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BARAKA

ZA FRANSALIANS

Half yearly news bulletin of MSFS in East Africa



10th
Issue

Baba Abrahamu!!

Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil MSFS
Our beloved Superior General surrounded by warriors !
With Massai kids in a Massai village in Tanzania

Our tribute to

SR. SUNITA PAZHAYATTIL SAL

(1955-2016)

Rev. Sr. Sunita Pzhayattil SAL - a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann Luzern, was a missionary from India who spent almost 25 years of her life in Africa.

Sr. Sunita was born on August 26, 1955 in Kerala, India. She entered the Society of in the year 1972, made her first profession in 1976 and final commitment in 1982. She was a person of an appealing charisma - manifesting an attitude marked by faith and deep trust in the providence of God. She was a prayerful religious, a person of deep sense of commitment, an experienced educationist, a vibrant communicator and above all a loving and caring person. She was a passionate lover of the Word of God and lived by it very concretely in the Mission Land.

She was also very much associated with us MSFS in our presence and apostolate in EA. She served the church and the congregation in different capacities and in various apostolate. Last year, shocking all of us she was diagnosed to be suffering from Leukaemia. Since then she was undergoing treatment in India.

The Lord found her worthy and entrusted her the mantle of leading the East African



Region for two consecutive terms. *Twenty four long years she served the Lord in the East African Mission* with dedication and commitment.

"Come you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the world" (Mt.25: 34). Whispering these words into her ears, the Lord called Sr. Sunita to the eternal abode on December 1, 2016.

May she and all the departed through the mercy of God, Rest in Peace... Amen

Still a long road to tread....

The "winds of change" are blowing strongly in many parts of Africa, and people are demanding ever more insistently the recognition and promotion of human rights and freedoms. In this regard I note with satisfaction that the Church in Africa, faithful to its vocation, stands resolutely on the side of the oppressed and of voiceless and marginalized peoples. I strongly encourage it to continue to bear this witness. The preferential option for the poor is "a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole Tradition of the Church bears witness ... The motivating concern for the poor — who are in the very meaning of the term 'the Lord's poor' — must be translated at all levels into concrete actions, until it decisively attains a series of necessary reforms".

Ecclesia in Africa N. 44b



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From the Editor

Dear Readers of Baraka,

Every issue of Baraka is so precious to us, as it is a chance for us to express the uncountable blessings we have received from God. And this issue in particular is so precious, because it is the Tenth Edition. Countless are the blessings we have received from God during these six months in our apostolates in East Africa. This edition of our MSFS East Africa Province Newsletter covers the major events which took place from July 2016 to December 2016 and it marks the closing of Year of Mercy.



On 20th November 2016, while formally closing of the end of Holy Year of Mercy Pope Francis insisted that “God has no memory of sin, but only of us, of each of us, we who are His beloved children.” He added “God is ready to completely and forever cancel our sin, because his memory - unlike our own - does not record evil that has been done or keep score of injustices experienced.” The true door of Mercy, which is the Heart of Christ, is ever open for us and we need to open our hearts too that we may radiate Christ’s Mercy to other through our lives.

One day, when Pope John XXIII was bishop of Venice, he was told that one of his priests was becoming an alcoholic. “We’ll have to go and visit him,” he told his secretary. When they go near the presbytery of the priest’s parish, the bishop and his secretary stopped at a hotel, and the future Pope John sent his secretary off to get the priest. The secretary came back and said, “His hat is lying on the table, but he isn’t there.” To which the future Pope answered, “If his hat is there, he must be also there. Go back and look again.” A few minutes later, the secretary came back. He had found the priest at the local pub. All three of them walked over to the presbytery. Then the bishop offered the priest a chair and said to him; “Sit down, brother. I want you to hear my confession.”

Anyone reading this story would surely shed their tears for the goodness of the bishop. Yes, he was so good that God chose him to be the Vicar of Christ and more so, later raised him to the altar as a Saint. He was more human that he was even able to realize the goodness in the drunkard priest. He never condemned him; rather, he mercifully pardoned him when he asked him to hear his confession. The story goes on to say that the alcoholic priest never again touched alcohol in life. Unless we open our hearts for others, we can never experience the Mercy of God. Let us keep our hearts always open and receive the Mercy of God.

Baraka thanks you, Readers, for continuing to overwhelm us with your support and appreciation and wishes you all a fruitful and grace-filled time!!!

Yours joyfully,

Fr. Clement Sudhakar MSFS

Message from Superior General

'BARAKA' – BLESSING – the tenth issue is in your hands! *Baraka* - the news of Fransalians in East Africa - initiated five years ago is growing in age and wisdom in a steady manner. I am glad that this child, ever since its birth, is a blessing to the readers inside and outside the MSFS family.

A blessing is not a blessing until it is spoken. All of us need to hear words like, 'I love you' 'I believe in you' 'I think you do a great job' 'You mean a lot to me'. We need to feel being loved and blessed by others. We need to love and bless others. Others need our blessing (caring and affirming words) just as we need blessings from others. God pronounces blessings to so many people in the Bible.

The Bible reminds us that we can bless people or curse people with our words. "From the same mouth come blessing and curse (*James 3:10*). In the Old Testament, the first blessing occurred when God blessed the sea creatures and birds, telling them to be fruitful and multiply on the earth (*Genesis 1: 22*). Similarly, God blessed Adam and Eve and said: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (*Genesis 1: 28*). God blessed Abram due to his obedience to God's commands (*Genesis 22:16-18*). The book of Psalms is full of references to the blessings for those who love and fear the Lord God. The Beatitudes in the New Testament proclaim the blessings of those who find their purpose and fulfilment in God.

