

MISSIONARIES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

DIBRUGARH PROVINCE

MSFS Provincial House, SFS Campus, Likabali Road,
Silapathar (P.O) - 787059, Dhemaji (Dt.), Assam
Mob: +917086046455/+919436301324
Email: provincialdibrugarhmsfs@gmail.com
provincialesecretarydibrugarh@gmail.com



EMT/04 Circular – September 8, 2020

My dear Confreres,

I wish you all a blessings-filled Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary! Today is also the 175th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS) in India (1845 – 2020). On this occasion may we, who have bequeathed the missionary legacy of our Pioneering Fathers, experience the maternal intercession of our Blessed Mother, especially in our Life and Mission, to do God's Will always, even amid our troubles, sicknesses, tragedies, confusions, and hopelessness of our life!

Mary: Model of our Consecrated, Missionary Life

The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates Mary's sanctity and her Vocation as the Mother of Jesus. You might be very familiar with the following legendary story:



One day God sent an angel down from heaven to find the most beautiful thing on earth and bring it back to heaven. When the angel observed the lovely flowers on earth, he said to himself: "These must be the most beautiful things on earth." And he gathered them up to take with him back to heaven. As he moved along a little further, when he saw a cute child of golden hair and lovely smile, he said: "This must be the most wonderful thing on earth. Nothing could be sweeter than the smile of that innocent child." And he held the child with the smile, in the arms. But as he moved ahead, he reached a simple cottage, where a mother sat at the door with her baby on her lap. As he watched her tender and beautiful care for the little babe,

he said: "This must be the fairest thing on earth. I will take that mother's love back with me to heaven." When he reached the portals of heaven the flowers had faded and the smile on the child's face had changed into an angry frown. But the mother's love remained unchanged! Yes, a Mother's Love is something special!

Today, we celebrate the best, the most Beloved and the most Lovable Mother of all – our Blessed Mother Mary, by celebrating the birthday of Mary - the Mother of Jesus, the Saviour of the World!

When we read the Bible, we understand that Mother Mary spoke very little in the Bible, but in silence and contemplation, she accomplished unimaginable and great things in the salvation history. There are many powerful lessons that we can learn from her life, also from the few words that she had spoken in the Bible. In the four Gospels, we see Mother Mary speaking only five times: Four times in Luke and once in John's Gospel. Now I would like to reflect with you on the first words that Mary spoke in the Gospel. When the Angel appeared to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus from her, she said to the angel, "How can this be since I am a virgin" (Lk: 1: 34). Mary was just a teenager when the unimaginable happened. She was a simple, unnoticed girl in the small town of Nazareth. The angel Gabriel appeared to her and announced that she had been chosen by God to give birth to the Messiah. But God's intervention in the conception of Jesus by Mary was extraordinary. God works beyond our

calculations. We cannot fix the pattern by which God should work. In His plan, a barren old woman can bear a child and a virgin can conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Angel Gabriel repeats twice God's greetings to Mary: "Mary, You have found favour with God" (Lk. 1: 28, 30). She is praised by God even before she did anything! God is not acknowledging Mother Mary for what she had done. God is not waiting for our deeds and mighty works. It is not the age or degrees or qualifications or positions that God is searching for in a person. Who you are is more important! God appreciates the person of Mary - her humility, her intimacy with the Lord, her docility, simplicity, etc. Even today God is searching for such humble and unassuming people.

Mary was deeply troubled when she heard Angel Gabriel greeting her (1: 29). She never expected the proposal that the angel was making. It was a moment of great confusion and perhaps even total puzzlement as to how true the words of Angel Gabriel could be. There was great uncertainty as to how a conception of this sort could take place and what made Heaven grant her this choice of being the Mother of the Son of God! She was an ordinary young girl betrothed to a man named Joseph. The betrothal was as binding as marriage. It could be dissolved only by divorce. Besides, Jesus will be born of Mary without a human father! What a controversial message from God! She must have had her dreams and wishes for family life. But God had a bigger dream for her - a dream, which would make her the most Blessed among all and a model for all.

Now the question that we need to ask ourselves is: Is my life too simple and ordinary like Mary? Am I also troubled due to many things happening in my life? Am I confused? Do I feel that the Will of God in my life is too complex to say 'Yes'?

