

MISSIONARIES OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES



Fransalians - Province of East Africa

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Beloved Confreres!

Festal Greetings of this great day, as we celebrate the Feast of St. Francis de Sales, our heavenly patron. Today we remind ourselves of the great spiritual heritage that we have in the person of Francis de Sales. In this circular I would like to share with you some reflections based on the life and message of St. Francis de Sales.

Our patron Francis de Sales brought in the new notion of the quality of life and spirituality as one's ability to love – to give love and to receive love. It is love that gives us the mark as the child of God for God is love. It is the quality of love that makes us to live our BEST to give our BEST, to do our best and thus to BE AT OUR BEST. When our patron exhorted us saying to be at our best, it was a call to be filled with love for nothing is better than true love.

As we honor the great personality of St. Francis de Sales, I invite you to examine the real quality of our life. Is the quality of our life and ministry badly hit by mediocrity? One of the dangerous comforts for us religious and priests today is that that we are not challenged. We are the ones enjoying the maximum benefits of tolerance from the public among all the professions in the society. We can find many examples: Whether I prepare my sermon well or not the faithful will listen to (or rather hear) my sermon. As a seminarian even if I do not do my best in my life, studies and formation, normally it does not stand on my way of being promoted and above all, it does not affect the validity of ordination! Even if I do my ministry half-heartedly, I get my full reward! Even if I use my time for things that should not have any priority in my religious and priestly life, at the end of the day I am sure, I will not go to bed with empty stomach. My bed and food is always assured. Never do I need to have a fear of a dismissal from my ministry or loss of membership in the order due to my poor performance! Unfortunately this is the false conviction ruling the mind of many.

Our Patron has set us an example of single minded dedication to work. This dedication was not a thing that he developed after he became a Bishop. It was in his person even as a student, seminarian and later as a priest.

If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets as Michelangelo painted or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, "Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

If every one of us were to do our duties with the same diligence and sense of dedication as St. Francis de Sales, the quality of our own very persons and ministry would have been very different. It is not the

titles or positions that we hold that make us great. On the other hand the love and the deep sense of dedication with which we do the things make us great, no matter we do small things or big things.

Of course my beloved confreres, all of us are committed in many ways. We are good people and we do many good things. But my honest question is: Is that really enough? The universal truth about whatever is good is that it implies always the possibility to become better and lead to the best. Being good (or rather being convinced of being good) gives us sometimes a feeling of self-satisfaction leading to self-complacency. This stops us from going any further. This induces into us a conviction that just minimum is enough. After all, I am doing well. Remember: Just being good is the minimum. Whereas, our call is to give the maximum.

By being a priest or religious I profess to give my Best. It is a free choice and free decision from my part. Although there may not be an external legal force to ensure the quality of my life and ministry, am I not bound to give the best?

I do not intend to make of you a performance oriented confrere! What I intend that all of us become beings of love after the example of our patron. Out of our BEST BEING emerges the BEST MINISTRY. A QUALITY BEING makes QUALITY MINISTRY possible. The quality ministry begins with our self. My ability to treat everyone with respect; my readiness to forgive the other; my being able to go beyond the mere fulfillment of laws and rules; my ability to recognize the great power within me and to act with that power irrespective of the positions I have and the titles I hold.

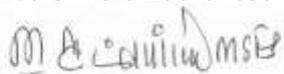
A person of average commitment and average quality of life looks for what is easy. But the person of single hearted commitment looks for what is best and what is right. It was not necessary for Francis de Sales to volunteer be a missionary in Chablais. No one ever pressurized him to write the spiritual classics. He was not compelled to take the risk of founding a religious order. Yet Francis de Sales did all of those things because he wanted to do the best.

He did in the best way because it emerged from his being of his very person made best through determination and discipline. Perhaps today we lack determination. Sometimes we are not disciplined. Our thoughts wander, our words hurting and accusing; our deeds loveless. Thus, our beings become distorted and as a result what suffers are: our ministry; the people entrusted to our care; our human relationships, our talents and above all we ourselves.

Beloved confreres, May the celebration of the SFS Feast this year, help us to think beyond the ordinary and give us the courage and good will to give our best in whatever we do. *Let us grow further.*

United with you in the Eucharistic Lord,

Yours in the Eucharistic Lord



Fr. Johnson Kallidukil msfs
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Only one thing is necessary: that our hearts remain united with God, resigned to serve with equal commitment whether we find ourselves in the comfort of fragrant roses or in the turmoil of bed of thorns.

St. Francis de Sales.