It is not only God who pronounces blessings to people in the Bible but parents and elders also pronounce

statement of blessings to their children and descendants. We find children in the Bible fighting more often for the blessings of parents than for their money or inheritance. Parental blessings are important in the Bible. "A father's blessing gives a person firm roots, but a mother's curse uproots the growing plant" (*Sirach 3: 9*).



Today, the biblical tradition of blessing is continued through BARAKA of MSFS (Fransalians) in East Africa. The moments we receive spoken blessings are the unforgettable moments in our lives. Emotional wounds, persisting from not receiving caring and affirming words of blessing from our parents, elders, community members, formators, superiors, and companions can hurt us.

I encourage all of us to embrace the biblical tradition of blessing. I congratulate BARAKA for this bold step taken to bring blessings to all readers. Let us stay blessed through BARAKA!

Live Jesus!

Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil, MSFS

Message from the Provincial

MSFS in Africa - Celebrating the Perl Jubilee...

Dear respected reader of Baraka,

Today on December 31, 2016, it is 10,594 days since the first MSFS Confreres landed in Africa. That means we have completed 29 years and one day today in the continent of Africa. We are entering into the Perl Jubilee - 30 Years - of the MSFS Presence in Africa.



It was a very humble beginning; a leap into the dark - with the deep faith that the Lord is there even when he is not seen. Turning back, we realize how God was guarding us and guiding us all these years - in his own way, in immeasurable measures. Today MSFS is present in 10 countries in Africa. Sure, all that happened during these 29 years were not necessarily all good things. We had accidents, deaths, sicknesses, attacks, robberies experiences of rejection, financial crisis, vocation crisis and so on. Yet with a firm conviction I can state: *We are Blessed! Tumebarikiwa !*

In our missionary lives and in the apostolate, when we come across challenging situations, let us not be discouraged. God allows everything to happen - even the painful and unpleasant things - sometimes - even apparently evil things! Are we able to live along those darnels (Ref. Mt. 13: 25-38) of misfortunes and sufferings? The chastisement will come in a time as planned by God. As missionaries, if we were to be discouraged by the darnels around us, sure we would have packed up and gone back long ago.

Dear friends, Remember: Not all things that happen in our lives are good things. But all things are for our good.

As we enter into this jubilee year, let us remember every one - specially the pioneers and all those who were in authority - who responded to the need of the times and ventured courageously to the launching of the Africa Mission.

I request your prayers and blessings up on the MSFS Missions in Africa.

May God bless you!

Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS
(Provincial Superior MSFS East Africa Province)



Diaconate ordination - 2016

**“Brothers, select among you seven reputable men,
filled with the Spirit and wisdom,
who we shall appoint to this task” (Acts 6:3).**

On October 15, 2016, on the Feast of St. Theresa of Avila our Province had a historical moment whereby five of our seminarians were ordained deacons. The ordination took place at Jordan University College Chapel. The mass was presided over by His Lordship Telesphor Mkude, the Bishop of Morogoro Diocese. There were 24 Brothers from different Congregations who were ordained deacons that day. The 5 MSFS Brothers who were ordained deacons were: Lawrence Sebowa, Gerald Mabilirizi, Amal Paul Neerolickal, Jonathan Muema, and Ibrahim Mussajja.

After the mass, the newly ordained deacons were received at Fransalian Study House at Kola by the confreres together with their

family members, who came to witness their ordination. After reception all the members present gathered together in the hall for felicitation. One member from each family expressed their heartfelt gratitude for witnessing their sons as they were raised into the Sacred Order of Diaconate. Rev. Fr. Thomas Kochuparampil MSFS the Rector congratulated them and requested all the members present to continue praying for them, since that day marked officially the beginning of rendering fully their service to the Lord. He told them to be committed and dedicated servants before the Lord. As the ceremony came to an end, the new Deacons were surrounded by their family friends to enjoy memorable evening.



Our Deacons with the Rector Rev. Fr. Thomas Kochuparampil MSFS

The opening and blessings of **St. Francis de Sales Church** **Mkuza, Dar es Salaam** Another gem among the contributions of the Ministry of the Fransalians to the Local Church

It was all on August 13, 2016, the memorable and colourful event took place in the St. Francis de Sales Parish in the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. His Eminence Polycarp Cardinal Pengo, the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam graced the function of blessing and consecrating the newly built parish church during the solemn Eucharistic celebration which began at 9 am. That day



the dream of the parishioners of having a church, came to the fulfilment after the whole hearted cooperation and hard work of the parishioners for almost 9 years. According to the then Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Mathew Chavely whose brainchild the project was, it is only a miracle performed by God as almost 70 percentage of contribution came from the people. Our sincere thanks to different agencies, individual benefactors and well-

wishers for their generous contributions. May God be their reward.

The solemn Eucharistic celebration was a time of divine experience for all people present, for the event as they were witnessing such an event for the first time. The important elements in the blessing ceremony were opening the main door of the new church, blessing the church walls with the holy water, anointing of the altar, incensing of the altar, depositing of the relics of St. Francis de Sales in the altar and solemnly placing the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. The presence of His Lordship





Salutarius Libena the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Ifakara, a great friend of MSFS , also graced the occasion. Together with Fr. Johnson Kallidukil MSFS the Provincial Superior of the MSFS East Africa Province, many MSFS confreres and other priests and religious graced the occasion with their presence.

Following are some of the salient features which make the church unique and making



it one the best churches in the country.

