



**Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
Celebrating 170 Years of Foundation**

Dear Confreres,

With deep joy and gratitude to the Heart of Jesus, we address each of you to commemorate a significant milestone: 170 years since our founder, Fr. Jules Chevalier, heard the call to witness the compassionate love of God in a wounded world; 170 years of life and mission as the MSC Congregation. It was on December 8, 1854, that Fr. Chevalier heard the echo of the Heart of Jesus, calling him to found a missionary institute as a response to the world's afflictions. Today, we are called to update how we live our charism, reimagine our structures, and write new pages of love and compassion in a world thirsting for meaning, with imagination and prophetic creativity.

With great hope, we can say that we have 1,560 reasons to celebrate these 170 years – the approximate number of MSC confrères worldwide. Moreover, we have about five hundred additional reasons to celebrate, when we consider the number of confrères in initial formation across the world.

For us MSC, there should be no room for discouragement, even though we live in a world beset by so many challenges, the war in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Ukraine, and the eastern Congo, among others. The problems of Safeguarding in the Church and in our Congregation. The ecological devastation of Mother Earth.

As I write this letter, I have received challenging news from two MSC places. Our two confrères in Mozambique have informed me that the situation of protests and police repression has reached the city of Pemba, where they live and work. They had to go immediately to pick up the formandi from the school where they study in order to get them to safety in Jules Chevalier House. Our confrères in South Korea informed us today that a grave situation is emerging in the political leadership of this beautiful and developed country; martial law was imposed and revoked. This has led to protests and calls for impeachment, generating a situation of terrible chaos where the People of God are affected.

In Haiti, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Northern Cameroon, our confrères also face complex situations. These are just a few of the many examples we could give of challenging situations in which we are celebrating today 170 years of missionary and prophetic self-giving and dedication amid challenging, complex, and, unfortunately, 'eternal' conflicts.

This year, I had the grace and opportunity to spend nine weeks in our largest Province, Indonesia. Listening personally and communally to the vast majority of members made me witness the MSC charism alive, resilient, vibrant, vulnerable, and committed in approximately 75 parishes and other ministries. In the vast areas of West Papua, I witnessed the presence of young confrères dedicating their lives to the People of God in parishes in the jungle and facing the overwhelming presence of companies that extract and exploit natural resources. Furthermore, as I passed through places of strong MSC presence, in archipelagos full of cultural and linguistic expressions and challenges, diversity of colors and flavors, right through to the big metropolises, all this confirmed for me that there are plenty of reasons to be hopeful in these 170 years.



This year, we also celebrated in all MSC Entities the 200th anniversary of our Founder's birth. How could we not celebrate these 170 years after witnessing the presence of so many confrères at the Chevalier Congress held in Aparecida, Brazil? It was an event that made the vigor of MSC life and the Chevalier Family tangible.

I have personally witnessed a new organizational awakening in Papua New Guinea, our first mission, within its provincial structures and mission work. We also received news of the progress in the process towards the canonization of Peter To Rot.

The members of the General Team have also been able to hear the reality of our confrères in many parts of the world. For example, the United States Province is a multicultural, vibrant province, which has to address the missionary imperative of rethinking and reconfiguring itself in order to face a new and less certain future.

How inspiring is our presence in Japan. While the Church has small numbers of parishioners, and in a country not known for demonstrative expressions of love, the people know they are loved because of the faithful dedication of our confrères. One older man told an MSC that he knew the MSC loved them because even though only a few people came to Sunday Mass, the MSC continued to turn up and be there for them.

More reasons to celebrate these 170 years with enthusiasm:

- ♥ The implementation of two MSC facilitators' programs in English in Rome and in Spanish/Portuguese in Brazil.
- ♥ The International Meeting of the Laity of the Chevalier Family in the Philippines.
- ♥ The continuity one confrère is giving to the Centre for the Poor-CEPAGCO in the Philippines, as its director has begun to promote JPIC at the Congregational level.
- ♥ The ministry of one MSC Brother in Vietnam who works as a chef in a boarding school where 700 meals are prepared three times a day. There, in the midst of pots and pans, the MSC Spirit vibrates.
- ♥ The birth of the new MSC Province of India, just 170 years after our foundation and its upcoming missionary project in Ireland and France.
- ♥ The second newest Province, the Pacific Islands Province, will soon be opening a community in New Zealand and another in France.
- ♥ The presence of the Francophone African Union in France and in the Brussels City Centre where two Congolese MSC and an 84-year-old Belgian are staying at the 'foot of those excluded from the system'.
- ♥ This energy is also evident through the courage of the MSC entities in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Italy as they dream of an MSC Union of Europe, even with the aging challenges. Our delegate for this project is taking steps through listening to each member and the leaders of these places, which gives us plenty of reasons to celebrate these 170 years of missionary life.
- ♥ Five retreats will be held in the Australian Province, supported by a member of the General Team, to deepen their awareness of being Gifted and Blessed as MSC.



- ♥ There is new energy in the General Administration infused by young and renewed members, together with the dedication of the Communications, Safeguarding, Finance, Ongoing Formation, and JPIC Commissions, enabling us to better serve the Congregation.
- ♥ Further times of celebration include the 100 years of MSC presence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the new formation community in Kenya, the courage of the Spanish Province in ‘letting go’ of two historic MSC works so that they can ‘let come’ a new reality with hope, and the two international Communities in Issoudun, France and Kiel a suburb of Antwerpen, Belgium.
- ♥ The processes of reconfiguration and transformation being undertaken by the MSC Territorial organizations—CAMSC, APIA, and PEC—and the ongoing project to establish AFMSC in Africa, fill us with energy and dynamism, providing us with reasons to celebrate this anniversary.

There is an endless list of reasons to celebrate. Intentionally, I have avoided mentioning names to ensure no one is left out. There is an abundance of experiences and MSC presences where each of you is living out your dedication in silence so that wherever an MSC is present, the entirety of our congregational and charismatic identity is also present. This is a profound reason to celebrate these 170 years of our foundation.

It is life that we celebrate, and it is the dedication of each one of you, dear confrères, that has made it possible to reach this 170th anniversary. You, along with those who came before us—even our martyrs—are the ‘patrimony’ of the congregation. For this reason, we trust that, under the protection of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, inspired by the Church’s call to synodality, and motivated by the Jubilee of 2025, we will celebrate alongside the People of God and continue to be, today, ‘Pilgrims of Hope.’

In Corde Iesu,

Mario Abzalón Alvarado Tovar *[writ]*

Chris Chaplin

Bernard Mongeau

Fransiskus Bram Tulusan

Simon Lumpini

Genie Pejo



GENERAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

"The heart of Christ is "ecstasy", openness, gift and encounter. In that heart, we learn to relate to one another in wholesome and happy ways, and to build up in this world God's kingdom of love and justice. Our hearts, united with the heart of Christ, are capable of working this social miracle."

(Encyclical Dilexit Nos n. 28)