Then Mother Mary is a model for us. She is a perfect example, a shining witness, and a great challenge! Amidst all our ordinariness, troubles, confusions, and unwillingness to do God's will, in the midst of grief and pain, Mother Mary gives us a message of hope. To all those who are going through terrible loneliness, meaninglessness, and hopelessness, Mary is saying that this life will change and we will experience soon the true God who is an embodiment of justice and truth. Let us trust and have faith in God, just like Mother Mary, and seek always what is His plan for our life in the midst of troubles and tragedies, panic and perplexities, confusion, and dilemmas.

Reflecting further, we see that Mary our Mother is a glowing model of discipleship. Already her "fiat" to the angel at the Annunciation, testifies to her radical sense of detachment: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Let it be done unto me according to your holy Word" (Lk 1. 38). She was totally detached from her own will, plans, interests, and dreams. She was detached from all the material and social cravings as well as pursuits. She was detached even from her own most beloved Son, in which spirit she readily offered him for the salvation of the world. She followed the Lord, not in his glorious moments, but on his way of the cross to the foot of the cross at the crucifixion. However, this detachment was not only at the end of his life but every moment and all through her life. In this way, she fulfilled the purpose and the meaning, the beauty and value of her birth, by her total fidelity to discipleship. Today's Feast of Mary should urge and challenge us to check upon our shallow discipleship, slogging in our journey by needless attachments, both material and personal. May Mary, our Blessed Mother intercede for us all to be loyal and committed in our Life and Mission, especially by doing God's Will in all adverse circumstances of our consecrated and missionary life!

CONGREGATIONAL MATTERS

Prayer Intention of the Superior General for September 2020

“That reading the signs of the time, we may be inspired to reach out to our brothers and sisters who are deprived of their human rights and dignity through our social ministries.”

September 08: The 175th Anniversary of the Arrival of the first MSFS in India

Today, on the 8th of September is the 175th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS) in India (1845 – 2020). Fr. Superior General has exhorted us to make ‘this arrival’ a milestone in the history of the Church and our Congregation by recognizing our missionary heritage. He has suggested us to acknowledge the outstanding missionary efforts and contributions of our six pioneering and daring missionaries, sent by Fr. Peter Mermier, to India by honouring them - **Fr. Jacques Martin, Fr. Joseph Lavorel, Fr. Jean Marie Tissot, Fr. Jean Thevernet, Bro. Pierre Carton, and Bro. Sulpice Fontanel** - by re-telling their stories of missionary life to our present generation as recorded in history. To mark the occasion of the arrival of the first group of Six Missionaries from Annecy, it is suggested that every Local Community plants six (6) trees on the 24th of October, 2020, on the Foundation Day of our hallowed Congregation. I would like to request every Local Community Superior to take note of this request and ensure that planting is done to mark this important occasion of the MSFS.

Congregational Appointments/Congratulations!

Very Rev. Fr. Superior General, Abraham Vettuvellil has made the following appointments:

- ✓ **Rev. Fr. Suresh Babu** and **Rev. Fr. Johnson Pathiyil** are appointed as the Director and Co-Director of De Sales and Mermier (DSM) Resource and Animation Centre in Hyderabad respectively for a term of three years with effect from June 25, 2020.
- ✓ **Rev. Fr. Thomas Chozhithara** is re-appointed as the Director of Mission Development Office (MDO) in Rome for another term of three years with effect from June 25, 2020.
- ✓ **Rev. Fr. Thomas Kochalumchuvattil** is appointed as the Local Superior of the MSFS Community in LCI for a term of three years with effect from September 01, 2020.

On behalf of MSFS Dibrugarh Province, we congratulate all of them and wish them all the best as well as God’s blessings in their new assignments at the service of the Congregation!

Webinar on DSM Spiritual Insights

The General Administration has decided to organize a Webinar once in three weeks or on other important days of MSFS titled: ‘DSM Spiritual Insights’ 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 will be organized by the DSM Resource and Animation Center Hyderabad in collaboration with the General Secretaries of Formation and SAIM. The inauguration of the Webinar was on the 21st of August 2020, on the birthday of SFS with the talk of Rev. Fr. Superior General on the topic: “The Influence and Relevance of St. Francis de Sales Today.” The forthcoming Webinar talks in this month are: (1) “Significance of the Feast of Mother of Sorrows for MSFS” by Rev. Fr. Yves Carron MSFS, Asst. General on 15.09.2020 and (2) “Missionary Zeal of Fr. Peter Mermier: I want Missions” by Rev. Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS, General Councillor for Mission on 30.09.2020.