- The involvement of the lay faithful in the whole process of the construction
- Seating capacity of the church is above 1500
- Beautifully decorated sanctuary with a celestial ambience
- A tabernacle - unique in many ways
- Wonderful stained glass work displaying the biblical themes
- Thematic arrangements of the history of salvation in the sanctuary
- Bell tower which calls all people for prayer and adoration
- Unique presence of the relic of St. Francis de Sales in the altar

The liturgical function was followed by a well organized gathering in the church premises during which many prominent personalities gave their messages of felicitation. This was followed by common meals provided from the parish shared by more than 3000 persons.

Fr. Pius Kochuparampil MSFS
The Parish Priest



SFS INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL KATANI

Decennial celebration and graduation

November 5th 2016 was an important day in the history of SFS Integrated Pre Primary and Primary School- Katani as we celebrated its 10th anniversary and the graduation of our pre-unit children with much pomp and splendour. The chief guest of the occasion was Mr. Bimal R Kantaria the director of Elgon Kenya Limited who is our friend and benefactor. The guests of honours were our DEO Mr. Joseph Kiema and The Area Chief.

The programme started at 10.30am. The

chief guest and the guests of honours were welcomed at the school gate and were accompanied by the school band and scout members to the assembly ground. After hoisting the National and School flags we proceeded to the school auditorium. The programme started with a word of prayer, then a prayer dance invoking the assistance of our lord and master Jesus Christ to lead us and guide us from darkness to light in this world of illusion and confusion.



The manager of the school Rev. Fr. Sunny Thomas presented the report of the school in which he clearly gave an account of the activities of the school year 2015 and the challenges and growth it encountered in the past 10 years. It was followed by presentations of the children starting from baby class up to class 8 of various items like poems, speeches, various types of dances including traditional and western. Every item challenged everyone to look into oneself to see the moral values they hold on to in their personal life.

The graduation ceremony was done by our chief guest. He appreciated the programmes of children and congratulated the manager and the entire team for the good work that they are doing. Mr Joseph the D.E.O in his parental address advised them to keep

peace and harmony at home so that the children will get a conducive environment to learn their lessons and become efficient personalities in future so that they can build a strong and prosperous country in future.

The PTA president in his speech mentioned about the progress that the Katani village achieved after the establishment of the school here. The children, the teaching and non-teaching staff were awarded for their performance both in curricular and co-curricular activities with certificates and beautiful presents.

The programme ended with a vote of thanks from Sr. Mary Anthony, The Headmistress of the school. Finally the food was blessed by our manager, all the parents, guests and children were served a delicious lunch.



A family is like a forest, when you are outside it is dense, when you are inside you see that each tree has its place. - African Proverb

A HEART AFTER GOD

by Grace Yeo



MY PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

With a desire imprinted in the deep recesses of my heart for Mission, I set out with a team of four brothers and sisters from St Francis Xavier Retreat Centre, now known as Catholic Spirituality Centre, to Tanzania in 2005. We were welcomed by the then Provincial of the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales (MSFS) in East Africa, Fr Thomas Olickal, and Fr Sunny Vettickal, who over the years of my association with them, have become not just priests to me, but also my brothers and friends. That's how it all began!

To give us an overview of the work of the MSFS, also known as the Fransalians, Provincial Fr Thomas took us to visit MSFS Mission houses in Tanzania, from Dares Salaam all the way to remote Tabora during the span of a week. Wherever we went, we were warmly welcomed by the missionary Fathers, with hugs and laughter, as we humored each other over a meal. I was overwhelmed by the warmth, hospitality, and love of the Fathers. Those moments filled me with great joy, which remains in my heart to this day.



2007: Mission in Tanzania



2016 Mission: Rosalie, Stefanie, Grace and Rita

My initial thoughts after that first mission exposure were 'Where do I go from here, Lord? What do You have in store for me in this open field?' In the subsequent days, God answered my prayer. Greatly inspired by this first encounter, I was encouraged to plan and organize several outreach programs to East Africa, with the help of Fr Sunny Vettickal. He was very encouraging and helped to fulfil more than our needs -- much to the satisfaction of those who went on these Mission trips -- from food, lodging, transport, and every detail throughout the program. Each of the missions and the experiences gained were just as enriching as the first. I have also realized that outreach missions have a 'fun' dimension as it involves interacting and bonding with the priests and forming new friendships with them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

My association with the religious priests, in particular, the present Provincial Fr Johnson Kallidukkil, Frs Sunny Vettickal, Pius Kochuparambil, Jose Eriyani, C. A. Samy, Steven Ubadesi (just to name a few) left an indelible, deep impression of a loving and dynamic community. Through the missions,

I have learnt from the silent actions of the MSFS community of priests that it is not so much in the doing, but how much I am able to love.

The Fransalians visibly manifest God's love and presence in East Africa. They bloom where they are planted. Churches, schools, vocational and technical institutes, homes for special needs and other establishments have been 'planted' and they have bloomed and flourished! The missionary zeal is clearly present in each one of them, working tirelessly in God's vineyard, never failing to pray and to serve.



2014: Retreat @ SFS Integrated Primary School, Katani

Observing how they work and interact with one another, I can say 'How they love one another', not only among their fellow priests but also with people around them. It has made me feel that I am part of the big MSFS family.



