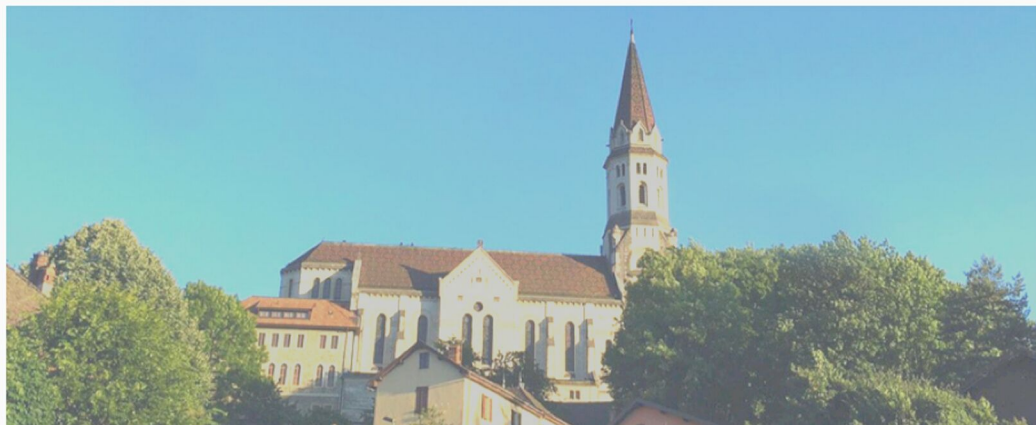


MSFS

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

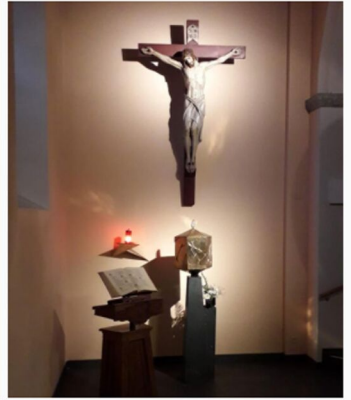


SUPERIOR GENERAL TO ALL THE MISSIONARIES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

My dear Confreres,
Fraternal greetings to you! At this time of the pandemic, when the world has almost come to standstill and when we are confronted with our fragility and uncertainties of lives, we must be learning new lessons and re-setting our priorities. Let us be united in prayer and supportive in caring for each other in this difficult time. Let me share with you a few reflections for our consideration during this time of Coronavirus in the light of the feast of Transfiguration of our Lord:

CASA GENERALIZIA

ROMA, ITALIA



A. WHAT REALLY MATTERS

As Pope Francis instructed us on Palm Sunday this year, this is the time to remember “what really matters” in life: Loving God and Serving others. He said: “Look, look at the crucifix, the fullest measure of God’s love for us”. The virus is here not to make us go through the darkness but also to see what really matters. What really matters is kindness, love, generosity, and compassion. What really matters is not what we lack, but what good we can do for others. The real heroes of today are not the famous, rich, and successful people, but the doctors, nurses, health care workers, the police, teachers, elders, and all those who are giving themselves to serve others.

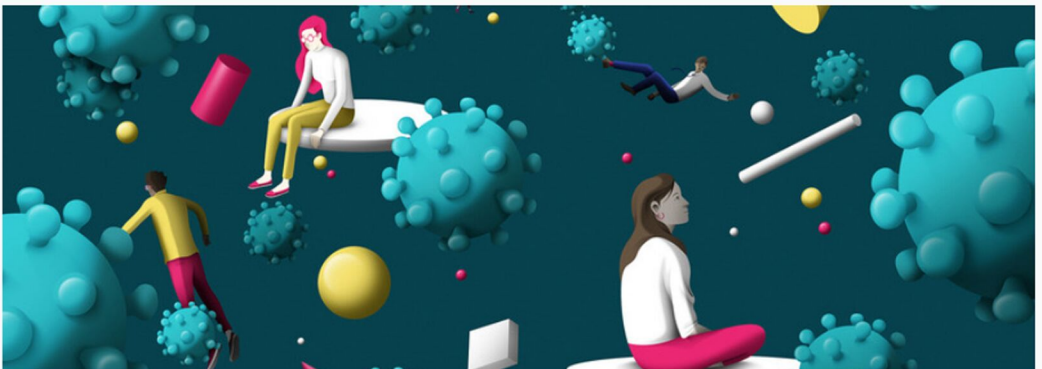
I am glad and proud of many of our confreres in different Provinces and mission units who are giving themselves to others through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and spiritual and emotional online support to those struggling to cope with the crisis. I place on record the efforts of the Secretariat for Social Apostolate and Innovative Ministries and the Mission Development Office for encouraging and guiding the different Province units to reach out to the neediest people with necessities.

