

MISSIONARIES OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES

Fransalians - Province of East Africa

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Beloved Confreres,

Today we begin the novena to St. Francis de Sales. It is indeed a blessing for us to celebrate the feast of our patron in the very first month of every New Year. Any devotion of novena is often considered as a set of prayers for particular favours. However I consider it much more than that. The prayers that we make and the reflections that we share during this novena are true reminders of our obligation to be true sons of St. Francis de Sales. That is our specific call to be MSFS.

How blessed are we to have a patron full of love! This love was characterized by deep faith, gentleness, humility, hard work and concern for the people under his care. He is considered to be an authority on love not because of what he wrote but because of what he was: A person of sincere and deep love for every human being. Such a person can see things with the eyes of God. Such a person sees in the other the image of God and one's own image which means: to be able to see God and self in the other. When we grow to that extent, the other is no more object of our negativity (criticism, resentments, ill-feelings, indifference etc) but the subject of our love.

Why do I say *Subject of love* and not the *object of love*? Grammatically when I say I love someone, that someone is in *accusative case*. That someone becomes the object of my action that is love. That is not so in true Christian love. **When God who is love, loves us we are not mere objects but he enables each one to be subjects of love; to be beings of love. When we love the other with same love as God loves us we too make the other subjects of love.** Which means true love generates love; in true love the recipient becomes again agent of love and subject of love. In love that is not from divine, the other becomes object and we can never term it love in the true sense. There will be only appearance of love and I tend to be the recipient rather than giver of love. It is this scenario that is called selfishness. When I do not get that from those persons whom I take for granted as objects, I become disappointed. Then comes anger, arrogance, ill-feelings, resentments. The other becomes my enemy; the other is at fault and is a hindrance for me. But in fact I am the starting point of this misery.

Our beloved patron St. Francis de Sales realized this truth and lived this truth in his daily life. He wrote: *The loving heart loves God's Commandments; and the harder they are the more sweet and agreeable it finds them.* Thus only a person who has love can live the obligations of consecrated life. As Fransalian missionaries when we are (full of) love, even the most difficult situations of life; hard demands of evangelical counsels and community life become *sweet and agreeable*. As we prepare for the feast and when we celebrate the feast, may we be filled with love. May our hearts be free from all ill feelings and resentments, bitterness over the negative experiences of the past and the fear of commitment to love.

With these reflections, may I wish you a very happy feast of our heavenly patron St. Francis de Sales. Let us become true subjects of love after the noble example of our patron. May

divine love fill our hearts, our homes, our communities and be radiated further in our apostolate.

Congratulations: New Archbishop of Tororo, Uganda

The Archdiocese of Tororo in Uganda has new Archbishop in the person of his Lordship **Most Rev. Emmanuel Obbo** from the Congregation of Apostles of Jesus. Until now he was the Bishop of Soroti Diocese in Uganda. The installation will be on March 1, 2014. I request your prayers for the new leader of Tororo Archdiocese.

Our Gratitude: His Grace Denis Lote Kiwanuka.

We are very much indebted to the retired Archbishop of Tororo **His Grace Denis Lote Kiwanuka**. His fatherly care and concern was always encouragement for us. In spite of our inability to keep up our promise of supplying more personnel and taking up new missions, he had great understanding for us. We appreciate and thank His grace for his simple life, approachability and availability. May the Lord bless him with good health and happy days in his life of retirement.

Canonical Visitation from the Superior General and Assistant Superior General

My dear Confreres, let us understand that Canonical Visitation from the General Administration is a vital moment for the General Curia and the Provincial Curia and the entire Province to share the concerns of the Province with each other for the missionary and religious animation of our East Africa Province. Our Constitutions (201/vi) remind us that 'visitation of the Superior General is to become occasions for evaluation, renewal, and reinvigoration of the life and Apostolate in the Province' (adopted from the letter of Superior General)

Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil our Superior General will be making the Canonical Visitation to East Africa Province from April 26 to June 18, 2014. He will be visiting every community and institution and meeting every one personally.

Rev. Fr. Thumma Mariadas our Assistant Superior General will be visiting us from May 8 to 30, 2014. This is with the purpose of animating, evaluating and monitoring the life and ministry of our Fransalian family in East Africa. He will be meeting us in five Apostolic Communities.

The details of these visits are being planned out. Please note the dates of the meetings in connection with the conical visitations. Dates of visitations will be finalized by the end of this month.

