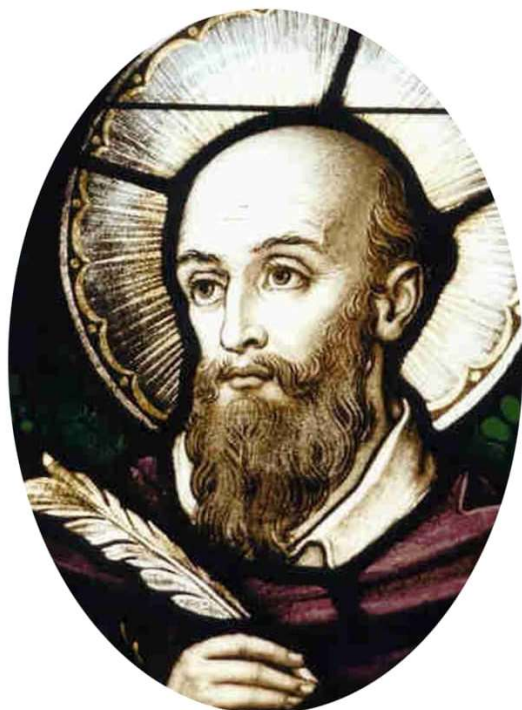


 <p style="text-align: center;">MISSIONARIES OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES Fransalians - Province of East Africa Provincial House P. O. Box 12 Morogoro Tanzania Tel: +255 689 882 711; +255 624 027 880 www.msfs-eastfrica.com e-mail: provincialeastafricamsfs@gmail.com</p> 		
Provincial Circular EAP – MT.32		Jan 24, 2022

My dear Confreres,

I wish you all a very happy Feast of our heavenly patron St. Francis de Sales! May his spirit and spirituality guide our lives and ministry!

The 400th Death Anniversary of St. Francis de Sales (1622 – 2022)



We commemorate this year the 400th death anniversary of one of the greatest figures in the history of the Church – St. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva and Doctor of the Church. He is the patron of our Congregation and also of many other Congregations around the world. He was born on 21st August 1567 at Thorens, France. He was ordained a priest on 18th December 1593. On 8th December 1602, Francis was consecrated as Bishop of Geneva. He passed away on 28th December 1622 at Lyons. His funeral services took place at Annecy on 24th January 1623. On 19th April 1665 Francis de Sales was canonized by Pope Alexander VII. On 16th November 1877, Pope Pius IX made him a Doctor of the Church.

St. Francis de Sales was a zealous missionary, preacher, spiritual director and a prolific writer. His classical works – The Introduction to the Devout Life (1608) and Love of God (1616) – speak volumes of his intensive personal experience of God. He also has written numerous sermons, letters and booklets which are valuable sources for deepening our union with God. He is the patron of Catholic writers, the Catholic press, the deaf, journalists and adult education.

The Relevance of St. Francis de Sales

The spirituality and teaching of St. Francis de Sales has been relevant for the last four centuries. At the time of his episcopal consecration, King Henry IV honoured Francis de Sales with the title “the phoenix of Bishops”. The king said, “He is a rare bird on this earth”. St. Vincent de Paul (1581 – 1660) a contemporary of St. Francis de Sales, was influenced by his teachings. Through his magnificent personality and warmth of spirit, which was said to be almost divine, he helped Pierre de Berulle, St. John Eudes and John Olier, all three of whom were educators of French clergy. He was the precursor of three.



There are several other women and men who were inspired by St. Francis de Sales to follow Christ, like St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1572 – 1641) who together with St. Francis de Sales founded the Order of the Visitation Sisters in 1610, the Visitation sister St. Margret Mary Alacoque (1647 -1690), who became the apostle of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Teresa of Lisieux (1873 – 1897), who was educated, after the death of her mother, by Pauline, her elder sister, who had been for several years a pupil of the Visitation Sisters at Le Mans. Pope St. John XXIII, a great spiritual son of St. Francis de Sales, speaks in his autobiography about St. Francis de Sales 24 times. St. Don Bosco (1815 – 1888) chose St. Francis de Sales as his protector from the very beginning of his priesthood. One of his ordination resolutions was: “The charity and gentleness of St. Francis de Sales are to guide me in everything”. Bl. Louis Brisson (1817-1908), founder of ‘The Oblates of St. Francis de Sales’ is another great son of St. Francis de Sales. Our Venerable Founder, Servant of God Fr. Peter Marie Mermier (1790 -1862) was inspired by the apostolic zeal of St. Francis de Sales, the ‘apostle of Chablais.’ He founded our Congregation under the title ‘The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales’. There are several other men and women down the centuries who were inspired by St. Francis de Sales to establish religious orders or lay associations.

