

THE MSC Message



Missionaries
of the
Sacred Heart
MSC MISSIONS



Celebrating the first
year of our
Mozambique mission

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Winter 2019

MSC Missions Office,
PO Box 23, Western Road,
Cork, T12 WT72, Ireland.

www.msccmissions.ie

From the Director



Dear Friends,

So we find ourselves preparing to bid farewell to another year. I hope 2019 has been kind to you and your loved ones, and that this winter treats you well.

As ever, the past year brought with it its peaks and troughs, moments of triumph and times of trial. Our missionaries have certainly faced their own challenges this year, but as we look back over the past 12 months, and see the difference that we have been able to make - with your help - well, it proves that each and every tribulation is worth the effort of overcoming.

We have celebrated two wonderful ordinations in Venezuela and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We have waved goodbye to two of our MSCs from the Irish Province on their return to the Venezuelan mission, where they are working hand-in-hand with local families who struggle to put food on the table to feed their children as a result of the ongoing crisis. We have seen our mission in Mozambique go from strength to strength, despite facing the devastation followed by two cyclones earlier in the year.

They say "it takes a village", and our extended community of mission friends is living proof of what can be achieved when we work together. "If we walk in hope, we have joy in our hearts," Pope Francis reminds us. "Let us be lights of hope," he says.

Christmas is coming, a season of joy and promise. Soon, homes and shops and offices will be lit up with the lights of the season. Your light, my dear friend, is the everlasting light of hope, and I thank you, with the deepest gratitude, for the light you shine on our missions.

With every blessing of the winter season,

Fr Michael O'Connell MSC

Director of the MSC Missions Office

MSC Christmas Mass Remembrance Cards



Remind loved ones they're always in your thoughts this Christmas season with a set of beautifully designed Christmas cards. Each card contains a thoughtful blessing and includes a special remembrance in our Christmas Masses.

How to Order

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Email: info@mscmissions.ie

Web: www.mscmissions.ie

Suggested Donation €25 or £20 per pack of 5

Light Up a Memory Mass

Saturday, November 30th 2019

A special Mass for the Holy Souls will take place in the Sacred Heart Church, Cork, at 6.30pm.

All are welcome to join us live on our website

www.mscmissions.ie



Join us on Facebook and Twitter for daily news and updates!



Find us at **@MSCMissions**

MSC 2019 Pilgrimage to Fatima

The final days of May saw MSCs Fr Michael O'Connell and Fr Des Farren join 30 pilgrims from Ireland and the UK on our annual MSC pilgrimage to Fatima. With blue skies and sunshine as a backdrop to prayer, reflection, and conversation, this year's trip was a resounding success for all involved.



During the five-day trip, the MSC pilgrimage group paused to pray at a number of hallowed stops along the way, including the Basilica of the Rosary, the Basilica of the Holy Trinity, the Way of the Cross, and Valinhos, where Our Lady appeared to the Children of Fatima on August 19th, 1917.

Fr Michael and Fr Des celebrated Sunday Mass during the pilgrimage, along with approximately 60 other priests from around the world. Sunday Mass is a wonderful celebration overlooking the Capelinha, or the Chapel of the Apparitions, which marks the spot where Our Lady appeared. Every Sunday, a statue of Our Lady is carried from the Capelinha to the open-air altar, often by representatives from the fire brigade or the army, dressed in their best with shining uniforms and helmets.

“The devotion of these people is perhaps what touched me most about our pilgrimage,” said Fr Michael.

Our Lady's path is lined with pilgrims, singing and waving white handkerchiefs. It is an extremely emotional moment, with many people shedding tears because they won't return to see Our Lady of Fatima again for at least another year.

“The devotion of these people is perhaps what touched me most about our pilgrimage,” said Fr Michael. “Their tears are just amazing – there are literally tears running down their faces, they are crying their hearts out. They won't be back again for at least another year, if at all, and they are crying. Our Lady is going away, and they're going away. It was so emotional that it made me cry, too.”

