

# THE MSC Message



Missionaries  
of the  
**Sacred Heart**  
MSC MISSIONS



**Bishop Fintan Gavin  
ordains Fr Giacomo  
Gelardi MSC**

Read more on page 7  
Photo: Frediano Marinelli

## In this issue:

2. From the Director
3. MSC News
4. Caring for our world at the School of Love, Philippines
5. MSC Mission Updates
6. MSC World News
7. MSC Vocations
8. World Projects Appeal 2023

## Summer 2023

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[www.mscmissions.ie](http://www.mscmissions.ie)

## From the Director



Dear Friends,

I write with blessings of the changing seasons as the wheel of the year continues to turn, and we embrace the lengthening light and welcome warmth of summer.

2023 has already been a time of great change and progression for our MSC communities, here in the Irish Province and all over the world. We have celebrated the ordination of Fr Giacomo Gelardi, a wonderful addition to our province and our society, and, as the summer begins, we will be undertaking a change in our MSC leadership team as our Provincial Chapter gets underway. With change comes progress and opportunity; together, we continue on our shared journey in the spirit of unity and love, answering to the changing needs of the times and our world.

In the following pages, you will read about just some of the ongoing mission projects that you, as part of our extended Sacred Heart family, are supporting from day to day. We bring you news from the School of Love in the Philippines, and from our missions in Mozambique and Guatemala. Fr Alan writes to us from South Sudan, to tell us about the Papal visit that took place in February, while our Sacred Heart Sisters write from Africa and Brazil in gratitude for the compassion of our friends here at home that is touching so many lives in far-flung corners of the globe.

As we continue to navigate life's challenges, both personally and as a wider society, find strength and encouragement in those simple daily blessings that are great gifts in disguise. The beauty of nature, the presence of loved ones, the immeasurable power of small kindnesses - treasures not to be taken for granted. I leave you with my sincere thanks, as always, for your continued friendship, and with a prayer that the Lord may bless you and your family with a peaceful, restful summer season.

*Fr. John Fitzgerald MSC*

Director of the MSC Missions Office

## New beginnings at the Sacred Heart Church, Cork



Those who join us on our live stream will have noted that 2022 marked the start of a new chapter for the Sacred Heart Parish on the Western Road, Cork, as we bid a fond farewell to outgoing parish priest Fr Tom Mulcahy MSC, and welcomed Fr Des Farren MSC who is already well known to you via our live stream and Fr Con Doherty MSC, who you might not be so familiar with. A native of Thurles, Co. Tipperary, Fr Con joined the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in 1983, and was ordained by Bishop John Buckley in the parish of the Sacred Heart, here in Cork, in 1990. Since then, Fr Con has been on a fascinating missionary journey, serving in St Alban's Parish in the UK until 1995, before travelling to Russia to join his MSC brothers Fr Michael Screene and Fr Kevin Blade on our mission there. Fr Con remained in Russia for a decade, before returning to Ireland. In 2015, he took up the role of chaplain in Cuan Mhuire in Co. Limerick, and there he ministered until his new appointment as parish priest at the Sacred Heart Church.

Fr Con has gladly returned to the place of his ordination, some 32 years later, and has been getting to know our parishioners and mission friends together with Fr Des. It is with grateful hearts that we thank Fr Tom for his dedicated ministry as parish priest, and welcome Fr Con and Fr Des into the heart of a wonderful local community – and indeed beyond, as so many friends become part of our parish family daily through Masses on our live stream.

All are very welcome to join us for our daily Masses and prayers on our live stream at [www.mscomissions.ie](http://www.mscomissions.ie).

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



Find us at [@MSCMissions](https://www.facebook.com/MSCMissions)

## MSCs supporting Cancer Connect

The Irish Province of the MSC is delighted to be able to support Cancer Connect in Co. Cork, with a recent donation helping in facilitating the addition of a car to their fleet.

