



MISSIONARY SISTERS

of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

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CONNECTIONS

Fall 2015 Newsletter

MSC Province News

She's spent 17 years with the circus. But she's not a performer. She's a nun!

by Abby Ohlheiser • Photos by Toni L. Sandys • Courtesy of The Washington Post

Inside the Patriot Center, the Cossacks are circling center ring when Sister Dorothy Fabritze, 67, arrives for Mass. She wasn't expecting the horse act to be there, and it is a problem. If she is to bring God to the center ring of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, the least she can do is keep it free of horse dung.

But, as Fabritze says, God provides: One of the horse trainers offers to clean the floor in time for noon Mass.

He is still sweeping when more performers begin to arrive by charter bus from their rail-car homes parked by Union Station in the District. Instead of sequin bodysuits or oversize shoes, they wear suit pants and button-down shirts. Today is their last off day in Fairfax, Va. After tomorrow's shows, they're headed to Charleston, W.Va., the next stop on a year-long tour.

Most weeks, Mass is a stolen half an hour between shows, with a visiting priest in a spare room or hallway. But today it will be held in the center ring. Instead of death-defying feats, the main event is a flurry of baptisms, first Communions and confirmations, of which Fabritze is the unofficial ringmaster.

The Rev. Jerry Hogan, head chaplain of the circus ministry overseen by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Rev. Frank Cancro have



The Revs. Jerry Hogan, left, and Frank Cancro wait for everyone to be seated before starting mass in the center ring at the Patriot Center in April.

come from Boston and North Carolina, respectively, to perform the afternoon's marathon of sacraments. But Fabritze taught the Boss Clown when to offer his son's name during a baptism. She sat for hours over many months with the trapezist's son and daughter, reciting the catechism. And she turned two folding tables into an altar and procured a green mixing bowl and a floral teacup for the baptism.

With noon approaching, Fabritze gathers the children backstage. On the other side of the red curtain, a trumpet player launches into "Ode to Joy."

"This is your moment," she says, and leads the miniature procession into the ring, to Hogan, who is wearing

vestments handmade by Ringling's costume department and adorned with clowns and lions. On the back it reads: "Greatest Show on Earth."

A few weeks after the Mass, Fabritze sits behind the wheel of her 15-year-old Coachman trailer, peering into an early morning fog, looking for red flags tacked to telephone poles. The flags were attached by the *continued on page 2*

Visit mscreading.org to watch the inspiring 6 minute video created by The Washington Post.

MSC International News

Kurugodu, India - Inauguration of Sacred Heart School

Sacred Heart School at Kurugodu, Bellary, Karnataka (a state in the southwestern region of India) was inaugurated on June 22, 2015. Most Rev. Henri D'Souza, Bishop of Bellary solemnly blessed the newly constructed school building. The bishop congratulated the noble service rendered by the MSC Sisters in this remote village through the ministry of education. He also said that the school is a wonderful means to spread the message of love and values to the children. Sr. Ancy, MSC, the District Superior along with Sr. Chandra and



Monies generously gifted to the United States Province of the MSC Sisters through the Pontifical Mission Society Appeals in parishes across the country contributed to the building of Sacred Heart School in Kurugodu, India which was inaugurated on June 22, 2015. We thank and bless our donors!

Sr. Veronikam inaugurated the opening of the building with great joy and delight. Sr. Ancy expressed her appreciation and commended the tireless effort of the Sacred Heart community members for making this day possible and for all that they do every day for the children.

The people of Kurugodu, primarily Hindus, are very happy

with the presence and mission of the MSC sisters. For some years, the sisters and lay teachers have been providing classes in temporary structures. There are now over 500 students enrolled in the school from *continued*

Want to "Be Green?" To receive Connections in email format only, contact: cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org

Kelly Miller Circus's "24-hour man," whose job is to mark routes that can accommodate the circus's trailers. Today, the flags stretch between Bangor, Pa., and Weatherly, Pa., about 40 miles from Allentown.

Fabritze spent seven years traveling exclusively with Ringling's Blue Unit, the circus she was with in Fairfax. But these days, she and her traveling partner, Sister Mary Seibert, split their time among five circuses. It is an attempt to extend the reach of their small ministry, which falls under the church's pastoral care of migrants, refugees and travelers.

