

Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales

Circular

NAGPUR PROVINCE

TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE PROVINCE



MT-16, 2024

23 December 2024

*Merry
Christmas!*

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2025



MSFS PROVINCIALATE

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From the Office of the Provincial

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favours!" (Luke 2:14)



Dear Confreres,

As we come together in joy and gratitude to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I extend to you my warm Christmas greetings. This sacred season invites us to reflect deeply on the profound mysteries of God's love, mercy, and incarnation. Let us take a moment to renew our commitment to live and share the light of Christ by drawing inspirations from the Holy Scriptures, the teachings of St. Francis de Sales, and the vision of Fr. Peter Mermier.

1. The Gift of God's Love: A Call to Gratitude

The birth of Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's love for humanity: **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life"** (John 3:16). St. Francis de Sales reflects this truth beautifully: **"The greatest honor we can give Almighty God is to live happily because of the knowledge of His love."** As we celebrate this gift of love, let us foster a spirit of gratitude, recognizing God's blessings in our lives and sharing His love generously with others.

2. The Humility of the Incarnation: A Call to Simplicity

Jesus chose to enter the world in the humblest of circumstances—a manger in Bethlehem. This profound humility challenges us to embrace simplicity and reject the allure of pride and materialism. Fr. Peter Mermier reminds us: **"Let us love what God wills; let us will what God loves."** May we reflect Christ's humility in our daily lives, serving others selflessly and finding joy in simplicity.

3. The Light of Christ: A Call to Witness

In a world often overshadowed by darkness, Christ's birth brings the light of hope and salvation. **"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light"** (Isaiah 9:2). St. Francis de Sales encourages us: **"Be who you are and be that well, so that you may bring honour to the Master Craftsman whose handiwork you are."** As missionaries and disciples, let us recommit to being bearers of this light, sharing the Gospel with courage and compassion, especially among those most in need of hope.

This Christmas, as we celebrate the Word made flesh, may we be filled with the peace, joy, and love that only Christ can give. Let us also recommit to the vision of Fr. Mermier by deepening our missionary zeal, renewing our faith, and working tirelessly for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

May the blessings of the Holy Child of Bethlehem shine upon you and your families, filling your hearts with His boundless love and peace.

I WISH YOU ALL
A MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
A GRACE-FILLED NEW YEAR 2025



Formation Forum Meeting

The Formation Forum meeting was held on 7th and 8th December 2024 at the MSFS Provincialate, Nagpur. Fr. Sandeep Tirkey, Provincial Councilor in charge of Formation formally welcomed Rev. Fr. Manoj Tirkey our Provincial Superior and the resource person, Fr. Marcel OFM Cap.



The first day began with a solemn Eucharistic celebration by Fr. Marcel. He stressed the point that a formation program is very basic of all ministries and it is a noble task to prepare someone for divine functions. It is a life giving ministry and not an income generating ministry.

Fr. Marcel gave three talks which was followed by a discussion of an hour. In the first talk he dealt on the topic, “Discovering our identity as priests, religious and formators.” In the second talk he highlighted the role of formators, their challenges and difficulties.

In the third talk he dwelt on affectivity blessing and challenges in formation. He also referred to the Church documents - the spirit of Lumen Gentium, creative methods of understanding and training formees according to their interests, evangelization in the digital era, and space for falling to become perfect learners.



On the second day, reports of Prakash Bhavan Seminary, Mannarkad, Divya Jyothi Ashram, Lattapara, and Dhyanaashram, Varanasi, were shared by the Rectors and Novice Master. A report of the formation houses of the Mozambique Delegation was also presented. Recruiting of vocations from each region was discussed. Fr. Lalit Tigga shared a few points on ways and means of promoting vocations.

Rev. Fr. Manoj Tirkey in his address thanked the Formation Forum members for their availability. Fr. Provincial informed the members that, according to the new policy at Suvidya, Philosophy studies will span two years, after which students will proceed either to Regency or graduation. He also stated that the Provincial Curia will decide on a suitable arrangement for taking care of the students during their Philosophy and graduation studies. Once again, he stressed that promotion of vocations is everyone's task. He also thanked the formation team for their hard work, dedication and sacrifices in forming our candidates and scholastics. He specially thanked Fr. Sandeep Tirkey for arranging the resource person, making a proper time table and thus making it a successful program. In the end Fr. Sandeep Tirkey thanked all who participated in the meeting and made their contribution for the good of our formation ministry. He wished them the very best in all that they are doing for the growth of our students.