Based in West Cork, Cancer Connect is a charitable organisation that offers transport to passengers who need help getting to cancer-related hospital treatments. Founded in 2011 and run by a team of over 250 volunteer drivers, the Cancer Connect website states that over 34,500 passenger journeys have been recorded to date.

A five-seater Skoda Superb has now been added to the existing fleet of five cars. Last September, Fr John Fitzgerald MSC, Missions Office Director, met with Cancer Connect chair Neillie O'Leary, board secretary David O'Brien, co-ordinator Helen O'Driscoll, and volunteer driver Majella O'Neill, to officially hand over the keys to the new car.

"The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart have a close association with West Cork, and many MSCs have ministered there over the years, including myself," said Fr John. "We are well aware of the distances involved to get to the major hospitals in Cork City for treatment, and the importance of being able to travel easily and without additional stress at such a crucial time. We are delighted to be able to help sponsor a vehicle that will be used to transport people easily from their homes to and from their places of treatment. We wish the Cancer Connect team well; we hope everyone will be safe, and we remember all who are ill in our prayers."



*Photos: Anne Minihane via Helen O'Driscoll, Cancer Connect co-ordinator.*



## Emergency aid in the Philippines

Last November, MSC Missions in the Philippines responded to the urgent needs of communities affected by Tropical Storm Paeng. Over 100 deaths were confirmed in the aftermath of the storm, with more people reported missing, and severe damage done to homes, farms, and businesses.

The MSC Mission Office Philippines, Inc., working together with the MSC Centre for the Poor, issued an immediate call for help, and undertook an emergency response programme across Mindanao, providing essential items to communities in Maguindanao and Cotabato who were left reeling by the effects of the storm. Relief packs included basic food provisions and essentials, and were distributed to more than 200 families in regions of significant storm destruction.

On November 9th, 219 families received emergency aid packs through the relief operation in Barangay Tapian, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao, as part of the ongoing mission response project in the Philippines, which aims to provide direct assistance to communities affected by natural disasters. In a country that is greatly impacted by typhoons, this mission response programme undertaken by the MSC Philippine Province is a true lifeline to families and communities who live under a constant threat of flooding and serious danger to both lives and livelihoods.

"We would like to thank all our Mission Partners and donors for your kindness and generosity," wrote the MSC Mission Office Philippines, Inc. on their Facebook page. "We also thank the MSC – CFP [MSC Centre for the Poor] Butuan led by Fr. Richie Gomez & Bro. Franz Pelare, MSC for spearheading the project and to all our supporters & volunteers."



*Photos shared by the Facebook page for the MSC Mission Office Philippines, Inc.*

# Caring for our world at the School of Love

The MSC Centre for the Poor, situated in the city of Butuan in the Philippines, continues in its efforts to promote sustainability and self-sufficiency in harmony and balance with the natural world.

Established in 2018, the MSC Centre for the Poor has since developed an agricultural cooperative movement for local farmers, with a view to improving quality of life for the poor and marginalised in society. One of their most recent projects is the School of Love, a farm school dedicated to protecting and conserving the environment with “tender love and care,” while also encouraging positive growth in those who tend to the earth and reap the benefits of its resources.

As part of their ongoing development programmes, the MSC Centre for the Poor Agriculture Cooperative (MSC-CEPAGCO) is working on building a “learning site” – a model farm covering 4.3 hectares where farmers and community members can learn and practise basic skills in organic agriculture. The project promotes a “holistic perspective” of “seeing ourselves within the web of life” – essentially, becoming aware that everything we do in life “causes a ripple of impacts, big or small, good or bad, to travel throughout the web and ultimately back to us.” This drives the desire to make a positive difference, encouraging a better quality of life for each other as much as for an individual, “working together for the betterment of all.”



