

# MISSIONARIES OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES

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*This Circular is dedicated exclusively for the MSFS Jubilee Year in East Africa*

Beloved Confreres, Collaborators, Friends and Well-wishers!

Greetings of peace and joy from Bagamoyo! I am here in Bagamoyo, in order to participate in the three-day-programs of the concluding celebrations of the Year of Faith at the national level in Tanzania. It is a gathering of almost 3000 Catholics from all over Tanzania, including bishops, priests, religious and laity representing all the dioceses and congregations, pious associations from all over the country. I find it more than a mere coincidence, that this circular dedicated to the MSFS Jubilee is being sent from the very place where first missionaries (Spiritan Fathers) landed in the year 1868 in East Africa Mainland. With deep respect we pay our homage to them.

## Introduction

This is the time when the year of many celebrations are being concluded. The observation of the year of faith is coming to a close; our jubilee celebrations at the congregational level and in various units are almost concluded. The much awaited, well anticipated and deeply prepared events of our Silver Jubilee in East Africa, are becoming part of the past. I would like to invite you to look at these memorable events in very realistic manner.

Concluding of the year of faith is not the conclusion of faith. On the other hand it is a great start and motivation for an enhanced life of faith at the individual and community level. Concluding of the year of our jubilee is not the end of jubilee and celebrations. On the other hand we begin yet another phase in our missionary life in East Africa, characterized by jubilation and celebrations.

## Pioneers and the Power of Choice

Our observation of the year of jubilee and the various jubilee celebrations and the connected activities have given us the insight into the myriad of blessings bestowed on us by the Almighty God in the past quarter of a century. It was a turning back in order to move forward. It was an experience of treading the paths walked by those who prepared the way for us; it was time of reminding ourselves of the exercise of the power of choice by our early missionaries – not only in East Africa but also in the early life the and history of the congregation. They had the choice to come or not to come; they had the choice to be or not to be missionaries; they had the choice to remain confined to a mere local church in a particular situation or to work towards the establishment of the Fransalian family in the way we are today. They made choices that demanded vision, courage and determination. They made choices that were not comfortable to them but that would bring comfort to the next generation. They have walked on the paths of rough stones and sharp thorns so that today the present generation can have smooth and safe paths. They have had many leaps into the dark so that today we have the light and direction in our being, becoming and in our mission.

## Let us dare for more!

Beloved confreres, today when we tread the already paved paths, when we feel secure and comfortable in the given situation, it should in no way imply lack of choices for us. It is not a signal to confine ourselves to the comfort zones not looking beyond the ordinary. The determination with which the early missionaries envisioned, lived and moved and worked should serve us as source of inspiration and new strength. If we confine ourselves to the existing situations and the possibilities in life, that would be the beginning of the end of the missionary dynamism of our mission in this part of the world. Drawing inspirations from the past we need to address the needs of the future. That implies for us too today, daring for walking even the thorny paths, and leaps into the unknown. This daring is to be lived at the personal and community level.

**Personal:** looking into my own self, being aware of what I am and what I can, accepting oneself as a child of God with all strengths and weakness; seeking the best and giving the best in me for the mission.

**Community:** Praying, deliberating and discerning as community united in mission, and taking steps that would initiate the pointers for the coming generations.

All these would involve sufferings and challenges from us. Do we really dare to do that? Jesus the first Missionary and the Leader in every mission was a daring person. When we dare, let it be after the example of Jesus himself, whose daring was the result of his union with the Father. St. Francis de Sales our Patron and Fr. Peter Mermier our holy founder are also examples for daring missionary zeal. Life is for those who dare. Let us dare again into the unknown being accompanied by the Holy Spirit as individuals and as community of Fransalian Family, so that what we do today including our sufferings and pain will set a path for the future. We had something great to celebrate in this jubilee year, for those who have gone before us have given their lives for us. It is now our turn to give our lives today so that those who come after us have something great to celebrate. Let us dare and let us dare for more.

## OUR GRATITUDE

It is our sacred duty to recall to mind, the wonderful ways in which God in his eternal plan sends several persons who were instrumental in making us what we are today. Each of them has played certain definite roles in their lives, connected to the MSFS in East Africa. We are in fact bound to them in an invisible and inseparable cord of spiritual link. Today we enjoy the fruits of their good thoughts and intentions. Had they not cooperated with the plan of God, had they decided otherwise, had they *Nos* instead of their *Yeses*, probably I would not be writing this circular and you would not be reading this either at this moment. If God has planned these moments in your life, he has made preparations for it, involving so many persons and situations in in the past. My beloved confreres, this very moment in your life – moment of reading this circular would not have been there if many of those connected with our history had decided otherwise. We are aware of some of them, yet some are not even known to us. Some are with us today, yet some are no more alive here on earth. Let me mention some of them. At the very outset let me admit that this list is in no way exhaustive.