Fr. Vinayanand Katru MSFS

Mission Forum Meeting



The Mission Forum Meeting was held on the 11th and 12th December 2024 at the Provincial House, Nagpur. Eighteen members were present for the meeting. The day began with Morning Prayer followed by Mass celebrated by Fr. Manoj Tirkey, the Provincial Superior. He gave an inspiring homily based on the Gospel of the day.

First Session: Fr. Agnelo Fernandes invoked the blessings of God by a hymn and a prayer to the Holy Spirit. He welcomed the members and thanked them for their presence. He then shared three perspectives of the meeting:

- 1) Animation:** By the Vicar General and the Provincial.
- 2) Participation:** We are called to share the happenings at the grass root level. This will help the Provincial Administration to take the right decisions.
- 3) Making Proposals:** After studying them the Provincial Administration will take decisions.

Fr. Agnelo welcomed Fr. Manoj by presenting him with a sapling. Then Fr. Peter Dominic read the minutes of the previous forum meeting. The minutes were approved by the members. The resource person, **Fr. Anthony D'Souza, V.G. of Nagpur Archdiocese** was welcomed by Fr. Manoj who presented him with a shawl and a sapling.

Fr. Anthony gave his talk on the topic – **Pastoral Challenges in Today's World and How to Face Them**. He invited the participants to move from Maintenance Mode to Missionary Mode; to Walk Together; to create other

leaders; to have a Strategic Planning. We have to learn how to face the challenges that we priests in India face. Sometime was given for clarification and questions.

Second Session: Reports of the new upcoming missions were read – Badadugapur, Kandore, Bano, Darkona and Ambad. After each report time was given for any clarification.

Third Session: Reports from other mission stations were read – Ambapani, Neemuch, Panderpali and Sini. Then Fr. Robin gave a brief history of the mission in Germany and especially about the new center we will soon be taking over. It is a Marian Shrine and a pilgrimage center in Regensburg Diocese.

Fourth Session: Matters not completed in the previous session were taken up. A report on Parish Mission Preaching was read and certain clarifications were made. Then Fr. Agnelo shared certain points regarding celebration of the Eucharist. The Bishops and the Parish Priests are the Guardians of the Liturgy. In 2017 the Holy Father gave certain directions for change and different Dioceses have given directives for liturgical celebrations. We are called to follow the directives given by the Universal Church as well as those laid down by the local Bishops' Conferences.

The day ended with Adoration followed by dinner.

Thursday, 12 December 2024

The day began with Morning Prayer followed by Mass celebrated by Fr. Marianus Kujur.

Fifth Session: It began with a hymn and a prayer invoking the blessings of the Holy Spirit. Then the Provincial Superior was invited to animate and give his instructions to the forum members. He thanked Fr. Agnelo the PCIC of Mission for planning and preparing for the meeting. He thanked all the members present for taking time out to participate in the meeting. He then focused his sharing on the following points:

1) Fransalian Pastoral Attitudes: He read out and gave a brief explanation on each of the twenty-five points.

2) Pastoral Planning: He said that after understanding the needs of our people we can draw up a Pastoral Plan. He proposed four regions – Santhal Pargana, Tribal Areas, Marathawada and Vidarbha, other areas. A well-defined plan will help us to animate various programs.

3) Vision for the Parish: The priests need to take personal initiative and give maximum service.

4) Goals: Need to have short, middle and long term goals.

5) Healthy Relationship with the Bishop: Need to visit him on various occasions and seek his guidance.

6) Other Points: Need to have inter-parish collaboration, spiritual renewal of the parish, be a praying team, certain dos and don'ts in order to inspire the people we are sent to serve.

7) Celebration of the Jubilee Year 2025: We will follow the instructions given by the Local Ordinary.

Sometime was given for questions and clarifications of doubts.

Sixth Session: Fr. Agnelo gave a few more instructions regarding celebration of the liturgy. He asked the members to read the book on the Liturgy brought out by the CCBI. He then invited Fr. Melroy to share briefly about **Fransalian Associates (F.A.)**. The role of the Parish Priest and other priests in the parish is important in beginning and continuing the F.A. Fr. Melroy gave a brief understanding of how to begin and what we need to do later to prepare the people to commit themselves to this movement. We need to follow the Guidelines for F.A. and the syllabus. The members clarified certain doubts and made certain proposals.