*Do everything for God, uniting yourself to him
in Word and Deed.*

B. OLD NORMAL VS. NEW NORMAL

COVID – 19 has given us masks to cover our mouths and noses but has lifted the veil from our eyes. We now see clearly and differently what really matters. We begin to see the possibility of a 'new normal'. We also begin to understand that our way of life before the pandemic was not the perfect one but can be improved. We begin to see that we are all connected. No matter what part of the world we live in, we are interconnected. What was once framed as a foreign virus has come to hit almost every country. The world has come together to flatten the curve. We are willing, even at the congregational level, to collaborate with other communities and Provinces in many areas.

COVID – 19 has given us also an opportunity to see 'other viruses' that have been spreading and causing damage. We are aware of the social and spiritual viruses spreading among us from individual to individual, community to community, generation to generation, but not named. They continue to spread all kinds of sicknesses like racism, caste and regional feelings, groups, tribalism, individualism, etc that are detrimental to community life.



C. FEAST OF TRANSFIGURATION

The Feast of Transfiguration of our Lord recalls Jesus' change of appearance and God's revelation on the mountain top. The divine revelation is not for us to know about God. It is for us to know God which is transformational. When Jesus was transfigured and showed his divine nature to the Apostles, he did it so that they might be transformed with him. The transfiguration was a special event and a privileged experience to strengthen the faith of the Apostles for the challenges they would endure.

Transfiguration is transformational. Transformation is different from change. Change normally refers to new beginnings.

But transformation often happens not when something new begins, but when something old falls apart. When something so dear to us falls apart and when pain invades our soul, we are forced to listen to a deeper level and go to a new place. Most of us will not go to the new place of transformation in any other way. The pandemic is forcing us to go to a new place. Our old is falling apart at many levels. Something new will hopefully begin. The new place is, as St. Francis de Sales teaches us, *a deep spiritual search* among the exercises of devotion and to *search only for Him*.



Transfiguration of Our Lord



D. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES ON TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

In one of his sermons on Transfiguration, our Patron answers a question that many devout souls ask: How can it be known that we are advancing in prayer and, through prayer, to perfection? One of the four considerations through which we get his answer is: **'seeing only Our Lord in whatever we do'**.

*"The Apostles, having stood up (for they fell on their face hearing the voice of the eternal Father), saw **only Jesus alone** (Matt 17:6,8). That is the sovereign decree of perfection, **seeing only Our Lord in whatever we do**. Many refrain from looking upon others and the things of this world, but there are extremely few who no longer regard themselves. Thus do the more spiritual search among the exercises of devotion and choose those, which are more to their taste and more conformed to their inclinations. However, **the only thing necessary is to see God, to search only for him, and then we will be blessed**. Souls, which have attained this degree of perfection, have entirely particular care to look upon and to be held by Our Lord crucified on Calvary because they find him there more alone than in any other place. Amen. (Sermon for the 2nd Sunday of Lent -- February 23, 1614)".*



GOD ALONE or SEARCH ONLY HIM is the new place of transformation that we are called to be. **'To search only for him and then, we will be blessed'** (SFS). The words 'alone' or 'only for him' are to be read to check how we seek God and what the quality of our seeking is; not as describing God but as describing our way of seeking. I seek him not with others, but alone, by myself. To seek God alone, we need to have a capacity for solitude.

