



Editorial

Advent is the most grace-filled time to prepare ourselves for the coming of our Lord, so that Christmas becomes a real lived experience of receiving Christ into our hearts. When I think of Advent I am reminded of a story narrated by Stephen Covey in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Once upon a time there was a very strong woodcutter who asked for a job with a timber merchant and got it. The wages the timber merchant paid were really good and so were the work conditions. For that reason the woodcutter was determined to do his best. His boss gave him an axe and showed him the area where he was supposed to work. The first day the woodcutter brought 18 trees. "Congratulations" the boss said "go on that way." Very motivated by the words of the boss, the woodcutter tried harder the next day, but he could only bring 15 trees. The third day he tried even harder but brought only 10 trees. Day after day he was bringing less and less trees. "I must be losing my strength," the woodcutter thought. He went to the boss and apologized, saying he could not understand what was going on. "When was the last time you sharpened your axe? The boss asked. "Sharpen? I had no time to sharpen my axe. I have been very busy trying to cut trees.."



Our lives are like that. We are too busy with so many things, we have no time for our spiritual life. Like the axe that needs sharpening, we too need to sharpen our spirit in this Advent season by becoming more loving, more prayerful, more compassionate, more generous and more faithful. What better gift can we give to Jesus at Christmas than to have meaningfully lived Advent in union with him? What better gift can we give to Jesus at Christmas than to have removed from our lives anything and everything that keeps us apart from Jesus?

Pope Francis in his latest Apostolic Letter, ADMIRABILE SIGNUM-On the meaning and the importance of the Nativity Scene, writes: "In the new world inaugurated by Jesus there is room for whatever is truly human and for all God's creatures. From the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the women carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of the everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, born whenever Jesus shares his divine life with us." (No.6). He further says: "When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all.... As we contemplate this aspect of the nativity scene, we are called to reflect on the responsibility of every Christian to spread the Gospel. Each of us is called to bear glad tidings to all, testifying by our practical works of mercy to the joy of knowing Jesus and his love." (No. 8,9). Thus let us relive the nativity scene in our celebration of Advent and Christmas this year and every year.

Fransalian International wishes you all a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year 2020.

Dr K. Henry Jose MSFS
Chief Editor

Saint Francis de Sales A Saint So Human

Insight: Patience

There is difference between an act of patience and patience itself. Someone made unpleasant, annoying remark. The one who is effected by it does not react. He is calm. This is an act of patience. There is someone who has irritable temperament. He constantly annoys his neighbour. But the neighbour does not react. He is

patient. He suffers with patience. What the neighbour gives in return is gentleness, love, patience. He shows understanding. May patience be a source of understanding, growth and love.

- Fr. Antony Mookenthottam, msfs



Mermier Bytes



As we come to the close of **2019**, the Fransalian Family joyfully expresses gratitude for the hope of **rejuvenation** enkindled by the spark of the Divine Spirit guiding our response to the Call of the at the XX General Chapter, 01-13 February : MSFS WAKE UP TO THE BASICS.

We have sought to re-discover and re-live the **Basics of Christian Living** :

- expressed by Jesus, the first Missionary sent by the Father, in his gracious

invitation : "Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart";

- contained in the loving counsel of Mother Mary, our Mother of Compassion, the first Christian disciple and our Patroness : "Do whatever He tells you";

- sounded in the clarion call of Francis de Sales our Patron : "Live + Jesus";

- echoed and exemplified in the life's aspiration of our Founder Fr. Mermier : "I want Missions";

that generations of Fransalians have been and continue to be called upon to emulate.

As we move into the year **2020** that Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil, msfs, our Superior General, has declared : the Year of Fransalian Associates, we rejoice at the prospect of being **revitalized** in our mission, as Fransalians, thanks to a wider networking, a more focused collaboration, and a deeper communion in mind, heart and spirit with individuals, families and groups committed to the Spirit and Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales lived in the exercise of the MSFS Mission.

This Fransalian Mission finds concrete expression in:

- (i) the Apostolate for the renewal of Christian Life;
- (ii) the Apostolate for overseas and pioneering evangelization; and,
- (iii) the Apostolate of education and formation of the young. (MSFS Constitution Ch 2. Our Mission, No.22).

I wish to share with you for your inspiration and emulation some Fransalian Bytes paraphrased : (I) from the *Spiritual Conferences* of our Patron, and, (II) from the *letters* of our Founder addressed to the MSFS, as applicable to our state of life as Fransalians / Fransalian Associates.