PROVINCE MATTERS

Precautions at Covid-19 time...

We are going through an unprecedented time in our history, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has reached Northeast India late, but now it is spreading at a fast pace, affecting adversely every area of our life and ministry. Already some of our confreres in the Northeast are tested positive. So, we need to continue to be vigilant as well as taking enough precautions, to contain the further spread of it, following the directives of both Civil and Ecclesiastical Authorities.

By this time you may be aware of homeopathic medicine - *Arsenicum Album* - 30 - which seems to be effective both as an immune booster and preventive medicine for Covid-19. If you have access to this medicine, please do take a course of it and take care of yourselves and the (campus) community members. Thanks to FAsCE India, I have supplied it to some of our communities, wherever possible, and if anybody still requires it, please let me know about it.

As I had written to you on the 5th of this month, in many parts of the world, the number of positive cases is surging, and many of our confreres are affected by this Virus as well. In this context, our beloved Superior General, Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil MSFS, is exhorting all of us to pray the Novena to Mother of Compassion, in preparation for the Feast of the Patroness of our Congregation on the 15th of September, praying for the Congregation and our confreres during this time of crises. Also, let me urge you dear confreres to continue with our daily morning adorations in the communities. I am pretty convinced of the fact that if we are protected till now, it is because of our continued fidelity to our Eucharistic/Risen Lord, who has promised us to be with us till the end of our times.

2020: Year of Fransalian Associates

As you know our beloved Superior General has declared this year - 2020 - as the Year of the Fransalian Associates. These are men and women, who would like to associate with our Congregation, embracing our vision and spirituality, but remaining in their respective state of life. In the course of time, surely they are going to play an important role in our Congregation, as the Lay wing of our Congregation. As a new Province, we do not yet have any formal unit of Fransalian Associates till now. It is an important matter of concern for us. A copy of the Guidelines/the Statutes of the FA was supplied to every community long ago. Every Mission Centre of our Province is expected to have a local unit of FA. I have already appointed Fr. Carlus Barowa as the Coordinator for FA in the Province, who will also look into their formal training/formation of these Associates. So I would like to request every Community Superior/Parish Priest, when normalcy returns to our centres, to look into the matter, to form local units of FA, latest by January 2021 in consultation with the Coordinator of the Province. Thank you dear confreres for your generous cooperation!

Cause of our Founder, Servant of God, Fr. Peter Mary Mermier

As you know, the Cause of our Founder Fr. Peter Mary Mermier is underway and we need to spread our devotion to him so that people will have opportunities to seek his intercession and be benefitted from his life of holiness. We have already supplied to you the prayer card with the 'Prayer of Devotion in Honour of Servant of God, Fr. Peter Mermier'. Now I would like to request you once more, to seek his intercession as a community every day after the mass. If you are celebrating the Mass with a parish community, especially on Sundays, please do it using the locally translated prayer of devotion in honour of Fr. Peter Mermier. And if you come across any favours received through his intercession, please do report to Fr. Kurian Pattimackel, the Vice-Promotor of the Cause of Fr. Peter Mermier in our Province. Thank you dear confreres for your initiatives and your commitment to the Congregation!

Formation Matters

- **Orientation Programme:** The challenging time of the Covid-19 pandemic is a trying time for our formation programmes. This year, due to the pandemic, we have decided to conduct the Orientation Programme for the candidates from Northeast in SFS Seminary, Medziphema, instead of having it together in Vinaya Bhavan Seminary, Thamarassery. We thank the Rector and the community for their readiness to accept the candidates for their formation in this predicament. Thanks to the hard work of all the vocation promoters of the respective areas and each one you dear confrere, we have about twenty-two (22) candidates for the Orientation Programme for both Dibrugarh and Guwahati Provinces. They all are kept in different groups at various communities waiting for a favourable time to reach them to SFS Seminary Medziphema for their Orientation Programme. May God bless you dear Fathers for your service to the Congregation!
- **Novitiate:** Due to the imposition of inter-state travel restrictions following the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, we had to make quick decisions regarding the Novices. This year we have twelve (12) Novices (for both Dibrugarh and Guwahati Provinces) of whom five (5) were initiated into the canonical year of Novitiate in Makkiyad, Kerala, and the rest seven (7) in MSFS Novitiate, Chabua on the 15th of July 2020. We thank our beloved Superior General for giving us the necessary permission and Fr. Benny Koottanal, Provincial of Southwest India Province, for allowing our Novices to do their Novitiate in Makkiyad, Kerala.
- **First Year Philosophy:** Two (2) of our Brothers, namely, Marbaniang Biljakson and Tigga Bimal are sent to St. Clement College, Nagaon, and Morning Star Regional Seminary, Kolkata respectively to do their philosophy studies.
- **Suvidya College:** Fr. Philip Thomas, the Rector has updated us that normalcy is returning to Suvidya College after the trying period Covid-19 infection and that they are getting ready for the new academic year, with the proper COVID SOP in place. We shall continue to accompany them with our prayers.
- **Promotion to Perpetual Profession:** Two (2) of our Brothers, namely, Chithung Horam Joel and Pakon Narzary are promoted to make their Perpetual Profession, scheduled to be held on the 30th of this month in OTC.
- **Departure from the Congregation:** Bro. Francis Vengra (1st Year Theology, MSFS Study House, Shillong) has left the Congregation on his own. He is dispensed from his temporary vows with a decree from the Superior General dated on the 3rd of August, 2020. We wish him all the best and God's blessings for his future life!