2014: Night Vigil @ St Joseph's Church, Mlolongo

A Bible verse can best describe the community of the MSFS: "All of you have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind." 1 Pet 3:8



2008: A 3-day renewal retreat at Mji Mpiya

IN PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

Many others who went on these missions were similarly touched by their experiences. We praise and thank God for the wonderful and memorable moments. We realize that when we give, we receive much -- joy and immense love fill our hearts. Some of those who were blessed by their encounters with the MSFS congregation had this to say:

'I have seldom come across a community of religious priests who are more dynamic, and committed to the work of evangelization as the Fransalian Fathers. Their works of mercy and charity, visibly apparent in the many projects in East Africa, leave me with a sense of awe. Their warm friendship, hospitality and love throughout my long association with them have touched me deeply. I have learnt much from them. My prayer is that the Lord will continue to grant them the wisdom, courage and necessary resources to continue their good works to build His kingdom here on earth.' ... Roselie Chia

'Meeting the MSFS made me realize that they were truly shepherds after the heart of Jesus. That their priority was the people's needs and how they could in small yet impactful

ways, respond to the cry of the needy. I felt the Lord's presence among them and am deeply grateful for the experience of the love of His beloved missionaries!' ... Audrey Tan

'Serve one another in love -- this verse left a deep impression in my memory and my heart. I took so much back with me -- the experience will always be the light for my journey towards the Kingdom of God. Praise the Lord!' ... Jessie Yeo

'The gentleness and compassion of the MSFS Fathers have always stood out for me. Their zeal in serving the Lord as missionaries inspires me most.' Peter De Souza

'My encounter with the MSFS congregation is difficult to describe in words. I embraced every experience I had and was charmed by the people I met along the way. I saw the Shepherd's heart in the love and compassion of the Fathers.' Judy Yeo

Finally, a gracious note of thanks to the Fathers for the experience that they have given us.



2011: Mission with my sister, Judy



Pope Francis speaks about children.....

For their (children) sake, and for the good of society, our faith in God's word calls us to support families in their mission in society, to accept children as a blessing for our world, and to defend the dignity of each man and woman, for all of us are brothers and sisters in the one human family.

SFS School Bukene



De Sales Isaka



Salesan School Chera



SFS School Kagongwa



Fransalian School Morogoro



SFS Junior Seminary



Fransalian School Mkuza



SFS School Ipuli



Introducing our New Priests

Fr. Aristides Timothy Danda MSFS

Fr. Aristides Timothy Danda MSFS was born on January 12, 1979 of the family of Mr and Mrs Timothy Danda in Tabora, Tanzania. He is the fifth born of the eight children of whom four are girls and four are boys. He was baptized in the following year in Njombe Parish and was confirmed in January 1993. He studied his initial Primary School from 1989-1995. Secondary Education was from 1997-2005, in Matola Pre-form one seminary-Njombe, Mafinga Seminary-Iringa, Montfort Sec. School-Mbeya, and Ifakara High School.



Having the desire to become a priest he joined the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales. After a brief community experience in Itaga Parish, he started formation in Ndagani seminary in 2006. Then the following year he was admitted to the Canonical Novitiate. He made the first profession on July 10, 2008. He studied Philosophy in Jordan University College from 2008 to 2010 and he did his regency, 2010-2011 at St Francis de Sales Parish-Ngurdoto Arusha.

He did the Theological studies at Jordan University College Morogoro between 2011-2016. He made the perpetual profession on 10 July, 2015 at *Fransalium* Kibaha. Aristides Timothy Danda was ordained deacon on January 3, 2016 at St Francis de Sales Parish Dumila by His Lordship

Bishop Telesphore Mkude of Morogoro Diocese, Tanzania.

He was ordained priest on January 5, 2017 in his home parish at the Cathedral Church Njombe, by His Lordship Bishop Alfred Maluma of Catholic Diocese of Njombe Tanzania. At present Fr. Aristides is working in the MSFS Mission in Katani, Kenya.

For me priesthood implies to be in the love of Christ until the end of my days.

Who will separate us from the Love of Christ? Rom.8:25.

Fr. Aristides Danda MSFS

Introducing our New Priests

Fr. Jobin Joseph Karottukambadathil MSFS

Fr. Jobin Joseph Karottukambadathil was born on June 13, 1989 in the family of Mr and Mrs Joy Joseph in Kappumthala, Kerala, India. He is the first born of the two children. He has an younger brother who has now completed graduation. Jobin was baptized on July 15, 1989 at St Mary's Church Marangoli. He studied his initial school and high school at St. Johns High School Kanjirathanam from 1993- 2004 and the Secondary School at St. Aloysius Athirampuzha from 2005 - 2007.

With the deep desire to become a missionary priest he joined the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales and started formation in SFS Seminary Ettumanoor from June 2004. In the year 2006-2007 he did his canonical novitiate at Sannidhi and made the first profession on June 10, 2007. He studied Philosophy in Suvidya College Bangalore 2008 - 2011 and came to Tanzania for the further stages of formation. He did his Regency during 2011- 2012 at St. Francis de Sales VTC Mwakata, Tanzania. He did the Theological Studies at Jordan University College, Morogoro from 2012- 2016. He made the perpetual profession on July, 10, 2015. He was ordained deacon on January 3, 2016 at St. Francis de Sales Parish Dumila, by his Lordship Telesphore Mkude of Catholic Diocese of Morogoro.



Fr. Jobin Joseph Karottukambadathil MSFS was ordained priest on December 28, 2016 in his homeland at St. John the Baptist Church Kanjirathanam in the Diocese of Palai by his Lordship Jacob Murikan the Auxiliary Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Palai, Kerala, India. At present Fr. Jobin is working in the MSFS Mission in Mkuza, Tanzania and later from July 2017 in MSFS Mission Kashishi, Tabora.

Priesthood for me is the unique grace and opportunity to glorify God and to serve Him in my sisters and brothers.

