



MISSIONARY SISTERS

of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

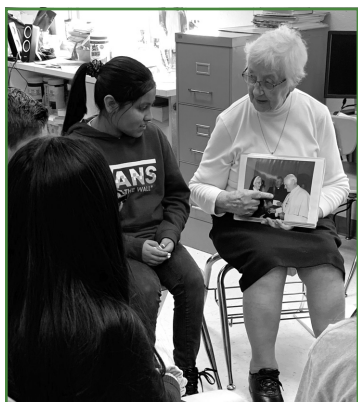
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CONNECTIONS

Spring/Summer 2020 Newsletter

Celebrating with Good Neighbors

The Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus were delighted to visit with students of Holy Guardian Angels Regional School in celebration of Catholic Schools Week 2020. Neighbors ever since the parish was founded in 1929 just down the hill from the MSC Sisters' Motherhouse (1908), the school's invitation was met with enthusiasm and joy. Sisters Mary Anne Bigos, Bernard Overkamp, Nanette Wisser and Marie Janesch spent an afternoon sharing their stories of vocation and mission with small groups of curious, intelligent sixth and fourth grade students.



Sr. Marie Janesch enjoyed sharing her mission stories of Namibia. She remarked on several details of her visit saying: *"I remember very clearly the children's interest in where Namibia is and seeing it on the map. They also were keenly interested in the things I had brought along — an ostrich egg, baskets and wood carvings. What attracted the most attention was a small crystal I had bought from a little boy on the coast who himself*

had dug it out of the mountain — and you could see a droplet of water in the crystal! You would have thought it was a world wonder! And they wanted to make sure everybody saw the droplet — including their teacher. The children were most attentive. They asked many questions and enjoyed my personal collection of Namibia photos too!"

Sr. Bernard happily shared her mission stories with students whom she said "were very welcoming and were keenly interested in my Circus Ministry experiences as a seamstress and Sr. Dorothy Fabritze's work among the circus children as a traveling teacher and a religious education instructor preparing the children and adults for any sacraments they needed." Sr. Bernard also shared her daring younger life of mission in Papua New Guinea when she traveled into places unknown and taught natives how to bake bread, helping them to set up bakeries in villages so they could earn some money. Sr. Bernard remarked that "The students were very attentive and asked us to come back to tell more stories."



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Oktoberfest Announcement



We will celebrate Oktoberfest in April on October 11, 2020

All existing reservations, sponsorships, and donations will be honored as is. Please use the paperwork and invitations you received in February or visit MSCreading.org to attend, sponsor and donate today. During this very uncertain time, we are deeply touched by any assistance you can lend to help us meet both our FUN and FUND-raising goals.

Congratulations to the winner of our \$10,000 Heart of Mission Raffle:

Anita Paukovits of Easton, PA

Together you bought 276 tickets and provided a profit of \$18,250 for the MSC Sisters and Mission.

Thank you for playing and advancing our Mission of Love!

From Our Province Leader

Dear Friends,

During this time of social and physical distancing because of the corona virus I would like to send you a greeting of *Nameste* across the miles. *Nameste* is a traditional non-contact spiritual Hindu greeting. With folded hands and fingers pointing to Heaven you bow to the person you meet as a sign of respect and reverence. The message you are conveying from your heart is *The God in me greets the God in you. I honor the place in you in which the entire universe dwells. I honor the place in you which is of love, of truth, of light, and of peace. When you are in that place in you, and I am in that place in me, WE ARE ONE.*

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Want to "Be Green?"

To receive Connections in email format only, contact: cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org

A Special Thank You...

St. Catharine of Siena



Kindergarten teacher Patty Miravich and her students shared their monthly virtue – compassion – with nine Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus who moved to their new home in November 2019. Sisters Annuntia Kollar, Bernadette Ball, Bernice Domitrovitz,

Francine Fehrenbach, Georgette Casavecchia, Josanne Huber, Rosemarie Mullen, Theresa Lepera, and Virginia Chnapko made the move from Sacred Heart Villa to St. Joseph Villa in an effort to enjoy more comprehensive care. When Mrs. Miravich's students heard about the Sisters leaving behind their home of sixty plus years, they wanted to offer the Sisters some emotional support, so they invited a few of them to visit their classroom at St. Catharine of Siena School in Reading. These Sisters, Rosemarie Sommers, Annuntia Kollar, and Francine Fehrenbach were overjoyed by the students' concern for them and their fellow Sisters. The students shared stories and songs with the Sisters and then sent them home



with arms full of presents including homemade cards, plush blankets and candies. Sr. Bernard Overkamp remarked, "They really thought of everything! How wonderful!"

