



Editorial

Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher and theologian, narrates a story which has a relevant message for us during this Advent and Christmas season! Once upon a time, a king fell in love with a peasant girl. He knew that it was next to impossible for him to marry her, as the kings usually married only someone from the royal families. But this king was so powerful and he knew that he could marry her and get away with it. Then, suddenly, another thought occurred to him. If he married her, there would be always something missing in their relationship because the gap between them would be too great. She would be grateful to him but she would not be able to love him. He thought of abandoning the idea of marrying



her but finally he decided that he would abandon his palace, his riches and his comfort and even his kingship and become a lowly peasant himself in order to make it possible for her to love him. Kierkegaard never told how the story ended whether the girl accepted the king's love or rejected it. But he had two reasons for not telling how the story ended. First and foremost, it was not the point of the story. What was important for him was the king's love for the lowly peasant girl was so great that he renounced everything in order to marry her. The second reason was that this story was still going on. It is the true story of God's love for each one of us. God decided to become one of us in the person of Jesus Christ. This is why St. Paul writes "...though he (Jesus Christ) was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God... but emptied himself, taking on the nature of a servant, made in human likeness and being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:6-8). God's Son is a powerful king who became one of us so that he could love us at our level with self-emptying love. This is the mystery of the Incarnation. As we celebrate Christmas, - the feast of incarnate love, let us share God's love with all, irrespective of their caste, creed, colour or without any discrimination.

In the setting of the Christmas crib, may we learn that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55, 8). May we learn to cultivate God's ways- the way of peace, humility, love, simplicity, kindness and so on.

When Christ is born anew in us, we become Christ-bearers manifesting his love and goodness. Let our communities and families radiate the light and joy of Christmas. Let this Christmas bring us together and keep us together in communion. Angelus Silesius once said: "Even if Christ is born a thousand times in Bethlehem, it is useless, if he is not born in our hearts." So let him be born anew in us.

Fransalian International wishes you all a very happy Christmas and a bright and grace-filled New Year 2018.

**-Dr. K. Henry Jose, MSFS
Chief Editor**

Saint Francis de Sales A Saint so Human

Insight: Gentleness is not Absence of Anger



We are inclined to consider a person as gentle, if he or she does not get angry. Is it really a proof of gentleness? A person may not get angry because he is emotionless. Nothing touches him. Such a person may be apathetic but not gentle. St. Francis de Sales gives a beautiful insight into gentleness: “Gentleness is the cream of charity”. A person may be quick-tempered. Daily, several times he may feel angry within himself. But he never utters an angry word. The cream of charity, tenderness and compassion, make him gentle. Charity overwhelms anger and flows out as gentleness. Anger is aroused. But charity is more powerful. The power of charity calms down

anger and flows out as gentleness. Thus, gentleness is the overflow of charity. It costs but is most rewarding for the offender and the offended. For gentleness, like a balm, soothes both, calms down both. St. Francis de Sales was quick tempered, but he never allowed his temper to burst out. Instead, gentleness flowed out. Gentleness overwhelmed anger. “Blessed are the gentle”.

-Fr Antony Mookenthottam, msfs



As the curtains fall on 2017, Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS) the world over would want to introspect on our fidelity to the Foundational Apostolic Charism bequeathed to us by our Founder, Fr. Mermier, during this year which is declared the MSFS Year of “Social Empowerment through Education and Social Ministries”.

The clarion call, “I want Missions,” encapsulated his Foundational Charism: “To live in a **Community**, to continue Christ’s **Missionary** mandate entrusted to His Church, in the **Spirit and Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales**”.

Docile to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit, our Founder was led to embrace **Ministries of Education and Formation** of the young, as a support to his overriding Foundational Apostolic Charism – Mission Preaching and Pioneering Evangelization.

As for the fledgling MSFS Congregation, in spite of paucity of personnel, lack of finances and of the required professional excellence, Fr. Mermier, the zealous missionary, trusting in providence, responded to the pressing call of the Bishop of Annecy, in the 1850s, to take up the management of the State College of Evian and the Diocesan College of Melan.