Our great family of faith offers warmth and encouragement from all over the world, and this became especially clear when Fr Michael bumped into MSCs from Indonesia over breakfast in the group's hotel! Fr Nicholas Adi Seputra MSC, Archbishop of Merauke, Indonesia, and Fr Cayetan Tarong MSC were travelling with two other MSCs from the Philippines to celebrate

30 years of ordination. It was a fortuitous meeting indeed, as they were leaving Fatima for Rome later that day, continuing their pilgrimage to the Holy Places.

Our group returned home on June 3rd, replenished in body and soul after a truly wonderful trip where new friendships were made, and old and enduring bonds were strengthened. Sincere thanks to all involved for a joyous pilgrimage journey!



MSC Missions in Mozambique



In July, the MSC community in Mozambique celebrated their first retreat together, with the community of Our Lady of Fatima in Meluco.

The Mozambique mission began in March 2018, when a team of our MSC missionaries from Brazil began ministering in the Pemba diocese, an extremely poor part of the country without any church infrastructure or functioning pastoral ministry. Here, they began construction of an MSC community house from which they could have a base to undertake their ministry and parish outreach, and they immediately began working to bring positive change to the district.

A year after the mission began, in March and April 2019, two cyclones hit north-eastern Mozambique over the space of six weeks, killing hundreds and rendering over 21,000 people homeless.

“Our house and most of our belongings were taken by the wind and the waves,” said a survivor of two cyclones.

With many houses in the area built of mud, bamboo, and wood, floods and mudslides destroyed homes, crops, and livestock, with no means of recovery. “We have lost everything,” said one survivor. “Our house and most of our belongings were taken by the wind and the waves.”

Before the cyclones struck, our MSC missionaries had already been hard at work rebuilding struggling communities in the area, and in the wake of these disasters, they have been doing their

best to help devastated families as they attempt to restore the shattered pieces of their lives.

July’s retreat truly was a wonderful opportunity for the MSC community in Meluco and beyond to join together in prayer and unity, just over a year after the mission began in 2018. The Facebook page for MSC Mozambique also posted about the experience, describing it as a very special “moment to withdraw and pray, deepening our experience of God”.

With every blessing and very best wishes to our MSCs and the local communities they serve in Mozambique – may this be the first of many prayer-filled and powerful retreats for you all.



MSC ordinations around the world

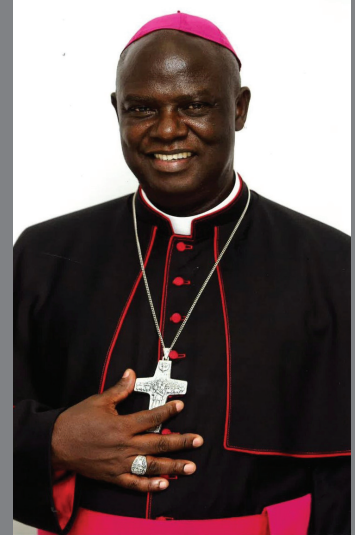
Congratulations to MSCs in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Venezuela on ordinations as Bishop and Deacon in recent months.

Bishop Toussaint Iluku Bolumbu MSC, Democratic Republic of Congo

Bishop Toussaint Iluku Bolumbu MSC was ordained bishop of the diocese of Bokungu-Ikela in the Democratic Republic of Congo on July 21st - the first MSC African bishop.

His ordination took place in Bokungo, celebrated by Bishop Fridolin Ambongo Besungo, Archbishop of Kinshasa and Apostolic Administrator of Mbandaka Bikoro.

Bishop Toussaint was born in Monieka, Zaire (now called the Democratic Republic of Congo), in November 1964, the seventh in a family of 11 children. He entered the novitiate of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and was ordained a priest in 1995, having professed his religious vows the previous year. He holds bachelor's degrees in both philosophy and theology, and has served in a wide and varied range of pastoral roles including parish priest, vice rector, bursar, and later superior and director of formation of the MSC school in Yaoundé, teacher of philosophy and theology, vice president of the Association of Major Superiors of the ecclesiastical province of Mbandaka-Bikoro, assistant to the secretariat general of the General Chapter of the MSC in Rome, and moderator of the General Conference of the MSC in Yaoundé.



