



Vol.3 No.2 Issue 6

Jul - Dec 2014

BARAKA

ZA FRANSALIANS

Half yearly news bulletin of MSFS in East Africa

**"We all must say Yes
to Jesus always"**

Fr. P. Paulsamy MSFS

Born: 08/07/1970 *RIP*

Died: 21/12/2014



The priest who died while celebrating the Holy Mass!

This issue is with special focus on the Apostolate of Formation

Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (Fransaliens)



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St. Francis de Sales



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- A man of self-discipline, good character, and right motivation
- Good health of mind and body, Balanced, sociable, generous nature
- Sincere desire to become a missionary religious priest
- Readiness to work anywhere in the world, even in challenging conditions

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From the Editor

Dear readers of Baraka,

The sixth issue of *Baraka* is at hand. In this issue, our focus of reflections is on **apostolate of formation** in general. With the present emphasis on the identity of the priest as foundational to his ministry, I believe the identity is shaped by his theological and spiritual formation in very specific ways. The consequence for his pastoral ministry and insertion into a living community where he plays the role of animator and unifier is obvious. The search for meaning and truth, both human and divine is surely one of the primary motives of a formee. Pope St. John Paul II's apostolic exhortation on the formation of priests, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, places transformation in faith within the context of theological formation, as faith always incorporates a cognitive element (cf. PDV n.53 & 54). As much as theology is faith-seeking understanding, this enterprise cannot take place in a vacuum, as this faith is incarnated in human experience, in history and in culture. The Seminarian is trained to familiarize himself with questions about God and how God communicates. He must be at ease with the various languages God speaks.



Moving from meaning to the truth, he is able to make a commitment of his life based on the discovery of truth. The essence of a vocation is to be true to oneself by being true to the God one discovers in the encounter. Thus, the aim of priestly formation is to assist the seminarian so that on the day of his ordination is able to subjectively receive the objective grace of the sacrament of holy orders. Every seminarian is taught what to do as a priest; however, the nuances and personal receptivity of what it means to "be Jesus" far extend mere skill development or apprenticeship.

In this issue we also pay homage to two of our priests who were close to our hearts: **Fr. Paul Sankoorickal** and **Fr. Paul Samy MSFS**. May they rest in peace!

I wish you a pleasant and inspiring time with *Baraka-6*

Fr. Sebastian Nirappel MSFS

**MSFS East Africa Province has today 36 Major Seminarians
who are professed members of the Congregation. They are
from Tanzania, India, Uganda and Kenya.**

REV. FR. P. PAUL SAMY MSFS

(1970 - 2014)

Rev. Fr. P. Paul Samy MSFS son of Periya Samy and Gnanasoundary, was born at Neyveli in the Archdiocese of Pondicherry-Cuddalore, Tamilnadu on July 8, 1970.

He joined S.F.S. Minor Seminary, Pudukkottai in 1989. He did his Novitiate at Salesianum, Visakhapatnam in 1992 and professed his first vows on 10th June, 1993. He was ordained a Priest at Presentation Church, Neyveli Township, on May 3, 2001 by the then Bishop of Vellore, Rt. Rev. Dr. M. Chinnappa.

After serving in India in various capacities for the last 13 years, he volunteered to go to Africa for mission work and on July 28, 2014, he left for Tanzania for his pastoral ministry. After the initial course in Kiswahili language at Ipuli, he was appointed Administrator at S.F.S. School, Ipuli-Tabora, Tanzania. He was very happy with his mission work in Tanzania. He earned the appreciation of all the confreres in Tanzania within a short span of five months. He was



cheerfully and actively involved in his mission until the saddening unexpected event of his life took place on Sunday, December 21, 2014. That evening at 7.10 p.m (EA Time).



A child's hand is not burned by hot yam which is placed into his palm by his mother.



"He was a living saint... who had nothing but a simple and cheerful life to serve the Lord", said Fr. Johnson Kallidukil, the Provincial Superior of the East-Africa Province in his message.

The mortal remains of Fr. Paul Samy was brought to Pudukottai India and was laid to rest at SFS Seminary Pudukkottai on December 26, 2014.

Eternal rest, grant unto him O Lord! & Let perpetual light shine upon him!

MAY HE REST IN PEACE!

(Excerpts from the Cicular of Fr. Antony Dharmaraj MSFS, Provincial South East India Province)

Who was Fr. Paul Samy to them? They share!

We lost a wonderful human being and a holy MSFS. I knew him from seminary days. He was a zealous priest and a true Salesian. We all will miss him in our MSFS family. I join you to mourn the death of our dear Paul Samy. May he rest in peace and he will continue to live in our hearts and memories with his saintly, innocent and smiling face.

Fr. Abraham Vettivelil MSFS, Superior General, Fransalians

He was one of the novices at the time when I was the Socius at Salesianum. As a novice, he was a very simple and prayerful person. His humble life-style was indeed a great inspiration for me. He was a silent worker. His death is a great loss for our congregation. I extend my hearty condolence to all the confreres of the South-East Province. I am

sure he celebrates Christmas this year in the most delightful way.

Fr. Luke Kalarickal MSFS

With heart-felt deep sorrow, I express my hearty condolence (POLE SANA) to you and all our confreres in the SE Province. I do not know how many years he worked in India; but he worked among us just 5 months. Within this short time, he captured all our hearts through his life of simplicity, honesty and prayer.

Fr. R. Sebastian Williams MSFS

He was indeed a committed missionary. May the Lord grant him eternal rest! Hearty condolence!