E. FROM LONELINESS TO SOLITUDE

One of the challenges, we may be facing more than ever, at this time of the pandemic, is loneliness as we cannot exercise our ministries, our spiritual animation to the people through sacraments, hold our meetings, do our travels, and other daily routine tasks entrusted to us. 'Doing' is being replaced by 'being'. This is hard for us who are so used to 'busy life' and finding our worth and value in 'doing instead of being'.

As celibate men, we all will agree that we encounter loneliness. We need to know how to cope with it. Loneliness is part of not only celibate life but of any state in life. It would be absurd to work on avoiding or eradicating the uncomfortable feeling of loneliness. Rather, we should work on, as spiritual writers say, passing through the doorway of loneliness to solitude. Our capacity for solitude transforms our experience of loneliness and entire life.

Solitude is our capacity to be alone, making us aware of our deepest needs and feelings, and leading us to the realization that God alone suffices. It is a journey toward a deeper and more personal relationship with God.

Is this not the ultimate goal of our celibate commitment and consecrated life? Is COVID-19 experience helping us to journey from loneliness to solitude and transforming us?



As celibate men, we experience the reality of being alone in two ways: loneliness and solitude. Loneliness is a space where we experience the absence of emotional intimacy. Knowing and being known by another is heartwarming. Each one of us wants to be known, accepted and loved. It is the absence of emotional intimacy more than the physical presence of a person that explains our loneliness. Solitude is a space in which we seek God alone and come to realize that we are deeply known by Him and completely loved by Him. 'Nothing will separate us from His Love', as St. Paul says. Solitude allows us to develop a deeply intimate one-on-one relationship with God. It allows us to seek God Alone and Search only Him. ***The only thing necessary is to see God, to search only for him, and then we will be blessed (SFS).***

DECISIONS – NEWS – EVENTS

APPOINTMENTS

NAGPUR PROVINCE

Fr. John Britto Muthuswamy is re-appointed Provincial of Nagpur Province for another term of three years with effect from August 15, 2020.

PUNE PROVINCE

Fr. Jayaseelan Selvaraj is re-appointed Provincial of Pune Province for another term of three years with effect from August 10, 2020.

EAST AFRICA PROVINCE

Fr. Mathew Thazhathukunnel is re-appointed Provincial of East Africa Province for another term of three years from July 15, 2020.

BRAZIL PROVINCE

Fr. Jagannathan Gnanadurai is appointed Provincial of Brazil Province for a term of three years with effect from June 10, 2020.

Fr. TOMSON AERATHEDATHU

On behalf of the General Administration of the past and the present, I sincerely thank Fr. Tomson for his able leadership and committed service as Major Superior of Brazil Province for the past six years.

De SALES & MERMIER RESOURCE & ANIMATION CENTER

Fr. B. Suresh Babu is appointed Director of the DSM Resource and Animation Center in Hyderabad for a term of three years with effect from June 25, 2020.

Fr. Johnson Pathiyil is appointed Co-Director of DSM Resource and Animation Center in Hyderabad for a term of three years with effect from June 25, 2020.

Fr. JOSEPH THAZHATHUKUNNEL

On behalf of the entire Congregation, I thank Fr. Joseph Thazhathukunnel for his valuable service to DSM Center as its first Director.

MISSION DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Fr. Thomas Chozhithara is re-appointed the Director of Mission Development Office in Rome for another term of three years with effect from June 25, 2020.



