

# GENERAL BULLETIN

MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART

OCTOBER 2024

## *May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere*

Dear confreres, see you again in the October 2024 edition of the general bulletin. October is a special month for us members of the Chevalier family because every 21st of October, we commemorate the death of our founder, Father Jules Chevalier. Last July, Vatican news interviewed General Superior about the Church in Papua New Guinea. On that occasion, Fr General reminded us of a significant moment in the history of the mission of the Catholic Church and the Missionary Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Papua New Guinea, namely the first mass celebrated by Henrik Verius MSC on 4 July 1885 in the land of Papua New Guinea (Yule Island).

There is one lay figure whose name is very close to the history of the mission of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea. He is Blessed Peter To Rot, a lay catechist trained by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who dedicated his life to the evangelisation of Papua New Guinea. So, in this issue, we follow the story of an interesting article by Fr Thomas Augustin Ravaioli IVE on the life of Blessed Peter To Rot. There are also some good articles on missions written by our confreres Jaime Rosique MSC (Spanish Province) and Sr Roberta Tremarelli AMSS (Ex-Secretary General of the Pontifical Work of Missionary Childhood). These articles, along with the inspiring sharing of experiences from some of our confreres and from the laity of the Chevalier family, are sure to motivate and encourage us in our own missions. And of course, as always, we have some interesting events from various regions around the world.

Thank you to all the confreres who have contributed to this edition of the General Bulletin, as well as to the editors (John Walker MSC, Raymond Lièvre MSC, Javier Traperó), who always work hard on our bulletin. May this edition inspire us to be more energetic and dedicated in carrying out each of our missions. Happy reading.

| Fransiskus Bram Tulusan, MSC |



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# INDONESIA



**30 May to 06 August 2024.** I wondered how to express nine weeks of accompaniment to our beloved MSC Province of Indonesia in an article. Then I thought it could be through the following acrostic:

**I. Incredible.** Incredibly welcome. It all made me feel at home; both the MSC confreres and the Laity of the Chevalier Family, and our parishioners were always very attentive to show how much they love to be MSC or how much they love and value the MSC. The numerous welcoming ceremonies showed and confirmed all this.

**N. Novelty.** The Newness of the Good News of Jesus. In our MSC missions in Indonesia, one always discovers something new. The newness of the diverse ministries: education, credit unions, social media, retreat houses, formation houses, JPIC Centers, many parishes, etc., confirm this novelty. Each mission has its peculiarity and uniqueness. Each island and region show the newness of the Kingdom. In Indonesia, we Catholics are a minority, but this minority bears witness to a significant commitment. This fragility is a great strength.

**D. Diversity.** Everything in Indonesia is 'multi,' multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual. It is an archipelago occupying a large part of the Pacific Ocean. There is so much diversity that you end up fascinated and challenged by the accompaniment. There are so many cultures and expressions of faith. Amid all that diversity, there are about 350 MSC in about 75 parishes and many other ministries. The MSC's presence dates back to 1903, the year of the first arrival of the MSC. From that time to date, the MSC Charism, Spirituality, and Mission has taken on the color, smell, rhythm, and values of Indonesia's cultural diversity.

**O. Organization.** Our MSC Province of Indonesia strives to maintain an organization through the districts of Moluccas, Meraoke, East Sulawesi-Kalimantan, Central Java-South Kalimantan, Jakarta-West Kalimantan-Sumatra, and Pinneleng-Manado Formation Community. Each district seeks the best for its organization to work from and with all its vulnerabilities to build the Reign of God.

**N. Nazareth.** The accompanying to this MSC Province was an experience that made me deeply remember the family of Nazareth. The sense of family always has many elements that need to be improved, and, as it is everywhere, this is very challenging. However, it is also an opportunity for our MSC Family to be an accurate reflection of the Family of Nazareth. I felt that this continues to encourage this whole MSC Province of Indonesia to show that it is possible to be an MSC family everywhere, as Fr Chevalier dreamt.

**E. Ecosystem.** Suppose one thing is confirmed in a reality like that of the Indonesian Province. In that case, it is imperative not to have an ego-systemic or island mindset, even if living in a beautiful archipelago. It is necessary to build an MSC ecosystem. As St. Paul says, to be one body made up of different parts, as one organic and living 'body.' The challenge is building an open life system from the Spirituality of the Heart. Pope Francis told the religious on his last trip that they were called to be bridges that unite all the islands, regions, and cultures in Indonesia. I reiterate this invitation to all MSC in Indonesia.

**S. Service.** In all meetings and personal conversations with members, I have shared that our identity card as MSC is SERVICE. I accompanied many living witnesses to the Service. In fact, many MSC are already living in it, often in silence, in remote regions, on islands far away, and close to very simple and needy people. I also urged them not to lose this spirit of SERVICE. I encouraged everyone to be aware of and resist modern evils threatening SERVICE. Among them, clericalism, individualism, the temptation of power, prestige, academicism, and money, as well as the installation and comfort zones, could make us lose the missionary Spirit of Service.

**I. Indigenous.** There is a lot of work in different regions of Indonesia with indigenous peoples. I was filled with hope and admiration. The indigenous people of Indonesia are struggling against all that the large extractive companies are doing and destroying their ancestral habitat. It broke my heart to hear how they are losing their lands, their homes, their lives. Several MSC are still there at the foot of today's crucified hearts.

**A. Admirable.** I end this acrostic with heartfelt admiration for the commitment and dedication to the mission of our confreres and lay people in Indonesia. I also admire the presence of many Indonesian MSC collaborating in about ten countries worldwide. I appreciate all the organization, openness, trust, and sincerity manifested in personal, community, parish, leadership team, and other apostolic ministries conversations. I encourage everyone to keep going and show that living and strengthening our Missionary Identity in Indonesia and the world is possible. It is possible to live in unity and diversity, and it is possible to BE the heart of God on earth.

**Abzalón Alvarado, MSC**





## COLOMBIA

**30 August to 9 September 2024.** Colombia is an MSC Section belonging to the Province of the United States.

Accompanying this MSC Section of Colombia again showed me the reality of Latin America, the continent with the most significant number of Catholics worldwide.

Listening to each of the nine MSC members and their sincerity in naming their strengths and vulnerabilities made me feel at home.

I found two parish communities (Sagrado Corazón in Fusagasugá and Santa Margarita in Ciudad Kennedy, Bogotá). These two parishes were full of life and commitment to the building of the Reign of God, and this witness was manifested both by our MSC confreres and the parish laity.

I could see the appreciation that our parishioners and the laity of the Chevalier Family have for the MSC. I was able to experience how good shepherds our MSC confreres have been over the years and continue to be in the different pastoral ministries in which they serve.

We also have a formation house, in which four formandi live the postulancy and/or pre-novitiate. This, together with the pastoral commitment of the other MSCs, is a sign of hope for this MSC community.

The Chevalier Family's Laity groups are marvellous. They are very committed and close to living our charism and spirituality. Their commitment and sense of belonging to the MSC Charism is admirable.

After deep listening and working with the Communal Wisdom, this accompaniment was concluded with, among others, the following guidelines to continue the journey:

- with the hope to initiate processes to strengthen the MSC Community and the commitment to contribute to the process,
- happy and hopeful about being an MSC,
- reflecting on the challenging realities we face as individuals and as a community.
- with openness and expectations,
- trying fearlessly to go deep into our vulnerabilities and not just attending to the visible 'symptoms,'

- with vision and hope to strengthen our sense of congregational belonging. It will help us, by living participative processes, to re-emerge with a New Heart.

Thanks to the MSC confreres, the MSC formandi, the Laity of the Chevalier Family, and our wonderful Parishioners for making me experience a sense of family during these days in Colombia.

Abzalón Alvarado, MSC

## ACCOMPANIMENT IN CA-MSC MEETING

**From July 9 to 17.** I participated in the CA-MSC meeting of Formators and Superiors of Latin America. The gathering was held at the Santa Teresa Retreat House in Bogotá, Colombia. Twenty-four confrères were involved in the activity.

The presence of ten provincials was noted.: Moacir Figueiredo of Curitiba, Raúl Gabriel Mera of Central America. Hugo León Londoño of Colombia, Agustín Guzmán of the Dominican Republic, Ricardo Senduk of Ecuador, Joe McGee of Ireland, Mesías Neyra of Peru, Luis Carlos Araujo of Sao Paulo, Ronnie Diniz of Rio de Janeiro, Yonys Mendoza Delegante of Venezuela.

Eleven formators were noted to be present: Julio Cesar Molina and Jorge Gómez Rodríguez of Central America, Miguel Piamba of Colombia; Juan Gabriel Corona and Juan Tomás García of the Dominican Republic, Amos Jean of Haïti, Miguel Díaz Poma of Peru, Rafael Lima Coelho of Rio de Janeiro, Benedito Cortez, Girley Reis and Lucemir Ribeiro of Sao Paulo.

Also present were Humberto Henríquez, a facilitator from Rio de Janeiro, and Roberto Núñez as secretary of the Dominican Republic.

Hugo welcomed the participants on Tuesday evening with dinner. On Wednesday, July 10th in the morning, we gathered at the Retreat House San Teresa, run by the Teresian Sisters of Colombia in Bogotá.

**Emmaus: formation of the heart. The 2023 Document on MSC Initial Formation.** During the first three days, Humberto invited us to reflect on the dynamics in formation at the level of the Americas.

Humberto encouraged us to be enthusiastic about entering these days and reminded us that we face new paradigms. During this encounter, we were asked to connect with the Lord and offer our presence at the CA-MSC meeting. To continue deepening, the Gospel of the Disciples of Emmaus provided key elements. We had to personally reflect on the following questions: what questions do we have about initial training? What challenges do we encounter for the Lord to open our eyes? What questions do we bring in our hearts for this meeting? Like the disciples of Emmaus, we are faced with many questions.

Humberto gave a detailed explanation of the four movements of Heart Spirituality that are mentioned in the Emmaus Document on Initial Formation. Cuskelly's contributions were the origin of the concepts of the four movements. Our spirituality brings mercy to the peripheries. The Church must be a place of mercy and compassion. We were asked: is there anything specific that we, as MSC can contribute to this world? How do we lead? What steps can we take to get outside ourselves and go to the peripheral areas? How can we ignite the flames of our missionary energy in our time? How can we combat self-centeredness and indifference in our society?

A paradigm shift and a complete shift in mindset are necessary to answer these questions. The mystery of the Heart's spirituality is something we must embrace. Going from the Ego to the Eco. At this moment, it is essential to go through a significant paradigm shift.

There are two paradigms of organisational change: the old paradigm is to solve problems, whereas the new paradigm is a mystery to be embraced. From old to new, it goes as follows: identifying the problem vs finding what we did (encounter); analysing the cause vs what it could be (intimacy); analysis of possible solutions vs what it should be (conversion); action plan vs what will be (mission).

We spent the afternoon of Thursday, July 11, exploring the document and thinking about how we will implement it. Examining the fundamental motives of men who want to join the MSCs is necessary. Are they interested in becoming priests or consecrated men? If their primary motive is to be ordained, they must attend seminaries. This requires that the formators need to be well-trained. The Emmaus Document is the responsibility of all MSCs' not the sole responsibility of the formators. The General Administration was tasked with creating an outline for the report on perpetual vows that is consistent for all entities.

On Friday, July 12th, the day began with a Zoom meeting with Bram Tulusan and Simon Lumpini, who, along with Humberto, shared their joy in sharing this moment of encounter. They highlighted the importance of initial formation and the contribution made in formation in favour of the Congregation. They stressed that, for the past 30 years, the formation was based on the Valladolid Document. Then, in 2023, the Emmaus Document



was created not to replace the Valladolid document but to maintain continuity.

**The Superiors' meeting.** Monday, July 15th, and Tuesday 16th, the superiors' meeting took place. The issues concerning the progress of the CA-MSC were discussed. It was decided that the next meeting of the CA-MSC will be held in Venezuela (if the political situation allows it) or in Peru from July 13 to 20, 2026.

**The new CA-MSC Team.** In a tone of discernment, we asked who could help us in the service of CA-MSC coordination in the coming years. The use of vocational texts provides us with illumination to accept community and ecclesial services. In small groups of two, we questioned ourselves: What measures can be taken to continue this entity's approach, help, and enlightenment? Who is capable of assisting us on this journey?

Following a moment of reflection, the assembly read the statutes of the CA-MSC approved in 2013. The document stipulates that the coordination team is elected for four years. Because Juan Tomás has not finished his mandate as coordinator, he is no longer a provincial, and he accompanies the novices but doesn't feel ready to handle both duties, it is proposed to reform the statutes. After a lively exchange of opinions, it was determined to make changes to article 4.2 of the Statutes so that the term of the coordinating team is two years, with a possible renewal for another two years. Thus, the election of coordinators will be held at regular CA-MSC meetings every two years.

Given the change in the statutes, the current coordinator, Juan Tomás García, resigns as coordinator and proposes the election of a new coordinator. The assembly accepted the resignation with seven votes in favour and two abstentions. The election was then held, with an elective assembly composed of nine members.

The new coordinating team was elected: with eight votes, Raúl Ruiz Mena from Central America is the new coordinator, and with six votes, Mesías Neyra Huamàn from Peru is the new vice-coordinator. Both agreed to serve for two years.

**The situation of the Andean Union, new structures, Spirituality course, CorAmérica, and the Latin American Theologate.**



**The Andean Union** was created on January 6, 2022. The statutes were designed and approved. The Union was established to address the situation where the region of Peru was left after Germany transferred it to the General Administration. The General Administration's inability to sustain the region led them to propose the creation of the Union, anticipating that other entities in the area would face the same situation. One concern is that some entities will be left without any reference to the province they belong to when the mother province disappears.

The Union was established to open the doors and facilitate the process. Peru agrees, but time will tell. There is currently a dialogue between the Province of Ireland and Venezuela. Although the Province of Ireland has decided Venezuela should be part of the Union, they have no intention of immediately breaking relations with Venezuela.

**The new structures of the CA-MSC.** Absalón Alvarado reminded the participants in a WhatsApp message of the convenience of considering our commitments in our General Chapter during our meeting, particularly regarding a territorial entity in Latin America. Rethinking the current structures of the CA-MSC is a way to begin moving in this direction. Do we maintain them or propose new structures? What actions do we take? Below are the conversations that took place.

Thinking of an international house for the pre-novitiate was perceived as problematic because of the characteristics of young people in their early stages, such as instability. Young people are starting their formation experience. Although Brazil has already had this experience since last year with the pre-novitiate of the three provinces, it should be remembered that they are provinces of the same country. The pre-novitiate is a year before the novitiate, at the end of philosophy. Brazilians have dreamed of a common theologate and are already taking steps in this direction.

A common pre-novitiate of young people who go to a common novitiate is well considered, and if they go to a common theolo-

gate, it is much better. This would make it easier to free up staff for the accompaniment and avoid having each instance devote formators independently.

Economically speaking, maintaining an international house is a great challenge, given that income sources are being reduced in most cases. We acknowledge the necessity of ensuring our current structure. Then, we should look with the new coordination team of the CA-MSC to what steps we can take together with the other territorial entities and the General Leadership Team to follow up our commitments, which express our hopes as a Congregation.

The attention will be directed towards the recommendations and suggestions of the General Chapter by the new CA-MSC coordinator until we arrive at the 2025 General Conference in São Paulo, Brazil. We believe in what the General Chapter has proposed, and we commit ourselves to going in that direction in dialogue with the General Administration. We acknowledge that we need more information about the process. We are willing to participate in the process, but we need more time to become familiar with the dynamics. We have a desire to participate, but we are unsure of how to become involved in the process.

**Spirituality course.** The next course will be held in Guatemala, possibly in July 2026.

**CorAmérica** continues its mission. The last course of Spirituality offered was in Lima in July-August 2023. It takes over the formation of the first five years. The team is available to respond to any invitation from the entities.

The Dominican Republic province invited CorAmérica to accompany them for their week of permanent formation in April 2024 on the person and work of Father Julio Chevalier within the framework of celebrating the 200 years of his birth.

Both Peru and the Dominican Republic recall that each year they have their rhythm of two meetings per year for retreat and formation. Despite the distance, Central America has chosen to hold an annual formation meeting in addition to the retreat.