Fr. Augustine Mangatt MSFS, General Bursar



The Altar up on which Fr. Paul Samy was celebrating his last Mass!

I knew him more closely from the time of his regency. He was a fine gentleman, unassuming and caring. It is indeed hard but we are left with no other option than to accept his death in deep faith and in total surrender to God's will, his final and parting exhortation to us.

Fr. Simon Paicatt MSFS, the Provincial of Vizag Province

Indeed, it is a great loss of a missionary who went to Africa. May the Lord grant the eternal reward he deserves. May his soul rest in eternal peace!

Fr. Vincent, the Provincial of Pune Province

He was such a nice person and after being here in Tanzania, I wanted to meet him but this wish of mine was not fulfilled. I was Rector to him for two years in Suvidya and I know him to be so gentle and kind person. Last month, Fr. Raison died and this month, Fr. Paul Samy - Young priests who could have done a lot for God. But God has others

plans than we have. He must have fulfilled his mission which God had assigned to him already. May He Rest in Peace!

Fr. Mathew Kozhuppakalam MSFS

Dear Fr. Johnson, Fr. Dharmaraj, and Confreres of the SE Province, Sincere condolence heart-felt sympathy. We join in your pain and sense of loss. Fr. Paul Samy was a student of mine and I knew him personally for his cheerfulness and loving availability. We have a great loss in his death. May his soul rest in Peace!

Fr. Jose Kumbollickal MSFS the Provincial of the SW Province

I had the great chance to accompany Fr. Paul Samy here during his last days as he was preaching a retreat to us the Holy Cross Sisters in Moshi, Tanzania. During the retreat I was given the task to attend to him. He had great devotion to St. Francis de Sales; he was filled with zeal for the mission; his attitudes were with deep sense of hope and encouraging the other; he was a person of deep humility. We remember him fondly when we read the quotes he personally wrote for each one of us. His favourite instruction was: Fear the LORD, you holy ones of his; for those who fear him lack nothing (Ps.34:9)

May he rest in peace!

Sr. Christina Leonard SCC

A TRIBUTE TO REV. FR. PAUL SANKOORIKAL

Father Paul Sankoorikal remembered for service, missionary zeal

By Jerome O'Brien
Staff Writer

LA CROSSE — One of the first international priests to serve and then be incardinated into the Diocese of La Crosse, Father Paul Sankoorikal lived his life as a priest, no matter where he was called, as a missionary servant of Christ to His people.

Serving in this capacity for the past 55 years, Father Paul died on Dec. 19 at the age of 80.

Born on July 22, 1934, in India, to Lonappan C. and Chinnamma (Kanjooparambil) Sankoorikal, Father Paul was ordained a priest of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS) on Sept. 28, 1959. As a seminarian he attended the Papal Athenaeum in Poona, India; the University of Kerala in Kerala State, India; and St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.

Prior to his service in the Diocese of La Crosse, Father

(1967); associate pastor of St. Catherine of Sienna Parish in St. Louis (1971); associate pastor and chaplain at St. Lawrence Parish and Visitation Monastery in Snellville, Ga. (1974); regional superior of the Missionary Society of St. Francis de Sales, pastor of Mission Center, principal of Don Bosco High School and director of the Mission Dispensary in Silvapuram, Assam, India (1976-1980); associate pastor of St. Luke Parish in St. Louis (1980); associate pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Alton, Ill. (1981); administrator of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Ste. Marie, Ill. (1981); and associate pastor of St. Mary Parish in Taylorville, Ill. (1981).



Father Paul Sankoorikal

Bishop William P. Callahan was the main celebrant and Monsignor Michael Gorman was the homilist. Burial was held in the Catholic Cemetery, La Crosse, on Dec. 24.

In his homily, Monsignor Gorman acknowledged with gratitude the care which the Paul and Curtis Hansen family gave to Father Paul in his final years — and to those who knew him during his residence at St. Mary Parish rectory, Bangor, and as chaplain at Mayo Clinic Franciscan Health Care. As a Catholic priest, Father Paul received two indelible marks of God's love, Monsignor Gorman said — baptism and holy orders.

"We recalled at the beginning of today's liturgy that, in the waters of baptism, Father Paul died with Christ and rose with Him to a new life and a new dignity as a child of God, becoming a member of Christ's body, the Church," he said.

tion of the word of God in the various ministries he exercised as a priest — preaching and teaching, administering to parishes and schools, and finally, in what seems to have been the niche perhaps for which he had sought throughout his years of priesthood, as a chaplain in a hospital to the sick and dying, there to bring consolation, hope, and healing."

According to Monsignor Gorman, Father Paul's natural compassion for his neighbors, especially the sick and dying, was channeled through his office as priest.

"Father Paul ministered those many years at St. Francis Hospital so generously, so confidently, so compassionately and so gently," he said. "All of those were qualities of his very being, which his priesthood merely amplified, but enabled him to do so much more than he could as a human being through the administration of the sacra-

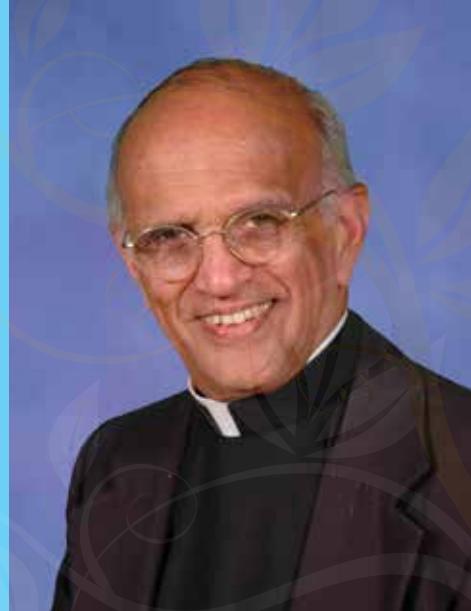
return to the dust from which it was made," Monsignor Gorman said, "his spirit has gone forth from this world and now is in the care of God. As we offer this sacrifice of thanksgiving and this holy Eucharist, we do so confident that this offering and our prayers will help to purify him of any attachments to sin and anything that might separate him from entering fully into the all holy presence of God our Holy Father and his."