These bytes focus on the BASICS of Christian living (in Family / as Religious):

MISSION:

(I) The Lord expects of you nothing else than that you share in His mission. You will fulfil your mission by proclaiming the good news so that they may have life. They will grow in this life by the good example that you provide them by your own life. Do not be worried whether your efforts bear fruit for you to see. You are expected only to be faithful in working to prepare the barren and arid land. You will only be asked how well you have sown the seed, not how much you have harvested.

(II) "How happy and contented you are in the performance of your ministry in spite of the countless and constant difficulties that you encounter ... the isolation in which you are obliged to remain so often and for so long, away from your confreres. God adjusts his help according to your needs". His love is our mainstay in this life; He Himself will be our reward in eternity.

CONSECRATION: (Devotion with Committed Focus)

(I) One may strip oneself of one's garments only to clothe oneself with God. [Col. 3/9-10] Do not live in shame of one's nudity, at the sight of one's weakness but focus on love and confidence in God who is in you and accompanies you on your journey.

(II) The cluster of qualities which make a missionary (who are filled with the spirit of God, who pray, who study, who mortify themselves, who love their brethren) is rarely found blended together in a single individual; ... to obtain it you have to ask God for it, you have to draw it down upon yourself through a prayer which is humble and full of confidence.

COMMUNION :

(I) It seems to me that God has chosen you to be receptacles of his divine perfume. You are commissioned to spread the aroma of his Divine Fragrance by the witness of a life a virtue. Thus, along with you many others may benefit, in this life, of genuine peace of mind and tranquility of heart, and thereafter enjoy eternal bliss in the life to come.

(II) "Imitate the Holy Trinity, that all may be one - that they may be one as we are one ... remain perfectly united, at all times showing a warm and cordial regard for one another like brothers who love each other and possess the true zeal of Jesus Christ and of Saint Francis de Sales our glorious and illustrious patron, and who wish to seek nothing else but the greater glory of God, the salvation of souls as well as their own salvation.

DISCIPLINE: (Conformity with the Rule of Life / Constitutions)

(I) For propelling the ship to its Port of Call – destination, what is required of the oarsmen is uniformity, rather than intensity. One may be excused for rowing lazily but rowing out of rhythm is inexcusable.

(II) “Let us carry our Rules in our hands, in our hearts, on our tongue. Let us take up our resolutions and set to work.”

-Fr Noel Rebello, msfs

Birth of New MSFS Provinces in Northeast India

Father Abraham Vettuvellil, Superior General of The Missionaries of St Francis de Sales, announced the establishment of two new provinces from the Northeast India Province of the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales on October 24, 2019, the Foundation Day of the Congregation. The decree from the Superior General says that THE PROVINCE OF GUWAHATI AND THE PROVINCE OF DIBRUGARH of the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales from the present Province of North-East India of the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales, will come into effect on January 24, 2020, when the two duly appointed new Provincials will assume charge. Fr Emmanuel Mappilaparambil is appointed new Provincial of Dibrugarh Province and Fr Sabu Francis Manasrayil is appointed new Provincial of Guwahati Province. Hearty congrats and prayerful wishes to the new Provincials!

-Fr Praveen Johny, msfs



IBIHWA PARISH IN TANZANIA

“Bloom where you are planted” has been the motto of all our ventures in East Africa. The new mission at Ibihwa is a visible sign of God’s providence for the people who longed for regular spiritual services. The Province of East Africa took one more step forward in the mission of the Lord by taking up a sub-station raised to a parish, in a challenging environment in a short time.



On August 11, 2019 Ibihwa made history by witnessing the triple events: blessing of the new house, official opening of the new parish, and conferring the Sacrament of confirmation for 246 students. His grace Rt. Rev. Beatus Kinyaiya OFM Cap, the Archbishop of Dodoma was the main celebrant of the Holy Eucharist, Rev. Fr. Mathew Thazhathukunnel MSFS, the Provincial Superior, Rev. Chesco CPPS, the Vicar general of the diocese, a number of priests and religious sisters, District Commissioner, District Executive Director of Bahi district and around 3,500 faithful witnessed the event. The parish at Ibihwa being the first mission of Fransalians in the Archdiocese of Dodoma was named after St. Francis de Sales. It has 6 sub-stations and 7 prayer centres, consisting 60 small Christian communities and a total of 7,000 faithful. It is a very promising parish for evangelisation and renewal of Christian faith. We are very grateful for all the support and contributions made by the Province, benefactors, and well-wishers.

