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# MSFS

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES



## SUPERIOR GENERAL TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION

Father Abraham Vettuvellil msfs

I greet you cordially and invite us all to enter a common point of reflection as we begin this Lenten season. We will be signed with Ash today in line with the Gospel: "Turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel". Let us be reminded that no renewal will be effective if it does not begin with us.

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## 1. SEASON OF LENT

It is said that two moments matter in life. One is when you know that your life is absolutely valuable and worth living. The other is when you know your life, as lived presently, is entirely meaningless and empty. But you need both these moments (absolutely valuable and entirely meaningless) to keep you going in the right direction. The season of Lent is about these both moments we experience. The first moment connects you with God who is your Source/Center while the second one exposes your weaknesses and makes you humble to seek God, the real Source/Center of your life.



## 2. THE SEASON OF LENT IS:

### (i) A TIME TO RE-THINK OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Our spiritual journey is not always a success story. It is one step forward and two steps backward. It is a series of humiliations of the imperialistic ego-self. The true spiritual journey must and always will involve real humiliations. God is always working to bring us to awareness and acceptance of our wounded and sinful human nature. This awareness is the essential condition of our being able to receive God's mercy and grace. Our humiliations and failures as we fall again and again take our control away and make us feel powerless. Remember that our humiliations and powerlessness are the chosen channels for God into our soul.



Can we enter the Promised Land without leaving Egypt behind? Can we buy the pearl at a great price without selling everything we have? Every humiliation is a call to leave Egypt behind and move on to the Promised Land with God's grace. Every fall is a call to make me humble enough to realize that God's quest for me is stronger than my quest for God. God's enthusiasm to find me is stronger than my enthusiasm to find God. Jesus is never upset at sinners; he is only upset with people who do not think they are sinners.

#### (ii) A TIME TO CLEAR THE GROUND OF OUR HEART

As spiritual writers constantly remind us that our spiritual life is all about clearing the ground of our hearts from all clutter and junk so that God finds us. Your spiritual life is all about God finding you and not the other way. It is about you letting GOD in. The season of Lent calls us to be attentive to all those things that clutter the mind and heart.

In the book of Exodus, Egypt is the place of slavery and the Promised Land is the place of freedom. The journey from slavery to freedom, through the wilderness, is a paradigm for our struggle from what enslaves us to what transforms us. It is a paradigm for our spiritual journey as well.

### (iii) A TIME TO FACE OUR WILDERNESS AND CRY

Lent is a season when we face the wilderness within. 'The Spirit sent him (Jesus) out toward the desert ... stayed in the wasteland forty days, put to the test there by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and angels waited on him' (Mark 1: 12-13). In the wilderness, Jesus did not destroy the wild beasts. He was with them. Are not these wild beasts our own deepest disturbing emotions that drive our actions – our fears and anxieties, our anger, shame, longings, hopes, brokenness, and shadows? Jesus could be with the wild beasts and at the same time allow the angels of God to wait on him and minister to him.

Our wilderness within entails us to be with the 'wild beasts'. Do we allow the angels to 'wait on us?' In the landscape of our wilderness, can we nurture the ability to be with our wild beasts and to hear the soft voice of the angels, "You are my beloved Son?" God is ever inviting us to depend on Him alone. The wilderness experience has ultimately one purpose: I listen to God's cry for me and I cry, in return, for God and God alone.

### (iv) TIME TO FACE OUR PERSONAL COVIDS

In his book, "Let us Dream: The Path to a Better Future", Pope Francis describes three of his personal 'COVID-moments' that changed his life. The first one was at the age of 21, during his second year in the seminary when he fell seriously ill with a lung infection and struggled to breathe on ventilators. It was a near-death experience that Francis claims to have changed how he saw his life. The second 'COVID-moment' was when he was in Germany where he felt thrown off balance in a kind of solitude of non-belonging. Pope confesses that he spent his time watching airplanes landing in Frankfurt airport and longing for his homeland in Argentina. Pope Francis recalls his humiliating experience in Cordoba, Argentina, as his third 'COVID moment'. His religious order sent him in exile to reflect on his overbearing leadership style. Francis writes: "It was kind of self-isolating, as so many of us have done lately, and it did me good".