At the end of Mass, Bishop Callahan also offered a few words of comfort to those present, encouraging them to pray for Father Paul as he undertakes this new journey after his earthly life.

"It is never joyful for a parent to bury one of his or her own children; nor is it ever joyful for a bishop to bury one of his priests," he said. "Consolation is very much evident in our celebration of the life of Father Paul today because in many

Rev. Fr. Paul L. Sankoorikal was born on July 22, 1934, in Kerala, India, to Lonappan C. and Chinnamma (Kanjooparambil) Sankoorikal. He completed his theological studies at the Papal Athenaeum in Poona, India, and was ordained on September 28, 1959, as a priest of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS). He did his university studies at the Kerala University in Kerala, India, and St. Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

Fr. Paul began his priestly ministry as Chaplain to the Adoration Convent in Changanacherry, India (1960). Later, he was the Hostel Rector at St. John Berchmans College in Changanacherry, India (1961); a teacher and Hostel Rector at St. Aloysius High School in Visakhapatnam, India (1963); Assistant Pastor at St. Augustine Parish in St.



Fr. Paul Sankoorikal

Louis, Missouri (1964); Assistant Pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in St. Louis, Missouri (1965); Chaplain at

Mount Providence in St. Louis, Missouri (1967); Associate Pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in St. Louis, Missouri (1971); Associate Pastor and Chaplain St. Lawrence Parish and Visitation Monastery in Snellville, Georgia (1974); Regional superior of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (North East India), Pastor of the mission Center, Principal of Don Bosco High School and Director of the Mission Dispensary in Silapathar, Assam, India (1976-1980); Assistant Pastor of St. Luke Parish in St. Louis, Missouri (1980); Associate Pastor of SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Alton, Illinois (1981); Administrator of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Ste. Marie, Illinois (1981); and Associate Pastor of St. Mary Parish in Taylorville, Illinois (1981).

Fr. Paul began his service as Chaplain at the former St. Francis Medical Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin on September 14, 1982. He was granted an Indult of Secularization from the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales on May 18, 1992, and was incardinated into the Diocese of La Crosse on August 5, 1992. He continued in his role as Chaplain until 2006.

Fr. Paul L. Sankoorikal, at the age of 80, a priest for 55 years, died on Friday, December 19, 2014, at Gundersen Medical Center in La Crosse.

We, the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales of East African Province, owe much to Fr. Paul for the development of our missions in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Since 1991, he is associated with our East Africa Mission. He coordinated "Mission Appeal Programme" for the East African Missions, which was a timely help for the development of our missions. He also substantially contributed for the infrastructure development of our formation houses and schools. In the recent years, he has contributed immensely for the development and growth of Lumen Christi Institute. The missionaries of St. Francis De Sales of East Africa Province are very grateful to Fr. Paul, who was a true missionary and lover of our African missions. His memory will be cherished in the history of the East African Province always. May he intercede for us in heaven.

May he Rest In Peace.

Message from Fr. Provincial

My dear friends of *Baraka*,

We believe that every Institute of Consecrated Life or Society of Apostolic Life is an ongoing divine project. At a given time in history this project is entrusted to each one of us. Every member of the Congregation works on that project in various ways and in different capacities. After a while the project is handed over to another group, another generation. The project is divine and the act of handling this project is sacred. An ongoing divine project is not completed in the life span of one human being or one generation. This project has to be handed over to the next generation. **Preparing the right persons to take up this sacred task, is the core mission of religious formation in the institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life.**



Those of us who are today members of a particular congregation, were prepared by someone yesterday. And today we prepare others to be members tomorrow. Just as God trusted us and entrusted us with this project, we learn to trust our younger ones and in the course of time we entrust to them the rich heritage of our Fransalian family with all its spiritual and temporal goods.

Naturally when the young ones come into our family, there is a process of learning; there can be a flux. But there is nothing to be panicked about it. We need to trust God, trust the other.

Let this issue of *Baraka* dedicated to the apostolate of Formation help to establish a bond love and concern between you and the MSFS family, inspiring you to pray for our young seminarians and for all of us who are in one way or other formators and to pray for more vocations. Have a blessed time with this *Baraka*.

Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS

(Provincial - East Africa Province)

johnsonmsfs@gmail.com

THE FORMATIVE DIMENSION IN THE MISSIONARY THRUST OF FR. MERMIER

2015 – has been declared by Pope Francis as Year of Consecrated Life, dedicated to prayer for Religious and Laity committed through profession of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience lived in community to become consecrated “witnesses to the world that God alone suffices” (MSFS Constitutions No, 49). For us Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS, also known as Fransaliens), the call of the Holy Father has a deeper significance, with the invitation of our Superior General to observe 2015 as “MSFS

Year of Mission”, with individual and community focus on “renewal of our consecrated thrust on recapturing the missionary spirit of our Founder, Fr. Mermier, in our decisions and policies and ministries”.

