



MISSIONARIES OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES

SOUTH-WEST INDIA PROVINCE

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SWIP Circular TK/23

December 2024

My dear Confreres,



The season of Advent is almost done, the time of preparation and anticipation is getting over, and we are ready to commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christmas is essentially a love story, the story that tells how God loved the world that He sent His only Son as a helpless, needy little child, telling the human race

thereby, “This is love that I give to you. Now open your hearts, take him and share him with others.” It is not without reason that the great German mystic Angelus Silesius once said: **“Christ could be born a thousand times in Bethlehem – but all in vain until He is born in me.”**

Openness and humility are the prerequisites for Christ to be born in one’s heart. It was their openness that made the shepherds of Bethlehem and the Magi to seek and find the Saviour. It was their humility that made them to recognize God in the Child in the manger. Christmas is an invitation to be open and humble in order to discover Jesus in the most unlikely places and in the most distasteful people. The message of Christmas is that we can truly find Jesus if we look in the right places, as inconspicuous as our own home or place of work. We need to look for Him in people that we might otherwise ignore: the homeless, the sick, the unpleasant people, or the people of different cultures and lifestyles from us. God challenges us to be like the shepherds who overcame their fear in order to seek out Jesus, or like the Wise Men who travelled a long distance to find Him.

Finding Jesus opens up ways of sharing Him with others, just as God shared His Son with us. Let us remember that the angels wished peace on earth only to those “people of goodwill,” those able to receive that peace, who possessed the goodwill and largeness of heart to share Jesus, our Saviour, with others in love, kindness, mercy, forgiveness and humble service. May this Christmas 2024 become such an experience for all of us!

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SILVER JUBILEE OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE MISSION IN CHAD

As we have just concluded the silver jubilee celebrations of the start of our Chad mission, this circular would be a Chad-Special. It is indeed a time to express our gratitude to God and celebrate with a sense of pride and satisfaction of a step taken over a quarter of a century ago, by a pioneering team of three, embarking on a journey of trust, service, and commitment to spreading God's love in the Fransalian way in the West-central part of the beautiful, yet challenging continent of Africa.



The triggering point for the venture of South-West India Province to open an overseas mission in Tchad-Cameroon goes back to the year 1994 when Msgr. Michel Russo, the then Bishop of Doba, during one of his several visits to India, looking for missionaries for his new diocese, met Fr. Emile Mayoraz, the then superior General, in Nagpur and personally extended his invitation for MSFS missionaries to his diocese, which he further repeated several times. In 1996 the general council decided to accept the invitation and asked the South-West province in India to pioneer the new mission in Doba as well as in Francophone Africa. The very idea of opening an MSFS Mission in Chad was inspired by a larger vision of the Congregation to extend its mission and apostolate to the entire Francophone region in Africa.

Fr. Thomas Cherukat, the then provincial, and Fr. Mathew Kozhuppakalam visited Doba from 18th October to 2nd November 1997 and presented a report favouring the taking up of a mission there. After a long period of reflection and consultation, the province was able to form a pioneering team of three volunteers in 1998 consisting of Fr. Antony Mookenthottam of happy memories, Fr. Thomas Payattukandathil and Fr. Jose Puthiaparambil (Jr.). Fr. Thomas Payattukandathil and Fr. Jose after a few months of French course in Fribourg arrived in Doba on 12th November 1999 and were joined by Fr. Antony Mookenthottam on 16th November, paving the way for the opening of the first-ever MSFS Mission in Chad. With the realization that the MSFS presence in Chad will not have its desired results unless the mission is immediately extended to the neighbouring countries like Cameroon, Central Africa and the two Congos considering the geo-political realities of the entire region, Fr. Thomas Cherukat, the then