Fr. Jobin Karottukambadathil MSFS

Introducing our New Priests

Fr. Stephen Mutisya Mathembo MSFS

Fr. Stephen Mutisya Mathembo was born on November 11, 1986 of the family of Mr and Mrs Charles Mathembo in Wote-Makueni, Kenya. He is the first born of the five children of whom two are boys and two are girls. He was baptised on March 31, 1996 at Ngai Prayer House Mbooni parish and was confirmed on October 15, 2006. He studied his 1 primary school from 1991-1999. Secondary education was from 2000-2005 partly in Kaumoni Sec School.

Having the desire to become a priest he joined the missionaries of St Francis de Sales and started formation in Fransalian Seminary Ndagani on June 15, 2006. Then the following year he did the Canonical Novitiate and he made the first profession on July 10, 2008. He studied Philosophy in Salvatorian Institute, during 2008-2011 and did his regency during 2011-2012 at St Francis de Sales Primary School Katani.

He did the Theological studies at Jordan University College, Morogoro. He made the perpetual profession on July 10, 2015. Stephen Mutisya Mathembo was ordained deacon on January 3, 2016 at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Parish, Dumila by His



Lordship Bishop Telesphore Mkude of Catholic Diocese of Morogoro.

Fr. Stephen Mutisya Mathembo was ordained priest in his native parish St. Francis of Assisi Parish Mukuyuni on October 27, 2016 by His Lordship Most Rev. David Kamau, the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. At present he is working in the MSFS Mission in Osia, Uganda.

Priesthood for me is a life of service and sacrifice after the example of St. Francis de Sales.

Fr. Stephen Mutisya MSFS

Introducing our New Priests

Fr. Thomas Njue Njeru MSFS

Fr. Thomas Njue MSFS was born on November 13, 1984 in the Family of Mr and Mrs Alloys Njeru in Embu- Kenya. He is the last born of the seven children of whom five are boys and two are girls. He was baptised on April 16, 1995 and received the Holy communion the same day. He was confirmed on August 8, 1998 at Nthagaiya Parish. He did his primary education from 1991 to 2000 in Nthagaiya primary school. He did his secondary education from the year 2000 to 2004 in Macumo high school. After one year, he got the desire to become a priest and he joined the formation in the congregation of Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales in June 2006 at Ndagani -Kenya.

The subsequent year, he did the canonical Novitiate and made his first commitment on July 10, 2008. From 2008-2011 he did his Philosophy in Salvatorian Institute of Philosophy and Theology. He did his one year Regency from the year 2011-2012 at Lumen Christi institute-Arusha. Fr. Thomas did his Theology from the year 2012-2016 at Jordan University College. He was ordained Deacon on January 3, 2016



at St. Francis de Sales Parish -Dumila by His Lordship Bishop Telesphor Mkude of the Diocese of Morogoro. He was ordained priest in his home parish on October 22, 2016 by His Lordship Bishop Paul Kariuki of the Diocese of EMBU, Kenya. At present he working in the Mother of Compassion Parish, Mji Mpya Relini, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Priesthood for me is the power and authority given to me by God to offer sacrifice and to act as a servant-leader in the Church.:

Fr. Thomas Njue MSFS

The Beginnings of Christianity in East Africa

(Part 7)

a. The Baganda People in Uganda

In Uganda largest and most powerful of the local ethnic groups was the Baganda, a group in which European missionaries took particular interest. Edward Rice (a friend of Thomas Merton) offers an overview of the importance of the region and the Baganda people in his book "Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton- a biography of the Victorian explorer and linguist". Rice recounts that the Baganda were among the richest and most advanced tribes in central Africa. Moreover, they "bore a certain patina of civilization that was to astound Europeans later, with well-organized bureaucracies, statesmanship of a superior order, finely developed arts and architecture, and unusual handicrafts." Yet the civilization also had a dark side, according to Rice, with both rulers and subjects having the reputation of being "unnaturally cruel."

Conversion to Christianity among the Baganda meant a rejection of the traditional religions. It also implied a setting aside

of some of the traditional ways of life, an adherence to a new set of moral and religious standards, and, often, the establishment of a new set of alliances, based on religious belief. As a result, the group of new believers (called *abasomi*, or readers) came to be regarded with suspicion by other Baganda as a dangerous rebel faction. During the reign of Mutesa, however, these suspicions were kept under check.



Fr. Thomas Chozhithara MSFS

With the accession of his son, Mwanga, the situation altered dramatically. As a young man, Mwanga had shown some favor to the Christian missionaries, but his attitude changed as soon as he took the throne. According to tradition, the kabaka was the center of all authority and power in the kingdom, and he could use his subjects as he wished. But the presence of the missionaries was severely diminishing his authority among the converts. Mwanga was also a practicing pedophile, and upon discovering that the young men who had converted to Christianity were beginning to reject his sexual advances, he grew enraged. As a result, the king sought to eliminate Christianity from his kingdom and began a violent persecution of the missionaries and the new Christians.



