



Congregazione dei Missionari di San Francesco di Sales

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Circular for the entire Congregation

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My beloved Confreres,

I greet you in the precious name of Jesus! Shalom!

Month of September and the Emotional resonance for us MSFS

September is a particularly grace-filled month for every Missionary of St. Francis de Sales, for it places before us two figures who are at the heart of our Fransalian identity: Mary, Mother of Sorrows, our beloved Patroness, and Servant of God Fr. Peter Mary Mermier, our Founder.

Besides, on **September 8 we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, and on **September 14 we have the Exaltation of the Holy Cross**.

On **September 15, as we celebrate Mary, Mother of Sorrows**, we are invited to contemplate her walking the way of the cross steadily and standing faithfully at the foot of the Cross. Her compassion, courage, silence, and complete surrender to God's will challenge us to become missionaries who are close to the suffering, struggles, and hopes of the people entrusted to our care, and to ache for them with her own aching heart.

On **September 30, Founder's Day** calls us to remember with gratitude Fr. Peter Mermier, whose life was marked by deep prayer, total surrender to God, pastoral creativity and an ardent missionary zeal expressed in his famous conviction, "I want missions." His life reminds us that our vocation cannot cling and remain stuck to comfort, personal security or compromise; we are called to go where the Gospel needs to be proclaimed, where people need to be accompanied, and where faith and hope need to be renewed.

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

September is beautifully adorned by the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated on September 8 - a feast that held a special place in the heart of St. Francis de Sales, our Patron.

St. Francis de Sales had a profound devotion to Mary and entrusted himself and his ministry to her maternal care. He saw in her a model of humility, purity, obedience and complete docility to God's will. For him, Mary always accompanies us and leads us to Christ and teaches us to receive God's grace with a humble and generous heart.

Let us, therefore, joyfully celebrate the Nativity of Mary, remembering that her humble, hidden birth was already part of God's great plan of salvation. From this seemingly small

beginning, God prepared the way for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. In her birth, we already see the “germination of a regeneration of the Spirit, and the fecundation of a new generation”.

Mary as the Mother of Sorrows

Both our Patron, St. Francis de Sales, and our Founder, the Servant of God Father Peter Mary Mermier, had a profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and sought to live their priestly and missionary vocation in close union with her, sealed with the suffering and saving love of Christ.

Father Mermier chose Mother of Sorrows as our patroness, not at random, but by purpose. Mother Mary reminds us that what appears small and insignificant in human eyes can become great when God is at work. God's greatest works often begin quietly and humbly. This is a beautiful message for us as MSFS missionaries: our daily prayers, sacrifices, faithful service and simple missionary efforts may seem small, but when offered to God with love, He can transform them into instruments of great grace.

Seen in this optic, her seven sorrows are not merely seven isolated instances of affliction and anguish, but are testimonies of one entire life of small acts of patience, deprivation, sacrifice, and self-effacement, offered to God with a large heart. They mirror a heart that is sensitive, receptive and in complete solidarity with the suffering God for a suffering humanity. We witness in her sorrowing heart a heart that vibrates with such a consuming passion for the passion of Christ that it overflows into an abyss of compassion. That is why, even her tears turn into pearls of faith and surrender!

May this feast renew the joy of our vocation and strengthen our missionary zeal!

Exaltation of the Holy Cross

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14 also has special significance for us as Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, and even more so in our fraternal bond with the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod. The Cross stands at the heart of the Christian mystery and reminds us that the path of discipleship is one of self-giving love, compassionate presence, and faithful service. For the Fransalian family, the Cross invites us to contemplate Christ who emptied Himself in love and calls us to carry on His mission with courage and generosity.