Fr. Agnelo then highlighted certain **Takeaways** that would help the members to improve the quality of their functioning in the Parish. The members then made a few observations and proposals. Then Fr. Melroy the Secretary of the Mission Forum gave the **Vote of Thanks**. He concluded by wishing everyone a **Very Happy Christmas and Happy New Year 2025** and wished them a safe journey back to their places of work. The Angelus was said and the members moved to the dining room for lunch.

Fr. Melroy Almeida MSFS

INAUGURATION OF OUR LADY OF COMPASSION CHURCH **MARIAM NAGAR, BARADURGAPUR**



In 2014 the Baradurgapur Mission in Jharkhand was handed over to the MSFS of Nagpur Province by Bishop Julius Marandi. This year the MSFS confreres had the Decennial celebration of the mission. The confreres felt the need for a Church in Baradurgapur to gather the communities under one roof and have a proper place to worship God. It was a long cherished dream and today we have one of the biggest Churches in the Diocese of Dumka.

The Inception

The faithful in Bardurgapur faced many challenges. The long distance to St. Fatima Church, Mundli made it difficult for the people to attend regular liturgical celebrations and participate in the parish activities. The people in Baradurgapur have a profound and deep faith, therefore, they were in need of a closer, more accessible place to celebrate Holy Mass and have other liturgical celebrations.

Embracing Challenges

Building a Church in Baradurgapur required careful planning and collective effort. The project began with the support of many benefactors both local and international. The main sponsor Fr. Robin MSFS and his parishioners in Germany played a key role along with other generous contributions. Under the guidance of Fr. K.V. Joseph MSFS, the project coordinator, the construction of the Church moved forward in phases. Despite numerous challenges, their resolve never wavered. The project took nearly four years to complete.

The Church design features stained glass windows with images from the Old Testament and the New Testament. On the left side above the windows pictures of different Saints are put and on the right side pictures of Indian Saints. Inside the Church the statues of Mother Mary and St. Joseph are placed as spiritual guardians. At the entrance on the top of the Church the statue of Our Lady of Compassion is placed, symbolizing grace and mercy. The beauty of the Altar invokes the presence of God. This sacred place with its intricate designs and serene atmosphere gives all who enter an experience and a deep sense of Divine presence and peace.

The Inauguration

The Church was inaugurated on 30th November 2024, by Rev. Fr. Manoj Tirkey MSFS, Provincial Superior of Nagpur Province. It was blessed by Rt. Rev. Julius Marandi, Bishop of Dumka Diocese. Many confreres, priests, sisters, local benefactors and well-wishers participated in this event thus celebrating faith, unity and the realization of a long cherished dream.

A Joyful Event

This joyful occasion was marked with a lot of celebrations. The faithful actively participated in the inauguration ceremony under the guidance of our confreres and Fr. Simon Murmu a diocesan priest, who led the choir. The faithful indeed worked very hard to make this day a memorable one. The happiness seen on the faces of the people was overwhelming. The faithful celebrated this joyful day with deep gratitude to the Lord.



Looking Forward to the Future
The Church journey does not end with its inauguration. The future plans include building a Grotto, setting up a solar system for electrical needs and continuing to support the community.

Fr. Biraj Minz Msfs

LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE FOR SISTERS CONVENT AND TEACHERS QUARTERS



On 22nd November 2024, a significant milestone in the development of St. Francis de Sales School, Seraikella, was achieved with the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone for the new convent and teachers quarters. It will be one of the memorials of the Silver Jubilee of the School. The event held in the School premises was attended by the confreres and the staff of our schools in Sini and Seraikella. This event marks the beginning of a project aimed at improving the facilities for teachers and a house for the Sisters on the campus itself.

The foundation stone was laid by Rev. Fr. Manoj Tirkey, Provincial Superior of Nagpur Province. A prayer for the success of the project was offered, symbolizing hope and unity among the stakeholders. The new buildings for the Sisters and the teachers demonstrates the commitment of the School Management to support its collaborators in the field of education. The construction is expected to be completed by December 2025. It will certainly have a significant and a positive impact on the retention of teachers and their satisfaction. This initiative is a testament to the School's vision for holistic development and its dedication to fostering a thriving academic environment.

Fr. Albin Joseph

ONGOING FORMATION PROGRAM - "A CALL TO TRANSFORMATION"



The Ongoing-Formation program for the confreres ordained between 2014-2016 was held from November 12 to 14, 2024, at the Cluny Provincialate in Trichy, Tamil Nadu. This update program with the theme "A Call to Transformation," aimed to help these young confreres to be rooted in their priestly formation which is a foundational principle for consecrated living. Three days of fruitful and productive sessions were organized to cater to this need.