Brazil is saying it is doing well in accompanying its members up to the first five years in ministries. They also express that in bringing together all the MSCs living their first years of ministry, it would be necessary to consider their economic involvement, travel and stay outside their usual places of life. The province of Rio is carrying out the accompaniment to MSCs over 50 years old to follow up on health, spirituality, etc. CorAmérica could help with that. São Paulo holds two yearly events: an assembly and a retreat.

**The situation of the Latin American Theologate**, located in El Salvador, was presented by Jorge Gómez Rodríguez. He feels encouraged by the experience, with challenges from work in formation, the penal system, parish collaboration and other commitments. He thanked the visit of Moacir, the support of Raúl and the visit of other confreres from other provinces and Central America. Due to the impossibility of obtaining the necessary visas to travel to El Salvador, religious from Haiti have been unable to participate. Over the past two years, five Haitian students have been absent due to the chaotic socio-political situation in their country. El Salvador is the land of martyrs. We are encouraged by the great witness of St. Oscar Romero and the martyrs of El Salvador. The theological faculty of the Central American University (UCA) in San Salvador is in line with liberation theology. Several factors helped us prepare for the mission: the Hope Recovery House, assisting the penitentiary with those deprived of liberty, accompanying the parish communities and the pastoral of mercy.

The theologians are: 1st year: Luis (El Salvador); 2nd year: Mateus Henrique (Brazil), José (Guatemala), Yefry and Ronald (Dominican Rep.), Kevin (El Salvador) and Rafael (Mexico); 3rd year: Mateus Borodiak (Brazil), Nicolás and Edgar (Guatemala). For the next year 11 students are projected in the house. Ideally, there should be three members of the formation team. Currently, they are Jorge and Jozef Geeuricks (Zeca). A third person is welcome. The Dominican Republic commits to preparing a confrere to be part of the Team of Formators of the Theologate for 2026-2029. Brazil will begin the common pre-noviciate this year, along with the common noviciate. They must have formators every three or six years, rotating between provinces.

The monthly fee for each student is \$1,000, which covers university tuition, food, transport, services, salaries, allowances, etc. There is a lack of funds to maintain “Casa Padre José María Gran”. We had a big expense to renovate the water well pump and needed to replace the house’s roof. To obtain funding for these expenses, a project could be submitted.

We must be convinced that the common theologate is a positive step for CA-MSc, which integrates us as MSC and that it is vital that we support it by sending theology students. Peru is open to sending its students when they have them.

The entire responsibility mustn’t be left to the formators of the Theologate. The superiors must visit the Theologate and evaluate its performance after ten years. If a provincial is unable to come, he should appoint a delegate. A celebration could be organised to mark that realisation.

**The Assembly’s evaluation.** The participants said they learned a lot and thanked each one for their welcome and understand-

ing. It was excellent. Humberto’s presence was a blessing during those fruitful days. Our brothers have been trustworthy. We all expressed our gratitude to the Colombian community. We felt at home.

We discussed a few points to improve our meetings. It is important to send the agenda, statutes, and minutes from the previous meeting two weeks before the meeting. This will give each participant a clear idea of the meeting. We need to improve our communications. Knowing how to organise ourselves is crucial for effective decision-making. A statement of income and expenditure from the last meeting must be provided to all participants. Virtual meetings could be held regularly to prepare for the meeting. Ask someone to introduce us to the reality of the country where the bi-annual assembly is held.

The outings were highly valued. One day was dedicated to visiting the national shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá, the patron saint of Colombia. It was a pleasant day with a positive community atmosphere. We also visited Ubaté, Ráquira, and Villa de Leiva. On another occasion, the confrères invited us to attend mass at the parish community of Santa Margarita in Kennedy, which is the eighth locality of Bogotá. The community greeted us with overwhelming emotion and enthusiastically participated in large numbers. Then, the MSC community and the lay MSCs offered us lunch and an enjoyable cultural play area, which made us feel like part of a great family, the Chevalier family. We ended the day listening to football! Unfortunately, Colombia lost.

**The Assembly’s conclusion.** On July 16, at 12:24, the CA-MSc meeting came to an end with the new coordinating team being chosen, which was followed by a Eucharistic celebration and dinner. We were reminded by the new coordinator, Raúl, about our shared responsibility and that the Lord will lead us in completing this congregational project. Let’s meet again in two years! Until then, let’s keep in touch.

**Bernard Mongeau, MSc**

## SPAIN

**From 23 June to 4 July 2024.** I was invited by Francisco “Paco” Blanco Martín, the Provincial of Spain, to visit some communities and works of MSc to know better the confreres and to animate the annual provincial retreat, which had not happened for a few years. Simon Lumpini accompanied me.

On June 23, we landed at the airport in Madrid. Paco warmly welcomed us and took the metro to the provincial house. The next day, we took the car to go to Valladolid.

**Annual retreat from June 25 to 27.** Fourteen confreres participated in this intense period of community life, including a confrere from Uruguay, Cristhian David Mancuello Arias, a confrere from UAF, Ella Ndo Jean Mermoz, and an aspirant from Cuba, Joelin Rodríguez Delgado. Paco motivated all the province mem-





bers to participate, reminding them of 139.6 and 140 of our Constitutions.

I have given six lectures: The Identity of the MSC and the Vocation of the Brothers; The Gift of Community Life; Cultivating Hope in Difficult Times – the first part: spiritual aspect and the second part: practical aspect; synodality; permanent formation, even at an advanced age.

I have used the community wisdom method throughout the retreat. To do this, I used six excerpts from a series of reflections on the spirituality of synodality that Father Timothy Radcliffe OP gave in October 2023 at the 16th Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. At the beginning of each conference, for fifteen to twenty minutes, then in small groups of three to five people,



it takes time to create a sacred space, a time of silence, without being distracted by our cellphones.

Everyone is invited to reflect on one of the proposed excerpts and ask themselves what touches them personally after reading them individually. Once members are ready, it is time to share what comes next. Listening carefully to what the Lord is telling us in our deepest being does not mean debating the words of others. This method is beneficial because it allows everyone to express themselves.

After each presentation of the theme relating to retreat, the confreres had a discussion, exchange and questions on this subject. The participation of each person was far beyond what we had hoped. Among the reflections shared by our confreres, here is what we retain: individualism versus fraternal life; lack of discretion and negative criticism; sadness; living with our vulnerabilities; building fraternity requires sharing; how to reveal the beauty of the Cross to today's world; living synodality is not an easy thing; telling and listening to the truth is a challenge; we do not have the correct language to reach out to young people and walk with them or they are walking with us.

During the retreat, the Provincial informed his confreres of the current and future situation of the province. In particular, the project for creating the European MSC Union; the future of the two Spanish MSC colleges, that of Pontevedra and that of Barcelona.

**Community visits from June 27 to July 4.** On June 27, after saying hello to our confreres, we took the road from Valladolid to Zamora and a fast train to Pontevedra. In the evening, we took a tour of the city centre, the church of the Pilgrim Virgin and the convent of San Francisco. We even took a short walk on the way to Compostela.

**Pontevedra - The Sacred Heart College.** On 28 June, Paco introduced us to the Sacred Heart College, which was inaugurated on 13 November 1956, one year after we had settled in Pontevedra, on the site of the former Villa Lucía, and initiated by Father José Miguel Vergés, director of the Small Work. The college, which currently has about 1,200 students and 90 teachers, will be under the responsibility of the Jesuit Educational Foundation from

the Congregation of the Daughters of Jesus as of September 1st 2024. This is an organisation that manages 23 schools in Spain. As they explained in a press release of May 28, 2024, the MSC made the decision “to withdraw from this field of educational mission in Pontevedra because, for years, we have suffered a decline in vocations and we do not have staff to deal effectively with this work. We leave in tears, but we do it to ensure the school’s future. Thousands of students, thousands of families, hundreds of teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as collaborating companies have passed through our classrooms,” says Paco, who recalled that “51 Missionaries of the Sacred Heart have passed through this school. Each has left a part of his life in this city and school, some even to the end of their days.”

In the afternoon, a farewell meeting was organised at the Manor of Culture of Pontevedra to celebrate this historic moment. All college staff, including parents, friends, alumni and teachers, were present.

In the evening, the school’s management team organised a Thanksgiving Eucharist as a farewell. The event was chaired by the Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, Francisco José Prieto. After the ceremony, a simple lunch was held in the basement of the church Virgen del Camino. A sincere thank you to all the confreres who have served the Church, the Christian community and, of course, the families of Pontevedra throughout these years.

**Barcelona - San Miguel College.** On the morning of 29 June, we took the road to Vigo to fly to the community house in Barcelona. We visited our shrine dedicated to Notre Dame du Sacré-Coeur and the San Miguel College. In the late afternoon, we explored the outside of the Sagrada Família before ending the day with a mass at the Sanctuary.

The Sant Miquel College was founded in 1868 by Miquel Clergue, a French priest who served as director for the first 25 years. It is the second oldest school in the city. It is named “Sant Miquel” in honour of its founder. The school’s headquarters was on Duran i Bas Street for 30 years, then moved to Rosellón Street. It was a very prestigious school for the training it provided both culturally and spiritually. It included sections for kindergartens, primary education, secondary school and commerce. There were also students in boarding schools. The school was linked to the Provincial Institute of Barcelona (later called General and Technical Institute). In 1880, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart settled in Barcelona, first on Ample Street and then on Sant Elies Street. Father Vicente Casas was the main promoter. In 1882, our Founder, with Father Jouët, managed the purchase of the house on Rosellón Street, occupied until then by the Hospitaller Brothers of Saint John of God. This building was intended to serve as a seminary - the Little Work - and housing for the MSC community, which also managed the church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It is also worth mentioning that at this time, the reconstruction works of the original Gothic cloister of the convent of Santa Maria de Jerusalem were carried out.

In 1893, Gustau Hibos, nephew of Miquel Clergue, already very old at the time, took over the management of the school and two years later (1895), due to health problems, he put it on sale. The



Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bought the rights in 1895, making Sant Miquel the first MSC college in the world. The director was Father Jean Baptiste Perriot (French), who until then directed the Little Work of Rosellón Street. Fr. Pourquier (prefect) and Fr. José Tatcher lived with him for three years in the building on Duran i Bas Street. The other MSCs would go daily from Rosellón Street to the College to teach. At this time, the school maintained its prestige during the emergence of great colleges from other religious institutions.

In 1898, Father Pietro Benedetti (Italian) took over the management and proposed to move the school to Rosellón Street. Starting in the academic year 1899 1900, academic work began in the new house. This new stage will be challenging, and the college risks disappearing even if it occupies a better space. Its new geographical location, at the time outside of Barcelona and in an area with few buildings and a sparse population, had a negative impact on it. The college will become the fifth largest of the seventeen existing schools in the city.

After 129 years of presence in this institution, the members of the MSC Community leave behind many hopes, projects and lives. These century-old walls are grateful witnesses of the good work done: Inauguration of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (1943), more than 1000 students at the College (1959), San Miguel handball team, Spanish champion (1961), gymnastic sports team, Spanish champion (1972), Spanish champion table tennis team (1976), coeducation (1980), opening of the swimming pool (1982), Association of Music Teachers of Aragon (1997) ...

Due to the impossibility of the MSC to continue the educational project, the Congregation of the Escola Pia will take over the College from September 1, 2024. We intend to stay in the neighbourhood where the Sanctuary and community are located. The Escola Pia aims at the integral education of children and youth with a Catholic religious identity.

On the occasion of this new stage that begins, for all the good lived so far, let us give thanks to God, to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and to all the MSC who have believed in this Christian educational project.

**Back to Madrid.** On the morning of the 30th, we had taken a plane to Madrid. During my stay with the local community, I listened attentively to the confreres, listened to what they lived in their



daily lives and learned about the economic reality of the province with Manuel Barahona Álvarez and his assistant, Antonio Delgado García. I had an interview with Javier Trapero, the Province's communications director. On the evening of July 2, I took part in a meeting organised by Chema Álvarez with the laypeople of the parish. On the morning of 4 July, with Simon Lumpini, I was returning to Rome.

I want to express my gratitude to the members of the Spanish Province for their warm welcome, the times of prayer we lived together, the energy they have invested in making us discover their country, their works, their hopes and their vulnerabilities.

**Bernard Mongeau, MSC**

## SOUTH GERMANY - AUSTRIA

**The joy of meeting the confreres where they work.** With just a few lines, I'm sending you some images of my visit to the confreres of the Province of South Germany-Austria from 6 to 16 July 2024.

When I arrived at Munich airport, three confreres from the Birkenneck community came to greet me. One of them had travelled with me by train to Salzburg, as arranged with the Provincial, Father Michael Huber.

You'll find pictures of all the places I visited. However, I failed to get a photo of our confreres in Salzburg, for which I apologise.

**Maira Kirchenthal.** This is a place of pilgrimage, and the first pilgrimage took place in 1701. Two confreres live in this community. But in a few months' time, they will give up this place to another community called Oasis of Peace and join the communities: Toni in Salzburg, where he has been in charge, and Ludwig in Freilassing. In the photo, from left to right: Toni, Simon, Ludwig, and Manfred (1).

**Maishofer.** A colleague from the Province of Nederland is here. It is Piet Comandeur. He is alone in a flat and is already retired. Piet was a missionary in the Philippines for a year. Because he did not want to return to his own Province, he is in Austria (2).

**The Freilassing Community.** Two confreres are here: Hubert Kuun, the bursar of the Province, and LEMMÄR. As you can see, the pictures are separate because the two were not together. Hubert came with me to the Salzburg community (3).

**Community in Slovakia.** Brother Tomech is alone in this community. There is a spiritual centre and the house occupied by our sisters, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, who have come from Kiribati. The Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit, look after the spiritual centre. You'll find them dressed in white and grey robes. Here, you will also find the first house occupied by the MSCs in Slovakia (4).

**Birkenneck community.** Five confreres live in the community. Father Karl Unger, the superior, is 92 years old. However, all are in fairly good health (5).



1



2



3

**Steinerskirchen Community.** This community is home to the old chapel on the square. It is also a place of pilgrimage. Some of our confreres did their novitiate here. There are always visitors almost every day. There is also a cemetery where some confreres who worked in the DRC are buried. I met at least 23 confreres. Three or four were unavailable—for example, the one in Vienna. I also did not meet the confrere from Croatia. One from the Steinerskirchen community was away (6) **Simon Lumpini, MSC**



4



5



6

# Europe as a mission land

‘But the time has come, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such worshippers’ (Jn 4:23). Two thousand years after the incarnation of the Son of God, we find ourselves at a moment in salvation history when being a Christian, a disciple of Christ, a member of the Catholic Church, goes beyond the structures, customs and traditions handed down to us today.

Salvation history continues because it is God’s work, and even amid storms and difficulties, Jesus is with the community, present in his Church. This verse from John’s Gospel does not mean that today, the Catholic faith is justified by being lived in an individualistic and personal way, only personal, but that we are rediscovering what the Lord announced to us, that is, to live fully our vocation as children of God, without fear, without shame, accompanying and accompanying each other to create deep bonds founded on his word and under the guidance of the Spirit.

A life lived fully in the light of the Gospel is already a witness and is already going out. In Europe, there are still movements, associations and institutions that are very committed to sharing the faith, popular religiosity and the joy of being disciples of Christ. And alongside them, there are still many who no longer want to know. Let us discern, observe and assume with hope, without scaremongering.

‘The change of epoch, which also includes the end of Christianity and parochial civilisation, demands an ecclesial reform that accepts to face and manage the fear of loss linked to change, focusing on what is essential: the life of the community of the baptised which finds its reason for existence in faith in Jesus Christ. This change will also affect the priestly ministry and the role of the laity as presiders of liturgical celebrations’ (Rites without priests, Rivista di Pastorale Liturgica, August 2024).

Christian society has ended, and it is therefore urgent to set in motion a new dynamic, a process. Improvised proposals,

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*‘Tertullian said: You are not born a Christian; you become a Christian’.*

animation programmes and celebrations for an event, a missionary month, or an anniversary are no longer enough. Authentic itineraries are needed, processes that listen to and consider all realities, not to satisfy them but for the common good and to build relationships. We do not doubt that God is present in the world among the men and women of our time. His presence accompanies the person in the search for the meaning of life, for the good, the good and the beautiful. This presence, as Pope Francis says, must not be fabricated but revealed and discovered.