### Archbishop Marko Mihayo of Tabora: Passionate Prelate for Missionary Presence

The initial official contact with the local church in Tanzania and MSFS authorities in view of missionary expansion started as early as in the year 1975. The connecting link was Fr. Armind Nazareth MSFS who has Tabora in Tanzania as the place of birth. As a priest he had visited Tabora a couple of times in the 1970s. Upon seeing the young

dynamic missionary priest, naturally the then Archbishop Most Rev. Marko Mihayo presented to him the matter of getting personnel from the MSFS to his Archdiocese. He was insistent that MSFS come into his archdiocese. When our first study team from India (Fr. Midathada Mariadas MSFS and Fr. Devasia Kuzhupil MSFS on March 20, 1987) met him in the parish of Ipuli, Tabora, Tanzania where he had retired due to his canonical age, but was active in the parish as an assistant to the young vicar, the prelate received them with open arms and joyful tears. He blurted out: ***“At last you have come - I am very happy. – Now I can say with all my heart: Nunc dimittis, Domine*** and he added, ***“you will see the situation with your own eyes as you go around the Archdiocese. Kindly send soon at least 40 missionaries.***

This was the resilient longing with which the late Archbishop waited for the missionaries. A visionary idea from him came to reality after almost twelve years of patient waiting. May his soul REST IN PEACE.

### **Archbishop Mario Abdullah Mgulunde: The Father of Fransalians in East Africa**

The history of MSFS in East Africa would not be complete without paying due tribute to the late Archbishop Mario Abdullah Mgulunde of Tabora. Many of us in the early history of MSFS in Tanzania were really privileged to have encountered him and to experience his genuine love and care. The bishop’s house was a home for the missionaries, always being welcomed, and archbishop himself being available to the priests whenever they come from parishes covering long distances. He was a real father-figure to all and showed genuine concern for the missionaries. He was a man of deep faith and extreme cordiality, was good and kind towards us. .... He told to our fathers who came for the study visit: ***Dear Fathers, send us as many missionaries as possible. We shall do our best to take good care of them.*** This great pastor kept his word, in spite of the meagre resources of the Archdiocese. His goodness, missionary concern and all possible helps have encouraged us missionaries throughout the years. It was his generosity to bless our initiative to establish our own community in Morogoro i.e., outside the Archdiocese of Tabora. In deep appreciation of the MSFS he made the public remark that MSFS was running very fast in terms of missionary development and expansion. May his soul REST IN PEACE.

### **Rev. Fr. Emile Mayoraz MSFS: Our Inspiration and Solace**

Anyone who is familiar with the early history of MSFS in East Africa would agree without a second thought that if not for Fr. Emile Mayoraz and his charismatic leadership; his keen interest in the infant mission in East Africa and his fervent trust and missionary courage – the MSFS in East Africa would not have thrived as it did. Fr. Mayoraz came into the scene at the right moment in history or rather he did the right things at the right time making the history of MSFS a right one. He acknowledged, “My own one ambition is to be totally committed to live in intimacy with Jesus and to follow Him, for the realization of His mission. In fact, the Holy Spirit is at work through us, when we are totally open to Him and His action of sanctification. (Fr. Emile Mayoraz in this thanks giving address at the General Chapter – 2001.) Fr. Mayoraz is very dear to the East African mission. The entire Province is indebted to him and extends to him prayerful gratitude. His genuine concern not only for the growth of the mission but also for the personal welfare for each confrere was very astounding. May God continue to bless him with all that he needs especially good health so that he will continue to be a blessing for many.

## **Rev. Fr. Mariadas Midathada MSFS: the Architect of African Mission**

From the time the African mission was in planning until the end of his days Fr. Mariadas Midathada was very much part of the African mission. It was during his tenure as the Provincial Superior of the erstwhile Visakhapatnam Province, concrete steps were taken to launch the African Mission. Under the directives of Rev. Fr. Emile Mayoraz the then Superior General correspondence with the Archdiocese of Tabora was revived. In March 1987, Fr. Midathada Mariadas along with Fr Devasia Kuzhupil, the then councillor in-charge of mission and evangelization came to Tanzania for the spot study. Apart from the spot study and initial preparations, he was fully into the mission encouraging the confreres and motivating them to opt for this new venture.

Fr. Mariadas Midathada in his capacity as the Provincial superior visited again the Tanzanian mission from July 1 to 26, 1990. The details of his extensive travel and visit are given in his circular dated August 28, 1990 on the occasion of the bicentenary of the birth of our Founder Servant of God Fr. Peter Mary Mermier. He wrote: *My recent visit to our missions in Tanzania, East Africa was blissful and fruitful..... All were extremely kind to me and have evinced excellent welcoming and accepting attitude, "Karibu" in their language Swahili. ....At present our confreres are working in two dioceses: Tabora and Morogoro. They are doing very well. Local people love them very much for their simple sincere and honest way of religious and missionary life. "*

In the same circular he made the missionary appeal to the confreres in the following manner: *Hence during the Bicentenary of the Birth of our Founder, Fr. Peter Mermier who expressed his desire in clear terms "I want missions" and offered himself for African mission, I take this opportunity to make an earnest appeal to you, my dear confreres; if you feel to devote yourself to African mission, please give your names. The words of our Divine Lord are quite apt to us in the present African situation: "The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. God bless your good will, generous efforts and above all your sacrificing spirit.*

He also had made personal contact with the confreres whose names were proposed by the pioneers as would be and fitting missionaries in Africa. It is this emphatic appeal made in the erstwhile Vizag Province as well as in other Provinces in India, which inspired a few priests and seminarians to opt for the African Mission. May his soul REST IN PEACE.

