

# MISSIONARIES OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES

## Fransalians - Province of East Africa

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Beloved Confreres,

### Maundy Thursday: the Feast of Priesthood : What do we celebrate ?

Today we - those of us who are priests and those who are preparing themselves to be priests - celebrate the gift of priesthood! By being ordained priests, God has imprinted up on us the indelible character of being a **Sacred Minister**. This comes from God himself, through the ministry of the Mother Church. Besides, the Church confers on us the status being a **Cleric**. We may call these two aspects, the spiritual and juridical expressions of our priesthood. The first one is a unique grace showered upon us by God. The second one is the power and authority vested in us by Mother Church in order that we may serve God and His people in the most orderly manner. When one leaves priesthood, by way of deprivation or by own decision, as we know, only the clerical state is taken away from a person and not the character of being a sacred minister. Today let us thank God for the precious gift of priesthood to each one of us and for all the priests all over the world.

### How many are we?

According to the official statistics we are about 425,000 Catholic priests in the world. This is really a small number comparing to the 7.2 Billion world population and 1.25 Billion Catholic population. When we look at these numbers, on the one hand, we understand how uniquely we are chosen by God. On the other hand we are reminded of the great volume of responsibility of service awaiting us. Today a catholic priest has to serve an average of 295,000 faithful! But in reality to how many of them can we reach out? With how many today can we break the bread and share the cup? To how many persons with a firm handshake or with a warm hug can we say "peace be with you"? To how many those who come to us with the burden of sins, can we make ourselves available in the sacrament of reconciliation? The answer is very clear: only a very small fraction of the global average.

The Lord does not expect us to do what is beyond our ordinary capacities and possibilities. When we take the case of Jesus himself as he was here on earth as a human being, to how many people did he reach out? How many heard him preaching? How many got direct benefits from his deeds of miracles? Perhaps a few thousands. This tells us clearly that we are not to be worried about the numbers. However what matters is the quality of our presence and ministry.

### *Do this in memory of me!*

My dear Fathers, today you and I are priests. My dear Brothers you are preparing yourselves to be priests. Our priesthood begins from these words of Jesus: **Do this in memory of me!** Had he considered that the Last Supper alone would have been enough then he would not have exhorted us telling "Do this in memory of me". That was a mandate given directly to the Apostles who in the course of time share this task and privilege to those chosen for this special task.

The words of Jesus: *Do this in memory of me*, should thrust into our hearts. As we celebrate today the great feast of priesthood, let us thank the good Lord for allowing us to be sharers in this unique call. When Jesus said, *do this in memory of me*, it was not merely a request to break the bread and to share the cup. On the other hand it was an exhortation to do all that Jesus did – during his life here on earth as well as on the cross. Just merely sharing the bread and wine can be done by any one. But making an act of self-giving is indeed a demanding task.

Eucharist is the sum total of all that Jesus did and we are called to do the same through a total self-giving. Hence as we celebrate today the Holy Thursday let us remind ourselves of the unique act of self-giving by God made eternally possible. Every Holy Mass that we celebrate speaks to us volumes of our sacred obligation to fulfil the mission of the self-giving to be exercised through our fragile lives made strong by the presence of Jesus.

### **Is clericalism sullyng our priesthood?**

In our lives do we not come across situations where we function more as a cleric than as a sacred minister of God? Pope Francis has on several occasions brought to the public attention that clericalism is one of the most dangerous scenario within the church or in a religious institute. It is an overriding set of beliefs and behaviours in which the clergy view themselves as different, separate, and exempt from the norms, rules and consequences that apply to everyone else in society. It is the disposition of a priest considering oneself as superior to others and of being too much pre-occupied with legalities and being less open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in one's life and apostolate. "Lord, free your people from a spirit of clericalism and aid them with a spirit of prophecy," Pope Francis prayed. Are there not occasions in our lives when we identified ourselves and our priesthood with the role that we play and the office that we hold? Am I more at home with my office table than the table of the altar of God. Is the faithful who is entrusted to me a mere number or my customer? Clericalism gives me the conviction that as a priest I am employed and I am entitled to be paid for my works. But as a Sacred Minister I tell myself: I am a servant of God and His people. I demand nothing for my work; but joyfully accept what is given, if at all something is given.

