



# FRANSALIAN

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“Mary gave birth to her first-born son” (Lk 2:7). In this verse Saint Luke recounts quite soberly the great event to which the prophecies from Israel’s history had pointed. Luke calls the child the “first-born.” In the Old Testament, “first-born” does not mean the first of a series of children. It is a title of honour, quite independently of whether other brothers and sisters follow or not. For instance, Israel is designated by God in the Book of Exodus (Ex 4:22) as “my first-born Son,” and this expresses Israel’s election and singular dignity as the chosen one of God. Saint Paul amplified and deepened the idea of Jesus as firstborn in the Letters to the Colossians and to the Ephesians: Jesus is the first-born of all creation the true prototype of human, according to which God formed the human creature. Furthermore, as these letters tell us, he is the first-born from the dead. This new family of God begins at the moment when Mary wraps her first-born in swaddling clothes and lays him in a manger. There appeared a great heavenly host of angels who appeared to the shepherds camping in the countryside. They were keeping watch over their flock by night. The announcement was made to shepherds who were ranked rather low in Jewish society. The lowly ones (*anawim*) have a special place in God’s plan of things. The angels praised God and said: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!” (Lk 2:14). This peace (*shalom*) did not mean just calmness and absence of war. It referred to a complete, holistic well-being of the total person imbued with God’s love. The Church has extended this song of peace and praise, which the angels sang in response to the event of the holy night into a hymn of joy at God’s glory. God’s glory, from which



all beauty derives, causes us to break out in astonishment and joy. Anyone who catches a glimpse of God experiences joy. Thus, down the centuries, the angels’ song has again and again become a song of love and joy, a song of power and might for those who love God and humans. In this way, in the weakness of infancy, Jesus is the mighty God and he shows us God’s own might in contrast to the self-asserting powers of this world. The lowly infant in the manger is the mighty God of love who has overcome the infinite distance between God and human. God has not only bent down, but he has also truly come down to us. He has come into the world and has become one of us in order to draw all of us to himself. This child is truly Emmanuel, “God-with-us.” His kingdom truly stretches to the ends of the earth. This child of peace and love has ignited the light of goodness in humans of good will and has given them strength to overcome the tyranny of might.

The past one year has been hectic with lots of activities in the MSFS Congregation on account of the 175th Jubilee celebrations. The Jubilee celebrations have highlighted the accomplishments of our missionaries for the mission of the Lord and His Church all over the world, following Jesus in the footsteps of St Francis de Sales and Father Peter Mermier, the founder of the MSFS. The present Issue of the Fransalian International humbly endeavours to make known to all Fransalian friends and benefactors some of the reports of these celebrations that mark the great accomplishments of the missionaries ever since the foundation of the Congregation on October 24, 1838. The members of the Editorial Board of the Fransalian International are also happy to wish its readers a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.



## Saint Francis de Sales a Saint so Human (Insight – XXII): An Obedient Life

Obedience is one of the solid foundations of all societies. It makes demands on us. One has to sacrifice one’s own will and follow the command or order that is given. It is difficult and it costs. In the post-Vatican period dialogue was introduced to make obedience more acceptable. Even then there was a crisis of obedience. All the same, the society is built on obedience. No society can survive without obedience. When disobedience raises its head anarchy reigns and the society disintegrates. In fact obedience enters the very nature of being. For a stone, for a plant, for an animal to be what it is, it has to follow the laws of its nature. So we can never overestimate the value of obedience. St Francis de Sales has just one chapter on obedience in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, two conferences on obedience in the *Spiritual Conferences* and two books on the Declared will of God and Permissive will of God and obedience to it in his *Treatise on the Love of God*. So obedience to the will of God is essential for spiritual growth and mysticism. There is no mysticism without surrender to God. St Francis de Sales distinguishes two kinds of obedience: one “necessary” and the other “voluntary.” As regards necessary obedience, there is no choice –

one has to obey parents, civil and ecclesiastical authorities. As regards voluntary obedience, one is free to choose but once the choice is made, one is bound to obey. A girl or a boy is free to choose one’s partner. But once a choice is made, they are bound to one another. Similarly, one is free to choose a spiritual guide. Once the choice is made, he or she has to follow the guide and guidance given. St Francis de Sales tells us how to obey: obey gently without retort, promptly without delay and cheerfully without murmuring. Above all, obey lovingly for the love of him who for the love of us *made himself obedient till death on the cross* (Phil 2:8). The saint suggests means of learning to obey: In order to learn to obey your superiors easily, comply readily with the will of your equals giving in to their opinions in what is not evil without being quarrelsome or obstinate. Accommodate yourself willingly to the wishes of your inferiors insofar as reason permits it, and so long as they are good without exercising any domineering authority. It is an error to believe that we would obey easily if we were men or women religious, when we find it difficult and hard to render obedience to those whom God has placed over us. Love of God is the motive force of obedience. It renders sweet the bitterness of obedience.