Kelly Miller is a smaller circus than Ringling Bros., although it is owned by a member of the Ringling family. (Feld Entertainment has owned the Ringling Bros. Circus since the 1950s.) Kelly Miller is what insiders call a "mudshow" — it



Sr. Dorothy Fabritze prays with a young student in April.

raises its tent in a different place every day, often in a muddy field.

Being a circus nun is not quite what Fabritze had envisioned when she returned to the United States in the early 1990s after 15 years as a missionary in Papua New Guinea.

"When I first heard about this, I thought, 'No way, José, are you gonna do this, okay?'" she says.

But in the end, she believed that the decision was not hers to make.

"God pursued me. When you ask me, 'Why am I here?' It's because I've been pursued. I've been duped, like Jeremiah says," she says. "I could not forget it."

Since then, she has outlasted everyone in the ministry except Hogan, who has been at it 22 years.

Life in Papua New Guinea prepared her for circus life. She supervised religious instruction at 150 schools and traveled constantly. "It was canoe, motor boat, walking, climbing," she says. "Here, it's living in a trailer."

In Papua New Guinea, she also learned the value of embedding herself among the people she wanted to reach. At the circus, that has meant taking odd jobs. At Ringling, Fabritze spent two years opening and closing the main curtain between each act. "I counted it — it was 100 times per show, for 800 shows," she says.

Between rope tugs, she would have to stand in the dark as the next act waited beside her. It was in those moments that she did most of her counseling.

"They could just come over and say whatever they wanted to say for five or six minutes," she says. "If you talk it over with your mother, you can talk it over with me."

In Weatherly, Fabritze heads for the ticket booth. Christian Joseph, the circus's clown, often hangs out with her. He isn't Catholic but counts the sister as a friend. "She's always giving us prayers, which we all need," he says.

This is not an empty sentiment: Circus shows are often spiked with danger. At Kelly Miller, the trapezist doesn't use a net. Instead, her husband, the juggler, stands 30 feet below, ready to catch her if she slips.

Before the first show begins, Fabritze retreats to her trailer for midday prayers in her chapel, which takes up the master bedroom. She sleeps instead in a fold-out bed stored under the kitchen table, while Seibert takes the couch.

Fabritze regularly takes breaks from traveling, a few days at a time. Five years ago, the mother superior of her missionary order forced her and Sister Bernard Overkamp, her traveling partner at the time, to take a year-long sabbatical. Overkamp never went back; she is now a superior of their house based in Reading, Pa. Fabritze returned, but with an eye to working herself out of a job.

continued



Sixth Annual Nun Run Celebrates MSC Charism

The Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC) wish to shout out a loud THANK YOU to the people who made our September 19th NUN RUN 2015 at Sacred Heart Villa, Reading a huge success. From our wonderful committee of volunteers, chaired by Rita Phillips, to our gold, silver, bronze and in-kind sponsors, to our race day volunteers and certainly to our 5k run, 1m walk and 1m youth run participants — **NUN RUN 2015** was our best yet!



Sr. Bernette Ball, MSC shares smiles and gratitude with 5k Nun Run participants Ken Chrusch, Nick Saponara and Karen Shull-Archer.



Team Hildebrand enjoy the awesome Nun Run photo opp created just for our Nun Run by the Spinka Family of Reading, PA.

Pope Francis suggests—to step outside ourselves so that we might create a culture of encounter, of friendship and belonging, that expands mission.

To every person who took part in **NUN RUN 2015**, thank you for recognizing that we depend on you; our mission to reach people everywhere with the love and compassion of the Heart of Christ can only continue with your friendship and support. You are helping us to create the Kingdom of God.

Whether you were able to join us or not, we invite you to take a look at our **NUN RUN** pictures at www.mscreading.org so that you can enjoy the day for the first time, or so that you may relive parts of it. Looking forward to **NUN RUN 2016!** May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere. Now and forever. ☩



MSC Sisters thank the Walmer Family of Mohnton, PA who registered as Team Walnut Street Associates for our 5k run.