The season of Lent calls us to look at our traumatic interruptions during coronavirus lockdowns. What have we learned from them? The moments that generated tension, deaths of many including our dear confreres and family members, disappointments, anxieties, travel-restrictions, isolation, etc. have revealed to us our COVID-moments. These are moments to begin a process of purification and clarification. Lent is a time to look at our COVID- moments in our consecrated life and ask ourselves: How is my 'COVID -experience' changing the way I look at and live my consecrated life?

#### (v) A TIME TO 'SHAPE OUR OWN CROSS

For St. Francis de Sales, the season of Lent is a time to shape our cross to conform to that of Jesus. "Our divine Master ... spent His entire life even shaping his cross, suffering a thousand persecutions, from the very ones to whom he was doing so much good and for whom he laid down his life ... We must do the same ... We too should shape our cross in suffering for one another as the Savior taught us; in giving our life for those very ones who would take it from us, as he so lovingly did ..." (Lenten sermon 93).

On the cross, Jesus took the worst thing (crucifixion, suffering, and death) and made it into the best thing. Our suffering is the only thing strong enough to dismantle our imperial ego. The cross teaches us to win by losing. The ego wants to win by winning. Shape your cross as the cross always leads you to resurrection.

For St. Francis de Sales, our mortifications and acts of self-denial that we practice are undertaken not so much to achieve self-mastery or self-discipline. They are to open us up more to God's love. It should help us to engrave the motto, 'Live JESUS' in our hearts, at the core of our being. It is then we have him in all of our actions.

*May our Lenten journey help us to engrave the motto LIVE JESUS in our hearts!*



## DECISIONS – NEWS – EVENTS

### 1. IMPORTANCE OF THE YEAR 2021 – 2022

With the apostolic letter, ***Patris Corde (With a Father's heart)***, Pope Francis has declared "YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH" from December 08, 2020, to December 08, 2021.

On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Apostolic Exhortation ***Amoris Laetitia (Joy of Family)***, Pope Francis will inaugurate the special Year dedicated to Family, **AMORIS LAETITIA FAMILY**, on March 19, 2021, which will conclude on June 26, 2022.

Our beloved and **Rev. Fr. Emile MAYORAZ** wrote to me: "... In view of your next meetings, I would like to send you one of my proposals. I **think that the Lord is particularly waiting from us the MSFS for a deep devotion to the Holy Family**, to Jesus as the Love of God incarnated, given to us; to the Holy Mary, through whom the Love of God is given to the humanity; to the very humble holy Joseph, so that the incarnation of the Love of God could be actualized. All is grace. There is only the Love. Once again, I assure you of my fraternal affection and my prayer" (Fr. Emile MAYORAZ MSFS).

The love of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are unconditional and faithful. Without love, the holiness of life is impossible. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are perfect models of pure love that requires sacrifice and forgiveness. The Holy Family is a model of love for families and communities. 'Devotion enhances every calling' (St. Francis de Sales). Honoring this proposal of Father Mayoraz and valuing his spiritual insight and wisdom for the renewal of the Congregation, I invite us to cultivate devotion to Holy Family in the Congregation.

### 2. YEAR OF MISSION 2021- 2022

**Taking into account the Year of St. Joseph, the Year of Family, the Devotion to Holy Family, and the directive of the General Chapter XX to initiate more ministries directed to families, with the consent of the General Council, I am glad to formally declare The year 2021 – 2022 as Year of Mission in our Congregation starting from Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021, and concluding on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 24, 2022.**



## Objectives of the Mission Year 2021 – 2022:

1. Bring to the forefront the apostolate of Missions in the Congregation.
2. For the renewal of the individuals and communities so that we can function more effectively with credibility as agents of renewal.
3. To impart to our young formees and scholastics the correct orientation regarding the nature and purpose of being a member of a missionary congregation. For the renewal and rejuvenation of our parishes through PMP (Parish Mission Preaching).
4. Focused implementation of the directives of the General Chapter 2019 on MISSION.
5. To initiate ministries directed to families, to promote devotion to Holy Family, and to celebrate the Year of Family and Year of St. Joseph.

