

THE MSC Message



Missionaries
of the
Sacred Heart
MSC MISSIONS



Team MSC walk the
Camino in aid of the
Holy Family Centre

Read more on Page 5

In this issue:

2. From the Director
3. MSC Missions in the Philippines
4. Home & away: Latest news
5. Camino Walk 2024
6. MSC Global News
7. MSC Vocations
8. OLSH Novena 2024

Winter 2024

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

www.mscomissions.ie

From the Director



Dear Friends,

As sure as ever, winter is approaching once again. There is not a lot we can say is certain in our world today, and there's a great sort of comfort in consistency as the wheel of the year slowly and inevitably turns, and the old familiar signs of winter beckon from the horizon. With it, of course, comes Advent, that sacred season of reflection and anticipation as we give our weary spirits a chance rest and prepare for the great glory of Christmas.

It has been a challenging year in more ways than one. On a global scale, we're faced with war, climate change, and social and political unrest. Our MSCs are out there, among the displaced and the marginalised, the vulnerable and the hungry, those who just do not know where to turn. It has been another year of uphill battles as we try to do our best to help as many as possible, and the demand is always greater than the resources we have to hand. What we do have are blessings beyond measure in our extended community of friends and benefactors. This year, countless families have had full bellies because of you. Countless children have received medicine, or have been able to go to school, because of your support. You have touched hundreds, even thousands, of lives without even knowing it, and that generosity of spirit is the greatest gift of all.

As we come to the end of another year, it is with a grateful heart that I thank you, so much, for your continued friendship. We are on this journey together, and we thank you for your company along the road this year.

This winter, we remember all who need our prayers especially those who continue to suffer the atrocities of war. I leave you with a prayer that the Sacred Heart may bless you and your family with health, happiness, and peace this Christmas season, and throughout the year ahead.

Fr. John Fitzgerald 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

MSC Missions Office,

PO Box 23, Western Road, T12 WT72, Cork.

Telephone: +353 21 454 5704

Fax: +353 21 434 3587

Email: info@mscmissions.ie

Web: www.mscmissions.ie

Suggested Donation €25 or £20 per pack of 5

Light Up a Memory Mass

Saturday, November 23rd 2024

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

All are welcome to join us live on our website

www.mscmissions.ie



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



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

Ecobrick project in the Philippines

The MSC community in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, have been working on an ongoing project where discarded plastic bottles are repurposed and made into “ecobricks”, finding new life as fences, planter boxes, outdoor furniture, altar decorations, and even chapel walls.

Part of the “Sowing Hope for the Planet” campaign, a world-wide movement to promote environmental awareness, the ecobricks project is just one of many efforts in the MSC mission for ecological sustainability and care of our common home. MSCs in the Philippine Province are also extremely active in the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform, Pope Francis’ Vatican initiative, not least with the remarkable efforts of the community at the MSC Centre for the Poor and their accompanying agricultural co-operative.

Fr James Espuerta MSC was rector at the Manila seminary from 2018 to 2023, where he led countless workshops in the construction and use of the ecobricks. Each brick is comprised of a 1.5 litre plastic bottle, which is then stuffed with smaller pieces of plastic, all compressed with a bamboo stick. Often, the plastics and bottles are painted in bright, appealing colours. The creation of a single brick is time-consuming, and can take a full day to be produced.



“If we have plastics, instead of throwing them away or into the trash or to the garbage cart, better to keep them and then organize ecobrick-making,” says Fr James Espuerta MSC.



MSC Superior General Fr Absalón Alvarado visits a chapel constructed by ecobricks on Camotes Island in Cebu. (Images: ncronline.org)

A recent article by *Earthbeat* reports how the MSC ecobrick initiative began in 2019, at the seminary in Manila, and has since expanded into 15 parishes in the care of our MSC brothers. A chapel in Santo Nino Parish, on Camotes Island in Cebu, has been constructed using ecobricks, and several plastic banks are in operation, whereby people in need can trade plastic they bring from home, or pick up on the street, for food.

Ecobricks help to reduce the costs of building materials while also promoting recycling and ecological awareness, and MSCs in the Philippines are very much aware of the need to reduce the use of single-use plastics in addition. “We have to care for our common home. And plastics destroy creation,” explains Fr James. “Human beings are not the only residents in the world. We also have our brother creatures, and we have to take care of them.”

“Being responsible for the use of the plastic could be a good way to save our environment,” Fr James says.

With the support of our mission friends here in the Irish Province and around the globe, MSCs in the Philippines continue in their mission to work in harmony with the natural world, while developing sustainable and self-sufficient lifestyles for the vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in their care.

Original article and images via *Earthbeat*:

www.ncronline.org/earthbeat/science/philippines-catholic-priests-tackle-plastic-waste-brick-brick

Celebrating 150 years of OLSH Sisters

The end of August marked a very special day for our extended Sacred Heart family, as the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart celebrated their 150th anniversary on August 30th.

Established in 1874, this year marked a jubilee celebration for our OLSH Sisters, and we are delighted to share photos of just some of the wonderful celebrations that took place around the globe to mark the occasion.