Kudos to the students of St. Catharine and to their teacher Patty Miravich who brought life and breath to the virtue of compassion. This lesson is one that both the students and the MSC Sisters will remember for a long, long time. †



MSC Sisters doubly blessed by honorarium gifts

On August 16, 2019 the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus lost a dear friend and benefactor Mrs. Marcia Finisdore. Marcia was linked to our community from the day of her birth when she was named after her Aunt and our Sister Marcia Gasdaska, MSC. True to her vibrant and generous spirit, Marcia remained a friend for life even setting aside funds especially reserved for the MSC Sisters and mission. Marcia spoke warmly about her childhood memories of visits with her aunt to Sacred Heart Villa. She wanted nothing more than to honor her Aunt Marcia's memory by maintaining relationships with the Sisters and remembering them philanthropically.

Family and friends knew of Marcia's dedication to and love for the MSC Sisters, so following her passing they honored her affection by continuing her graceful act of giving. Not only did many family and friends send honorary gifts, but a special group of friends also



donated gifts to nine Sisters who moved to St. Joseph Villa in November. In memory of Marcia Finisdore, these friends who included Pat, Barb, Rose, Courtney and Diane Higgins (the in-laws of Susan (Finisdore) Higgins) joined by Dana and Jim Fawcett, provided gifts of plush blankets and candies to ease the transition of leaving their lifelong home behind. Our Sisters are so grateful for this generous act of kindness. Were Marcia still with us, she certainly would have done the same. †



MSC Volunteer Spotlight



Name: Sue Kasopsky

When and Why I became an MSC Volunteer: I became part of the MSC Sisters' charismatic love when Sr. Kathleen White and I became friends over 23 years ago. Through Sr. Kathleen, I began to get to know many of the sisters. She eventually connected/introduced me to Sr. Dorothy Fabritze, encouraging me to help her with the annual spring carnival. Needless to say, the seed was planted, as it is when anyone meets Sr. Dorothy and begins to work with her. The deep spiritual love the sisters have for Jesus was sparked in my heart by Sr. Kathleen and then continued to grow as I continued to volunteer with Sr. Dorothy.

Eventually, I even went on to visit Sr. Dorothy and Sr. Bernard on the circus trail. I stayed with them on weekends when they were close by, first helping with a very small circus selling tickets etc. and eventually helped with

Barnum and Bailey, which was a wonderful experience where I was able to help Sr. Dorothy teach the young circus children and help prepare Mass for the circus performers.

Throughout these years, Sr. Kathleen and I continued to be close friends and I partnered with her in helping to organize the MSC Centennial Celebration, which was another great volunteer experience for me. She was also very important in the lives of my children as were many of the MSC sisters. My reason for continuing to volunteer would not be complete without mentioning my children's volunteerism as their participation in the sisters' lives was very important to my own. All three of my children did their Confirmation service projects with the MSC Sisters. My oldest, Kevin, now 30, helped Marion Ford, Activities Director, playing trumpet for different events, helping a blind sister to play bingo, even dressing as a cow with Sr. Edna. He also spent a lot of private time with Sr. Maria helping to count stamps and developed a special relationship with her. My middle son, Steven, now 26, helped Sandy with maintenance work, and enjoyed that very

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International Mission Update

MSC Mission Alive and Growing in India

General Superior Sister Barbara Winkler, MSC and General Councilor Sister Nicola Sprenger spent the month of October 2019 among our MSC Sisters in India for a three-fold purpose: Visitation; Consultation with the District Leader; and Facilitation of the District Assembly. On their arrival in Bangalore, they were impressed to see the newly established Linckens Home for the Elderly, adjacent to Sneha Bhavan, the central house of the Sisters. The home opened in April 2019 with its first three residents which have now grown to ten. They are quite settled and happy in their new surroundings and are pleased with their new relationship with our Sisters who invite them to join in various celebrations.

At the beginning of the visit, Sisters Barbara and Nicola spent time with the present leadership team and had a three-day gathering with most of the Sisters of the District. This was possible because there was a special Hindi feast and holidays thus the schools etc. had closed. At this gathering, the Sisters engaged in a process of prayerful reflection, sharing, and discernment about the future of the district and leadership. They voiced their dreams and hopes for the District while also identifying areas of their lives and ministry in need of attention.

