

THE MSC Message



Missionaries
of the
Sacred Heart
MSC MISSIONS



MSC Audience with Pope Francis

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From the Director



Dear Friends,

It's that time of year again - the Christmas season is upon us! The days grow shorter and colder, and the flickering lights of the Advent wreath offer welcome warmth as a beacon of hope in these darker months.

'Tis the season to spend time with those we love, and to enter into the true spirit of Christmas - the spirit of love and goodwill. Surrounded as we are by all the trimmings, it's all too easy to forget that many people are living in fear for their lives in regions where violence, poverty, illness, hunger, and injustice are sadly all too common.

At home and abroad, Christmas can be a difficult time for many who are experiencing loss and sorrow. This is especially true for our MSCs in the mission fields, and for the communities whom they are urgently trying to help. This past year has been a particularly difficult one in Venezuela, where a turbulent social, political, and economic climate has meant prolonged suffering and hardship for local people.

This year, our MSCs marked 50 years of ministry in Venezuela. As we have been the only Irish missionaries working in the region, we have been doing everything we can to help those who are suffering the effects of this terrible time. With people scavenging in rubbish heaps for food, the situation has become a desperate one, and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are doing all we can to help.

As always, a little kindness can go a long way, and this Christmas, I want to thank you sincerely for your support during this past year. You are a blessing to our community, and I wish you and yours every grace and happiness this festive season and throughout 2018.

With Christmas blessings to you and your loved ones,

Fr. Michael O'Connell MSC

Director of the MSC Missions Office

First Professions at Myross Wood

Five MSC novices take the next step on their missionary journey as they make their First Professions.

On Tuesday 15th August five MSC novices took the next step on their missionary journey as they made their First Profession in Myross Wood House, Co. Cork. The First Profession takes place at the conclusion of the Novitiate, which is a one-year period of intense spiritual preparation for young men who wish to become Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. From this point on, they are now members of the Society, with temporary status, and they will continue their studies in preparation for the day when they will make their Final Profession as full members of the Society.

Newly professed Br Giacomo Gelardi MSC recalls, "The ceremony went very well. At moments, I realised where I was and what I was doing, and I felt both peaceful and joyful. This is what I had been waiting for, and now it felt real. I have always been for Jesus, and now it's official!"

This was a wonderful day for the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, it means new life. It really is encouraging that, in this day and age, young men who might otherwise live fruitful and productive lives in any other professional capacities have chosen to dedicate themselves to our mission and ministry.

Each of these young men have many talents and skills which they will place at the service of our mission, and we look forward to watching them progress along their journey as they follow the Lord's call.



L-R: Br Piotr Zlobinski MSC, Br Jaime Rosique MSC, Br Domenico Rosa MSC, Br Daniel Filipek MSC, and Br Giacomo Gelardi MSC.

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MSC Audience with Pope Francis



The new Irish Provincial Fr Carl Tranter MSC meets Pope Francis

“Return to your first and only love.” - Pope Francis

During a private audience between his Holiness and the members of the 2017 General Chapter of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart on Saturday 16th September, 2017, Pope Francis said “Return to your first and only love.”. In an uplifting, yet profoundly challenging address the Pope stated that the MSCs before him were called to keep their “gaze fixed on Jesus Christ and learn from Him how to truly love with a human heart, to care for the lost and hurting members of his flock, to work for justice and show solidarity with the weak and poor.”



A group picture of all MSCs accompanied by Pope Francis.

Pope Francis told the group that the Church sends them out as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart to show by their lives and by their works the passionate and tender love of God for the little ones, the underprivileged, the vulnerable and those whom our world has discarded. He went on to explain how it is about learning from Christ how to give hope and dignity to the destitute and to go forth to all places, where people are in need of acceptance and compassion.

Fr Carl Tranter MSC, the newly elected Irish Provincial commented on how Pope Francis’ words beautifully captured and crystallised the MSC mission to the world, their brotherhood with each other, and their partnership within the Chevalier Family: “to be on earth the heart of God”. Fr Carl continues, “This personal exhortation of Pope Francis to us as MSC, together with the orientations and priorities that have emerged from both our Provincial and General Chapters, offer a direction for our common journeying over the coming six years”.



The Irish MSCs in attendance at the recent MSC General Chapter.

Over the course of the General Chapter the MSCs identified a number of key themes that will form the basis of their future vision and mission, including formation of the human person, the MSC work with the laity, integrity in ministry, justice, peace and integrity of creation, child safeguarding, and communications for the 21st century.

A Golden Jubilee: 50 Years in Venezuela



This summer marked 50 years since the first MSC mission began in Venezuela.

