreres in the Local Church: in Mzuzu Diocese in Malawi

As we, European and Canadian Missionaries in Mzuzu Diocese, age, it is very pleasing to see young, vibrant missionaries from India continue building the Kingdom of God in Mzuzu Diocese. When I arrived in Mzuzu in 1978, there were approximately 45 missionary priests from Europe and Canada and five local Malawian priests. Now, it is the other way around: 43 local Malawian priests and about 5 European priests (who are ageing). A few other missionary groups, like Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, are sending young and enthusiastic missionaries to Mzuzu Diocese. This is vital for the Church in Mzuzu Diocese. The Catholic Church in Mzuzu Diocese is full of life, energy and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, the number of local Malawian priests is minimal, especially at the expanding Church in Mzuzu Diocese. In the last seven years, eleven new parishes have been opened. In fact, in the previous seven years, the number of parishes in Mzuzu Diocese has grown from 11 to 22. That is double the number in just seven years! This growth has been made possible partly by the presence of the missionaries of the younger generation. We are most grateful to them for their sacrifices in coming here, learning a new language, getting to know the local Church and its ways of doing things, and getting familiar with local customs and traditions.



Fransalians began their first parish in May at Edingeni, named after St. Francis de Sales, under the leadership of Fr. Sebastian Susairaj MSFS when Fr. Ignacimuthu Kulandaisamy was Provincial Superior at that time. In less than three years, we have received another four young MSFS priests, young and energetic. Their hard work in learning the Chitumbuka language and orienting themselves with local customs and traditions is commendable, as language and orientation are essential prerequisites for missionary work. We know it is not easy. We know it takes stickability. It requires focus. We applaud them for their dedication and commitment. Now, under the leadership of the present Provincial, Rev. Fr. A. Patrick Jayaraj, the MSFS priests are about to take charge of their second parish in Mzuzu Diocese. This shows the richness of our worldwide Catholic Church and the MSFS Congregation with us in Mzuzu Diocese to build the Kingdom of God. Let us praise and thank God for this marvellous gift. In the name of the Diocese, I thank the MSFS Fathers for their commitment and dedication.

Bishop John Alphonsus Ryan S.P.S



Message from Bishop Martin

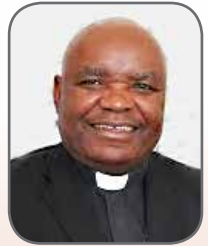


Fransalians in my Diocese

Bishop Martin Mtumbuka

Bishop acknowledges the presence and apostolate of MSFS Confres in the Local Church: in Karonga Diocese in Malawi

Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS) arrived in the Diocese of Karonga five years ago. Their first mission in the Diocese of Karonga is St. Francis de Sales Parish, Livingstonia, which they opened as soon as they arrived in the country/Diocese. Since then, they have opened two additional missions in the Diocese of Karonga, namely St. Augustine of Hippo Parish and St. Martin de Porres Parish.



The MSFS Fathers have demonstrated a remarkable dedication that is truly inspiring. Despite their relatively short time in the Diocese of Karonga, they have deeply immersed themselves in the local communities and culture. They share the daily lives of the locals, from their meals to their accommodation arrangements. Their energy and enthusiasm are evident as they go door to door, visiting the faithful and blessing their houses, regardless of their religious affiliation.

The arrival of the MSFS Fathers has brought about a significant change in the Diocese of Karonga. Their presence has sparked a renewed interest in the conversion of the Phoka people around Livingstonia. After nearly 80 years since the Catholic Faith was introduced to Rumphi District, the Phoka have finally embraced the Catholic faith. This is evident from the establishment of Catholic communities in areas such as Chakaka, Junju, Thunda, Mweyeye, Kasonkhwe, and the soon-to-be parish centre at Vunguvungu. We are proud of the impact the MSFS Fathers have made and we pray for God's continued blessings on their work.

As a Diocese, we very sincerely thank God for sending us these very selfless and energetic MSFS Fathers who are entirely available to minister to the faithful regardless of the size and number of difficulties they must overcome to reach them. We pray that God continues to give them good health and the graces they need to continue with what can honestly be described as heroic missionary work in our Diocese. We humbly commend them to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary - their Mother and our Mother.

+ Right Rev. M.A. Mtumbuka
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF KARONGA



Apostolate of Presence

The Challenges and Possibilities

Ambad Catholic Mission is one of the many MSFS Catholic Mission Stations in Nagpur India. It is located in Jalna district which is part of the Diocese of Aurangabad. This mission was started by the Society of Jesus, in the year 2008. Rev. Fr. James Shelke SJ, a very pious and dedicated missionary, built two churches. One at Patherwala Khurd which is also known as Gundewady and the other at Rewalgaon. Fr. James used to come from Gevarai to these places to fulfil the spiritual needs of the faithful. He baptized only three to four families in these villages. After his transfer, the priests who were put in charge of this mission were not able to fulfil the spiritual needs of the people.