b. Persecution under Kabaka Mwanga II and the Holy Martyrs of Uganda

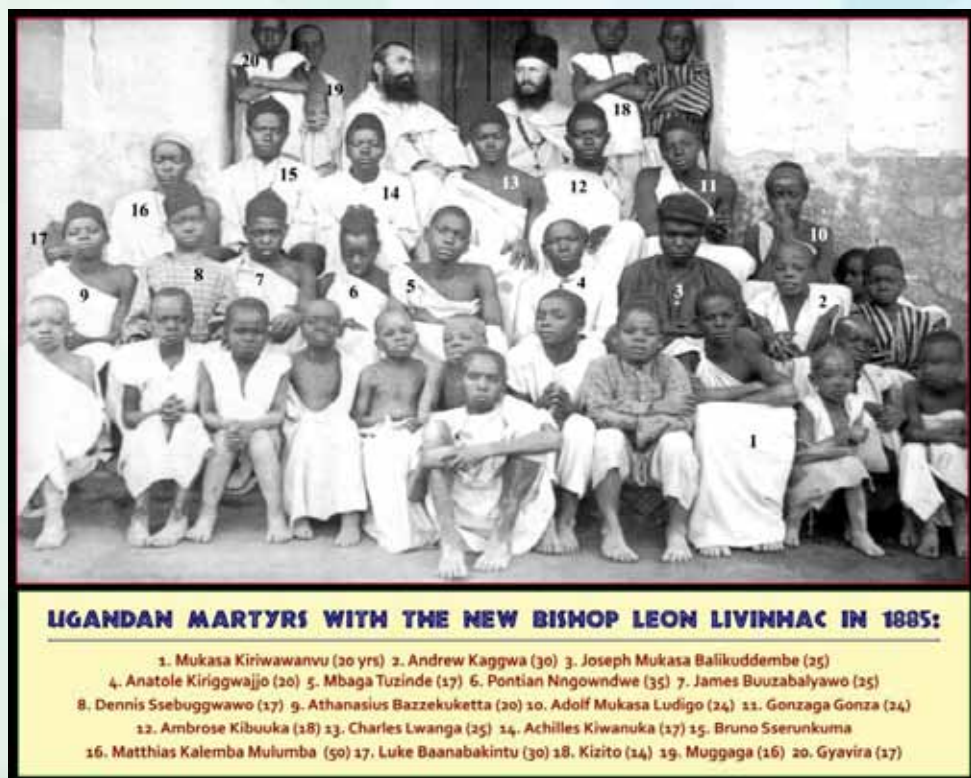
Following the death of Kabaka Mutesa in 1884, Mwanga his eighteen-year-old son was made the new Kabaka. He was very much impressed by the works of the White Fathers and therefore, he called them back immediately. The White Fathers overwhelmed with new hopes landed back in a procession. However, Mwanga's character was unstable and his actions unpredictable, as he was not only addicted to homosexuality but also to the smoking of bhang. Over a period of time, he alienated everybody.

Mwanga II was unable to deal with the

various frictions in the Kingdom and they included frictions sparked by the differences between Catholics, Protestants and Muslims. Each group was zealously gathering new converts because Kabaka Mwanga never committed himself to any religious group.

Each Group tried to gain maximum influence at the court of the Kabaka Mwanga II and there was lots of infighting in the court. Mwanga II was denounced by Muslims for his refusal to be circumcised and Christians denounced him because of his polygamy – he had at least 85 wives. All groups began to put their loyalties first to God denouncing traditional ways and adopting the morality and ways of their religion.

Kabaka Mwanga totally turned on the Christians – even on his personal attendant



If you marry a monkey for his wealth, the money goes and the monkey remains as is. - Egyptian Proverb

who was a devout convert to the Catholic Faith whose name was Joseph Mukasa and who had brought many to Christ – up to 500 young men and boys who were pages in the court of the Kabaka. These young pages respected Joseph Mukasa and followed his leadership as he led them into their faith in Christ. Mukasa was also respected by Kabaka Mwanga II since Joseph Mukasa once killed a snake with his bare hands as it was about to strike the Kabaka.

Non-Christian advisors who were jealous of Joseph Mukasa began to poison the mind of the Kabaka telling him that Mukasa was no longer loyal to the Kabaka but another King



– Jesus the King of Kings. The Kabaka was not only angry at Joseph Mukasa but against his newly converted pages – both Catholic and Anglican who refused the sexual advances of the Kabaka. When Kabaka Mwanga II planned to kill the new and first

Anglican Bishop James Hannington – Joseph Mukasa warned him to not to do so and the Kabaka went ahead and had the Archbishop put to death. John Mukasa further enraged the Kabaka when he opposed Kabaka from using young pages as sex partners. John Mukasa taught the boys as to how to avoid sexual encounters with the Kabaka and to stay out of his way.

Kabaka Mwanga was so enraged that he decided to make an example of John Mukasa's disobedience and had him put to death, he ordered that John Mukasa would be burned alive for being a traitor to the kingdom. John Mukasa's response was one based on his abiding faith in Christ – as he was facing his executioner he told him "a Christian who gives his life for God has no reason to fear death.... Tell Mwanga, "that he has condemned me unjustly, but I forgive him with all my heart." The executioner did not burn him but beheaded him as an act of mercy and then burned his body.

The Kabaka who still was enraged demanded the loyalty of all of his Christian pages by renouncing their Christian Faith – if they did not do that the result would be death for them.

Charles Lwanga had taken on the place as head of the pages and he became their spiritual leader – he like Mukasa before him protected the boys from the advances of the Kabaka and as to how to keep their faith in the midst of persecution.

One evening when the Kabaka returned to his residence he found out that a page – Denis Ssebuggwawo had been instructing



Kabaka's favorite boy in the faith and he ordered that Denis Ssebuggwawo be put to death and he was taken out and hacked to death.

Events were reaching a horrible climax – Kabaka Mwanga II ordered all pages to attend a meeting – he ordered all those who do not pray to stand with him – those who prayed were ordered stand on the other side – the youngest – Kizzito was only 14.