September: A Month of Spiritual Vibrancy and Missionary Zeal!
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Therefore, let this September not be merely a month of celebrations and devotions, but a month of spiritual renewal and missionary recommitment. Let us ask ourselves honestly:

- ⇒ Am I still burning with the missionary zeal of our Founder?
- ⇒ Do I carry the compassionate heart of Mary into my community and apostolate?
- ⇒ Am I willing to move beyond my comfort zone in order to serve God and His people?
- ⇒ Do I resent, resist and refrain from crosses that God permits to be part of my life and mission?

May the compassionate gaze of Mary teach us to see the suffering around us, and may the missionary spirit of Fr. Mermier give us the courage to respond generously. Let us renew our commitment to prayer, community life, pastoral availability, service to the poor and marginalised, the education of hearts, and the proclamation of the Gospel. Above all, may

we rediscover the joy of being Fransalians and strive to live our vocation with gentleness, humility, charity, courage and an undaunted missionary spirit!

September: A Journey of Reparation, Restitution, Reconciliation and Renewal!

Beloved Confreres,

Apart from the beautiful feasts and celebrations that mark September, I invite every confrere to undertake a special spiritual journey this month. I propose that we make September a Month of Reparation, Reconciliation and Renewal for our Congregation.

This invitation arises from a simple but profound realisation: as individuals, as communities, and even as Provinces and Regions, or as the global MSFS family, we have not always been faithful to the Gospel and to upholding the dignity of the persons entrusted to our care. Through our words, actions, omissions, failures, negligence, or misuse of authority, we may have hurt others. There may be persons whom we have wounded, relationships that we have damaged, injustices that we have inflicted or failed to rectify, and institutions or communities that have suffered because of us.

We must also have the humility and courage to recognise that this is not only a matter of the past. Even today, situations of abuse do occur. There are persons who, because of the actions, failures, negligence, or misuse of authority of some among us, have been hurt and have become victims. We cannot close our eyes to this painful reality. We cannot think that such matters belong only to another time or to other people.

Wherever harm has occurred, there is a responsibility before God and before those who have suffered. Genuine conversion calls us not only to ask forgiveness but, wherever possible and appropriate, to make reparation, restitution, acknowledgement, reconciliation, and concrete efforts to prevent further harm.

This is not intended to create guilt or suspicion among us. Rather, it invites us to examine our consciences honestly and renew our commitment to live our vocation with greater integrity, humility, responsibility, and love.

We do not need to wait for Lent

We do not need to wait until the next season of Lent to enter into the spirit of repentance and reparation. Every season can be a season of grace. Every month can become an opportunity for conversion. Every day can be a new beginning.

Therefore, I invite each of you to choose one day in September, according to your own circumstances, and make that day a personal day of prayer, sacrifice, reparation, and renewal. Where possible, you can do it as a community.

Let each one choose an act of sacrifice according to one's own situation—something meaningful, sincere, and something that helps one grow closer to God. It could be an additional time of prayer, an extra lap before the Blessed Sacrament, fasting, giving up something we ordinarily enjoy, an act of charity, or another sacrifice that leads us toward greater humility and conversion.

But let this sacrifice have a particular intention. On that day, I invite you to pray silently and sincerely for all those whom we may have hurt, knowingly or unknowingly, personally or collectively. Let us remember especially those who have suffered because of abuse, neglect, misuse of authority, or any other form of harm caused by members of our Congregation, in the past and in the present.

- ⇒ Let us bring their pain before the Lord.
- ⇒ Let us ask forgiveness.
- ⇒ Let us pray for healing.
- ⇒ And where we have the possibility and responsibility to make things right, let us have the courage to do so.

Sometimes reparation may require us to say, “I am sorry.” Sometimes it may require us to restore what was taken away, correct an injustice, acknowledge someone's suffering, repair a relationship, seek appropriate assistance, or take concrete steps to ensure that the same harm does not happen again.

A Congregational Act of Reparation

I would like this to become more than a private spiritual exercise. Let us make it one common spiritual project of our Congregation.