Indeed, there is a weakness of faith in this historical period. In Europe, particularly the Christian basis of society, the family and life have been missing for a long time. If we look at the Church only as a visible assembly, we notice the continuous decrease in the number of the faithful. Many are even calling for the cancellation of Baptism, the sacrament that grafts us into Christ and the Church.

The number of ‘traditional’ believers, understood according to structures and concepts linked to the last century, is undoubtedly decreasing if we look at participation in Sunday Mass, for example, or in other activities and meetings proposed by parish communities, but this does not mean that there are no people who believe in God, in the God of Jesus Christ, in the Kingdom of God and that precisely by this faith they set out and seek to live the faith and the Gospel in a meaningful way, as baptised persons and members of the universal Church, for evangelisation (‘To evangelise is to make the kingdom of God present in the world’, EG 176)

Let us courageously acknowledge the present situation. This requires an openness of mind and outlook to meet and rediscover Christ’s disciples, to meet them and help them to have an authentic experience of the living Jesus. This means that we must ‘go to where the new narratives and paradigms are born, to reach with the Word of Jesus the deepest cores of the soul of the cities. We must not forget that the city is a multicultural environment’ (EG 74).

The Church is not called to be the centre but to present itself as a good for all and to be close to all. So today, the churches as structures are no longer at the centre of the life of people and cities but have become marginal. Many structures of the certainties of the past, both in society and the church, have collapsed. The generation gap is widening, causing tensions and disintegration in communities (of all kinds) and families. I believe that listening, not only institutional and institutionalised but daily listening, is the fundamental element and attitude, so ancient in the Bible but always so relevant. Listening, however, in the light of the word of God, is the foundation of all thought and action of the disciple of Christ, of the missionary disciple.

We are insistently called to listen to the Holy Spirit to discern in the crowd, in the communities, those called to be sentinels, beacons, lights, multipliers, and apostles.

And to learn that one is not a Christian by tradition but by a conscious choice made personally, at a particular moment





of our life, with enthusiasm to put on Christ and the ability to transmit him with joy.

'Although many Europeans no longer consider themselves Christians, they still hunger for spiritual values.... But today, they 'believe witnesses rather than teachers; they believe experience rather than doctrine, life and facts rather than theories.' (RM 42). And if they listen to teachers, it is only because these teachers are first of all witnesses' (Antonio Pernia, SVD).

What was announced by Paul VI and then by John Paul II is even more true today in the multicultural context of Europe. We need a missionary project for Europe. Only a conscious Christianity can be missionary; only a Christian who is aware of his Baptism can feel and be a brother/sister to others, to many, to all, and thus be missionary, catholic, universal. It is not a question of planning and will but only of heart and spirit. Being and wanting to be a community, the body of Christ. But all this requires the knowledge (as experience and not only intellectual) of Christ, of the Word of God.

Pope Francis continually invites the Church to go out. And the Church is each one of us. Do we feel impelled, motivated by the Spirit to go out, without fear, tiredness or melancholy, with joy to meet the world, people, and each person, without prejudices or preconceptions, but with a solid Christian identity? Do we want to move away from individualism, which is something that is not proper to the baptised and which is increasingly widespread in today's social context? In Europe, the various proposals are losing ground every day. How can we make a difference?

There is still a small flock that preserves the faith and tries to nourish it, also thanks to the witness of those who live

on the other side of the world and next to us. The European scenario before us is an opportunity; we have to be convinced of it. A few years ago, we were in a situation of Christianity and faith that we can define as mixed. In some villages, there were still religious customs and the request for Christian gestures and rites: baptisms, first communions, confirmations, and marriages, which today are very much in the minority. It was a Christianity of duty and then also of commitment. It was the Christianity of causes, of humanitarian and socio-political challenges, of charitable organisations, of service to the poorest. It was a great gift that worked very well in us and others, but which caused a bit of imbalance. Today, this way of understanding faith, duty and commitment is no longer attractive; it is no longer felt as something or someone who responds to people's deep needs. And this is because we are in a crisis concerning cultures characterised by duty and commitment. This is no longer the era of stability and conformity. We have moved from duty to freedom, taking it to the extreme. Many slogan words used everywhere to be manifested in the squares (concrete and virtual) should help us to recover their evangelical meaning and content: freedom, respect, fraternity, welcome, and equality.

In the future, we will have a predominantly Christianity by choice and, consequently, a minority Christianity. We will come to faith through conversion and conviction. In fact, at the centre of today's Western culture is no longer faith but religious freedom. We will be back to a situation similar to that of the Christians of the first centuries. Tertullian said: 'You are not born a Christian; you become a Christian'. A community in which gratuitousness and gratitude are experienced, which will rediscover the centrality of the Sunday Eucharist, an encounter and experience to grow as a community and as Children of God and disciples of Christ. The Angel in front of the empty tomb said to the women: 'Do not be afraid... now go immediately and tell his disciples: He has risen from the dead and is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him' (Mt 28:7).

The challenge today is to find our Galilee in order to meet Him and to draw from Him strength and new fervour, finding new forms of expression and sharing, giving a deeper value to the contents and re-generating in the Spirit.

Finding and going to Galilee requires a constant expansion of boundaries, mental - spiritual - physical.

Happy journey!

**Sr Roberta Tremarelli AMSS.**

*Ex-Secretary General of the Pontifical Work of Missionary Childhood*



# *A MSC parish in Europe*

In this issue of the General Bulletin centred on the “Mission”, Fr. Jaime Rosique, msc, tells us how he manages his appointment as Parish priest in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Madrid, his concerns, his willingness to serve the Parish Community and, above all, the challenges underlying this way of making the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved in an ever-growing secularised society as can be Europe in general and Spain in particular.

On the 4th of June, on the liturgical feast of the Blessed MSC Martyrs of El Quiché, Guatemala, I was appointed Parish Priest of the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish that the MSC run in Madrid. To be honest, I feel a little bit like the prophet Jeremiah and many others called by God in the Old Testament. I feel small (for those who have met me in person, this adjective will put a smile on their face). I consider myself inexperienced, but I am also very much aware of God’s response to these “complaints” or “excuses” of mine and of Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and many others before me: “Do not be afraid, for I am with you”. With such certainty, I put in His hands the work ahead: Accompany the Parish Community during the next five years. And I say ‘Accompany’ because I think that is the primary mission of a parish priest.

A few years ago, during my formation time in Ireland, a close friend of mine was dealing with a delicate family situation. As I was regularly checking up on him and giving my words of encouragement and consolation, he said to me: “If to be a priest means to accompany people, you have already walked part of the way”. That phrase touched me, making me think about the truth it highlights. To be a priest is not re-inventing the wheel, neither is to change what is already working or trying to leave your “signature” in the parish at all costs: it is all about accompanying. In every accompaniment, one needs to learn when to be in front, when to be behind, and when to be next to the person you accompany. As I wrote in the Parish Bulletin following my appointment as Parish Priest, my main concern is “to give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to give back to God what belongs to God”. In this case, the Parish belongs to the Parish Community, to Caesar, and my priesthood belongs to God. I am merely an earthen vessel carrying two treasures: God and the Parish Community. In fact, I think it is in these last two words “Parish Community” lies ahead the major challenge for a parish priest, for a parish to build up community. What I have seen as a parishioner first and now as a priest in Madrid for the last year is the difficulty in achieving some sense of belonging to a parish. This is, I believe, also one of the greatest challenges of the “Mission” in Europe. Faith nowadays tends to be lived in a very individualistic, personalist way. There is a tendency to perceive a parish as a Service Station, as a sacramental dispenser, a place where one can be heard in confession, where one can attend Mass because he

was late for the service of his/her own parish, because he preferred the Mass times, for he was looking for the last Sunday Mass available as he was away during the weekend, etc. All that, however, as in the best telecom offers, without “commitment to stay”. For me, the key to building up community is being ‘welcoming’. The person who comes in, for whatever reason, needs to feel welcomed, cared, and listened to. It needs to be felt like anyone else, part of us, so that when they come, they end up staying, and in staying, they share their talents because they encounter a community of persons that are giving life to the different groups available in the parish, nurture and beget life onto others. A community in which everybody adds something and together they put their talents to the service of others. A community not of passive recipients but of people that, given their nuances, character and likings, contribute where they may be felt called to.

In other words, we need to transition from a priest-centred pastoral, in which the priest is seen as the engine of the parish and the dispenser of sacraments, to a laity-centred pastoral, recovering or strengthening the call of all the baptised, configured like Christ priest, prophet and king. This pastoral ought to avoid the risk of the “clericalism” of the laity. To do that, to move from “the few that does many” to “the many that does few”, we would have to stop seeing the different tasks or works as an acquired right “I

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‘House of Prayer’ and  
a ‘Meeting Point’, a  
‘Point of Reference  
AD GENTES’.*



## MAIN ARTICLES



have always read”; “I have always distributed holy communion in this Mass” . . . and start regarding them as a service to which others may also be felt called to. It is about creating spaces and opportunities for people to establish significant relationships with one another in which they can grow in their faith, in which they listen and be listened to, and in which they can grow as intentional disciples of Jesus rather than passive recipients of the sacraments.

Writing like this, it would look as if I only regard participants in the parish life as those people forming part of their territory. Far from it. As a parish priest and an MSC parish priest, my parishes have to be alert and attentive to the needs of the wider society. In Europe, massive recipients of migrants, with an aging population, with a high level of homelessness, families in situations of vulnerability, etc . . . these are the issues, the “ills” of our society within the 21st century.

In his recent letter to Parish Priests, Pope Francis invites us to bring about a Synodic and Missionary Church. The Parish, therefore, should not look only ‘AD INTRA’ towards the people who come in, but ‘AD GENTES’ towards the people who can benefit from the activities and services that the Parish can offer. Using a parable from Jesus, we could see the parish as the tree that grows from the mustard seed, with many branches in which the birds come and go find shelter. The Parish would then be that ‘Meeting Point’ to which we can return to rest with the Lord, telling him about everything we have been doing, the hearts we have touched, etc. In other words, the Parish would ideally be that ‘Point of Reference’, the Headquarters, from which we build the mission, discerning the needs we feel called to answer to. But to do that, the Parish must be a ‘House of Prayer’; it has to be opened as much time as possible to allow that encounter with the Lord in the silence of the Tabernacle.

Summing up, from my little experience as a parish priest, but also from my experience as a priest and as a parishioner as well,

a parish should be a ‘House of Prayer’ and a ‘Meeting Point’, a ‘Point of Reference AD GENTES’, where people who come in can find a place where, more than a mere passive recipient of the sacraments, they establish significant relationships that help them to grow as intentional disciples. A place where people feel “welcomed, listened to and accompanied” in their journey of Faith; a place where they can have their particular needs met to the best of our abilities; a place where the parish priests give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar: the parish (laity, Parish Community) and to God what belongs to God: our priesthood. We may fulfil in Europe that prophecy from Joseph Ratzinger about becoming a small Church, but being a small Church has some advantages, such as being able to respond quicker to the needs and circumstances faced or having a greater sense of belonging, of being a community. Paraphrasing Rahner, who said that the Christian of the future would be a mystic or would not be at all, maybe the same can be said of the Church and a Parish community: whether it is mystic or not. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is deconstructing us as a Church to make us anew, like the process found in nature when a worm is converted into a butterfly. During that process, the worm suffers an organic decomposition; it deconstructs from within and reconstructs itself, changing its nature completely.

Although it may seem the opposite, there are reasons to be hopeful. . . that is the paradox of the Cross, the life that gets hidden in death; it is the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies. . . God can generate life from the most unsuspected places. Maybe he is inviting us now to be prophetic, like Ezekiel, to the bones and life-less tissues in a deserted valley. In any case, we don’t have to forget that ultimately, the true “Parish priest” of every parish remains hidden in the Tabernacle, whispering to all the Parish Community: “DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR I AM WITH YOU”.

**Jaime Rosique, MSC**

# A Martyr for our times

Blessed Peter To Rot

Peter To Rot was born in 1912. He was a married man and a father of three children. His name became famous during the Japanese occupation of East New Britain, one of the islands of Papua New Guinea. It began on 4th January 1942, and a few months later, all missionaries were ordered into strict internment. It was no longer for the missionaries to live in the villages with the people, and for that reason, people would die without sacraments. To Rot's wife, Paula, recalled, "Peter To Rot continued his work as catechist during the war years, baptising, performing marriages, giving religious instructions, caring for the sick." And Fr Carl Laufer, MSC, his parish priest, also declared, "When in 1942, at the command of the Japanese Marines, the priest in charge was forced to leave, To Rot assumed responsibilities in the parish and kept the Catholic people united. For approximately four years, he was the sole spiritual director, substituting for the internal pastor. Regular-



ly, he assembled the children and adults for religious and secular instructions, conducted the Sunday services, baptised infants, officiated at marriages, visited the sick and buried the dead. He recorded parish proceedings in the register and was considered the leading personality among the Catholic native population for the duration of the Japanese occupation."

The Japanese police and army became aware of Peter's work and apostolate. Many times, he was called by the police and threatened. But he told his friends, "They want to take away prayer from us, but I shall do my work."

To Rot's best friend, Fr Laufer, wrote, "Secretly, at night, and in dug-outs, To Rot prayed with little groups, gave religious instructions, baptised the newborn babies and officiated at marriages. He travelled from place to place and encouraged his catacomb Christians: 'They have taken away our priests, but they cannot forbid us to be Catholics and to live and die as such. I'm your catechist, and I will do my duty even if it costs me my life.'"

"During this time, -another missionary wrote- To Rot cared particularly for the sick and the dying. He visited them and prepared them for death, kindled their repentance and buried the deceased. When this was no longer possible officially, he did it secretly, even in the dark of the night, fearless of eventual consequences. His principle was: 'God's work is all and everything.' Sometimes, he even walked to faraway Vunapope to fetch the Viaticum for the dying (6 hour's walk). Afterwards, he invited the people to worship the Blessed Sacrament..."

**The Sanctity of Wedlock and the Polygamy Issue.** By June 1944, the fate of the war was almost determined, and the Japanese knew that defeat was inevitable. Trying to go over this adverse moment in the best possible way, they called a special meeting of the village chiefs to gain their favour and keep their cooperation. "As a result of the discussion that ensued as to what compensation would be acceptable to the chiefs for their collaboration, it was decided that traditional Tolai polygamy, outlawed by the Christian Churches and previous Governments, would be legalised for all who would prove themselves friends of the Japanese.

**His Martyrdom.** During the Beatification, Pope John Paul II: "When the authorities legalised and encouraged polygamy, Blessed Peter knew it to be against Christian principles and firmly denounced this practice. Because the Spirit of God dwelt in him, he fearlessly proclaimed the truth about the sanctity of marriage. He refused to take the 'easy way' of moral compromise. 'I have to fulfil my duty as a Church witness to Jesus Christ,' he explained. Fear of suffering and death did not deter him. During his final imprisonment, Peter To Rot was serene, even joyful. He told people that he was ready to die for the faith and his people."



Paula, To Rot's wife, declared, "...Expressing my fears, I begged To Rot to give up the catechist's way of life and to take up, instead, a quiet, withdrawn style of living. To Rot had replied: 'Don't you worry about that. It is my duty to die for God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and for my people.' Then he made the sign of the cross. He showed no sign of fear or grief. We sat together for a long time, and then To Rot urged me to take the children home."

On the very night of his martyrdom, Peter To Rot said, "I am here because of those who break their marriage vows and those who do not want to see God's work go forward. That's it. I shall die."

Indeed, that very night, some Japanese doctors came, gave him an injection, and that's it. That night, Papua New Guinea lost his best catechist, and the entire Church won a defender of family and wedlock.

**His Cause of Beatification.** In 1952, just seven years after the death of the catechist, the Apostolic Vicar of Rabaul, Bishop Leo Scharmach, MSC, driven by the growing reputation of martyrdom and the increasing devotion of the faithful in the vicariate, decided to form a commission of three priests for a preliminary investigation



*Pope John Paul II:  
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into the life and circumstances surrounding the death of Peter To Rot. Unfortunately, despite the initial desire and enthusiasm provided by Monsignor Scharmach, the preparations for the opening of the Cause were practically abandoned for the next 30 years until 1985, when Bishop Albert Bundervoet, MSC, asked the Holy See the

Nihil Obstat. The reason for this abandonment did not lie in any moral issue related to the Blessed, nor in any lack of interest or devotion from the people, but only in To Rot's familiar circle because some members of his family had drifted away from Christian values, and were causing public scandals.