They were marched to Namugongo, where, bound with ropes, shackles, iron rings, and slave yokes, they waited for one week. During that time the martyrs prayed and sang hymns; the Catholics among them recited morning and evening prayers, grace before and after meals, as well as the Angelus and the rosary, in preparation for their deaths. On June 3, before the execution of the rest of the young men, Charles Lwanga was put to death by the king's men. He was wrapped tightly in a reed mat, a yoke was hung on his neck, and he was thrown onto a pyre. Taunting his executioners, Charles

is said to have shouted, "You are burning me, but it is as if you are pouring water over my body!" Before he died he cried out, "Katonda," or "My God."

His companions were killed in the same gruesome fashion. Aylward Shorter writes, "As the flames rose, their voices could be heard praying and encouraging one another." The last words of the young Kizzito were "Good-bye, friends. We are on our way."

In all, forty-five Christians were martyred at Namugongo: twenty-two Catholics and twenty-three Anglicans.

The 22 African Roman Catholic martyrs were collectively beatified by Pope Benedict XV in 1920 and canonized by Pope Paul VI on October 18, 1964. Five years later, as the first pope to visit sub-Saharan Africa, he laid the foundation stone of the shrine to be built in Namugongo in honor of St. Charles Lwanga and his companions. The shrine was completed in 1975, on June 3, now the feast day of the Ugandan martyrs.

Three Popes have come to Uganda to pay their respect for the Martyrs of Uganda who died for their Faith. Pope Francis' visit in November of 2015 came after Pope Paul VI (1969) and that of Pope John Paul in 1993. Paul VI was the first reigning pope to visit the sub-Saharan Africa. Uganda becomes the only African nation to have three papal visits. – also there has been a visit of Archbishop of Canterbury.

Fr. Thomas Chozhithara MSFS

You cannot develop people.
You must allow people to develop
themselves.

Mwl. Julius Kambarage Nyerere



GRADUATION CEREMONY OF ST. JOSEPH VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE Mlolongo, Nairobi



November 11, 2016 was an important day for all of us who are part of St. Joseph Vocational Training Centre. It was our Graduation Day! It has to be a great day for us, after all it comes as the fruit of our hard work of three years. We began our day with the Lord in the Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Fr. Jose Eryanickal MSFS, the Director of St. Joseph VTC. After the Holy Mass the graduates had a photo session with the priests in the church, after which the parents, guardians and the graduates had a procession to the hall. The program started with the national anthem.

Mr. Mwangi, the staff representative introduced the teaching and non-teaching staffs, and the Director Fr. Jose

Eryanickal MSFS introduced Fr. Sunny Vettikal MSFS, the chief guest to the audience. The students had prepared entertainments, like, cultural dance, poem, spoken word, fashion show, oral narrative Gospel dance and drama.

It was grace filled day for all of us. All the students were of appreciation for the management and the staffs for their dedication to impart the technical skills in them. There total number of students who were graduated this year were 54: computer department 15; secretarial and front office 6; motor vehicle mechanic 9; ECDE 16 and tailoring 8.

By Susan Nduku
Secretary St. Joseph VTC



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A Glimpse of the *Power house* of the Province: Fransalium MSFS Novitiate for Africa A place to nurture the call

In God's own time, on September 15, 2000 the dream of the then young East African Province for establishing a Novitiate came to its fruition. FRANSALIANUM is the only MSFS Novitiate in the continent of Africa. It is situated at Bungo-Mkuza, in Kibaha District of the Coastal Region of Tanzania. Since the start to this day Fransalium has received 15 batches of novices reaching a total of 123. Among whom the majority are still in formation at various levels and 11 of them are already priests and some others discontinued or joined other dioceses and congregations. Novitiate stands as a core of one's religious formation. The batch of 2015-2016 canonical year has been unique in its position of altogether 14 novices of the 14th batch of whom one was the 14th born in his family and these 14 were under the 14th Superior General of our beloved Congregation. And by God's grace all of them made their first commitment to God on July 10, 2016 at St. Francis de Sales Parish, Mkuza. This year we have 13 novices for the different mission units of MSAF.

Jesus the first formator had very many disciples but chose the 12 as apostles reminding us of this truth "Many are called but few are chosen" (Mt 22:14). In this world, God still leads human beings from contact to communion, from



success to fruitfulness, from comfort to eternal life. Though people in large numbers take the broad and easy way still there are many who take the straight and narrow way. Religious life is typical of those who are called to follow the life of Christ more closely, practicing obedience, poverty and chastity in a radical manner.

The idea of radically following Jesus very much referred to as vocation or "calling" has



a significant role within Christianity. The 'Call' or Vocation to religious life and priesthood is a mark of God's personal love for certain privileged souls. This privilege given by God does not free him/her from the privilege of self-denial, leaving behind one's own dreams, ambitions of life, even his/her identity in the eyes of world in order to be in perfect harmony with God by making one's life a lasting oblation for God and his people. The call is responding to His love and the willingness to accept the demands of loving which in some way is the "sharing of the cross". This loving invitation freely given is to be freely accepted and responded to. The call prepares adequately the indispensable elements of any relationship to grow in one's capacity to love and receive love.

Every 'call' is a free invitation placed before the individual and he/ she responds to it in freedom. One can never be forced to love. Freedom is love's energizer. God who is infinitely free to love and to choose gave humankind the freedom to respond to His love. However, individuals vary in the degree to capacity to love. Behind every decision and action there is a motive, a purpose. Since the motive generates the decision and the action, it is imperative to clarify it.