### **How many of us are lost?**

It is true that we all thank God for the gift of our priesthood. But do we thank God that we are still priests even today? Perseverance is a grace. Do we often think about our fellow priests who are no more in ministry; who have left the priesthood; who are laicized? It is estimated that every year around 2000 Catholic Priests are defecting. It means an average of more than five priests every day! If not today, tomorrow anyone of us may be counted among those five. Today as we celebrate solemnly the gift of priesthood we are obliged to pray for all the "ex-priests". They are our brothers. They share in the same priesthood as we do. No matter they exercise the ministry or not, their priesthood lasts. As we love the unique gift of priesthood and just as Jesus wished and prayed, let us pray for one another that "none of us may be lost".

### **Treatise on the Love of God - 400 Year!**

This year marks the 400th year of the publication of the *Treaties on the Love of God* by St. Francis de Sales. We are reminded about our obligation to delve into the depths of this work, creating in us a greater awareness of the great love of God and our neighbour - the fundamentals of the summary of all the laws.

As a practical means to get ourselves more familiar with the book, I ask you take various themes from the book for our community/ Apostolic community recollections. Rev. Fr.

Agnelo Fernandes MSFS had prepared some guidelines in this regard with some main themes and references. I will be sending the matter to you shortly.

### **Province Education Core Committee**

At the recommendation of the recent Forum Meetings, in order to assist the Provincial Administration, to ensure the quality and welfare of all our educational institutions by way of proper structure and efficient functioning, the Provincial Administration has constituted a Province Education Core Committee. Members of the Committee are: Fr. Sunny Vettickal (the PCIC Education as Convenor), Fr. Jomat Kollappallil and Fr. Robert Soosai Raj. The committee had its first meeting on March 18 at LCI, Arusha. The committee would be sending out some concrete guidance and checklist regarding the management of the educational institutions. They would also make the on the spot study of each institution and appraise the situations.

### **Transfers and Appointments**

**Fr. Raparathi Vara Prasad** (associate member from Archdiocese of Vizag, India) is transferred from Mkuza and is designated to be appointed as the Assistant Parish Priest in St. Michael's Parish Chera, Kenya with effect from July 1, 2016.

**Fr. Susai David MSFS** is designated for pastoral work in Germany and he would be going to India in June for the language studies.

**Fr. Tomychan Perumanoor MSFS** is designated to be appointed as the Parish Priest in St. Stephen the Martyr Parish Maji ya Chai with effect from April 10, 2016. He continues to be the Administrator at LCI.

**Fr. Mathew Chavely MSFS** is relieved from the responsibility as the Parish Priest of Maji ya Chai with effect from April 9, 2016.

**Fr. Francis Kallikatt MSFS** is relieved of his responsibilities in Mji Mpya from April 6. There after he will be in Katani mission as Fr. Sunny Vettickal is going for holidays.

**Fr. Joseph Poikunnel MSFS** is given the additional responsibility of initiating the construction and starting of the Primary School in Dumila.

### **Update Programs**

**Fr. Innocent Ngowi MSFS** will be attending the Seminar on the Love of God in Annecy, France from July 1 to 7, 2016. This is organized by the OSFS Fathers.

**Fr. Francis Kallikatt MSFS** will be attending a update program on Pastoral Leadership in East Asian Pastoral Institute, Philippines from the last week of July to December first week.

**Fr. Antony George MSFS** is attending a few sessions on Psycho Spirituality and holistic growth at Anugraha Centre, in Tamil Nadu India.

### **Home holidays**

The following confrere are on home holidays.