## **Rev. Fr. Devasia Kuzhupil MSFS: The Pioneer of the Pioneers**

Fr. Devasia Kuzhupil who was to lead the team of the pioneers was a great visionary. The extraordinary vision of this great missionary played a great role in the implanting of the MSFS mission in Africa. It was very daring step from the part of Fr. Devasia Kuzhupil to opt for African mission and to set an example to the young confreres. He was 63 years when he opted for the mission! Although he remained in Tanzania only for a short while, the impressions he had made are long lasting. There are still people in Lububu and some of the elderly priests in Tabora who remember and cherish his graceful and magnanimous personality. It is this magnanimity and far sighted vision that enabled him to prepare the would-be leaders who would take the MSFS mission in Africa to new strides. He would withdraw from the scenario of active and direct mission but would support enormously from the background, leaving the credit to those in the field. After he returned, he issued a *four-page writing* as an appendix to the circular of Vizag Province.

I believe it is not mere coincidence that Fr. Devasia was called to eternal rest in this jubilee year. I had the opportunity to meet him in October 2012 just after we had

opened the jubilee year. It was with a great sense of satisfaction and with a heart filled with love that he listened to some news from African Missions. His transformed and transcended presence is one of the jubilee gifts for us who are still on mission here. May his soul REST IN PEACE.

### **Rev. Fr. Augustine Mangatt MSFS: The daring power of East African MSFS**

After Fr. Devasia Kuzhupil left for India on February 7, 1989 the task of leading the pioneering ream fell on Fr. Augustine Mangatt. On July 30, 1989, Fr. Augustine Mangatt left for Morogoro in order to establish the MSFS house in Morogoro and Fr. Sebastian Kuzhupil was appointed as the parish priest of Lububu. By that time Fr. Mathew Chavely had already arrived in Lububu adding lot of strength and life to the pioneering team. In Morogoro we could procure some plots of land through the good services of the Holy Cross Sisters of Chavanod. The blessing and laying of the foundation stone of our first ever MSFS Community house in Africa was done on October 1, 1989 on the feast of St. Theresa of Child Jesus, the patroness of the mission. Later when the mission unit in East Africa was raised to Region Fr. Augustine was appointed as the first Regional Superior. In the year 1996 when the Region was to a Province he served as the interim Provincial until the newly appointed Provincial Fr. Thomas Kochuparampil took charge. In the year 1997 Fr. Augustine moved to Kenya as pioneer in order to expand the MSFS presence to Kenya. Since then he continued to work in Kenya coordinating the missions in Kenya until he was elected the General Bursar in the year 2007. He was also instrumental in expanding the MSFS presence some of the other African Missions.

We see in Fr. Augustine a daring personality who ventures into things. Many of the communities and projects that we have today were his initiatives. He is a person who reminds us to have deep faith in God. He can relate to people at the heart level and so nothing stands as barrier for him in establishing contacts and relationships. He is not afraid of taking risks, for his life giving force is the question of St. Paul: *When Christ is with us who can be against us?* He was very much instrumental in giving a vibrant missionary thrust to MSFS mission in Africa. We appreciate his every loving and supporting presence in our mission and wish him every blessing he is in need of.

### **Rev. Fr. Sebastian Kuzhupil MSFS: The Call within the Call to be a Healer**

Being one of the pioneers, he was fully into the pastoral ministry in Tabora. Soon he discerned that there was the great need for the people to be healed. The life of the faith was in need of healing: physical, spiritual, emotional and social etc. It was a moment of rediscovery for him to recognize and to exercise the God-given power to heal. That was the need of the time, need of the place and the people. Realising this possibility, Fr. Sebastian was freed from the direct pastoral responsibilities and was entrusted with the task of healing ministry. In 1997 he moved to Morogoro, where we have the Mermier Holistic Healing Centre. During these two decades plus time period, a few hundred thousands have surely sought help from Fr. Sebastian. Although ageing and being alone, in his apostolate he is never tired of giving service. There is hardly any confrere here who has not benefited from his healing ministry – which is a unique contribution of the Fransalians to the Church and Society in East Africa. Bishops and priests, religious, politicians, business persons, people - poor and rich - from far off villages and cities... all are his clients. From dawn to dusk, every Monday to Friday year after year this ministry goes on. According to him, getting to know in a very deep manner the tradition of various tribes, the cultural practises would help to offer the person holistic healing. Added to this service there is also Mermier Optical Centre where Fr. Sebastian and his team render services of eye check-up and provide lenses. We thank Fr.

Sebastian for his unique service and wish him all the strength required to carry on this ministry with the spirit of perseverance.