## “Seeing ourselves within the web of life” as we nurture our common home.

With a consciousness of the damage that has already been done to local ecosystems, the School of Love is working on allowing the environment to regenerate. “From the tiniest seeds to a grown tree, from fertilization of eggs to completely matured animals, from planting to nurturing, growing and harvesting, all these processes are realised because of tender love and care, whether by nature or by a responsible steward,” states a recent report from the MSC-CEPAGCO.

Involvement in the scheme is far-reaching, including members from the professional, religious, and agricultural sectors of the local community, people undergoing rehabilitation from drug and alcohol abuse, youths who are out of school and lacking the necessary skills for progression, repatriated Filipinos, the indigenous Lumad community, and single parents who are struggling to raise a family on their own. To date, more than 100 participants have completed the training programme, going on to find employment in farming and market gardens, school programmes, and international development and food security projects. “One of the most important outcomes of the apprenticeship is the ripple effect our graduates have working locally, nationally, and internationally to promote, practice, and teach sustainable, organic farming and gardening,” reports the cooperative programme.

Now in its second year, the agricultural cooperative continues to promote and develop an ethos of sharing, of zero waste, and a simple lifestyle based on having enough. As part of the programme, rainwater is collected and purified for use as drinking water, with the treatment of waste water and sewage the next project on the horizon.

From food foraging to composting, the different techniques employed on the programme are many and varied, and are constantly developing for the better in the quest to provide a positive, practical space in which people can grow and learn as they reap the benefits of nurturing the earth and our common home.



## Lenten reflection in Mozambique

Across the world, Lent is a special season of prayer and reflection. On our MSC mission in Metuge, Mozambique, Fr José Eduardo Paixao MSC celebrated the Lenten journey with the community of St Antonio de Metuge.

Originally established in 2018, our MSC mission in Mozambique marked its fifth anniversary in March, as it continues in its ministry to the vulnerable and displaced across the Diocese of Pemba. The need here is great; from the damage caused by natural disasters, to the terrible effects of the constant threats of war, violence, and political unrest, this is a mission that must continuously adapt and respond to the demands of the social climate and the prevailing needs of the local communities and parishioners.

The MSC community in the Irish Province has an enduring relationship with our Mozambique mission, with the friendship and support of our mission friends here at home touching the lives of families across the district of Pemba. Since 2017, more than 850,000 people have been displaced by war in the region. Many have lost their lives to violence, while many more have gone missing. Together with Fr José, we have been raising funds to support those who have been displaced by war, along with other disadvantaged communities in the community of Metuge, as we work together to provide hope, brighter prospects, and a better quality of life for those in real need.

While local troubles are not at an end, the spirit of hope, perseverance, and unity remains at the heart of our Mozambique mission; please keep our MSCs in Mozambique, and the communities they serve there, in your prayers.



*Photos shared by MSC Mozambique on Facebook, with credit to Abudo Manara.*

## A hopeful future in Guatemala

As 2022 came to a close at the MSC-run Centro Faustino Villanueva in Guatemala, Fr Jairo Uriel Sevilla Mendoza MSC, Director, wrote in gratitude for the support of mission friends here in the Irish Province.

Founded by the MSC in 1984, Centro Faustino Villanueva is a vocational centre that has been dedicated to helping disadvantaged youths in the rural region of San Agustín, Alta Verapaz, for almost 40 years. Located in an extremely remote area with limited access, the school is an invaluable resource for young people who would otherwise be isolated by their locality and the challenges raised by coming from backgrounds of poverty and hardship.



“In the past year, we have been reflecting on our journey here at the Centro Faustino Villanueva, with a view to improving and innovating our work in the training of our young people,” writes Fr Jairo. “We are in the process of finishing the programme for a new agricultural and livestock project, which will help us to take advantage of all the resources the centre has to offer, and to provide training in the areas of agriculture, livestock, and forestry, among others. As we are living in a rural area, this will motivate our students to continue in promising new ventures, developing farms and orchards that will also help to improve diet and nutrition for local families and communities. We are also working towards opening our boarding school again; because of the effects of the COVID pandemic, we have not been able to have a functioning boarding section in recent times.”