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Each year our event grows in family, faith and funds as our MSC Sisters welcome new and old friends to the philanthropy and fun of mission by inviting all to do as

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.
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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

Sister Mary Goes to Rome

... for the International Congress for Formators

Monday of Holy Week 2015 began as usual for me during these last twenty-two years in our Mexico City mission of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC). I am the Religious Education Director for the children, youth and adults in the poor parish of San Ramon Nonato, and I also am the Initial Formation Director for our pre-novitiate. We are a small community with two American Sisters, two Mexican Sisters, one postulant and three candidates. Shortly after Easter Sunday, I received an email from the Religious Formation Conference nominating me to participate in the first ever *International Congress for Formators in Consecrated Life* in Rome, April 7 to 11, 2015. I was elated, surprised and overjoyed to accept a scholarship made possible by a generous grant the Vatican received from an American foundation which enabled religious from every continent to attend the Congress.

Brazilian Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, the prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and the Vatican congregation's secretary Archbishop Jose Rodriguez Carballo presided over the Congress whose theme was "The Following of Christ Set Forth in the Gospel". In his opening address, Cardinal Aviz recalled Pope Francis's invitation to "look to the past with gratitude, [to see] the signs of the times through the eyes of faith and to respond creatively to the needs of the Church," while he encouraged us to "embrace the future with hope" because with God "nothing is impossible." Together, speakers, participants and volunteers constituted a powerful and diverse "cloud of witness" to Christ and to consecrated life. The gathering, attended by 1,320 religious women and men from 114 countries and 416 religious communities, represented the entire world, and this amazing experience deepened for me as it unfolded.

Each day of the Congress began and ended with prayer, often expressed through forms of liturgical dance from various continents, and the focus of the gathering remained upon forming the participants who, in turn, are responsible for the formation of women and men at the beginning of their religious lives. A wide range of presenters offered daily inspirational reflections on a variety of themes related to formation. Among these presenters were theologians from Rome, a Poor Clare Sister "present" by video and an Orthodox monk. One afternoon

was dedicated to seventeen workshops on various subjects such as: the world of young people aspiring to embrace consecrated life; the digital era; the prophetic dimension of consecrated life; the poor as agents of formation; dialogue among cultures, and enculturation in formation.

The Congress reached its highpoint with a visit to the Vatican when Cardinal Aviz presided Mass at the altar of the Chair of St. Peter and

when we were graced by a meeting with Pope Francis in the Paul VI Audience Hall. Our Holy Father seemed amazed to see us in such great numbers and immediately commented jokingly that there are probably more formators than candidates to be formed. He encouraged us saying: "I am convinced that there isn't a vocational crisis where there are consecrated persons capable of transmitting, with their own witness, the beauty of consecration. This is your ministry, your mission. You are not just 'teachers'; you are above all witnesses of the following of Christ in your own charism. Without your service, consecrated life could not exist. I ask you to pray for me and offer you my heartfelt blessing."

Concluding the *International Congress*, Bishop José Rodriguez Carballo passionately reminded all formators to prioritize in accordance with the Beatitudes as recounted in Matthew's Gospel and to practice patience and discernment so that the people of God might see "that luminous way of life that makes that definitive world transfigured by the beatitudes shine in a world that passes."

I knew from my arrival in Rome, when I was warmly welcomed among the good will of all the Sisters, Priests and brothers registering us in five languages, that my experience at the *International Congress of Formators* would be larger than life! Organized by tables, my small group represented Mali, Poland, Slovakia, Germany, the United States and Mexico. Fortunately, we all spoke English and we learned from one another as we shared deeply and prayed communally. Our discussions reminded us that we are not alone in our work, that we must look at young people with the eyes of God and we must see God in their hearts. I am eternally grateful to the Religious Formation Conference for nominating me for the scholarship that made this rich experience, which forever will remain in my heart and my prayer, possible for me. ✚



Sr. Mary Saponara shares her excitement upon visiting Rome as a member of the *International Congress for Formators* during Holy Week of 2015.