Re-Registration of Trust/Society under 12 A of ITA 2020

As I had informed you all earlier, you might be aware that every Trust/Society we have in the Province, must re-register it under 12 A (which gives certain exemptions under S. 11 for Charitable and Religious Organisations) of the Income Tax Act 2020. The process must be initiated by the beginning of October 2020. To aid that process, we need to get ready with the activity report of the centre (Trust/Society) for the past years. So please make contact with the people responsible (Diocese/Province) soon and make sure that every centre that is filing IT Returns (through Diocese/Province), complete this process as soon as possible. If you require any clarification/guidance on this matter, please do contact our Provincial Bursar, Fr. Peter Parankimalil.

Results of our Schools

It is a matter of joy and pride to note the excellent class X and XII results of the academic year 2019 -2020 of our schools, which are serving mainly the rural and semi-urban areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, and Upper Assam. I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the entire School Fraternity of all our schools - Students, Parents, Staff, and Management - for their total commitment to the holistic growth of our children. Hearty Congratulations!

CLASS X RESULTS – 2020

	Name of the School	Appeared	Dist.	Star Marks	I Div.	II Div.	III Div.	Failed/ Comp.	%
01	Christ King, Gogamukh	78	17	17	36	08	nil	nil	100
02	SFS Dhemaji	97	21	36	39	01	nil	nil	100
03	Don Bosco, Silapathar	120	10	22	53	33	02	nil	100
04	SFS, Telam	48	03	02	25	20	03	nil	100
05	Fransalian, Jonai	82	09	20	44	09	03	nil	100
06	All Saints, Peren	37	05		25	02	nil	05	86
07	SFS, Medziphema	98	08	nil	41	46	03	nil	100
08	SFS, Tening	11	nil	nil	05	02	nil	04	63.6
09	Holy Rosary, Purul	42	nil	nil	nil	28	nil	14	66.6
10	SFS, Kangpokpi	81	nil	nil	40	39	03	02	96
11	SFS, Aalo	27	03	05	09	08	02	nil	100
12	SFS, Basar	30	nil		02	01	13	01	97.7
13	St. Joseph, Kaying	27	02		12	11		02	93
14	SFS, Pasighat	77	09		26	33	09		100

XII RESULTS – 2020**ARTS**

	Name of the School	Appeared	Dist.	Star Marks	I Div.	II Div.	III Div.	Failed/ Comp.	%
01	All Saints Hr. Sec., Peren	22	01	Nil	03	16	01	01	95
02	SFS Jr. College Dhemaji	12	Nil	06	05	01	Nil	Nil	100
03	SFS Hr. Sec. Medziphema	108			32	59	13	04	96.2

COMMERCE

	Name of the School	Appeared	Dist.	Star Marks	I Div.	II Div.	III Div.	Failed/ Comp.	%
01	SFS Jr. College Dhemaji	09	Nil	Nil	07	02	Nil	Nil	100
02	SFS Hr. Sec., Medziphema	22	Nil	Nil	13	06	01	Nil	100

SCIENCE

	Name of the School	Appeared	Dist.	Star Marks	I Div.	II Div.	III Div.	Failed/ Comp.	%
01	SFS Jr. College Dhemaji	25	Nil	07	17	01	Nil	Nil	100

Hearty Congratulations/Thanks to:

- ❖ **Bro. Marbaniang Biljakson and Tigga Bimal**, who made their first Religious Profession on 1st of June 2020 at MSFS Novitiate, Chabua. Thanks to Fr. Francis Poovelil, Novice Master and Fr. Daniel Lalmuanzela, Socius, who organized it very well, and Fr. Emmanuel Mappilaparambil, Provincial of MSFS Dibrugarh Province, for receiving their vows.
- ❖ **Bros. Gaichungdai Anthony Kameih, Painapally Jimal Johny, Souba Standfort Stephen and Synkli Andreas**, who were ordained Deacons on 17th June 2020 at Oriens Theological College, Shillong, by Most Rev. Victor Lyngdoh, Bishop of Jowai Diocese.
- ❖ **Fr. Cherian Marottickathadathil**, who was installed as the Superior of the Hildesheim Local Community of Dibrugarh Province in Germany-Austria today on 28th June 2020 by Fr. Benoy Veliyathu, Delegation Superior of GP in GA.
- ❖ **Fr. Rojin P., Fr. Roy Muthedathu, and Fr. Sunny Panthanazhivadakkethil** for attending an Assamese Course (partially now ongoing online) organized by Rev. Fr. Paul Thettayil in Pastoral Centre, Dibrugarh from July 2020.
- ❖ **All the Participants** of the First Annual Retreat of the Province held online from 20th to 25th July 2020. Thanks to **Rev. Fr. Arockiaswamy** of Amaravati Diocese for animating us during these days of retreat with his spirit-filled, anointing, and challenging messages. Thanks also to **Fr. Roshan Kanjirathinkal** and both the Provincial Secretaries: **Fr. Praveen Kumbattu** (GP) and **Fr. Jaimon Thadathil** (DP) for all their technical support for this online retreat.
- ❖ **MDO Director of our Province**, Fr. Sunny Panthanazhivadakkethil for attending an International Training Programme online on Project Management and Fundraising organized by the Claretian Fathers in Rome together with Mission Project Service USA from the 27th July to the 1st August 2020. We thank the Director, MDO Rome for the opportunity offered with financial support.
- ❖ **Fr. Sunny Panthanazhivadakkethil**, Director of Social Work, in collaboration with **Frs. Joseph Bamhingbe and Rijesh Thalayinakandathil** for initiating the Mothers' Meal Movement (launched by the Claretians of Bangalore Province on 15th of August 2020) to alleviate hunger by providing survival Kits worth Rs. 500 to 25 families each for a sustained period of a minimum of six months in our Purul (Manipur) and Mangkolemba (Nagaland) Missions. It is based on a novel concept of Family to Family support, which is done simultaneously across 55 locations in all 28 states and 8 UT's of the country.
- ❖ **Fr. Peter Peuhausiding**, Parish Priest, Likabali and **the MSFS Community Silapathar** for organizing a Thanksgiving Mass for the newly professed Sr. Veronica Tada UFS, the first Religious Sister from Likabali Parish, presided over by Fr. Emmanuel Mappilaparambil, the Provincial, and concelebrated by many MSFS Fathers from Silapathar, Telam, and Jonai on the 6th of September 2020. After the Mass and Felicitation of the Sister, the newly built presbytery (Assam type building) was blessed by the Provincial in the presence of the faithful, sisters, and priests.

Transfers and Appointments

- ✓ **Fr. Cherian Marottickathadathil**: Superior of the Hildesheim Local Community of Dibrugarh Province in Germany-Austria
- ✓ **Fr. Jojo Thomas Pazheveetil**: Bursar of the Hildesheim Local Community of Dibrugarh Province in Germany-Austria
- ✓ **Fr. Sunny Thomas Panthanazhivadakkethil**: Director of Social Work, MDO Director – DIB Province, Director (FASCE India) Community Facilitation Centre, Silapathar