The Church always recognized the contribution of St. Francis de Sales through writings of many Popes. Pope Pius XI wrote on January 26th 1923 an Encyclical –*Rerum Omnium Perturbationum* – to commemorate the 300th death anniversary of St. Francis de Sales. Pope Paul VI wrote on January 29th, 1967 a document –*Subaudiæ gemma* – to all the Bishops of France and Switzerland to mark the 400th anniversary of the birth of St. Francis de Sales. Pope St. John Paul II wrote a letter on 23rd November 2002 to the Bishop of Annecy on the 400th anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of St. Francis de Sales. Pope Benedict XVI has written on several occasions about St. Francis de Sales: “The life of St Francis de Sales was a relatively short life but was lived with great intensity. The figure of this Saint radiates an impression of rare fullness, demonstrated in the serenity of his intellectual research, but also in the riches of his affection and the “sweetness” of his teachings, which had an important influence on the Christian conscience.” “This great master of spirituality and peace,” he said, “gave his disciples the ‘spirit of freedom’ – true freedom.” (General Audience March 2, 2011). Pope Francis speaks about the “sweetness and gentleness” of St. Francis de Sales, who treated others with unconditional love. He reminds us that we are all frail and weak, but instead of hiding these limitations, we should allow them to soften our hearts toward others, for our weaknesses are actually great teachers. They help us to focus on reality! (June 23, 2013).

All these are ample examples of the influence St. Francis de Sales exerted throughout the last four centuries. J. B. Midgley writes in his book "The Gentleman Saint" regarding the legacy of St. Francis de Sales: "In some ways the Age in which St. Francis de Sales lived has similarities to our own. Then, as now, the world was experiencing dramatic change, and the mind of the Church was necessarily focused on spiritual, intellectual and institutional renewal: correcting aggressive heresy, reaffirming doctrine and practice, and preserving the ministerial priesthood that is at the heart of Catholic life. The Church continues to work for the revival of evangelization and the conversion of nations, withstanding secular assaults on faith, reversing the dilution of doctrine and of protecting the accessibility of the sacrifice of the Mass. In every season, the 'Barque of Peter' navigates some stormy waters but, thankfully, there are saints like Francis de Sales whose eager and powerful intercession does not diminish with the passing of time."

St. Francis de Sales: Our model



The spirit of St. Francis de Sales has guided our beloved Founder, Servant of God Fr. Peter Mermier to found our Congregation under his patronage. By naming the Congregation after him, Fr. Mermier wants to pay tribute to the virtues of a man who was the greatest friend of his fellowmen and the most sensitive person to the feelings of all who were in distress. He writes: "The house of the Congregation at Annecy is close to the tomb and relics of its illustrious and glorious protector patron. It is from there, as from a centre, that the Congregation hopes to extend itself in the Diocese, and even further if it pleases the sovereign Master of the Harvest to bless it and give it growth." (from A. Duval, Selected letters of Fr. Mermier). Fr.

Mermier wrote to Cardinal Gabriele della Genga Sematici after the approval of the name of the Congregation (29th May, 1857): "In confirming the title "The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales", we undertake a more strict obligation of studying, of acquiring his spirit, of acquiring and imitating his virtues." (from A. Duval, Selected Letters of Fr. Mermier).

Our beloved Founder presents to us St. Francis de Sales as our model especially through the Charism of our Congregation. He urges us to live the spirit and spirituality of St. Francis de Sales in our mission. Bishop Joseph Rey exhorted the first missionaries saying: "Yours is a triple task: study St. Francis de Sales, imitate his virtues and form your method of guiding people on his: full of gentleness to sinners." Our Founder wants us to imitate Christ following the example and virtues of St. Francis de Sales such as his patient charity, total surrender to the will of God, intense love of God and humans, apostolic zeal, profound humility and simplicity, joyful holiness, confident optimism, firm gentleness, hospitality, open-mindedness and fellow-feeling (Refer: MSFS Constitutions 7, 8 & 9).

The most outstanding virtue of St. Francis de Sales which Fr. Mermier wants us to follow is his "apostolic zeal". Indeed, his zeal was so great that during the first year of his priesthood, Francis attempted, despite the opposition of his own father, to reconcile the people of La Chablais to the Church. To accomplish this work he left no stone unturned, fled from no danger, not even that of possible death. He used to say: "Apostles battle by their sufferings and triumph only in death." It is almost unbelievable to note the vigour and constancy with which he defended the cause of Jesus

Christ among the people of La Chablais. In order to bring them the light of faith and the comforts of the Christian religion, he was known to have travelled through deep valleys and climbed steep mountains. If they fled him, he pursued, calling after them loudly. Even when repulsed brutally, he never gave up the struggle; when threatened he only renewed his efforts. He was often put out of lodges and had to spend the night on the snow under the canopy of heaven. He would celebrate Mass though no one would attend. During a sermon, when almost the entire audience left the Church one after the other, he continued with his preaching. At no time did he ever lose his mental poise or his spirit of kindness toward these ungrateful listeners. It was by such means as these that he finally overcame the resistance of his most formidable adversaries. (Rerum Ominium Perturbationum 7 & 8).