Thus, this mission was handed over to the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, Nagpur Province in the year 2012. Fr. Shantwan Khuteker MSFS was appointed Mission in charge by the Provincial. As he was residing in Jalna community, it was not so easy for him to frequently visit the mission. Looking after this mission was an additional responsibility given to him and the mission is also 45 kms from Jalna. He continued going there once a month but his visits were not so effective and didn't have an impact on the people. The others appointed after



him continued the missionary work in the same manner.

In the year 2022, Fr. John Ruptake MSFS was appointed as Ambad Mission in charge by Fr. Muthuswamy, Provincial Superior of Nagpur Province. He took up his appointment in all earnestness. He was the first priest who took the initiative to stay with the people of this village. Many projects were initiated by him for the welfare of the people and he is happy to be with his sheep. After seeing his





they were also not practising Catholics as they were like sheep without a shepherd. To bring them back to Catholicism, daily the rosary is prayed in the evening. The 'Dry Mass' is celebrated for them every Sunday and whenever it is needed. We have built a Grotto and every day we gather and pray the rosary, asking Mother Mary for our daily needs.

dedicated hard work the Provincial Administration decided to further develop the mission center. It was decided to purchase three and half acres of land with the intention of starting an English Medium School in order to educate the poor and needy.

Fr. John shares:

Life in this mission is not so easy. I have to face many obstacles on my way. The most challenging one is to keep them oriented towards the Cath-

At present Fr. John is staying at Patherwala Khurd village in a rented house. The house doesn't have basic facilities like a bathroom or toilet. With the help of Jalna community, he bought a readymade toilet and placed it in the nearby compound where the chapel is. In this village, there are twenty-two families who are Protestants. Of these twenty-two families only six ladies and a few gents were baptized, but





olic faith as they are more comfortable and happy with the Protestant way of worship. If I happen to be out of the station on a Sunday, the people may call the Protestant pastor or a pastor comes to occupy the Church. Once in my absence, the Chapel was occupied by a pastor and it was a big struggle to get it back because he was not ready to move from there. But I still have hope in God that He will work a miracle and one day they all will become true Catholics.

Daily tuitions are held for the boys and girls who are studying from 6th to

12th standard. Simultaneously they are taught catechism and spoken English. Their school homework is checked and help is given to finish it. Assistance is given in solving their educational problems. The people are good and receptive. They provide me with food twice a day and they look after me very well. Right now whatever I am doing is not bearing much fruit but I hope and pray that God will do wonders and bring these people back to the Catholic faith. To accomplish this the presence of a priest is very much needed.

For me living there is very challenging. The response of the people is good but not as simple as we think. I have the strong feeling that our great Patron St. Francis de Sales must have had the same experience when he took up the Chablais Mission. Kindly pray for the success of our ministry in this mission station.

Fr. John Ruptake MSFS

**Some people make others happy wherever they go.
Some other people make others happy whenever
they go.**

: Oscar Wilde

What is the quality of my presence as a missionary?



Welcome to

PNG

Papua New Guinea

Land of Pristine Beauty



Fertile land for evangelization



MSFS in Papua New Guinea

The year 2024 marks 19 years of MSFS presence in the mission of Papua New Guinea. In all these years 11 MSFS confreres have come to do the mission work. At present there are three confreres working in the Catholic Diocese of Vanimo engaged mainly in parish ministry. Our pioneer Fr. Jose Mullenmadackal who arrived in 2005 worked in parish mission as well as formation and right now he is the parish priest in the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in the town of Vanimo. Fr. Prabhat Bastiray who arrived in the year 2008 is a parish priest in St. Therese of Child Jesus Parish, Lido on the outskirts of Vanimo town. Fr. Solomon Raju who arrived in July 2023 serves in St. Michael's Parish, Ossima, 45 kilometers away from the town.

In these 19 years the MSFS confreres were assigned by the bishop of the diocese in remote areas of the diocese



like Yapsie, Kambratoro, Wasengla, Ossima and coastal areas of Laitre. The diocese also had entrusted the responsibility of Minor Seminary and Major Seminary for a certain number of years. Wherever the confreres worked, they have left an indelible mark of MSFS charism. The five priests ordained in recent years for the diocese were under the formation of MSFS confreres both in minor and major seminaries and also were accompanied under the able spiritual guidance of Frs. Thomas



Perumalil and Jose Mullenmadackal. Fr. Jose continues to give his spiritual guidance to minor seminarians as spiritual director and confessor. Our confreres are fondly remembered by the parishioners wherever they worked even though they have left the mission long ago.

The diocese being very small and having small numbers of clergy, the MSFS confreres also render service in the administration of the diocese. Frs. Jose and Prabhat are members of different committees like finance and health. Fr. Jose was serving as Vicar General under the previous administration and Fr. Prabhat is working as chancellor in this administration.