The process was resumed in 1987. In 1989, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints appointed a Relator, with Father Lucio de Stefano, MSC, as the Postulator, and with the invaluable assistance of Father John Dempsey, MSC. The Positio Super Martyrio was completed on December 3, 1990. On April 2, 1993, in the presence of Saint John Paul II, a decree regarding the martyrdom of the Servant of God, killed in odium fidei, was promulgated. The beatification ceremony took place on January 17, 1995, at John Guise Stadium in the city of Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, during what was Saint John Paul II's second and final visit to these lands.

**Thomas Augustin Ravaioli, IVE (Vice-Postulator)**



# The spring in Guatemala

I want to share my one-month experience in Guatemala, known by the motto 'El País De La Eterna Primavera' (The Country of The Eternal Spring). I dedicated the whole month of August to learning Spanish in Guatemala. My course was in Antigua (One hour by car from the capital city) at 'San Jose de Viejo school. I have experienced learning languages, and Spanish is the hardest; however, I did my best. The first week was tough because I had no friends with whom to practice Spanish in the house where I was living. I shared this with Confrere, who introduced me to one Mercedarian priest in Antigua. He was so welcoming and introduced me to their community. Praise God, finally, I had the opportunity to practice Spanish.

I went to the La Merced community every afternoon to practice Spanish with them. I am very grateful because they welcomed me well and were willing to help me. I was given the opportunity to participate in all the community activities, including celebrating mass in the parish. Every day, I was given the opportunity to celebrate mass together with the parish priest. The experience with the La Merced community gave me a new enthusiasm for learning Spanish.

The Spanish course finished on 30 August. After that, I had the opportunity to visit Quiché and Chahal. In Quiché I had the chance to visit the shrine where the MSC martyrs were killed during their mission. The simplicity and enthusiasm of the people in Quiché touched me. The experience proved that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Christian faith. In Chahal, I visited the parish and the school where the MSCs perform their mission. There are two confreres in the parish and three confreres in the school. Before leaving Guatemala, I met with the pre-novitiate community in the afternoon.

I want to say that my experience in Guatemala was not only about learning Spanish but also about learning how to live as an MSC. During my time in Guatemala, I encountered a new reality that was very inspiring. I had the opportunity to interact with indigenous people who are very friendly to foreigners. I was deeply touched by their simplicity and how they struggled to survive. Their way of life is an inspiration for me always to strive to be a missionary who is ready for any mission. I want to ex-



tend my sincerest gratitude to the MSC community in Guatemala, Raúl Ruíz Mena, MSC, Julio Molina, MSC and all the MSC confreres for the hospitality and support during my time in Guatemala, *muchas gracias por todo, hasta pronto.*

**Bram Tulusan, MSC**





# Called to show the true face of Christ

In its decree *Ad Gentes*, the Second Vatican Council stated that 'The pilgrim Church is, by its very nature, missionary' (AG, 2). In this month of October, when the Church is dedicated to studying, meditating and reflecting on this theme, as well as missionary and evangelisation activities, it will be edifying to revisit this Council teaching, namely that the Church, in its essence, is missionary. It will also help to remember the concept of the Church as the People of God, which the same Council revived, because it will then be possible to understand that the Church's mission is carried out through all her children, that is, all the baptised and not just ordained ministers and consecrated religious.

Every Christian must see themselves as a missionary because 'all the members [of the Church] are called to feel their missionary duty as their own in all times and places, and not only in specific times and places, entrusting the mission only to a few delegates' (RASCHIETTI, 2011). Of course, the understanding that all the baptised are missionaries does not exclude or diminish the fact that some specific places require the presence of Christians, missionaries *ad gentes*, for the proclamation of the Gospel and the establishment of the Church, given the advent of the Kingdom of God. That said, the attitude of those who remain in their homes and dioceses must be one of cooperation with the missions in distant places, and one of the ways to cooperate is to pray for the missions and for missionaries, as well as to promote a missionary culture.

One truth that needs to be known is that 'it is God's mission with which we are called to co-operate. For this reason, this cooperation is rooted and concretised, above all, in being personally united to Christ' (cf. CNBB: Mission and Cooperation, 25). Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, that is, the sacraments of Christian Initiation, incorporate and configure the faithful to Christ (cf. AG, 36), so the disciple becomes a missionary because united to Christ, he is called to participate in his life and mission. Jesus' mission is all described in the Gospels, but especially in the words that inaugurate his public ministry: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me. He has sent me to proclaim the gospel to the poor: to set the captives free and the blind recover

their sight, to set the oppressed at liberty, to proclaim a favourable year from the Lord' (Lk 4:18-19).

Missionary action is a commitment that springs from following, which must lead to a search for 'social transformation through the values of the Gospel in the concrete lives of people and peoples' (CNBB: Mission and Co-operation, 2016, 18). The following and missionary action carried out by the disciple must not be an imitation, like a theatre, but a configuration to the Master, that is, allowing the words and actions of Jesus to be one's own, taking into account that 'whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood



abides in me, and I in him' (Jn 6:56), that is, the disciple and missionary must be united to the Lord, because the word abide in this Gospel story indicates intimacy and union.

The mission of every baptised person is first and foremost to proclaim and witness to the virtues and style of the Gospel in their daily lives, wherever they may be, in other words, 'to show the true face of Christ' (cf. AG, 38). Pope Paul VI, a saint of our times, recalled in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that 'to evangelise is first of all to bear witness, simply and directly, to God revealed through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. To bear witness that in his Son he loved the world; that in his Incarnate Word he gave being to all things and called people to eternal life' (EN, 26).

**Leonardo Agostinho, MSC**

## May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere

As we approach the month in which we celebrate the memory of our founder, we join the whole Church in also celebrating the 98th World Mission Sunday. In his address for this occasion, Pope Francis drew inspiration from the Gospel parable of the wedding banquet (cf. Mt 22:1-14) and presented us with the theme: 'Go and invite everyone to the banquet'. In this way, we can think of our own missionary identity from the motto left to us by our founder, expressed in number 5 of our Constitutions: 'May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere'!

When our congregation was founded, mission was seen primarily as the conversion of non-Christians and the expansion of the



Church. A missionary congregation had to be willing to travel to distant places, reach unevangelised peoples and, moreover, establish an autonomous ecclesial community. This is why Fr. Jules Chevalier received with great enthusiasm Pope Leo XIII's proposal that his small congregation take on a mission in a group of islands in Oceania, in Melanesia and Micronesia.

In 1882, the first Missionaries of the Sacred Heart arrived in Papua New Guinea. The challenges they faced were numerous, but the mission was established and produced many fruits: priests, men and women religious, bishops and even a cardinal. The participation of the laity was also significant, with Peter To Rot, the first autochthonous Blessed, standing out. He was a lay MSC who was martyred at the end of the Second World War by Japanese troops who dominated the region and beatified in 1995 by St John Paul II.

Missions such as Papua New Guinea and others across the continents show the Church and the world our missionary charism, but they are no longer the only way to live this dimension of our spirituality. With the advent of the Second Vatican Council, the mission concept was broadened to include interreligious dialogue, the promotion of social justice, the defence of human rights and care for our common home. The 'everywhere' of our congregation's motto includes these realities and makes us realise how much the missionary intuition of Fr. Jules Chevalier is present and current in the Church's journey.

We can call these different missionary fronts new ministries, and we find them in several of our groups. Some of our provinces have a strong presence in the field of education, living up to the maxim: educating new hearts for a new world; others bear witness to our charism in the field of communication and the digital world, recognised as the sixth continent to be evangelised. In general, we can

also highlight the commitment of the entire Chevalier Family to promoting care for Integral Ecology, formerly known as JUPIC. Each month, the prayer intentions and practical suggestions proposed every First Friday help us to make our Spirituality of the Heart incarnate.

At the centre of all these missionary realities, whether in the mission ad gentes or in the new ministries, must always be the human person, as Pope Francis tells us in the speech quoted above: 'Mission is a tireless journey towards all humanity to invite it to encounter and communion with God'. May the missionary ardour that inflamed the heart of our founder and the intercession of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart help us ever more to live what Fr Julio Chevalier left as his legacy: to make the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus known and loved everywhere! Eternally!

**Elinaldo Assunção, MSC**

## *In the Church's Mission, no one is left out*

The numbers are striking: thousands upon thousands gathered in massive assemblies, with countless devotees in prayer throughout the night. A Church that fills its members with pride, a media-savvy Church with millions of viewers, microphones, spotlights, and people who are more than ready and capable of handling all of this, especially mastering the digital world. A generation of young religious men and women bearing witness to Christ's love with their new charisms. In short, a Church focused on "saving souls," as is commonly said nowadays. And this Church is not wrong. But this very same Church has another face that is just as true. Its mission is the same as the

former's: to save souls. But the souls this Church seeks to save are far from any visibility.

I live in a parish spread across the vast hinterlands of Piauí, a state in the Northeast of Brazil—an immense area with various communities. Here, I have discovered another side of our Church's life. To begin with, I sometimes have to travel 120 kilometres on dirt roads to celebrate a Mass. Crowds? No. About 30 people at most. With some luck, there are a few communities with a chapel. Most have none, so we celebrate under the cashew trees and beneath the marvellous light of the moonlit Sertão skies. Altars, sacristies—none of these exist here. A table serves as the altar, and a chair as the



credence. I think of my fellow priests who celebrate Masses for large crowds. I admire their courage; I would find it very difficult. But my consolation is knowing that the same Christ present on the altars of grand and luxurious churches worldwide is also present in our humble chapels of the hinterlands. Christ is with the crowds and these few souls who devoutly receive His Body and Blood on the beaten earth of our communities.

Moreover, pastors are needed to guide all the sheep, both the many and the few. Each one of them, in its entirety, awaits the presence of their shepherd. The anonymity of our small and

poor communities calls for a look of fraternity and respect. Here, one sees the daily struggle to obtain what, for many, has long been secured: a simple little chapel where Mass and other sacraments can be celebrated. These people, with their immense capacity to share what they have, are slowly building the Church of Christ. Unnoticed and resilient, this Church also advances in its mission of evangelisation. If we lack crowds, we have faith. If we lack visibility, we have hope. If we are few, our mission is joined to the many. After all, when two or three are gathered in His name, He is present.

Alex Sudre, MSC

## MSC mission in Cuba

The MSC mission in Cuba was started by the MSC of the Province of the Republica Dominicana in 1999. Through cooperation with the MSC of the Indonesian Province, since 2014, the mission in Cuba has been served by the MSC from Indonesia. On this occasion, our confreres will share their experience working in the Diocese of Guantánamo, Cuba.

**Diocese of Guantánamo.** Since 2023, in the entire territory of the diocese of Guantánamo (which administratively covers the whole province of Guantánamo), there have been 11 parishes. According to the 2009 Yearbook of the

Diocese of Guantánamo, out of a population of 1,117,535, the number of people who profess the Catholic faith is 769,426. According to the 2020 Papal report, the diocese of Guantánamo had a total of 197,400 baptised Catholic faithful at the end of 2019. Although the number of non-religious people is increasing, most still see Christianity (especially Catholicism) as their religion, even though most of them do not regularly attend mass. There is also the phenomenon of syncretism of the Catholic Faith with African and mestizo (Spanish descent).

**Nuestra Señora de Las Mercedes Parish.** There are 32 stations spread across two districts in our parish. Our parish area is the largest in the diocese of Guantánamo. We celebrated Mass in the parish and provided catechesis in the stations. Of the 32 stations, only the parish Centre and seven stations have mass. Outside of the seven stations, we conducted catechesis in their houses.

One of our new programs was to equip volunteers who will be sent with us to the stations to give catechesis. Previously, on catechesis days (every afternoon except Monday and Tuesday), we went to the zones (1 zone consisting of several neighbouring stations) with the Ketekis, who are MSC lay people, bringing food for the people.



Most of the parishioners still consider themselves Catholic. They are baptised Catholics, but they only come to church occasionally when someone in their family dies or during the celebration of the patron of the parish and patron of Jamaica City. The very challenging economic conditions and the reality of the people's poverty made us think of doing something more. So, we organised the COMEDOR (Dining Room) programme, which feeds the poor (lunch) every Tuesday and Friday. There are about 50 people who receive this programme. For them, this programme is very useful and very beneficial.

**Challenging mission.** The mission in Cuba is very challenging, but we are optimistic about the development of the people in Cuba. The phenomenon of Catholics in Cuba is in line with the phenomenon of faithful in other countries, where many people have become indifferent to spiritual life. However, the number of baptisms is still increasing every year, so we must ensure that those baptised grow in faith and live their faith every day. The pastoral and spiritual care is urgent. There are two groups of people: The first are those with a deep-rooted Ca-

tholic tradition that has been preserved in families despite the closure of churches for almost 50 years. This is not a large number. Most come from white families of Spanish descent. The second group are the new parishioners evangelised since 1998 and those whose families once practised Catholicism and are seeking their Catholic roots again. They are the majority of our parishioners.

**Ametur ubique terrarum Cor Iesu Sacratissimum in aeternum.** Our ministry in Cuba is not only to think and create pastoral work but also to struggle for our own daily needs. In this situation, we continue to serve with joy because we can take part in the work of the universal church amid an environment that is economically difficult and spiritually arid.

This is the sharing of our experience of the mission in Cuba. We feel joyful and grateful to be entrusted by the congregation to mission in Cuba. May our presence in Cuba give positive meaning and help grow the faith of the people we serve. May the sacred heart of Jesus be loved everywhere.

**Philipus Seno Dewantoro, MSC**

## Jesus, who burnt my heart

On 29 June 2024, at the Marian Shrine of Popenguine, by the laying on of hands of Monsignor Benjamin Ndiaye, Archbishop of Dakar, I was conferred the priestly ministry on behalf of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Engraving this unprecedented gift in the compassionate Heart of Our Lady, I wanted to make it concrete with the motto taken from the implacable Easter hymn entitled 'Jésus qui m'a brûlé le Coeur' ('Jesus who burnt my heart') by Didier Rimaud, sj. It goes like this: 'Let me go out in the evening when too many of my people are without news, and by your name in my eyes, make yourself known'.

In addition to me, 16 other candidates, including 05 religious priests and 11 deacons, religious and diocesan, received the grace of being configured to Christ the Servant.

Preceded by a 5-day preparatory retreat, the ordination took place in a lively and sensational atmosphere, bringing together almost everyone from the four corners of the country and its surroundings. This was all the more true given the unsuspected number of priests and religious who had made the trip. It was also a first for the archdiocese to host ordinations with such a large number of religious.

The afternoon Mass was devoted to the various fraternal meals offered by the Congregation and the Family, respectively. And the immensity of the joy of welcoming a new priest

was inescapable, so much so that the sleepless nights accumulated in favour of this day could hardly be read on the faces. What's more, the mobilisation of the parish community where we are newly assigned and family members from countries in the sub-region was impassive.

Initially scheduled for 30 June, the day after the ordination, the first Mass will finally occur on 14 July at Saint Paul's parish in Grand-Yoff to mark the end of the parish pastoral year. And whatever the tangled web of organisation and proceedings, we have made our own Pauline invitation to give thanks in all circumstances and continue to ask God to rekindle in us this gift we have received.

At the heart of the rural community of Malicounda, in Grandigal, in the department of Mbour (a subdivision of the region of Thiès) lies a large complex whose elegant architecture rivals all the other buildings around it. The UAF MSCs, and particularly those from the District of Senegal, intend to make a spiritual impact on this gigantic estate, which is the stuff of dreams and aims to transform the children who visit it into walking memories. And it was on the occasion of the 70th year of the presence of the MSC in Senegal, under







the high presidency of Monsignor Benjamin NDIAYE, Archbishop of Dakar, in the presence of Father Yvon César BANACKISSA, Superior of the UAF, Father Michael HUBER, Provincial of Austria-South Germany and Father Georges Moise DIABONE, District Superior, that this work, unformed and unpopulated until the date of 04 May 2024 which consecrates its deployment, was blessed.

‘Our Society is also concerned with training young people (...). All those responsible for these children will never lose sight of the sublimity of such an important mission. Considering the immense usefulness of this task, they will apply themselves to it with all the more courage and ardour, as it is more thankless and repugnant to nature.’ Based on the spiritual heritage of our founder, Jules Chevalier, of venerable memory, the man who, incidentally, is the patron of this great Complex, we have dared and continue to dare to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus known and loved everywhere and forever, even in the high-risk profession of education.