-Fr Antony Mookenthottam msfs



## SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION COMPLETES 15 YEARS

The Southern African Region consists of both Namibia and South Africa. In 1998, three priests from the North-East India province went to work in Namibia and in the following year to South Africa. In the year 1994 Bishop John Minder OSFS, then bishop of Keimoes-Upington extended an invitation to the then Superior General Rev. Fr Emile Mayoraz, to send some missionaries to work in his diocese. In response to the invitation, in 1995 Fr Augustine Mangatt, then a general councillor, made a visit to the diocese of Keimoes-Upington and gave a positive report to the General. In 1996, Superior General, with the approval of his councillors, entrusted this new venture of the Congregation to the North East Province. In response the North East provincial administration designated Frs Philip Mangatt, Jose Kunjaparampil and Babychan Arackathara to plant the Congregation in Southern Africa. On July 22, 1998, the designated three confreres of the North-East India Province landed at Windhoek airport in Namibia. Fr Philip Mangatt, the seniormost among the three, was the Mission Superior. They spent a week at Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish at Keetmanshoop and moved out to three different parishes to learn Afrikaans, before they could take up the parish of Bethanie that was offered to us. It is 15 years since the three pioneers from North East India province landed in Namibia. God's abiding presence has always been with us since the inception of this mission unit. Today we have 23 priests and 7 professed scholastics belonging to the Region. It's a joy to see local vocation sprouting from our own missions in Namibia. During the past few years we have taken an additional measure to recruit candidates from East Africa with the gracious assistance from East Africa province. The Southern African Region – along with East Africa which turned 25 this year and our Congregation which has just completed its quartoseptcentennial jubilee – celebrates its 15 years of presence in Southern Africa. May God continue to guide its destiny!

## FIRST CONGRESS OF THE USA VICE PROVINCE

The first ever Vice Provincial Congress of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, USA Vice Province, was held from the evening of Monday, August 26, 2013 to 12:00 noon on Friday, August 30, 2013, at Wellspring, Fransalian Center for Spirituality in Tyler, Texas. Forty one of the forty nine confreres in ministry in USA participated in the Congress. The occasion was graced by the presence and active participation of Rev. Fr Thumma Mariadas, Assistant General. The deliberations, discussions, sharing, and discernment centered on the main theme of the Assembly, "I want Missions: The Pastoral, Prophetic and Spiritual dimensions of our Mission in USA". Papers and reflections on the theme

were presented by Fr Augustine Tharappel, Vice Provincial. Confreres present took active part in all the proceedings and the general feedback on the process was very positive. The Assembly elected two councillors from the permanent members, two Advisers from the short-term members and a bursar from the permanent members for the Vice Provincial administration: Fr Joseph Mullakkara (Councillor), Fr Luke Kalarickal (Councillor & Admonitor), Fr Tomy Joseph Puliyampattayil (Adviser), Fr Santy Kurian Kochupurackal (Adviser), and Fr Joseph Pottammel (Bursar).

-Fr Augustine Tharappel, msfs

## MSFS Mission in Zambia

Three young, dynamic and pioneering missionaries, Frs Jude, Amal and Britto, belonging to Pune Province are now learning the local languages Nyanja and Bemba, in a language institute at Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. On their landing in the country, Rev. Clement Mulenga sdb, the Bishop of Kabwe, welcomed us and took us all to many places. Kabwe is a new diocese carved out from the Archdiocese of Lusaka. We had several meetings with various groups and got introduced. There are a few religious from India working in the diocese and many in Zambia. After much discussion, dialogue and discernment, it was decided that we start a new parish in a mini town called Liteta, which is exactly at the middle on the way between Lusaka and Kabwe. From



either side it is 65 kms. The centre has a land to be developed. The community is very eager to have priests in their place. The Bishop assured that he would have dialogue with the people and would do the needful. There is great scope for mission work in this area of the diocese. The bishop is willing to offer a few more places.

-Fr Vincent Lourduwamy, msfs

-Fr Babychan Arackathara, msfs

## Jaratoli Mission in Ranchi Diocese

The credit for our venture into Jaratoli mission under Ranchi Archdiocese goes to Fr Mario D'Souza who took up our cause with Cardinal Telesphor Toppo. Jaratoli was the sub-centre of Ulhatu Parish around 27 kilometres away from Ranchi City. Ulhatu Parish is around 12 kilometres from Jaratoli. This centre has a spacious church already built with a brand new presbytery like a formation house. During my meeting with the Cardinal, he said that Jaratoli needed a resident priest in view of possible evangelisation and education. Although Ulhatu has a catholic Hindi Medium school, it is too far for little children. A primary school is to be

started. What is most striking is that the handful of families at Jaratoli treat the newly appointed missionaries with great love and reverence. Their loyalty to the church and love for people in consecrated life is commendable. Fr Pradeep and Dn Hilarus have been staying in Jaratoli since July. The centre is about 20 kilometres away from public road transport. Electricity supply is yet to be properly stabilised. Mobile networks are available. Tuition classes are already being conducted for some occupation and work. Primary school is to be started. Classes can be conducted in the church and presbytery.

-Fr Jacob Karamakuzhy, msfs

## DESALITE RINGTONE

Ringtone is one which expresses a particular brand in the mobile world. All companies such as Air-tell, Air-cell, Vodafone, Reliance, BSNL, etc have their ringtones that remain strong in the minds of children, youth, adults and the old as well. Keeping this in mind the SFS P. U. College, Hebbagodi, Bangalore, composed and launched a ringtone that every DeSalite (every Student who studies at SFS institute is called "DeSalite") could use proudly, reminding oneself of the institute he is attached with. This ringtone was composed by Fr Herold Christopher Crasta msfs. It has been welcomed by the staff and students.