On the first day, November 12, 2024, the program commenced with an inaugural Eucharistic celebration, presided by Rev. Fr. Patrick Jayaraj MSFS, the Provincial Superior of South-East India Province. It was followed by a formal inauguration of the event, where Fr. Saji George MSFS, General Secretary for Formation, welcomed the participants. Fr. Patrick Jayaraj MSFS delivered the inaugural address, emphasizing on the importance of ongoing formation in the lives of religious personnel. The participants also received a video message from the Superior General, offering words of exhortation and encouragement. The first day's sessions focused on psycho-sexual integration, led by Rev. Fr. Mathew OFM. The sessions explored the importance of integrating one's psycho-sexual identity, and how this integration can lead to an authentic and holistic living. He emphasized that one needs to care for one's body so as to have good mediation, prayer and rosary. The body and spirituality are connected through our five senses.

On the second day, November 13, 2024, during sessions 1 and 2, canonical updates were given to the participants, particularly on Book VI of the Code of Canon Law, by Rev. Fr. Merlin Ambrose. He focused on providing the recent updates on Book VI as well as offering canonical clarifications on related matters. The objective of these sessions was to enhance the participants' understanding of the canonical aspects governing the Church. He spoke about delicts against the 6th Commandments and its safeguarding. Everyone has to safeguard minors and the vulnerable using the universal law. He also explained the aspect of human life and liberty mentioned in Canon Law 1398. The remaining sessions on the same day focused on the pastoral challenges from a civil perspective. Sr. Selvi FSAG was the resource person and she explained the possible pastoral challenges from the civic angle. These sessions aimed to equip the participants with a deeper understanding of the legal aspects influencing pastoral ministry and also prudence in dealing with people.

On the third and final day, November 14, 2024, Pastoral Leadership was the main theme for the first two sessions. These sessions, led by Rt. Rev. Singarayan, the Emeritus Bishop of Salem aimed to prepare the participants with effective leadership skills, emphasizing on the importance of servant-leadership in pastoral ministry. He emphasized God's mission as our mission and Evangelization today means taking Jesus to the people. He noted that there are priorities for a missionary citing the example of St. John Mary Vianney. The Bishop also gave a few Biblical models of authority. He explained about the eight pillars of servant leadership for a religious priest.

The final two sessions centered on the theme 'Pastoral Concerns - A Feminine Perspective' by Sr. Metti SCC. The resource person offered feminine perspective aiming to raise awareness about the specific challenges faced by women in pastoral ministry and to promote a more inclusive and compassionate approach to pastoral care. The program came to end with tea. On the following day, 15th November 2024, a pilgrimage to Velankanni was organized.

Fr. Peter Thomas MSFS

SALESIAN PROGRAMME ANNECY 2024

The Salesian Programme Anancy (SPA) 2024 began on September 28th. There were eight participants for the programme. All the participants landed at Geneva airport on 28th September and we were given a warm welcome by Fr. Samuel the Director of SPA. He took us to the Franco-Swiss Provincial House in Anancy. We were accommodated at the Diocesan Pastoral Centre. We began the SPA programme with a Salesian Retreat. The venue for the retreat was at the convent of the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod. It was a personalized retreat and each day we were given different Salesian meditation points for our reflection. The personalized retreat was a beautiful experience for me as this retreat helped me to comprehend the Salesian meditations in a deeper manner.

After the retreat we started our classes on Salesian Spirituality. We dealt with various topics on Salesian Spirituality both from The Introduction to Devout Life and The Treaties on the Love of God. On every Saturday we had a very special programme called, "In the footsteps of St. Francis de Sales". We visited the places related to St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Peter Mermier. It was indeed a unique experience as I had an opportunity to witness the legacy of Salesian Spirituality. On every Sunday we had the opportunity to go to different parishes where our confreres are serving. We joined in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It was an amazing experience, as I came to know more about how the liturgy is conducted and about the faith of the people, by interacting with them.

On every Monday we were taken to all the places that are very significant for us Fransalians, such as the birthplace of St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Peter Mermier and the Churches where they were Baptized and Ordained. It was also a wonderful opportunity for me to visit the Chablais Mission, the Cathedral in Geneva, as St. Francis de Sales was the Bishop of Geneva, and all the other places where St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Peter Mermier worked. It was indeed a blessing to visit Thorens, the birthplace of St. Francis de Sales and Chaumont, the birthplace of Fr. Peter Mermier and where his family lived. It was also a great honour to meet the great grand niece and nephew of Fr. Peter Mermier.