“We are so grateful for the support of the Irish Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, which will be the foundation for this new phase. Together, we place our trust in God that with your ongoing support, we can move forward in our work. God bless you for your generosity; we remain, as always, united in the heart of Christ.”

## A Papal audience in South Sudan

“Hope is the word I would leave with each of you”: Fr Alan Neville MSC writes from South Sudan, with news of the Papal visit in February.

“The Vatican, and Pope in particular, have been involved in promoting peace in South Sudan for the last decade. When he met the President and Vice Presidents in Rome in 2019, the Pope stunned those present by getting down on his knees, kissing their feet, and begging that they would work for peace in the world’s newest country. This powerful act of humility demonstrated more beautifully than words ever could how committed he was to building a different future for a people in need of hope.

Over the previous nine days, Sr Orla Treacy and the Loreto team had walked as part of a pilgrimage of peace from our school in Rumbek to Juba, where I joined them. A group of 90 students, interns, Religious, and youth walked from village to village on the way to the capital, witnessing to peace. On the second day of his visit, our group had an opportunity to meet the Pope and have their photo taken with him on the steps of the Cathedral. He had heard their story and wanted to meet them personally. To say that they were on cloud nine afterwards would be an understatement. It would be something that they would never forget.

Pope Francis’ addresses during his visit were greatly encouraging, and uncompromising in spirit. ‘May the patience and the sacrifices of the South Sudanese, this young, humble and courageous people, challenge everyone,’ he said, ‘and, like the seeds sown in the soil that give life to plants, allow peace to blossom and bear fruit. Brothers and sisters, it is time for peace!’

On his final day, having spoken about the persecution of women and the vital need for peace and stability, the Holy Father reminded us, ‘Hope is the word I would leave with each of you, as a gift to share, a seed to bear fruit.’ A hopeful message indeed, at the culmination of an amazing journey for all of us - but for South Sudan, it is a journey that is continuing.”



*God bless, or, as they say here,  
Bi Nhialic arrer kek yin,  
Fr Alan*

## Thank you from our Sacred Heart Sisters

As our 2023 World Projects Appeal continues, our Sisters in the Daughters of the Lady of the Sacred Heart have been in contact to express their gratitude for the support of our mission friends here in the Irish Province.

Provincial Leader Sr Marie Solange Oko writes from Africa, with thanks for the support given to OLSH communities across the province, including current projects in childcare, health care, educational facilities, and agricultural programmes. “I come with gratitude to express our joy and thanks in the name of the Province of Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Africa,” she writes. “Through your support, we have been able to improve our activities in education, health care, and simply ensuring our mission. We really appreciate with all our heart this contribution to our province.”

Sr Renisa da Fonseca has also been in touch from Brazil, where current projects include care for the elderly, a kindergarten for vulnerable children, providing catechism books for communities in remote locations, and the support of a second-hand shop whose proceeds go towards feeding 65 local families each month. “I am writing to say a huge thank you for your support of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Brazil, for our ministry to those in need. I wish that you could see face to face the joy and relief your help spreads among the people which we work with. God bless you!”



*MSCs and OLSH Sisters all over the world continue on our shared mission to bring hope and dignity to the people and places that need it most. Together, we’re making a world of difference.*

# Fr Giacomo Gelardi MSC ordained

Warmest congratulations to Fr Giacomo Gelardi MSC, who was ordained to the priesthood on November 19th, 2022. The ordination ceremony was led by Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross, who travelled to Italy for the great occasion, with the Mass taking place in Fr Giacomo’s home town of Urbino.