- ✓ **Fr. Mathew Puthumana:** School Counsellor in SFS Dhemaji and Don Bosco/SFS Silapathar; on MSFS Provincial House community Silapathar. (In the course of time he is to extend his help to facilitate the School Counselling Ministry in the rest of the schools of the Province)
- ✓ **Fr. Varghese Chettupuzhakaren:** on MSFS Community, SFS Technical School, Imphal (in view of Superior and Director, SFS Technical School, Imphal)
- ✓ **Fr. Carlus Barowa:** Coordinator of Fransalian Associates, Director of Fransalian Youth Mission, DIB Province, and designated to be appointed Associate Priest, Sacred Heart Parish, Likabali.
- ✓ **Fr. Jose Karipadathu:** on the Staff of SFS College Aalo/MSFS Community, SFS College Aalo.
- ✓ **Fr. Ajimon Cherian Mathirampallil:** Designated to do his Doctoral Studies in Spiritual Theology at IIS, Bangalore.
- ✓ **Fr. Avilhou Stephen Metha:** On the Staff of SFS Seminary, Medziphema till his departure for France to do his Doctoral Studies.
- ✓ **Bro. David Nogrums:** Regency in MSFS Community of SFS Seminary, Medziphema, Nagaland

Obituary

- † **Rev. Fr. Kurian Cheriankalayil** (82), belonging to Visakhapatnam Province, died on 15.07.2020.
- † **Mrs. Thresiamma Mattaparambil**, Aunt of Fr. Jacob Mattathil, died on 17.07.2020.
- † **Mr. Joseph Pattimackel** (85), Elder Brother of Fr Kurian Pattimackel, died on 23.07.2020.
- † **Sr. Anjela Moshahary SCC**, Superior of Holy Cross Convent, Aalo, died on 27.07.2020.
- † **Mrs. Angela Escot-Fessler** (71), Younger Sister of Mrs. Gabriela Natzer, died on 29.07.2020
- † **Rev. Fr. Martin Griffin MSFS** (82), belonging to English Province, died on 18.08.2020.
- † **Mr. Mathew Pattimackel** (82), Elder Brother of Fr. Kurian Pattimackel, died on 22.08.2020.
- † **Rev. Fr. Mathew Chavely MSFS** (71), belonging to East Africa Province, died on 04.09.2020.
- † **Most Rev. Bishop Paul Chittilappilly** (86,) Bishop Emeritus of Thamarassery Diocese, died on 06.09.2020

Rev. Fr. Martin Griffin MSFS



Rev. Fr. Mathew Chavely MSFS



May they rest in peace!

Provincial Congress/Chapter...

As I had written you on the 1st of this month, since our scheduled Provincial Congress was postponed indefinitely due to the Covid-19 pandemic and giving us many problems administratively, there were a few enquiries to me from different quarters regarding the possibility of having a virtual Provincial Congress, E-Voting of a Provincial Curia, etc. I had forwarded the matter to the Superior General, who in turn has furnished me with the directives from the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies for Apostolic Life (CIC SAL), which stresses on the physical presence for a Provincial Congress/Chapter. As we understand the Church expects and insists on the physical presence as an important principle to promote the search for collective discernment in a Congress/Chapter. (Synodality/collegiality is an integral part of collective discernment and it cannot be replaced by online meetings or telecommunications).

Thank you, dear Fathers, for your kind understanding and for the patience as well as the trust that you exercise in this trying period! Slowly we see a ray of hope for our Provincial Congress... The Central Government in their 'Unlock 4' directives has already permitted from the 21st of September 2020 gathering of 100 people for religious purpose with the SOP in place. As soon as interstate travel restrictions are lifted unconditionally, we shall assess the situation again and look forward to a suitable schedule for our Provincial Congress. You are most welcome to share with me your thoughts on a possible Provincial Congress/Chapter.

My dear confreres, I wish you all a safe and healthy time ahead! May Mary, our Compassionate Mother keep us all under her protective mantle! May St. Francis de Sales and Servant of God Fr. Peter Mary Mermier intercede for us!

Fraternally yours in Christ Jesus,



Fr Emmanuel Mappilaparambil MSFS
(Provincial, MSFS Dibrugarh Province)

TREADING THE PATH OF OUR PATRON SFS...

Honour, venerate and respect with special love the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, who being the mother of Jesus Christ, our Brother, is also in very truth our mother.

(IDL, Part II, Ch. 16)

ANNEXURE

The Background and Salient Features of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (By Fr. Vintu Augustine Avittappallil and Fr. Vipin George Edakazhickal)

Fifty-two years after the first Education Policy (1968) and Thirty-four years subsequent to National Policy on Education (1986), modified once in 1992, the Union Cabinet approved the new National Education Policy (NEP-2020) on July 29, having let the baton pass through long deliberations and two committees since 2014.

Aiming at making India a knowledge superpower and seeking to direct the education system in India in the 21st century, the new policy comes with tall promises. When an elaborate vision and an enhanced aspiration underlie the policy, we cannot but only stare at the possibility of its perfect implementation in the near future.