Unfolding of MSFS foundational and apostolic Charism: So ardent was the missionary zeal of Fr. Mermier that, as an essential concomitant to his primary commitment to the apostolate of parish missions across his native Savoy, at the call of the local Church he offered his services

to education of the young, and in response to the offer of the universal Church, he commissioned six confreres the fledgling Congregation (in existence for only seven years, and with a membership of merely fourteen confreres), to take up pioneering evangelization overseas – in distant India.



Fr. Noel Rebello MSFS

The twin objectives of embarking on the ministry of education taken up, in Melan and Evian, in spite of paucity of number and inadequacy of finance, were: to promote local vocations and to prepare ‘skilled’ missionaries for the Indian Missions.

Conscious, on the one hand, that ‘in the opinion of the people missionaries are *extraordinary men*’, and on the other, that the ensemble of qualities which make a missionary is rarely found blended together’, Fr. Mermier considered it an obligation to form ‘well prepared, well exercised and well tested men’ (Memoir, 1939), ‘for whom the greatest sacrifices and death itself are a gain, ... men who fear only sin and the loss of souls’. (let.



Candidates in Fransalian Seminary Ndagani, Kenya

To Fr. Sermet, 6-7-1849) ‘My concern is to establish the Congregation on a solid base’ (Let. to confreres in Lafeuillette, from Rome, 20-9-1842) It is amazing that during his lifetime itself he commissioned the bulk of his best confreres (31 in number) for pioneering evangelization in India.

‘Mermierian’ Mission-oriented formation: The young candidates of the nascent MSFS congregation who opted for the Indian missions received their initial formation on-the-job, in what could be described as a ‘mobile seminary’. They accompanied the pioneers on their mission trail and lived with them in

make-shift residences among the local population.

From these modest beginnings of personalized formation and ‘on-the-job’ training for the apostolate, Fransalian Formation has responded to the concerns of the MSFS foundational apostolates according to exigencies of time and space.

‘Fransalian’ Formation Policies and Guidelines, 2001: Here below are some of the major thrusts in its reprint (2013) that incorporates references to the Revised Constitutions (2007). Fransalian formation has the following essential characteristics:

Purposeful: growing in faith, discerning one's vocation, seeking to sublimate personal blocks in order to develop attitudes in keeping with one's vocation – self-sacrifice in fidelity to God's Will, Self-giving : expressed in fraternity, fairness, patience and generosity;

Prioritized: nurturing discipleship with Christ through personalized Prayer expressed in committed involvement in community exercises and programmes;

Progressive: each successive stage of formation building on the previous one and leading to the discovery of talents and development of skills for exercise of the mission of the Congregation suited to the present times as directed by the Church;

Integrative: inculcating a healthy blend of the intellectual, relational, emotional, communitarian, socio-cultural, ecclesial and spiritual dimensions of the individual person through a truly transformative process;

Salesian: drawing from the inspiration of St. Francis de Sales who sincerely sought to form himself, gratefully accepted being formed by God through the instrumentality of his human, natural and social environment, and, who allowed God to form others through his simple

creative and committed service to one and all;

Missionary and Fransalian: imbibing the charism of Fr. Mermier, grounded on the Salesian Spirit and Spirituality and focused on creative response to the needs of Church and Society in keeping with the signs of the times, and replicating the dynamism of MSFS pioneers and veterans in the spiritual vitality of our Constitutions and General Directory.

Accordingly, the focus of formation should be:

- on Discernment of one's vocation seen as gift and task;
- on Empowerment that enables one to attain the required levels of competence and skills for the Mission that flows from one's vocation;
- on fostering Commitment, on the one hand to the interiorization of true human values that are evangelical, and on the other, to the personalized communitarian expression of these in one's life and mission;
- on facilitating the Transformation of attitudes and behavior leading to liberation from negative personal and social conditioning;
- on nurturing Devotion as



The newly professed on July 10, 2014 in Fransalianum, Kibaha, Tanzania

a personal God-experience, a free response to the call of faith and a generous involvement to the demands of the mission.

CONCLUSION: This note sought to focus on the original vision of Fr. Mermier – as gleaned from his writings) and the overall approach to formation – as spelled out in the Fransalian Formation Policies and Guidelines. For ready reference, the salient traits of the vision and mission of Fransalian formation are encapsulated in the respective Profiles of a Fransalian candidate, postulant, novice, scholastic, as also that of a Fransalian formator.

However, while revised curricula, updated syllabi, adapted and graded programmes are important, there will always remain a ‘gap’ between Ideal and Reality.

“The congregational focus on the Mission in Africa is the urgent need. In this regard, Inter-Province collaboration and pooling of resources are called for.” The response from Provinces has been significant, and collaboration has been mutually enriching. (MSFS General Chapter, 2013)

“Crescat et Floreat” is the earnest prayer and wish of one and all.

Fr. Noel Rebello MSFS
General Secretary for Formation



LCI Arusha serves as center for Ongoing formation for Priests, religious and laity.

Faithful discipleship is grace and love in action; it is the practice of sacrificial charity. When we journey without the Cross, when we build without the Cross, when we profess Christ without the Cross, we are not disciples of the Lord, we are worldly. We may be bishops, priests, cardinals, popes, but not disciples of the Lord.