The nature of the mission here is that we assist the diocese in pastoral work. Hence in the past twenty years, we couldn't start anything of our own rather we render our help according to the directives of the bishop. The mission in Papua New Guinea is very vibrant having ample possibilities but



issues of owning land, instability of priests in ministry and difficulty in self-sufficiency discourage us to start our own MSFS mission. However, being missionary priests in nature we can continue to do missionary work as the diocese and the country is in need of missionaries to cater to the spiritual hunger of the catholic faithful.





Fr. Solomon Raju is given the mission of Ossima which was started by the Passionist Missionaries after 1960. The parish has many substations which can be covered by road. Fr. Solomon uses a motor bike for his ministry and also to commute to the town. Fr. Raju is visiting the sub centres regularly, administers sacraments and engages in catechesis. Most Rev. Francis Meli, on his visit to the parish, was very much impressed to see how this new missionary is well equipped and adapting to the new environment. Very Rev. Fr. Suresh Babu also paid a visit to the parish when he was here for his visit in Feb, 2024.

Fr. Jose has been the parish priest of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Dasi for a long time. He caters to the spiritual needs of mostly settlers from the remote villages of Vanimo district. The parish has many communities of settlers and a distant sub center. Fr. Jose is very active in visiting families, conducting charismatic prayer meetings and administering sacraments to the sick and elderly. Fr. Jose is very strong in spirit. On 14th April night, he was attacked by a thief in the courtyard of his presbytery and the miscreant stabbed him in the right side of his face and robbed father's mobile. Fr.

Jose had the courage to drive himself to the police station and also to the hospital for first aid. Fr. Jose has recovered physically and mentally and says he is stronger than before to face such challenges.

Fr. Prabhat was given both the parish ministry and formation in charge of the diocese in the past. Right now he is serving the very first mission of the diocese known as Vanimo Village. The parish has daily mass, two Sunday masses, Friday school mass and catechesis for different groups. Fr. Prabhat enjoys his ministry as the parish has a vibrant liturgy, good participation and cooperation and reception to the catechesis.





Salvation Hill

Osia, Tororo Archdiocese UGANDA

The Salvation Hill is situated on the eastern part of Osia parish, in the Archdiocese of

Tororo, along the road which goes to Jinja. A holy pilgrimage was begun to this hill in the year 2005, when the late Rev. Fr. Mathew Chavely MSFS, who was then the parish priest of St. Jude Catholic Parish. Osia parish erected a huge concrete cross on the top of the hill which is adjacent to the road, and named the hill as Salvation Hill. It was named Salvation Hill to remind everyone about the true Salvation Hill of Calvary, where Jesus was crucified. The cross was blessed in a solemn ceremony and permission was granted by the then Archbishop to use it as a place of prayer and pilgrimage. And the practice continues.

The Salvation Hill is devoted to the devotion of Divine Mercy. Every first Friday the parish organizes a pilgrimage to the hill and an average of 1500 or more people come from different parts of Uganda and Kenya, to make a holy pilgrimage to the hill. On Thursday evening of the previous day of pilgrimage, the pilgrims come to the parish and we organize a Holy Mass followed by Eucharistic adoration till midnight. During this time, the priests are available for the sacrament of penance, for those who wish to receive it, and a great

number of people line up to receive penance and prepare themselves for the pilgrimage to the Salvation Hill. During the Holy Mass and adoration, talks are given regarding different areas of faith and spiritual life, which are based on the teachings of the Catholic church. Those who wish to pray and keep vigil till morning are allowed to do so. Osia parish provides the pilgrims a place for rest and refreshment without any payment.

On Friday morning people are invited to join for the recitation of the full Rosary (all 4 Mysteries) in the Rosary Garden in front of the church.



After the Rosary, people proceed to the hill in procession singing and praying along the way. At the foot of the cross, there are pictures of the stations of the cross drawn on the rock, and people climb the hill reciting the Way of the Cross. Around 11 am the Holy Mass on the top of the hill begins, and special prayer intentions of the pilgrims are offered during the Holy Mass. A special prayer is made to the Cross of Jesus, for all the pilgrims and they receive a special blessing from the priests who celebrate the Holy Eucharist. After the Holy Mass, the pilgrims are given the opportunity to give testimonies of their faith or any miracle or special graces which they had received after praying on the Salvation Hill and every month a good number of pilgrims give testimonies of healing and other miracles. Around 1.30 pm the pilgrimage is concluded and the pilgrims return to their respective places. All the neighboring parishes take turns leading the monthly pilgrimage and the parish priest or his assistant accompanies the



pilgrims from that parish. Normally the same priest will be the one who presides over the Holy Eucharist on Thursday and Friday. Many priests give reflections during the Holy Hour also.

This pilgrimage is held purely for the spiritual growth of the people who make the pilgrimage to the Salvation Hill, and very many Catholics and non-Catholics benefit from the pilgrimage every month. Many people make this pilgrimage individually and according to their convenience, they climb the Hill and pray there and come down. It is a memorable experience for anyone who has made the pilgrimage to the Salvation Hill in Osia Parish in Uganda.