provincial, and late Fr. Antony Mookenthottam, the coordinator of the Francophone MSFS Mission, made a first visit to Yaounde, the capital of Cameroun on 18th February 2000 and met the Archbishop of Yaounde. Fr. Thomas Cherukat, who along with Fr. Antony Mookenthottam arrived in Yaounde on 19th November 2000. After around six months of temporary residence with the community of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Nkolbisson while pursuing a French language course as well as systematic preparation and exploration in and around Yaounde, Fr. Thomas was able to find a suitable house for rent, named it as “Maison Pierre Mermier” was inaugurated on 29th June 2000. Fr. Jose Parappillil, realizing the need for a sufficient number of young and dynamic confreres joining this mission, took the bold decision of sending five newly ordained confreres to this mission and this house accommodated the new missionaries from India consisting of Fr. Saji Vadakkedathu, Fr. Binoy Kidangathkarot, Fr. Jaison Pezhathinal, Fr. Regi Narikunnel and Fr. Viju Kunnathottel who arrived in Yaounde on 22nd July 2001. After completing the five-month course they left for Chad on 28th December 2001. The house in Yaounde served as a transit house for several missionaries who succeeded the pioneering batches. It also served as a house of initial formation for the candidates from Cameroon.

On this momentous occasion, as we celebrate the silver jubilee of our arrival in Chad, we should not be oblivious to the manifold difficulties our pioneering missionaries had to undergo in shaping the mission of Christ there. With no electricity, hardly any means of communication, an extremely hot climate, frequent attacks of Malaria, having to learn French as well as the local dialect, and adapting to new cultural differences, not to mention the animus socio-political atmosphere, they had to draw deep from their faith and passion for the mission. Through their strong determination, remarkable adaptability in the face of every form of adversity, and a profound sense of purpose, they triumphed over every challenge, gave shape to a proud legacy that is flourishing today and touched the lives of thousands that they came across while bringing the good news to them.

For the past twenty-five years, we have been accustomed to growing up in our Province with narratives of how the Congregation was planted in the soil of Chad and how the missionary zeal and commitment of our pioneering missionaries took the congregation to several other parts of Chad and Cameroon and what struggle they had to undergo for the sake of the Mission of Christ. In fact, the rest of the Congregation has watched with joy and pride the unparalleled growth of the congregation in Chad and Cameroon, first under the pioneering spirit of Fr. Antony Mookenthottam, then under the daring leadership of Fr. Thomas Cherukat, followed by the dynamic animation of Fr. Joshy Nellimalamattam, who handed over the post of Mission Superior to Fr. Manoj Arackal. This mission was raised to the status of a delegation on 30th September 2018 with Fr. Manoj Arackal as the first Delegation Superior, who with his astute leadership, passion for the Chad-Cameroon mission, and amiable and large-hearted relationship with the confreres, has ensured that the Chad-Cameroon delegation flourishes like the mustard tree that Jesus spoke of. Today, the Chad-Cameroon delegation has 23 priests, 4 deacons, 07 perpetually professed scholastics, and 33 in temporary vows. It is not just the legacy of an exceptional missionary spirit alone that the Chad-Cameroon missionary venture is remembered for today, but the MSFS engaged all over the world have learned from our pioneering missionaries the spirit of openness in taking up challenging new mission territories and centres keeping alive the exemplary missionary spirit of our pioneers.

A detailed account of the jubilee celebration with pictures will be made available through the

SWIP News soon. The jubilee celebration consisted of a series of events like the blessing of the newly constructed school and boarding in Ngaundere, the inauguration of the new novitiate in Ngaundere, the laying of foundation stones for a PU College and a tailoring centre in Gaki, the perpetual profession of Six brothers and as the culmination of the celebrations the thanksgiving mass presided over by the bishop of Doba, during which three of our scholastics were ordained deacons. Several dignitaries were present for the entire celebrations including Fr. Le Tue, the provincial of Franco-Swiss Province, the MSAF Superiors, Fr. Elias, the Bursar of the Stift at Klosterneuburg, along with three Austrians connected with several of our projects. Our sincere thanks to Fr. Manoj Arackal, the delegation Superior, and all the members of the delegation for leaving no stone unturned in order to make the celebrations a memorable one. I also place on record our gratitude to all our benefactors and agencies, whose generosity has made much of our efforts bear fruits. To be specially mentioned are Fr. Le Tue, the Provincial of Franco-Swiss Province, and his predecessors who have taken a special interest in our Chad-Cameroon mission and have been very generous in supporting several of our projects, Fr. James Manjackal who has found the financial resources for both the minor seminary and the novitiate, Fr. Mathew Kozhupakalam, Fr. Jaison Pezhathinal, and several others whose contributions only Fr. Manoj would know, etc.

