

**MISSIONARIES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES  
PUNE PROVINCE**



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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PROVINCE

SEPTEMBER 15, 2018

**CIRCULAR DEDICATED TO OUR MSFS MISSION ECUADOR - 2018  
ON THE FEAST OF OUR MOTHER OF COMPASSION,  
THE SPECIAL PATRONESS OF OUR MSFS CONGREGATION**

My dear Confreres,

Fraternal greetings to each of you. Today our hearts rejoice and glorify the Lord our God on the Feast of our Lady of Sorrows, the Patroness of our Congregation.

Our beloved Founder Fr Peter Mermier presents to us Mary, the Mother of Sorrows as the Patroness of our Congregation who inspires us to be closer to the Crucified Christ, through a life of complete surrender and total dedication to the Father's will and to be more ready to suffer the consequences of standing for the values of the Kingdom of love, justice, peace and reconciliation.



Mary our Mother of Compassion is the loving consoler of those touched by the many physical and moral sorrows which afflict and torment humanity. She knows our sorrows and our pains, because she too suffered, from Bethlehem to Calvary. Mary is our Spiritual Mother, and the mother always understands her children and consoles them in their troubles.

We express our filial love to Mary by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, the Seven Sorrows and by honouring her as the Mother of Compassion. As missionaries, our compassion becomes meaningful whenever we identify ourselves with suffering humanity as we realize that God suffers when humans and the world suffer. This active compassion impels us to proclaim the Good News of liberation and wholeness at all times and in all places.

*Wishing you all a very happy Feast of our Lady of Sorrows!*

## MSFS MISSION ECUADOR - 2018

Ecuador is a country straddling the equator on South America's west coast. Its diverse landscape encompasses Amazon jungle, Andean highlands and the wildlife-rich Galápagos Islands. It is bordered in the north by Columbia, on the east and south by Peru and by the Pacific Ocean on the west. Ecuador was the first country to officially recognize the rights of nature. Rather than treating nature as property, Ecuador recognizes that nature has constitutional rights and has the "right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles. People in Ecuador are primarily Roman Catholic, a religion that was introduced into the country when the Spanish took over. About 94% of the Ecuadorian population can be considered Roman Catholic.



The harvest is full but the labourers are few. Hence, prompted by the Holy Spirit, with the inspiration and blessings of our Superior General Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil MSFS and his Administration, the first team of MSFS confreres consisting of Fr Melky Fernandes MSFS, Fr John Kennedy MSFS, and Fr Jayaseelan Selvaraj MSFS the Provincial, under the guidance of Fr Joseph Mullakkara MSFS (USA Vice Province), embarked on a historic missionary journey to Ecuador in South America on Sunday, 22 July 2018.



After 22 hours of long journey from Mumbai, we landed at Quito International Airport, Ecuador. Fr Joseph Mullakkara MSFS received us at the Quito Airport with a warm welcome and fraternal Fransalian affection and accompanied us to the residence of the Episcopal Conference of Ecuador at Quito for the overnight stay. On the next day, 23 July 2018, we set out on a journey to the Apostolic Vicariate of Esmeraldas and after five hours of drive by car we reached the Bishop's house at Esmeraldas wherein the Bishop Eugenio Arellano Fernández and the Vicar General Rev. Fr Albino Mina welcomed us to the Diocese with affection and care and made us to feel at home by personally serving us with a delicious lunch. After a short rest, the Vicar General Rev. P. Silvino Mina took us around the Cathedral "Christ the King", the Diocesan Pastoral centre, the University Campus of the Diocese and to the boarding school started for the children at periphery by the Vicar General himself.

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF FR JOHN KENNEDY MSFS ON HIS VISIT TO MISSION ECUADOR

As we set out for Ecuador, I was both anxious and excited. My anxiety stemmed from the fact that this was my first longest trip and that I was traveling beyond lands, valleys and seas. However, I was so excited because this was an opportunity for me to foster and confirm my desire to pursue missionary work and more specifically, this trip was an opportunity to experience global opening, a passion that God has put into my heart. Needless to say, this trip was everything I hoped for with so many great surprises along the way. I made some great memories and came across new people, culture, language, food, weather etc.



When we reached, I expected that the Archbishop and people of the place there to be more of a very formal and reserved but for my surprise we were blessed to receive a warm welcome by the Bishop and Vicar General when we landed our promised Land, Ecuador. We were very fortunate to experience their love and care in their interaction and we were very comfort throughout our stay.