May God bless all.

Next time when you are in Uganda, make it a point to place your feet at the foot of the Holy Cross at the Salvation Hill.





Look forward with excitement!

Meditations with Mermier

From September 1 – 30, 2024

A joint Project of the

Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales and the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod

Topics	Guide
Encouragement and support: Father Mermier's letter to women Religious	Sr. Priscah Muthoni SCC
Father Mermier: A Pioneer of Evangelization	Fr. Berdinand Selvan MSFS
Father Mermier's approach to Spiritual direction	Sr. Caroline Fernandes SCC
Father Mermier's Approach to Youth Ministry	Fr. John Barman MSFS
Father Mermier's Commitment to the Poor and Marginalized	Fr. Philip Mhomchumo MSFS
Father Mermier's Contributions to Education and Formation	Fr. Augusto Antonio MSFS
Father Mermier's contributions to pastoral care	Sr. Flora Celine SCC
Father Mermier's Dedication to the Sacramental Life	Sr. Jiji Mathew SCC
Father Mermier's Love for the Word of God	Fr. Francis Kizhakethazhathu MSFS
Father Mermier's Marian Devotion	Sr. Therese Saleth SCC
Father Mermier's Pilgrimages and Their Spiritual Significance	Fr. Viju Kunnathottil MSFS
Father Mermier's Relationship with His Fellow Missionaries	Fr. Mathew Rodrigues MSFS
Father Mermier's Response to the Challenges of His Time	Fr. Britto Selvam MSFS



Father Mermier's Role in Strengthening Parish Life	Fr. Emmanuel Uppanthadathil MSFS
Father Mermier's Strategies for Conflict Resolution	Fr. Davis Chackalackal MSFS
Father Mermier's Vision for Community Life	Fr. Mathew Thazhathukunnel MSFS
Father Mermier's Vision for Women's Apostolic Work	Sr. Maureen Peiris SCC
Father Mermier's writings and their spiritual impacts	Sr. Sonita Ngwe SCC
Joy in Suffering: Lessons from Father Mermier	Fr. Wilson Abraham MSFS
Missionary Zeal: Father Mermier's Driving Force	Fr. Francis Kyule MSFS
Spiritual Fatherhood: Insights from Father Mermier	Sr. Jacqueline Pragasam SCC
The Courage to Proclaim: Father Mermier's Preaching Ministry	Fr. Naveen Nirmal MSFS
The Heart of a Servant: Father Mermier's Leadership Style	Fr. Antony Rajesh MSFS
The Influence of St. Francis de Sales on Father Mermier	Fr. Rajesh Chatragadda MSFS
The Mother of Fr. Mermier and her influence on him	Sr. Liza Thomas SCC
The Power of Patience: Father Mermier's Enduring Virtue	Fr. K. Thomas MSFS
The Role of Silence and Solitude in Father Mermier's Spirituality	Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil MSFS
The Role of the Holy Spirit in Father Mermier's Mission	Fr. Benzer George MSFS
The significance of the Cross in Father Mermier's life	Sr. Tresa Kalapurayil SCC
The Virtue of Perseverance in Father Mermier's Life	Fr. Vijay Sekhar MSFS

Animation for daily meditation based on the spirituality of our holy founder Father Mermier, will be prepared by each guide and will reach you in video presentation as well as in text format during the month of September, 2024.



MY MOTHER

was **not** an ordinary woman: Father Peter Mermier

Power of Positive Presence: A concrete example from the life of our Holy Founder Servant of God, Father Peter Marie Mermier

At the time of his birth, the population of Savoy was almost rural. Fr Mermier's father, Francois Mermier, who belonged to a race of landowners and a family peasant, and the son had of a peasant: good sense, audacity, tenacious His mother, Antionette and devout woman to his fine and alert mind, first initiation into faith had the first place in the Fr. Mermier once said: written anything about much I owe her. No, no, woman." This expression of regret from Father Mermier underscores the profound influence his mother had on his life and spirituality.



of good standing, was a inherited all the qualities practical mind, prudent and calm perseverance. Bastian, was a pious whom Fr Mermier owed his social sense, and his and sound piety. God home of the Mermiers. "I repent for not having my mother. My God, how she was not an ordinary

The mother of Father Mermier played a significant role in shaping his character and spirituality. Her deep faith, wisdom, and nurturing guidance were foundational in Mermier's early spiritual formation. She instilled in him values of piety, discipline, and a strong devotion to God, which became evident in his later life and missionary work. Her example of unwavering faith, dedicated service, and courageous support of the 'underground' priests provided a living model for Mermier. It inspired him to pursue his vocation with zeal and commitment. His mother's teachings and example continued to resonate throughout his life, helping to shape his approach to ministry and his compassionate care for others.