# Quartoseptcentennial Celebrations

## Suvidya College and South West Province:



The Quartoseptcentennial Celebrations of our Congregation, co-hosted by the South West Province and Suvidya College, was held at Suvidya College, the Inter-Provincial Institute for Philosophy, Bangalore, on September 23, 2013. The Holy Eucharist was presided over by His Excellency Salvatore Pennacchio, the Apostolic Nuncio to India, and concelebrated by 175 priests. At the auspicious outset, Fr George Panthanmackel, the Rector of Suvidya College, introduced and welcomed the dignitaries. The Indian lamp was lit to symbolize the presence of God. Immediately after the Holy Mass the colourful cultural evening began. The welcome speech was delivered by Rev. Fr Jose Kumbloickal, the Provincial of South West India Province. The various cultural items and power-point presentations were enchanting and informative because both echoed the need of our missions and the status of our provinces. The speeches by his Excellency Salvatore Pennacchio, Most Rev. Dr Abraham Viruthukulangara, the Archbishop of Nagpur and Most Rev. Dr Bernard Moras, the Archbishop of Bangalore, were very inspirational as they focused on and emphasized new insights and advices for the effectiveness of our continued existence as MSFS in the world. The messages by Very Rev. Fr Abraham Vettuvellil, the Superior General, Rev. Fr Angelo Fernandes, Former Superior General, and Rev. Fr Francis Thadathil, the Chairman of the Governing Body of Suvidya College, reminded the gathering of the great legacy of MSFS and the daring steps of our pioneering missionaries. Rev. Fr George Parampukattil, the General Councillor in-charge of the Jubilee celebration, delivered the vote of thanks. The exhibition on the Congregation, the decorations, the presence of number of invited guests which included religious sisters from the neighbouring communities and lay benefactors of the Congregation, the melodious choir and the united hard work of fathers and brothers of Suvidya College contributed to the beauty and success of the day.

**-Tony Thomas Mundachalil, msfs**

## South East Province:

The Quartoseptcentennial (175<sup>th</sup> Jubilee) of the Foundation of our Congregation was celebrated by South East India Province at Holy Cross College, Trichy, on October 2, 2013. It was an occasion of immense joy for the South-East India confreres to gather together with our Superior General, Very Rev. Fr Abraham Vettuvellil, Assistant Superior General, Rev. Fr Thumma Mariadas, General Councillors and confreres from other Provinces to thank God during the Eucharistic celebration presided over by the Bishop of Trichy, Most Rev. Dr Antony Devotta along with seven other Bishops: the Bishops of Thanjavur, Vellore, Chenglepet,



Palayamkottai, Sivagangai, Tuticorin and Ooty. Rev. Sr. Rosy Antony, the Provincial Superior of Holy Cross Sisters of Chavanod, Trichy, introduced the theme and highlighted the significance of the Jubilee celebrations prior to the start of the Solemn Eucharistic celebration. Rev. Fr Anthony Dharmaraj, our Provincial, in his welcome address, exhorted the faithful to experience deep within themselves their oneness as God's people. The inspiring homily of Very Rev. Fr Abraham Vettuvellil, our Superior General, rekindled in everyone a missionary enthusiasm worthy of our Founder. After the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, a short felicitation programme was arranged. The climax of the event was the Dance Drama by MSFS Kalai Ulagam, Chennai.

**-Fr V. Yesuraja, msfs**



## North East Province:



MSFS has been at the service of the Church in Northeast from the year 1975. Today, it is the second largest men Congregation in the northeast. 175 priests of the Province serve in 33 parishes in the Northeast as well as in the overseas missions. Most parishes in the Northeast have schools and hostels attached to them. Confreres are involved in preaching ministry, education, pastoral ministry and social apostolate. MSFS Northeast celebrated the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Foundation of the Congregation on Oct 17, 2013 at SFS School, Narengi. The Jubilee Celebration began with Holy Eucharist presided over by Most Rev. John Moolachira, the Archbishop of Guwahati, and concelebrated by Most Rev. Dominic Lumon, Archbishop of Imphal, Most Rev. John Thomas, bishop of Itanagar, Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, bishop of Agartala, Most Rev. Stephen Routluanga, bishop of Aizawl, Most Rev. Thomas Pullopillil, bishop of Bongaigaon, Most Rev. Joseph Aind, bishop of Dibrugarh, Most Rev. Victor Lyngdoh, bishop of Nongstoin, Most Rev. Michael Akasius, bishop of Tezpur, and Very Rev. Fr Hilarius Lamare, administrator of Jowai diocese, Rev. Fr Francis Thadathil, Provincial of North East Province, along with several priests. Many religious and faithful from various parishes of the region also participated in the celebrations. Immediately following the Eucharist a felicitation program was also held. A number of cultural dances were performed by students and parishnors of various MSFS missions in Northeast. Many dignitaries from the Government and local bodies also attended the programme.

**-Fr Shaju Ambiyil, msfs**

## NEW DELEGATE SUPERIOR OF MOZAMBIQUE

Rev. Fr Petrus Kullu was installed as the first MSFS Delegation Superior of Mozambique by Rev. Fr Jacob Karamakuzhiyil, Provincial of Nagpur Province, on August 19, 2013. The solemn Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Fr

Provincial himself and concelebrated by all the MSFS priests working in Mozambique. The religious communities of the neighbourhood and the Friends of Fransalians were invited for the function.

