

# MISSIONARIES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

## DIBRUGARH PROVINCE

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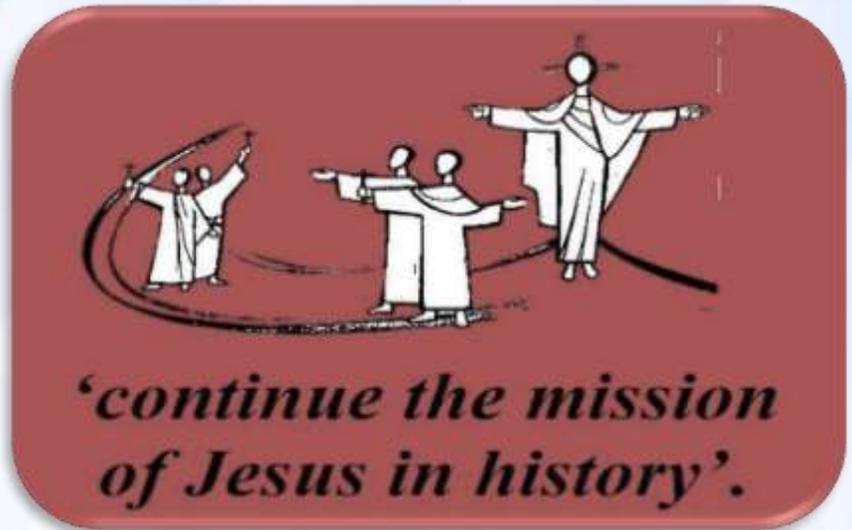
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EMT/05 Circular - October 18, 2020

### **My dear Confreres,**

I wish you all today a blessings-filled World Mission Sunday! It is an important occasion for us, Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS), to remind ourselves of our core identity as Missionaries and to recommit ourselves to the Mission of the Church/Lord. We thank God for the gift of our beloved Congregation as we celebrate its 182<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day (1838-2020) on the 24<sup>th</sup> of this month! And we do it this year, celebrating also the glorious 175 years of our presence in India (1845 - 2020)!



### **The Arrival of the First Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS) in India**

On this occasion of the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of the first Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales in India Fr. Mariadas Sesetti of Visakhapatnam Province has put together a nostalgic description of their arrival in India and their onward journey to help us to appreciate and enthuse ourselves of our bequeathed missionary legacy of our Pioneering Fathers:

“March 16, 1845, for the Evangelization, the ecclesiastical authorities had decided to erect Visakhapatnam Vicariate from the existing Madras Vicariate and entrust it to a non-English Prelate. On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1845 Fr. Peter Mermier, the Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, with around 14 professed members in total, received an official communication entrusting Visakhapatnam Vicariate to MSFS, asking him to send six missionaries of his choice. The communication was the response to the request made earlier by Fr. Mermier who placed his small congregation at the service of the Church. The news was received with great joy. Fr. Mermier, though longed to venture himself, the responsibility of the two congregations he founded, he was needed to be in Annecy. **He chose six Confreres:**



**1. Fr. Jacques Martin:** was the founder's long-time companion. He was born in 1802 at La Cote – d'Arbroz and was ordained priest in 1832. He was a construction expert for the congregation and gave the plan of the Mother House, La Feuillette. He was the Mission Superior.

**2. Fr. Joseph Lavorel:** born at Cuvat in 1801, was ordained in 1827, was the diocesan priest of Annecy, while being the Bursar of the La Roche Seminary, he joined the Missioners in 1834.

**3. Fr. Jean Marie Tissot:** born at Megeve in 1810 later became the second bishop of Visakhapatnam and instrumental in the development of the mission in Visakhapatnam town.

**4. Fr. Jean Thevenet:** was the Benjamin of the team, born at Clermont in 1817, instrumental in the construction of many churches.

**5. Brother Pierre Carton:** born at Alex in 1805. He entered the Missionaries in 1841, the first lay brother of the congregation and the first teacher of St. Aloysius Anglo-Indian School, when Fr. Gailhot started the boys' school.

**6. Brother Sulpice Fontanel:** born in Allinges in 1819, worked in Yanam constructed the Convent and the school there.

All of them would lay down their lives in the service of the church. Fr. Martin in Yanam, Fr. Lavorel in Kamptee, Fr. Tissot near Surada, Fr. Thevenet in Kamptee, Brother Sulpice in Samarlakota and Brother Pierre Carton in Visakhapatnam. From their sacrifices, the Vicariate of Visakhapatnam would flourish!