"I deeply regret not having written anything about my mother. My God, how much I owe her. No, she was not an ordinary woman."





Equality of opportunities and privileges!

Does it always help?

What is the solution?

Please see page 39

Being a missionary means stepping out of one's known comfort zone and stepping out into the unknown and trusting Him to lead the way

I do not know where God takes me, for what purpose he takes me, or how he guides me. But one thing I know is that he leads me and guides me. It is not for me to know all the "how" and the "why" of everything



Qualities of a Missionary

According to St. Francis de Sales

Series No. 7

Inspiring Presence

Fr. Johnson Pathiyil MSFS

In life, we meet thousands of people who either become a source of inspiration or discouragement. Some persons, we feel blessed to have met them and desire to be in their company due to the positive vibes emanating from their personalities. Whereas some other persons, we are weighed down with a heavy feeling of regret for having met them. Besides that, we feel drained of our energies after spending time with them. We belong to either of these categories.

Jesus was a person who always gave life to others. Not only did he bring back the dead to life, but he also boosted the life of the drooping spirit of man. So, whoever went to him with a heavy heart laden with sin and shame indeed became a new person in Christ. That's why the tax collectors and sinners flocked to him to see him and be in his company. This is such a wonderful experience that we should experience ourselves and share it with others.

When we look at our heavenly Patron, St. Francis de Sales,

we realize he had a fascinating personality that inspired many people. All those who went to him, be it for confession, spiritual advice, or material need, would never go empty-handed or empty heart. They always had something to take home with them from his inspiring personality. Pope Clement VIII, upon the recommendation of Bishop Garnier, called Francis de Sales to Rome for a personal interview and before an assembly of Cardinals along with St. Robert Bellarmine who was one among those present. After the interview and examination, the Pope said to St. Francis de Sales: "Drink, my son, from your wellsprings and from your living sources. May these waters issue forth so that everyone may drink his fill from them."¹ The history proved that the words of Pope Clement VIII were not in vain. In the words of Rev. James F. Cassidy, "We saw in the soul of Francis de Sales such an

1 Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. Ryan K. John (New York: Image Books, 2014).p.2. Ref. Proverbs 5:15.

exceptional wedding of gentleness to strength, of feminine delicacy to masculine power, of profound learning to practical ability- a combination so well calculated to attract and move to virtuous living every type and age-that we could not resist to urge to extend the sway of his most versatile saint over the souls of men."²

Francis de Sales was not only an inspiration to the people throughout his life but continues to remain a source of inspiration to thousands of men and women, especially through his writings. He wrote to Madam de Chantal in one of his letters to her: "As much as possible, we must touch the hearts of others as do the angels, delicately and without coercion." Monsieur De Boisy, the father of Francis de Sales, told his wife: "In truth, madame, it seems to me that this child is less a son by nature than by divine grace; some instinct tells me that God intends making a wonderful character of him, for his modesty and his goodness make even me desire to be a better man."³

Our life as missionaries of St. Francis de Sales should be a source of inspiration to others. We are called to imitate this great saint in our lives and become a source

of inspiration and motivation to those who come in contact with us. The lives of all the Salesian saints like St. John Bosco, St. Dominic Savio and many other saints and missionaries are examples.

What do I give to the person who comes to me? Is it a bundle of negative feelings and discouraging words I share with them that they never want to return to me again? Or do I stand as a beacon of encouragement and positivity to everyone who comes to me? After the example of St. Francis de Sales, we must learn to touch the hearts of others like angels, with all delicacy and without using force. We can always enrich others with our kind words and gentle approach. Thus, we shall live the legacy of St. Francis de Sales through our life and ministry.



Live Jesus!



Fr. Johnson Pathiyil MSFS

2 James F. Cassidy, *St. Francis de Sales: The Doctor of Devotion* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, Ltd, 1944).p.1.
3 Cassidy. p.5.



Mom, when I am with them, they behave better!



Story of a mother who inspired her child to be an inspiration for the other

St. John Bosco was born in 1815 to Francis Bosco and Margherita Occhiena Bosco, a poor peasant family in Italy. Seeing the young boy Johny, the neighbours commented: "A fine healthy baby, fit for the soil to take his father's place on the old homestead."

But no one went further than that in predicting the child's future. His dad, Francis, died only two years after John's birth, leaving Margaret to raise three boys by herself. She taught them that they each needed to carry their weight and help with the keeping of their home and farm. There were house chores, firewood to cut and gather, fields to plough, and crops to tend. Little John and his older brother Joseph, supervised by their stepbroth-

er Anthony, tackled the endless work with energy. Margaret taught them that work was a privilege and that joy would make it lighter.

She was a woman of character and tenderness. All who knew her called her Mama Margaret. The love she showed her sons, not in coddling words but in deeds, was unparalleled. Innumerable were the lessons in upright living,

Christian fortitude, and fear of God that she taught by her example. A pillar of goodness, she stood before them as sturdy as the Alps.