**-Jins Karakadayil, msfs**

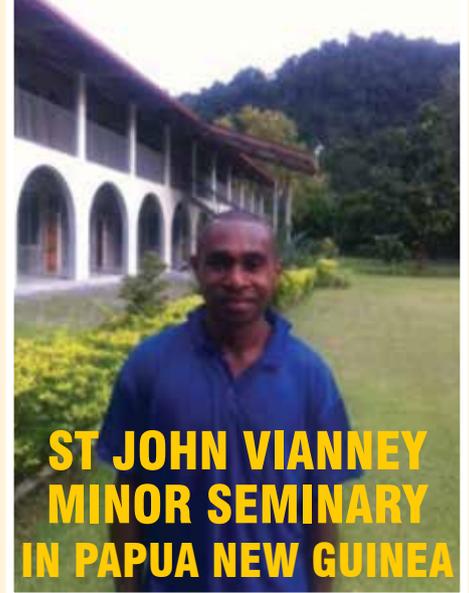


# VISITATION TO BRAZIL PROVINCE

I had the joy of visiting our confreres working in the Province of Brazil in the month of August, from 09 to 27. On August 09, 2013, I arrived at the International Airport in Rio de Janeiro at 2.30 pm and was given a warm welcome there by one of our Confreres, Rev. Fr S. Eldin Bernard, who is also one of the Provincial Councillors of Brazil Province. The very next day, I met the Provincial Superior of Brazil Province, Rev. Fr Gilberto Bugnon and had a talk with him and made plans for the future and discussed the various ways we could have co-operation and collaboration. Rev. Fr Gilberto thanked South East Province profusely for the timely help and collaboration. At present, five confreres from our Province, are working in Brazil Province and 3 more are yet to join the team. Both of us also used this meeting to sign a contract between both the Provinces. I had the joy of visiting the following parishes and centres: *Paroquia Nossa Senhora do Amparo in Tangua*, *Rio de Janeiro*: It is a parish, where Rev. Fr Gilberto, the Provincial himself is the pastor and he is assisted by Fr Tomson Aerathaduthu. The parish, *Nossa Senhora do Amparo*, is a very vibrant parish that has over 12,000 Catholics and covers about 24 square kilometers and has 10 substations. *Paroquia Sta. Teresinhado Menino Jesus in Sao Paulo*: It was here in Sao Paulo in the year 1926 that the MSFS landed at first at the invitation of the Archbishop of Sao Paulo. In the course of time, the mission took deep root and grew into a Province. This parish has over 1, 00,000 Catholics, of whom many do not practice their faith due to various factors. However, our priests working there, the pastor and superior, Fr. Agnaldo Costa and Fr S. Eldin Bernard, the associate pastor, are doing their best to reach out to the inactive Catholics through social media and radio, which they are planning

to start in Sao Paulo. *Casa de Formacao Sao Francisco de Sales and Paroquia Menino Deus at Curitiba*: The next and the third stop was at Curitiba, where we have a formation house as well as a parish church named after Menino Deus. It is there that Fr Joao Inacio Rodrigues is the Rector, the Parish Priest and the Provincial Bursar. Fr A. J. R. Benedict is assisting him in both the Seminary and the Parish. The parish has more than 2000 parishioners, who are very simple and loving. It has only one substation. At present, Frs. D. Arockiaraj and G. Jagannathan are staying there and preparing to go to Brasilia, the capital of Brazil for the language course. Fr Joao Inacio takes good care of those of our fathers who go to Brazil for ministry. He gives them all initial orientation to Portuguese and Brazilian culture / way of life. *Paroquia Nossa Senhora Rainha at Cacador, Santa Catarina*: My final visit was to Our Lady of Queen, where Fr F. Justin is the Assistant Parish Priest and Fr Francisco is the Pastor. August 22 is the Feast of the Queenship of Mary, who is also the patroness of the parish at Cacador. In view of the Feast, nine days of novena was conducted and different priests from the locality were invited to preach on Mary. This year was so unique as they held a triple celebration: Parish Feast, Priestly Silver Jubilee of Fr Francisco and the Inauguration of the newly-built Grotto. The mega celebration began with a welcome "bharathanatyam" by Fr D. Arockiaraj at 7.30 pm on Sunday, August 25, 2013. The Mass was presided over by Most Rev. Severino Clasen OFM, Bishop of Cacador, Santa Catarina. There were about nine MSFS confreres and a few other guest priests.

-Fr A. Dharmaraj, msfs



The diocese of Vanimo is one of the 18 dioceses in Papua New Guinea (PNG), bordering Indonesia. It is in this diocese that the MSFS priests started to work from 2005 at the invitation of Most Rev. Cesare Bonivento, PIME. The first MSFS to arrive here was Fr Jose Mullanmadackal, followed by Frs Joseph Kallacheril, N. Goa Showraiah, Prabhath Basthy Ray, Thomas Perumail and John Vedhanayakam. At present, only Frs Jose, John and Thomas are working here. The uniqueness of this diocese is that there is a minor seminary (St John Mary Vianney) and a major seminary (St Charles Borromeo) here. Since the year 2007 the minor seminary was under the management of MSFS priests. Fr N. Showraiah was the Rector for four years and after his departure Fr John Vedhanayakam was appointed Rector in the year 2012. Fr Thomas Perumail and Fr Jose Mullanmmadackal (the latter is also the parish priest of one of the town parishes) render their service to the minor seminary as well as the major seminary as spiritual directors, confessors and professors. Three sisters from India (Presentation Sisters) are also teaching in the minor seminary along with four lay persons. There are about 50 students in the minor seminary from the neighbouring coastal area as well as "bush parishes" (interior villages). Due to the distance and lack of proper transportation facilities, it takes about five to seven days for some of the students from the bush parishes to reach here. They have to walk quite a long distance and then travel through river by boat and then by road. They travel in groups and carry with them food stuff needed for a week. The students who completed 8th grade are admitted here. After one year of orientation course, they are promoted to the 9th grade and continue their studies here till they complete the 12th grade. After that, suitable candidates are promoted to the major seminary. Due to cultural and also some other factors, perseverance rate is poor. So far only four completed the priestly formation here and were ordained priests, of these two are for another diocese and one for a religious congregation. Only one is for this diocese. The minor seminary is the only hope for the existence of the major seminary here.