Pope Francis

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL APPLIED IN FORMATION AS FRANSALIAN

Evangelii Gaudium(EG) begins with beautiful expression that the joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sins, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness (art.1). Jesus is the source of the eternal newness which is concretely realized in the formation as Fransalian. In fact the joy of the Gospel is found residing in the heart of men who are called to embrace religious life without any reservation. Joyfully they encounter Jesus in a special manner in the formation. These young men they are drawn from different nationalities, races, tribes and blended together by forming a community which nurtures and cherishes their different gifts and talents. There is the foundation of real joy of Christ. They are not Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter as Pope Francis puts it, but they are instances of joy that flows from the infinite love of God.

Being a Christian is encounter with an event, a person of Jesus Christ who gives life a new horizon and decisive direction. This experience is deepening



Bro. Jonathan Muema MSFS

during various stages of formation of which we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption to a persona of Christ (cf. EG, 7). Narrowness and self-absorption are manifested when we cling on our tribal differences, boasting of our vastness in various successes accompanied by a slogan ‘if it were not my effort they would register no success at all’. This kind of mentality brings pain to our communities eradicating the joy of the Gospel in them. We forget that we become full human when we become more than human. Therefore, during stages of formation we should let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being.

The Gospel offers the chance to live life on a higher plane, but with no less intensity: “Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others” (EG, 10). Likewise, those who enjoy life as true Fransalians are

We rejoice in the Lord !



those who give their lives entirely to the community striving to cultivate a close friendship with our Lord who has called each one of us to this Congregation of Missionaries of St. Francis de Sale (cf. MSFS Constitution, art.15). Here we discover a profound law of reality that life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others; in other words, self-abandonment to the will of God. This calls for a healthy level of human maturity, marked by growth in self-knowledge and inner freedom to respond promptly to the divine will of God.

We are partakers in the mission of evangelization profoundly by bearing

witness to the world as missionaries not in isolation with church but being in the church and for the church. Thus we realize that missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the church's activity. This task continues to be a source of immense joy for the church to see young men coming forward to proclaim boldly their faith experience by living authentically the evangelical counsels. Every MSFS brother under formation and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, that is why all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel.

The formation program endeavors see to it that prayer life is enhanced; failure to which spiritual desertification may raise bringing culture of death to many religious. Prayer is network that links us with God and if network is unavailable there is no communication with God. Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a 'mystique' of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage (*EG*, 87). In fact Pope Francis is well acquainted that formation is in danger when such networks appears to allure the very

purpose of religious life. Hence those who are aspiring to become religious and those who are religious are called to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity through prayer.

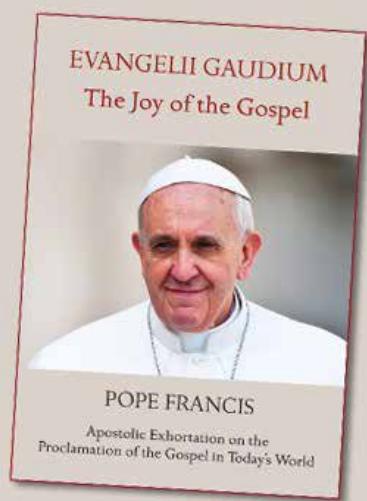
We should be aware that through baptism all the members of the people of God have become missionary disciples. However, those whose wish to embrace religious life are given special charism to do so more promptly and unceasingly. We want to have better training, a deepening love and a clearer witness to the Gospel. Thus the salvation which God has wrought, and the church joyfully proclaims will become a reality in the Formation as Fransalian.

Bro. Jonathan Muema MSFS

EVANGELII GAUDIUM

The Joy of the Gospel

First Apostolic Exhortation
of Pope Francis



IS THE CHURCH IN AFRICA EXPERIENCING CRISIS IN VOCATION?

Whenever we talk about the Church in Africa we mean the Church as it is within the geographical boundaries of Africa. Since the moment of its establishment in Africa, it has advanced in terms of the number of believers who have accepted Christianity wholeheartedly. Many have abandoned their traditional religions for the sake of faith in Christ; however, there are many Christians who are still attached to their local and traditional practices. The universal Church organises its adherents under three categories of vocation. There are lay people whose vocation is that of family life confirmed by the sacrament of marriage, there are also those who are consecrated to God through the Evangelical Counsels and other sacred bonds, and then there are some others who share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ through

Ordination. As the number of Christians increase, so too each of these categories of vocations.

Vocation to Family Life

A priest or a catechist may say that he has worked so much that many people got converted to the Catholic faith. On this issue, one forgets that it is the Holy Spirit who converts. We are just instruments of Christ and He uses us in order to act in the world. He confirms our work by granting opportunity of change to people who open their heart to him. These are the people whom we call Christians. They all respond to the same call to follow Christ. They are lay people whose vocation is that of the family life characterised by the union of husband and wife in marriage. Among all the vocations in the church, this particular one is the most common. In fact if there



Bro. Franky Leandre MSFS



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should be any religious and priests in the church, it is as a result of the fruits of marriage. So God calls people to embrace married life and from here He chooses some to become Priests and Religious.

The number of Christians is increasing as many children (fruit of the marriage) are being baptised every year. As the result of this ever increasing number of Christians, marriages are being celebrated everywhere and many new parishes are being created. It is therefore understood that if this vocation to married life have not been increasing in Africa, and if the number of Christians were not increasing, many of our Churches in Africa would have been closed down as it is the case today in Europe where,

due to the lack of Christians and the diminishing faith, Church buildings are sold for business.

Religious Vocation in the African Church

Examining the number of young Africans who are choosing today to live such a life, we find that they are quite many and more of them are joining every day. And this is justified by the fact that all the religious Congregations that are present in Africa have many vocations; they only have to make themselves known and interact with people.