Personally I feel a **“Call within a Call”** to work in such a place, looking forward to meet different sort of challenges and to be a strong missionary. It is the **“Need of the Time”** to work among the people of Limones, the Diocese of Esmeraldas Ecuador, to bring back the lost sheep. I believe and trust that it is an awakening spirit filled called to the new mission to work to build up and



rebuild the faith of the people through our commitment towards this challenging mission. As Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales we have lots of compass and scope in that land where we can reach out to the people through New Evangelization like Preaching, Education, Social and Innovative ministry etc. It is the high time for all of us to think beyond our limitation to reach out the people as Jesus said to His disciples, "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to all creation" Mk:16:15.

Whole heartedly I thank Rev. Fr. Jayaseelan MSFS, our Provincial for availing this opportunity to visit the place and for guiding us with his capability, being with us as our brother, making all the possibilities to have a wonderful and memorable experience with his presence. We are grateful to Rev. Fr. Joseph Mullakkara msfs of

the USA Vice Province for spending his precious time with us to study the New Land and making all the arrangements in advance to make us feel at home.

As we are launching into a new venture, may the Lord bless our Province and our Congregation through the intercession of our Beloved patroness Mother of Compassion, our Heavenly Patron St. Francis de Sales and our beloved founder Fr. Peter Mermier. (By Fr. John Kennedy msfs).



**PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF FR MELKY FERNANDES MSFS ON HIS VISIT TO ECUADOR EXPLORATORY TRIP**

After stepping on the soil of Ecuador, I felt that God is calling me to be a true missionary in Ecuador. The words of Fr. Peter Merrier, our founder. "I want mission" flashed right in front of me. Having travelled the terrain of the mission to be entrusted to us in Ecuador in Esmeraldas Diocese at Limones, I felt that there is a mission for us Fransalisms to build the communities of faithful. While listening to the Bishop of Ecuador Mon. Eugenio Arellano and his Vicar General Silvino Mina, what I felt was that a large number of faithful need us the missionaries who will guide them in faith and life with devotion and dedication.



The words of Pope Francis asking us priests and religious to go to the peripheries can be actualized here. To smell the sheep and be shepherds of the flocks. Though we spend just a couple of days in the area, it did inspire me in my call to be a missionary after the heart of Jesus at the footsteps of our Patron St. Francis de Sales. In my personal reflection I felt enthused to reach out to these people who are in



need of a spiritual leader. Due to lack of Church personnel the people seem to be drifting away from their Catholic faith. As they lack a support system in their faith

formation, I personally felt that it is a God-given opportunity for us Fransalians to live a life of grace and renewal and thus establish the kingdom of God in Ecuador.

As the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, I feel that God calls us to Ecuador and re-evangelize the faithful through the methods of our patron St. Francis De Sales. Making his method of meeting the people in their Homes to build a strong community of faith and love in Christ Jesus. And therefore the essential elements of mission such as knowing the language, studying the political situation, culture and the economic status of the people and thus build the Kingdom of God here and now in Ecuador. (Personal Experience of Fr. Melky Fernandes).



## BACKGROUND OF THE APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF ESMERALDAS

Esmeraldas is a coastal city in north-western Ecuador. It is the seat of the Esmeraldas Canton and capital of the Esmeraldas Province. It has an international sea port and a small airport. Esmeraldas is well known around Latin America given the large number of locals that have historically played in the Ecuadorian national football team. On 14 November 1957, Esmeraldas was elevated to an Apostolic Vicariate by Pope Pius XII.

Its Cathedral See "**Cristo Rey**" is located in the town of Esmeraldas in Ecuador's homonymous Pacific Coastal Province. Bishop Eugenio Arellano Fernandez, is the Apostolic Vicar of Esmeraldas and who is also currently the President of the Episcopal Conference of Ecuador who invited us through our Superior General Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettvelil MSFS. The seeds of MSFS Mission Ecuador was sown through the personal visit of our Superior General along with Fr Joseph Mullakkara MSFS from November 27-30, 2017 (SG-AB 17-191).