-Fr Thomas Perumail, msfs

## IMPORTANT MEETINGS at MSFS Provincialate, Trichy

The Provincials of India Forum (PIF), together with the Provincial of East Africa (PEA), had a meeting with the Superior General and the General Administration at MSFS Provincialate, Trichy, from October 09 to 10, 2013. It was a joy for our Province and for me very personally to have these most honourable dignitaries of our Congregation present with us during those days of meeting. All expressed that they felt at home at our Provincialate and were happy to be with some of the members of our Province. Prior to the meeting of PIF and PEA with the General Curia, our Provincial Curia had a meeting with the General Curia from October 07 to 08 to have an evaluation of the very life and various ministries of our Province and to discuss the diverse ways and means for further growth and development of the Province. The General Curia also had a five-day meeting here from October 12 to 16.

-Fr L. Sagaya Basker, msfs

## SECOND GOLD MEDAL



Fr J. Stephen msfs was honoured with a Gold Medal, for a second time, by the University of Madras for successfully completing his Post Graduation in Media Arts at Loyola College, Chennai, and securing 1<sup>st</sup> Rank with 93.4%. He received his award from Hon'ble Shri Oscar Fernandes, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Government of India, on October 12, 2013, at the 85<sup>th</sup> Graduation Day of Loyola College, Chennai. He received his first Gold Medal in 2012 and his short film 'DADDY' won him a National Award in the same year.

-Fr L. Sagaya Basker, msfs

## THANKS TO CONFRERES IN EUROPE

I visited our MSFS confreres of Pune Province and a few diocesan personnel in Germany and German Speaking Switzerland. I had the chance of attending the Society meeting in which about 20 confreres were present. Fr Prakash has just joined the mission in Augsburg. All of them are busy with various activities as they have many centres. My sincere thanks to all these confreres for their committed service. Besides these confreres I also had the privilege of meeting and staying with other confreres from other provinces. I thank all these confreres for their warm hospitality to me and the support they give to each other, very specially to our new confreres. *Fr Nazareth:* He has been working in the diocese of Augsburg for more than 10 years. He is the parish priest of Weil, under which he has a few more churches. He is very pastoral minded and is well accepted and appreciated by the people. He is very busy with various activities, including teaching catechism in the school. *Fr Christopher Rajmani:* He is working in the parish of St Stephen, at Heilbronn, in the diocese of Stuttgart as an assistant parish priest. Earlier he was working in Augsburg diocese. As an assistant he has to serve at few other churches and at times in collaboration with Protestants. *Fr Thomas Muttam:* He arrived there in 2012 and is working in the parish of St John the Baptist, at Saslack in the diocese of Bamberg. Tom has started Face-book ministry for youth in the parish to attract them. *Fr James D:* Fr James is an assistant parish priest of Ibbenbueren in the diocese of Muenster. He has a fine parish priest. He is well-appreciated and has a beautiful church, actively involved in the parish activities. *Fr Prabhu(Johnpaul)* is doing the language course in an institute meant for international priests and people to learn the language. He is eagerly waiting for an appointment soon. *Fr Cyriac N.* is a very active Parish Priest of Holy Cross church, Chur, in German Speaking Switzerland. He is also the dean of the Chur deanery, very much appreciated. He has about 6000 Catholics. He has a lot of meetings to attend. He has a number of volunteers and collaborators to help the church. *Fr Perry Da Silva* is retired but assists in Bonsten parish and different churches, as usual very jovial, happy and very hospitable. He has, Idy and Verni, good friends who take very good care of him giving him his daily bread and helping him in all his needs. *Fr Thomas Fernandes* is now retired, stays in a rented house but still very active taking up various ministries, helps in various parishes and keeps himself very busy.

**-Fr Vincent Lourduswamy, msfs**



## “Dominus Benedicat Anglicam”: MSFS in Malmesbury, England

*(Continued from the Previous Issue)*

Fr Larive's successor at Malmesbury was Father Decompoix, who previously had been for 15 years a missionary in India, like Fr Larive. This venerable priest was a model of courtesy who left a lasting memory of kindness and patience to all who knew him. Many were his difficulties to obtain good teachers for the school. At last in 1884, the Sisters of St Joseph were able to take over its management which they retained until recently with grateful thanks of both clergy and people. It was then that the Coachhouse became Father Decompoix's residence where he lived until his death when it became what it is today, a clubroom.

Father Decompoix was the first Fransalian missionary to have died at Malmesbury in the midst of the people whom he loved and served for over 40 years. Of course, as the years rolled by Fr Decompoix, though robust in general health, had grown deaf and unsteady on his feet. He was given an assistant Priest in the person of Father Louis Valluet. Of French birth and education, he loved England and his thoughts and ways became more English than the English themselves. When in 1903 he was appointed to Yeovil, Father Prunier took his place here, followed later by Father Anthonioz. In 1912, however, after 45 years restoration, Catholics in Malmesbury were few in number and had no impact on their fellow townsmen. On the contrary, they were ignored by the Borough authorities and treated by their neighbours with contempt.