MORNING STAR SEMINARY, KOLKATA, INDIA

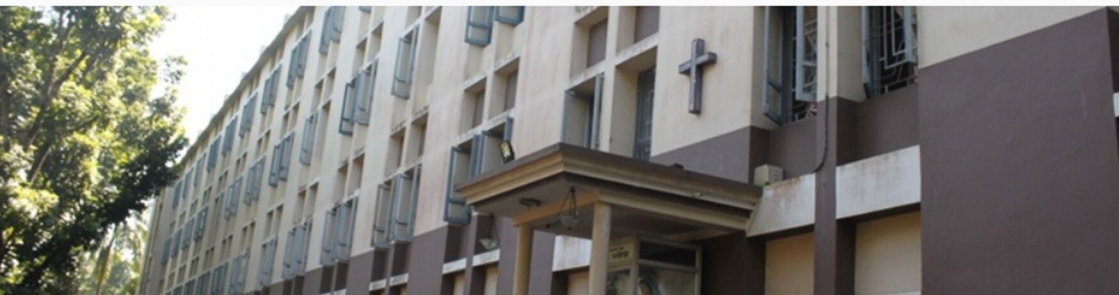
Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, upon a request from Most Rev. Vincent Aind and the Bishops Conference of West Bengal, has kindly accepted a new ministry of Management and Formation Program in Morning Star Seminary in Kolkata. On June 07, 2020, **Fr. George Panthanmackel** was installed as the **Rector** of Morning Star Seminary. **Fr. Henry Jose Kodikuthiyil** is appointed **Dean of Theology** and **Fr. Thumma Mariadas Reddy** is appointed **Dean of Philosophy**. On behalf of the entire Congregation, we wish our prayerful support to our confreres in their service to the Church in India. I thank **Fr. K. Ignaci Muthu, the PIF Chairman**, for his leadership in facilitating the execution of this project on behalf of the Provincials of India Forum.

FRANSALIAN ASSOCIATES

The Year 2020 is being celebrated as the Year of Fransalian Associates. However, due to the Covid-19 crisis, the Provinces and Units could not start (as planned earlier) the formation for the FA. A syllabus was prepared, it is going to be amended and corrected within the different Units of the Congregation. The USA Vice-Province is a little ahead of time; they begin the 2 years' formation program on August 21, 2020.

CAUSE OF OUR FOUNDER

To close down the diocesan phase in Annecy, it is necessary to get some more witnesses. Hopefully, the last session of the diocesan Tribunal shall take place on September 19, 2020.



De SALES INTERNATIONAL FILM AND MEDIA ACADEMY (DeSIFMA)

DeSIFMA is a unique international institution and a new initiative for media studies established by the MSFS as per the directive of General Chapter 2019. It is situated at the heart of south India's most dynamic film city Kodambakkam, Chennai. It is founded on a path-breaking education scheme designed by the renowned media experts and distinguished film personalities to provide a media hub for the MSFS to disseminate Fransalian core values and spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. The DeSIFMA research team offers a systematically structured course that enables the students to excel in various fundamentals of media and film production within a short time. It is a specialized place where one can pick a career in Script Writing, Direction, Cinematography, Editing, and Post Production. It gives not only the necessary theoretical knowledge to the students but also imparts with very grass root level practical training.

The infrastructure is in the final stage of completion. I thank all our 12 Province Units for your generosity and cooperation in the investment for this media ministry.

DeSIFMA will remain as a souvenir of the 175th anniversary of the first SIX MSFS landing in the Indian soil. May St. Francis de Sales, Patron of the Media and Journalists, and our heavenly Patron intercede for us to realize the new Project! I thank **Fr. J. Stephen**, General Secretary for SAIM, and **Fr. Shaibu**

Ezhanikatt who will be functioning as the Director and the Administrator of DeSIFMA respectively. We appreciate their initiatives, planning, and vision.



DeSIFMA
DE SALES INTERNATIONAL
FILM & MEDIA ACADEMY



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FEATURE FILM
WHILE YOU LEARN
FILM MAKING

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OCTOBER 23 -24 CELEBRATION IN VIZAG

In the present situation of COVID-19, the proposed common celebration to honor the arrival of the first group of MSFS from Annecy to India at the congregational level is postponed to a future convenient date (to be scheduled).