-Fr. A. Sebastian, msfs

MOZAMBIQUE DELEGATION COLLOQUIUM September 2019

A religious community is a group of persons living together, knowing and loving one another. This is the earthly version of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said to His disciples, “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest for a while.” (Mk 6:31) In the context of the return of the seventy-two, this call of Jesus could mean that He was calling his disciples for some rest, after the completion of the mission entrusted to them. On the other hand

we can also say that Jesus was asking His disciples to gather at a lonely place so that they could possibly evaluate their Mission Experience. Whether they had fulfilled the original mandate they were sent to accomplish.

In the light of this need, the members of the Mozambique Delegation gathered at Casa Fransaliana, Matola, Mozambique,

for the Colloquium-2019, from 22nd - 25th September. It was a gathering to assess, to evaluate, to straighten the curves and to re-dedicate ourselves to the 'Mission Mozambique.' The theme of the Colloquium was 'MSFS ON THE THRESHOLD OF HOPE FOR A PROGRESSIVE MISSION IN MOZAMBIQUE.' The assembly began on 22nd evening with the introductory and recollection talk given by Fr. Henry, the Delegation Superior. The key-note address was delivered by Fr. Joseph Puliyilakat, of the Southern-African Region. The total number of participants was 19. We were happy to have the guiding presence of the Provincial, Rev. Fr. J.B. Muthuswamy. A well-planned schedule was prepared for the smooth flow of the Colloquium. Each day had a theme in line with our MSFS Constitutions.

Fr. Petrus Tirkey, the outgoing Delegation Superior shared his report. This was followed by reports of the four forums - Mission, Formation, Education and Social-Innovative Ministries. Then the collated report of the questionnaire and the financial report were presented. For the first time, the election of the Councilors/Advisors and Bursar of the Delegation was held by secret ballot. A special session was held to reflect and discuss on the Call of the General Chapter-2019. On the last day of the



Colloquium, Founder's Day was celebrated. A few benefactors of the Delegation were also present for the festive meal.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said; "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity." As a community of Jesus' disciples, we the MSFS in Mozambique, have decided to carry on the vision and mission of Jesus actively in accordance with the decisions of the Colloquium-2019. To those who ask the question, "Is there any hope for progress in Mozambique Mission?" our answer is a resounding Yes. In Christ there is always hope. A hope for progress echoing in the hearts and minds of all the members of the Mozambique Delegation.

-Fr. Melky, msfs

Fransalians of USA Celebrating 50 Years of Pastoral Presence!

The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, also known as Fransalians, working in the United States of America, celebrated 50 years of Pastoral Presence and Missionary activities in the Country. Fransalians began their pastoral ministry in the United States in the year 1969 beginning with the Archdiocese of Atlanta, Georgia. It used to be a Mission Territory of the English Province of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales. We are currently working in 24 Arch/Dioceses spread out in 14 States of the country. There are 71 confreres constituting 14 local communities in the United States.

The year 2019 is a mile marker in our pastoral ministry with the motto "*Fransalians Forward Frontiers*" as we are celebrating 50 years of pastoral service to the Catholic Church in the United States. A major celebration was held in Atlanta, Georgia from September 9-13, 2019 with retreats, meetings, releasing of Souvenir and Eucharist celebrations. There were about 70 priests in attendance including the Local Ordinary and the Superior General of the Congregation along with several friends, family, well-wishers and parishioners of the Fransalians from Atlanta, Georgia.



In conjunction with the celebrations, we are also planning several major projects to continue the growth and development of the Fransalians in the USA which was formally constituted as a Vice Province in the year 2013 under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Augustine Tharappel, MSFS. The good works begun by the former Provincial and his team, is being continued by Rev. Fr. Tomy Puliyanampattayil, MSFS and his team. The USA Vice Province is continuing its journey as Fransalian Missionaries moving forward to new frontiers as Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales in the USA.

-Fr. Tomy Puliyanampattayil, msfs



Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the 25 Years of MSFS Presence in the Philippines

On the 26th August 2019 at 10.00am the Bishop of Imus, **Most Rev. Reynaldo Evangelista**, presided over the concluding thanksgiving Mass of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Philippines Delegation. The Provincial of SW Province, together with the Bursar and Councilor in charge of Education and the Delegation Superior were the concelebrants at the altar together with the bishop. A total number of 25 priests who participated in the Jubilee, including the delegation members, diocesan clergy and religious priests, added joy to the celebration. In his

homily, the Bishop of Imus praised the dedicated pastoral and spiritual services of MSFS Fathers in his diocese and he assured his continued support and love for the Fransalians.