SAVE THE DATE – Plan to join us Saturday, April 9, 2016

for our annual *Spring Into Mission* gala! This year our celebration will be held at Berkleigh Golf Club in Kutztown, PA. If you would like to join our awesome SIM Event Committee, contact Carrie at cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org or call 610-929-2802. All are welcome! Thank you!

2015 USA Lay MSC Convocation

by Joann Rivera, Lay MSC Coordinator

What an exciting time to be a Lay Missionary of the Sacred Heart!



We welcomed LaRue Emmell, as she made her first commitment to the Lay MSC, and all other Lay MSC present made their re-commitments as well.

With deep gratitude we acknowledge the loving work of the coordinating committee: Marie Pellish, Lynn Ditlow, Mary Myers, Bev Hennigan, and Fr. Michael Camilli, MSC. The MSC Community in Center Valley could not be outdone in hospitality and we thank them graciously!

Daily, we strive to live our calling as Lay MSC, to be the heart of God in the world in which we live. We extend an invitation to all laity to join us in this mission — visit www.mscreading.org to learn more.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere! Now and forever! ✚

On June 10-12, 2015, the 2nd National Lay MSC Convocation took place at Sacred Heart Villa in Center Valley, PA.

The convocation was attended and presented by the Pennsylvania, New York and Texas Lay MSC and the Lay Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, New Jersey. California was represented by Fr. John Fahnstock, MSC.

Fr. Michael Camilli, MSC gave a wonderful opening on our “distinct branch of the MSC Family,” the laity. He spoke of the 3 gifts that the MSC has to offer the world, “the Spirituality of the heart, compassion for the world, and a spirituality that makes us proud to be human.”

Conferences based on the book, “Jules Chevalier’s Charism and the Identity of the Chevalier Family” by Fr. Hans Kwakman, MSC were deeply inspiring and our small group sharings spoke to us of our prayerful consideration for our future. As Lay MSC Theresa Yankowy beautifully put it, “How can we best serve?”

Most edifying was the presence of so many MSC Sisters and Priests; we receive so much love and support from them in our mission as their laity.

Our convocation ended with a beautiful celebration of the Eucharist on the feast of the Sacred Heart with Fr. Raymond Diesbourg, MSC presiding.



The Lay MSC welcomed its newest member, LaRue Emmell, center, to the MSC Family during its National Convocation in Center Valley, PA. Sr. Mary Anne Bigos, MSC Provincial Superior, Lay MSC Director Sr. Lorraine Molchanow and Fr. Raymond Diesbourg, MSC officiated the beautiful ceremony.

*The Missionary Sisters
of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
extend sincere wishes for a
spirit-filled Thanksgiving and
Christmas season. May you experience
the love of Christ through family, friendship
and prayer. May you grow spiritually
in gratitude and faith and share
your renewed love
with others.*

Sacred Heart Tree of Life



Memorialize and Honor Loved Ones outside the chapel of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus by inscribing a tribute in return for your donation. Visit www.mscreading.org to view options and to order or call (610) 929-2802.

“All In” With the MSC Family

Celebrating Our Mission Partners



A beautiful couple inside and out, Si and Mary Marino represent so many of our mission partners who engage with our MSC Sisters as family.

Our involvement with the MSC Sisters began when we moved to Sinking Spring, PA eight years ago. Some of our wonderful new neighbors, Ellen Di Girolamo and Regina Rinehimer, were already great advocates for the sisters and through our interaction with them, we also became interested and involved. Presently, Mary spearheads the Sisters' Spring Into Mission benefit and I am a member of their Development Advisory Board. Both of us come from strong Catholic backgrounds and attended Catholic school when Nuns wore distinctive habits and were the primary educators. We continued our secondary education at Catholic High Schools. So, it was natural that we would send our three daughters to Catholic grammar school to receive the necessary Catholic foundation.

The interest that we have in support of the Sisters is actually pretty simple. These ladies have given their life in support of Jesus Christ and his teachings. They provide caretaking, education, development and the list seems never ending. But they do so with little in return and not much in the avenue of support. This was highly evident to me when we met up with the Sisters who travel with the circus to bring the word of God and religious education to these travelling performers. Both my wife and I were very much involved in the entertainment world at some point in our lives. And speaking for myself as a former musician, it is so easy to go astray out there. But listening to the stories

of these ladies, I could only imagine how many performers they must have affected—and continue to affect—positively.