Coming back to the communication received from Rome, they did not have much time to get ready to travel. They had to hurry up. In two separate farewells they were bid adieu by the Superior and the Confreres. On 12<sup>th</sup> May 1845 Frs. Martin and Lavorel and on 22<sup>nd</sup> May Frs. Jean Marie Tissot and Thevenet and Brothers Pierre Carton and Sulpice Fontanel were given touching farewell, their venerable feet kissed by Fr. Mermier. Perhaps Fr. Martin and Fr. Lavorel had to leave Annecy before the others to meet the Superior of MEP Fathers in Paris to collect the travel grant arranged by Rome for their journey. On 28<sup>th</sup> May all the six confreres reached Bordeaux from where they embarked on to Visakhapatnam on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1845. After 89 days of long voyage, they arrived in Pondicherry via Mauritius on 7<sup>th</sup> September. They were warmly welcomed by Mgr. Bonnand, the Bishop of Pondicherry and they had to stay there for 4 long months due to various unforeseen reasons, though they were originally expected to stay a few days only.



Their journey to the destination was full of setbacks. The Bishop of Pondicherry was unwilling to send the priests who were according to the prior plan supported to assist the new missionaries to settle down in the new territory. Then, the Bishop of Madras who wanted Irish Missionaries and not the French Missionaries did not grant them the faculties needed for their ministry in Visakhapatnam that was entrusted to them for the Evangelization. They were

stranded and lacked funds and support from the local ecclesiastical authorities. Amidst their trials and hard times, as reported by Fr. Martin, in a spirit of holy indifference, they used their time to learn the languages and prayers in Telugu and Tamil, preaching Retreats and Parish Missions. They lived these four months living the Rules better than ever as if they were in a Novitiate, they did a Retreat that helped them realize the union of hearts and work of grace among them (Letter of Fr. Martin to Fr. Mermier on 9.1.1846).



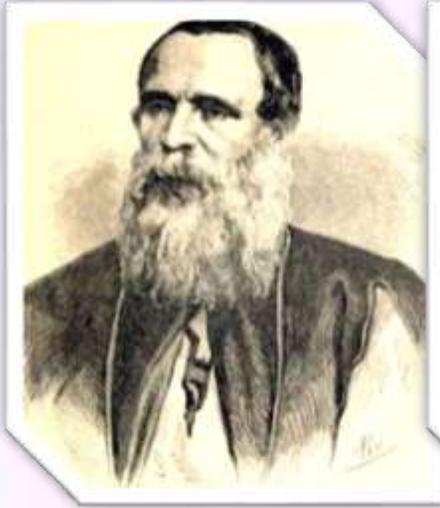
Propaganda Fide had intervened and soon the Bishop of Pondicherry yielded and made arrangements. But he selected a priest whom he wanted to be away from the diocese and thus Fr. Gailhot was appointed as the leader/Pro-Vicar of the missionaries. On 5th of January 1846 Fr. Gailhot joined them enabling them to journey to Madras on 16<sup>th</sup> January. There the Bishop Fennelly received them and they stayed for 9 days. They embarked to Jagannaikapuram near Kakinada where

they landed on 15<sup>th</sup> February. For the first time the MSFS celebrated the Eucharist in a small chapel there on the land of Telugus, and the mission allotted to them. Later they proceeded to Coringa, a journey of 3 or 4 hours. From Coringa around 5.00 p.m., they travelled on foot to Yanam with the luggage on their heads wading themselves through the marshy lands in the darkness and reached the small church at 9.00 p.m.

The next day, 17<sup>th</sup> February, they celebrated the Mass and Fr. Gailhot installed Fr. Martin Jacques as the Parish Priest of Yanam with the Christians of Portuguese and other European nationalities. The first missionaries faced a lot of difficulties as they were separated from their superior. The team returned to Coringa to resume their onward journey to Visakhapatnam. On 19<sup>th</sup> February 1846, the three MSFS priests (Fr. Lavorel, Fr. J.M. Tissot and Fr. Thevenet) and the two Brothers (Bro. Pierre Corton and Bro. Sulpice Fontanel) and the Pro-Vicar, Fr. Gailhot arrived in Visakhapatnam Harbour to the Joy of big crowd of Catholics, mostly Irish soldiers gathered to welcome them. They were brought on palanquins with plenty of fanfare and fireworks, all arranged by the happy Irish soldiers, to the only small Chapel in Visakhapatnam, later developed into the present Co-Cathedral.

They were welcomed by the incumbent Fr. Dom Joseph Xavier d'Attaide, a Goan Theatine priest. In those days, Visakhapatnam Catholics were being served by priests from the Goan diocese. Fr. d'Attaide was in charge of the vast mission for 16 long years basically serving the European and Tamil Christians. The local Telugu people could not be evangelized for the lack of language skill. He stayed at the small chapel of St. Anne, (present co-cathedral), in the property belonged to him. The Mission territory entrusted to the MSFS was huge, being the land between the Bay of Bengal on the East and Narmada on the West, Mahanadhi on the North to the Godavari on the South. Prior to the arrival of the MSFS, only four(4) priests served around 6000 Catholics scattered in the area. They were stationed one each at Jalnah and Visakhapatnam and two at Kamptee, near Nagpur. Without exception, all of them were settlements of the soldiers working in the British Army.