Bishop Fintan concelebrated the ordination Mass with local Archbishop Mgr Giovanni Tanni, along with local diocesan clergy and MSC members from Ireland, Italy, Spain, and the General Administration in Rome. Irish Provincial Superior Fr Carl Tranter and Formator Fr Joe McGee were accompanied by MSCs Fr Michael O’Connell, Fr Tom Mulcahy, Fr John Finn, and Fr Con O’Connell, while MSC brothers Domenico Rosa and Jaime Rosique, who originally completed their novitiate programme with Giacomo in Myross Wood, West Cork, also travelled to Urbino to serve at the ordination ceremony as Deacons.

A host of friends travelled from Dublin and York to be with Fr Giacomo at this special time, along with Fr Pat Fogarty and parishioners from the parish of Carrigaline, Co. Cork, where Giacomo served as a Deacon in recent years. Everybody involved was delighted to join the celebrations with Fr Giacomo, his mother, Francesca, his father, Michele, his brother Luca and sister Maria, plus extended family members, friends, and parishioners.

“This was a beautiful celebration, presided by Bishop Fintan in Italian,” wrote Fr Carl. “We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Fr Giacomo and blessings on his priestly ministry as he commences a life of missionary service as an MSC.”

On the morning following his ordination, Fr Giacomo celebrated his first Mass at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart. Fr Giacomo is now embarking upon a period of mission in Fiji, where he will work in our MSC parish in Suva, and at the Chevalier Training Centre, our trade school in Namosi.

*With every blessing to Fr Giacomo as he begins this new chapter of hope and faith as a Missionary of the Sacred Heart.*



If you feel that you might have a calling to religious life, please contact Fr Con O’Connell MSC by emailing

[vocations@mscmissions.ie](mailto:vocations@mscmissions.ie)

Please cut here

## Burses to help train our student missionaries

Enclosed is my donation of  towards  Burse

MR / MRS / MISS (Please use block capitals)

Name:

Address:

Tel:

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Please subscribe to the Burse of your choice for the training of missionaries.

**SEND TO:**  
Fr John Fitzgerald MSC,  
MSC Missions Office,  
PO Box 23, Western Road,  
Cork, T12 WT72, Ireland.

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.

# MSC World Projects Appeal 2023

Each January, we invite our mission friends in the Irish Province to help us to make the new year one of positive change by supporting our annual MSC World Projects Appeal.

Since January, the appeal has been raising funds for several life-changing mission projects, including:

- Essential parish maintenance projects in Quito, Ecuador, where nine pastoral groups minister to a growing population of 42,000 people.
- Supporting the formation of young priests in India, working to minister to the needs of the people in changing, challenging times.
- Partnering with the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in their global outreach projects, from caring for the elderly and ministering to extremely rural communities in Brazil, to the provision of education and medical aid for vulnerable children in South Africa.
- Educating disadvantaged young men in Fiji, where underprivileged youths can learn practical skills for future opportunities in a safe and supportive environment.

**With heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported our World Projects Appeal to date.**

**Not only does your compassion provide vital support, it also reminds real people that they too matter and are not forgotten.**



If you would like to find out more about the mission projects included in this year's World Projects Appeal, it's not too late to take part.

Visit us at [www.mscomissions.ie](http://www.mscomissions.ie) to find the full list of projects featured in the appeal, and learn more about how you can help us to make 2023 a year of fresh starts, new beginnings, and positive transformations.

Please cut here

## I would like to support the MSC Projects. Here's my gift:

€10    
  €20    
  €50    
  €100    
  €250

I would prefer to make my own gift of: €

**PAYMENT METHOD**

I enclose my cheque / bank draft / postal order payable to Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

Please debit my:  Visa      MasterCard      Visa Debit      Laser

(Last three boxes for Laser only)

Security Code:           Expiry Date:   |

(Last three digits on back of your card)

Signature:      Date:   |   |

*\*If you pay PAYE or self-assessment tax, a donation of €250 or more in one year could be worth an extra €112.32 to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.*

Name:

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Is this gift in memory of someone?

Name:

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 MSC Missions Office,  
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