New Mass Register

From January 2014 we will be using the new Mass Register prepared for the Province of East Africa. This register is prepared for the period of five years from 2014 to 2018 with each day and date specified according to the calendar year.

The book has mainly four parts:

1. The Instructions
2. REG 1. The registry of the Masses received
3. REG 2. Registry of the Masses transferred
4. REG 3. The Registry of the Masses celebrated and the intentions honoured.

In order to use this Mass Register in the most appropriate and effective manner, I earnestly request you to study the instructions given at the very beginning.

Those intentions which remain as your obligation as on December 31, 2013, please transfer them to the new book. If you do not have any intentions to honour, kindly get the Mass intentions from me and honour the intentions of the Province. Each time, as soon as the intentions from the Province are exonerated, kindly contact me and take new intentions.

Maintaining the **personal mass register** is an obligation for every Catholic Priest. Kindly consider it as a sacred task and make the entries faithfully and in a legible manner.

As parts of the body of Christ, let us share in the vocation and mission given to us by the Mother Church as the dispensers of the grace of the Sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist. By now, if anyone has not yet received the new Mass Diary I request you to contact me at the earliest.

Province Forum meetings

Fransalian Stewardship Forum Meeting was held on January 10, 2014 at MSFS Provincial House, Morogoro. Although some of the members could not come due to fact of being alone in the centres, most of the forum members were present. The members shared the matters of financial situation of the communities and institutions. A draft of the financial guidelines was presented and studied. With the modifications this draft will be sent to you to be studied in the communities.

Fransalian Formators Forum Meeting was held on January 11, 2014 at MSFS Scholasticate, Kola Morogoro. The forum appraised the present formation programs. The committee that was designated to prepare the guidelines on formation presented the draft. The modified version of this would be sent to you shortly for your further study.

Fransalian Innovative and Social Forum meeting could not be convened as planned due to certain serious reasons.

Remembering our departed confreres

It is one year since we began to experience the reality of death of the confreres in our Province. Various Masses were celebrated in our communities and parishes remembering our departed confreres **Fr. James Nedungatt, Fr. Lourance Thadathil** members of our East African Mission and **Fr. Devasia Kuzhupil** one of the pioneers in East Africa. Their life and ministry was blessing for many. On January 4, 2014 Holy Mass was celebrated at Fransalian Seminary Ndagani by **His Lordship Salesius Mugambi the Bishop of Meru, Kenya**. More than 130 persons were present from among priests, religious and lay persons from Chera parish and surroundings.

Let us realize that the departed ones are sharers in our mission in their own manner. They are members of our Fransalian family. They are present just on the *other side of the river*. Let us firmly believe in their powerful and supportive presence among us interceding for our mission – which they share in their own way.

SFS Children's Home Ipuli, Tabora: Former facilities handed back to Archdiocese

From the year 2002 we have been using the structures at Ipuli to facilitate the activities of SFS Children's Home. It was on September 27, 2002 the home was blessed by His Grace Mario Mgulunde the late Archbishop of Tabora. During the last 12 years the tiny seed of *Ipuli Project* grew gracefully into **Foster**. As we have now new facilities and structures for the children at the new site, it was right and just that we hand over the structures at Ipuli to the Archdiocese.

The children were shifted to the new home although it is partially complete. The old house and other structures were given facelift and in an official ceremony were handed over to the

Archdiocese on December 2, 2013. The inventory of movable and immovable assets was prepared and verified physically to the best of satisfaction of the Archdiocesan authorities.

Those present for the meeting included **His Grace Paul Ruzoka the Archbishop of Tabora**, The Vicar General and Bursar of the Diocese and other priests and our confreres at Ipuli. Fr. Santhosh Prakashbhan represented the Provincial Administration on this significant occasion.

My sincere thanks to Fr. Jomon Vellachalil and all the past and present members of Ipuli community for making all the preparations for this handing over in the best way possible.

Jubilee of MSFS Presence in Lububu

As the history tells us on January 24, 1989 MSFS was entrusted with the Parish of Lububu in the Archdiocese of Tabora. This was the first ever MSFS mission in Africa in our times. (*From 1947 to 1978 MSFS from Europe was present in Algeria in Northern Africa*). The silver jubilee of MSFS presence in Lububu was celebrated on December 29, 2013. It is a matter of great joy for us that in spite of the many challenges, we have our continued and stable presence in Lububu. The erstwhile Lububu Parish has given birth to the new Parish of Bukene and several flourishing out stations. Lububu is irreplaceable from the MSFS history of East Africa as well as from the personal missionary life and formation of many of the confreres in East Africa. Let us pray for more and more blessings upon Lububu and its people.