Fr. Tomy Kattikanayil	from March 21 to May 20, 2016
Fr. Stephen Ubadesi	from April 5 to June 5, 2016
Fr. Sunny Vettickal	from April 14 to June 14, 2016
Fr. Robert Raj	from April 20 to June 20, 2016
Fr. Sebastian Palakudy	from May 13 to June 15, 2016
Fr. Stephen Gerald	from May 29 to June 24, 2016

Fr. Kudeep Kujur                      from April 20 to June 20, 2016  
Fr. Sijo Pendanath                    from April 23 to May 28, 2016

### **Blessing of the Convent in Bukene**

March 12, 2016 marked a very important day in the history of our Bukene Mission. The newly constructed residence for the Sisters (collaborators) was blessed by His Grace Archbishop Paul Ruzoka of the Archdiocese of Tabora. The well built very spacious structure is a real asset to the mission. As we thank the Almighty God for this great blessings, let us remember our benefactors, friends and the people of Bukene who have supported us generously in this project. Our sincere appreciation and congratulations to our confreres of the past and present in Bukene who have taken great pain to realize this project. Franciscan Clarist Sisters from Iduki Province collaborate with us in Bukene Mission. So far they were staying in the facilities of the hostel with the children. We wish them pleasant stay in the new home and an enhanced ministry.

### **Year of Formation : Gathering of all the Scholastics**

As part of the Congregational year of formation, we are organizing a gathering of all the MSFS Scholastics in EA. This would include those in Theology, Philosophy and Regency. The program would consist of Seminars, Input sessions Symposium and Annual retreat. The themes dealt with will include: Formation for Mission and MSFSness; Understanding the *Treaties on the Love of God* for our daily life; Personal Growth & Holistic Integration; Inner Journey & spiritual growth etc.

The venue will be **LCI Arusha** and the dates will be from **August 7 to 22, 2016**. The details will be made known later. Let us keep this unique project in our prayers.

### **News Snippets**

**Fr. Thomas Moongamackal MSFS** from Chad-Cameroon Mission will be visiting us from March 30 to April, 14, 2016. He will be landing in Nairobi and flying out from Dar es Salaam. We extend to him a warm welcome and pleasant time with us.

**Power in Ngurdotto!** : Final preparations are on in the process of getting electricity in our Ngurdotto Mission. Let us thank God and all the civil leaders for that.

### **Prayers Requested for the departed ones**

- **Rev. Fr. Kurian Chempalakunnel MSFS**, Nagpur Province was called to eternal rest on March 16, 2016. He was 78 years old.
- **Rev. Fr William D'Silva MSFS** Nagpur Province, was called to eternal rest on March 21, 2016. He died of massive heart attack. He was 63 years old.
- **Rev. Fr. Elias Delphine Dennis MMI** (from Tamil Nadu, India) was called eternal rest on March 12, 2016. He died in Mwanza, Tanzania due to acute Malaria. He was 33 years old and a priest for three years.
- **Mrs. Annakutty Thekkekara** - the beloved mother of our confrere Fr. Jacob Thekkekara - was called to eternal rest on Feb 20, 2016. She was 92 years old.

*May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in Peace!*

## **FRANSALIAN COMMUNICATIONS MOROGORO- Youth Fest 2016**

For the fourteenth time Fransalian Communications Morogoro organized successfully the Inter-school cultural competitions. These competitions were in the following items: Jiving, *Igizo/Skit* and *Ngoma/Cultural Dance* which took place on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016, at Fransalian Primary School - Kigurunyembe, Morogoro. A total of eleven schools participated in the competitions. The inaugural speaker was Professor Josephat Itika the acting Vice Chancellor of Mzumbe University. The chief guest was Mr. Milikiel Mansuet Mahiku, the Deputy Mayor of Morogoro Municipality. Both guests appreciated the schools for turning up in big number and encouraged the students to put more interest in the extra-curricular activities for one can excel even in such activities. Besides that, Fransalian communications too was appreciated very much for organizing such events for the youths in Morogoro and choosing relevant themes for the items which affect the society today and need awareness. Both the Chief Guest and the inaugural speaker provided refreshments to all the students. We, the members of the Fransalian Communications-Morogoro, are very grateful to all who generously contributed to enable us to conduct the Inter-School Cultural Competitions-2016.