It was a great platform to learn extensively about St. Francis de Sales, Fr. Peter Mermier, the Legacy of our Congregation and Salesian Literature. We also got the opportunity to see the original copies of The Introduction to the Devout Life and the Treatises on the Love of God, written by St. Francis de Sales and preserved in the Visitation Monastery in Annecy. All these experiences helped me to comprehend better and deeper the richness of Salesian Spirituality and our Congregation. I thank Fr. Manoj Tirkey, the Provincial Superior and Fr. Henry Nedumkallel, the Delegation Superior of Mozambique for giving me this opportunity to attend Salesian Programme Annecy 2024.

Fr. Ruben Gilbert

PERPETUAL VOWS AND DIACONATE ORDINATIONS **IN MOZAMBIQUE DELEGATION**



On November 23rd 2024 at 6.00 pm a deeply meaningful and joyous occasion unfolded at Our Lady of Fatima Church, Muliquele, Mozambique. Rt. Rev. Inacio Lucas, the Bishop of Gurue Diocese celebrated a special Mass. The highlight of the evening was the solemn ceremony in which **Brother Egidio Abel and Brother Lona Christian** made their Perpetual Profession, marking a lifelong commitment to religious life. The vows were received by Fr. George, the Provincial Delegate, who guided the brothers through the sacred ritual, in which they pledged obedience, chastity, and poverty, dedicating their lives entirely to God and the Church. The godparents of both brothers also participated in this significant occasion, offering their support and prayers as they witnessed the brothers they had guided in their spiritual journey take this important step in their vocation.

The following day, the celebration continued with even greater joy as the newly perpetually professed brothers, along with five diocesan brothers, were ordained Deacons, in a meaningful liturgical service which began at 09.00 am. Through the laying on of hands and the prayer of ordination, Bishop Inacio Lucas bestowed upon them the grace and responsibility of the Diaconate. This marked a significant step in their spiritual journey, as they were now called to serve the Church in various ministries, including assisting in the celebration of the Eucharist, preaching, and performing works of charity.



The participation of MSFS confreres, diocesan priests and seminarians, religious priests and sisters, family members of Deacon Egidio, friends and benefactors enriched the solemnity and joy of the occasion. Their presence was a powerful testament to the unity and strength of the Fransalian family, offering prayers and support for the seminarians as they embarked on their ministerial journey. Their involvement underscored the deep bonds of faith that unite us all in service to the Church and God's people.

After Mass, a fraternal meal was shared by all, strengthening the ties of the community and offering an opportunity to celebrate in fellowship this special occasion. For the Delegation, this was a moment of great pride and joy. As we welcomed two new members into the religious community, we celebrated not only their commitment to the Church but also the expanding strength of the Delegation family. As a Congregation, we rejoice in these moments of grace and continue to pray for the newly ordained Deacons Egidio and Lona as they begin their ministry, trusting that they will serve God and His people with commitment and love.

Fr. Jins Karakkadayil MSFS

APPROVALS

Bro. Febin Tom and Bro. Abhijeet Bhengra have been approved for final vows and for the order of diaconate.

LET US PRAY FOR THE DEPARTED

Mr. Francis Eknath Ruptake, 68 years, the brother of Fr. Marcus Ruptake, who passed away on 13th November 2024.

Mrs. Annamma, 98 years, the grandmother of Fr. Manu, who passed away on 15th November, 2024.

Mrs. Annamma, 73 years, the mother of Fr. Anil George and Fr. Anish George, who passed away on 28th November, 2024.

Mr. Satish, 46 years, the nephew-in-law of Fr. Peter Paul, who passed away 28th November, 2024.

Mr. Ravi Aikarakayil, 75 years, the brother-in-law of Fr. Sebastian, who passed away on 29th November, 2024.

Fr. Umesh Tigga, 32 years, the nephew of Fr. Roshan Tigga, who passed away on 02nd December, 2024.

Mr. Pushparaj, 82 years, the father of Fr. Bosco, who passed on 07th December 2024.

Mr. Varghese, the maternal grandfather of Fr. Anish Praveen, who passed away on 16th December 2024.

SALESIAN THOUGHT

*“Perfection does not consist in being perfect or acting perfectly.
It is the striving for perfection that is important”*

Yours Fraternally in Christ



Fr. Manoj Tirkey
Provincial Superior