Arising from within the backdrop of massive changes due to economic liberalization in the early 90's, a current population growth rate of 1.13%, and growing aspirations of the middle class and youth, NEP-2020 holds several promises but raises concerns aplenty as well.

Need for NEP 2020

Having had innumerable criticisms, grievances, and discontentment to deal with over the years, especially in the recent past, NPE 1986 was very much in due for an updating, everyone knew for sure – No wonder; BJP had rendered a prominent place to it in their 2014 Election Manifesto. Definitely, that added its share in winning the card for them.

For, over three-decade-old NPE had countless flaws to address given the fact that the educational system of any nation for that matter needs to undergo required amendment following societal, cultural, and political changes and global requirement.

When one's education doesn't earn him/her any job; when too much of what one studies in schools and colleges become irrelevant to the life and when education ends up merely exam-centric and rarely knowledge-oriented, a re-think is inevitable. Questions of the vintage and generation gap show up as well.

Talk about quality; educational surveys over the recent years clearly manifest the pathetic state of affairs in our education system. The poor learning outcomes, gaps between textbook teaching and real-life vocations, huge imbalance in rural-urban and private-public educational sectors, etc., are concerns that can't be ignored.

Commercialization of education and exponential growth of educational institutions in the country has created imbalances in the number of graduates and requirements in respective fields. So we have a new category of 'educated unemployed' in our country. The number of engineering and management colleges and the jobless condition of the majority of graduates from these colleges elucidate this fact.

Lack of vocational training, outdated curriculum, judging students with the same parameters regardless of their individuality, increasing number of drop-outs are all problems in our education sector today despite numerous educational schemes available.

The emergence of an educational policy that would address all these and beyond was imminent. On the backdrop of such issues comes the New Education Policy-2020. Let's analyze the salient features of the new policy from the perspectives of both School Education and Higher Education.

Salient Features of NEP – 2020

NEP – 2020 is based on the draft policy submitted by Dr. K. Kasturirangan committee which was constituted by the Ministry of HRD in 2017. Apart from accepting the report, the cabinet also approved a change in name of the Ministry of HRD to the Education Ministry.

The New Education Policy deals with School education and higher education comprehensively and provides key targets and fundamental overhaul of the education system.

The National Education Policy 2020 proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance, to create a new system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st-century education, including SDG4, while building upon India's traditions and value systems.

Significant Points Concerning School Education

1. Early Childhood Care and Education: The Foundation of Learning

- Given the fact that over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of six, the existing form of 10+2 structure will be transformed to a new **5+3+3+4** design to ensure healthy brain development and growth, with a strong base of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from age three.
- A **National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE)** will be developed by NCERT in two parts (0-3 and 3-8). This emerges from the indication by various reports that a large proportion of students currently in elementary schools have not attained foundational literacy and numeracy (So to say, they are not able to read and comprehend basic text and basic calculation).

2. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

- The Priority of the education system will be to **achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy at the primary level by 2025**. Towards this goal, a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy is proposed to be set up on priority. All-State/UT governments will immediately prepare an implementation plan for attaining universal foundational literacy by 2025.
- The policy aims at ensuring a **pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1** at the school level (25:1 for socio-economically backward areas).
- A **simple but energizing breakfast** in addition to midday meals will be provided, realizing that morning hours after a nutritious breakfast can be particularly productive for the study of cognitively more demanding subjects.

3. Curtailing Dropout Rates

- Even though the Gross Enrolment ratio (GER) for Grades 6-8 is 90.9%, for Grades 9-10 and 11-12 it is only 79.3% and 56.5%, respectively – indicating a significant amount of drop out after Grade 5 and even more after Grade 8. The policy envisions to achieve **100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in preschool to secondary level by 2030** by bringing those drop-out children back into the educational fold as a priority.

4. Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools

- **Reducing the curriculum to its core essentials** for each subject for encouraging critical thinking and inquiry-based, discovery-based, and analysis-based learning.
- Providing **vocational training along with internships** during school.
- Adopting art and sports integrated education.
- The hallmark of the new system of the curriculum will be holistic development by rendering a **wide choice of subjects** with no hard separation among different disciplines.
- The **medium of instruction** will be mother tongue (home language/local language/regional language) until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade VIII and beyond.
- The policy accepts three-language formula, however, there will be **greater flexibility in the three-language formula**, and no language will be imposed on any State.
- The formulation of a new and comprehensive **National Curricular Framework for School Education, NCFSE 2020-21**, will be undertaken by the NCERT.

