



Wake Up The World!

This letter is from the desk of Sr. Barbara Winkler, MSC. Sr. Barbara, a member of the United States Province of MSC Sisters, is in her first year of ministry as the newly elected Congregational Leader for the world-wide congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. As such she is charged with directing and inspiring the more than 750 MSC Sisters present in twenty-two countries on six continents. In this letter Sr. Barbara shares an Easter message with you, the friends and supporters of our MSC Sisters.



of faith walk in the footsteps of great women and men who have enriched our lives with high ideals, vision and values. This year reminds us to honor what we have by telling our story in praise and thanks to God for his gifts and his continual presence in our lives.

The Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus throughout the world give thanks to God for **this special year dedicated to Consecrated Life by Pope Francis**. In his letter to all consecrated people, Pope Francis highlighted the aims for this year "to look to the past with gratitude, to live the present with passion, and to embrace the future with hope."

As we MSC Sisters look to the past with gratitude, we recall the richness of our heritage, the joys and challenges which our founders and first communities faced and their great perseverance. We women

In speaking to consecrated people, **Pope Francis actually speaks to all of us**. He calls us to live the present with passion; he reminds us that "grateful remembrance of the past leads us to listen attentively to what the Spirit is saying to the Church and to us today, to implement ever more fully the essential aspects of consecrated life." Each of us in our own lives must ask ourselves if we passionately believe that we are loved by a God who has called each of us by name telling us, "You are important and precious to me. I love you; I am counting on you." (Isaiah 43:4) From this deep affirmation and experience our joy is born!

Pope Francis puts before us all the challenge of the Gospel. He asks us, "Is the Gospel our guide for daily living" *continued on page 7*

'Fireside Chat' warms winter night with vocation stories

by Tami Quigley, Staff Writer • Photos by John Simitz

"In some ways I feel I was born to be MSC," said Sister Rosemarie Sommers, first councilor on the Provincial Council and one of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC) who shared her vocation story in a "Fireside Chat" Feb. 3 at Sacred Heart Villa, Reading. Much warmth and laughter filled the room as the sisters shared with visiting laity their heartfelt, heartwarming and sometimes amusing roads to the religious life. The event was part of the MSC's "Sharing the Heart" series, explained Carrie Whitmoyer, the MSC Sisters' Mission Advancement Director. The series includes "Fireside Chats," bimonthly gatherings on various topics. The February chat focused on the sisters sharing their vocation stories and asking their guests to share their vocation stories in light of the Year of Consecrated Life 2015 and National Catholic Sisters



Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC), from left, Sister Mary Anne Bigos, Sister Rosemarie Sommers and Sister Lorraine Molchanow chat with guest Marie Pellish.

Week (NCSW) in early March. Other MSC sisters sharing their vocation stories were Sister Marianne Baker, co-coordinator of the MSC Motherhouse; Sister Mary Anne Bigos, provincial superior; Sister Marie Janesch, Catholic chaplain at Country Meadows, Wyomissing; and Sister Lorraine Molchanow, spiritual director of the Lay MSC and former provincial. Also, Sister Bernard Overkamp, who until this past year was one of the MSC Circus Sisters and is now a co-coordinator of the MSC Motherhouse; and Sister Nanette Wisser, pastoral care coordinator for Sacred Heart Villa. Sister Marie is technically retired but continues to serve. The sisters created the villa, formerly St. Michael Convent, in 2003 with the vision of providing a personal care home for the MSC sisters and for other seniors. The villa incorporates the spirit, love and *continued on page 2*

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care that have been the foundation of St. Michael Convent, motherhouse of the MSC province since 1908.