Vocation to Priesthood

Jesus Christ the High priest had seen the need for more servants of the Gospel; He advised His disciples to pray for more labourers: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few..." Lk, 10: 2. Hence it could be said that the prayer which Christ addressed to God for more vocations was in view of the actual situation in Africa. Unfortunately, we still find that there are many parishes with many outstations, and all these are being run by only one or at the most



We also need priests

two priests. In such cases, many faithful get the chance of meeting their priest only once a year.

As we read in Matthew, 28:18-20, we find Jesus sending His disciples to the whole world to preach the good News to everyone and to baptise them. These were His last words before His ascension to heaven; He therefore made His disciples, Missionaries in the world. Through their preaching, many were converted, believed and followed them. Since then, the believers are increasing and the Ministers are becoming insufficient.

We are not saying that there are no priestly vocations in Africa, but that with increasing number of Christians, the Church in Africa is lacking enough priests. This is because, the more Christians we have, the more priests we stand in need of. This is different from saying that there is a decrease in the number of priests.

The Lack of Education

Many young Africans have not responded positively to their priestly vocation because of their limitation in education. In the challenging world of today, it is very essential to insist on the importance of education. An uneducated youth cannot

join the seminary, even if he has the desire to become priest or religious. The Church in Africa is powerfully responding to this situation of the lack of education in the continent by opening new schools wherever the need is felt. This action could help in both the building of personality of Africans as educated people, and the effective response to the religious and priestly vocation from the part of young Africans.

The Need for Children

The African culture does not give value to life without children; hence young Africans often find very difficult to join the seminary for the priestly formation because if they become priests, they will not get married and therefore cannot have children of their own. This is often not the fear developed by the youth themselves, but their parents play a



May be a priest in the future?

great role by encouraging them to get married and procreate in order to continue with the Family lineage. On this view, traditional Africans consider children to be more valuable than money and gold; this is why it becomes difficult for parents to leave their children join the seminary to become priests.

The Duration of the Formation

Generally, the priestly formation takes at least ten years; and so it is difficult for many people to opt for this kind of life. Africans by nature like the immediate, the present, the earlier or the soon done. Therefore, one could say that patience is not in the habit of Africans. Added to this duration, there is also the uncertainty of completing the formation; because some people either abandon on their own decision or they are asked to leave. To leave a Seminary and especially if one is asked to leave, brings a lot of uneasiness to the one who

experience it, because all people in fact consider seminarian as 'priests to be' in all surety. . This is what creates fear in many young people in Africa when they think of going to the seminary.

Conclusion

Putting into consideration the points above, we could respond to the question of whether the Church in Africa is facing a crisis in vocation by assuring that the Church in Africa is in fact the seed-bed of vocations, not only for Africa, but for the whole world. Now, considering all the three types of Vocations mentioned at the commencement of this presentation, we can raise Africa to be the hope, the future of the Universal Church, and so, we feel that there is no crisis in vocations as far as the Church in Africa is concerned. But still the Church in Africa has to find means of multiplying the number of vocations so as to be well equipped with enough personnel. This need is due to the fact that the Church is growing and spreading in Africa enormously.

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Bro. Leandre Francky MSFS*



We are a rejoicing people

THE TEACHINGS OF ST.FRANCIS DE SALES AND THEIR RELEVANCE IN SEMINARY FORMATION

St. Francis was born near Annecy in Savoy in the year 1567. After his ordination as a priest he worked strenuously for the renewal of the faithful in his country. After his election as the bishop of Geneva, he proved himself to be a true shepherd of his flock, (People of God) by being an example in all things; helping all and combating the heresy of his time through his outstanding writings and work. His outstanding and profound writings remain relevant even in today's world.

St. Francis De Sales teaches about due preparation before becoming a priest: he says that, "knowledge is the 8th sacrament for a priest", In responding to his call, he gave himself

a solid spiritual and intellectual formation; preparing himself for the service of God. The Holy See presents four "pillars" of seminary learning: "spiritual, intellectual, community and apostolic". Pope Francis reiterates what he said to religious General Superiors during a discussion published by Italian Jesuit periodical *Civiltà Cattolica* in January 2014: "The four pillars must interact from your very first day as novices/seminarians; they must never follow a structured sequence." The teaching of St. Francis on due preparation stands as a pillar in the seminary formation as the Pontiff calls; seminarians ought to prepare themselves with the assistance of the formators in their priestly formation by loving the 8th sacrament, the sacrament of



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knowledge; preparing themselves in such a way that their knowledge of philosophy, theology, culture, civil and canon law be employed at the service of their pastoral mission. For, Saint Francis had given a socio-cultural orientation to his studies wanting to be all things to all men.

St. Francis also teaches about Self acceptance as a fundamental step for spiritual and human formation. "I am nothing if not human", says St. Francis. Spiritual formation is one of the pillars in seminary learning according to the Pontiff. It is in fact the pillar of pillars; St. Francis teaches about Self acceptance as a fundamental step of spiritual and human formation. In religious houses/seminaries today, the formees should aim at spiritual and human growths which are essential for community living and apostolic work; this requires self acceptance: accepting that one is a servant and handmaid of the Lord who ought to seek His graces unceasingly through prayers.