**Fr. Johnson KALLIDUKIL**, General Secretary for Mission, in consultation with Provincial Councillors In Charge of Mission will work on a detailed program for the Mission Year in the coming weeks and months. Let us collaborate with the Mission Forums and Mission Secretariat in this noble cause of Mission.

### 3. CAUSE OF THE FOUNDER (CFT) - AN UPDATE

The “Cause of the Founder team”, consisting of a representative from our Provinces, has been provided with some new members, and a team of Holy Cross of Chavanod is enriching it: **Sr. Shaly Sebastian** (General councilor), **Sr. Adelia (Pune)**, **Sr. Lourdes (Trichy)**, **Sr. Philo (Amravati)** and **Sr. Vincy (Angamaly)** **Fr. Sudeep Paul** (South West, also Chief Promoter), **Fr. Johnson Gonsalves (Pune)**, **Fr. Inna Reddy (Visakh)**, **Fr. Carlus Barowa (Dibrugarh)**, **Fr. Sheen Singh (South East)**, **Fr. Joby Kurikilamkattu** (Guwahati), **Fr. Domy Vallomkunnel** (Nagpur), **Fr. Sebastian Williams** (East Africa), **Fr. Samuel Devaraj** (Franco-Swiss), **Fr. Agnaldo Costa** (Brazil), **Fr. Lijo** (England), **Frs. Mathew Thayil** and **Fr. Tomy Pulyian** (USA) are the present members, along with **Fr. K. Thomas**, the Vice-Postulator.





On February 8th, an online meeting was conducted, to update the members on the Cause, its developments, and the tasks ahead. After the 3rd session on the Cause of the Founder, held in Annecy on September 19th, 2020, it has become necessary to get some more witnesses from other parts of the world than France and Switzerland. Thus, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints will see that the devotion to Fr. MERMIER has spread out of his native place and that his name is somehow known on different continents. So, all the members of CFT are requested to shortlist at least 5 witnesses before Pentecost 2021, so that a Tribunal can be constituted in India for the hearings. Only after this, we will be able to move on towards the very last step of the Diocesan inquiry.

This is the place and moment to express our gratitude to the confreres who have been part of this process during the past few years: **Fr. Mario D'Souza**, as Chief Promoter in India, **Frs. Kurian Pattimackal, Francis Peethurithil, Sesetti Mariadas, Isaac John**, under the guidance of **Fr. Thumma Mariadas**, the Assistant General.

As St Paul says, *"I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow"*. Let us continue to pray the Lord to provide His graces through Fr. MERMIER and sustain our efforts towards his glorification.

Fr. Yves Carron, Postulator of the Cause



#### **4. ALL INDIA MSFS PRINCIPALS' ONLINE MEETING**

Fransalian Educators online meeting was organized on 30.01.2021 at 10.00 am by MSFS Education Forum Regional. The meeting began with a short prayer session conducted by Fr Ignathi KshirsagarMSFS. A well-acclaimed lead life coach of educators and Trainers Mr. Wilson Joseph was the resource person who focused during his session on Virtual Effectiveness of Teachers, Positive Psychology in Virtual Class, Effective Virtual Engagement Skills, Creativity in Virtual Delivery, and Virtual Behaviour Management. There was also a session of unique Educational program sharing by selected MSFS Schools such as Collaboration of SFS School Ettumanoor with Professional coaching Institute for Competitive Examination, Functioning of the SFS Evening College Bangalore, the Inception of Friends of Fransalians by SFS Kelambakkam, functioning of HARIDMA the evergreen eco-club of SFS School Delhi, a common classroom Instructional strategy evolved and the International Carrol singing Competition conducted by SFS School Guwahati. There was also a question-answer session at the end giving each chance to each province. There were more than seventy participants in the meeting. Some attended in groups. The online meeting ended with a vote thanks proposed by Fr Jose Karipadath and concluding prayer conducted by Fr. Lukas MSFS of southeast Province.