Following this initial gathering, Sisters Barbara and Nicola visited various communities in the District where they received warm welcomes and gracious hospitality. There was time for a community meeting, personal interviews and where possible, they visited the Sisters' ministries. Both Barbara and Nicola were impressed to learn more about prison ministry in India since one of our Sisters is currently serving as secretary at the national level. They visited a home for children of those serving time in prison where the children are receiving loving care and emotional support.

For her first time, Sister Barbara visited our Sisters ministering in the far North area of Orissa with Sister Ancy, District Leader. Currently four MSC Sisters live in Kotpad, a small village, primarily Hindu and Muslim. The Sisters are working closely with the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) priests at Christ's School, an English medium school started by the CMI's a few years ago. They now have over 300 students, are expanding gradually and adding new classes each year. Sister Barbara was impressed by the dedication of the CMI's to education and their zeal for mission. Two of our MSC Sisters in Kotpad are doing further part-time studies at one of the CMI's nearby universities while also working at Christ's School. We are blessed for this opportunity to collaborate with the CMI fathers who have been very supportive.

Sister Nicola visited Bellary where our English medium school has grown to over 800 students. They are doing very well but there is a great need for additional classrooms. We are working with our Sisters to find ways to enable the further development of the school. Each year their 10th grade students have passed the required exams with excellent grades.

While at Sneha Bhavan the Sisters of the District celebrated Sister Barbara's Golden Jubilee with her. She was grateful and pleased that a number of the MSC's could join in the celebration. On the anniversary of Fr. Jules

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Volunteer Spotlight *continued from page 2*

much. My youngest son, Shaun, now 21, helped Sr. Nanette to plant flowerbeds, prepare the altar, and many other projects she always had in mind for him. All three boys continued helping in their particular areas long after service hours were done. Steven completed his Eagle Scout project at Sacred Heart Villa, weeding and cleaning up the grotto and the cemetery, scrubbing all of the tombstones and statues. Little did he know that less than a year later, he would be cross bearer and pallbearer there as our dear friend, Sr. Kathleen was laid to rest. The connection my children had with the MSC sisters was a big part of my own continuation in volunteering for the sisters.

What I do as an MSC Volunteer: After all of the above, I wanted to stay connected with the sisters and to continue to help spread the love of Christ to others as that has always been a necessary part of my own spirituality. Working with Sr. Dorothy, former Development Director, was always such a rewarding experience so I went on to work with Carrie Whitmoyer, the present Mission Advancement Director, as a member of the Nun Run and Oktoberfest committees. Working with Carrie has been a joy and nothing short of a most wonderful experience every year. I have made so many new and cherished friends in the other volunteers and we have been able to be the "Heart of God in the World" along with the MSC Sisters. I look forward to continuing as an MSC volunteer in any way I can in the future. It has been one of the most rewarding parts of my life.

Beloved Volunteer Moment to Date: I spent many days trying to think of the right answer to this question. I have come to the conclusion that every moment I have spent as an MSC Volunteer has been beloved to me. I always feel very happy and fulfilled inside my heart when I am doing any work at all that involves the MSC Sisters. There is something special about these sisters, something different. Their love is like a magnet that draws you in to feel the love of Christ in your life. I have always known this. I have always felt this. Every time I am with them. They truly are the Heart of God in the world and I feel privileged and blessed to be a part of that. †

From Our Province Leader *continued from page 1*

I believe that during this global pandemic we have experienced in many ways that we truly are one, that we are in this together and it is as one that we will get through this and move into the future. Most of us are living in places where there are many restrictions to keep us apart and yet it seems we are more united and connected than ever.

Here in our convent at the province center Sisters Deborah, Patrice and I are trying to make the best of the situation. Sr. Deborah and I are able to work daily in the Province offices which are attached to our house, and because she cannot carry out her ministry at St. Mary's in Kutztown, Sr. Patrice has been keeping busy "spring cleaning" our house which is now "convent clean and organized!" Lately, we have more time for prayer and reflection and are able to have daily Mass live-streamed with our Bishop. We actually feel blessed in so many ways and we pray for all of you who are struggling with concerns for the health and safety of your families and with the financial burdens that you carry.

We pray that you are filled with hope and trust in our loving God who will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand, God will carry you in His arms. We pray for the time when we can take off our masks and gloves; the time when it is safe to reach out and hug another person without fear. We pray that we will do so in a way that speaks of understanding and acceptance, a way that offers peace to our world, a way that lets us all know WE ARE ONE.