Sister Mary Anne Bigos shared her first childhood experience with a nun. “At first I was terrified,” said Sister Mary Anne, a parish daughter of SS. Cyril and Methodius, Reading, of the MSC sister she had as her first teacher. “All you saw was her face from the eyes down and her hands,” she recalled, noting sisters at the time wore a full habit, head to toe. As a little girl, Sister Mary Anne wanted to be a WAVE in the Navy like her aunt. “I didn’t know what she did in the Navy, but she played softball and traveled.” The Enthronement of the Sacred Heart took place in school when she was in fifth grade, introducing the future sister to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Then Sister Mary Anne was pretty impressed when her class took a bus to spend a day at Vistarama—an exhibit of the Roman Catholic Church’s missionary work at Convention Hall, Philadelphia in 1956. “We didn’t have class trips in those days, so that was it,” she said, adding she came home with many holy cards and pamphlets.

The MSC sister who taught Sister Mary Anne in seventh and eighth grade had “a profound influence” on her, as the teacher exhibited compassion, understanding and kindness—the virtues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“I started to think, why join the Navy and serve my country, why not serve the maker of our country?”

A sister asked Sister Mary Anne if she thought of becoming a sister, and after a visit to St. Michael Convent, Sister Mary Anne enrolled in the high school. “Though I said prayers, in the novitiate I really began a personal relationship with God.”

Since then Sister Mary Anne has been a teacher, vocation director, novice directress, a member of the provincial council and the MSC Sisters Congregational Leader.

Sister Rosemarie Sommers came to the former St. Michael High School at age 13 in 1961. She was taught by the MSC sisters, and her mother’s brother became an MSC priest. Recalling growing up in Nazareth, Sister Rosemarie said, “In our small town our whole life was centered on the parish and school. In second grade I decided I wanted to be a sister because I wanted to do what they do.”

Sister Rosemarie felt called to teach, which she did for many years, including at her alma mater, Holy Family School. “When I was teaching I wanted the children to know God loved them.”

Sister Rosemarie was later assigned by the MSCs to community service, including a stint as novice director. Though the sister loved teaching, “I needed to respond to where God was leading me and trust him, and be open to it.”

After a sabbatical Sister Rosemarie felt drawn to the healing of mind, body and spirit—and asked the MSCs for permission to become

a licensed massage therapist, which she is today. The sisters and villa residents avail themselves of the healing touch of Sister Rosemarie, who for 10 years also offered her services as a massage therapist to retreatants at the Jesuit Center, Wernersville.

“It’s all about God’s love leading you and leading me. If you just trust, amazing things will happen.”

Sister Bernard Overkamp Born and raised in Germany, Sister Bernard Overkamp always felt called to religious life, and at 21 she entered the MSCs. She went to do missionary work in Papua New Guinea in 1968 and stayed for 25 years before returning to Germany after asking for a sabbatical and then requesting to go to the United States.

Once in this country, Sister Bernard spent five years working with MSC Sister Virginia Longcope, director of Stephen’s Place, Bethlehem, a nonprofit residential community designed to meet the needs of adult nonviolent offenders with a history of substance abuse.

Then life became a circus—literally—when she joined MSC Sister Dorothy Fabritze in circus ministry. Though Sister Bernard was skeptical of life with the circus at first, “What you fall in love with is real.”

“It’s not the show but the people” who are important, said Sister Bernard, who’s official “job” was a seamstress in addition to her ministry. So for 14 years she lived in a trailer doing shows all over the United States. Sister Dorothy taught circus personnel and their children, and both sisters provided religious education, preparation for sacraments and the opportunity for Mass.

“The important thing is to be a religious presence among the people. To work with these people is wonderful,” Sister Bernard said. “It’s a special calling, and I never knew Stephen’s Place would prepare me for it.”

There was even an altar and religious education center in a trailer, and the sisters had to secure permission to have the Blessed Sacrament in a trailer. “Without Jesus there are no sisters on the road.”

Sister Bernard was the co-director of Show Peoples Evangelization of Catholics (SPEC) until 2014. Sister Dorothy and Mary Seibert are now co-directors of SPEC. “

The presence of sisters in the circus is an indescribable gift to people,” Sister Marie offered. “I even see this gift at Country Meadows.” People say, ‘I’m not even Catholic and she smiles and talks to me.’”

The chat Future Fireside Chat topics will focus on growing the sisters’ mission to be the heart of Christ for others. For more information, visit www.mscreading.org.