Its people are mainly descendants from the African stock but there are two indigenous ethnic minorities, the Chachis and the Eperas. There is also another group called "Colonos", are mainly people come from other areas and regions looking for fertile lands in order to exploit them. Vegetation and greenery are simply exuberant; there are plenty of rivers, coasts with a very strong tropical

weather. People here have a remarkable capacity as per the positive response they have given to the Gospel so far, yet there has been a great scarcity of priests and missionaries in the past as well as in the present.

### **VISIT TO THE LIMONES ISLAND: MISSION TO BE ENTRUSTED TO OUR CARE**

It is one of the missions in the Apostolic Vicariate of Esmeraldas. On 5 July 2018, the Vicar General Rev. Fr. Silvino Mina took us around the Island Parish of Limones, the Promised Land. After two hours of drive from Esmeraldas, we travelled by a mechanized boat and reached the Limones Island situated at the tale of the Pacific Ocean.



Limones consists of over sixteen Parish units with the population of over 20000 Catholics. For years a singly Priest was entrusted with the responsibilities of the entire mission who was not able to meet the pastoral needs of the people. The entire Limones Island Mission is going to be entrusted under our care for the pastoral, spiritual, renewal, educational and counselling care of the flock.



Just across the street from the Rectory, the Parish has also up-to a Senior Higher Secondary School - Paulo VI (known as College in Ecuador). There are over 1200 children studying in the school and the government pays the salary of the staff. The Bishop has assured us that once we are sufficiently confident and comfortable with the proficiency in Spanish and with the educational system of Ecuador, the responsibility and the management of the school would be entrusted to us. The Rectory at Limones is with a well-furnished parish office, kitchen and a three bedroom house.

On 24 July 2018, along with Most Rev. Eugenio Arellano Fernández and the Vicar General we had our interactive meeting on the needs and expectations of our missionary presence and community based service to the mission. The Bishop thanked us the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales for being faithful to our missionary call and commitment to the people at the periphery. He invited us



with an open heart and expressed that the whole Diocese is looking forward joyfully to our missionary and pastoral collaboration. On behalf of the Diocese, he has assured us of his wholehearted support and assistance in all our initiatives.

## ESMERALDAS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



1. The mission requires missionaries with a strong spiritual depth and the salesian virtues of patience, perseverance and the simplicity of life.
2. The mission needs missionaries having a missionary heart to plunge into the life situation of the people and build the Basic Christian Communities of faith, hope and love.

3. The mission needs missionaries to face the challenges along with the people and the mode of transportation to the missions and parishes are primarily by mechanized boats and the people do their business and travels locally by boats.
4. The mission needs missionaries with lots of patience and understanding in pastoral care as the people are more relaxed, slow, with no regularity and punctuality.
5. The mission needs missionary shepherds to love and guide them through spiritual and renewal animations, creative pastoral paradigms, new evangelization and innovative catechetical animation programmes and to facilitate socio-economic initiatives for their holistic growth and development.
6. The mission requires pastorally and culturally sensitive missionaries to promote sacramental values and counsel them with care and concern who are often faced with marital problems and affected by alcoholism and drug addictions.
7. The mission requires missionaries who are able to live in communities and foster community based apostolates through collective witness and pastoral collaboration with the Church in Ecuador, Priests and Religious.
8. There is a great opportunity to implant our Congregation in Spanish speaking South America and Ecuador could be seen as an entry point to neighboring countries: Columbia and Peru for vocations.

**Conclusion:** True to our Missionary Charism of the Congregation, we are constantly called by the Lord to serve the people whenever and wherever we are sent to. On behalf of the Province I thank our beloved Superior General Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil msfs and his administration, Fr Agnelo Fernandes msfs our guide and animator to initiate this mission Ecuador, Fr Joseph Mullakkara msfs who accompanied us on our missionary journey and Fr .Joe Mendes who facilitated this trip with his prompt financial assistance and to all our confreres who constantly pray and encourage us for the success of this Mission Ecuador. We thank Most Rev. Eugenio Arellano Fernández and the Rev. Fr. Silvino Mina the Vicar General for their loving care and assistance in Ecuador.

We entrust Fr Melky Fernandes, Fr John Kennedy and Fr Adaikala Rajan, the daring missionaries and the pioneers of the mission Ecuador to the care and guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the intercession of our Mother of Compassion.

Yours fraternally in Christ Jesus,

*Fr. Jayaseelan msfs*

Fr Jayaseelan Selvaraj msfs  
Provincial Superior

**LIVE JESUS! HAPPY FEAST**