The over-riding motive for taking up the management of Evian College, was, in the first place, to provide the required religious education, neglected in State colleges, and further, he expected, thereby, to train Priests for Pastoral ministry in Savoy and Missionaries (Priests and Brothers) with additional skills for pioneering evangelization, overseas.

When the Bishop offered the College of Melan to the MSFS, after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1848, Fr. Mermier accepted the offer stating : “The Missionaries consent to take charge of the College of Melan, hoping from the divine Bounty, the power to discharge it well, though, for the moment, they find it far above their strength. Your Lordship will say a word in this

Mermier Bytes

connection to the clergy gathered together for their retreat so that these latter will not accuse us of having allowed the work of the missions to suffer in order to occupy ourselves with things that they judge less conformable to our vocation.”

Indeed, far from being an invader (as he initially thought he would be), by accepting the management of educational establishments, Fr. Mermier, in fact, would be instrumental in reforming the institution. He had very strong views on the type of education required to respond to the needs of his time.

As for Social Empowerment, Parish visits during Mission preaching exposed to Fr. Mermier the tragic plight of young girls – condemned to illiteracy and consequent exploitation. This is what led him (with Mother Claudine Echernier) to found (in 1838) the Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross. “By their services and life example, these Sisters “set the tone” in their parishes and helped others to come out of their condition of ignorance and poverty. At the time of the death of Claudine Echernier in 1869, there were already 300 Sisters in the Congregation.” (www. <http://sisterscrosschavanod.org/about-us/our-heritage> Historical note p. XI).

At the threshold of 2018, the entire membership of the MSFS Congregation is engaged, at all levels – individual and congregational – in its preparation, through prayerful dialogue and discernment, for the XX General Chapter, February 2019. The focus is on the Call of the Chapter : “**MSFS : Wake up to the Basics**”.

May the inspiration bequeathed from our zealous Founder lead us, like him, not only to conformity to our Foundational Charism, but also, following his example, to revive as he did in his time, through prayerful discernment, the Foundational Education and Social Apostolates, to respond to the needs of our present world thirsting for realization of the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

-Fr Noel Rebello, msfs

Salesian Programme Annecy (SPA)

The SPA is a program aiming at deepening one's knowledge in Salesian spirituality, understanding the history of the foundation of the congregation, and have a personal experience in the life and culture of occidental church. It was framed for 6 weeks from 6 Octobre to 16 November, 2017, at Annecy, organised by Franco-Swiss Province.

There were five confreres from five different provinces who participated the SPA, and they were able to rediscover fundamental aspects of the spirituality of St Francis de sales, our founder Father Peter Marie Mermier and the other salesian families in and around Annecy. The salesian piligrimage was organised to various historical places, such as Thorens, Chablais, Chaumont, Annecy, La Roche-sur-Fonon, not forgetting Ars, where father Mermier went to meet the holy priest, St Jean Marie Viannie.

It is one of the rarest of initiatives of this sort, which has materialised in the history of the congregation. As we know, it's a



herculean task arranging the programmes in different places for six weeks and finding resource persons « who speak English » in France, transportation from place to place etc., Congratulations to Fr. Carron and his team who have done a yeoman service to the SPA 2017.

-Fr Antony Valiaparampil, msfs

New Mission station in Tete, Mozambique

The Mozambique Delegation took the bold decision to work in the diocese of Tete which is in the North. The pioneers, Fr Ranjit and Fr Aajo, moved to Domwe to take up mission work. They were presented to the parishioners on 22nd October. They found the faith of the people in Domwe stronger than that of those living in the South. The people are religious, and they sincerely desired the presence of a priest. The welcome Mass was celebrated on a small stage; the people were standing bare feet on the ground. The dusty wind, the hot sun, the four hour long Eucharistic celebration was not a problem for them. They were happy to receive the new priests and attend the Holy Eucharist. It was a joy to see the number of people receiving Holy Communion. Though poor, the people are ready to forgo anything when a priest is present in their midst., always ready to welcome the Word of God and work for the Kingdom of God. We pray that our Fransalian presence will make a great impact in their minds and hearts and together we may work for the growth of the Kingdom and the glorification of God's name.