Today, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are the only Irish priests working in this turbulent region, where social and political turmoil mean that daily life is fraught with danger and suffering for local people. This year, Irish and Venezuelan MSCs joined together with local parishioners in Maracaibo and Caracas to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Venezuelan mission, which began in 1967.

Celebratory Masses took place across the region in June, with a special outdoor ceremony in La Santa Cruz, Caracas. An altar was set up outside the parish church in order to accommodate the large crowds, reflecting the true essence of the MSC mission: to make God’s love known everywhere, and to everyone. Our mission is not limited to the church – our missionaries bring the message of God’s love to the homes and hearts of the people, no matter where they may be.

Today, Venezuela is a troubled land, one where poverty, hardship, and social and political unrest motivate young Venezuelans to go abroad to seek better lives. During this time of great disorder and uncertainty, the MSC Golden Jubilee celebrations offered the opportunity for reflection, in the hope of better things to come in the years ahead.

MSCs Welcome a New Irish Provincial



Fr Carl Tranter MSC Provincial

Introducing the new MSC Provincial and Council.

At the MSC Provincial Chapter last March, Fr Carl Tranter MSC was elected as the new MSC Provincial Superior for the Irish Province and assumed the role in September of this year, immediately after the MSC General Chapter in Rome.

Fr Carl was born in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, England, and was educated by the MSCs at their school in England, Princethorpe College. After a couple of years working in banking, he began his

formation with the MSC in Ireland in 1986. He was professed in 1989 and ordained to the priesthood in 1993.

Fr Carl began his ministerial life in the parish of St John the Baptist, Tamworth, Staffordshire. In 1998, he commenced further studies in adult education and pastoral theology in Boston College, Boston, USA.

For the last six years, he has been Assistant Superior General of the MSC Congregation and a member of the General Council in Rome. During this time, he has travelled extensively throughout the world, with the MSC ministering in 50 countries in all of the

world's continents.

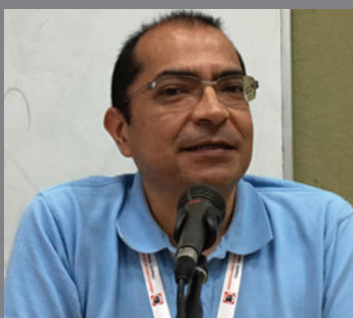
Fr Carl thanked the outgoing Provincial, Fr Joseph McGee MSC, and his team for their "selfless and generous service of the Province over the last six years and for all their support, availability and commitment to making this period of transition as smooth as possible".

Joining him on the new Provincial Council, are fellow MSCs Fr John Fitzgerald, Fr Michael O'Connell, Fr Manus Ferry, Fr Tony Nolan and Fr Michael Serrage and he looks forward to working with them over the coming term of leadership.



MSC Provincial Council - Irish Province

NEW MSC SUPERIOR GENERAL



Fr Absalón Alvarado Tovar MSC

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are delighted to announce the election of Fr Absalón Alvarado Tovar MSC as their new Superior General, during the MSC three week General Chapter in Rome.

Fr. Absalón, from Guatemala, was the provincial of the Central American Province and is now the first Superior General from the Global South. He has a Masters in Theology, as well as a PhD in Psychotherapy. He has ministered as a vocations director and a formator, and has worked in parishes in Nicaragua as well as lecturing on the theology of Religious Life.

In his acceptance speech Fr. Absalón thanked God for the honour. He also thanked his brother MSC for their trust and confidence. He promised to do the best he can to serve the Congregation and be there to animate the MSC mission.

Fr Absalón acknowledged the importance of having a team and all his brothers around him as he said "we walk together in the hands of God". He then went on to wash the feet of five MSC from different continents to show the global scope of the call to service as a Missionary of the Sacred Heart.

Fr Carl Tranter MSC Provincial of the Irish Province, likened this new election to the election of Pope Francis four years ago "as his election has rightly generated much enthusiasm, hope and expectation in the Congregation".

MSCs reaching out in Venezuela



REFLECTIONS ON VENEZUELA

Fr Joseph McGee MSC shares his thoughts on the Venezuelan crisis.

“I have been coming here for the past 12 years and have had much food for thought on each visit. Nevertheless, on this occasion, I left feeling very disturbed by what I witnessed. The feeling of unrest is palpable in this region of social and political turmoil.

An inflation rate of 700% means that food shortages and exorbitantly high prices are the order of the day. Long queues in shops and at petrol stations are a regular occurrence. When, for example, word gets out that the local shop has bread for sale, people will queue for hours to buy a loaf of poor-

quality bread.

Soap for personal hygiene or for laundry is a luxury item and is rationed. Clean water is a scarce commodity, and one is conscious when drinking filtered water that it too is in short supply and very expensive. The most difficult thing I witnessed was seeing people scavenge in the rubbish heaps for scraps that have burst through the overflowing rubbish bags and appear to be edible.