As we celebrate the silver jubilee of the implantation of our missionary presence in this land, let us be reminded of the essential fact that mission is the call to go forth and also to be sent, to go out of ourselves: our Church Compounds, rituals and rites, our divisiveness and discriminatory attitudes, our preferences and prejudices, our yearning for settled comforts and dislike for the challenging and the unknown, our arrogance and aggressiveness, our hate and violence. The journey that began 25 years ago may continue to inspire us towards deeper communion, fuller participation and greater openness to fulfilling our mission in the world. May we continue to be beacons of hope and agents of positive change for those we serve, embodying the Gospel message through the teachings of our Patron, St. Francis de Sales. Let us be inspired by the example of our Founder, Fr. Peter Mermier, and our pioneering missionaries first to India, then to all other parts of the world, more especially to Chad-Cameroon.

DELEGATE TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Since Fr. Thomas Cherukat, one of the elected delegates of our province to the General Chapter 2025, expressed his inability to participate in the General Chapter due to health reasons, with the consent of our Superior General, the provincial council has nominated **Fr. Santhosh Kumar**, the first substitute, to be the delegate to the General Chapter in the place of Fr. Cherukat.

OPENING OF A NEW MISSION STATION IN THE APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF TAYTAY, PALAWAN.

In follow-up to the decision made at the Delegation Colloquium during the provincial's visitation on 17th October 2023, to expand our mission to other dioceses in the Philippines, two of our confreres, namely Frs. Praful Tigga and Roberto Batohinog, are already rendering their service at St. Joseph husband of Mary station Brgy haHlsey, Culion, Palawan in the Apostolic Vicariate of Taytay, Palawan.

VISITATION OF OUR SUPERIOR GENERAL TO THE MSFS PHILIPPINE DELEGATION



The MSFS Philippine Delegation of the Southwest India Province was blessed with the canonical visitation of the Superior General, Rev. Fr. Abraham Vettuvélil, from October 8 to 15, 2024.

Fr. General made it a priority to visit all five communities, meet each member personally, and spend meaningful time with them. He also led the Delegation Colloquium. During his visit, he emphasized the importance of revitalizing individual confreres and nurturing the religious spirit in local communities. He highlighted the vital role of local superiors in shaping community life and advancing the Fransalian mission through a collaborative, community-centred approach.

Though short, it was a time of grace and joy, offering an opportunity for personal and communal renewal, a chance to reconnect with our foundational spirit as Fransalian religious communities, and a time to strengthen our bonds of fraternity.

DELEGATION SUPERIOR OF THE PHILIPPINE DELEGATION



At the expiry of the first term of Fr. Jundie Sumagaysay as the delegation Superior of Philippines, with the permission of our Superior General, the members of the delegation were consulted and with the approval of our Superior General and with the consent of the Provincial Council, Fr. Jundie Sumagaysay was appointed for a second term of three years as the delegation superior of Philippine Delegation with effect from 6th December 2024. And in the presence of all our confreres Fr. Jundie assumed his second term during a concelebrated Holy mass.



REFERENDUM ON THE QUESTION OF A POSSIBLE DIVISION OF SWI PROVINCE

The study of the text to enlighten the dynamics of a possible division of the SWI Province is complete and the referendum will be conducted in the second week of January 2025.

THE NEW OFFICIAL NUMBER FOR THE PROVINCIAL SECRETARY

The Office of the Provincial Secretary now has a permanent mobile number for official use. Please take note of the following:

+91 8123047728

Kindly save this number on your mobile and use it for any official correspondence and communication.