Delegation Superior Philippines

- **Fr. Ginu Pathiyakam MSFS** is appointed Superior of the Philippines Delegation for a second term with effect from December 8, 2013.

New Rector: Suvidya College

- **Fr. Joy Mampally MSFS** is appointed as the new Rector of Suvidya College and the President of the Institute.

Fransalian International New Chief Editor

- **Fr. Jolly Chackalakkal MSFS** is appointed as chief editor of Fransalian International, the newsletter of the Congregation, which from now on will be published from Indian Institute of Spirituality, Bangalore.

New Vicar General of Keetmanshoop Diocese, Namibia:

- **Fr. Joseph Kunjaparambil MSFS** is appointed the Vicar General of the diocese of Keetmanshoop, Namibia.

MSFS Mission Development Office, Rome: New Director

- **Fr. Thomas Cherukat** is appointed Director of the Mission Development Office of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales in Rome for a term of three years with effect from November 15, 2013. He will reside at the community of Via del Mascherino, in Rome.

Governing Body Chairman of Suvidya College

- **Fr. Anthony Dharmaraj** is appointed as the Chairman of the Governing body of Suvidya Collage. He is also the Delegate of the Superior General functioning as the Major Superior for those in the Suvidya Community.

Hearty Congratulations to each one of them! We thank God for the gift of these confreres to our congregation and to the universal church and wish them all the best in the new tasks of leadership and service entrusted to them.

Our gratitude to Fr. Francis Thadathil MSFS

As a Province we are very much indebted to the blessings that we have received in one way or another through the ministry of leadership exercised by Fr. Francis Thadathil as the Provincial of North East India during the last six years. Be it at the PIF –PEA level or MSAF – Southern African Region or as the Chairman of the Suvidya governing Body, he has manifested concern and understanding. May God bless his generosity of heart. *Asante sana Padre Francis!*

New Book

Fr. Kurian Kollapallil MSFS has published a new book *Through the Year with St. Francis de Sales* - 2014.

Fr. Kurian draws inspiration from the Scripture readings of each day's liturgy and offers us a thought from St. Francis de Sales for further reflection. I really appreciate this initiative of constructive and positive way of using one's resources and time. Hearty congratulations to Fr. Kurian. The soft copy of the book has been sent to you by mail.

A day with the Founder

As a concrete measure to know more and imbibe in a deeper manner the spirit of our holy founder Servant of God Fr. Peter Mermier, Fr. General instructed the following in his official writing (SGAB-03-2013):

All the Major Superiors are requested to start with the cooperation of the Local Superiors "A DAY WITH THE FOUNDER" in all our Local Communities every month. Some of the suggested ways are: conducting a thematic prayer service or liturgical celebration, symposiums, presentation by one of the confreres on Father Mermier, and presentation on the Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and its impact on Father Mermier and our pioneering missionaries. You are welcome to introduce your own ways of sharing input with the community. The objective of the DAY WITH THE FOUNDER is to re-capture the spirit of our Founder in our apostolates and personal lives.

I request each one of you to take this task of ours seriously. We know how earnestly Fr. Mermier studied St. Francis de Sales. It was one of the triple tasks given to us from the very beginning. In Fr. Mermier we have someone who has studied and lived the spirit and spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. In studying *Memerian* life, method and spirit, we surely can live in depth the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales.

Hence Kindly plan out in your personal life, communities and the Apostolic Communities, the relevant ways to spend the *Day with the Founder*

Vision and Mission Plan

Since some time we have been given the task to prepare the Mission and Vision of every community and institution. Kindly do the preparation of texts of the same in your community, if it has not yet been done. Please send to me the text by email in Word Document before February 28, 2014.

2014 - The Year of the Family

Our loving Holy Father Pope Francis has declared 2014 as the Year of the Family and has called for a Synod of Bishops, which will be held from Oct 5-18, 2014. A lot of deliberations will take place on the "Pastoral challenges of the Family in the context of the

Evangelization." Family as the first school of humanity has always held a prime role in shaping the lives of individuals. Families need the support and guidance of the Church. The Pope clearly calls upon us to take the Church to the homes of people and offer them the treasures of Church in a new way.

My dear Confreres, it is now time for us to think about our commitment to the families in the context of our mission in East Africa and wherever we are. Can we not take up some programs this year that would help our faithful to renew and enliven the family life? Please take this as a matter of discussion and reflection in your community and apostolic community meeting.