The newly appointed Assistant Priest (note: this was Father Morrin himself) set about making of much needed improvements. Bazaars, concerts, and raffles were organised. Money was thus raised to build a new sanctuary with new sacristies, to change the heavy Roman arches into the present slender gothic ones, to install central heating and electric lighting. In order to have a means at hand to defend his people from attacks in local Parish Magazines and to put forward the Catholic point of view he started a Catholic Parish Magazine. He became a member of the local Debating Society, assisting regularly at all the debates. It was there that he realised how ignorant people were of the true doctrine of the Catholic Church and what nonsensical stories they believed about Catholics and their religion. So he hired a Public Hall and gave two series of six lectures each on Catholicism which led to a six months weekly correspondence in a local news paper to which people outside Malmesbury as far as America contributed.

He also played a part in the social life of the

Borough, was helpful with refugees during the First World War and became Chairman of the Food Committee. The result was that Catholics began to be treated with respect. Never again were they called by abusive names. The Catholic population increased. Many influential converts were received into the Church.

The good work began was developed by Father Grorod who took charge of Malmesbury in 1925. He embellished the little church with a new altar and pulpit. To him Bishop Lee gave the picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe which has been offered him by Mr Storey, of Ingleburne Manor and originally been at Bradenstoke Priory. To him the Bishop gave also the three stained glass windows which had once adorned Bristol Pro-Cathedral. Malmesbury is also indebted to Father Grorod for the fine School he erected in Holloway and which has recently been enlarged by the present Parish Priest. It was left to Father Antonioz when he came back to Malmesbury the second time, to clear away the old school building which was blocking the view of the church. The mini-walls with their railings and the fine wrought-iron gates were erected by the late Parish Priest, Father James Lehiff.

Such is the brief outline, the story of the Catholic Faith in Malmesbury. How it was first brought from Ireland by the monk Maelduff who gave his name to the place; how for 800 years Malmesbury was entirely Catholic until Henry V111 apostatised, robbed the monastery, banished the monks, ousted the Catholic Faith. How 300 years later the same faith of Maelduff, of Aldhelm, of Athelstan, of William was brought back to this ancient Borough all the way from India by one of her sons, a retired Army Captain with a French priest Missionary of St Francis de Sales.

None of us saw what happened 100 years ago, and none of us will live to see what will take place at the next centenary celebration 100 years hence. By studying the wind of change and the trend of thought today throughout the world and especially here in our own country, we may be allowed to conjecture, to hope and to wish that the words Saint Aldhelm wrote to the British Church in Wales: 'It is useless to call yourselves Catholic unless you follow the teaching and the discipline of Rome' will have by then converted the minds and hearts of our countrymen, so that the next centenary will be celebrated by the entire population of Malmesbury.

**-Fr Martin Griffin, msfs**



## PRAYER SESSIONS IN VISAKHAPATNAM

*Prayer Meeting at Seethammadara:* Fr. M. Joji, the Principal of SFS School, Seethammadara, organized a prayer meeting for the students of his school, on July 5, 2013, in the school hall, exclusively for the catholic children to mark the beginning of the academic year and invoke God's blessings. Fr Joseph Kondala msfs was the animator who shared his reflections on how God regards children and how noble and happy would be the life of a child who lives in God. There were about 450 children from classes 4 to 10 along with their teachers, attending this prayer. The booming responses from the children with their thunderous choral responses to his interaction was indeed encouraging. These two hours of prayer session was closed with a prayer for children, their teachers and for their families. *A Day of Prayer for the Married:* On August 9, 2013, a special day of prayer in Telugu was organized for married couples at Ross Hill Chapel. The registration recorded 160 couples, Launch Internet Explorer Browser.Ink apart from individuals who attended this prayer session. Frs Anil Bellamkonda msfs

and Dominc Savio msfs animated the sessions by preaching on the theme, "Faith and Family." The day began with praise and worship before the Blessed Sacrament and the Eucharistic Adoration. Post-lunch sessions had the celebration of the Holy Mass followed by prayer for inner healing. *A Day of Prayer for Women:* A day's prayer on "Unquestioning Faith: A Mover of Mountains" was organized for women, on the Ross Hill Chapel, on July 13, 2013, to mark the Year of Faith. The women who attended this day of prayer numbered about 150; they were both working women and girl students. The animator Fr Joseph Kondala explained to the participants the importance of faith in the life of a Christian, how it helps us to overcome the mountainous hurdles which life presents to us and how we ought to grow and be strengthened in faith through humility, trust and self surrender. The participants expressed their wish to have such prayer gatherings more frequently.

-Fr Joseph Kondala, msfs

## Holy Father 'FRANCIS EFFECT' in Religious Life

Person of Pope Francis has caught the imagination of almost all of us. He has demonstrated to the world a new way of being Pope, not as a strategy but as a spontaneous expression that is coming from his heart. We are challenged, I believe, by his courage to speak out the essentials of the message of the Gospel and to speak out the nature of the Church more and more as a 'horizontally structured Church' and less and less as a 'vertically structured Church.' What is really new in his leadership style? People of Buenos Aires tell us that "Pope was always like this." What is new is his position? The position does not change him but he changes the position. This is an invitation to all of us in our religious life. The basics remain the same: simplicity, authenticity, humility, not all knowing, close to God and close to the truth. Pope Francis invites us to a new mind-set of life-witness and simplicity. He said: "*The first reform must be the attitude. The ministers of the Gospel must be people who can warm the hearts of the people, who walk through the dark night with them, how know how to dialogue and to descend themselves into their people's night, into the darkness, but without getting lost. The people of God want pastors, not clergy acting like bureaucrats or government officials*" Our vocation is to look at and see the world from the periphery as people of God see and show us the periphery. (From the letter of Superior General Rev. Fr Abraham Vettuvellil dated 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013)