### **Rev. Fr. Thomas Kochuparampil MSFS: The Pioneer who piloted the Province**

Fr. Thomas was the youngest in the pioneering team. After being here in Tanzania for a couple of years he completed his higher studies in Germany. In the year 1996 when the East African Mission was raised to the status of a Province he was the one to lead the Province as the Provincial Superior for three consecutive terms lasting nine years. Traversing miles and miles even in worst weather and road conditions he visited the missions and encouraged the confreres. His persevering efforts helped the mission to live a life characterized by deep sense of trust in God and true spiritual life. After his immeasurable service as the leader, he was entrusted with another pioneering task of initiating the Lumen Christi Institute at Maji ya Chai Arusha. To this day he continues to serve at LCI as the Superior of the community, Lecturer at LCI, Administrator of LCI and also rendering regular pastoral service in the Archdiocese of Arusha. May God give him good health and renewed determination to go ahead with courage in the African missionary journey he began over a quarter of a century ago.

### **Rev. Fr. Thomas Olickal MSFS: Unassuming leader and Friend of all**

After Fr. Thomas Kochuparampil laid down his office after completing his term for the third time, the task of leading the Province in East Africa was entrusted to Fr. Thomas Olickal. Six years at the helm and being focussed on the mission and direction of the East African Province, the tasks accomplished by him are numerous. In spite of various challenges of lack of personnel and lack of resources, he took remarkable and daring steps to meet the needs of the mission as well as to give us a firm foundation for the MSFS Mission in East Africa. A person of simplicity who cared least for the formalities of position, he was approachable and attended to the needs of every mission with a caring attitude. At this juncture as we thank him and thank the Lord for the many blessings through his life, we also need to pray for him very specially as he is taking treatment for cancer. May the healing touch of the Lord be on him.

### **Rev. Fr. Amirthanayagam Gabriel MSFS: The Human Scholar**

*What has late Fr. Gabriel to do with MSFS Mission in East Africa?* May be the spontaneous thought coming to the mind of many of the young confreres. I do not think, I can get another opportunity to pay him our tribute than placing in record in this circular the remarkable support given by him for the MSFS Mission in East Africa. Fr. Gabriel was here a few times with the mission of giving lectures at St. Paul Major Seminary, Kipalapala, Tabora and Salvatorian Institute for Theology and Philosophy (Now Jordan University College) Morogoro. He was a scholar who was truly human. His learning never separated him from the ground realities of life of an ordinary person. His classes were very much appreciated and welcomed. But more than that, I would like to underline the fact that Fr. Gabriel had a heart for African Mission and for the people of Africa. He always encouraged the young confreres to opt for African Mission. He had great dreams for Africa. The so called Mission Institute in Africa (now taken the form of LCI) was shared by him even before the ideas were put down officially in papers. His untimely departure is a great loss for the Church, for entire Congregation and very specially to the African Mission. (I recommend reading his contribution titled: **At home in Tanzania** - in the Decennial Souvenir of MSFS in East Africa. May his soul REST IN PEACE.

## Rev. Fr. Josef Giefing: Fallen in Love with Africa

After typing the name of Fr. Giefing, my first instinct was to add MSFS to his name. Had I done so, there is a juridical error, however practically I would not be wrong. Although not a professed member of the MSFS Congregation, he is part and parcel of the Fransalian Family in East Africa. Going through the Souvenir prepared on the occasion of the Decennial celebration of the MSFS in East Africa, we can find an Article by Fr. Giefing. It is titled: **My new Love**. May I quote him: ***“What a change! Five years ago I was still telling everybody, I will never travel to African or Asian countries. It is very dangerous. Snakes, scorpions, different diseases will keep me away from these countries.”*** Later in 1993 he happened to visit Tanzania due to some circumstantial pressure. After that visit he wrote: ***“... This was my first contact with MSFS Fathers. From the first day of my stay here in Tanzania, I have fallen in love with this country, her people and her nature. Also the hospitality and kindness of MSFS impressed me very much.”***

Fr. Giefing, diocesan clergy from Eisenstaedt, Austria – who was *Afraid of Africa* later took the daring decision of being a missionary in Africa. As an associate member of the Fransalians he worked in the Diocese of Kahama and in the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam for a period of almost a decade. Fr. Giefing who was afraid of the snakes and scorpions and diseases of Africa comes to Tanzania every year to spend the annual holidays! Not because snakes and scorpions are no more there, not because he was never sick here, but he has been touched by Africa! It was not merely Fr. Giefing coming to work in Africa but it was the beginning of the close collaboration between the MSFS in East Africa and the Diocese of Eisenstaedt. We whole heartedly thank Fr. Josef Giefing, Diocese of Eisenstaedt, Burgenland community whose love and generosity we have all shared and share even today.

## Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod

It was, I believe, the wish of our holy founder Servant of God Fr. Peter Mary Mermier that the “Sister” comes to receive the “brother” into the African continent. The Holy Cross Sisters were in Tanzania as early as 1986. They were working in the Apostolic Nunciature in Dar es Salaam as well as Teaching at St. Peter’s Seminary in Morogoro. It was Sr. Petronilla and Sr. Mary George who received our pioneers at Dar es Salaam International Airport on December 31, 1987. Surely they have played a vital role in making our confreres feel at home in the foreign land, facilitated their stay in Dar es Salaam until they got the transport to Tabora (by flight 2 hours; by road 920 Kms). Later it was through the instrumentality of Sr. Annie and other Holy Cross Sisters who were already in Morogoro, MSFS could get land in Morogoro and to establish our first house in Africa – the house which serves today as the Provincial House of the MSFS in East Africa. On behalf of the entire Fransalian community in East Africa may express our deep sentiments of gratitude to the Holy Cross Sisters for their support to the MSFS all through the years.