United in love and prayer,

Sister Rosemarie

Sr. Rosemarie Sommers, MSC Province Leader

2019 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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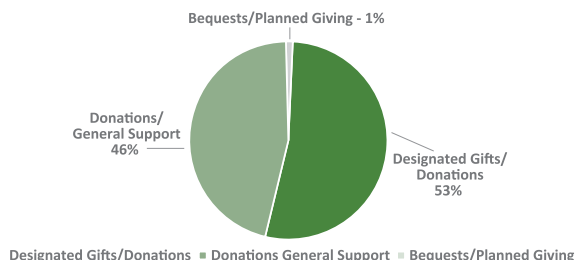
"The love of the heart of Jesus is the remedy destined to save the world at this crucial moment of time."

— Rev. Jules Chevalier, MSC

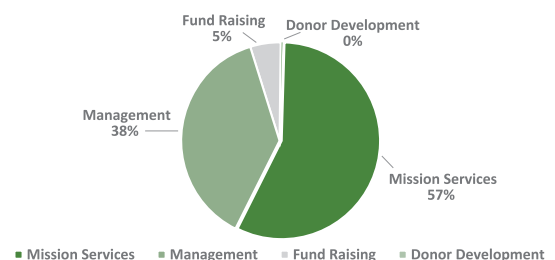
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Please continue to help us spread the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

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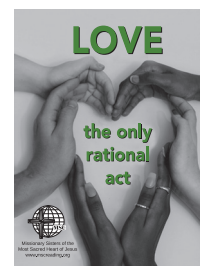
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IN MEMORIAM



**Sr. Dorothy Columber, MSC
(Sr. M. Josita)**
1929 - 2019

Sister Dorothy grew up in a large family of seven brothers and two sisters. Three of her brothers died very young. Her parents came to the United States from Czechoslovakia and settled in Allentown. They were members of St. John the Baptist Slovak Catholic Church and Sr. Dorothy and her siblings attended the parish school

where our sisters taught. After eighth grade Sr. Dorothy entered our Aspirancy, Mt. St. Michael High School, and in 1947 was received as a Candidate. She became ill during her time in the Novitiate and returned home to her family in July, 1948. Five years later, Sr. Dorothy was able to return to complete her Novitiate. She was so grateful her whole life for this opportunity to profess her vows as a Missionary Sister of the Most Sacred Heart and lived her 65 years of religious life in loving service to God's People.

Most of her years as an MSC Sister Dorothy ministered in our hospitals: Sacred Heart Hospitals in Allentown and Norristown and St. Mary Hospital in Athens, Georgia. She worked as a Medical Records Administrator where she was very successful because of her keen mind and organizational skills. She also used those gifts while serving for a short time as provincial treasurer for our community.

Sister Dorothy had a heart full of compassion for the sick and dying and spent 16 years as a pastoral minister in our hospitals in Norristown and Athens, Georgia. With her life-long health issues that led to several surgeries and hospitalizations, Sr. Dorothy knew very well the importance of being a comforting and supportive presence to the patients lying in their hospital beds. She had an understanding heart ready to listen to their worries and concerns, to offer them the assurance of God's love and mercy, and to bring them the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist.

In these last years Sister Dorothy lived with much physical pain despite the doctors' efforts to relieve her suffering. Finally, a few weeks ago, Sr. Dorothy made the decision to begin hospice care even though her doctor wanted to continue to treat her. She prayed for Jesus and Mary his Mother to come for her. Her prayer was answered and she died peacefully. With our faith in God's promises we believe that she is enjoying her heavenly reward united with her family and her MSC Sisters who were waiting to welcome her.

One of the songs that Sr. Dorothy chose for her funeral includes the words: "Deep the joy of being together in one heart. All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you." Yes, we will remember you, Dorothy, and we ask you to remember us and intercede for all of us that we may one day be united again in the Heart of our Beloved Jesus. †



Sr. M. Colleen Birmingham, MSC
1937 - 2019

Sister Colleen grew up in a warm and loving Irish family in Philadelphia with her brother William (Bill) and her two sisters Mary and Catherine (Cass). Somehow the family became members of the German parish of St. Henry where Sr. Colleen was taught by our Sisters in the parish school. In 1958 Sr. Colleen entered our community with a strong desire to be a missionary in foreign lands.

For twelve years following her Profession of Vows Sr. Colleen taught in several parish schools including Our Lady of Hungary, Northampton; St. John the Baptist, Ottsville; Incarnation, Palos Heights, Illinois; and St. Peter, Coplay. In 1973 her great desire to be a missionary abroad was fulfilled when she was sent to Namibia (formerly Southwest Africa) where she ministered in schools and parishes sharing God's love and compassion with all she met. Sr. Colleen spent nine years in Namibia and sadly returned to the States after sustaining serious injuries in a car accident.