## JUBILEE IN EAST AFRICA

The Missionaries of St Francis de Sales in East Africa already celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the first arrival of the Missionaries in African Soil, especially in East Africa consisting of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. The first four pioneers – Fr Devasia Kuzhupil, Fr Augustine

Mangatt, Fr Sebastian Kuzhupil and Fr Thomas Kochuparampil – voluntarily dared to begin the mission life in Tanzania on December 31, 1987. The Jubilee year began with the celebration of *Hija Takatifu kwa Mlima wa Wokovu* (Holy Pilgrimage to the Salvation Hill) in Lububu

Parish on September 14, 2012. The Jubilee Cross was prepared and was taken to all our centres: Parishes, Schools, Seminaries, Hospitals and the Houses of the Lay Faithful in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Everyone was blessed by the Cross and all expressed their joy at the event. The concluding celebration of the jubilee was at St Francis Junior Seminary, Morogoro, Tanzania, on October 26, 2013, officiated by His Lordship Telesphor Mkude, the Bishop of Morogoro. Many priests, religious, friends of Fransalians, well-wishers, students and lay faithful participated in the event. The celebration happily coincided with other jubilees of the Congregation: the 175 year-jubilee of the Foundation of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales in Annecy and the 150<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary of our founder, Fr Peter Marie Mermier the Servant of God.

-Fr David Susai, msfs



## New Books on Salesian Spirituality

On May 31, 2013, at Salesianum, MSFS Novitiate at Visakhapatnam, a book titled, *A Spoonful of Honey Vol. I: Precious Pearls from the Introduction to the Devout Life of St. Francis de Sales*, and again at Stella Maris, MSFS Provincialate of Visakhapatnam Province, on October 24, 2013, *A Spoonful of Honey Vol. II: Priceless Quotes from the Treatise on the Love of God*, were released. Both these books are compiled by Fr B. Suresh Babu msfs, the Director of Novices. While releasing these books, Rev. Fr Simon Paicat msfs, Provincial of Visakhapatnam, hoped that these works will "add some more sweetness of the honey to our life" if we take time to read and reflect on them. He opined that since these quotations are arranged according to the themes, they would be very useful "not only for talks or conferences but also for personal meditation and transformation."

-Fr Sabin Kavunkal, msfs

## GOLDEN JUBILEE at Chagford, England



The Holy Family Catholic Church in Chagford, England, celebrated its golden jubilee on Thursday, November 28, 2013. A special service was held to mark the occasion with Most Rev. Christopher Budd, Bishop of Plymouth, celebrating the Holy Mass. Also in attendance were former priests of the parish, Mgr George Hay, Fr Michael Koppel and Fr Peter Morgan as well as other invited clergy from the diocese. During the service, a number of parishioners were acknowledged for their long standing association with The Holy Family: Jean Nyburg, one of the initial fund raisers for the church and the organist for the past fifty years and Dr David Rhodes the long standing custodian of the church. After the service, 70 priests and parishioners made the short walk to Endecott House which was a former meeting place for Holy Mass prior to the consecration of The Holy Family Church. A short film presentation was shown giving the history and key events in the life of The Holy Family Church to date and included anecdotes from a number of Parishioners. There followed a splendid lunch which was enjoyed by all.

-Fr Darline Joseph, msfs

## ESSAY COMPETITION FOR MSFS SCHOLASTICS

Rev Fr Abraham Vettuvelli, the Superior General of the MSFS Congregation, proposed an innovative idea of an essay competition among the MSFS young scholastics to enkindle the spirit of the General Chapter 2013. This was also a project deemed a fitting token of the celebration of the 175 years Jubilee of the Foundation of our Congregation, assigned to the responsibility of Assistant General, monitored by Fr Noel Rebello, the General Councillor for Formation, entrusted to the Provincials and Rectors for implementation, actualised in concrete by different scholastics and assessed by a panel of assessors. The objectives of the competition were to deepen our sense of belonging to the Fransalian family, revisit our Mermierian legacy, and to shape authentically and effectively our MSFS identity. The criteria for assessment of the essays were creativity and fidelity to the spirit of the Founder and the Fransalian heritage, relevance to the signs of the time, practicality and achievability, and sufficient language accuracy. On the basis of the results submitted by the panel of judges and after personally going through all the 150 essays of both philosophy and theology, six MSFS scholastics were adjudged winners of prizes. For Theology: Dn Lawrence Jayaraj (first), Dn Charles Joseph (second), and Dn Sujith P John (third). For Philosophy: Raymond Figredo (first), Sanjay Lakra (second), and Debit Robert Tirkey (third).