The newly arrived missionary team and the Pro-vicar were provided residence in a rented house hired by the Irish Soldiers in the present old town area in Visakhapatnam. Even before they could settle down,



they received the shocking news of the death of Fr. Martin at Yanam. They were shocked and shattered. But they had to go on. Later Fr. Gailhot assigned Fr. Lavorel to Kamptee and Fr. Thevent to Jalnah on 14<sup>th</sup> May. Fr. Tissot, Bro. Pierre Carton and Bro. Sulpice remained in Visakhapatnam in the rented house till 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1846. Soon Fr. Gailhot purchased two small plots close to the beach and started school in one room and the other room was used as residence and Chapel. On 8<sup>th</sup> July, Fr.

J. M. Tissot and Bro. Sulpice Fontanel were sent to Yanam to succeed Fr. Martin. Brother Pierre Carton remained in the house with Fr. Gailhot and taught Latin to the students.

The beginnings were tough and daunting! Yet they went on! They had to obey Fr. Gailhot, the Pro-Vicar who had his own schemes and plans, not necessarily that of the missionaries to whom the mission was entrusted. They had no money and the funds promised did not arrive. They were stationed far from each other with no communication between them and seemingly abandoned in the tough mission. Though the situations were testing, the first six MSFS were indomitable in their spirit and unwavering in their faith and totally surrendered in their commitment. They held on and stayed on, giving a chance to God and His Gospel! God did miracles through them. What Fr. Martin said to Msgr. Bonnand, Vicar Apostolic of Pondicherry, stands as a loud testimony their faith in the Providence of God. When they reached Pondicherry, on 7<sup>th</sup> Sept, 1845, they had very little money left for further journey. The subsidies promised by Rome had not materialized. Their entire luggage consisted of six small suitcases which contained also a number of books. On seeing it Msgr. Bonnand, exclaimed: "Oh, you don't have enough." Fr. Martin replied: "*Monsignor, poverty is a much more solid foundation than money.*" That is our legacy! **A firm faith in the Providence of God and willingness for personal sacrifice!** (Fr. Mariadas Sesetti MSFS)

## CONGREGATIONAL MATTERS

### Prayer Intention of the Superior General: October and November 2020

- **October:** "In this month of the Foundation Day of the Congregation, let us pray that the two newly established Provinces of Dibrugarh and Guwahati will take the Congregation to greater heights in pursuing its apostolic and missionary goals as desired by our founder Fr. Peter Mermier".
- **November:** "That all our departed confreres enjoy eternal peace in heaven and that Fr. Peter Mermier be raised to the saintly status."

## Celebration of the Foundation Day and 175 Years of MSFS Presence in India

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, we will be celebrating our 182<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day of our Congregation (1838-2020). This year 2020, also marks the 175<sup>th</sup> year of the arrival of the first MSFS in India (1845 – 2020). I would like to exhort all the Local Communities in the Province, to celebrate the day with special community celebrations meaningfully while remembering the first Missionaries, who dared to come to India 175 years ago. Our beloved Superior General, Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvilil, suggest two important things for our celebration the 24<sup>th</sup>:

- **PRAYER OF CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY:** During the mass, after the Liturgy of the Word and homily (or during a special prayer service in the community), we will consecrate our Congregation and ourselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary with the prayer of consecration sent to you already by email. Please go through also the document that was sent to you, which would give the background for this spiritual exercise on October 24<sup>th</sup>. Let us intercede for the protection of Mother Mary for us at this difficult time.
- **PLANTING SIX TREES ON OCTOBER 24, 2020:** To mark the occasion of the arrival of the first group of six (6) Missionaries from Annecy: 1) *Fr. Jacques Martin*, 2) *Fr. Joseph Lavorl*, 3) *Fr. Jean Marie Tissot*, 4) *Fr. Jean Thevenet*, 5) *Bro. Pierre Carton*, and 6) *Bro. Sulpice Fontanel*, - every Local Community is requested to plant six (6) trees on October 24, 2020. I would like to request every Local Community Superior to ensure that planting is done to mark this important occasion of the MSFS.

## The Inauguration and Blessing of DeSIFMA

On 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2020, on the Feast of our Heavenly Patroness Mary, Mother of Compassion, DeSIFMA – De Sales International Film and Media Academy – was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. Ignaci Muthu MSFS, Chairman of Provincials India Forum and blessed by Very Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvilil MSFS, Superior General online (via a live video streaming) from Rome . On behalf of the Province I congratulate Fr. J. Stephen, the Director and General Councillor for SAIM for initiating this proud venture of the Congregation and wish the whole team of DeSIFMA all the best as well as God's abundant blessings for the success of this Congregational Project!

## DSM Spiritual Insights: Next Webinar on our Foundation Day

Webinar Series, known as 'DSM Spiritual Insights' aim at to enlighten and educate ourselves on matters concerning our life as MSFS as well as to disseminate the Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales beyond the boundaries. It is organized by the DSM Resource and Animation Center Hyderabad in collaboration with the General Secretaries of Formation and SAIM. The next Webinar scheduled is on 24<sup>th</sup> of October, on the Foundation Day of our Congregation at 19.00 hrs (IST) by former Superior General Rev. Fr. Angelo Fernandes MSFS on the topic "Reflections on the Foundation of MSFS and its Foundational Charism." I exhort all the confreres to attend the talk and wake up to the basics of our Congregation!