In fact, ‘rebuilding the global educational pact’ by promoting education for and about the maturing of the person through the language of ideas, the language of the heart and the language of the hands is indeed the evocative pa-

radigm for which we would like to consume ourselves in a world with unfortunately famous scoops such as egotism, human waste, exclusion, soulless and sweatless consumption. This would then require, in part, a conditioned framework, such as the CSPJC (Complexe Scolaire Père Jules Chevalier), which is for the benefit of all inhabitants of Gandigal and elsewhere, without discriminating against any culture, let alone religious denomination.

To put it mildly, and it has to be said, the fundamental aim of this Complex is to cultivate the dream of a humanism based on solidarity, responding to the expectations of mankind and God’s plan, and consolidating the efforts of the underprivileged to rise above their affront. It is to such a grave responsibility that we each commit ourselves to our specific mission, defined by our terms of reference. There are three of us working here, including a technical director, an economist accountant and a chaplain in charge of spiritual guidance and the religious and moral education of the children.

As a reminder, since we define ourselves by excellence, we have opted to open one class per year to follow better and supervise the generation of beginners and to expect convincing and beneficial results.

**Buama Demba, MSC**

## *And if we make this mission our own today*

‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted. To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4:18-19

The purpose of mission is to bring the lost into the stream of God’s blessing. God sends Abram to fulfil his plan. Genesis 12:1: ‘The Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your homeland and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.

Jesus is sending us today just as he sent his apostles. He invites us to evangelise, to proclaim the Good News, to fight evil and, above all, to help those who are suffering. Jesus sends his disciples out two by two to continue his mission because it is a community adventure. Our faith is enriched by the faith of others, by the faith of our parents, grandparents, friends and acquaintances, and our faith contributes to that of others.

Alone, we are sometimes fragile. In pairs, we have more self-confidence, more power, and better cope with adversity,



depression, and fatigue. He sent them out two by two: the testimony of two people was important to be heard in a trial. What's more, Jesus tells us that mission is not an individual affair but a community endeavour, a team effort. Even after his death, those on the road to Emmaus were always two, not one.

In his homily on World Mission Sunday, Cardinal CRESCENZO SEPE said: 'Today, this mission is a vast ocean into which the whole Church must venture, counting on the help of Christ. The Eucharist encourages and impels us to cross the oceans of languages, cultures, and so many socio-political and religious barriers in order to bring all nations closer to Christ, with a view to a missionary action without frontiers, convinced that the Saviour of the world destroys nothing of what God has sown in all peoples, but brings all to its fullness' (cf. Mt 5:17).

You don't just decide to be 'sent'; Jesus himself decides that. Once called and elected, we are sent on mission. You don't go for your desire or interest; you go as a missionary; you are a 'spokesperson'. And you never go alone. Mission is always a community effort. Never alone.

There are many duties in this great mission. The most important is to invite people to conversion. To do this, we ourselves must bear and express the signs of a true conversion: to love like Jesus, to love in Jesus, and to love for Jesus. This is the true mission of the good missionary.

Like the disciples of Emmaus, we, too, set out 'without delay' to communicate what we have seen and heard after having had a personal experience of the Risen Lord. The encounter with Christ,' writes the Holy Father in the Apostolic Letter *Mane nobiscum Domine*, "constantly deepened in the intimacy of the Eucharist, awakens in the Church and every Christian the urgency of witness and evangelisation" (n. 24).

It should also be noted that Vatican II, in *Ad Gentes*, situated mission as constitutive of the Church: 'By her very nature, the Church, during her pilgrimage on earth, is missionary, since she herself derives her origin from the mission of the Son and

the mission of the Holy Spirit, according to the plan of God the Father'. (AG,2)

John Paul II, of happy memory, identifies three missionary situations in today's world and no longer speaks in terms of territories but refers to 'peoples, human groups, socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known...' (RM, 33). We are moving from a geographical conception of mission to taking into account other fields of mission, 'the new airspaces', because other dimensions of human life and the contemporary world need to know the Gospel.

If each of us today could grasp this same vision that Jesus had, his primary mission on the breadth of the Earth would also become ours. We would be so filled with the love of Christ that nothing could distract us from proclaiming it. The people around us could not escape the name of Jesus. For the mission, we need to know that words are necessary, actions are good, and there is no faithful proclamation of the Gospel without words. Mission is a global but complex reality that is accomplished in different ways, some of which are of particular importance in the current situation of the Church and the world.

Mission is a free and conscious response to God's call. However, we can only perceive this call when we experience a personal relationship of love with Jesus living in his Church.

As the Father has sent me, so I send you. We are sent first and foremost to proclaim the Good News, to bring Christ so that people may be saved. Jesus' mission takes place within the Church, and this mission aims to make a family of us all. At the end of our mission, we must realise that we are a family of God's children, the family of the baptised.

Secondly, the mission of the Church is to be hopeful and bring joy and hope to the world. It is good today to pray for those who have passed on the faith to us, who have brought us the Good News, as the Letter to the Hebrews teaches us: 'Remember your leaders who proclaimed the word of God to you; consider the end of their lives, and imitate their faith' (Heb 13:7). At the same time, the epistle to the Hebrews warns us against false doctrines and bad teachers, whose mission is to lead us astray from the salvation that Christ brings us. 'Do not be led astray by various and strange doctrines, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, and not by food that has done no good to those who have clung to it!' (Heb 13-9)

Let us think of the missionaries who left their towns and villages to come and proclaim the Good News of salvation to us and of their sacrifices. Some of them left their comfortable lives, sacrificed themselves, and accepted living in extreme poverty for the sake of the Gospel.

Let us make our mission that Christ has entrusted to us. Let us go to the ends of the earth to proclaim the Good News of salvation. Mission means making the universal God known to all peoples. We are called to accomplish a mission. And that mission is not the will of men but the will of God. Our objective must, therefore, be the mission that God has entrusted to us for his people. May the Lord help us to be less carnal and to fulfil his mission.

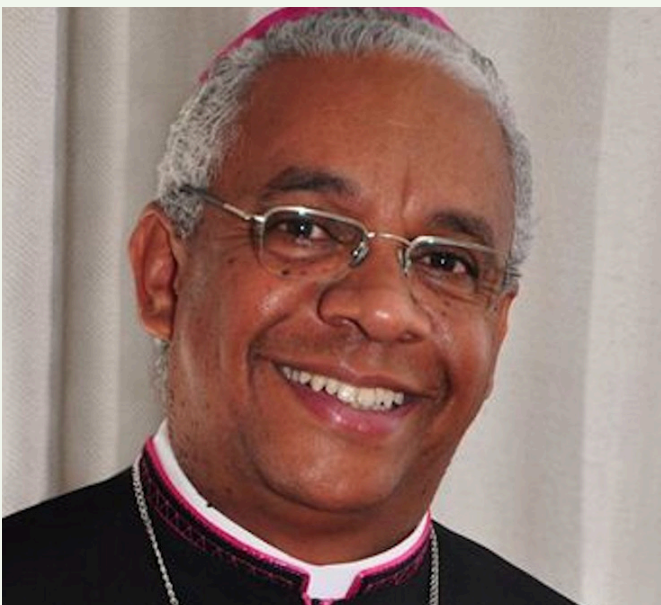
**Simon Lumpini, MSC**





**MSC General Leadership Team:**

Fr Abazaló Alvarado, Fr Bram Tulusan, Br Bernard Mongeau, Br Simon Lumpini, Fr Gene Pejo, and Fr Chris Chaplin.



**Fr Antônio Carlos Cruz Santos, MSC.**

He was installed Bishop of Petrolina, Pernambuco, Brazil, on 29 June 2024.



**Fr John Chinnappan, MSC.**

New Provincial elected of MSC Province in India, on 2 October 2024.





## *Practical training in group facilitation*

Greetings from the beautiful MSC Casa de Encontros Sagrado Coração, in Juiz de Fora, Brazil. August saw the Practicum of the Spanish/Portuguese Language Training in Group Facilitation Practice. Like the English Practicum, it has been an incredibly graceful time. One Lay Chevalier Family (Curitiba Brazil), one MSC Sister (Peru), two FDNCS (Brazil), seven MSC (Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Curitiba, São Paulo), including three provincials, three formators, the five members of the Cor America Team, joined the Formators, Raissa Da Viera, Pablo de O Moura, and Humberto Henrique, during the two weeks of rich and rewarding growth as facilitators. The group moved through their processes and their challenges so beautifully. We sincerely appreciate their work and the guidance of our three new trainers. Congratulations to Raissa, Pablo and Humberto for their incredible work as facilitators of this group through the process, and congratulations to the group for their generous participation. The training programme began online at the end of June, and participants completed five modules of facilitation theory. Following the practicum, they must complete a further three modules of online work to help integrate what they have learned. They will graduate upon completion of the entire course in September. We wish them every blessing.

Some photographs of the internships accompany brief testimonials from three of the participating students. We thank them for their contributions.





## *Community wisdom, an amazing and challenging missionary style*

Participating in the facilitators' course has helped me to connect with myself, with God, with the group and with nature. It is a processual experience and a holistic development where I am moving from the learned and normalised egosystem to the participatory and co-creative ecosystem. As an MSC, I feel that community wisdom from the perspective of the spirituality of the heart is not a palliative spiritual and pastoral remedy that cures the ills of this world; it is not. But it is a concrete and surprising missionary style that, by discerning the personal or group reality in tune with the motions of the Spirit of God, heals human wounds from within to serve in the missionary community with tenderness and missionary joy.

**Joselito López Osorio, MSC**

## *Beloved be the Sacred Heart of Jesus everywhere!*

**Juiz de Fora, 23 August 2024.** I'm sharing my incredible experience here in Juiz de Fora, an enchanting place. Every day, I am graced by the melodious sound of the birds, a perfect harmony! And the sun's radiant glow illuminates and emphasises the harmony and beauty of nature around me. It was in this inspiring setting that I took part in the Facilitation course, which gave me an enchanting and transformative experience.

During the course, I learnt that facilitating goes far beyond what we find in the Oxford dictionary, which defines the term as being ready, willing or available. Facilitating is, first and foremost, a sensory and spiritual experience. It means feeling the body in harmony with the mind, using tenderness and creativity to build meaningful processes, opening up to the new with courage and humility, and praying to the Community Wisdom, which guides us at every step towards discernment. In short, it's about connecting with yourself, with the team and always with the Spirit.

Through facilitation, we get closer to the feelings of the Heart of God, especially when we practise welcoming and deep listening. When we let our charism and spirituality echo, it is spectacular to realise how sensitivity, both of the ears and

of the heart, can be a vehicle for the creation of something new and beautiful that is emerging inside and outside of us, of a group, of the community and the Church.

I express my deep gratitude for this opportunity to grow and for everything emerging in me from this learning. May we continue to walk together, exploring new ways of being and creating in the world.

With affection and gratitude,

**Ir. Luci Jane Pontes Pereira, FDNSC**



## *The Spirituality of the Heart is our source of prayer and community discernment*

From the 11th to the 23rd of August, we lived the on-site part of the ongoing formation course in group facilitation in Juiz de Fora-MG, Brazil. I believe that it has been a time to live, grow, and see ourselves from the path that we, as Chevalier Family, are becoming and doing: simple presence and witness of the love of God revealed in the Heart of Jesus and to ask ourselves what it means to feel, walk, and co-create together, welcoming with tenderness the current challenges and transforming dynamism of our life service.

**Julio César Molina Martínez, MSC**



# Mission in the Chevalier Family

For Fr Chevalier, it was unthinkable that the mission of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart to be undertaken without the laity. He saw lay people as a third branch alongside the Chevalier Family's religious and diocesan laity. It was an idea well ahead of its time, both culturally and ecclesial, and it has taken all these years from that initial vision to begin to deeply discern what his vision might look like in 2024.

The emergence of the International Council of the Laity of the Family in 2017 is a significant step along the journey to understand this vision. The Council did not emerge in a vacuum – it grew out of fifty years of post-Vatican II work as the Spirit moved amongst us. The purpose of the Council is very simple, and that is to connect members of little groups of laity scattered all over the world in every country where the Chevalier Family religious exist. Like religious, the laity are so much stronger when we are aware of who we belong to and are connected with each other. This was very evident at our recent Assembly.

In the early days of the emergence of lay groups, the model was focused on religious forming laity, and there was a necessary dependence of laity on religious. We wanted what we saw in you, and we needed you to lead us. And you did lead us superbly. We generally called you our Spiritual Directors, and appropriately, you were in charge of the groups. You formed us so well that we have matured over the years and begun exploring our distinct vocation as laity within the Chevalier Family. We recognise that we share the same spirit as religious, but we live that spirit in a very different way. We are beginning to find language and images to depict the lay vocation in the Chevalier Family.

The explanation of our logo describes this very well:



‘Organisationally, we are also maturing. We recognise that we must be responsible for our organisation, our formation and our finances, and we are beginning, through the network of International and National Councils, to undertake these responsibilities. We don't see ourselves as an independent group; we don't want to break away from our families of origin, but we are asking that we be seen as an autonomous third branch that is interconnected with our religious brothers and sisters. Quoting from the statement of identity on the Homepage of our website:

At the international level, the governing body (the International Council) of the Laity of the Chevalier Family is not considered to be underneath the professed members and serves alongside the governing bodies of the professed. This is also the vision at the national and local levels and is a work in progress. The professed and laity are interconnected, each with its own autonomy. This is Synodality in practice. There is work to be done to enable this vision to flourish. Amongst the laity, we call the religious who accompany us



The Logo is distinctive in its features and differs from the explicitly Christian images of the MSC, FDNCS and the MSC Sisters. While the key symbols of Spirituality of the Heart are present in the recognisable but softly drawn Sacred Heart and Cross of Jesus, the Logo also contains strong images of the human interconnection and interrelationship that are identifying features of our shared charism, yet at the same time point to the distinctiveness of our Lay Charism, where we live in families, we earn our living in our communities, and we commit ourselves in a way that is different from professed members. When the images are considered through the eyes of our Charism, they point us to foundational scriptures: since it is in him (LOVE) that we live and move and exist (Acts 17:28) and this LOVE of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Romans 5:5) and

whoever fails to LOVE does not know God, because God is LOVE. (1 Jn 4: 8)



as Spiritual Companions, not Spiritual Directors. Fr. Abzalton referred to what we are asking of religious as a mindset shift. We ask that you accompany us as companions on our journey to the heart rather than direct and control us. We are asking that you actively encourage us into a mature self-understanding of our place in the family. We recognise that the only purpose for all that is emerging is for the sake of engaging in our shared mission of ‘making the Sacred Heart of Jesus known and loved everywhere’.

At a recent meeting of the International Council with the Trigenalate members of the International Council, we agreed to this vision statement:

- We envision the Chevalier Family to consist of three branches (only two are currently operational) the Religious and the Laity.
- We envision a laity who are deeply formed in Spirituality of the Heart, through the lens of their family of origin (FD-NSC, MSC sisters, and MSC men) but also, who recognise and celebrate their unity in diversity.
- We hope that this understanding of the Lay Charism could be a gift to the whole Chevalier Family where traditional divisions and differences are less important than our shared mission.
- We recognise that formation of the laity into this expansive vision is a work in progress, and as an ideal, but not yet a reality, it is the responsibility of the laity to form new members and to engage in ongoing formation. Currently, in many places, it is still essential and desirable for all formation to be offered by Spiritual Companions.
- We ask that formation of religious into this expansive vision be a role that the Religious Congregations assume.



· We further ask, that formation of Spiritual Companions rather than Spiritual Directors be undertaken by the Congregations so that this role comes to be seen as a key role within Provinces, ideally offered to younger members who have a passion for the laity and a capacity to form mature faith groups who are aware of their key role to contribute to the shared mission.

You might think this is a dream, but it is happening in Indonesia. The Indonesians are leading the world in this mindset shift guided by Petrus Maringka, Fr Sam Maranresy msc and Fr Joni Astanto msc.