St. Francis teaches about the growth in virtue and how to overcome evil tendencies and strive after virtue to attain perfection. He says, "no one is born a saint but everyone has been given the ability to rise above self and to grow progressively after perfection." This saying reminds us of the teachings of Christ "be perfect just as your Father is perfect". The Pope said, "Becoming good shepherds in

the image of Jesus is something very great and we are all small." "Yes, it is true, it is too great; but it is not our work! It is the work of the Holy Spirit, with our collaboration," Every seminarian ought to strive for perfection in order to become a future holy priest; practicing the little virtues of obedience, simplicity, humility and by doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way as St. Francis teaches; we should strive after virtue and attain perfection.

St. Francis taught by his own example. He abandoned his very successful and comfortable ministry in Annecy and became a missionary in the Chablais. Chablais, had been corrupted by the heretic doctrines of the Calvinists, especially the doctrine of predestination. They held that even if one lives here on earth like an Angel, he/she will go to hell if God predestined him/her to hell, and even if one lives here in this life like a devil, he/she will go heaven if God has predestined that he /she will go to heaven. St. Francis took up this dangerous task at the risk of his life. St. Francis's attitude contrasts with current tendencies to stick to one's own position and the reluctance to face insecurity for the sake of God's kingdom. His courage contrasts with the fear of the unknown. A seminarian must experience the joy of abandoning existing comfortable situations in order to launch into unknown perilous waters. We notice three important

and immediate preparations for his mission by prayers.

- He sought the prayers of everyone;
- He prepared for his mission with prayer and fasting;
- He made an intellectual preparation- took with him books which were useful to the situation and his work.

Here we can get an insight into the reason for the failure of modern missionary efforts. Money and equipment can never offer what the Spirit of God and prayer promise. St. Francis accepted poverty willingly. Prayer, penance and spirit of poverty achieved what riches and equipment could not.

These modern attractions which seem to have enslaved many seminarians in this millennium can only be overcome by following the exemplary teachings of St. Francis: cultivating the spirit of prayer because it is only through prayers one gets power and strength to carry on the missionary work and transcend this world of consumerism.

In this article, only some of ideas from St. Francis De Sales' teachings on formation are attached upon. There are still lengthy writings of St. Francis regarding the seminary formation,

like his teachings on:

Zeal for the formation of the laity; seminarians ought also to prepare themselves to the service and formation of the laity, catechizing and directing them.

Every priest, every religious is a person of the people, for the people and among the people. There are no barriers of caste and creed. This teaching is a form of a golden rule to all seminarians who are preparing themselves to become future priests. They are to be all things to all men.

The writings of St. Francis should always urge the reader to positive change and betterment: He has lengthy writings on these wise sayings: "humility, humility, humility", "be nothing if not human" etc.

Seminarians therefore should be aware of these teachings which accord with the teachings of the Supreme Pontiff and be imbued by them."You are becoming pastors in the image of Jesus, the good pastor. Your aim is to resemble Him and act on behalf of Him amidst His flock, letting His sheep graze" said Pope Francis.

*Bro. Thomas Njue MSFS
Bro. Francis Ndumuli MSFS*



Welcome to **Bro. Avil Veigas**
MSFS to East Africa

Bro. Avil who made the First Profession last year volunteered to join the East Africa Province of MSFS. We thank the Province of Pune for their generosity.

Mother Mary,
Star of the new evangelisation,
help us to bear radiant
witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous
faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the
earth,
illuminating even the fringes
of the world.

Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for
God's little ones,
Pray for us.
Amen. Alleluia!

(Prayer from Pope
FRANCIS in Apostolic Exhortation
Evangelii gaudium)

*Today Fransalians work in nine
countries in Africa*

- **Chad**
- **Kenya**
- **Zambia**
- **Uganda**
- **Namibia**
- **Tanzania**
- **Cameroon**
- **South Africa**
- **Mozambique**

CHALLENGES OF PRIESTLY FORMATION IN AFRICA

It goes without saying that the vocation to priesthood in Africa is on the brink of deterioration today, considering the dwindling numbers of candidates who join the seminary. This meteoric decent is due to many factors, some of which are coming from the parents of the potential candidates, influence of the society and even the pressure from the peers of the candidates themselves. In addition to these, the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience has been questioned with much vigor in the African context. This article examines these factors as posing a great challenge to the potential candidates to priesthood in Africa today.

1. Reluctance of the Parents

Nowadays, many parents do not consent to the idea of their children joining seminary formation. They want their children to pursue well-paying professions like law, engineering, medicine and the like. They see the latter professions as having financial security and therefore their children will be in a better position to support them,



Bro. Dennis Musugu MSFS



Bro. Titus Chaiabi MSFS

as opposed to priestly life where there is no salary, thus no financial assistance.

The parents are also unwilling to release their children to priestly life because they want a perpetuation of their lineage (*kuendeleza ukoo*). They want their children to sire many children and have their own families. This ensures a continuity of the family lineage. In priestly life, there is no such privilege of marrying. Thus many parents would not tow with the idea of their children joining the seminary.

2. Evangelical counsels as a challenge to Priestly Formation

The vows of chastity, poverty and obedience have not been in conformity with the African traditional culture. Those who opt for priestly formation have



MSFS Seminarians ordained Deacons on September 27, 2014

been looked with a skeptical eye, especially from the elders of the society.

a). Chastity

Traditionally, an African young man who has reached puberty stage is supposed to have his own family, as a mark of maturity. Any young man who does not conform to this tradition is seen as dysfunctional sexually, thus he may be ostracized from the society because he is a sign of a bad omen.