## New Provincial Curia of East Africa Province

The recently held Provincial Congress of MSFS East Africa Province has elected a new team of Provincial Administration. In addition to the Provincial, the following confreres are elected to the Provincial Curia:

- Rev. Fr. Sheejan Kallarackal (Councillor and Admonitor)

- Rev. Fr. Zachariah Burefero (Councillor)
- Rev. Fr. Soosai Raj Robert (Councillor)
- Rev. Fr. Japhet Kirimi (Councillor)
- Rev. Fr. Reji Pendanath (Provincial Bursar)

In the name of MSFS Dibrugarh Province, I congratulate Rev. Fr. Mathew Thazhathukunnel MSFS and his new team God's abundant blessings in their ministry of leadership in the Province!

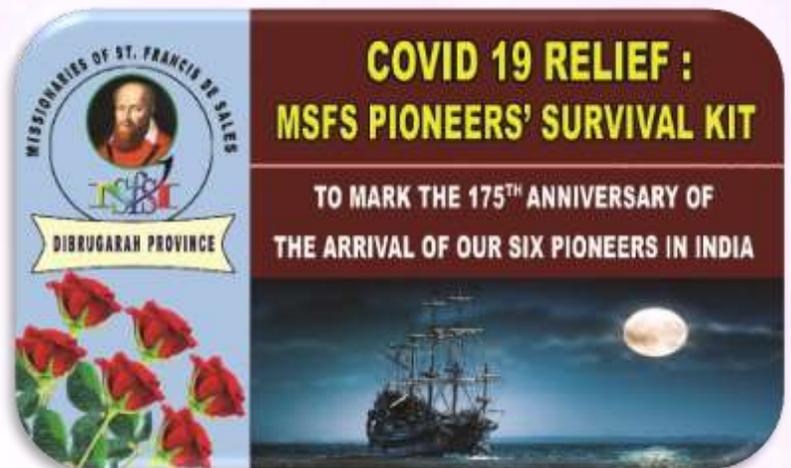
## PROVINCE MATTERS

### Celebration of the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Arrival of the First MSFS in India

Although we were planning Province level/National-International level meaningful celebration of this historical event we had to cancel it due to the Covid-19 pandemic. But the Provincial Administration is of opinion that we celebrate this event in Apostolic Community level on our Foundation Day or any day of your convenience closer to this day, in this month itself. Therefore, I would like to request every Apostolic Community Convenor to organise a worthy celebration of this important event in the history of our Congregation.

### Project Covid-19 Relief: MSFS Pioneers' Survival Kit

This proposed project is our response as a Province to the present challenging Covid-19 Pandemic, as we celebrate also the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of our six Pioneers in India (1845 – 2020). In honour of our six heroic Pioneers, who courageously ventured into our Motherland and survived all the odds and sicknesses of that time with their trust in God as well as their limited resources, we plan out to reach 60 families in distress, with a Survival Kit worth Rupees 600, to every Mission Centre of our Province (22). Fr. Sunny Panthanazhivadakethil, the Director of Social Work/Mission Development Office in our Province has already reached out to you with the concept note and with all the details for implementation. Please do cooperate with Fr. Sunny so that we can reach out to the people in distress around our Mission Centres, even in this most difficult situation, upholding our pioneering spirit as well as our missionary zeal and thus celebrate our 175 years of existence in India with renewed commitment and fervour. I would like to request every Local Community (Superior) to implement this noble project in this month of October itself to mark this important occasion of the MSFS.

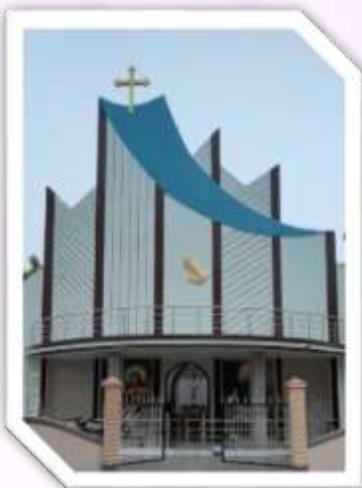


### Second Annual Retreat of the Province

Although we had planned to have the second Annual Retreat of the Province in this month of October by coming together physically, the Provincial Administration has decided to have it as well on a virtual

forum, due to the hike of the number of the positive cases of Covid-19. At this time, we are advised to be extra cautious and careful. So, our second Annual Retreat of the Province is scheduled from 19<sup>th</sup> (evening) to 23<sup>rd</sup> (night) October, 2020. The Animator of the retreat will be Fr. Arockiaswamy of Amaravathi Diocese. All those who have not participated in the first retreat, are obligated to attend this retreat. Those who have already registered for the retreat please do not organise any personal or community programme that might prevent you from a full participation in the retreat. A tentative time table will be suggested to you for a fruitful participation of the retreat. The participants will be given the link for the talks 15 minutes prior to the talk. I wish you all a fruitful retreat!