Novitiate is the time of building ones call on right motivations and coming to be in conformity with God's will. It is the time of genuine test of oneself and also allowing oneself to be tested by others towards the aptitudes for becoming a lasting oblation for God and others. As a result one searches not outside his/ her but rather within and makes a firm yes to God as Mother Mary. One finds oneself as a treasure in the "earthen vessel". The one who in this life comes to that reality of knowing the worth and value before the Creator finds in fuller freedom to be at the service of Him generally and particularly in making selflessly his/ her life as a total



The Present Novices 2016-2017

gift. Such a call is lived in constant joy a thanksgiving to God and to all. When one is convinced of God's call in life he/ she surrenders to the providence of God and being freed from anxiety takes shelter in the assurance of Jesus who says: ...do not start worrying: "where will my food come from? Or my clothes? (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about) your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned about everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what He requires of you, and He will provide you with all these other things. (Mt. 6:31-33)

I would like to end this short reflection on religious vocation with the words of Holy Father Pope Francis in his address to the Superiors General of men's Orders in the year 2013: "preparing new members for religious life is a craft, not a police operation. We must include the formation of hearts. I am reminded of those religious who have a heart as sour as vinegar; they are not made for the people. We must not create administrators and managers, but fathers and sisters, travel companions". Therefore let everyone know the profound duty of nurturing the vocation of God which is a mystery within the mystical Body of Christ and ever be the co-worker of Jesus' mission to the ends of the world.

Fr. Antonysamy Sebastian MSFS
Director of Novices

Asante!



Asante!



*Our sincere thanks and appreciation to
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*MIVA is a support organisation of the catholic church,
with the goal to provide vehicles to missions and development aid.
We acknowledge with thanks to the Almighty God and to the organization
MIVA together with the BBM for facilitating the procurement of
our many vehicles in our Missions in East Africa.
May God bless MIVA and all your supporters and benefactors.*

SFS MISSION SCHOOL TABORA

A DECADE OF SERVICE

Mr. Yegah Swaleh Abdul

Ten years ago, Saint Francis de Sales Mission School (also Popularly known as St. Francis) was started at Ipuli, Tabora by the MSFS Fathers. It was the time when the literacy rate in Tabora was very low and there was a great need for an advanced school. It would not be an exaggeration to say that St. Francis de Sales Mission School has become so popular in and around Tabora and is categorized in the "A" standard school due to its superb and outstanding performance in both curricular and co-curricular activities. The school has very good infrastructures and conducive environment to learn. Just like gold and diamonds are uncovered from the earth, the highly competent, full of good deeds and sharp minded students are uncovered from Saint Francis de Sales Mission School Tabora. Almost all pupils who complete their studies from Saint Francis de Sales Mission School get admittance into the special schools in Tanzania and they really do well there, as we lay solid foundation while they are in St. Francis.

On 6th August 2016, the school management organized a celebration to mark the ten years of service. The tenth anniversary celebration was organized along with the School Day Celebration and the 2016 Class Seven Graduation Ceremony. All three events were organized in the school assembly grounds. The celebration was attended by a number dignitaries, some of whom were government officials, priests, religious sisters, teachers, pupils and their parents.

The celebration was started with the Holy Mass which was led by His Grace Paul Ruzoka, the Archbishop of Tabora and it was attended by all the invited guests and the pupils. After the mass, the guests were entertained by the pupils from class one to



seven who had prepared different programs such as dances, songs and poems.

On giving his speech, the school manager Rev. Fr. Reji Joseph MSFS thanked all the guests who attended and made the celebration into a success. The manager also appreciated the work done by previous managers and principals. He also recognized the good work done by the school administration. He thanked the principal, the administrator, teaching and non-teaching staff for helping to make Saint Francis de Sales Mission School The choice parents in Tabora region and the country at large. He finished by appreciating the co-operation which parents and guardians are giving to the school administration and urged them to continue with the same spirit.





The Chief Guest, His Grace Paul Ruzoka, the Archbishop of Tabora, appreciated the efforts and strategies which have been taken by the school management to ensure that the school becomes the best in curricular and co-curricular and environmental activities in the region. He also urged the parents and guardians to have faith in the school, as it up brings and nurtures the pupils academically, spiritually, mentally, and physically. He also congratulated the class seven pupils (2016), who graduated on that day, and urged them to follow the guidance of virtues and



teaching of wisdom they have obtained from this school throughout their lives in this school.

The celebration came to an end after lunch which was enjoyed by all the people who attended the celebration.



*Nothing is so strong as gentleness,
nothing so gentle as real strength.*

St. Francis de Sales

Are we also part of the system of corruption ?

In the present world order, the African nations are among the most disadvantaged. Rich countries must become clearly aware of their duty to support the efforts of the countries struggling to rise from their poverty and misery. In fact, it is in the interest of the rich countries to choose the path of solidarity, for only in this way can lasting peace and harmony for humanity be ensured. Moreover, the Church in the developed countries cannot ignore the added responsibility arising from the Christian commitment to justice and charity. Because all men and women bear God's image and are called to belong to the same family redeemed by Christ's Blood, each individual should be guaranteed just access to the world's resources which God has put at the everyone's disposal.

Ecclesia in Africa N. 220



MSFS Scholastics in Theology Formation in Kola, Morogoro



Catholic Youth Mlolongo, Nairobi

Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (Fransalians)



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- Age not more than 23 years unless you have higher educational qualifications, Capacity to live in community
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*Darkness can only be scattered
by light, and hatred can only
be conquered by love.*

St. John Paul II



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abundantly a
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BARAKA 1 to 9

ZA FRANSALIANIS