After the communion service, there was a short program which included the address by Provincial to all the participants of the Jubilee; the honoring of the Bishop, the Provincial, the Bursar and the Councilor in charge of Education; a Video Presentation on the history of MSFS during the last 25 years in the Philippines prepared by the MSFS Scholastics with the guidance of Fr Jinu

Pathiyakam; the releasing of the Silver Jubilee Magazine titled *I Want Missions: 25 Years of MSFS in the Philippines* and the vote of thanks proposed by the Delegation Superior. As a silver jubilee souvenir, a prayer book prepared by Fr Philip Valakodiyil and Fr Binoy Kuzhupil titled *Pray with MSFS* was given to all the participants. The jubilee celebrations were concluded with the agape meal shared by all the participants.

-Fr Benny Koottanal, msfs



Silver Jubilee celebrations of SFS Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Pudukottai

The life of S.F.S. School, Pudukottai started with just 16 children in a thatched shed, guided by Fr. C. Sebastian Raj. Fr.R.Mathias shouldered the responsibility in the following year and served as Principal for eight years. The first batch of 23 students appeared for their board exam in 2004 and all of them passed the exam with First Class and in the following year, the school was raised to higher secondary school. Year by year, the strength of the school was increasing. At present there are 2840 students studying in our school. It is one of the best schools in Pudukottai town. As it celebrates the Silver Jubilee, over these years, it has indeed achieved great academic results setting a trend for other institutions.

- Fr. A. Lawrence, msfs



Inauguration and Blessing of New School Building at Banjhi Kandor

An educational institution in Kandor mission, Jharkhand was a long cherished dream of the Nagpur Province. The people of this place too had the same dream. 21st October 2019 was a joyful and memorable day in the history of Kandor mission. At 10.30 a.m. we began the Inauguration Ceremony with Holy Mass. Sr. Anupa Kiro FCC welcomed all the guests. Holy Mass was presided over by Rt. Rev. Julius Marandi, the Bishop of Dumka Diocese. Bishop Julius in his introduction appreciated the fast developing work being done by the MSFS in Kandor Mission and he thanked especially the Provincial and Fr. Francis V. MSFS, who came all the way from Germany to be present for this event. The Bishop also said that as the number of students is increasing every year a new school building was very much needed. This school will definitely provide the best education to the underprivileged children and help especially the Santhal children to have a bright future.

Then the school building was inaugurated by Fr. Provincial. He cut the ribbon at main entrance of the school and unveiled the plaque. The ceremonial lamp was lit by Bishop Julius, Fr. Provincial, Fr. Francis V. and the other invited guests. The ground floor was blessed by Bishop Julius and the first floor by Fr. Francis V. in the presence of students, staff, religious, priests and the faithful. This was followed by a cultural program. The school



community then welcomed the special guest by presenting them with a rose flower. The entire program was well organized by the teachers and students.

Fr. Kamil Tete proposed the vote of thanks and honoured all the guests by presenting them with a shawl. The architect Mr. Parag Date, the contractor Mr. Amit Patre, and Mr. Neetin Zanwar BPO of Borio Block, Jharkhand were specially honoured. The Kandor Community acknowledged, appreciated and expressed sincere gratitude to God, to the Provincial Administration and especially to Fr. Francis, Mrs. Martina Kamp and all the parishioners of Pinzberg, Germany who financially supported us to build the new school building.

-Fr. Kamil Tete, msfs

Workshop on Extraordinary Missionary Month at SFS School, Seethammadhara, Visakhapatnam

Extraordinary Missionary Month, declared by Pope Francis in view of the centenary celebration of the Apostolic letter *Maximum Illud*; a document written by Pope Benedict XV, on the church's mission to bring to the world the salvation of Jesus

Christ, was celebrated meaningfully by MSFS Vizag province on 24th October, 2019 at SFS School, Seethammadhara.

The theme "Baptized and Sent": the Church of Christ on the Mission in the World, was systematically pealed by Rt. Rev. Dr. Mallavarapu Prakash, Archbishop of Vizag and Fr. Jacob Parapally, msfs, who animated the day's workshop with his theological reflections. About 160 religious and clergy from Vizag city area participated for the same. 24th October 2019 was an important day for MSFS Congregation as it is the 181st Foundation day of the MSFS Congregation. Rev. Fr. Chinnappa Reddy, Provincial Superior, highlighted the importance of Foundation day and welcomed the gathering. The committee members: Fr. Mariadas Sesetty, Fr. Velangini Dola, Fr. Inna Reddy, Fr. Ravi kumar, Fr. Anand Prakash, and Fr. Vijay kumar looked into the arrangements and proceedings of the meeting.