At her knee, John first heard the voice of the Master calling him to

a special assignment. It was a low, insistent voice, an urge that occasionally manifested itself in a sudden outburst.

"When I grow up," he told his astonished mother, "I'm going to be a

But, Mama, those boys aren't really bad. They don't have a good mother like I have, and they don't know their catechism, and their parents don't take them to church. When I'm with them, they behave better.





priest, and I'll talk to children all the time, and I'll do everything for them!"

Once again, the voice within John urged him to step up among the farm boys, not just as a playmate but as a leader. He would return home with a battered cheek or torn shirt, and in explanation, he would say, "But, Mama, those boys aren't really bad. They just don't have a good mother like I have,

and they don't know their catechism, and their parents don't take them to church. When I'm with them, they behave better. Please, Mama, may I go with them?" This early display of leadership and empathy was a sign of the great man he was to become.

As the child grew, he began to fully embrace God's plan for him. He learned the tricks of magic from traveling showmen, he juggled, he walked the tightrope. Then, he opened his own carnival show. The admission was one rosary to be recited by all

When the boy John Bosco performed the juggling tricks, the admission was one rosary to be recited by all spectators!

spectators, and the added attraction was the Sunday sermon, repeated by the little ringmaster. The show grounds were the field in front of the house, where Margaret Bosco often watched her son at

work, marvelling at his diverse skills and wondering what might come of it all.



Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil, our beloved Superior General, preached two retreats for the entire clergy of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry, India.

One of the groups: June 2024



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Lumen
Christi
Institute
ARUSHA
Tanzania

Serving
the Universal
Mission
of
CHRIST

The mission of Lumen Christi

in the Local Church:

A Beacon of Hope and Service

Fr. Thomas Kochalumchuvattil MSFS

Lumen Christi Institute is an educational, socio-pastoral, and spiritual centre under the direct supervision of the General Administration of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS). MSFS in Africa had long cherished the desire to establish a Mission Institute in Africa. This dream materialised with the purchasing of one hundred acres of land at Maji ya Chai. To address the pastoral needs of the surrounding communities, the Archdiocese of Arusha entrusted the Ngrudoto and Maji ya Chai Parishes to the MSFS in 2009, marking the beginning of a transformative journey for the local church and community. The confreres residing at Lumen Christi diligently managed these Parishes and their substations, addressing the pastoral needs with unwavering dedication. St. Stephen's Parish in Maji ya Chai and St. Francis de Sales Parish in Ngrudoto

have two resident priests, with Lumen Christi supporting them through their presence and pastoral ministry as needed.



The establishment of a Philosophate at Maji ya Chai in 2010 bolstered the centre's capacity to serve as more priests became available to assist in pastoral duties. MSFS philosophy students also contributed significantly, teaching catechism and assisting priests in various pastoral ministries and animation programs. In its mission to prepare catechists for parishes and outstations, Lumen Christi established a three-year (one month each year) Catechetical Training Center in 2012. Selected men and women from different dioceses



are trained at Lumen Christi for pastoral leadership in their parishes. At the end of the three-year program, they receive certificates, signifying their readiness to take on pastoral leadership roles. Over the years, this program has attracted many participants, with 45 to 50 catechists graduating each year, ready to serve as pastoral assistants in parishes across Tanzania and beyond.

A significant aspect of Lumen Christi's mission has been addressing the community's healthcare needs. The LCI dispensary, which opened in 2014, is equipped with qualified doctors, well-trained nurses, lab technicians, and other allied services, ensuring that the local population receives essential medical care.

In 2015, Lumen Christi launched a one-year training program for priests and religious called the *Formators Course*. Since its inception, this program has consistently attracted enrollees, with an average of twenty formators graduating each year. These formators are well-equipped to meet the needs of the Church throughout Africa. They are trained to be preachers, teachers of faith, prayer leaders, superiors of the community,

and formation personnel at various levels of formation in the Church. The comprehensive curriculum ensures that these formators are well instructed in psychology, counselling, psychotherapy, and spirituality, with all its allied subjects, and specialise in human, spiritual, social, cultural, and intellectual formation.

The pastoral wing of Lumen Christi has been instrumental in initiating various animation programs for novices, sisters, and priests through seminars, retreats, and classes. These programs encompass various socio-psychological and spiritual subjects, serving as vital awareness programs. Bible-related seminars have been conducted to deepen the understanding and appreciation of Scripture, while prayer seminars have taught people to pray and grow in their prayer life. Additionally, regular seminars on counseling, psychotherapy, spiritual direction, and inner healing have been organized to strengthen individuals in all areas of life and equip them to face life's challenges.

In addition to these initiatives, LCI opened Fransalian Hekima Seminary Secondary School on its campus



in 2018. While the boys' boarding is within the campus, the girls are boarded with the Sisters of Sacred Sciences. The school provides a holistic educational program that includes regular morning and evening prayers and daily Eucharistic celebrations. Lumen Christi Institute staff take turns celebrating Mass and other sacraments for the students. The results have been most encouraging, with students consistently performing exceptionally well, placing the school among the top in the country.