Petrus says:

“The Laity of the Chevalier Family is a movement dedicated to living the Spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus daily, whether at work, at home, or community. To live this Spirituality of the Heart, it is essential that we fully understand it, a process that is neither easy nor quick but requires ongoing dedication. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) priests, the MSC sisters (not present in Indonesia), and the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (DOLSH) are religious congregations rooted in this Spirituality of the Heart. In Indonesia, we also have two other congregations, the FBHK and TMM, which share this focus. These religious communities, with their deep knowledge and understanding of the Spirituality of the Heart, play a vital role in realizing the vision of Father Jules Chevalier.

For the Chevalier Family laity to grow and thrive, continuous collaboration between the laity and religious communities is crucial. In Indonesia, the Chevalier Family comprises four religious orders and one lay group, all working together to spread the good news and embody God’s heart on earth. The lay groups formed in parishes and communities must continue to grow and receive regular and ongoing formation. Briefings on Heart Spirituality, led by these religious groups, will help impart the charism and Spirituality of the Heart as envisioned by Father Jules Chevalier. This collaboration will strengthen and empower the Chevalier Family lay group as they continue to develop.

The vision of Father Jules Chevalier—“May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere”—remains highly relevant today and is desperately needed. Violence persists across the world, affecting people of all ages, from adults to children, in both families and public spaces. This issue is exacerbated by the rapid development of technology, which makes harmful content easily accessible to everyone. In today’s world, human priorities often shift toward self-interest, making selfishness difficult to control. This behaviour affects people’s faith, leading many to rely on their strength and self-confidence while abandoning God.

Efforts to introduce more people to the Spirituality of the Heart are essential in addressing these challenges and combating violence. By understanding the Spirit of the Heart, individuals are called to emulate Jesus in loving, forgiving, serving, and fostering a culture of love within their families and communities”.



# Mission in a changing world: MSC Community Netherlands

We report on some projects in which we, MSC Community Netherlands (since the Feast of the Sacred Heart), are involved. We must painfully observe that the Church in the Netherlands as an institution is slowly disappearing. More and more parishes are merging but hardly growing from within. Monastic communities are dying out. But in other places we see signs of hope regarding a totally different faith community. Yet we too, in the Netherlands, have not lost our faith. Many are searching for the deeper dimension in this changing world. Many translate this into projects such as those listed below. Dutch brothers are closely involved in these projects below. Read about these signs of hope!



**Gypsy work, Roma and Sinti.** Our confrere Jan van der Zandt (81) has been the national pastor for caravan dwellers, Roma and Sinti for more than 30 years. In recent years, he has had help from confrere Antoon Egging (79). From our MSC Province we have supported his work financially for many years and now, with the transition to Community, the foundation has received an additional amount so that the work can continue in the coming years. It involves over 40,000 caravan dwellers, Roma and Sinti in often great poverty.



**Supply and Demand International (VAI).** VAI was created through the efforts of religious in the 1980s when there was a lot of youth unemployment in the Netherlands. Workshops were set up throughout the country where young people could gain work experience by overhauling old tools, typewriters, computers, bicycles, medical devices etc. MSC was closely involved with VAI all these years. Gerrit te Wierik worked in administration more than 25 years and his brother, Theo, was national chairman for over 12 years. (On this moment André Claessens, Belgium, and Theo te Wierik are ambassadors of VAI)

The refurbished goods came, initially, to young people in Africa so that they could take jobs and thus earn an income.



For over 10 years now, there have been mediators in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Congo DC and Cameroon. They send requests for projects to the Netherlands and in the Netherlands, Vraag en Aanbod (over 40 volunteers) ensures that these projects (after all the goods have been reconditioned) are placed in large 20 and 40 ft containers and shipped. The costs are still, and mainly, funded by orders and congregations. Several young people are still involved in Africa and in the Netherlands. Six years ago, MSC Netherlands entered into a contract with VAI for 2 X 3 years. Confreres in Congo DC sent projects to VAI and MSC Netherlands funded these projects. These included a wonderful project in Kinshasa where there is a carpentry workshop where young people receive training and even a government diploma! Our confreres there have done and continue to do a fantastic job. Our director (volunteer), who has just returned from Africa to visit the projects there, said he has now seen great progress. Young people have even set up their own businesses with staff employed. Think of a sewing workshop, car garage, construction company. Many of the refurbished products also benefit schools. There is even a large warehouse in one of the countries where goods are stocked and can now be delivered faster to the spot.



**Foundation Bread Father Gerrit Poels.** After 25 years, the government wanted to subsidise. Gerrit didn't want this! He wanted to remain in charge himself! He gave all the work to the government and started spending the next 25 years delivering bread at night for people who were ashamed to come and get bread, or mothers whose husbands didn't allow them to leave the house much, if at all. It continued every night. Even on Christmas or Easter night! No holidays and no days off! In 2016, he asked a confrere to continue his and his wife's work in a foundation. That happened and the MSC is still very directly involved in the work. The foundation was given a wooden building by the parish. There, the group of volunteers led by two mission sisters SSpS from India and Indonesia, receive a hot meal on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. More than 75 homeless people are involved each afternoon. On Thursday mornings, food parcels are distributed in Tilburg Noord to, mainly, Somali young mothers with their families. The mothers have time to cook but do not have the products. This involves 120 people. The Trappists offered to provide 50 loaves of bread every week. The wooden building is in need of replacement. All nine orders and congregations in and around the city of Tilburg, are paying for the new prefab building with even solar panels. All this is seen by a lot of Tilburg residents and they are now also moving more and more. Residents donate money and goods. Others give free help to realise the new building. The construction company clears the old wooden building for free and provides new sewerage etc.



**MST Keeping people in the picture.** The mission Keeping People in Focus provides the MST with the right to exist. For this purpose, the MST was founded in 1989 by two religious congregations: the MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart) and FDNESC (Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart). The MST is indebted to the social tradition of these two congregations. Keeping people in the picture means that the MST wants to support people in vulnerable circumstances in a stimulating way with:

- Learning the Dutch language
- Being a support point for migrants
- Being a support point for Roma and Sinti
- Being a living room

The city of Tilburg has over 120 nationalities and many hundreds from these nationalities knock on the MST's door. There is much more faith than we think...!!! You just have to want to see it!

Theo te Wierik, MSC



# Exploring England and Ireland: A missionary journey

**Embarking on a Memorable Mission.** In December 2022, Fr Carl Tranter, MSC then provincial of Irish Province, and his provincial council proposed something groundbreaking to the MSC Indian Union: establishing a mission in Ireland and England. This sparked a journey of deep reflection and unity. With unanimous support from the MSC Union Council and subsequently following the Union's extraordinary chapter, the idea gained momentum. Discussions between leaders, including the present Provincial Fr Joe McGee MSC and Fr Carl, paved the way for detailed plans. Finally, during the 2023 General Chapter in Rome, the decision was made to embark on a pilgrimage of exploration, uniting hearts and minds from different corners of the world. It marked a significant step forward for the MSC mission.

On April 11, 2024, Joshua and I embarked on an extraordinary journey from Bangalore to England and Ireland, spanning approximately 9000 kilometres. This mission, imbued with a sense of purpose and discovery, was destined to leave an indelible mark on our hearts and minds. Our journey was more than just a physical one; it was a spiritual and cultural exploration that deepened our understanding and commitment to our missionary work.

**A Warm Welcome to England.** Arriving at Heathrow Airport around 7:30 p.m., we were greeted with warmth and familiarity by Fr Dave Nixon MSC, whose friendly demeanour made us feel instantly at home. The transition from Bangalore's 35-degree heat to London's cool 10-degree spring air was refreshing and revitalising. Following dinner, Fr Nixon graciously escorted us to the Parish Presbytery of Chesham St. Columba in the Diocese of Northampton, setting the stage for what would be a memorable and enriching stay.



**Celebrating Our Founder's Legacy.** The day after our arrival, Fr Joe, the provincial, invited us to join in celebrating the 200th birth anniversary of our founder, Father Jules Chevalier. The celebration took place at the MSC college in Princethorpe, a school known for its vast campus and excellent infrastructure and academic pursuit. Fr Dave drove us to the college, where Fr Joe and Fr Alan, the former principal and current school chaplain, warmly welcomed us. The evening included a gathering with the school staff in a newly constructed block, featuring a brief talk about our founder and the purpose of the meeting, followed by a grand dinner. The sense of community and shared mission was palpable, making the event both inspiring and memorable.

**Embracing London's Rich Heritage.** During our four-day stay in London, we had the opportunity to explore the city's vibrant culture and rich history. Our sightseeing included visits to iconic landmarks such as London Bridge, Buckingham Palace, and the Houses of Parliament. The bustling city, with its diverse ethnic groups and smiling, active people capturing memories through photographs, was a delight to experience. On Sunday, we attended Mass at two churches, where parishioners, including those of Indian descent, extended their warm hospitality. That evening, Fr Giacomo MSC, who had just returned from an Ignatian pilgrimage in Spain, joined us for a delicious dinner prepared by Fr Dave, adding another layer of warmth and friendship to our visit.

**A Journey to Ireland.** Our journey from Chesham to Liverpool and then to Holyhead, where we boarded a ferry to Dublin, was enchanting. The twilight ferry ride set a magical tone for the adventures that awaited us in Ireland. Upon our late-night arrival in Dublin, Fr Joe welcomed us warmly and escorted us to our rooms for the night. The next morning, we were introduced to many MSC priests during breakfast and given a tour of the community house by Fr Joe and Alan. Later, a taxi took us to Killinarden parish in Tallaght, a suburb of Dublin, facing significant social and economic challenges. The parish priest warmly welcomed us, Fr Fintan O'Driscoll MSC, and pastoral key worker Ms Patricia, who drove us through the streets of Killinarden and the surrounding areas. They introduced us to the life of the local people. The MSC's mission in Killinarden focuses on providing support and hope through various outreach programs, including youth activities, education, and social services.

**Connecting with the Provincial Leadership Team.** In the Provincial community, we immersed ourselves in the local lifestyle and shared an Indian meal with the Provincial leadership team, amused by their enjoyment of the spicy food. The following day, we were invited to address the provincial council, where we shared our thoughts, experiences, and the purpose of our visit. We extended an invitation for some of the council members to visit our communities in India, fostering future collaboration and cultural exchange.





**Discovering Cork and Galway.** From Dublin, Fr John Fitzgerald MSC drove us approximately 260 kilometres southwest to Cork, a city rich in MSC history. Here, we were warmly embraced by the community and visited the MSC Mission Support Centre, meeting the dedicated staff and observing the impressive work of our mission fundraising efforts. We also met with Fr John Fitzgerald and Ms Mary Morrish, the Head of Fundraising and Office Manager. Under the guidance of Fr John Finn MSC, the community superior, we journeyed to Cobh, standing before its majestic Cathedral and reflecting on its significance as the Titanic’s final port of call.

On Sunday, we attended mass at the Sacred Heart Parish, where we met many people, encountering the genuine warmth of the Irish people, whose hospitality knows no bounds. In the afternoon, Fr Hugh Hanlon, MSC drove us approximately 200 kilometres north from Cork to Galway, another historic city where several MSC priests warmly welcomed us. We visited the vibrant Galway beach and passed by the impressive National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway).

The next day, Fr Hugh drove us to the Ballinfoyle parish, where we concelebrated the parish mass with Fr Kevin MSC. In the evening, Fr Patsy MSC, took us for a drive to Clifden, which is so beautiful with its sea beaches. Patsy took us to some very secluded places, adding to the beauty and tranquillity of our journey.

**A Deeply Inspiring Pilgrimage to Knock.** Our visit to Our Lady of Knock, the site of a miraculous apparition in 1879, was deeply inspiring. Known for its spiritual significance, Knock holds a special place in the hearts of many. We spent time in prayer and reflection, seeking the intercession of Our Lady for the success of the mission collaboration between the two MSC provinces. The serene and sacred atmosphere

of Knock offered us a profound sense of peace and spiritual renewal. Fr Joe reminded us that our founder had made a novena to Our Lady to begin the good work of our missionary congregation. Continuing this tradition reinforced our commitment to our mission and reminded us of the power of faith and prayer.

**A Vision for the Future.** As our journey draws to a close, we find ourselves gazing toward the horizon with a sense of optimism and possibility. Inspired by the bonds we’ve forged and the lessons we’ve learned, we’re excited to chart a new course for future collaboration between the MSC provinces in India and Ireland.

Upon our return to Bangalore, we will share our experiences with the council and other members, sparking a dialogue about the possibilities for future endeavours in parish ministry, chaplaincy in hospitals or prisons, and MSC Mission Support Centre initiatives, among others. We aim to send three or four members to Ireland in October 2024. During the initial four to six months of their arrival, they will focus on immersing themselves in Irish culture and community. This acclimatisation period will deepen their understanding of Irish life and lay the groundwork for future ministries.

Subsequently, they will transition into actively participating in various ministries across different locations, whether within communities or individually. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of Irish life while enabling meaningful contributions to their assigned ministries.

**Farewell and Reflection.** As we bid farewell to our MSC Irish confreres and the beautiful country of Ireland, we reflected on the warmth and hospitality we experienced. The kindness and generosity of the Irish Province confreres, especially Fr Joe McGee MSC, the Provincial Superior, left a lasting impression on us. Our mission journey in Ireland was inspiring and deeply enriching, reinforcing our commitment to our work. We felt grateful for the unforgettable memories and the strong connections we made. Ireland will always hold a special place in our hearts.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Provincial Secretary Ms Paula Ryan-Kavanagh for meticulously arranging our itinerary and Fr Carl Tranter MSC for initiating this mission collaboration and extending the invitation. Their efforts and support made our mission journey both possible and memorable.

Looking ahead, we are filled with optimism and excitement for the possibilities that lie on the horizon. Our vision for the future encompasses not only continued collaboration in parish ministry, chaplaincy, and mission support initiatives but also a deeper integration into the fabric of Irish life and community. This journey may have reached its conclusion, but the mission it has ignited will continue to unfold, weaving together the threads of our shared humanity and spreading the love of God on earth with the shared vision of our Founder, Father Jules Chevalier.

Darwin, MSC

## *MSC Indian Province: First Provincial Chapter*



19th August 2024 was a great day in the history of the MSC Indian Province as it celebrated the First Provincial Chapter from 19 -23 August 2024 in Nirjhari Conference Centre, Carmelaram Bangalore.

The Theme of the Provincial Chapter “Celebrating Our Present, Embracing Our Future: A New Horizon in Our Missionary Journey.” helped us to feel that we were gathered together as brothers, belonging to something bigger than ourselves and our local communities, namely to the province community and the Congregation, sharing our common concerns for the Mission and Future of MSC Indian Province. The 27 Capitulars of the Chapter gathered in a spirit of prayerful discernment.

The Opening Ceremony set the tone from the onset: Gathered in the love of Christ, we are formed to be goodness and

light in the world. The prayer spoke to the heart of each one. The Eucharistic Celebration was presided over by Rev.Fr. Gene Pejo MSC, The Assistant General, and the Facilitator for the most important Chapter of our MSC Indian Province. In his Welcome Message, Fr.Darwin Thatheus MSC, Provincial Superior, invited the Chapter Body to see this as a special moment of discernment.

The Report of the Provincial Superior aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the activities, achievements, challenges, and future recommendations of the MSC Indian Province. This clearly defined our capacity for embracing the Newness that God was presenting to us. It was an invitation for the capitulars to listen, see and understand the newness. The delegates who came together considered the mission directions for the coming few years. The chapter, which is on the threshold for the Indian Province, discussed Statutes as its primary importance. Apart from this, the chapter also focussed on Formation, Mission, Apostolate and Finance as its important milestones.

The fraternal dimension of the provincial chapter was experienced in our unity around the Table of the Lord and in our common prayer, our fellowship at meals and evening socials, and the unanimity in voting. While respecting the different points of view on the topics discussed, in the end, we reached a consensus about the documents in preparation for our Future.

I believe we can confidently say that the provincial chapter was an experience of the movement of the Spirit, giving our province a clear direction for the next few years to grow more in MSC Spirit and Missionary Zeal.

**L. Stanley Loude John, MSC**

## *Episcopal Ordination of Mgr Simon Samendra Mani, MSC*

On May 2, 2024, the Holy See announced the appointment of Reverend Father Simon Samendra Mani, MSC, presently serving as Rector of the Pacific Regional Seminary in Suva, Fiji, as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Tarawa and Nauru. This important ecclesiastical decree was made public in the Vatican’s Daily Bulletin at noon, Rome time, marking a significant moment for the Catholic communities of Kiribati and Nauru.