## Our thanks to the Civil Governments

The place where our pioneers (and most of us for that matter) landed is called Dar es Salaam, the port city and former capital and the present business and functional capital of Tanzania. The name Dar es Salaam means: **Harbour of peace!** It is true. East Africa is rated to be one of the most peaceful parts in Africa – in contrast to the many war-torn nations where civil insurgences are very common. The socio-political scenario is very much conducive for missionary activities and works of evangelization. Religion is left to the personal freedom of the individual and by and large there is mutual respect among

the people of various faiths. The hallowed constitutions of the East African nations allow freedom religion and the state is free from religion.

We bow in deep gratitude to all the civil and political leaders under whose guidelines and protection we move and work. May East Africa and the entire African continent be blessed with lasting peace and harmony. God bless Africa!

### **Our thanks to the Local Ordinaries and the Diocesan Clergy**

As of now Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales is working in eight Dioceses/Archdioceses in East Africa. They are: in Uganda: Archdiocese of Tororo; In Kenya: the Diocese of Meru and the Diocese of Machakos; in Tanzania: Archdiocese of Tabora, Diocese of Kahama, Diocese of Morogoro, Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam and Archdiocese of Arusha. Some of the Local Ordinaries who invited us are no more in office, some are already called to eternal life. As members of Holy Mother Church it is always under the patronage of and with the blessings of the Local Ordinaries we live and exercise our Apostolate. I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to:

- His Eminence Polycarp Cardinal Pengo, the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- His Grace Paul Ruzoka the Archbishop of Tabora, Tanzania
- His Grace Josephat Lebulu the Archbishop of Arusha, Tanzania
- His Grace Denis Kiwanuka Lote, the Archbishop of Tororo Uganda
- His Lordship Salesius Mugambi Bishop of Meru, Kenya
- His Lordship Martin Kivuva Musonde the Bishop of Machakose, Kenya
- His Lordship Joseph Ludovic Minde the Bishop of Kahama, Tanzania
- His Lordship Telsphore Mkude the Bishop of Morogoro, Tanzania
- His Lordship Eusebius Nzigilwa the Auxiliary Bishop of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- His Lordship Titus Mdoe the Auxiliary Bishop of Dar es Salaam and
- His Lordship Salutaris Melchior Libena one of the former Auxiliary bishops of Dar es Salaam and currently the Bishop of Ifakara Diocese, Tanzania.

There are other Local Ordinaries during whose terms of office we made the entry into those dioceses and now they are retired and some of them are called to Eternal rest.

- His Lordship Bishop Emeritus Matthias Shija of Kahama Diocese, Tanzania
- His Lordship late Bishop Adrian Mkoba the former Bishop of Morogoro Diocese, Tanzania. RIP
- His Lordship Bishop Emeritus Silas Njeru of Meru Diocese, Kenya
- His Lordship late Bishop Urbanus Joseph Kioko the former Bishop of Machakos Diocese, Kenya. RIP
- His Grace Archbishop James Odongo the former Archbishop of Tororo Archdiocese, Uganda.

Besides, as we have confreres working/ studying outside of East Africa (India, Europe and USA). We also acknowledge with sincere thanks and appreciation all the Local Ordinaries in whose jurisdiction our confreres live and work.

We also thank the numerous diocesan priests in the all dioceses where we are present for the support they give to us as our brothers.

### **Formation Houses in East Africa**

From the very beginning of the MSFS Mission in Africa there was the thrust to promote vocations for this mission from India as well as from East Africa. With the arrival of Fr. Sunny Mattathil and Fr. Alexander Singarayan (then as seminarians) on January 6, 1989 a new vista was opened and many followed. In the training of the seminarians from India as well as from East Africa, we relied on the already existing seminaries and it was an act of concern and welcome from the local church. I here express our deep sentiments of gratitude to the Local Ordinaries, Major Superiors, Rector and the Staff of these seminaries where our seminarians once studied or are still studying.

- St. Paul's Senior Seminary Kipalapala, Tabora, Tanzania
- Jordan University College, Morogoro, Tanzania
- Spiritan's Mission Seminary Njiro, Arusha Tanzania
- Blessed Bakanja College, Nairobi, Kenya

May God bless their generosity and good will.

### **God gives us our Manna through human hands!**

God complements man's good will and readiness to work. This was the constant experience of the MSFS in East Africa. Starting everything from the scratches, we have experienced the accompanying presence of God in our lives all these years. From time to time and in His own manner God has sent people of good will who were ready to make many sacrifices for us. These persons and some of the organizations are inseparable from the history of MSFS in Africa.