PLANTING SIX TREES ON OCTOBER 24, 2020

To mark the occasion of the arrival of the first group of SIX Missionaries from Annecy (Fr. Jacques Martin, Fr. Joseph Lavorel, Fr. Jean-Marie Tissot, Jean Thévenet, Bro. Pierre Carton, and Bro. Sulpice Fontanel), every Local Community is requested to plant 6 trees on October 24, 2020. I request the Local Superiors of each community to ensure that planting is done to mark the 175th anniversary of the arrival of the first group of missionaries.

MSFS STATUS 2020

The soft copy of STATUS 2020 is ready and it will be sent to all the Provinces for the final check (for verification and clarification).

NEWLY PROFESSED 2020

We are blessed to have 62 newly professed members in the Congregation from the 6 novitiates of the Congregation. I cordially welcome our newly professed confreres to the Congregation.

MSFS SECRETARIAT FOR EDUCATION

A format designed to prepare for the assessment of all our MSFS Schools by experts is ready for implementation. However, the School Assessment Program will start once the lockdown caused by the pandemic is lifted.

‘A SPOONFUL OF HONEY’, is the name of our long-awaited and visualized value education textbook to be used in all our schools from classes 1 to 10. This book integrates the Christian, Salesian, and Mermierian values and teachings and we hope to get the series of books ready by 2022.

WEBINAR ON DE SALES AND MERMIER (DSM) SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

After due consultations with the concerned persons in the administration, it is decided to conduct a **WEBINAR** once in three weeks and other important days for the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS), under the title: **De Sales and Mermier (DSM) Spiritual Insights**. The topics will be based on the life, the charism, and the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. The objective of this webinar is primarily to enlighten and to educate ourselves on matters concerning our life as MSFS as well as to disseminate the Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales beyond the boundaries. This program will be organized by the De Sales and Mermier Resource and Animation Centre (DSM), Hyderabad in collaboration with the General Secretary for Formation, and the General Secretary for Social and Innovative Ministries (SAIM).

The details of the webinar are here below:

Time: Will be announced shortly

Duration: 20 minutes

APP: Google Meet Video live

Target Group: All the Members of the Congregation

Formal Inaugural Talk: AUGUST 21, 2020 by the Superior General

Upcoming sessions will be announced and all are cordially welcome to join our MSFS family time.

CAUSE OF OUR FOUNDER: ESSAY WRITING FOR MSFS SCHOLASTICS

On the occasion of the 175th anniversary of MSFS coming to India, the General Secretariat for Formation is organizing an essay competition for all the MSFS Scholastics in Philosophy and Theology.

Theme:

1. Inculturating MSFS Charism in the Mission today (Theologians)
2. MSFS Commitment to the Post-Modern Society (Philosophers)

The competition is in progress and the best 3 Essays will be awarded separately for Philosophers and Theologians. Key ideas and insights from all the Essays will be collated and made available to the whole Congregation.



FR. JOHN KARONDUKADAVIL M.C.

Fr. John Karondukadavil ceases to be a member of the Congregation of the MSFS, as he felt called to be a Missionary of Charity. We thank him for his long years of presence and ministry with us and wish him all the best in his new mission.

PRAYERFUL TRIBUTE TO OUR BELOVED CONFRERES

Fr. Daniel Alfonso, 58 years, (PUNE Province) died on March 15, 2020

Fr. Kurian Cheriankalayil, 82 years, (VIZAG Province) died on July 15, 2020

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord! (We offer one Mass for every departed confrere GD 98/i).

I wish you all a Happy Feast of Transfiguration and Assumption of our Blessed Mother! United with you in prayer,

Live JESUS!

Father Abraham VETTUVELIL, MSFS
Superior General

If you question her and say: "Mother, what can we do to please you?" no doubt she will answer that she desires and wants you to do what she directed to be done at that celebrated marriage feast of Cana. ... If then you listen to her faithfully, you will hear in your heart those very words addressed to you: Do whatever my Son tells you. (St. Francis de Sales)

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