Public transport is not for the faint-hearted. I was fortunate enough to travel by air between Maracaibo and Caracas. The single journey cost a mere €10, but in local currency, this is simply out of the reach of the vast majority of citizens who have to make the 12-hour journey by coach overnight.

The average monthly wage of all citizens, whether they are school teachers or labourers, doctors or street sweepers, is the same and is standardised by the government. Medical necessities are scarce, and while doctors give prescriptions, patients will often find that the necessary medication is not available in the pharmacy.

People who can get their hands on financial resources, usually sent from relatives abroad, are doing all they can to leave the country and start a new life elsewhere.

During all of this turmoil, it was a privilege to be with our MSC brothers, who have worked and continue to work in this beautiful but troubled land.”

A Sincere Thank You from South Sudan



This summer, the MSC reached out to support the Loretto Sisters in Rumbek, South Sudan, where they have made huge strides in creating a better life for residents with life saving medical care and essential educational facilities.

During her recent visit to Ireland, Sr Orla Treacy IBVM (pictured above left) visited the MSC Missions Office, to personally thank Fr Michael O’Connell MSC and all of the MSC mission friends for their financial support from their recent fundraising Summer Appeal.

“It is unique for one congregation to financially support another one, so this contribution to our work in Rumbek is extremely generous” she said.

In 2008, the Loretto Sisters began working in the rural community of Maker Kuei, Rumbek, where daily life is a constant struggle for 1,000 families.



During this period they have built a Primary School that caters for almost 900 students, both male and female, where students are guaranteed to have clean water, nutritious meals, access to health care and a quality education.

“A sincere thank you for your generosity and for your willingness to collaborate in helping us with this challenging yet worthwhile mission”.

The Loretto Secondary School is an all girls’ boarding school, where students are educated in social and life skills as well as receiving a full academic tuition.

Currently, 240 girls attend this school, and the demand for places is increasing as principal Sr Orla works with families to protect these young women from enforced marriage.

As a result of the very successful MSC Summer Appeal the funds collected have been sent to the Loretto Sisters and work has begun on the foundations

for a new dormitory, (pictured left and right), which will accommodate 16 girls each year as they embark on an additional internship year and vocational opportunities.

In recognition for her work in South Sudan, Sr Orla was the recipient of the 2017 Hugh O’Flaherty International Humanitarian Award, at an event in Killarney on the 4th November. “It is very humbling to accept this award and I do so on behalf of our sisters, staff and students at loretto School in Rumbek, South Sudan” she told a large and appreciative audience who came to honour her inspiring work.



MSC Youth Team



Smiles all round from L to R Garrett, Felecia, Lucy, Michael, Keith and Tammie



MSC Youth Team Children's Mass with Parents and Toddlers Group

Hello everybody, it's the MSC Youth Team here!

We are a team of six young people working in the Sacred Heart Parish in Cork City. As members of the MSC Youth Team (Cork NET Ministries) we help in the running of a young adults youth group, consisting mainly of students, who come together every week to talk, learn and grow deeper in their faith.

We run a Parents and Toddlers group where parents can come and relax while their children run wild and have fun. Along with both of those we also hold a Children's Mass every Sunday wherein the younger children can learn about

the gospel in a fun and interactive way through arts and crafts, singing songs and even by playing games. They have so much fun learning about mass in this way and the smiles on their faces speak volumes!

As well as all of this, the team this year has been working very hard in a number of secondary schools holding day retreats wherein the youth can learn about their faith. We do this through activities, talks, dramas, songs, and, as members of the MSC Youth Team, we are happy to share our own life stories with the groups.

We have also had an amazing opportunity to fly to England and work

in the Parishes there! It was a lovely opportunity and we seized the chance to host interactive one hour sessions with over 300 students in Coventry and in St Alban's.

Overall, it has been an incredible start to our year and we are really looking forward to setting up two more youth groups to cater for both the older and younger years of secondary school students. We also had the pleasure of planning off site retreats such as surf sand and sun retreats for all youth groups to come and have fun while they are getting to know their faith.

We are so excited to see what the rest of this year has in store for us!

Please cut here

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A Burse is a sum of money which is set up in honour of God, His Blessed Mother, or one of His servants. We have several Burses from which people can choose – a full list is available on request. The most popular Burses in recent years have been the Sacred Heart, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and St Padre Pio.

The money donated is invested, and the interest goes towards the education of our students to the priesthood.

Any donation, large or small, is very much appreciated and is of great help in ensuring that our students are well prepared for the work that lies ahead on the mission fields. You are part of the great work they will do, in future years, in many lands. May God reward you for your kindness.