TRANSFER AND APPOINTMENTS:

- ⇒ **Fr. Jiji Manjackal** is appointed as Superior of the MSFS House and in Charge of the Social Action, the “Mermier Children’s Welfare Mission Centre” in Cavite.
- ⇒ **Fr. Romnick S. Civico** is appointed as the community member and the procurator of the MSFS House in Cavite along with his present responsibilities.

INFORMATION

- ◆ **Fr Joe Cherolickal** was designated for the pastoral ministry in the diocese of Augsburg and left for Germany on the 26th of August 2024.
- ◆ Six of our brothers—**Bros. Chidjo Djoko Bertrand Armand, David Shinyuy, Djoitanan Paulin, Engelbert Nga Modo, Melchisedek Nsoyuka Mbinkar, and Valentin Chimi Nzesseu**—belonging to the Chad-Cameroon Delegation, made their perpetual profession in our congregation on 22nd November 2024. Congratulations, dear brothers, on your courageous decision to say "YES" to the Lord!
- ◆ **Bros. Engelbert Nga Modo, David Shinyuy, and Valentin Chimi Nzesseu** were ordained as deacons on 23rd November 2024. Congratulations, dear deacons, on this significant step in your journey of service to God and His people.
- ◆ **Fr. Tito Puthuparambil** has submitted his doctoral thesis and is waiting for a date of his defence. He joins the community at Ulikkal until a regular appointment at the time of transfers and appointments.
- ◆ **Fr. Joshy Thumpechirayil** secured first rank and was awarded a gold medal in M.Sc. Visual Communication from SRM University, Chennai. Congratulations, dear Fr. Joshy!



ORDO 2025

Our Ordo for the year 2025 has been dispatched to all the communities in India. If anyone has not yet received it, kindly inform the provincial secretary. In this regard, I would like to thank very specially **Fr Thomas Kanat**, for the enormous time spent, and the meticulous care he has taken to bring out the Ordo 2025.

Hearty Welcome

Two of our confreres, Fr. James Mukalel and Fr. Anil Thondampallil, have returned to India after their pastoral service in Germany and Austria.



Fr. James Mukalel completed 37 years of ministry in Germany and was especially honoured with the unique title "Geistliche Beirat" for his years of committed and dedicated service in the Diocese of Augsburg as a member of the MSFS. He also got a charitable society civilly registered so that all the provinces can benefit from tax exemption and served with distinction as the President of this Society till last year. He has taken numerous initiatives and found sponsors to support several projects in our province. I thank Fr James and welcome him back to the province. He will be given an appointment after some time of holidays and treatment.