### **Rededication of St. Francis De Sales Church, Silapathar**



We are in the Golden Jubilee year of St. Francis de Sales Parish, Silapathar. It is the Mother Parish of many parishes in Assam and Arunachal. It is a time to thank God and gratefully remember the contribution of many towards the faith formation and the spiritual growth of the people connected to this parish. In view of the Golden Jubilee of the parish, the parish church was renovated and it was rededicated on 4<sup>th</sup> October by Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Mappilaparambil, the Provincial of Dibrugarh Province by the delegation of Most Rev. Bishop Michael Akasius, as the Bishop couldn't be present since he was tested positive for Covid-19. The ceremony was attended by 18 priests from the Upper Assam Apostolic Community, 10 nuns and 70 faithful of the

parish following the SOP for religious gathering according to Covid-19 protocols. Congratulations to Fr. Roy Muthedathu, the Parish Priest and the MSFS Community at Silapathar for efficiently organising the event! Special appreciation to Fr. Peter Parankimalil, the Local Community (Campus) Superior and the Provincial Bursar, who looked after the work to its completion to the satisfaction of all! We look forward to a worthy celebration of the Parish Golden Jubilee, when normalcy returns to us, after the Covid-19 pandemic. (Report: *Fr. Jaimon Thadathil, Provincial Secretary*)



### **Erection of a New MSFS Community at Likabali**

Sacred Heart Parish Likabali was erected in 2009, carving out from our Holy Rosary Parish Basar, in the Diocese of Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh) and entrusted to the MSFS for its pastoral care. All these years the Parish Priest/Priest-in-Charge was attached to the MSFS Community Silapathar, due to the lack of enough personnel for a community and of the needed infrastructure. Now, having made a simple presbytery and appointed one more person to the parish, in consultation with the Local Ordinary, Most Rev. John



Thomas, Bishop of Itanagar and with the permission of our beloved Superior General, a new MSFS Local Community was constitutionally erected in Sacred Heart Parish Likabali on 05<sup>th</sup> October 2020 with Fr. Peter Pehausuiding and Fr. Carlus Barowa as members. It was a historical moment for the Dibrugarh Province as Fr. Peter Peuhauuiding was formally installed as the Superior of the same Local Community by Fr. Emmanuel, the Provincial of Dibrugarh Province in the presence of the confreres from the Upper Assam Apostolic Community, Sisters and the Faithful of the Parish. The installation ceremony was preceded by a common rosary with the faithful in the church and reading out the appointment letter and order for the designated Local Superior by Fr. Philip Mhonchumo, Provincial Councilor. Fr. Carlus Barowa, the Associate Priest was also welcomed to the Parish and to the Local Community. It is the 8<sup>th</sup> MSFS Local Community in the Diocese of Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. We believe that the establishment of this community will enhance, by way of animation and organisation, the Consecrated and Missionary Life of its members. We thank God for the gift of this new MSFS Local Community to our Province. Congratulations and God's blessings to both Fr. Peter and Fr. Carlus! (Report: *Fr. Jaimon Thadathil, Provincial Secretary*)



### Perpetual Profession at Shillong

On the 30<sup>th</sup> September, on our Founder's Day, it was a joy to receive eight (8) of our Theology Scholastics as permanent members of our beloved Congregation. Hearty Congratulations to our Brothers viz. Joel Chitung Horam, Pakon Narzari (Dibrugarh Province), Athikho Isaac (Guwahati Province), Anoop Francis, Bettula Kalyan, Santhosh Soreng (Nagpur Province), Anto Pravin, and Michael Raja (South East Province) who have taken the bold step to commit themselves forever to the Lord in the Congregation of MSFS. The ceremony was conducted in Oriens Theological College (OTC), Shillong. Sincere thanks to Fr. Sabu Francis, the Provincial of Guwahati Province for receiving their vows. We are grateful to Fr. Athnas Kerketta and Fr Sebastian Kuzhuppil for their accompanying guidance and formation provided in preparing them to make their perpetual profession as well as for organising the whole programme.



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### Orientation Programme at SFS Seminary, Medziphema

This year, due to Covid-19 pandemic, we are having the Orientation Programme for the candidates from Northeast in SFS Seminary, Medziphema, instead of having it together in Vinaya Bhavan Seminary, Thamarassery.



Thanks to the hard work of all the vocation promoters of the respective areas and many committed confreres, we have twenty-three (23) candidates for the Orientation Programme for both Dibrugarh and Guwahati Provinces. We thank the Rector and the community for receiving them into the Seminary on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 and the confreres who brought them from different communities to Medziphema. We wish all our candidates an excited, fruitful and discerning time of formation to be an MSFS!