New Mission, Sacred Heart & Holy Trinity Midrand, Pretoria (South Africa)

Pretoria is the capital of South Africa. The Archdiocese of Pretoria was erected in 1948, and currently has over 60 parishes served by priests (local and foreign), religious and diocesan. The faithful of Pretoria come from various races, languages and countries.

The parish of Sacred Heart, Midrand, had been served by various priests from neighbouring towns until 1981. The Holy Mass was celebrated for about ten families in school classrooms, garages and make-shift shelters. For years, neighbouring Olifantsfontein was served from Bantule by OMI priests. In 1981 it was decided

that a central parish church should be built to serve this fast growing community of Midrand and land was made available in President Park by the Archdiocese. In September 1985, Fr Mike Lacey, the then parish priest, from the order of Sacred Heart Fathers, was able to secure a loan of R 52, 000.00 from the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Cork, Ireland. This loan gave the small Catholic community exactly what was needed. Following a tremendous fundraising efforts, sufficient funds were available to begin construction of the new church in 1986.



The church was finally completed and named, “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart”, in honour of Our Lady and in tribute to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. It was opened and blessed by His Grace, Archbishop George Daniel, on Tuesday, December 8, 1987, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Years later, the presbytery and parish centre were built with the active participation of the parishioners, donations and loans.

During 2017, when the Sacred Heart Missionaries gave back the parish to the Archdiocese, the current Archbishop, William Slattery OFM, requested the Fransalians to work in his Archdiocese and offered the above parish. Despite the lack of priests in the Region,

the MSFS took up the responsibility of the Parish on September 30, 2017 since Pretoria is a strategically important place and the parish is only 18 km from the Oliver Tambo International airport that serves Sothern Africa and various other countries with its flight services. The parish is blessed with all the required infrastructure and people from all races and cultures. The liturgy is lively and people are involved in various ministries of the church. May St Francis de Sales, our patron, guide our priests entrusted with shepherding the people of God there.

-Fr Praveen Johny Kumbattu, msfs

New SFS Church at Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh

The New church building was blessed and inaugurated at Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh, by Most Rev. John Thomas Kattrukudiyil, on 27 August, 2017, in the presence of Rev. Fr Emmanuel Mappilaparambil, Regional Superior of Dibrugarh Region, Rev. Fr Philip Thomas Kizhakumpurath, Councillor and Admonitor and the faithful. Thanks to Fr Varghese Manickathan and Fr Jojan Plathottathil for completing the construction of SFS Church, Pasighat. The day fulfilled the long cherished desire of the people of God at Pasighat to have a proper place for worship.

-Fr Praveen Johny Kumbattu, msfs



Blessing and Inauguration of Priests' Residence



At the request of the Bishop of Sultanpet diocese, the MSFS have taken up a parish in Kullarayanpalayam, Palakkad, Kerala. The blessing and inauguration of the priests' residence was held on 30th September. Rt. Rev. Bishop Antonyswamy Peter Abir blessed it and it was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. Muthuswamy, the Provincial of Nagpur Province, in the presence of priests, religious and parishioners. After this the Holy Eucharist as celebrated by Bishop Antonyswamy Peter Abir. Fr. Christu Raj of South East India Province is the Parish Priest. There are 178 families in the parish and most of them are farmers. The main ministry is the administering the sacraments, visiting the homes and conducting BCC meetings. It was a long-cherished dream of the parishioners to have a separate parish with a priest's residence; a priest who will be always available for their spiritual and social needs.

This dream has come true with the arrival of the MSFS here. I sincerely thank all those who helped to complete the building. Special thanks to Fr. Jacob K. our former Provincial, who helped

in all the possible ways to build the presbytery. We pray that our presence will make a difference in the lives of our parishioners.