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Catholic Charities Honoree

We congratulate our very own Sr. Virginia Longcope, MSC who recently was honored by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Allentown for her ministry as the founder and director of Stephen’s Place, a house for men leaving prison with a history of substance abuse. Stephen’s Place became incorporated as a nonprofit program in 1993 and believes that men coming out of prison should have a safe, spiritual environment in order to address early recovery issues from substance abuse as well as to develop personal life skills. Located in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Stephen’s Place and Sr. Virginia have earned the respect of their community and their clients alike. Sr. Virginia’s mission to be present among a population so in need stands as a prominent example of the MSC charism and mission which compels every MSC Sister to love and to serve with the heart of Christ. Congratulations, Sr. Virginia!

2014 MSC Sisters Donor Report

The MSC Sisters express joyful gratitude for all who support our mission. Each of your gifts, whether time, energy, treasure or prayer supports our mission to be God's Heart for others in the United States Province and around the world. Your generosity also enables us to care for ourselves as we age. Thank you for sharing your resources with us. Your gifts make a positive difference every day!

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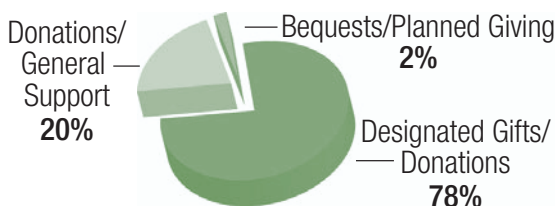
"Resurrection changes everything! May the Risen Christ transform us! May He heal our world! May we respond to his presence in our lives by allowing the good news of God's redemptive love to change us. May we embrace our mission anew with courageous, compassionate witness and service to everyone."

— Sr. Lorraine Molchanow, MSC

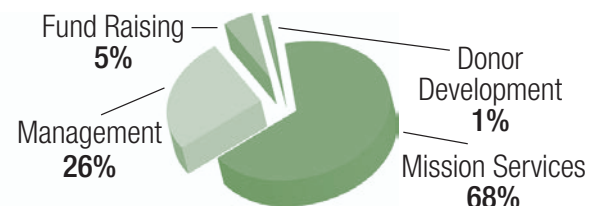
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Memories of Coopersburg Will Live On

by Sr. Marie Janesch, MSC

Great excitement filled the air of the Borough Hall of the small town of Coopersburg, PA on Saturday, October 15, 2014 as people of varying ages came together to honor the past. Some came because of nostalgia; others, because of curiosity and a sense of history. And MSC Sisters came because of their connection with the history of the event to take place – the demolition of Sacred Heart Home for Girls and Boys.

In 1938, Monsignor Leo G. Fink, pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Allentown had responded to the needs of countless orphaned children by establishing Sacred Heart Home in Coopersburg. Right from the beginning, Monsignor asked the MSC Sisters to staff this new institution, and so, from that time until its closure in 1974, MSC Sisters ministered to the children of SHH. Over the years hundreds of children called SHH home because SHH filled a crucial need for so many children and families in its thirty-six year history. Once these needs changed, however, and other programs were put in place, the home closed and its many buildings have remained vacant ever since.

Recently sold, the property's owners now have other plans for its use, and therefore, the long standing buildings were scheduled to be raised beginning October 15, 2014.

Recognizing the important role Sacred Heart Home played in the history of the Borough, the Historical Society chose to preserve what it could of SHH's history. Upon request, therefore, the cornerstone of the newest buildings, added in 1958, was presented to the Historical Society of Coopersburg; it and one of the windows from the chapel of the "Home" were on display for the October 15th gathering.

Shortly after 1PM, in the cool afternoon sunshine on this October Saturday, one of the former residents of the SHH was the first to strike down on the cornerstone with a hammer to see what had been placed in the time capsule so many years ago. The second person to strike the cornerstone had been present when it was originally laid. Successfully retrieved, the copper plated

box was carried carefully indoors, so that the contents could be displayed on a table for all to see. Inside the box were a trove of memories and icons. These included: a number of medals and small statues; a letter to the Sacred Heart written by one of the



7th grade boys; a Holy Water bottle which still had some condensation inside; a short hand-written history of the Home; a list of the Altar Boys scheduled to serve at weekly Masses; and a handwritten list of the MSC Sisters serving at the Home at the time. Because Pope (now Saint) John XXXII had just been elected in 1958, the box also contained many pictures of him from a magazine and some pages from the "Catholic Register", a newspaper of the time.