### Welcome back to Fr. Thomas (Tomson) Aerathedathu!

After serving the MSFS Brazil Province for the last eleven (11) years, Fr. Thomas (Tomson) Aerathedathu has returned to his Province. He reached MSFS Provincial House Silapathar on the 14<sup>th</sup> of this month and now he is under home quarantine for 14 days. We welcome him back to Northeast India and thank him for his willingness to be at the service of our newly established Province of Dibrugarh! Hearty Welcome to you dear Fr. Tomson!

### Hearty Congratulations/Thanks to:

- **All our School Fraternities –Students, Parents, Staff and Management** - who are continuing to offer online classes and who have already reopened the schools for Classes IX to XII following the SOP, in this trying time of Covid-19 pandemic!
- **All our Confreres (Fr. Luke Tanti, Fr. Solomon Tirkey, Fr. Varghese Paul Manickathan, Fr. Francis Belo, Fr. Lukose Kavunkal, Fr. Jose Chettaniyil, and Fr Thomas Kollathuvayalil & Fr. George Vadakkepericherimannil)**, who were creatively making use of the new communication media for breaking the word of God, presentation of spiritual songs or live streaming of Holy Eucharist!
- **MSFS Community Dhemaji (Fr. Philip Mhonchumo and Fr. Vintu Avittapallil)** for organising the Founder’s Day Celebration on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 with a basketball match between the confreres in Upper Assam Apostolic Community!
- **MSFS Community Yingkiang (Fr. Kusum Kant Toppo and Fr. Wanlambor Kharumnuid)** for organising the Concluding Celebration of the Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee of Rev. Fr. Kusum Kant Toppo on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at Yingkiang! Special thanks to Fr. Wanlambor for organising a basketball match between Upper Assam Apostolic Community and Arunachal Apostolic Community in honour of the Silver Jubilarian!
- **Fr. Sunny Panthanazhivadakkethil**, Director of Social Work, in collaboration with **Frs. Joseph Bamhingbe and Rijesh Thalayinakandathil** for continuing the Mothers’ Meal Movement in our Purul (Manipur) and Mangkolemba (Nagaland) Mission Stations!

### Appointments of Deacons for Diaconate Ministry

- ✓ **Dn. Andreas Syngkli** is appointed at Ka Maria Ka Syiem Jingsuk Parish, Amlarem (Guwahati Province), for his diaconate ministry with effect from October 10, 2020.
- ✓ **Dn. Gaichungdai Anthony Kameih** is appointed at Holy Rosary parish, Purul for his diaconate ministry with the effect from October 11, 2020.
- ✓ **Dn. Jimal Johny Painapally** is appointed at Sacred Heart Parish, Likabali for his diaconate ministry with the effect from October 13, 2020.

- ✓ **Dn. Standfort Stephen Souba** is appointed at SFS Parish, Kangpokpi for his diaconate ministry with the effect from October 11, 2020.

### Obituary

- † **Mr. Constantinus Toppo** (52), the First Cousin of Fr Kusum Kant Toppo, died on 04.10.2020.  
† **Fr. Thomas Vadakumpadam MSFS** (74), belonging to Nagpur Province, died on 06.10.2020.  
† **Fr. Julian Kodigandala MSFS** (57), belonging to Visakhapatnam Province, died on 09.10.2020.  
† **Fr. Pakki Devadas MSFS** (62), belonging to Visakhapatnam Province, died on 17.10.2020



**Fr. Thomas MSFS**



**Fr. Julian MSFS**



**Fr. Pakki MSFS**



**May they rest in peace!**

My dear confreres please do continue to pray for our confreres who are sick, especially Fr. Mathew Puthumana and Fr. Jobins Vengathadathil, who are tested Covid-19 positive. I wish you all safe and healthy time ahead! May Mary, our Compassionate Mother keep us all under her protection and care!

I wish you all a very Happy Foundation Day of our Congregation! May St. Francis de Sales and Servant of God Fr. Peter Mary Mermier intercede for us!

Fraternally yours in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to Fr. Emmanuel Mappilaparambil MSFS.

**Fr Emmanuel Mappilaparambil MSFS**  
(Provincial, MSFS Dibrugarh Province)

## ANNEXURE

### **A Short Summary of Pope Francis's Social Encyclical: "Fratelli Tutti"**

(Fraternity and social friendship are the ways the Pontiff indicates to build a better, more just and peaceful world, with the contribution of all: people and institutions, with an emphatic confirmation of a 'no' to war and to globalized indifference...)

**By Isabella Piro**

What are the great ideals but also the tangible ways to advance for those who wish to build a more just and fraternal world in their ordinary relationships, in social life, politics and institutions?

This is mainly the question that Fratelli tutti is intended to answer: the Pope describes it as a "Social Encyclical" (6) which borrows the title of the "Admonitions" of Saint Francis of Assisi, who used these words to "address his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel" (Par 1). The Encyclical aims to promote a universal aspiration toward fraternity and social friendship. In the background of the Encyclical is the Covid-19 pandemic which, Francis reveals, "unexpectedly erupted" as he "was writing this letter". But the global health emergency has helped demonstrate that "no one can face life in isolation" and that the time has truly come to "dream, then, as a single human family" in which we are "brothers and sisters all" (Par 8).