Rev Luis Gonzales MSC, Caracas, Venezuela

Rev Luis Gonzales MSC was ordained a Deacon in Caracas, Venezuela, on Saturday, May 4th.

"At a time when the country is going through such a difficult period politically, socially and economically, it is a sign of great hope that a young man such as Luis commits himself to the service of the people of Venezuela with the deep desire to be for all a living, tangible presence of God's heart for his people," wrote Irish Provincial Leader Fr Carl Tranter MSC, on the occasion of Rev Luis' ordination.

Vocations Director for the Irish Province, Fr Alan Neville MSC, also added his good wishes on the MSC Vocations Facebook page, posting: "Congratulations to Rev Luis Gonzalez MSC who was ordained a Deacon in Caracas, Venezuela. May the Lord bless your ministry, Luis, and always give you a big heart for his people, modelled after His own heart."



Blessings & best wishes to Bishop Toussaint & Rev Luis from the Irish Province of the MSC!

MSC Cardinal addresses climate change

With climate change becoming a growing concern in today's world, MSC Cardinal John Ribat, Archbishop of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, has spoken out about the vital importance of awareness and action.



"I think it's right, good, and necessary for someone to take these issues and bring them to the governments here and around the world," says Cardinal Ribat, speaking with Fr Daniel Auguié MSC for the French provincial bulletin *Entre Nous*. "In this part of the world, we live on islands, and we are the first concerned by the rise of the sea level, and the global warming of the planet."

"By 2050, many islands will be gone," he continues. "Papua New Guinea is already seeking shelter for the islanders who will be affected in the next few years. I recently visited two of our islands, including Andra. This island has about 700 inhabitants. The living space has diminished visibly. They showed me how large their island was before. A huge part is already submerged. We went around the island on foot in twenty minutes. The question is simple: what will we do when this island is completely gone?"

"We are urged by Pope Francis to hear not only the cry of the poor, but also the cry of the earth."

The effects of climate change on a national scale in Papua New Guinea are very clearly representative of a much larger concern on a global scale. "The people of the Pacific are coming together to demand the removal of

greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere and a change in lifestyle around the world," says Cardinal Ribat.

Fr André Claessens MSC also emphasises the necessity for increased awareness and conscious change. "Climate change asks for huge investments," he writes, "but it will benefit future generations. Climate-related disasters caused about 300 billion euros worth of damage in 2017, and the WHO calculated that in Europe alone, pollution costs more than 1.6 trillion dollars every year. Two hundred species are in danger of becoming extinct. Greta Thunberg said it clearly: 'We have all the facts and solutions. All we have to do is to wake up and change!'"

"We are urged by Pope Francis to hear not only the cry of the poor, but also the cry of the earth. We have had thirty years of pep-talks... Now action and only action will give hope!"

Irish MSCs return to Venezuela

Two MSCs from the Irish Province returned to Venezuela in July, to minister to struggling families in the midst of the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Fr Christy Coleman MSC ministered in Venezuela many years ago, before moving to Texas in the USA as a pastor and prison chaplain. He also acted as MSC Superior in the US Province for a time, and most recently returned home to Ireland to minister as a hospital chaplain. Throughout his travels, Fr Christy kept in close contact with the Venezuelan mission, and was a great support to our MSCs there, particularly the community at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School in Maracaibo.

Fr Tom Jordan MSC also spent some time in Texas following his ordination in 1966, before taking his place on the Venezuelan mission amongst the communities and parishes he has grown to love. He returned to Ireland due to ill health last year, and has now been welcomed with open arms on his return to the Venezuelan mission. Fr Tom's generosity of spirit has been legendary in Venezuela; as Fr Vincent Screene, Regional Leader of the MSC in Venezuela said, "Wherever there is a need, Tom is there".

We wish Fr Tom and Fr Christy all the very best as they bring their invaluable ministry to the Venezuelan mission once again.



Fr Christy Coleman (top) & Fr Tom Jordan.



A restless heart looking for God

Br Giacomo Gelardi writes about the path that led him to become an MSC missionary.



“My vocation began in my heart - with a hole in my heart.”