All gathered around the table of SHH memories shared many smiles, but most heart-warming was the reunion between some of the men present and Sr. Georgette Casavecchia (pictured) who had been their "housemother" when they lived at SHH. In addition, Sr. Marie Janesch, who had gone to school at the Home from 1940 until 1945, shared some of her memories as an "outsider" – a name given to children who went to school at SHH but lived in their own homes with their families. Also present was Sr. Mary Ann Bigos who had spent a year there as a teacher in her early years in religious life.

The nostalgic afternoon culminated with an invitation to the Sisters from the family now living in the original building of the property. This building, now their home, had been the Sisters' convent. Although much has changed, the building itself brought a flood of wonderful memories.

The MSC Sisters remain grateful for all the children they loved and cared for in Coopersburg from 1938 to 1974. Sacred Heart Home was a special place for so many in a very difficult time. The Sisters' loyalty to these children and their families continues today as new generations of MSC Sisters remember them and their families daily in prayer. It truly is a blessing to have shared the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in such a profound way. ☩

and the decisions we make? The Gospel demands to be lived radically and sincerely. It is not enough to read or meditate on it. Jesus asks us to practice it and put his words into effect in our lives." In direct reference to consecrated people, the Pope challenges that we ask ourselves

whether "Jesus is really our first and only love, as we promised he would be when we professed our vows. Only if he is, will we be empowered to love, in truth and mercy, every person who crosses our path. For we will have learned from Jesus, the meaning and practice of love. We will be able to love because we have his own heart." **We MSC Sisters reach out to all with this same question**, for within all of our own relationships we encounter the challenge to love with the heart of Christ. Where can we improve and therefore grow closer to being Christ for others? In what ways can we deepen our relationship with Jesus? Perhaps through prayer and scripture reflection which we then put into action.

During this year of Consecrated Life, the Pope is broadening our vision as consecrated women by calling on us to examine our fidelity to the mission entrusted to us. He asks, "Are our ministries consistent with what the Spirit asked of our founders? Do they meet the needs of today, in society and the Church? Do we have the same passion for our people; are we close to them to the point of sharing in their joys and sorrows, thus truly understanding their needs and helping to respond to them?" In his most recent communication, the Pope is especially challenging us, all people and governments to be mindful of and aware of the plight of the immigrants and the slaves of human trafficking. **We share these insights with you, our friends and families so that we all may find ways to respond within our own lives and relationships.**

Another aim of this Year, to embrace the future with hope is quite a familiar phrase because we are well aware of the many challenges facing consecrated life from decreasing vocations and aging members to economic problems and other societal threats. *The Pope reminds us that amid these uncertainties, we are called to practice the virtue of hope, the fruit of our faith in the Lord of history who continues to tell us: "Be not afraid...for I am with you." (Jer.1:8) This hope is based on the One in whom we have put our trust (Tim 1:2), the One for whom nothing is impossible. (Lk1:37).*

Pope Francis reminds us that, "this hope does not disappoint; it enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future which we must always look, conscious that the Spirit spurs us on so that he/she can still do great things with us.

We cannot yield to the temptation to see things in terms of numbers and efficiency, and even less to trust in our own strength. In scanning the horizons of our lives and the present moment, be watchful and alert. Clothe yourselves in Jesus and put on the armor of light. Let us constantly set out anew, with trust in the Lord."

Open Houses Welcome the Year of Consecrated Life

In celebration of the Year of Consecrated Life, many of our MSC Sisters opened their homes to guests on February 8. Our Reading, PA open houses included Sacred Heart Villa and Bethany Convent. Our Circus Sisters, Sr. Dorothy Fabritze and Sr. Mary Seibert also opened their home on wheels to their circus community while on the road at Queen of Apostles Parish in Belmont, North Carolina.