Province Forum Meetings with the General Secretaries of each Forum

As part of the Canonical visitations according to the new governance the various Province Forums will have elaborate meeting with the General Secretaries. Please note the date and venue.

- May 19, 2014 Monday: East Africa Province Stewardship Forum meeting with General Bursar at LCI Arusha
- June 2, 2014 Monday: East Africa Province Formation Forum meeting with the General Secretary at MSFS Provincial House Morogoro
- June 3, 2014 Tuesday: East Africa Province Mission Forum meeting with the General Secretary at MSFS Provincial House Morogoro
- June 5, 2014 Thursday: East Africa Province Education Forum meeting with the General Secretary at MSFS Provincial House Morogoro
- June 6, 2014 Friday: East Africa Province Social and IM Forum meeting with the General Secretary at MSFS Provincial House Morogoro

Other Meetings

- General Curia Meeting with MSAF on May 20 - 21, 2014 at LCI Arusha
- General Curia meeting with East African Provincial Curia on May 23-24, 2014 at MSFS Provincial House Morogoro
- General Curia Meeting will be from May 25 - 30, 2014 at MSFS Provincial House Morogoro

General Chapter Retreat/ Annual retreat - 2014

Our Annual Retreat- 2014 will be based on the Orientations of the XIX General Chapter. The retreats will be guided by Rev. Agnelo Fernandes MSFS and Fr. John Karondukadavil MSFS. The retreats will be held at LCI Arusha.

- ❖ July 23 evening - July 28 evening for Priest confreres
- ❖ August 2 evening to August 7 evening for Priest confreres
- ❖ August 10 evening to August 15 evening All Scholastics

Bank accounts

According to the new administrative policy, please make sure that all the bank accounts are operated by two confreres with the mode of operation *both to sign* in all the transactions of withdrawals and transfers irrespective of the amount of money involved. This is norm is to be implemented latest by February 15, 2014.

Prayers requested:

- Fr. Thomas Olickal is still undergoing chemotherapy. As informed earlier he is now in Kerala, India for the treatment and rest.

We shall also pray for our confreres who are still recovering:

- Fr. Joseph Kunnappilly
- Fr. James Manjackal
- Fr. Raison Kaduvakuzhiyil
- Fr. Mathew Kavithazha
- Fr. Thomas Mattakarathundiyl
- Fr. Jose Parampukattil

Home holidays:

Fr. Kurian Kollappallil will be in India for home leave from January 14 to 31, 2014.

My Programs

January 2014

- 24 Blessing of the Secondary School Mlolongo: SFS Feast Day
- 25 Council meeting in Mlolongo, Nairobi
- 27 Meeting the Bishop of Gong Diocese, Kenya
- 29-31 Visit to Uganda

February 2014

- 8 Education Forum Meeting in LCI, Arusha
- 14-16 Canonical Visitation to Bukene Mission
- 17-20 At LCI Arusha: Meeting De Sales University representatives

Concluding words

Beloved Confreres,

We are in the New Year. But let us remember that 2014 is 2014 only because it was exactly 2014 years ago some human beings initiated this calendar! I am sure all of us have welcomed the New Year with lot of expectations. We have wished the other saying “may the new year bring you many blessings; happy new year” etc. The reality is that the New Year as such cannot bring any blessing for you. Why?

The New Year in reality is neither new nor a year! **Year** is only a unit of time. After all, the New Year, or any year for that matter is only a concept which serves as a context. If we see things from the perspective of eternity, there is no beginning and no end; there nothing new and old for everything is in God who is eternal. The New Year is neither a subject nor an object. Our life is the subject and the object. When we take the steps to sanctify our life, when we bless the other, show care and respect for the other, blessing flow into our lives. For that, we need not wait for any particular time or year.

Hence let us realize that in every moment there is a call for us to be *beings of love* (ref introduction to this circular). We are called to be love and therefore let us remind ourselves as to how we are to be:

Love / Fransalian is patient,

love is kind.

It does not envy,

it does not boast,

it is not proud.

It does not dishonour others,

it is not self-seeking,

it is not easily angered,

it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

I Cor 13: 4-7

Every moment there is a possibility for us to be happy and to be blessing! Hence my wish for you: May you make your days happy; may you help others to make their days happy! When we work out this strategy of being happy, you apply happiness to your days. When we do every day of this year, sure this year becomes a "*happy new year.*"!

Yours fraternally in the Lord,



Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS

(Provincial Superior MSFS East Africa Province)