### **Chapter One: dark clouds cover the world**

In the first of eight chapters, which is entitled "Dark Clouds over a Closed World", the document reflects on the many distortions of the contemporary era: the manipulation and deformation of concepts such as democracy, freedom, justice; the loss of the meaning of the social community and history; selfishness and indifference toward the common good; the prevalence of a market logic based on profit and the culture of waste; unemployment, racism, poverty; the disparity of rights and its aberrations such as slavery, trafficking, women subjugated and then forced to abort, organ trafficking (see Par 10-24). It deals with global problems that call for global actions, emphasizes the Pope, also sounding the alarm against a "culture of walls" that favours the proliferation of organized crime, fuelled by fear and loneliness (see Par 27-28).

### **Chapter Two: strangers on the road**

To many shadows, however, the Encyclical responds with a luminous example, a herald of hope: the Good Samaritan. The second chapter, "A stranger on the road", is dedicated to this figure. In it, the Pope emphasizes that, in an unhealthy society that turns its back on suffering and that is "illiterate" in caring for the frail and vulnerable (see Par 64-65), we are all called – just like the Good Samaritan – to become neighbours to others (see Par 81), overcoming prejudices, personal interests, historic and cultural barriers. We all, in fact, are co-responsible in creating a society that is able to include, integrate and lift up those who have fallen or are suffering (see Par 77). Love builds bridges and "we were made for love" (Par 88), the Pope adds, particularly exhorting Christians to recognize Christ in the face of every excluded person (see Par 85).

### **Chapter Three: vision of an open world**

The principle of the capacity to love according to "a universal dimension" (see Par 83) is also resumed in the third chapter, "Envisaging and engendering an open world". In this chapter Francis exhorts us to go "'outside' the self" in

order to find “a fuller existence in another” (Par 88), opening ourselves up to the other according to the dynamism of charity which makes us tend toward “universal fulfilment” (Par 95). In the background – the Encyclical recalls – the spiritual stature of a person’s life is measured by love, which always “takes first place” and leads us to seek better for the life of the other, far from all selfishness (Par 92-93). The sense of solidarity and of fraternity begin within the family, which are to be safeguarded and respected in their “primary and vital mission of education” (Par 114).

The right to live with dignity cannot be denied to anyone, the Pope again affirms, and since rights have no borders, no one can remain excluded, regardless of where they are born (see Par 121) In this perspective the Pontiff also calls us to consider “an ethics of international relations” (see Par 126), because every country also belongs to foreigners and the goods of the territory cannot be denied to those who are in need and come from another place. Thus, the natural right to private property will be secondary to the principal of the universal destination of created goods (see Par 120). The Encyclical also places specific emphasis on the issue of foreign debt: subject to the principal that it must be paid, it is hoped nonetheless that this does not compromise the growth and subsistence of the poorest countries (see Par 126).

#### **Chapter Four: heart open to the world**

To the theme of migration, the latter, entitled “A heart open to the whole world”. With their lives “at stake” (Par 37), fleeing from war, persecution, natural catastrophes, unscrupulous trafficking, ripped from their communities of origin, migrants are to be welcomed, protected, supported and integrated. Unnecessary migration needs to be avoided, the Pontiff affirms, by creating concrete opportunities to live with dignity in the countries of origin. But at the same time, we need to respect the right to seek a better life elsewhere. In receiving countries, the right balance will be between the protection of citizens' rights and the guarantee of welcome and assistance for migrants (see Par 38-40). Specifically, the Pope points to several “indispensable steps, especially in response to those who are fleeing grave humanitarian crises”: to increase and simplify the granting of visas; to open humanitarian corridors; to assure lodging, security and essential services; to offer opportunities for employment and training; to favour family reunification; to protect minors; to guarantee religious freedom. What is needed above all – the document reads – is global governance, an international collaboration for migration which implements long-term planning, going beyond single emergencies, on behalf of the supportive development of all peoples (see Par 129-132).

#### **Chapter Five: better politics**

The theme of the fifth chapter is “A better kind of politics”, which represents one of the most valuable forms of charity because it is placed at the service of the common good (see Par 180) and recognizes the importance of people, understood as an open category, available for discussion and dialogue (see Par 160). This is the populism indicated by Francis, which counters that “populism” which ignores the legitimacy of the notion of “people”, by attracting consensuses in order to exploit them for its own service and fomenting selfishness in order to increase its own popularity (see Par 159). But a better politics is also one that protects work, an “essential dimension of social life”. The best strategy against poverty, the Pontiff explains, does not simply aim to contain or render indigents inoffensive, but to promote them in the perspective of solidarity and subsidiarity (see Par 187). The task of politics, moreover, is to find a solution to all that attacks fundamental human rights, such as social exclusion; the marketing of organs, tissues, weapons and drugs; sexual exploitation; slave labour; terrorism and organized crime. The Pope makes an emphatic appeal to definitively eliminate human trafficking, a “source of shame for humanity”, and hunger, which is “criminal” because food is “an inalienable right” (Par 188-189).