May I mention some of them:

- ❖ **Salesan e.V.** in Switzerland through the initiative of Fr. Augustine Mangatt and instrumentality of family of Mr. Werner Mueller and his friends.
- ❖ **Living Waters International Inc.** in USA through the instrumentality of family of Mr. Steve Zimmerman and his friends. (We fondly remember also late Mrs. Mary Zimmermann. RIP).
- ❖ **SL Paul Foundation** in USA through the good will and generosity of Fr. Paul Sankoorickal
- ❖ **John Judie Ministries** in USA through the infinitive of Rev. Fr. John Judie in USA
- ❖ **Maisha Pamoja e.V.** in Germany through the initiatives of our confers working in Germany under the leadership of Fr. Thomas Chozhithara in collaboration with the many young volunteers who assisted us in our apostolate in East Africa.

There are other several individuals and organisations that deserve our sincere appreciation and thanks. I would like to mention some of them: Kindly note that I can never make a list that is all exhaustive. Here are some our patrons, partners and collaborators in terms of resource generation management and spiritual support.

- Augustine Stewardship, USA
- Benedictines Muensterschwarzach, Germany
- Benedictines Uznach, Swizerand
- Caritas Italiana

- Catholic Dioceses of Koeln, Rotterburg, Wuerzburg, Eissenstaedt and Regensburg
- Church in Need Germany
- COMIDE Belgium
- Eine Welt Kreis Wuerzburg Germany
- Friends of St. Francis Sales, Singapore
- Holy Childhood, Rome
- Ingembol Sisters Germany
- Italian Episcopal Conference
- Jasani Foundation Nairobi
- Koch Foundation Inc. USA
- Loyola Foundation, USA
- Manos Unidas Spain
- Missio Aachen Germany
- Missio Austria
- Missionary Sisters of St. Peter Claver, Rome
- MIVA Austria
- MIVA Switzerland
- OFID, Austria
- Propganda Fidei, Rome
- Rotary Club Karlsatd-Arnstein- Germany
- Rotary Club Regensburg, Germany
- Semper Altius Italy
- Spanish Episcopal Conference
- Stiching Porticus Netherland
- Symphais Foundation Switzerland
- Totus Touus, Canada

In this context, I would like to mention also USA Vice Province of MSFS. Being aware of the need for support for the mission in East Africa, with the initiatives and interest of **Rev. Fr. Augustine Tharappel MSFS** the present Vice Provincial and the former Regional Superior, through the mission appeals organized every year with the good will of the confreres working in USA, we have received and we do still receive, many a blessing supporting our endeavours in East Africa.

Besides, there are several individuals and families from all over the world, who are part of the very life and mission of Fransalian Family in East Africa. I must also acknowledge and appreciate the efforts made by our confreres working in developed countries, in mobilizing resources for the mission works in East Africa.

Our beloved Mission-Friends, We the Fransalians have nothing to offer back to you except our prayers and good wishes. If not for all of you the esteemed organizations, associations, the dedicated staff, the generous benefactors and well-wishers our engagement here in this part of the world would have been very limited. May God bless all of you. May God bless your families. May God bless the work of your hands.

### **Collaboration with Laity and Other Institutes of Consecrated life**

In order to function more effectively and practically and to ease the dire situation of lack of personnel from the very beginning we have sought the assistance of laity and other religious in our various apostolates. During the last 25 Silver Years of MSFS in East

Africa, there was very close association and collaboration with other religious congregations in our various apostolates: Those collaborators of the past and present at the Province level, in the parish and institutional level include:

- Ancillae Secular Institute
- Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate
- Congregation of Mother Carmel
- Daughters of Mary, Tabora
- Daughters of St Francis de Sales
- Franciscan Clarist Sisters
- Franciscan Sisters of the Kingdom of Christ
- Holy Spirit Sisters
- Little Sisters of Africa
- Maryknoll Sisters
- Misericordia Sisters of Verona
- Sisters of Holy Cross of Mercy
- Sisters of Mary Immaculate
- Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro
- Sisters of St. Anns of Luzern
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy
- Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod
- Ursuline Sisters

We are grateful to them for the support and collaboration the lay people and these congregations have extended and do provide in our ministry. It is a matter of joy to note that among them most of the missionary congregations are now with the local vocations are getting rooted in the mission land.

### **Our beneficiaries- our greatest Benefactors**

May I now turn to the people with whom we work and for who we commit ourselves. It is said: ***Customer is the king***. The beneficiaries of our service and ministry in East Africa are in fact our greatest benefactors. The faithful in our parishes, the pupils and students in our educational institutions, the recipients of our services in the health and social work sectors – all of them give meaning and reason for our being here as religious and missionaries. If not for their receptivity and supportive collaboration; if not for their interest to hear the Word of God; if not for their quest for knowledge; if not for their longing to be liberated from powers and practices that are contrary to the Gospel values, our works as missionaries would not have born any fruit. In fact the community of believers and non- believers who long for the Word of God and healing and liberation are the reason for our being here. Their prayers, hospitality, care and concern speak volumes of the appreciation of our missionary presence in this part of the world.