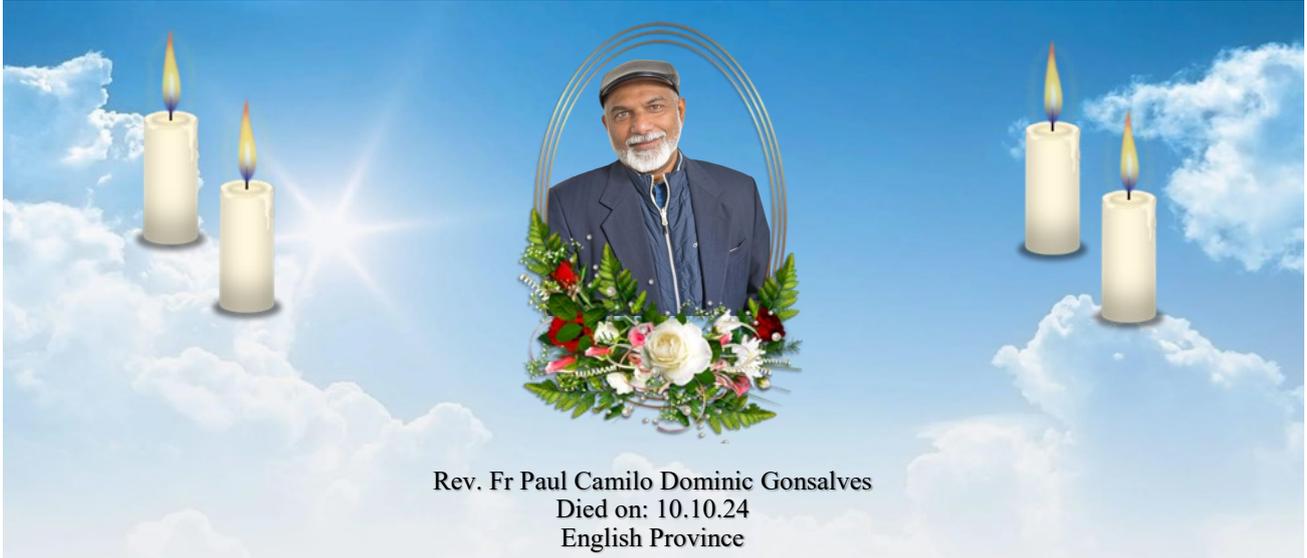


Fr Anil Thondampallil was engaged in hospital chaplaincy in Austria for close to four years. He was tremendously appreciated for his simplicity, availability and commitment. We thank Fr Anil and welcome him back to the province. Fr. Anil joins the community at Kattappana until he is given a regular appointment at the time of transfers and appointments.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- ♦ **The Province Retreat** for the second batch will be held from 13th to 17th January 2025 at Charis Bhavan Retreat Centre, Athirampuzha. All those who did not attend the first retreat are obliged to participate.
- ♦ **The Feast of Our Patron** is approaching. Kindly conduct the preparatory novena from 15th January and celebrate the feast meaningfully, ensuring that we are rejuvenated in his spirit and spirituality.
- ♦ **The XXI General Chapter 2025** will be held from 1st to 14th February 2025 at Stella Maris, M.S.F.S. Provincialate, Visakhapatnam. Let us fervently pray for its success and the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout the proceedings.

OBITUARY



- ◆ Mrs. Mary Jose Kulamkombil (68), he paternal aunt of Fr. Binu Edathumparambil.
- ◆ Mrs. Mary Simon Puliamparabil (81), the maternal aunt of Fr. Majish Vallisserikettil.
- ◆ Mrs. Thresiamma (75), the beloved mother of Fr. Cyriac Ummikuzhiyil
- ◆ Mrs. Pennamma Kottoor (86), the grandmother of Fr. Vijin Kottoor and the elder sister of Fr. Augustin Tharappel (USA Vice-Province).
- ◆ Mr. George Thomas (Joy) 76, the beloved Father of Fr. Saji Eanthanamkuzhiyil.
- ◆ Mrs. Nenita Masendo, the beloved mother of Fr. Nathaniel Masendo.
- ◆ Mrs. Thresiamma Jerome (63), the Sister-in-law of Fr. Jacob Parappally.
- ◆ Mr Joseph Thottiyil, the elder brother of Fr Mathew Thottiyil.
- ◆ Mrs. Alice Joseph (71), the beloved mother of Fr. Riju Vazheparambil.
- ◆ Mr. Thomas Devasya (90), the elder brother of Fr Abraham Pandanam.
- ◆ Mr. Madalaimuthu (70), the maternal uncle of Fr. Doraiswamy D.
- ◆ Mrs. Pennamma Philp (91), the beloved mother of Fr. Joshy Thazhathukunnel.
- ◆ Mr. Varkey Ben George (25), the grandnephew of Fr. Thomas Cherukat
- ◆ Mrs. Lizy John Aranjani (68), the sister-in-law of Fr. Paul Aranjani
- ◆ Mrs. Annamma Vellakada (95), the paternal aunt of Fr Sen Vellakada.

PROVINCIAL'S PROGRAMME

09 January 2025	Suvidya Governing Body Meeting, PIF Meeting, Suvidya College
13 -17 January 2025	Province Retreat at Charis Bhavan, Kerala
24 January 2025	Feast of St. Francis de Sales, Vinayalaya
31 st January to 15 th February	General Chapter, Visakhapatnam

VOICE OF SFS



God has destined everything for his love as the end of all things.

Fraternally,

**Fr Thomas Kalariparambil, MSFS
Provincial Superior**