Fr. Mermier was imbued with the same apostolic zeal as that of St. Francis de Sales when he planned to begin Parish Missions and subsequently to found the Congregation. It was this virtue that was his guiding principle and prompted him to send half of his confreres to India, when Rome asked him to send Missionaries to India. It is this apostolic zeal of St. Francis de Sales that has been guiding the Congregation all through its history. In this modern age, we are confronted with similar challenges which St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Mermier faced during their life time such as apathy towards faith in God, drifting away from Gospel teachings and lack of fervour among clergy and the Religious to preach and to live the Good News of Christ. The apostolic zeal of St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Mermier invites us to dedicate ourselves completely to the cause of Christ. Through the example and intercession of St. Francis de Sales, may each of us strive to be zealous, courageous, gentle and devout in our efforts to "Live Jesus" in word and in deed for the glory of God.

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS



In January 5th, 2022, the MSFS Confreres and friends gathered together at Fransalian Study House, Morogoro, to thank God for the gift of Priesthood that God granted to our beloved Confreres Fr. Sunny Vettickal, Fr. Kurian Kollapallil, Fr. Francis Kallikattu and Fr. Reji Pandanath, who were ordained as priests in 1997. The silver jubilee celebration was attended by many confreres, religious men and women, friends and well-wishers. Fr. Johnson Pathiyil, the Rector welcomed everyone for the Holy Eucharistic celebration

which was presided over by Fr. Kurian Kollapallil. Fr. Reji Pandanath gave an inspiring homily about priesthood and his priestly experiences. After the Holy Mass, the Jubilarians were felicitated in the hall. Fr. Provincial welcomed everyone and congratulated and thanked Jubilarians for their faithful ministry in Africa during the last 25 years. A meaningful account of life and ministries of each Jubilarian was presented by brothers. Fr. James Panthalanickal, who was their classmate, gave the felicitation address. Finally, a vote of thanks was proposed by Fr. Francis Kallikattu, who thanked the organizers and everyone present for the felicitations and prayers. The Brothers made a video presentation regarding the life of Jubilarians after interviewing a number of persons. The programme was concluded with a sumptuous dinner.

SEMINAR FOR YOUNG PRIESTS

The Province is organizing a seminar for priests who were ordained in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 at Lumen Christi Institute from March 7th evening to March 10th evening. It is obligatory for all the priests who were ordained in the above-mentioned years, to attend the seminar.

TRANSFER AND APPOINTMENT OF REGENTS

Bro. Moses Lobong is transferred from Novitiate community and is appointed in Fransalian Hekima School, Maji ya Chai with effect from 29.12.2021.

Bro. Dismas Ikachuli is transferred from Katani Community and is appointed in Mwakata Community with effect from 10.01.2022.

Bro. Justine Wanjala is transferred from SFS Junior Seminary Community and is appointed in Agururu community with effect from 20.01.2022.

DEPARTURE FROM THE CONGREGATION

John Wakoba who was doing regency in Mwakata community has left the Congregation for good.

We wish him all the best and prayers for his future life.

HOLIDAYS

Fr. Jacob Thekekara:	January 12 – February 28
Fr. Ssentamu Ruthital:	January 19 – February 22
Fr. Johnson Pathiyil:	January 25 – February 17
Fr. Kurian Kollapallil:	January 29 – February 26
Fr. Jomet Kollapallil:	February 06 – March 07

OBITUARY

Mrs. Clementine Wekesa (95), the maternal grandmother of Bro. Collins Simiyu Barasa (Kola), passed away on 27.12.2021.

Mr. Jeremiah Nanalo (22), the cousin brother of Bro. Godwin Nanalo (Kola), passed away on 01.01.2022.

Mrs. Mary Mshani (74), the mother of Fr. Aristides Danda, passed away on 15.01.2022.

Fr. Claude Morel (88) of Franco-Swiss Province passed away on 15.01.2022. He was a General Councillor and General Bursar for several years.

Fr. Sushant Mantri (52) of Pune Province passed away on 16.01.2022.

May God grant them eternal life!



My dear confreres, once again wishing you all a happy feast of our patron St. Francis de Sales, I remain.

Mathew

Father Mathew Thazhathukunnel MSFS
Provincial - East Africa Province



Salesian Thought

"All that is not eternal is not worthy of a thought."