Although each confrere/community may choose his/its own day and his own sacrifice, we will be united by one intention:

“Lord, in humility and repentance, we offer ourselves and our sacrifices for the healing of those whom we have hurt, for forgiveness for our failures, for reparation where harm has been done, and for the grace to become a more faithful, holy, responsible and compassionate Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales.”

In this way, every confrere, every community, every mission, every Province and Region can participate in one common movement of prayer and conversion.

In the Spirit of our Founder

I believe this initiative is deeply in harmony with the great desire of our Founder, Servant of God Father Peter Mary Mermier: that we become holy missionaries, faithful to Christ, transformed by the Gospel, and capable of bringing the love and mercy of God to others.

Our Founder did not desire merely an institution that would grow in numbers or activities. He desired men transformed by Christ, men of prayer, holiness, charity, humility, and missionary zeal.

Therefore, if we wish to honour our Founder and prepare ourselves to celebrate his life and charism in a meaningful way, one of the most beautiful things we can do is to allow the Lord to renew us from within.

Let it become a month of healing for the wounded, consolation for those who suffer, reparation for the harm that has been done, reconciliation where reconciliation is possible, and renewal for our Congregation. I invite every confrere, every community, and every Province and Region to embrace this initiative wholeheartedly. And may the intercession of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, who stood faithfully beneath the Cross of her suffering Son, accompany us as we seek healing for all who have been wounded and renewal for our Congregation!

Novena: A Nosegay of Trust and Entrustment!

As we prepare to celebrate Our Lady of Sorrows on September 15, and our Founder, the Servant of God Father Peter Mary Mermier, on September 30, I warmly invite you to

participate wholeheartedly in the Novena to Our Lady of Sorrows and the Servant of God Father Peter Mary Mermier.

This Novena is a special spiritual opportunity for us, as MSFS, to come together as one family in prayer. I therefore encourage every confrere to make this Novena a special community prayer. Wherever possible, let us pray it together in our religious communities, formation houses, parishes and mission stations. Let us unite our hearts and intentions as one Congregation and entrust ourselves anew to the maternal care of Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows.

During these nine days, let us place before the Lord, through the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Sorrows and the prayerful intercession of our Founder, the Servant of God Father Peter Mary Mermier:

- ⇒ the spiritual renewal, unity and sanctification of our Congregation;
- ⇒ the perseverance and fidelity of all our confreres in their vocation;
- ⇒ our candidates and young men discerning their missionary vocation;
- ⇒ our missionary apostolates and all those entrusted to our pastoral care;
- ⇒ those who are suffering, especially the poor, the abandoned, the marginalised and the persecuted;
- ⇒ and, in a special way, the cause of the canonisation of our Founder, the Servant of God Father Peter Mary Mermier.

Let us especially ask, through the intercession of our Founder, for the grace to live faithfully the charism he received from God and bequeathed to us: to know Jesus Christ, to love Him and to make Him known and loved.

Dear Confreres, I earnestly urge each one of you to participate in this Novena with faith, devotion and a deep sense of belonging to our MSFS family. May these nine days of prayer become a time of grace, spiritual renewal and deeper communion among us! May they also rekindle within each of us the missionary zeal of our Founder and strengthen our commitment to Christ and His Church!

As we honour Our Lady of Sorrows with filial devotion and remember with grateful reverence our beloved Founder, let us place ourselves anew at the service of Christ and His Church, so that through our lives the Fransalian charism may continue to bear abundant fruit throughout the world.

To Sum up

May Mary, Mother of Compassion and Our Lady of Sorrows, accompany us in our joys, struggles and sacrifices! May she intercede for our Congregation and for each one of us! May the Servant of God Father Peter Mary Mermier inspire us by his missionary rigour and vigour and obtain for us the grace to become ever more faithful sons of St. Francis de Sales and committed missionaries of Christ!

Let us move forward together as one MSFS family, trusting in God and entrusting our Congregation, our mission and our future to the loving hands of Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows.

Live Jesus!



Fr. Johnson Michael Kallidukil MSFS, Superior General