### **THE REST OF THE FRANSALIAN FAMILY**

#### **The General Curia**

The General Administrations from the past to this day considered the MSFS Mission in Africa as something very significant. More than mere juridical relationship there was always a supportive emotional connectivity to this mission from the part of the General Curia. Be it Rev. Fr. Emile Mayoraz and Rev. Fr. Agnelo Fernandes the former Superiors General or Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil the present Superior General and their team of General Curia, the African Mission was given due consideration and recognition. Yes the

African Mission was the dream of our holy founder Fr. Peter Mermier. It only right and just that we focus on this dream and help to realize it. In a very special way I thank Rev. Fr. Thomas Cherukatt the former Assistant Superior General and once a missionary in Africa for his constant support to our mission here. We pray for the blessings of God up on those were and who are in General Administration for their loving support to us.

### **The erstwhile Visakhapatnam Province**

On the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the MSFS, late Fr. Devasia Kuzhupil wrote: **The African Mission is the greatest Jubilee Souvenir.** In fact East African Mission establishment was an off-shoot of the missionary dynamism of the then erstwhile Visakhapatnam Province. There was regular communication, visits and encouragement from the Province. The province authorities spoke with passion for the African mission and that enthused and inspired many to opt for the mission here. There was also lot of autonomy given to mission here to make certain decisions in the given context of the mission, avoiding complicated processes and subsequent delays. May God bless all who were instrumental in fostering the MSFS Mission in East Africa.

### **Collaboration with Other Provinces**

From the very beginning, the growth of East African Mission of the MSFS was blessed with the close collaboration with the rest of the Fransalian family. Over the years we had a few confreres who voluntarily rendered their services here, some still enrich us with their presence and ministry, some of the confreres who were here when they returned to the homeland they were absorbed in one or other of the Indian Provinces:

#### Those confreres who were part of this Province and are now elsewhere:

1. Fr. Alexander Singarayan MSFS now in South East Province
2. Fr. Boney Chundakattil now laicized
3. Fr. Chacko Koodathinal now laicized
4. Fr. Jose Parambukattil MSFS now in Nagpur Province
5. Fr. KVS Prasad MSFS now in Vizag Province
6. Fr. Nusi Konda Reddy now in Vizag Province
7. Fr. Sebastian Kunnapally now a diocesan cleric

#### Those who rendered their services for a particular period of time

1. Fr. Antony Rajesh MSFS from SE India Province
2. Fr. Jacob Puthiyidathuchalil MSFS from North East India Province/ SA Region
3. Fr. Kallachery Joseph MSFS from SW India Province
4. Fr. Kinalia Savio MSFS from Pune Province
5. Fr. Simon Raja MSFS from SE India Province
6. Fr. X. Vincent MSFS from SE India Province

#### Those from other Provinces now rendering services in East Africa

1. Fr. Babu Kudakkachirakunnel MSFS from North East India Province/ SA Region
2. Fr. Joseph Vettukattil MSFS from SW India Province
3. Fr. Kuldeep Kujur MSFS SW India Province/ Chad – Cameroon Mission

All these are examples of the encouraging support that we have received and we do still receive from the rest of the congregation.

### **MSAF & Lumen Christi Institute: Collaborative efforts in Africa**

Forming the Mission Superiors Africa Forum (MSAF) and the establishing of the Mission Institute, christened as Lumen Christi Institute at Maji ya Chai, Arusha, Tanzania, are vivid expressions of the collaborative efforts from the entire congregation. From the very beginning almost all the administrative units of the congregation were involved in its establishment. Through sending formees and staff to LCI from various mission units in Africa, through the material and spiritual supports we jointly uphold our commitment to this joint venture. The presence of LCI in East Africa is a blessing for us. May I express once again all the mission units in Africa and all the Provincials and the General Administration for their constant support and encouragements.

### **The Departed Confreres: Our Jubilee Angels**

All through the years, we had experienced several accidents, major and minor; we had to face many attacks from robbers – sometimes being kidnapped, kept at gun point, sometimes badly beaten, humiliated; at times affected by illnesses, discouraged and lifeless! Yet in all these situations and occasions, God the giver of life spared us from the reality of death. But the reality of death of confrere came to us in this Year of Jubilees. Least expected, least wished and in a least expected manner! **We believe: God does not make mistake.** Perhaps the best jubilee gift for us from God was the death of our beloved confreres **Fr. James Nedungatt** and **Fr. Lourance Thadathil** – together with the death of **Fr. Devasia Kuzhupil** one of the pioneers in East Africa. They have shifted their ministry from earth to heaven. They are the angels now specially praying for us and our mission here on earth. Let us thank God for the courage and serenity given to us in accepting the reality of these deaths and comment our lives unto Him who is the author and designer of our lives. May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God REST IN PEACE! Amen.

### **Seeking Pardon and Blessings**

Jubilee is also the time to acknowledge the greatness of God and to confess our limitations. It is also the time to rectify things. We are not angels with a mission here in East Africa. All of us are mere human beings attempting to accomplish a divine mission here on earth. It is only natural and possible that at times we have failed in our duty, we have made mistakes, we have not given due respect to the other, we have failed to understand and esteem other cultures and traditions, we have not set the correct priorities etc. There may have been occasions we as Fransalians in East Africa failed to live and communicate Gospel values. There may be occasions when our conduct was scandalous or giving counter witness. I believe that in and through all these negative experiences and failures, God was preparing us for our growth.