Our Sisters treated their guests to refreshments, tours, pictures and mission artifacts which all celebrated various facets of the MSC charism and missions throughout the past 115 years. At Bethany Convent in Reading, our guests received the special treat of Sr. Bernette's baked bread and nut roll.

Thank you to the many visitors who shared their congratulations with us and brightened our celebration of the Year of Consecrated Life!

Pope Francis is expecting great things of consecrated persons. He wants us to wake up the world, to go out among the people, to be present and prophetic, to be in communion with one another and above all to be women and men of joy and hope! We invite you, our lay friends, to meet these challenges with us.

At our 2014 General Chapter, an international meeting of the MSC Sisters held every six years, the Spirit led us to identify a direction and actions

which are very much in line with what Pope Francis is calling from us as consecrated persons. Our directives speak of "Fullness of Life for All." God's gift to us is life and we are called to live in the Fullness of God's Life as we are and wherever we are. He is our All! In communion with one another, we embrace our call anew as Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus to make God's love known to all. *This is our passion . . . this is what we are being called to live daily.*

In closing I ask us to reflect again on the words of our founder, Hubert Linckens, MSC: "For this Heart you are in the midst of the world!" The world is where we experience life with all its joys and yearnings; its struggles, demands, contradictions and pain. It is where we hear cries daily for justice and equality, for understanding and mercy. I invite you to join us in living the theme of our General Chapter, **Choose Life with Renewed Heart!** Let us both desire and embrace this call so that our hearts renewed will be forged by the fire and power of the Spirit and the cross. Let us work in communion, united in our efforts to live in this world and to see it through God's eyes and according to the spirit of Jesus: full of love and compassion.

Let us be women and men of joy always looking up . . . for God's blessing, for a new day, a new opportunity, a new beginning and a future full of hope!

United in the Heart of Christ,

Sr. Barbara Winkler, msc

Sr. Barbara Winkler, msc
Congregational Leader



How can YOU play a vital role in the MSC mission?

Pray for the MSC Sisters and all whom we serve. • Become a Lay MSC Associate. • Join our monthly giving club.

Remember our Sisters in your estate planning. • Honor a loved one on our Tree of Life.

Attend and/or volunteer at our events, on our committees or on our Development Advisory Board.

For all information, visit www.mscreading.org or email cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org



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Spring into Mission

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Thank you to our Spring into Mission Committee and Development Advisory Board Members

And special thanks to our entertainers Simone Marino and Joanna Pressimone, as well as our Flash Mob Participants!

Spring into Mission 2015 was a heart-warming celebration because of those who chose to make our MSC Sisters a priority in whatever way they could. Thank You All and God Bless.



Join us for our **Sixth Annual Nun Run 5k and 1m Fun Walk** September 19 at Sacred Heart Villa, 10:00 AM start! Find information, sponsorship opportunities and registration online at www.mscreading.org.

FiresideChat

Join us for fireside conversations. Mark our summer **FiresideChats** on your calendar! Tuesday, June 16 (Game Night/BYOB) and Thursday, August 6 (Music Night/BYOB). 6:30 PM gatherings; 7:00 PM programs at Sacred Heart Villa, 51 Seminary Ave., Reading, PA. More information will follow in emails and online. Not on our email list? Visit www.mscreading.org and sign up.



Congratulations to our 2015 Jubilarian, **Sister Sylvia Mattoon, MSC**, as she celebrates her **50th year** as a Missionary Sister of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus! Sr. Sylvia's mass and celebration will be held Saturday, May 16th at Sacred Heart Villa.

Sr. Lisa Valentini, MSC, inspired the families at St. John XXIII, Carbon-Schuylkill, during the **Faith Alive Event of the Allentown Diocese** on March 24th: "Moms and dads, you were chosen by God to be parents because God saw that you were able to share his love. But you can't give what you don't have. So you have to know about this love that is so life-giving for us, and you have to choose to live this love. It's why your family exists." *Live with heart* ♥