Father Jacob Karamakuzhyil, General Secretary for Education

#### **5. EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CHAPTER 2022**

The Extraordinary General Chapter is re-scheduled from February 01-07, 2022, in Pune. Please continue to pray for the success of the Chapter.

#### **6. GENERAL CURIA ANIMATION AND VISITATIONS**

Visitations and General Curia Meetings as indicated till June 2021 (in the Six-Year Coordination Plan 2019 – 2025) will be rescheduled after June 2021. However, Regional (India) Forum Meeting with General Secretaries will be organized online or onsite by the General Secretaries and General Bursar.

## **7. NEW TEAM OF PROVINCIAL CURIA**

### **DIBRUGARH PROVINCE**

1. Fr. Thomson AERATHEDATHU, Admonitor and Provincial Councillor for Formation
2. Fr. George VADAKKAPERICHERIMONNIL, Provincial Councillor for Education
3. Fr. Joseph BAMHINGBE, Provincial Councillor for Mission
4. Fr. Milkius TIRKEY, Provincial Councillor for SAIM
5. Fr. Peter PARANKIMALIL, Provincial Bursar

### **GUWAHATI PROVINCE**

1. Fr. Saji PUTHIYAKULANGARA, Admonitor and Provincial Councillor for SAIM
2. Fr. George POOVATHUNKAL, Provincial Councillor for Education
3. Fr. Athnas KERKETTA, Provincial Councillor for Formation
4. Fr. Roy PARAYANIYIL, Provincial Councillor for Mission
5. Fr. Santhosh CHAVARANAL, Provincial Bursar

### **NAGPUR PROVINCE**

1. Fr. Benedict DE SOUZA, Admonitor And Provincial Councillor for Formation
2. Fr. Domy VALLOMKUNNEL, Provincial Councillor for Mission
3. Fr. Lajarus SORENG, Provincial Councillor for SAIM
4. Fr. Ignathi KSHIRSAGAR, Provincial Councillor for Education
5. Fr. Selbestar XALXO, Provincial Bursar

### **PUNE PROVINCE**

1. Fr. Tony PREM ANAND, Admonitor and Provincial Councillor for Formation
2. Fr. Santow JOHN, Provincial Councillor for Education
3. Fr. Jarard SAHAYARAJ, Provincial Councillor for SAIM
4. Fr. Juze FERNANDES, Provincial Councillor for Mission
5. Fr. Nelson A, Provincial Bursar

## **8. STATUS 2021**

**STATUS 2021** is ready for distribution. I thank Fr. J. Stephen, General Secretary for SAIM, Fr. Mark Hriinii, Secretary to the Superior General, and all our confreres in different Provinces for your hard work and contribution. The copies will be sent to the Provincials' offices as per your order.

## 9. PRAYERFUL TRIBUTE TO OUR BELOVED CONFRERES

1. Fr. Paul Ernest VULLIOUD of Franco-Swiss Province (95 years) died on 04. 11. 2020
2. Fr. Jules SEPPEY of Franco-Swiss Province (86 years) died on 10. 11. 2020
3. Bro. Raphael XALXO of Nagpur Province (85 years) died on 04. 01. 2021
4. Fr. Alwyn ZOTHANSANGA of Guwahati Province (38years) died on 22. 01. 2021

- Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, let perpetual light shine on them! Be advised to remember: ·
- We offer one Mass for every departed confrere ·
- Provincial or a designated confrere celebrates Mass for all the departed members of the Province/Vice-Province/Region/Delegation/ during the annual Retreat ·
- The obituary is to be read in our communities ·
- Each one is to remember the departed confreres and seek their intercession (GD 98).

I wish you a humble and enriching Lenten journey,

*"Do not lose courage in considering your imperfections" (SFS)*

Fraternally in Christ,



Father Abraham VETTUVÉLIL, MSFS  
Superior General