-Fr S. Jayaseelan, msfs



Lawrence



Charles



Sujith



Raymond



Sanjay



Debit

## OUR MISSIONARIES IN CANADA

The Congregation of the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales was invited by Most Rev. Dr Sylvain Lavoie OMI, the Archbishop of Kewatin le Pas, to serve in his Archdiocese in Northern Canada. Rev. Fr Simon Paicat, the Provincial of Visakhapatnam accepted the invitation and sent our confreres there. Fr Joseph Subash and Fr Guna Sekar were the first to reach the place. We were first received by Fr Bill Stang, the Apostolic Administrator, who installed us as pastors in the parish of St Lawrence in Thompson, Manitoba, on July 12, 2012, in the presence of our Provincial, Rev. Fr Simon. After a year and a half, two more priests from our Congregation have joined us: Fr Guru Prasad and Fr Vijaya Raju. They arrived here on November 13, 2013, and have been given Cross Lake Parish, which is a neighbouring parish to Thompson. There are 6 parishes attached to Thompson which we visit once a month and administer the sacraments. These six parishes are far away, each one being about 400 km from Thompson. The distance to the closest parish is 90 km, but the diocesan bishops, priests

and laity have been very caring and supportive. They show a lot of concern and have well-guided us on how to withstand extreme weather conditions. In fact, Canada is one of the coldest countries in the world and the Archdiocese of Kewatin le Pas is the coldest diocese in the country. Geographically, Thompson is situated approximately 739 km north of Winnipeg. For 8 months we live in below 0 degrees Celsius. From November to March it will always be -20 degrees Celsius and can increase to -63 degrees Celsius. Here we have a lot of snow, snow storms and very often strong cold winds. For a few months we do not see the sun at all.

-Fr Guna Sekar, msfs



# FATHER GENERAL EXHORTS

Life begins... G. K. Chesterton wrote: "When a person has found something he prefers to life itself, he for the first time has begun to live." Jesus preferred the will of the Father to his own life. Jesus said: "My food is to obey the will of the one who sent me and to finish the work he gave me to do" (Jn 4: 34). We need to keep asking for the grace to prefer something to our own small life and ego self because we have been offered the Eternal Life/God's Life that became visible for us in this world as Jesus. John the Baptist found something he preferred to life itself and said: "He must increase and I must decrease" (Jn 3:30) Mark begins his gospel with the preaching of John the Baptist, a voice from the river side instead of the temple. He changes the venue of transformation from temple to riverside. John is able to point beyond himself. He is not trying to gather people around himself. He sets the standard of pointing beyond himself. He teaches us that our ministry cannot be a career decision to increase ourselves but an urgent vocation to decrease ourselves. Our ministry is not to gather people and resources around ourselves but our ministry is for pointing beyond ourselves to

something that we found. Father Peter Mermier found something he preferred to life itself and said: "I want Missions". He preferred the mission of the Lord to his own life in founding the Congregation of the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales. He wrote: "To love God with one's whole heart, with one's whole soul and with all one's strength and one's neighbor as oneself – that's the one thing necessary; there you have the missionary, the apostle ... and that's happiness". What/Who shall YOU AND I prefer to life itself? Jesus told us WHAT we could prefer to life itself in his proclamation of the Kingdom of God through the man in the parable who 'goes and sells everything he has, and then goes back and buys that field (Mt 13: 44) and the man who sells everything he has, and buys that pearl (Mt 13: 45). Can we prefer the Lord and his Mission to life itself? The irony is that when we prefer the Lord and his mission to life itself and surrender to him we do not lose ourselves but we find ourselves in a new way to buy the field and the pearl. Merry Christmas! God Bless!

-Very Rev. Fr Abraham Vettuvellil, msfs



Provincial Congress of Franco Swiss

## HEARTY CONGRATS

**New Provincial of  
North East Province**



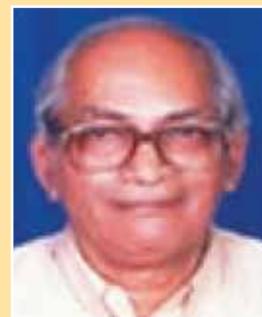
**Fr George Panthanmackel**

**Provincial of South East  
Province (2nd Term)**



**Fr A. Dharmaraj**

**Jubilarian**



**Fr Clement Mendonca**

### Gratitude to All and Welcome to the New Chief Editor

Thank you very much for your wholehearted and loving cooperation with me in publishing the Fransalian International. It has always been a pleasant task for me to work as Chief Editor of this Newsletter with the collaboration of many loving persons, especially of the dedicated members of the Editorial Board. I acknowledge with gratitude all words of encouragement and every gesture of sincere support. While I welcome cordially Dr Jolly Chakkalakkal who has been appointed Chief Editor by Superior General, I would like to request you to extend your full cooperation to him and to all the members of the Editorial Board in their ministry of making the good works of the Congregation known and appreciated for the greater glory of God.



Our confreres from GAH, Switzerland, England, Spain, Italy and members of Franco-Swiss for the quartoseptcentennial jubilee of the MSFS at Annecy on October 24, 2013

-Fr George Panthanmackel, msfs

The Fransalian International is an Illustrated Newsletter published by the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales. It highlights the activities of the MSFS family spread over all the continents and serves as a link among its members, friends and benefactors. You are welcome to send manuscripts and photos for publication to the following address: Indian Institute of Spirituality, P.B.5639, Dr Rajkumar Road, First Block, Rajajinagar, Bangalore 560010; Tel: 080-22901869, 23376857, Fax: 23473309; E-mail: gpanthanmackel@gmail.com, iispirituality@yahoo.com; Editorial Board: *Chief Editor*: Dr George Panthanmackel msfs; *Associate Editors*: Dr Jolly Chakkalakkal msfs and Dr Henry Kodikuthiyil msfs; *Sub Editor*: Dr Antony Mookenthottam msfs; *Managing Editor*: Dr Benny Koottanal msfs; *Circulation Manager*: Fr Jikson Cheravelil msfs; *Literary Editor*: Fr Joseph Pulloppillil msfs.