Bottom line, I think our involvement with the sisters has truly helped us much more than we have helped their cause. They actually have gotten me back to playing music again, and Mary enjoys sharing her creative juices through entertainment and banquet preparation. Could this be Divine Intervention? I hope so! But all kidding aside, our involvement provides us the opportunity to remain close to our Catholic upbringing while supporting our MSC Sisters who have given their lives for so many others. Ultimately, supporting the Sisters as volunteers and monthly donors really makes us feel good! †

Are you or a loved one seeking Independent and Personal Care options? Sacred Heart Villa in Reading, PA, offers compassionate care guided by the spirit and charism of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Call 610-929-5751 and visit the Sacred Heart Villa website, www.SacredHeartVillaPA.org to learn more and to schedule a tour today.

MSC Motherhouse Chapel Begins Renovation



Over the course of the last two years the MSC Mission Advancement Office began efforts to secure funding for chapel renovations including lighting, electric, air conditioning, sound system, water damage repair and paint. The first goal of these efforts included grant applications for \$50,000 toward renovations. Upon receipt of these grant monies which included \$25,000 each from the Colonial Oaks Foundation and S.O.A.R., the second goal was to ask specific MSC mission partners to assist our renovation through their own generous contributions. These requests were met by an amazing generosity of gifts totaling \$40,800! And so, we are very happy to announce that as of October 6, 2015 MSC Chapel Renovations have begun! We thank God for our many friends and benefactors who have made this day—and many more to come—possible! We bid farewell to water damage and faded walls as we welcome a sound system and lighting that will enhance our prayer ministry, our Masses and our daily devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. By the end of 2015 these renovations will be complete and we will extend invitations to our chapel unveiling. We hope you will join in our celebration, for we truly are blessed and we wish to share our blessings and our home with you. †

LCWR Membership Energizes and Challenges

MSC Sisters, long time members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), attended their annual national assembly in August 2015 assembly in early August through the presence of Sisters Mary Anne Bigos and Marie Clark. In existence since 1956, LCWR seeks to “promote a developing understanding and living of religious life” through collaboration and dialogue and by “developing models for initiating and strengthening relationships with groups concerned with the needs of society, thereby maximizing the potential of the conference for effecting change.”

The 2015 LCWR Assembly, titled “Springs of the Great Deep Burst Forth: Meeting the Thirsts of the World,” convened in Houston, Texas and decided on the following initiatives over the next seven years: to Embrace Critical Change; to Provide Skills and Resources for Contemplative and Anticipatory Leadership; and to Stand for Social Justice in Response to the Needs of the Time. These initiatives encompass the real time needs of a vast number of congregations of women religious as well as their preparation for intercultural and global leadership. These consecrated Catholic Sisters seek to speak the imperative of the Gospel with a collective voice in solidarity with others “to establish economic

justice, abolish modern-day slavery, ensure immigrant rights, promote nonviolence and protect Earth and its biosphere.”

As members of LCWR, MSC Sisters take these goals to heart as they strive to be women of faith risking for the Gospel. Speaking directly to this membership, Sr. Marie Clark states that, “Being part of this vast network of Sisters throughout the USA is a source of pride. I rejoice in the ability

of those who are able to send their members to the United Nations as Non-Governmental Organizations, actively lobby in the hall of Congress and serve as voting members of corporations with the leverage to influence policy. As MSC we are challenged to do our part on the smaller playing fields of individual

and parish ministries and especially through the power of prayerful social consciousness.”

Echoing these sentiments, Sr. Mary Anne Bigos added that, “Attendance at these meetings is always energizing and challenging as we meet with over 800 other religious women from across the United States and abroad and look at issues that impact our own spiritual and religious life as well as those impacting the world.” †

These goals may seem like an impossibility in today's world, but let us not forget that women religious built our country from its educational foundation to its healthcare and social service platforms when few others responded to these needs – AND they continue to do so today.



Please Consider Becoming a Monthly Donor – Join our Heart of God Society!