The success of Lumen Christi's initiatives can be attributed to its holistic approach to pastoral care and community development. By addressing the community's spiritual, educational, and healthcare needs, LCI has created a robust support system that nurtures individuals and empowers them to contribute meaningfully to society. The centre's dedication to holistic development is



evident in its diverse programs and initiatives, which cater to the needs of various demographic groups, from the youth to the elderly and from laypersons to religious leaders.

Lumen Christi's impact on the local community extends beyond the immediate provision of services. The institute has created a supportive environment where individuals can thrive by fostering a sense of community and belonging. The emphasis on pastoral care and spiritual development has strengthened the faith of the local population, while the





educational and healthcare initiatives have improved their quality of life. The success stories of individuals who have benefited from Lumen Christi's programs stand as a testament to the institute's transformative impact.

The impact of Lumen Christi's initiatives can be seen in the improved quality of life of the local community. The dispensary provides essential healthcare services, ensuring individuals receive timely medical attention. The catechetical training programs have prepared individuals to take on leadership roles in their parishes, fostering a sense of community and belonging. The Formators' program has equipped priests and religious with the necessary skills to serve in various capacities and has contributed to a network of formators who can support each other

in their ministries. The comprehensive training in psychology, counseling, and psychotherapy has enabled these formators to address the complex needs of their communities. At the same time, the focus on spirituality and allied subjects has deepened their understanding of their faith and their role in the Church.

In conclusion, Lumen Christi's mission in the local church has been a beacon of hope and service. Lumen Christi has addressed the community's pastoral, educational, and healthcare needs through its diverse programs and initiatives. As Lumen Christi continues to grow and expand its reach, its impact on the local community and the Church is bound to increase, furthering its mission of service and transformation.



Ahsanteni!

Thank you, our beloved



Fr. Abraham Mullenkuzhy MSFS



Fr. Devasia Manalel MSFS

Thank you for your long years of wholehearted commitment to Lumen Christi Institute. You have touched the hearts of many! May God reward you richly!





A garden of Eden in the Arizona desert!

An initiative to chill the Soul, Mind and Body*

Some time ago, St. James the Apostle Church in Coolidge in the Diocese of Tucson in Arizona, USA, stood in a sea of concrete, asphalt, and gravel. Waves of heat streamed off sunbaked surfaces, blinding parishioners as they dashed from their cars to the church's shelter.

Father Alexander Tigga, MSFS, arrived in Coolidge during the peak of summer yet was undaunted by the heat and stone. The master gardener has planted gardens all around the globe, wherever he is sent as a missionary priest with the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales.

With gardens on three continents, Alex has cultivated the earth and transformed empty spaces into thriving gardens. Alex first learned about plants from his father, a farmer in India. He planted gardens at his seminary before being sent to Africa, where the fruit trees he planted still produce good fruit. "Wherever I go, I plant beautiful gardens," he said.

In the Diocese of Tucson, Alex planted a garden in Kearny at Infant Jesus of Prague Parish and then at St. Therese of Lisieux Parish in Patagonia, which became a tourist destination for visitors and photographers.

Coming from the cooler, greener Patagonia, Alex became pastor of St. James the Apostle Parish in July 2023. The parishioners were already eager to make a prayer garden.

After meeting and brainstorming, the parish community decided to proceed and was able to raise enough funds to create a prayer garden. "It was very dry, dead, and lifeless. So, I wanted to help bring some life to the community.



“We started digging in July,” Alex said. “It was very hard because it was so hot. I brought some plants from Patagonia, but they were drying away. Keeping them alive was difficult.”

The pastor and his parishioners installed water irrigation, statues and benches. Some ten months later, parishioners and visitors could pray in a lush flower garden nestled behind the parish office. The property is already transformed by greenery’s cooling and comforting presence, blooming flowers of every color and new fruit trees beginning to take root.

“Whoever comes, they leave happy,” said Father Alex. “Many of them have started planting gardens at their own houses. They realize they can do it. Some will ask me what to plant and when.”

The parish grounds are now flourishing: existing trees grow greener than before, flowers line the gravel lot used for parish fiestas, a vegetable garden takes root behind the rectory, and the prayer garden welcomes visitors of people and pollinators alike.

While tending the plants, Alex also sees gardening as a way to care for his own body and soul. Physically, he said, “Gardening is a good habit. It refreshes your mind and relaxes you. It gives you exercise and keeps you young.



Gardening also nurtures and inspires the spiritual life. “You think a lot about God’s creation while gardening and how we are participating in God’s creation. It allows time for meditative prayer. The spiritual life and gardening go together. The garden helps people to pray and brings an atmosphere of prayer.”