- Fr John Britto Muthuswamy, msfs

Golden Jubilee Celebrations at SFS Seminary, Ettumanoor

SFS Seminary, Ettumanoor, celebrated its Golden Jubilee in all its grandeur on 04 & 05 October 2017. The splendid concluding celebrations were marked with the presence of Rev. Dr. Abraham Vettuvellil, the Superior General, Most Rev. Dr. Sebastian Thekethecheril, Bishop of Vijayapuram, Rev. Fr. Benny Koottanal, Provincial



of SouthWest India Province, Rev. Fr. George Panthamackel, Provincial of North-East India Province, Rev. Fr. Mathew Thazhathukunnel, Provincial of East Africa Province and a large number MSFS confreres. On 04 October at 10.30 am was the informal gathering of the Alumni that took up certain deliberations towards forming an Alumni association for the seminary. The same day, at 3 pm, Golden Jubilee Arch was blessed and inaugurated, which was followed by the office of the dead at the renovated cemetery to pay tribute to the guiding lights of the seminary. During the official inauguration of the Alumni Association at the seminary, Fr. Benny Koottanal, the Provincial Superior, spoke

about the mind of the province in forming an Alumni Association and how it can be a powerful instrument in ensuring collaboration of friends in a larger circle. At 6 pm was the public gathering which was attended by people from different walks of life. The following day, on 05 October Concelebrated thanksgiving Holy Eucharist was presided over by Rt. Rev. Dr. Sebastian Thekkathcheril during which the newly renovated chapel was blessed and opened for prayer and worship. The jubilee celebration was an event to renew the missionary dynamism and the fraternal bond among the members of this traditional house of formation.

- Fr Joby Mattathil, msfs

Blessing and Inauguration of the New School Building, Kengeri

SFS Public School, Kengeri, has achieved another milestone in its pursuit of educational development. The eagerly awaited grand inauguration and blessing of the new school building, together with Desalite Delight, the 5th Annual Day celebrations, were on 24th November, 2017, at the sprawling campus of SFS Public School, Kengeri. The programme commenced at 5.45 pm

with the inauguration of the new school building by Rev. Fr. Benny Koottanal, Provincial and General Manager and HH. Bernhard Backovisky, Prelate, Klosterneuburg, Austria, blessed it. Rev. Fr. Benny Koottanal lighted the ceremonial lamp and delivered the inaugural address. Among the other dignitaries present were Rev. Fr. Anton Hoestlinger, Klosterneuburg; Ms. Sandrine Destouches, Florimont, Geneva; Rev. Fr. Roy Plathottathil, Councilor-in-charge of Education; Provincial councillors, Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and other dignitaries. Rev. Fr. Joy Vazhappillil, Manager, reported how the hard work and planning of 14 years have come to fulfilment on that day and that it was a dream come true. The principal Rev. Fr. Subin Puzakkara, along with the students, presented a brief report of the academic and co-curricular achievement of the school for the academic year. The evening was made more colourful with the Annual Day celebrations "Desalite Delight - 2017" with the students showcasing their talents.



-Fr. Subin Puzakkara, msfs

Inauguration of new FAsCE Supplementary Education Centre at Ekrabari

Fransalian Agency for Social Care and Education in India [FAsCE India] inaugurated its sixth FAsCE Supplementary Education Centre in Ekrabari village, in Panikhaiti area under Narengi parish, on 12 November 2017. The new FAsCE Supplementary Education Centre was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. Saji George Executive Director of FAsCE India. The inauguration function was held at the Ekrabari village church premises and it was attended by Rev. Fr. Clean Areng, Associate Director, Ms. Regina B. Sereng, Programme Coordinator and Ms. Chaya Kalita, Women's Coordinator of FAsCE India. The village catechist, along with village headman and children, accompanied by their parents and guardians, attended the inaugural function. The solemn occasion was marked with the lighting of the lamp and colourful cultural dance from Garo, Adivasi tribes, performed by the children and youth of the village. School kit was also distributed to the children. There are 112 children already enrolled in the centre in the age group of 5 – 14 years. Among them 90% are school-going and 10% are out-of-school children, there are three teachers appointed for the centre. They are college students and residents of Ekrabari village. The regular classes are held on all working days from Monday to Saturday from 3 – 5 PM. The initiative by FAsCE India was applauded by the people, especially parents, as their children will get much needed academic support, motivation and guidance in their studies. The parents of these children are mostly illiterate and for their livelihood they work as daily wage labourers.