In the African cultural setting,

children are a sign of honor. The more children one has, the more honor is bestowed unto him. On the contrary, one who has no child is mocked and seen as an abnormal person. Thus candidates to priestly life are seen as not normal people, who "escape" the reality by opting to become priests.

b). Poverty

The founding fathers of the African nations had three enemies of development: poverty, disease and ignorance. Poverty was seen as an enemy to development, and it was

fought with the seriousness that it deserved. Eradication of poverty has been prioritized in African governments and much effort is being made to uplift the living standards of many Africans who live in abject poverty.

Here comes a candidate to priesthood and declares publicly that he is going to live a life of poverty! Isn't this a contradiction? On one hand poverty is being eradicated, yet on the other hand one wants to live a life of poverty. Male children, especially the firstborn sons are regarded as breadwinners for their families. They have the prerogative of seeing to it that they provide for their families both materially

and financially. This becomes a Herculean task for a priest in the African context. By pronouncing the vow of poverty, he is not going to meet the financial needs of his family. His family members look upon him as their breadwinner. This places the priest in a difficult situation. Indeed this affects the priest and he may resort to other means to help his parents and siblings.

c). Obedience

In an African context, once a young man matures, he is free to decide for himself. He is the sole master over his life and he can conduct his affairs without any external interference. With this in mind, a candidate to priesthood



LCI Students and staff

in Africa may find it difficult to be under the authority of a superior.

d. Influence from the society at large

The society surrounding the candidate to priesthood in Africa may also be a big challenge, especially by its conception of such a candidate. The society may question the motive of the candidate to priesthood. It cannot comprehend why a young, energetic and good looking man, with all the qualities befitting a husband, should not marry, but instead opt for priestly life. It is joked that for every one seminarian, four ladies have missed the chance

to get married! This means that one who joins the seminary denies four ladies the chance to be married. Such jokes and others may have an impact on the life of one who joins the seminary.

These challenges notwithstanding, Africa is a potential good soil for producing many priests. The candidates who join the seminary need constant encouragement and guidance, so that they may not detour from their journey of becoming priests.

*Bro. Denis Musugu MSFS
Bro. Chaiabi Titus MSFS*



Bishop Titus Joseph Mdoe

The Auxiliary Bishop Arch diocese of Dar es Salaam, giving his message at MSFS Novitiate Kibaha

Hope dies only at the end!

Vocation to Priesthood and Religious life in Germany: A Glimpse

The Vocation to Priesthood and Religious life in Western Europe, particularly in Germany is steadily declining. It is a fact that in the past few centuries the vocation here was flourishing and a vast number of priests and religious burning with missionary zeal, enthusiastically opted to work in the missions and thus brought the Christian faith to the various parts of world, like India and many other countries in Africa and Asia.

But the situation today has turned the other way around. The Church in Germany needs many priests, who hail from Asia, Africa and various other parts of the world to sustain it and to meet the dire need of the lack of personnel in the pastoral ministry. The number of Priests is rapidly going down; the theological faculties and seminaries are being closed down or put together; the religious communities are being closed and their properties are being sold out, due to fewer vocations. It is the same sad reality that I witness too, in the Archdiocese of Bamberg, where I am working.

The acuteness of this problem could be clearly perceived when one looks at the statistics of the number of Seminarians and the newly ordained priests. It has reached such a low level, as it was never there before. In 2008, the number of ordinations to all the German dioceses, dropped to 95, also below 100 for the first time. In order to maintain the existing parishes about 500 new priests are required every year. The total number of priests (both diocesan and religious) has reduced from 18,663 to 14,490 during the period 1995 to 2013. The situation of the various religious congregations is also in no way better. They too face the same problem as the members are reducing steadily.



Fr. Wilson Packiam MSFS

The consequences of such a lack of priests are obvious. Parishes are clubbed together, many of the

parishes have no resident priests at the center and many parish houses are vacant, rented or demolished.

When we search for the reasons for this crisis, we find that the process of secularization in recent years has left its mark on the church in the falling levels of attendance at religious services. From a situation where Mass attendance at one time was in the 85-90 per cent range, it has now fallen below 5-15 per cent. For many people, religion is only a cultural phenomenon, confined to first communions, confirmations, and funerals. The Baptisms and the Weddings are coming down rapidly. Many are leaving the Church due to number of reasons for example Church tax. In the next generation, the practicing Catholics will form only a minority.

In addition to that the birthrate is becoming less. Childlessness in the families has adverse effects on priestly vocations. Much more in the recent past there were too many scandals in the church, which have also shaken the confidence of the people on in the church and it shows its negative impact on vocations.

What could be done in order to solve this problem of shortage of priests? In my opinion, it could be rectified when people feel the need for God and try to live an authentic way of life and above all give a credible witness to their faith and the Church. When we change our way of life, miracles can happen. I am convinced that when we pray more and put our confidence in God, He will bring changes. This is our hope, as a German proverb says: „Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt“, which means “Hope dies only at the end.”

P. Wilson Packiam MSFS



I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lies defeat and death.

Nelson Mandela



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Dn Charles Ouma



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Dn Joseph Kayanja



Dn Siljo Aupaden

We humbly seek your prayers and blessings

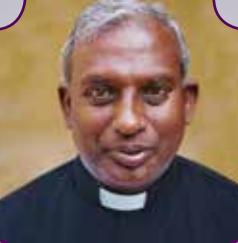
We must never undervalue any person. The workman loves not that his work should be despised in his presence. Now God is present everywhere, and every person is His work.

Saint Francis de Sales

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The tongue weighs practically nothing, but so few people can hold it.



Innocence!
We all had it once!



Those who love to be
feared, fear to be loved.

-Saint Francis de Sales