In a heartfelt post, the Facebook page for the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Australia wrote:

“On this day, August 30th, 1874, 150 years ago, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart were founded. Today, we celebrate this 150th Jubilee with hearts filled with thanksgiving for the last 150 years. We give thanks to those pioneer Sisters who, filled with the vision of Fr. Jules Chevalier MSC and the inspiration of Mother Marie Louise Hartzler FDNSC, went across the world, ministering and working alongside the poor and the vulnerable, establishing schools, hospitals, working on mission, and in recent years, working for justice, the rights of refugees, climate action, advocating for those whom society has placed on the margins, and much more! As we celebrate this special day, we are filled with the fire of God’s love to continue our mission with renewed vision so that we can continue to be ‘On earth the Heart of God.’

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart – Pray for us!”

The Australian OLSH community went on to highlight their continued commitment to their mission in a beautiful promise “to share God’s boundless love with everyone – no exceptions and no exclusions.”



Some marvellous photos of the celebrations were also shared from the Philippines (left) and the Province of the Pacific Islands (right).



Images from the Facebook pages for:
The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (Australia)
MSC Scholasticate Community - Philippines
Missionaries of the Sacred Heart - Province of the Pacific Islands

We join our hearts, our voices, and our prayers with our OLSH Sisters as they mark this jubilee celebration, as we give thanks for the past 150 years, and look forward to continuing on our shared journey, making the spirituality of the heart known wherever and whenever it is needed most. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!

Team MSC take on the Camino Inglés

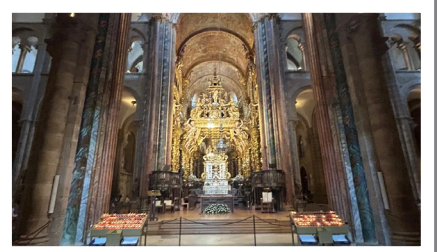
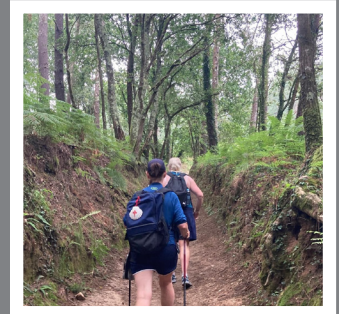
At the end of July, a group of 26 pilgrims walked the Camino Inglés in order to raise funds to help care for sick and abandoned children at the Holy Family Care Centre in Ofcolaco, South Africa. With Fr Tony Horgan MSC at the helm, the group covered 116km in six days, and raised over €20,000. Mary Morrish, one of our MSC pilgrims, shares her reflections with us.

Our 2024 Camino pilgrimage was a truly special experience, where 26 virtual strangers came together on a shared journey for a vital cause, and six days and 116km later, became great friends. We all approached the Camino walk with our own intentions in our hearts, while raising funds for the Holy Family children was the common denominator for all the group.

Each day, we paused for a reflection, a Mass, or even a simple prayer led by Fr Tony. He also prayed for you, our mission family, as we walked every day, remembering the intentions he carried on behalf of our mission friends along the Way.

Our evening meals were simple but delicious. Daily pilgrims' dinners of fish, chicken, potatoes, and wine sustained us in body, while our evening prayers and reflections fed the spirit. We also found that we had many talented singers in our midst! Each day ended with a sing-song, with Liam, one of our pilgrims, accompanying us on guitar. We gathered quite a crowd with our merry band each evening!

The scenery along the Way was quite simply breathtaking. From nautical cities and beautiful estuaries, to the welcome shade of woodlands and glades, we passed pretty country farmhouses with terracotta roofs, Galician mountains, medieval bridges, ancient monuments, and many architectural wonders along the Way.



Some of our group carried a stone for a loved one who has passed away, or for someone who needs healing in their life. They felt that the stone represented their loved one accompanying them on their journey. When they felt content and at peace, and were ready to walk on their own, they left their stone along The Way. Fr Tony also asked us to pick up one of the many stones that we saw on the various Camino stones markers that we passed as we walked. We could then carry the burden of the person that left it for the day, and keep them in our prayers.

When we reached Santiago, the sense of achievement was like no other. The sense of appreciation and gratitude you feel when you enter the square by the Cathedral for the first time is something very special. Two of us, myself and one of the other pilgrims, Mary, began saying the Rosary. Two of our companions had tears rolling down their faces, prompted by the sheer emotion of the journey and the fact that we had made it here. It was an incredibly special feeling, and a moment that I think will stay with us all for a long time.

We are so sincerely thankful to every person who joined us on our 2024 Camino Pilgrimage. Our aim was to raise €10,000 to cover the cost of food and basic care at the Holy Family Care Centre for six months. Thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of our Camino team, we hugely exceeded our goal, raising over €20,000 in total – a staggering amount which will guarantee that the Holy Family children will now receive the nourishment and care they need for one year. This support is quite literally invaluable, and it is with grateful hearts that we thank all who contributed for their compassion and their friendship, on the Camino and beyond. Until next year!

A new chapter in South Sudan

As one academic year ends and a new one begins, Fr Alan Neville writes from the Catholic University of South Sudan, Rumbek Campus.