FAsCE India has taken up this initiative of Supplementary Education Centre in keeping with its focus areas of Education and Empowerment of children. The purpose of the supplementary education centre is to ensure right to education of the children from economically and socially challenged background, with the objectives: to offer academic guidance and support to the children; to foster intellectual, physical, moral, sensible and social development; to provide hand-holding support for successful completion of their schooling; and to prevent child labour and school dropouts. The first Supplementary Education Centre was initiated in 2105 at SFS Higher Secondary School, Narengi, thereafter in 2016 four centres were started in Bongaon in Narengi, Assam, Telam in Assam and Thingbakhullen and Thingbakhonou in Senapati District, Manipur.

-Fr Saji George Puthiyakulangara, msfs

Missionary Children's Day Celebration at St. Augustine Parish, Soweto

It was a joyous moment for the Missionary Children when they celebrated their day together at St Augustine Parish, on 21st and 22nd October 2017. The merriment began during the early hours



on 21st Saturday with the opening prayer and joyful songs led by the Missionary Children. The children were very delighted and so cheerful to be together on their festive day. The input session gave the children insight into the qualities of a missionary child : I to pray for one another, to help each other, to share different things with each other, to be kind, to be good and loving. The children could get new knowledge about the "Mission Rosary", as a special Rosary, how it is being recited, the meaning of the five colors on the Mission Rosary. Green, praying for our Continent, Africa, Red for America, White for Europe, especially for our father Pope and for peace in the World; Blue, for Ocean and Yellow for Asia. Fr Saju Msfs, in conclusion, thanked all the parents and congratulated Sunday School Animators for their great effort and love they have for the children.

It was a great day indeed that the Lord has made. We had rejoiced and were Glad in it!!!!

-Fr Babychan Arackathara, msfs

PUNE PROVINCIAL CONGRESS



The Eighth Ordinary Provincial Congress of the Pune Province was held from 22nd - 26th Oct 2017. It was officially declared open by Rev. Fr Agnelo Fernandes, the General Councillor for Mission, and the Delegate of the Superior General, on 22nd October 2017. The event was also graced by Rev. Fr. Noel Rebello, the General Councillor incharge of Formation, Rev. Fr. Benny Kootanal, the Provincial of South West India Province, Rev. Fr John Britto Muthuswamy, the Provincial of Nagpur Province, Rev. Fr K. Ignacimuthu, the Provincial of South East India Province. The theme for the Congress was, "Recapturing our MSFS identity in and through community living, mission and Salesian spirituality". It was a joyful gathering and coming together of 85 confreres and one Scholastic representative of same family actively participating in the Congress joyfully and enthusiastically. The congress began

with inaugural and keynote address by Rev. Fr. Agnelo Fernandes. He appreciated us for having chosen the theme that is very much foundational to the Charism of our Founder, Fr. Mermier. The different days of Congress were marked by different activities, like presentation of forum wise report, elections of new Provincial Curia, discussions and deliberations. The Silver Jubilarians, Frs. Daiy and Santow were felicitated on their 25 years of ordination. I wish to thank each of you for your active participation, lively presence and your cooperation. It was a blessed occasion which brought us together to review, evaluate and reorient ourselves into the basics of MSFS. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those who were instrumental in making this Congress a successful one.