Born on March 27, 1968, in Labasa, Fiji, Bishop-elect Mani is the eldest of four siblings. His upbringing in the rural sugarcane district of Nagigi, Labasa, was deeply rooted in the faith traditions of his Indo-Fijian ancestors, descendants of indentured labourers brought to Fiji by the British to work on plantations. His spiritual formation was heavily influenced by his devout parents, particularly his mother, whose stead-

fast guidance played a pivotal role in nurturing his vocation to the priesthood. His early academic years were shaped under the tutelage of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM) at Holy Family Secondary School and the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel. Furthermore, the Columban Fathers in Fiji and Sr. Francis Hardiman, SMSM, were instrumental in steering him towards his religious calling.

In 1989, he commenced his religious formation with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC). A year later, he entered the MSC novitiate on Abemama Island, Kiribati, where he took his first religious vows on January 25, 1991. His seminary formation was completed at the Pacific Regional Seminary in Suva, culminating in his ordination to the priesthood on November 30, 1996, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Suva.



Throughout his priestly ministry, Bishop-elect Mani has undertaken numerous pastoral and administrative roles, including assignments as assistant parish priest, parish priest, principal of the Chevalier Training Centre, and bursar for the MSC Pacific region. In 2006, his leadership capabilities were recognised with his appointment as Superior of the MSC for the Pacific, a role he held for three consecutive three-year terms. In January 2018, he assumed the office of Rector of the Pacific Regional Seminary, a position he held with distinction until his episcopal elevation.

Bishop-elect Mani's ties to the Diocese of Tarawa and Nauru run deep, having spent his novitiate in Kiribati and frequently visiting the islands during his tenure as MSC Superior. His



appointment as bishop reinforces the historical connection between the diocese and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who were foundational to establishing the Church in the region. The diocese, originally established by MSC missionaries from France, has been consistently overseen by MSC bishops, a tradition that continues with Bishop-elect Mani.

The Catholic faithful of Tarawa and Nauru had been eagerly awaiting the consecration of their new bishop, particularly in the wake of the passing of Bishop Paul Mea, MSC, and the untimely death of Bishop-elect Father Koru Tito due to kidney failure. Their anticipation culminated in a jubilant celebration upon the arrival of Bishop-elect Mani.

On July 27, his episcopal ordination took place at the Sports Complex in Betio, an event of great historical and spiritual significance. Thousands of attendees from across the Kiribati Archipelago, Nauru, and even the United States, Australia, and New Zealand participated in this momentous occasion. The ceremony was graced by the presence of several bishops of the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC), including Cardinal Soane Mafi, Archbishop Michael Reyan of Guam, Bishop Kolio Etuale of Pago Pago, and Cardinal John Ribat of Port Moresby. Their participation underscored the unity and strength of the Church in the Pacific region.

The day following his ordination, Bishop Mani celebrated his first Mass as bishop, during which he solemnly invited the diocesan clergy and religious to renew their promises of obedience and service. In a moving act of unity, he expressed his gratitude to Father Iona Tatau, who had served as Apostolic Administrator during the sede vacante, and encouraged the clergy to reconcile with him and among themselves, setting a tone of healing and solidarity at the outset of his episcopate.

The Diocese of Tarawa and Nauru, a cornerstone of MSC missionary history, continues to face significant challenges. Nevertheless, with Bishop Mani's proven leadership and administrative expertise, there is renewed optimism for the future growth and revitalisation of the diocese and its clergy. The Catholic Church in Tarawa and Nauru, nurtured under the spiritual guidance of MSC bishops since its inception, will continue to thrive under his stewardship, ensuring the continuation of its rich ecclesial and missionary heritage.

**Vito Kelekele, MSC**

## *Building fraternity to heal the world*

A fraternity congress with over 4,000 brothers, including cardinals, bishops, priests and lay people, among several delegates from many countries, is presented in several languages. Like the Eucharist, it unites all the brothers around the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to heal the wounded world.

Our most painful wound is not to treat others as brothers and sisters; we live as slaves of the ego and forget to embrace our brothers and sisters. The consequences are terrible: war, as shared by the auxiliary bishop of Sambir, Ukraine, Msgr. Hryhoriy Komar, the suffering of migrants by Ms Leyden Revelo, who works for Caritas in the USA and other



wounds that need to be healed. We need to live as brothers, and Eucharist unites us in a song of fraternity (Paul Martinez), to be a family to live and learn in this school of fraternity (Mgr Graziano Borgognova), and to let it transform our life and the whole world (Mgr Andrew Cozzens).

We already have the testimony of several people and families as a light in this darkness of pain: the cry of Montesiño (Dominican Republic), Mons. Oscar Romero (Salvador), Mons. José Antonio (Vicariate of Esmeraldas, Ecuador) amid drug traffickers and gangs, the lay family of Mato Grosso who remain faithful to work in the mission, the lay people of Switzerland (Max and Maria Gabriela) who try to live synodality in the family or also Mary Wu from Taiwan in front of the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament to the children. But something continues to strike us in the face of wounded fraternity. It is the Eucharist as a source, the strength from such a



sacred heart of God as Mgr Jose Ignacio Munillo says, ‘The Heart of Jesus is a school of Love. It is the human school of divine love, and it is the divine school of human love’

**Paco Wellikin, MSC**

## *MSC Parish Suva Fiji gives their school a facelift in record time*

In March of this year (2024), I took up the appointment of Parish Priest of one of the three MSC Parishes in Fiji. After two decades in the USA, I returned to a country that had undergone many changes, and I had changed, too. St Agnes was my first parish assignment after ordination in 1991. The children I had baptised are now adults and have families. Many of my older parishioners are still around, and many have moved on or passed away. St. Agnes is a place where I have many good memories.

St. Agnes Church is located in Samabula, Suva, the capital of Fiji. We MSC have been at the parish since 1985, when Fr Lambert Somar, MSC of the MSC Indonesian Province, became the first MSC after the Columban Fathers. With the parish, Fr. Lambert also inherited St. Agnes Primary School, which was a block from the church. The school was established in 1960 by the Sisters of Compassion. The school’s manager is the Parish Priest of St Agnes Church. St Agnes Primary School is a co-educational primary school that educates 873 children from kindergarten to Year 8. St. Agnes is its patron saint, and the school motto is “Christ Our Light.” The example of St. Agnes and the motto guide and maintain the standards for the educational process. The feast day of St Agnes is celebrated on January 21 each year.

St Agnes Primary School provides education for children from the neighbouring communities such as Muslim League, Nabua Housing, Cunningham, Tamavua, Tacirua, Kinoya, Nabua Village, Vatuwaqa, Wailoku, Caubati, Veisida, Nadera, Nadawa and more. Students are from both formal and informal settlements. The school caters to low-income

families in the surrounding area where drugs, gangs, and crime are high.

My first visit to the school left me speechless as it was the rainy season, and many classrooms had leaking roofs and classroom ceilings on the brink of caving in on students. Several of our school buildings, over 70 years old, have not been adequately maintained and badly needed repairs, including raked tiles and electrical and plumbing problems. Of real concern was the growth of black mould in some classrooms due to the moisture and leaks. If continuously exposed to its spores, black mould can be deadly to humans, especially children. These were priority concerns for our teachers’ and students’ health and wellbeing. In addition, there was the issue of trash and broken desks, chairs, timber, metal grates, and pipes lying all over the place. All told, the building issues at St Agnes Primary were like a ticking time bomb that needed immediate diffusing to have a safe environment. The Parish’s only choice was to take action and do the repairs as soon as possible. The parish would carry out the repairs during the two weeks of the May school holidays.

The problems facing St Agnes were the same for just about every non-government school in the country. Four coups and two decades of bad governance had given rise to a series of military-backed governments with draconian, divisive policies bordering on dictatorship that contributed to the general malaise, fear and misery. The government promised everything but did not deliver. For schools, they promised free education for children and free buses to school. The government allocated dismal funds towards building upkeep and maintenance. Meanwhile, school buildings continue to deteriorate rapidly, while our children and teachers (who spend six hours plus) five days a week continue exposure to mould, dampness, and other health risks that could be avoided.

The current government is much more democratic and is returning responsibility to the owners of the schools. Still, we must contend with two decades of behavioural modifications, especially with the entitled “freebee” mindset.



The school roll of 783 students means we have quite a few classes bursting at the seams. There is barely enough floor space, with too many children packed into small classrooms. Some classes have from 48 to 50 students. There are two streamed classes from years one to six and three streams of years seven and eight. Such conditions are just not conducive to a proper learning environment. They place enormous pressure on students and teachers. The teacher-to-student ratio means that children's capacity for learning is greatly compromised as they will not get the necessary teacher's attention. Renovations and repair work at St Agnes Primary School occurred during the first term school holidays (04/05/24 – 20/05/24). The Parish took upon itself this responsibility as the school was in bad shape and risked being closed down by the Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) for non-compliance. Our initial plans were for a modest budget of \$15,000 to remove tiles and paint the double-storey concrete building with seven classrooms, a library, and a school hall. But from day one, we decided to go out and give the entire school a facelift. Foremost on our minds was the health and safety of the 783 children and 20-plus teachers and staff. They deserve a school environment that is clean, safe and conducive for learning and the pursuit of knowledge and truth centred on "Christ Our Light". We wanted to ensure that when the teachers and students returned in the second term, they would enter a completely revamped, clean, renewed school environment.



Work began on Saturday, May 4, with a volunteer force of 10 men and concluded on May 20. The 11 communities of the Parish would each take turns cooking lunches, afternoon tea, and dinner for the workforce. They went all out to keep the workers well-fed and hydrated. Work would begin at 8:00 am and conclude at 10:00 pm. We had 13 days before school reopened.

On day one, when faced with the time constraints and enormity of the task, one of our Parish Leadership Team (PLT) members asked me: "Father, how are we going to get this massive task done in two weeks and with so few?" I replied in the words I heard many times during my army service: "We are going to fight this battle with this team we have...we do our part and leave the rest to God." These words proved prophetic as, during the 13 days, more parishioners, encouraged by the small group of volunteers, would trickle into joining the work. Our first task was the removal of the accumulated trash. This job took several days as there was so much trash and old broken desks, chairs, lumber, roofing irons, metal pipes, metal grills, old appliances, and broken concrete strewn everywhere. Three dumpster skiffs were hauled out of the property while about the same amount was burnt by the roadside. The next task was to remove the vinyl tiles from the five bottom classrooms and the concrete-block library. This task was the most time-consuming and challenging as the tiles had cemented onto the concrete floors. It took more than a week to get all the tiles removed. On Monday, May 13 (a public holiday) and Saturday, May 18, over 50 men, women and children from the parish came to attack the tiles with shovels, hammers, chippers and scrapers. This same force would join for two days to paint the entire school.

It was most encouraging to see students as young as class one and two with paint brushes painting classrooms, doing odd chores, and loving it. It was a proud indication that the Parish has taken full responsibility for its school.

On May 2, the beginning of term two of school, the teachers and students entered the renovated, newly painted, clean



school. All this was done by a hard-working team of parish volunteer workforce, ably assisted by professional builders from Rapid Works Construction Company. Rapid Works is owned by David Qiolevu (a St Agnes graduate). His work crew volunteered to work from 5.00 pm – 10 pm Monday – on Fridays and from 8:00 am – 10:00 pm for two Saturdays and the public holiday (May 13). The professional work crew would handle even more technical tasks while the parish team did the tile removals, cleaning, painting and water blasting.

The workforce completed the renovation on a modest budget of \$30,512.39 for materials alone. We saved about the same amount as a volunteer workforce bore the entire work. The volunteers put in 2,450 hours of labour over 13 days. On the conservative side, this saved us an estimated labour cost

of \$40,000.00. Our volunteers succeeded against formidable odds of possible closure due to OHS non-compliance issues. Today, St. Agnes School inspires and is the envy of many other schools. It is a truly remarkable and proud achievement.

St Agnes Parish would like to acknowledge and thank our generous donors and partners in this massive task. In the name of the Priests and parishioners of St Agnes Parish and the teachers and 783 students of St Agnes Primary School, we acknowledge and say thank you to Mr. Mahen Nair of Rosy Cakes, Caritas Fiji, David Qiolevu and Rapid Works, St. Agnes School Management, Yvonne Brekerfield's group of Ex Scholars, the 11 communities of the Parish and last but not least, the MSC Parish priests, Parish Leadership.

Ioane Sigarara, MSC



## MSC Vietnam: Discernment gathering

Stephen Hackett MSC, the Provincial Superior of the Australian Province, writes to the MSC Vietnam Community back in February 2024:

You would know that the Provincial Chapter held in Sydney last April recommended “that the Provincial Administration organise a gathering in Vietnam, as a PRIORITY, to assess the current situation and plan for the future of Vietnamese MSC ministry.” Addressing this recommendation, the Provincial Council endorsed a proposal that this gathering use the ‘Communal Wisdom’ approach to discernment so that the focus of the gathering is attentive listening in prayer and in sharing to the Holy Spirit. We believe this approach will best serve the community as it looks to plan for the future of its mission, its ministries, and its community life.

This statement brought us to the preparation process for the gathering early this year with the facilitation of Khoi, MSC and

Hien, a diocesan priest in Australia with experience in Heart of Life. The Preliminary Discernment in the community (February-May 2024) indicated five main areas/themes:

- Potential
- Community Life
- Initial Formation
- Vocations
- Mission/Ministry

From July 23 to July 29, we all gathered as the whole group for the process of discernment in the spirit of communal wisdom, with the presence of 3 observers: Gene Pejo from the Generalate, Thoi Tran from Australia Province and Robert Irwin (staying in Vietnam for four months at the moment). The process of discernment is very fruitful and prayerful.

We started the gathering with the Opening Ritual in the evening. It was a wonderful time for the MSC Vietnam to gather on the night of 23 July at K’Long Don Bosco Centre to commence their discernment together with a ritual in which Bob Irwin, who was the Australian Provincial when the Australian MSC decided to come and begin the mission in Vietnam, brought in the light into the midst of the gathering. The light was, in turn, passed on to each community member. Finally,



it was passed on to Thoi Tran, who has significantly contributed to the development of the mission for the first twenty years, now representing the Provincial, Stephen Hackett, in his turn, lit the discernment candle of the community. Gene Pejo, on behalf of the Superior General, said a prayer and conferred a blessing on the community to conclude the opening ritual.

On the first day, we commenced our communal discernment by reflecting on what communal discernment is for us at this time in our morning prayer. For us, Communal Discernment is: Deepening our relationships with God and others, Promptings of the Spirit, Being honest, Surrendering self-Open-minded to the Spirit in-depth, Journey of adventure with surprises and risks, Open with the surrendering heart for God's will (not my own). Communal Discernment is NOT: Making decisions Consensus, Fear, Self-affirmation, or My belief/mentality. In the morning session, we discern our identity as human persons and Christians. In the afternoon, we discerned our identity as MSCs today. The Statements that the whole community came up with are as follows:

**IDENTITY - Who are we as human beings and as Christians?** We are unique individuals, born and nourished in love, called to acknowledge and embrace our strengths and weaknesses and be transformed toward holiness through our daily relations. (Ref. Jeremiah 1:1,4-10)



**IDENTITY - Why did we choose MSC? And at present, how are we living our vocation? As MSCs, experienced and believing in an intimate and unconditionally loving God revealed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we willingly and whole-heartedly share these values with everyone daily. (Ref. MSC Constitutions #4)** On the second day, we spent the whole day praying, reflecting and discerning the area of Mission and Ministry. There were moments in the morning when the community sensed fear, anxiety and lostness while at the same time finding cathartic joy, gratitude, trust and hope in the God who is on the same boat with us. One of the significant moments in our day was when we acknowledged our group vulnerabilities and realised that we need to be healed before we can be sent out in our mission as healers in our context today. We are called to become 'wounded healers'. Below is our statement on Mission and Ministry by the end of today.