By participating in God’s creation, the pastor uses his God-given gifts for gardening to make the world more beautiful. Father Alex leaves a more beautiful parish than when he found it.

“My gardens bring happiness to people,” he said. “After their visit, they leave smiling. That gives me fulfilment.”

Congratulations to you, our dear Confrere Fr. Alexander Tigga MSFS

- Based on an article from Web: EARTHBEAT: A Project of the NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER USA. <https://www.ncronline.org/earthbeat/faith/prayer-garden-arizona-catholic-church-nurtures-soul>

Laudato Si from Pope Francis is being literally implemented by Fr. Alex, and the parish community not because of the favourable climatic conditions but because of their strong will and ardent love for Mother Earth, our common home.

Laudato Si, in action

at Fransalian School Morogoro,
Tanzania



In the encyclical Laudato Si, Pope Francis urged the Catholic Church and all people of goodwill around the world to earnestly begin to care for our common home that is beginning to crumble.

With Pope Francis's guidance, the teachers and students of Fransalian School Morogoro are committed to making a difference on 'World Environment Day' every June 5th. Our collective efforts aim to inspire change and preserve our planet.

The earth is our 'common home', and everything on it is intricately connected, forming a delicate web of relationships. If one element is harmed, it reverberates across the entire planet, affecting the well-

being of all. This interconnectedness underscores the need for collective action to restore the beauty of creation that God bestowed upon us.

Fransalian Primary School is a leading school in Morogoro Region, Tanzania, East Africa and is committed to preserving nature.

Pope Francis emphasizes in "Laudato si'" that caring for the environment is not just an ecological issue but also a moral and social responsibility. By planting trees and actively participating in environmental conservation efforts, individuals and communities can contribute to the common good and work towards a more sustainable future for all.



When we say adieu to this world, it is our moral responsibility to leave it as a better place than we found it when we came.



When a journalist innocently asked Pope John XXIII, “Your Holiness, how many people work in the Vatican?” He replied, “About half of them.”

- As a Priest, Religious and Missionary, I must often examine honestly my work culture.
- Do I really work enough?
- Is my commitment to Christ limited to office hours?
- What is the quality of my work?
- Do I have passion for the mission?

PMP Training Program – Phase II

for 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

Arrival November 25th evening, Departure 30th afternoon

Please pray for the blessings of God upon this venture



Catechists and the Faith Formation



Catechists play a crucial role in Catholic missions, especially in developing countries. They serve as local leaders who help evangelise by teaching the faith, preparing individuals for sacraments, and guiding communities in understanding Catholic teachings. Their involvement is vital for several reasons:

Cultural Relevance: Catechists, often native to the local community, are uniquely positioned to present the faith in a way that deeply resonates with the cultural context of the people.

Education: They provide religious education to children and adults, helping build a foundation of knowledge about the Catholic faith.

Community Building Catechists help foster community within parishes, encouraging participation in church activities and social services.

Support for Clergy: In areas where there may be a shortage of priests, catechists play a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of church activities. They can assist in leading liturgical services, conducting prayer meetings, and managing parish activities, thereby providing vital support to the clergy.

Social Development Many catechists are involved in broader social issues, such as health education, literacy programs, and community

development, integrating the church's mission with local needs.

Overall, catechists are essential in bridging the gap between the church and the community, ensuring that the faith is lived and practised in everyday life. Their work contributes significantly to the growth and sustainability of the Church in developing regions.



The Catechists need to be equipped and supported. They often have to travel many miles on foot or bicycle to reach the parish centre and reach out to the faithful.

The Holy Redeemer Church (Erlöserpfarrei) Chur, Switzerland, supported these catechists from St. Francis de Sales Parish, Ibihwa Dodoma, by providing them with bicycles. Thank you very much Dankeschön....





As a person and missionary, you may have certain privileges or opportunities that you may not need. Whereas, they may be beneficial for someone else.

A missionary needs the following qualities of:

- **Mindfulness,**
- **Sensitivity,**
- **Compassion,**
- **Flexibility,**
- **Generosity &**
- **Trust**

to give away what you have, even though you are entitled to the same.

PMP – Parish Mission Preaching

Annual National Gathering and Prayer Days

for the confreres who are engaged in the preaching ministry

Theme: Deliverance and Healing

October 28 to November 1, 2024

Venue: MSFS Provincial House, Silapathar, Assam

Arrival on October 28th evening Departure on November 1st morning

Please get in touch with **Rev. Fr. Varghese Manickathan MSFS** for

further information and logistic arrangements.

(+91 76410 28745; manipaulmsfs@yahoo.in)

It is time to book your tickets!!

Let us prayerfully prepare for this event.





This also is a Roman Catholic Church.

Are those who pray here every Sunday
the **children of a lesser God**



Floor and Pews - all MUD



**You are welcome to support any mission worldwide
so that everyone can have a decent place of worship.**

Contact: gensecmisionmsfs@gmail.com