-Fr Jayaseelan Selvaraj, msfs

MSFS Inter-Province Meet on Graded Integral Formation

At the Invitation of Fr. Noel Rebello, General Councillor for Formation, most of the Rectors and Novice Masters of the Indian Provinces of our Congregation assembled at Montfort Sadan, Pune on 11th and 12th December 2017. Fr Noel highlighted the vital issues of formation and briefed the members on the genesis of Preparatory Committee for Graded Formation (PCGF). Fr. Benny Kootanal, (Provincial, SW) presented the Expectations of the Provincials of Indian Forum (PIF) bringing out a formation centered on the person of Christ, the Christological Model of formation. The Resource Person for the Meeting was Fr. Binu Edathumparambil, MSFS. He spoke about a Tridimensional Goal in the formation: human, spiritual and missionary. As Jesus was united to the Father, in the formation to discipleship, today there should be the same model and goal. The salutary exhortations of Saint Francis de Sales: "Be who you are and be at its best" and "Everything by love, nothing out of compulsion" should guide the formation team as well as the formees. Gentleness, Humility, Optimism and Hospitality should be the hallmark of Salesian formation. There were two work-shop



sessions, the participants were divided into three groups and a common sharing of their discoveries, was followed. Fr. Santhosh Chavarnal proposed the vote of thanks and Fr. Noel thanked everyone personally and the resource person amply for his input sessions. The participants felt that their staff members in their respective communities should get an opportunity to attend such input sessions so as to animate our formees effectively and unitedly.

-Fr Joseph Thazhathukunnel, msfs

Suvidya Reach-Out

A Blood donation camp was organised in Suvidya College on 21st of October 2017, by Narayana Health Organisation. The Staff and students actively participated in the Camp.

Over sixty Suvidyans donated Blood during the Camp. The Organisers were overwhelmed by the response of the Suvidyans. The participants also received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Organisation.

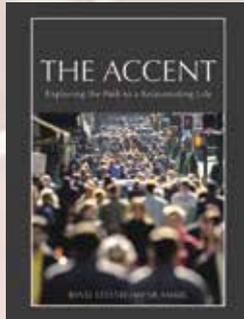
-Fr James Pattarakalayil, msfs



Three Books by Fr Binu Edathumparambil, MSFS

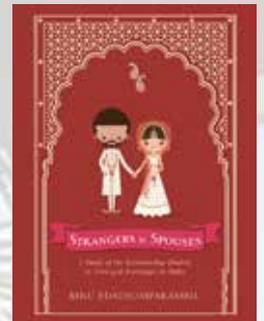
Fr. Binu Edathumparambil, MSFS, has authored three books, *The Accent: Exploring the Path to a Rejuvenating Life* (2015), *I Am Who I Am: Unraveling the Mystery of God* (2017), and *Strangers to Spouses: A Study of the Relationship Quality in Arranged Marriages in India* (2017). Fr. Binu holds a Masters in Psychology and a Masters in Christian Studies from Madras University. He received his Doctorate in Family Therapy from Saint Louis University, Postdoctoral Fellowship in Child Trauma from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and an advanced training in Psychodynamic Psychotherapy from St. Louis Psychoanalytic Institute, USA.

The Accent (2015). Integrating psychology and spirituality, Fr. Binu offers readers a roadmap to transcend individual differences and associated problems, which he calls "accents." This is a book on human development and relationships. He believes that by better understanding who human beings are, why human beings do what they do, and what human beings are meant to be, individuals and communities can overcome their difficulties and live fuller, happier lives.



I Am Who I Am (2017). A healthy and happy life, according to Fr. Binu, is one that is lived in communion with God and others. This book specifically focuses on the mystery of God and his place in the triangular model of life that he suggests for our lives. It is about how our understandings and experiences of God shape our lives as individuals and communities.

Strangers to Spouses (2017). Approximately 90 percent of the marriages in India today are reported to be arranged marriages. Most men and women who enter into such marriages have very limited pre-marital contact with each other. This book is a revised version of a mixed methods study that Fr. Binu conducted on the quality of relationship in such marriages in India.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR JUBILARIANS

GOLDEN



Fr Reddy Joseph,
msfs

SILVER



Fr Lawrence A,
msfs



Fr S. Alexander,
msfs



Fr Jose Karipadathu,
msfs



Fr Joseph Kunjaparambil,
msfs



Fr Sabu Manasrayil,
msfs



Fr Emmanuel
Mappilaparambil, msfs



Fr Abraham
Puthenpurackal, msfs



Fr Tomy Thekkel,
msfs



Fr Daiy Sebastian,
msfs



Fr Santow Kodamulil,
msfs