“It’s all go as usual in the Catholic University of South Sudan, Rumbek Campus. As we are approaching the end of one year, we are already in full swing getting organised for the next. The University is small but growing, and we are committed to seeing it flourish.

Without a doubt, our students are our best adverts and promoters. Many of our new applicants have come through their personal recommendation. However, we are faced with two significant challenges right now. The first is that the basic educational attainment level remains low. According to the UN, South Sudan has the lowest expected school attendance in the world at just 5.6 years on average. This is why the work of the University in training professional, qualified teachers is so imperative. In addition, there has been significant inflation since the beginning of the year, reaching 320% since January. This means that finding money for University fees is especially difficult. To this end, we have worked to make them as low as possible and continue to offer a partial scholarship to women. For many, it is still not enough.”

Fostering body and mind

“It is not enough to just educate our students, we also need to attend to their complete wellbeing. Here, that means addressing issues like Hepatitis B. Seventy percent of all new global infections of viral hepatitis B and C occur in sub-Saharan Africa due to insufficient interventions, and the rate in South Sudan is a real problem. Hepatitis mortality remains high due to low treatment coverage. To this end, we have been working with the Mary Ward Primary Health Care Centre to test and vaccinate all of our students and staff who wish to take part.”



*Nhialic ke yin
(God bless you as they say here),
Fr Alan
Director, CUSS Rumbek*

A busy season for Chevalier students in Fiji

It has been a productive summer in Wainadoi, Fiji, with various workshops and renovations keeping the team at the Chevalier Training Centre busy.



Images are from the Chevalier Training Centre Facebook Page

Established by the MSC, the Chevalier Training Centre opened its doors in 1992 with the aim of bringing practical skills and a useful education to underprivileged young men between the ages of 16 and 21. Every year, the centre welcomes up to 75 young men from disadvantaged backgrounds, improving their chances of employment and enabling them to make a valuable contribution to their communities and societies.

**“Our mission is to help these young men to face life with confidence and dignity,” says the CTC community.
“Our priority is to assist those who have the least hope.”**

Highlights of the summer this year included CTC students attending a talk focusing on the dangers of drug abuse, eradicating sexual violence, and the vital importance of mental wellness. July also saw the completion of renovations to the carpentry workshop at the Centre. The workshop itself has been refurbished, and equipped with new tools for lessons.

Congratulations and well done to all involved with the latest achievements at the Chevalier Training Centre, and good luck with the next chapter!

Fr Frank Natale MSC: An invitation to serve

“June 29th of this year marked the 11th year of my ordination into the priesthood as a Missionary of the Sacred Heart. However, my active ministry as a priest in a parish did not begin until late August or early September in Palm Springs, California at two parishes, Our Lady of Solitude and Guadalupe. Today, 11 years later, at age 45, I am pastor of three parishes in Northern New York in the Diocese of Ogdensburg: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, St Mary’s, and St Paul’s.



Many ask, “Where did it all begin? “When did you get your call?” When did God speak to you?” For me, it wasn’t so much a call but more of a nudge or a pull—an invitation.

It all began in my senior year of high school, class of ‘98. A call of this magnitude doesn’t begin in a vacuum or happen all at once. I grew up in a close-knit, loving family in Canton, Ohio. My three siblings, our parents and I lived on the outskirts of town, on a small two-acre farm and a big summer vegetable garden. Our faith as Catholics was central to our family life, and the sacraments were equally important. Growing up in the faith and receiving all of the initiation sacraments helped my siblings and me assimilate into our parish community. I was involved in many ministries: altar server, catechist aid, parish council, cup minister, and anything the parish needed. All this helped to guide and mold me over the years to be able to perceive the gentle nudge, pull, and invitation in that senior year.

It all began for me with a deep sense to service. It was a strong desire that I wanted to serve in the Catholic Church; for me, it could have been anything. With this sense of service in the Church, I decided to confide in my mom. She was and is our family’s Catholic rock of faith. Following our conversation in a coffee shop, I remember the word spreading, “We need to pray for Frank. He wants to be a priest.” I never said I wanted to be a priest, but I wanted to serve in the Church no matter where it would lead me. I was very much open to wherever the call to serve would lead, but I also had a sense of being a part of a family, a community – a religious community. My parish priest was a member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC), which also began to appeal to me. After high school, everything was moving too fast, and the idea of becoming a priest was too much, so I let things subside. I enrolled in our local tech college and worked for my Uncle Bill for the next few years. The nudge, pull, and invitation to serve remained all this time. Over the next few years, I visited the main house of the MSCs in Aurora, IL and got to know the vocation director and the community more and more. In the fall of 2002, I was ready to test the waters and enter the MSC’s formation process in San Antonio, TX. This ended up not being the end but only the beginning of a new journey, of a call that began for me as a nudge, a push, an invitation...”

- Fr Frank T. Natale MSC, USA Province
Original article & photo: www.misacor-usa.org

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

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. You are part of the great work they will do, in future years, in many lands. May God reward you for your kindness.

- Sacred Heart
- Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
- St Anthony
- St Padre Pio
- St Jude