Your monthly credit card gift is easy to set up; it saves time and money which enables you to make a bigger difference for our Sisters and for those to whom we minister!

For information or to join, visit www.mscreading.org, call 610-929-2802 or email cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org.



Mission Experiences for the Young at Heart

A group of “older” parishioners from St. Columbkille Parish, Boyertown, celebrated their Mission Sending Mass on October 8 at Sacred Heart Villa. Not to be outdone by young people, these “later-in-life” missionaries traveled with Sr. Lisa Valentini, MSC and their pastor Fr. Marty Kern to the town of El Factor, Dominican Republic from October 19-30.

It's never too late to live with heart! Interested in a mission experience? Visit <http://mscreading.org/where-we-serve/dominican-republic/> †



Advance the Missionary work of the MSC Sisters beyond your own lifetime... Remember the MSC Sisters when making or changing your Will.

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If you would like to donate a gift of stock to the MSC Sisters, please contact us at 610-929-2802 or cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org for information.

IN MEMORIAM



Sister Helen Papan, MSC
(Sister Lucille) 1943–2015

Sister Helen grew up in Reading, Pennsylvania with her parents and two younger sisters. They belonged to St. Cyril and Methodius Parish where Sister Helen attended grade school and was taught by the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Sister Helen entered the aspirancy in 1938. After her novitiate, she began her long ministry in health care by receiving

her initial training as a nurse in our own Sacred Heart Hospital School of Nursing in Allentown and later her degree in nursing at the University of Dayton. From 1949–1956 she was nursing supervisor in Good Samaritan Hospital in Pottsville and from 1956 to 1963 in Sacred Heart Hospital in Norristown. After further studies she served as assistant director of nursing service in Pottsville and Instructor in the school of practical nursing in Norristown from 1966–1968.

For two years, from 1968–1970 she was asked to be director of vocations for the province. After this she again returned to nursing as supervisor and assistant director of nursing service in our hospital in Norristown. From 1977 to 1980 she studied at the University of Pennsylvania and then taught nursing at DeSales University for seven years. For the next two years she was home caring for her aged father.

In 1989 Sister Helen began a new ministry in Sacred Heart Hospital in Norristown in patient education, and in 1995 she embarked on another special ministry in Mound Bayou, Mississippi. In this poor southern town, Sister became a special advocate for the poor and elderly as she devoted herself to their home health care and interceded on their behalf before various government and health care agencies. When we as a province withdrew from Mound Bayou, Sister Helen continued to minister in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania as the regional parish outreach social worker. In 2005 she retired to the motherhouse.

Since her retirement in 2005, Sister Helen bore a number of physical ailments, but through them all she showed great courage and determination. When she received the news that cancer had recurred for the third time, she took the news in stride and chose to begin treatments once again; however, she continued to grow weaker and finally God called her to Himself.

Whether it was in hands-on nursing, supervision, education or social work, Sister Helen gave herself wholeheartedly. She was very competent and efficient, and had a special place in her heart for the poor and disadvantaged. Sister Helen was very friendly and outgoing and had a great sense of humor. We are grateful for the many years that she lived among us and for the many people whose lives she touched. †

International News *continued from page 1*

pre-school to Grade 9 where the sisters offer value based education. The sisters work to collaborate with all the major religions to live in peace and harmony and they invite the leaders of other religions to the main activities of the school.

On the inauguration day, the school children, through their graceful moves and steps, performed a welcome dance that created a prayerful atmosphere for the blessing of the new school building.

Several religious sisters, clergy of the diocese, a Hindu and Muslim priest added to the spiritual atmosphere of the ceremony. Many dignitaries from the Board of Education in Bellary, teachers, parents, benefactors and well-wishers attended the inauguration which was concluded with a fellowship meal.

We are deeply grateful for all who made this day possible through their support and contributions, especially our MSC congregation. The Lord has been good to us and blessed our ministry here in Kurugodu, Bellary and we give him praise! †

Circus Ministry *continued from page 2*

That was how she left Papua New Guinea. Her ministry departed only after training local nuns to run the Catholic schools where Fabritze once taught. The difference now is that Fabritze doesn't see another nun ready to step in.