With gratitude to God for His blessings and to the previous MSC generations for their legacy received throughout more than the last twenty years, we desire and confidently commit ourselves to continue the Mission of Christ entrusted to the Congregation by our presence, accompaniment, solidarity and healing in response to the signs of the time. We recommend establishing a special committee for the ministries of the community. (Ref. MSC Constitutions #20-21)

On the third day, we continued to discern our ministries in our current contexts of our country, society, church, MSC community and potentials. In the afternoon, we moved to a space of recognising and sharing one of the community's vulnerabilities, our past wounds of not being heard by others in the community. This was a wonderfully moving time in which each community member could share their stories of hurt and pain and their movements when being heard again. We come up with the statement:

With the willingness to commit to service on the mission field in our own country and overseas, we would like to be supported in training of personnel, expertise, and finance in preparation for our mission, and we would like to establish a place/centre for pastoral purposes to developing quality of human life in terms of education (teaching English and other fields), faith (our own parishes, mission stations, basic ecclesiological communities, spiritual accompaniment, retreat guidance), family ministry (accompanying with broken and wounded families), and migrant ministry.

We, wounded and healed, desire to become messengers of healing of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (Ref. Matthew 13:18-23)

**Vulnerability - Not being listened to:** Our community is a family in which each member carries within them wounds and fears caused by lack of listening, respect and dialogue; but when being able to share, listened to, pray and dialogue, we sense compassion, support, respect, empathy, generosity, trust, healing, freedom, outbreking joy, with gratitude. Though imperfect hearts, we are still proud of the beauty in community life by choosing love and long to become messengers of healing of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (Ref. MSC Constitutions, #33)



On the fourth day, another long but productive day for us. In the morning, we discerned Initial Formation with genuine sharing from all community members with respect and compassion for each other. In the afternoon, we worked on the Vocations area. Initial formation: With gratitude, trust, and longing to become true missionaries of the Sacred Heart, we imitate the model of Jesus - the ultimately loving, humble and meek Formator - in the journey of formation and self-formation with the support, listening, and dialogue of the whole community. After 20 years, we recognise a need to update the formation program and model suitable to the contemporary context of Vietnam, based on the MSC Constitutions. We recommend officially establishing a formation committee cooperating with the local superior to support formators in their work. (Ref. Matthew 11:29b) Vocations: We recommend the Vocation Committee prepare/update the Vocation Policy with clear guidelines about regions, age, education, English ability, health, psychology, accompaniment process, evaluation and assessment of applicants. Every community member is aware of the responsibility to promote vocation and support the Vocation Committee by our living witness of the Spirituality of the Heart and all our relationships. (MSC Constitutions, #93-95)

On this final day, we focused on Community Life in the morning again, with abundant genuine sharing from people and groups. In the afternoon, we reflect on all the statements we created this week. For the afternoon session, the groups creatively present what they want to express from reflection on all the statements by drawing and acting. We all were deeply moved and held by each other in the presentation.

Community Life: Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge our community as a human community with limitations such as a lack of listening, dialogue, respect, equality, a sense of belonging, and individualism.

However, we, as an MSC community, have been endeavouring to build up unity, equality, and love through listening, dialogue, self-responsibility and co-responsibility, receiving and treasuring each other, especially our wounds, and creating conditions for each to feel free and confident to contribute and advance MSC family and culture. (Ref. MSC Constitutions, #33, 37)

In the evening, we concluded our week with the ritual of commissioning in which each member received the light from the discernment candle that had been burning with us as we gathered, prayed and discerned with the Spirit of God. We are now sent back to the world, to this country, for a renewed mission and vision.



## Mission Outreach Vietnam: Hung's Trip to Vietnam

From June 17 to July 21, 2024, Br. Hung Nguyen, MSC, director of the MSC Mission Office Vietnam and Fr. Roger Purcell, MSC, Director of Mission Office Australia, met with their team members in Vietnam. They discussed how the Mission Office has worked in Vietnam and its projects since 2022. In addition, they visited the disadvantaged youth and water projects in remote areas. Their projects from previous years continue to work well. Residents were happy with the visit.

When the Mission Office visitations' work concluded, Br. Hung attended an MSC communal gathering from July 23 to July 28, 2024. The MSC, including those in temporary vows, discussed a plan for the future of the MSC presence in Vietnam for the next 5 to 10 years. Three observers of the MSC in Vietnam were present for this meeting.

During the conference's closing, Fr. Gene Pejo read a letter from the Superior General, Fr. Absalom Tovar, MSC. The General ex-





pressed his concerns about the conference and highly appreciated all those who made this conference happen. The community's written proposals from the members were given to Fr. Thoi Tran, MSC, to present at the next Australia provincial meeting. The community hopes to have some things.

**Hung Nguyen, MSC**

## *The First and Final vows in Indonesia*

On Thursday, July 25, 2024, the MSC Congregation of the Indonesian Province received another blessing when 18 brothers professed their vows for the first time, and Brother Domingus Mergwar MSC professed his perpetual vows. The joy was enhanced by the fact that Father General Mario Absalon Alvarado Tovar MSC, led the profession of vows ceremony directly. MSC Indonesia Provincial, Samuel Maranresy MSC, at the beginning of the celebration, said this celebration is a very special celebration because many brothers, families, and congregations attend it.

The presence of Father Absalon as General further enhanced the honour. "He said that as a general, this was his first time leading the celebration of first and perpetual vows. Formerly, he never did because he usually assigned the province," stated Father Sam.

Father Absalon's homily addressed the significance of the vocation as a Sacred Heart Missionary. He underlined that the vocation is always everlasting. "You have completed the novitiate and definitely heard God's call."

The Confreres were present at this event to commemorate their inauguration as MSC monks. The majority of them commemorate July 25th as their anniversary. "I think there are around 20 batches celebrating their MSC anniversary here. This is incredible," the General commented.

The day before, on July 24, 2024, the Provincial led over a Eucharistic liturgy to welcome new novices. This canonical year will involve 23 novices. To the novices, the provincial advised them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the order, especially regarding the constitution of the MSC congregation.

These events took place at the Church of St. Joseph the Worker in Karanganyar, Kebumen - Central Java, which is affiliated with the MSC Sananta Sela Novitiate.

**Alexander Sisko, MSC**



# *The centenary of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in the D.R. Congo: 1924-2024*



The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were among the first religious congregations to evangelise the north-west of the Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Their arrival was part of the expansion of Catholicism to many parts of Africa between the two world wars. On Congolese soil, the private property of the Belgian King Leopold II, the arrival and presence of 'missionaries without borders' seemed necessary to put into practice the motto of their founder, Jules Chevalier: to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus loved everywhere.

Before the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart arrived, the King of Belgium had urged Pope Leo XIII to put pressure on the monks who, in the Middle Ages, had done much to 'clear the wastelands of Europe'. As a result, the Wesmalle Trappists agreed to open a mission in the vicinity of Coquilhatville, in Bamanya, the first Christian village in the northwest region of the DRC. For these contemplative Trappists, founding a mission and carrying on the very active work of the missions was a significant challenge, for this mission seemed contrary to the spirit of the order. At a chapter in Rome, these monks decided to hand over their evangelising missionary work to an active apostolic congregation: the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC). The Trappist missionaries who wished to continue the mission in the Congo chose to become Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC). In 1924, Rome granted the young Belgian MSC province its own mission field in the Belgian Congo: the apostolic prefecture of Tshuapa, in the province of Equateur.

The year 1924 thus marked the departure of the first three Belgian Missionaries of the Sacred Heart on Congolese soil. Father Edouard Van Goethem and two MSC confreres (Louis Vertenten and E. Van der Kinderen) embarked at the port of Antwerp on 23 September. In 1929, Father Nicolas Bovy, Belgian provincial of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, had

to abandon the Flemish Work in Wallonia to make many missionaries available to the new mission land. In 1966, the Belgian National Documentation Centre published statistics that ranked the Belgian Missionaries of the Sacred Heart 9th in terms of personnel among the thirty-four Belgian religious orders and congregations listed in the former Belgian colony. In 1933, the Apostolic Prefecture was upgraded to an Apostolic Vicariate. Mgr Van Goethem was, therefore, appointed bishop. In 1950, the number of priests on mission increased to more than fifty: they were divided between fifteen mission stations, including two leprosaria. In addition to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, there was a group of 'Brothers of the Christian Schools', who were very active in teaching, as well as a good number of nuns, in particular the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, who had arrived in the Belgian Congo in 1925. From the 1950s (1955), the MSC province of Bavaria-Austria began to take part in missionary work in the Belgian Congo. Bishop Vermeiren, MSC, entrusted them with the entire eastern part of the mission. There were already 13 Fathers and two Missionary Brothers of the Sacred Heart in just four years. In 1961, their mission was detached from the former Vicariate of Coquilhatville. As a result, it became an autonomous diocese with the double name of 'Bokungu-Ikela'. For the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in the DRC, 2024 has a particular connotation: their mission's centenary and presence on Congolese soil is being celebrated. The duty of 'remembering' is on the agenda. In the DRC, two celebrations mark this historic event: the opening of the jubilee year in Bamanya and its closing in Kinshasa in December. Bamanya is a village ten kilometres from Mbandaka in Equateur province. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are still present there: they serve a parish and welcome aspirants. The MSC also look after the Aequatoria library. It was founded by Father



Gustave Hulstaert, who spent most of his life there and died in 1990. Here are the activities organised at Bamanya to mark the opening of the jubilee year, celebrated on 7 April 2024: teachings on the Msc (arrival in Congo, charism, spirituality, mission, formation, etc.), exhibitions, cultural activities and the grand Eucharistic celebration presided over by Archbishop Ernest Ngboko of Mbandaka-Bikoro. This centenary is also being celebrated by the Trappist monks of Wesmalle in Belgium. On 12 August, the feast day of Blessed Isidore Bakanja (+1909), a delegation of MSCs and diocesans from Mbandaka-Bikoro visited the Notre Dame du S. Coeur monastery run by the Trappist Fathers. Coeur monastery of the Trappist Fathers in Westmalle to celebrate this blessed day of the Blessed, who the Trappists baptised, and to give thanks with the monks for the mission in Congo-Coquilhatville, which the Belgian MSCs have inherited since 1924.

There is now only one European Missionary of the Sacred Heart in the D.R. Congo, Father Peter Laschan (80), from the Province of South Germany-Austria, who is a member of the Union by convention. We recall that the provinces of Belgium, South Germany, and Austria formed two regions. In 1986, after the great assembly of the MSC in Boende, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of the Congolese region joined forces with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of the Province of France-Switzerland. At the time, the latter were working in Senegal and Cameroon. The first Congolese MSC priest, Boniface Kamay, was ordained to the priesthood in 1986 on behalf of the MSCs of South Germany/Austria. The number of MSCs in the DRC has declined due to the country's various wars. Today, the MSC District of Congo has more than fifty confreres (priests and brothers) in perpetual vows, including a bishop appointed to the Diocese of Bokungu-Ikela. Congolese MSCs work in the two Congos, Cameroon, Senegal, North America and Europe. They work in parish ministry and support movements linked to the spirituality of the Heart. They are also involved in the education and training of young people and in caring for the sick and vulnerable. The MSC District of Congo has several young people in training in Cameroon and the DRC.

The pioneering days are over. The mission is in the hands of the African Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. In their mis-



sionary commitment and evangelising work, the Congolese MSCs perpetuate the spirituality of the Heart. Today, they are actively involved in Congolese society to meet challenges such as the quality of education, scientific and vocational training for young people, the installation of boreholes for drinking water, and support for single mothers.

The jubilee year of the MSCs' presence and mission is due to end in Kinshasa on 08 December 2024. So, from now on, each of them is invited to pay more attention to the following aspects: evangelical fraternity, missionary responsibility, personal commitment (as religious in the apostolates linked to our charism), and particular sensitivity to the issues of inclusion of marginalised people and ecology.

Finally, a huge thank you to all our MSC colleagues who agreed to leave their Western countries to come and share the precarious and austere human conditions of our Congolese people. Much courage to all the MSCs working in challenging conditions to fulfil their vocation. The missionary obstacles we encounter could be opportunities to accomplish God's work of love. Our dear founder used to say: 'As long as God's hand is with us, trust is a duty'. Let us trust in God; let us trust in every MSC working on Congolese soil; let us trust in the future.

Lazare Elenge, MSC



## Grateful Experience

Being one of the talented performers to enliven the Grand Mass with the Holy Father Pope Francis, at Gelora Bung Karno, was an experience full of extraordinary grace for me. This moment is an honour and a very rare experience, perhaps only happening once in a lifetime. I am grateful and happy for what happened in filling entertainment events for pre-mass and post-mass.

I had no idea that I would be involved in this celebration. I am very grateful to the committee for allowing me to be involved in enlivening the entertainment program at a very historic event for Catholics in Indonesia in particular and, in general, for the Indonesian nation. Moreover, special thanks to Father Yustinus Ardianto, the priest of the Archdiocese of Jakarta, as director of the Pastoral Center, and chairman of the event section for the Holy Father's visit to Indonesia, who has involved me in becoming a member of The Romo's. The group formed by Father Yus consists of 12 people from various dioceses and congregations. I and Father Aloysius Tamnge MSC, represent the MSC.

Even though The Romo's appeared at the post-Mass event, so we weren't exposed to much camera attention, we still appeared to entertain the people, both during a duet with Margaretha Lyodra Ginting (one of the most popular young singers currently in Indonesia) and performing two medley



songs. During the first medley, I appeared to play an instrument using the Sape, a traditional musical instrument of the Dayak tribe of Kalimantan.

Appearing in front of tens of thousands certainly has a different and soul-shaking experience. I feel proud and satisfied with what happened, but I remain humble because the main goal is not to seek popularity but to entertain the people. Because of that, we don't care whether TV cameras highlight us or not when we perform; the important thing is that we carry out our part well and with joy.

**Sisko Alexander, MSC**

## Day of Hope

Tuesday, 3 September 2024. In the Belgian Province we have an MSC-commission "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation," made up of both MSC and members of the Chevalier Laity. Every year this commission organises a "Day of Hope." The purpose of this day is to visit social projects in different cities or towns. These are projects in which members of the Chevalier family may or may not be directly involved. This year, the hosts were the members of the International MSC community in Antwerp: Martin Eloundou Eloundou (Cameroon), Mark Van Beeumen (Belgium), Clement Sathish (India) and Epe-li Lutua Soqe (Fiji).

The sitting room of their house is not large, yet there was enough space to warmly welcome the 30 participants. Important was to see that they are already involved in many different initiatives in the area, even though they have been there only less than a year. A video presentation, made by Clement, showed their active involvement in different ministries. Martin is working in a parish with the French speaking African Community. The other three are working with local organisations for adults, youth and children living in the margins and people who are in prison.

During a walk through the neighbourhood, we visited various organisations and projects that bring hope and are inspiring for a renewed mission of our time. Some of these include Zewopa (support and care for people in need) and sports projects with youth in Kiel Park. Another interesting organisation was de Stadsmarinier, which involves itself in bridge building, connecting people and community organising. One of their projects is a Community Garden, in which the members of the ICB are strongly involved.

Our visit in the neighbourhood made the people feel that these four MSC are not alone, but supported by the whole Chevalier family.

**Rita Cleuren**





## PROFESSIONS AND ORDINATIONS (June-September 2024)

### PERPETUAL VOWS

Name	Entity	Date
Jean Jacques Valéa	UAF	30.08.2024
Yohanes Jeng, Jenner Bernardus Senduk	Indonesia	03.09.2024

### DIACONATE ORDINATION

Name	Entity	Date
Francisco Antonio Saravia Márquez, Isidro Castro Lòpez	Central America & Mexico	13.08.2024
Richard Momo	Papua New Guinea	15.07.2024

### PRIESTHOOD ORDINATION

Name	Entity	Date
Alfred Gomis	UAF	29.06.2024
Roland Kabore	UAF	06.07.2024
Alex Sandro Pereira Santos, José Augusto de Aguiar Junior, Luis Claudio Da Silva Lima, Richardson Bruno Costa Ferreira	São Paulo	08.07.2024
Kabuua Tonganibela, Ioakim Iabeta	Pacific Island	05.09.2024

## NECROLOGIUM (Deceased members from June-September 2024)

Name	Province	Date	Place
Antonio Cao Barjacoba	Spain	03.07.2024	Valladolid, Spain
Michael Smyth	Ireland	10.07.2024	Rahoon Cemetery, Galway, Ireland
Cornelis (Kees) Adrianus Maria Bertens	Indonesia	19.07.2024	San Diego Hills, Karawang, Indonesia
Maurice Marchand	France	08.09.2024	Les Herbiers, France



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# *The boat of the Church and the apostles*

**Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.  
Issoudun**



Missionaries of  
the Sacred Heart



Sophie Pamart