- The school progress card will be completely redesigned to make it a **holistic, 360-degree, multidimensional report** that reflects the uniqueness of each learner.
- While the Board exams for Grades 10 and 12 will be continued, the existing system of Board and entrance examinations shall be reformed to **eliminate the need for undertaking coaching classes**.
- The policy proposes to set up **PARAKH** (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), a national assessment center, as a standard-setting body under MHRD for all recognized school boards of India.

5. Teachers

- To ensure that outstanding students enter the teaching profession - especially from rural areas - a large number of merit-based scholarships shall be instituted across the country for studying quality 4- year integrated B Ed.
- Teacher Eligibility Tests (TETs) will be strengthened to inculcate better test material, both in terms of content and pedagogy.
- Each teacher will be expected to participate in at least 50 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities every year for their professional development, driven by their interests.
- School Principals and school complex leaders will also be expected to participate in 50 hours or more of CPD modules per year.

Important Features Regarding Higher Education

The policy's vision for Higher Education includes;

- (a) Multidisciplinary universities and colleges
- (c) Institutional autonomy
- (d) Leadership positions through merit appointments
- (e) Regulation by a single regulator for higher education

1. Institutional Restructuring and Consolidation

- The thrust regarding higher education is to transform higher education institutions into large multidisciplinary universities, colleges, and HEI clusters/Knowledge Hubs, each of which will aim to have 3,000 or more students. HEIs will consist of;
 - (A) A university = multidisciplinary institution of higher learning. It will be of two types;
 - (i) Research intensive Universities = Main focus will be research
 - (ii) Teaching-intensive Universities = Main focus will be teaching and granting degree but also may involve in research
 - (B) An Autonomous degree-granting College (AC) = multidisciplinary institution of higher learning that grants undergraduate degrees, primarily focused on undergraduate teaching.
- By 2040, all higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions and shall aim to have larger student enrolments preferably in the thousands. Since this process will take time, all HEIs will firstly plan to become multidisciplinary by 2030, and then gradually increase student strength to the desired levels.
- HEIs such as deemed to be university', 'affiliating university', 'affiliating technical university', 'unitary university' shall be replaced simply by 'university' on fulfilling the criteria as per norms.

2. Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

- The undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications; a certificate after completing 1 year, a diploma after 2 years, and a

Bachelor's degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme, however, shall be the preferred option. An Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) shall be established which would digitally store the academic credits.

➤ HEIs will have the flexibility to offer different designs for Master's programmes:

- (a) There may be a 2-year programme with the second year devoted entirely to research for those who have completed the 3-year Bachelor's programme;
- (b) for students completing a 4-year Bachelor's programme with Research, there could be a 1-year Master's programme; and
- (c) there may be an integrated 5-year Bachelor's/Master's programme.

Undertaking a Ph.D. shall require either a Master's degree or a 4-year Bachelor's degree with Research. The MPhil programme shall be discontinued.

3. Teacher Education

The 4-year integrated B Ed will, by 2030, become the minimal degree qualification for school teachers. The HEIs offering the 4-year integrated B Ed may also run a 2-year B Ed, for students who have already received a Bachelor's degree in a specialized subject. A 1-year B Ed may also be offered for candidates who have received a 4-year undergraduate degree in a specialized subject.

4. Regulatory System of Higher Education

Four structures will be set up as four independent verticals within one umbrella institution, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).

1. **National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC)**: It will function as the common, single point regulator for the higher education sector including teacher education and excluding medical and legal education, thus eliminating the duplication and disjunction of regulatory efforts by the multiple regulatory agencies that exist at the current time
2. **'Meta-accrediting body', called the National Accreditation Council (NAC)**.
3. **Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC)**, which will carry out funding and financing of higher education
4. The fourth vertical of HECI will be the **General Education Council (GEC)**, which will frame expected learning outcomes for higher education programmes, also referred to as 'graduate attributes'

National Education Policy – 2020 envisions improving the quality of education in the country, establishing its credibility, and addressing the gaps therein. Given the set goals and targets, the government will have to render a great role to the private sector for even its partial implementation. We need to wait and watch as to how far the government is going to address the issues involved in education through the new education policy and its implementation. For, the effectiveness of a policy depends on its implementation.

(To be continued...)