"I'd love anyone on the circus who wants to be a sister, who wants to come forward, but of course, we're not finding them," she says.

As an alternative, she has sought out lay leaders who can read the Bible with those who request to hear it and train for the sacraments. But recruitment has been slow. So far, she has eight for 30 to 40 circuses. Fabritze had planned to leave when she turned 65. She has upped that to 70.

"All I'm trying to do is plant seeds," she says. "If this lay leadership and these catechists are supposed to leave a mark on the circuses at large, God will provide."

After prayers, Fabritze might squeeze in an episode of her favorite show, "Murder, She Wrote," on the small television set she keeps in a cabinet above her favorite armchair.

Today, two students come see her.

Sammy, the 7-year-old son of a circus employee named Dee Dee Perez, is weeks away from his first Communion, and today he gets to try the wine and wafers. It's good to know what to expect, Fabritze says. "They're nervous already."

Sammy stands in front of her, hands placed just so, as he will when he takes Communion.

"Today, this is just wine, and this is just bread," Fabritze tells him, and not the body and the blood of Jesus unless he takes them from a priest.

He takes a sip.

"Did you like the wine?" Perez asks.

Sammy smiles and nods.

"Oh boy," Perez says.

The ventriloquist is Fabritze's most regular visitor at Kelly Miller, five days a week for coffee at 2 p.m. He is Finnish and goes by Sebastian. Fabritze calls him an "inquirer," a person interested in the Catholic Church but not yet looking to convert.

Sebastian is nervous. He's a veteran of the European circus circuit, and this is his first tour in the United States.

He has learned that the crowd's sense of humor varies by region. His act with Hector, a long-beaked puppet, killed in the Rio Grande Valley. But last week in New Jersey, "it was very difficult."

He says he talks to Fabritze because she helps him to know God better, which means a lot coming from a man who says he took years to decide between the Lutheran priesthood and puppeteering.

The ventriloquist and the nun sip coffee as they discuss the purpose of the congregation's prayer at Mass.

"Sometimes," Fabritze says, "something really awful is happening and you don't want to say, 'Thank you, Lord.' How do you say those words?"

She says the answer came to her 50 years ago when she was training to be a nun. "When you are at Mass, it's not the individual, it's the community," she says. "When you come to liturgy, you are joining a community."

After an hour, Sebastian gets up to go. He has to do his act now. Fabritze offers her blessing, the same one she gives him each day: "Make 'em laugh." †

Courtesy of The Washington Post.

Abby Ohlheiser is a Washington Post staff writer. To comment on this story, e-mail wpmagazine@washpost.com or visit washingtonpost.com/magazine.



Sister Mary Seibert, left, is the latest nun to accompany Sister Fabritze, right, as they follow their transient flock around the country in an aging Coachman trailer. Inside the RV, the nuns tidy up an altar in the master bedroom, which has been turned into a scantuary.



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Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC) are religious women who are called to be the Heart of God in the world. United in faith and prayer, we are 750 women risking for the Gospel in twenty-one countries including the United States of America.


Our mission is to serve all with the compassionate love of Jesus. We have been doing this in the U.S. for 117 years through such ministries as evangelization, social work, health care, education, pastoral care, counseling, elder care and parish ministry.

*We invite you to read this newsletter
and/or to visit us online at
www.mscreading.org to learn
more about the MSC Sisters,
our mission to be the
Heart of God for others,
and the role
you can play
in our
mission.*



UPCOMING EVENTS

2015

- Nov. 1-7 National Vocation Awareness Week
- Nov. 14 **FiresideChat** 
Painting Party with Bernadette Bresnahan
of Creative Spirit Painting
6:00–8:00 pm at Junk 2 Jazz, Reading, PA.
To register at \$40pp, email
cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org
- Dec. 3 Development Advisory Board
Christmas Evening

2016

- Jan. 16 Mission Partner Thank You Mass & Brunch
- Feb. 2 World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life
- April 9  **Spring** Berkleigh Golf Club
into Mission Kutztown, PA
- April 17 World Day of Prayer for Vocations
- June 3 Feast of the Sacred Heart
- Sept. 17 **NUN RUN**  Sacred Heart Villa
Reading, PA