Her mission of love and service continued for many years and was carried out in a variety of ways. Sr. Colleen was a parish minister at St. Margaret Mary, Parkersburg, West Virginia; St. Michael - Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Amsterdam, New York; and St. Ann in Naples, Florida.

In 1996 Sr. Colleen returned to the city of her birth, Philadelphia, where she devoted her time, energy, and pastoral gifts in social outreach to the poor and elderly. For many years she offered her services to an organization called "Aid for Friends" whose mission is to support isolated and homebound individuals - especially the elderly - through weekly visits, home-cooked meals, and outreach services - free of charge. On the occasion of her 50th anniversary of vows in 2010, the Secretary for Catholic Human Services for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia wrote to Sr. Colleen: "We have been truly blessed to have you in our midst as a bridge to God's tender mercy and a visible reminder that we too are called to join you in joyfully caring for the needs of others as we serve them with the loving compassion of Christ Jesus our Lord."

In recent years Sr. Colleen has been a witness to God's love especially in serving the transportation needs of her neighbors in the senior apartments where she lived. It was because she was late for a commitment to drive one of her neighbors to a doctor's appointment on Monday that the apartment manager entered her room and found that she had fallen Sunday morning and was unable to move. She was taken to the hospital and was transferred to the intensive care unit as her condition became more critical.

Sister Colleen was an outgoing and friendly person with a joyful spirit who lived a life of Gospel simplicity and fidelity to her call as a Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart. She will be missed by her family and many friends and by all of us, her sisters in community. We are grateful that she was with us for our annual retreat at Sacred Heart Villa that ended on the Feast of All Saints. God provided that she was prepared to enter her heavenly home two weeks later. †

MSC Mission Alive and Growing in India *continued from page 3*

Chevalier's death, Sister Barbara attended a special Mass and Chevalier celebration with the MSC Sisters, priests, brothers and formandeas. There was a wonderful spirit among them and Fr. Darwin, the union superior shared a desire for closer collaboration between our Sisters and the MSC priests.

The final weekend of the visit, Sisters Nicola and Barbara facilitated the three-day District Assembly held in a prayerful and reflective setting. Most of the Sisters were able to participate in the assembly, including Sisters Sophy and Clara from Manila. The Sisters were especially grateful for the experience and pleased with the fruit of their dialogue and the decisions reached during the assembly. †



Superior and U. S. Province member Sister Barbara Winkler, MSC and Sister Nicola Sprenger enjoyed a fruitful and hopeful visit with the MSC Sisters of Bangalore, India.

Sr. Mary Anne Bigos told students of her time in Papua New Guinea making the point that “although we Americans may think the people of PNG are poor, nature keeps them rich. They may lack conveniences but they do not lack ingenuity.” Sr. Mary Anne wanted



the students to understand that as Americans we have so much we don't need. In fact, Sr. Mary Anne shared that upon her return home, she cleaned out her closet and has ceased collecting things ever since.



Sr. Nanette surprised the students by telling them about her fond memories as a teacher at HGA from 1980-1985 and her mission experience in Namibia. Students enjoyed Sr. Nanette's memories of the old school building as well as her unique collection of hand-woven Namibian baskets and bowls. The Namibian culture remains



one of Sr. Nanette's true loves and her stories provided students a glimpse into a loving and spiritual people.

To wrap up this poignant celebration of Catholic Schools Week, MSC Sisters also enjoyed cheering at the boys' and girls' third through sixth grade basketball games. ✚

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Mission Update

Succeeding in Hard Times

Tanner came to us from Northampton County prison. He is originally from Salt Lake City, Utah. He landed in Northampton County prison because he was traveling from Utah to explore other parts of the country and was in his active addiction at the time. He was driving through Bethlehem while he was under the influence of alcohol and drugs. He was stopped by the police and was charged with a DUI which took him to



Northampton County prison. He was referred to Stephen's Place as a possible home plan. After he completed a 30 day in-patient rehab, Tanner came to Stephen's Place on October 30, 2019.

During his time at Stephen's Place, Tanner has been active in his recovery. He completed the Intense Outpatient program at Northeastern Treatment Center in Bethlehem and he attends Narcotics Anonymous Meetings on a regular basis. Since the middle of December Tanner has been employed by Weldship Corporation in Bethlehem where he started out as maintenance worker and since has been promoted to crane operator.

We are very proud of Tanner and it is our hope that he continues to grow in his recovery and matures into the person he is meant to be, thereby both fulfilling himself and the mission of Stephen's Place.

— Sr. Virginia Longcope, MSC, Director of Stephen's Place

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