## **FRANSALIAN COMMUNICATIONS LCI Arusha - Youth Fest 2016**

Fransalian Communications – Arusha organized for the fifth time, the Inter-School Cultural Competitions for the secondary schools at LCI, Maji ya Chai on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2016. Competitions were held for three items; jiving, *ngonjera*, and *ngoma*, with the following themes; peer groups, self reliance and hospitality respectively. It was such an auspicious moment for us and the students of Arusha and Moshi Region. The program began with a welcome address by Fr. Thomas Kochalumchuvattil MSFS, the director of Fransalian Communications and was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. Adam Mpando. Seven schools participated in the competitions. The chief guest of the day was Mr. Andason Miisho Pallangyo, councillor of Maji ya chai ward of Meru district. In his message, Mr. Andason appreciated the work and toil of the Fransalians and encouraged the Fransalians to continue lifting up the culture of our dear nation Tanzania through such programmes. He distributed different prizes and certificates to the participants at the end of the competition. The activities of the Fransalian communications were highly appreciated by the teachers and the students and requested that such programmes should be conducted often. They also suggested that more schools could be invited in the coming year. The programmes ended at around 3:00 pm with the National Anthem.

*Our hearty Congratulations and appreciation for the Young Fransalians in Kola, Arusha and to the formators for this beautiful initiative!*

## **TMM Schedule**

As it was announced we are hosting the TMM meeting of the Congregation together with the PIF-PEA and MSAF and General Curia Meeting at LCI. I would like to present to you the draft plan for the meetings and the visits by our guest confreres.

May 5	Some of the Provincials arrive in Nairobi
May 6-7	Visit to Missions in Meru/ Ndagani
May 8 SUN	Morning Mass in Mlolongo/ Outstations. Afternoon travel to Arusha by road
May 9	MSAF / LAC.LCI Meeting
May 10	GC, MSAF, LCI, PIF-PEA Meeting
May 11-12	GC, PIF-PEA Meeting
May 14	Graduation at LCI in the morning TMM begins in the evening.
May 15 - 18	TMM Meeting.

May 19 - 25 GC Meeting at LCI  
May 19-20 Some of the Participants make Safari  
May 21-24 Visits to Dar and Morogoro, Dumila  
May 24/25 Fly out from Dar

I request each one of you to pray for the blessings of God up on all these meetings, visits and travels.

### **Easter as the Feast of the Mercy of God**

When God had other infinite possibilities of redeeming the mankind, why God chose this way of suffering? No human intellect can ever give a satisfactory answer to this question. The way of suffering is the last option for us. But the way of suffering was the first option for God. God made the way of the suffering to be the way of salvation; He made the wood of the cross to be the tree of life! Let us have the willingness to walk the way of the cross so that we can rest under the shadow of the tree of life.

It is very evident that all kinds of atrocities and expressions of evil are rapidly increasing in this world. I think these questions are relevant for us:

- Is our hearts sensitive to what is happening in the world today.
- Did you feel anything for the MC sisters slaughtered by terrorists in Yemen?
- Have you earnestly prayed for Fr. Tom SDB, who is still missing?
- Did you care to say a prayer for those who were killed in Brussels ?
- Do you ever pray for the conversion of the terrorists?
- Is the way of noble suffering, my preferred option?

Beloved Confreres, if our answer to these questions is YES, we can be happy that we have put on the mind of Christ. But if our answer is mostly NO, we are far from the reality of God himself! We need to think realistically. Let us invoke the Divine Mercy up on everyone and everything in this world.

I wish each one of you my dear confreres grace filled days ahead of you and a Happy Easter! May the Risen Lord bless each one of us. Let us celebrate the Mercy of God in this Easter!

United in prayers,

Yours in the Risen Lord,



Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS (Provincial MSFS East Africa)

**“He was spurned and avoided by men,  
a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity...  
yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings  
that he endured...but he was pierced for our offences,  
crushed for our sins....Through his suffering, my servant shall  
justify many, and their guilt he shall bear...and he shall take away the sins of  
many and win pardon for their offences”**

(Isaiah 53:3-5, 11, 12)