-Fr Inna Reddy, msfs



SOPHIA BIBLE QUIZ 2019: A journey through the Gospel of St Mark

Grassy Park Parish took Bible Sunday 2019 to the next level by introducing Sophia Bible Quiz, A journey through the gospel of St Mark by Fr. Noble Jose Nakathingal MSFS.

Participants from various parishes in Cape Town as well as Ermelo and Namibia registered for the quiz. All 16 chapters were covered and adults had 101 questions to answer. The juniors had 51 multiple-choice questions.

Great excitement was generated by the Sophia quiz and parishioners found many ways to spend time with the Gospel, whether it was watching movies, listening to audiotapes, reading or discussing the Gospel in groups.

The quiz was done under strict exam conditions! Thereafter, many could not wait for the results. Papers were marked and re-checked for accuracy. All participants were invited to Holy Mass and the prize-giving ceremony. Archbishop Stephen Brislin, the archbishop of Cape Town handed out the trophies, medals, and cash prizes. Of the top 4 adult prizes, 3 went to Grassy Park Parish and one to Matroosfontein. Two Junior prizes also went to Grassy Park and one to Steenberg.



A huge thanks to Fr. Baiju Mundackal MSFS for allowing this initiative to happen and Fr. Libin C.J MSFS who helped us to compile promo videos and posters. Special thanks to the members of the organizing committee namely Vincent Klassen, Shawn Lotters, Geraldine Worship, Beryl Moodley, Teresa Roberts, and Michelle George. We keep in the record all the Fransalian Missionaries and Nobertain Fathers who opened their hearts to receive it in their parishes. Well done to all!

-Michelle George

Inauguration and Blessing of MSFS Garments Centre at Karahalli, Bengaluru

The newly constructed building and the machineries installed for PSI GARMENTS CENTRE, run by the South West India Province of the MSFS at Karahalli was inaugurated and blessed by Rev. Dr Benny Koottanal, Provincial and Rt. Rev. Dr Peter Machado, the Archbishop of Bangalore respectively, on October 31, 2019. The program of the day began with the inauguration, blessing and Holy Mass followed by a felicitation gathering. The Arch Bishop in his message highlighted the works and involvement of the many MSFS Fathers in his Diocese. Karahalli Gram Panchayath Officials very gratefully acknowledged the MSFS and as a sign of their appreciation honored Fr Benny, the Provincial. Fr Provincial in his address highlighted the importance of rising above the barriers of caste, color and creed and work towards a peaceful co-existence of everyone in the society. The function was well attended by a good number of priests and Religious along with



a large gathering of the people in the locality. While honouring everyone concerned, Karahalli Community thanked everyone present and involved. Hearty Congratulations to Fr Benny Marangolil and Fr Salvador Fernandes for their hard work and commitment in launching out this new venture of our Province.

-Fr Benny Koottanal, msfs

Salesian Programme of Annecy (SPA)-2019

The Salesian Programme of Annecy, organized by the Franco-Swiss Province, is an initiative to deepen Salesian spirituality, mission of our congregation and our venerable founder Father Pierre Marie Mermier. This year, it began on 15th September 2019 with the pilgrimage to the castle of Les Allinges, where Saint Francis de Sales began his pioneering mission in Chablais. Seven confreres from seven provinces, working in different countries such as Brazil, Mozambique, Kenya and India participated in it. It took place over six weeks. During this period, they visited



important places such as Thorens, Chaumont and Annecy. It was conducted mainly under the supervision of Fr. Yves Carron (Assistant Superior General).

-Bro. Aneesh Devassykutty, msfs

First profession of Bro. Dimitri Delmas

Bro. Dimitri Delmas made his first profession on 14th September 2019. It is after long time that we have a new vocation from France. He professed his vows during a solemn Mass celebrated by the Provincial and which was concelebrated by many of our confreres and other priests. It took place in the Visitation convent of Annecy, where the tomb of our Patron and Founder is found. The gathering also consisted of his family members and friends.

-Bro. Aneesh Devassykutty, msfs



Congratulations to NEW PROVINCIALS

Guwahati Province



Rev. Fr Sabu Francis

Dibrugarh Province



Rev. Fr Emmanuel
Mappilaparambil

South East Province



Rev. Fr Ignaci Muthu

Congratulations to OUR JUBILARIANS

Golden



Fr K.V. Joseph

Silver



Fr. Sudhir Kullu



Fr. Tomy Joseph
Puliyampattayil

OBITUARY



Fr Wilson Kottam



Fr Mathew Kalathungal



Fr Michael D'Souza