The politics we need, Francis also underscores, is a politics centred on human dignity and not subjected to finance because “the marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem”: the “havoc” wreaked by financial speculation

has demonstrated this (see Par 168). Hence, popular movements have taken on particular relevance: as true “torrents of moral energy”, they must be engaged in society with greater coordination. In this way – the Pope states – it will be possible to go beyond a Policy “with” and “of” the poor (see Par 169).

Another hope present in the Encyclical regards the reform of the UN: in the face of the predominance of the economic dimension, a task of the United Nations will be to give substance to the concept of a “family of nations” working for the common good, the eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights. Tireless recourse “to negotiation, mediation and arbitration” – the Papal Document states – the UN must promote the force of law rather than the law of force (see Par 173-175).

### **Chapter Six: dialogue and friendship**

From the sixth chapter, “Dialogue and friendship in society”, further emerges the concept of life as the “art of encounter” with everyone, even with the world’s peripheries and with original peoples, because “each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable” (see Par 215). Then, of particular note, is the Pope’s reference to the miracle of “kindness”, an attitude to be recovered because it is a star “shining in the midst of darkness” and “frees us from the cruelty ... the anxiety ... the frantic flurry of activity” that prevail in the contemporary era (see Par 222-224).

### **Chapter Seven: renewed encounter**

The value and promotion of peace is reflected on in the seventh chapter, “Paths of renewed encounter”, in which the Pope underlines that peace is connected to truth, justice and mercy. Far from the desire for vengeance, it is “proactive” and aims at forming a society based on service to others and on the pursuit of reconciliation and mutual development (see Par 227-229). Thus, peace is an “art” that involves and regards everyone and in which each one must do his or her part in “a never-ending task” (see Par 227-232). Forgiveness is linked to peace: we must love everyone, without exception – the Encyclical reads – but loving an oppressor means helping him to change and not allowing him to continue oppressing his neighbour (see Par 241-242). Forgiveness does not mean impunity, but rather, justice and remembrance, because to forgive does not mean to forget, but to renounce the destructive power of evil and the desire for revenge. Never forget “horrors” like the Shoah, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, persecutions and ethnic massacres – exhorts the Pope. They must be remembered always, anew, so as not to become anaesthetized and to keep the flame of collective conscience alive. It is just as important to remember the good (see Par 246-252).

### **“Just War”**

Part of the seventh chapter, then, focuses on war: “a constant threat”, that represents “the negation of all rights”, “a failure of politics and of humanity”, and “a stinging defeat before the forces of evil”. Moreover, due to nuclear chemical and biological weapons that strike many innocent civilians, today we can no longer think, as in the past, of the possibility of a “just war”, but we must vehemently reaffirm: “Never again war!” The total elimination of nuclear arms is “a moral and humanitarian imperative”. With the money invested in weapons, the Pope suggests instead the establishment of a global fund for the elimination of hunger (see Par 255-262).

### **Death penalty**

Francis expresses just as clearly a position with regard to the death penalty: it is inadmissible and must be abolished worldwide. Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity” – the Pope writes – “and God himself pledges to guarantee this” (Par 263-269). There is emphasis on the necessity to respect “the sacredness of life” (Par 283) where today “some parts of our human family, it appears, can be readily sacrificed”, such as the unborn, the poor, the disabled and the elderly (Par 18).

## Chapter Eight: religion and fraternity

In the eighth and final chapter, the Pontiff focuses on “Religions at the service of fraternity in our world” and emphasizes that terrorism is not due to religion but to erroneous interpretations of religious texts, as well as “policies linked to hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression” (Par 282-283). a journey of peace among religions is possible and that it is therefore necessary to guarantee religious freedom, a fundamental human right for all believers (see Par 279).

The Encyclical reflects, in particular, on the role of the Church: she does not “restrict her mission to the private sphere”, it states. While not engaging in politics she does not, however, renounce the political dimension of life itself, attention to the common good and concern for integral human development, according to evangelical principals (see Par 276-278).

Lastly, Francis quotes the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together”, which he signed on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi, along with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyib: from that milestone of interreligious dialogue, the Pontiff returns to the appeal that, in the name of human fraternity, dialogue be adopted as the way, common cooperation as conduct, and mutual knowledge as method and standard (see Par 285). **(Source: Zenit)**



ENCYCLICAL LETTER

# FRATELLI TUTTI

Of the Holy Father Francis

On fraternity and social friendship

## TREADING THE PATH OF OUR PATRON SFS...

*You will fulfil your mission by proclaiming the good news so that they may have life. They will grow in this life by the good example that you provide them by your own life. Do not be worried whether your efforts bear fruit for you to see. You are expected only to be faithful in working to prepare the barren and arid land. You will only be asked how well you have sown the seed, not how much you have harvested. (AE VI, 89, Conf. 6, SC II, p.101)*