“I grew up blessed in a blessed family. When I was 16, my parents decided to split up. It was the most painful moment in my life. That hole in my heart grew deeper, and my thirst for love became bigger. I started looking for things and people to fill it. However, no matter how hard I looked, nobody and not a thing in the world was able to fill the void.

One day, when I was 20, sitting on the steps outside San Francesco’s Church in Urbino, Italy, with the person I loved most in life, I saw a group of young friars walking down the street. They looked so full of joy that I said, ‘I think it would be cool to be a friar’. She looked at me bewildered, asking, ‘Are you serious?’

Yes, I was serious. Now, I know it was God trying to tell me something, but I, very proudly, ignored God, and myself too. I kept going my way - religious life was too scary. Pleasure, money, and success were all a lot more appealing. Why on earth would I leave them?

I became a chemist with a satisfying job in research in Verona, Italy, where I lived with my girlfriend. I remember sitting at Mass one day, hearing Christ saying, ‘If you feed the hungry, if you welcome the stranger, if you clothe the naked, if you visit the sick and those in prison, you will do it to me’ (cf. Mt 25:31-41). ‘Well’, I thought, ‘I am not doing this.’ I felt I had to do something, but I was not ready to let go of my life yet.

A few years later, I lost my dream job and moved to York, England. I did a PhD in organic chemistry, but I knew this was not my path anymore. I knew it was not filling my heart. One day, sitting at Mass, I heard Christ inviting me to action again. The word ‘healing’ resonated within me. If I followed God’s way and served him, I might be healed as well... I could not ignore the Lord anymore. At this time, I had no attachments and no job, so I really was free to choose.

Could I really serve the poor and needy?

I found a job as a support worker for disabled people. It was tough, but I loved it. With time, prayer and reflection I realised that I truly was serving Christ himself. It was then that I started feeling my heart gradually filling up with love, day after day.

The most difficult bit of the discerning process was making the first step. After some searching, I found the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Their joyful way of living the religious life, and their message that God is Love, appealed to me. It seemed the best way to answer that voice - to love God by bringing his love to all, especially the poor and marginalised, and to let him heal me. So, I asked to be one of them and now here I am.

Looking back, starting from a wounded heart, I could only go to the Sacred Heart. Now I know the Sacred Heart is the only place I needed to go to heal my heart and to quench the thirst for love.”

If you feel that you might have a calling to religious life, please contact MSC Vocations Director, Fr Alan Neville.

**Email: vocations@mscmissions.ie
Phone: +353 (0)86 785 7955 (IRE)
or +44 (0)75 2676 4236 (UK)**

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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.

Thank you from the Congo

We are delighted to have received a letter from Br Jean Manga MSC with an update from our MSC community in Righini, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Earlier this year, we reached out to our mission friends to help the MSC community in Righini as part of our 2019 World Projects Appeal. 15 MSC pre-novitiate students live in the Formation House in Righini, along with their two formators. Here, they work, study, and pray together as they contemplate the missionary journey. The residents of the formation house live primarily on a grant provided by the MSC French African Union – a grant which allows each person a sum equivalent to €11 per day.

As part of their daily routine, the pre-novitiate students travel to the local university to attend classes. They also travel around the surrounding areas, visiting parishioners and undertaking parish ministry. An old minibus served as their only



mode of transport, until it broke down beyond repair in April 2018.

“We thank the Lord for you and your great generosity,” writes Br Jean Manga MSC. “God bless you fully!”

For over a year, our MSC students and their formators had no choice but to travel on public transport, which is unpredictable, undependable, and time-consuming. The community was unable to travel together, and the lack of transport made it very difficult for duties around the parish to be undertaken efficiently and effectively. It also incurred great costs, with \$10 per day spent on public transport

as opposed to the cost of fuel for the minibus at \$30 per week.

The support and generosity of our mission friends here in the Irish Province meant that we have been able to contribute to the cost of a new minibus, and Br Jean has sent a message of thanks from Righini.

“We thank the Lord for you and your great generosity,” he writes. “You have made it possible for our pre-novitiate students to have a brand new school bus. After many months of hope, the bus is now with us.”

“You have our sincere gratitude,” he continues. “God bless you fully!”

Please cut here

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