Now on this occasion of the Jubilee year, on behalf of the entire Fransalian Family in East Africa, may I, as the father of this religious family, humbly acknowledge before all, our faults and failures and seek everyone's pardon and blessings. Beloved confreres, let us also among ourselves as brothers in the Fransalian Family move on with hearts free from any bitterness over the things of the past. Ministry emerging from such a beautiful state will be the most efficacious and valuable service we can do for the church and society. Above all that is the biggest good we can do to our own Fransalian Family.

## And you my beloved Father and Brother!

With deep sense of pride of your presence in the MSFS East African Family, I salute each one of you. Without you there is no Fransalian Family in East Africa. Without each one of you there would not have been a jubilee year and our various jubilee activities and the jubilee celebrations. We are privileged to be part of this history when beloved Fransalian Family is celebrating 175 years of its existence, 25 years of MSFS in Africa along with 150<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of our holy founder Servant of God Fr. Peter Mary Mermier. These are the three beautiful rose plants offered to us by God in the lovely basket of the Year of Faith!

Ever since we opened the jubilee year on September 14, 2012 at the Salvation Hill Lububu, Tanzania we have celebrated the jubilee year in various occasions, in various communities and institutions in various forms – the culmination of which we had on October 26, 2013 in Morogoro. We had several plans for the jubilee year – some of which we could accomplish, some partially and some not yet and some are still being carried out.

I thank you for your whole hearted commitment for the mission given to you. The interest with which you were part of the jubilee and its activities, the jubilee celebrations etc is a clear expression of your deep love for the mission and your sense of belonging to the Fransalian Family in East Africa. Some of you could not be present for the final celebrations due to reasons of your commitments, health and long distances. Yet your prayers, good wishes, congratulatory notes and good will was a great source of strength for me and for all during the last days of hectic activities. My sincere thanks to each one of you dear Father, dear Brother for making our jubilee year a memorable and meaningful one.

As I had shared earlier, what we have celebrated is not what we have done. We are not proclaiming our works and achievements. On the other hand we have celebrated and we still do celebrate what God has done for us. It was a time of thanksgiving, offering at the feet of the Lord, our missions and all the people and everything entrusted to our care. United in the Lord as Fransalian Family in East Africa let us move forward with renewed strength, clearer vision and a stronger sense of purpose. May the prayers of our beloved Patron St. Francis de Sales, our Holy Founder Servant of God Fr. Peter Mermier and the intercessions of our Beloved Mother Mary be our support in our missionary journey.

## Conclusion

As I wind up this writing, and as we begin yet another phase in the life and mission of MSFS in this part of the world, may I remind you about our total continued dependence on God in and through our faith and through people and situations around us and connected with us.

I had stated in my last circular that: *If not for the grace of God and if not for **the other** we MSFS would not have been in Africa – that too all these 25 years in the way we are!*

I would like to repeat my words from the previous circular in this regard:

**(Who is the other?)** The so called *other* is the people with whom we live and for whom we minister; *the other* is the rest of the Fransalian family whose encouragement and support we constantly enjoyed; the other is the ecclesiastical and civil authorities under whose guidance and protection we live and move; *the other* is our every benefactor and organization whose generosity we enjoy; *the other* is every child whose smile and playfulness – at times even being naughty - enlivened our dispirited hearts; *the other* is

everyone who taking our hands in theirs and said to us with gentle smile, *Karibu....feel at home!*; *the other* is everyone who took care of us when we were just flat with sickness and accidents; *the other* is several committed persons who served us in our communities – domestic servants, staff etc - all these years; *the other* is all those who silently pray for us even though far from us and even though sometimes we do not know them. *The other* includes every needy person who knocked at our door and who gave us the chance to practice patience and generosity; *The other* includes even the robbers and thieves – whose atrocities taught us to depend more on God and to lead a life of better discipline.

We find God sending *the other* to us each time we were in need of them – in times of problems, sickness, deaths, hardships, the angel of God was sent to us as *the other*. Hence let our jubilee celebration be an act of thanksgiving to God and to *the other*. May *the other* be blessed more and more through our further life of consecration and committed missionary life. Let our prayer be: Lord bless *the other* for you have blessed us through them.)

As true members of the Fransalian Family in East Africa, may I remind each one of you of you of your call to be the so called other to the rest of the Fransalian Family. That is our call to be good religious, imbibing the attitude of Jesus. Many such good religious would form a good religious community from which good apostolic and missionary activities emerge.

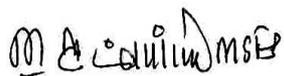
Let us be what God has called us to be and then let us do what God wants us to do.

*May God bless Fransalians!*

*May God bless all those who are part of our mission and ministry!*

*May God bless Africa!*

In the Eucharistic Lord



Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS  
(Provincial MSFS East Africa Province)

***We have done all things in Him who gives us strength.***

*(cfr. Phil.4:13)*