Missionary Sisters
of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

CONNECTIONS
Spring/Summer 2024 Newsletter
www.mscreading.org

In Gratitude

Dear MSC Family,

With a spirit of thanksgiving for our many years of mission operating from our St. Michael Convent Motherhouse in Reading, Pennsylvania, I would like to share with you the news that we, the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have moved out of the convent as of the end of April 2024 in order to cut our expenses and to use our resources wisely. We are hopeful that the sale of the convent property will happen soon, and we ask that you add this to your prayer intentions.

Presently, and into the foreseeable future, our retired and infirm Sisters reside at St. Joseph Villa, which is a retirement home owned and operated by the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters on their campus alongside Alvernia University in Reading, Pennsylvania. We are very much at home and well cared for in this place where the Bernardine Franciscans are making their chapel and their event space available to us. In fact, we will celebrate Sr. Theresa Lepera's Jubilee in May at their chapel and in their McGlinn Conference Center.

Various other MSC Sisters will continue to reside in our smaller convents from where they will continue their missions and ministries, and our Province Office remains at 2811 Moyers Lane as its own property.

We encourage you to continue to contact, visit, and support us as you so faithfully have at the following two locations:

- St. Joseph Villa, 464 St. Bernardine St., Reading, PA 19607 – 610-777-5556
- MSC Province Center, 2811 Moyers Lane, Reading, PA 19605 – 610-929-5944

I speak for each one of our MSC Sisters when I say that you are an important part of our lives and our mission. Together, with the power of God's love, many hearts will continue to change through our relationship with one another. We ask that you continue living your faith actively with us through our mission and ministries. Together, we will continue the MSC Legacy of serving others for the glory of God.

In gratitude,
Sr. Dorothy Fabritze, MSC
Province Leader

Celebrating the MSC Legacy

The chapel of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Reading, Pennsylvania filled with joyous music led by the Queenship of Mary Parish choir during the MSC Legacy Celebration at St. Michael Convent on April 20, 2024. The significance of this celebration was not lost on the two hundred who attended – it would be the last time the MSC Family gathered in this place which served as the Sisters' Motherhouse for more than one hundred years.

The day began with Mass during which Fr. Allan Hoffa shared a beautiful letter from Bishop Schlert and Fr. Marty Kern offered inspirational words enveloping the past, present, and future of the MSC Mission as it moves forward centered in the love of Jesus Christ.

Following Mass, the Sisters and their guests shared past memories and dreams of the future over brunch. To aid in the nostalgia, MSC Sisters presented a video encompassing memories of one hundred twenty-six years

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

Sr. Virginia Longcope Enjoys Retirement Gala

In 2021 Sr. Virginia Longcope retired from her role as Founder and Executive Director of Stephen's Place, a halfway house in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania that assists recovering male addicts upon their release from prison. Sr. Virginia founded and began this ministry in 1993 as a way for her to live out her mission as a Missionary Sister of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus – to love all people everywhere with the Heart of Christ.

Gifted with a keen sense of humor and a herculean spirit, Sr. Virginia truly enjoyed her guests' comments, many of which were a roasting of sorts for this legendary leader.

The Gala, held by the Board of Directors at DeSales University in November of 2023, drew together present and past residents, board members, staff members, donors, and Sr. Virginia's fellow MSC Sisters who have supported the Stephen's Place project from its beginnings. State Representative Steve Samuelson presented Sr. Virginia with a Proclamation and the Mayor of Bethlehem William Reynolds declared November 4 Sr. Virginia Longcope Day.

During her time with Stephen's Place, Sr. Virginia guided 370 men through her highly successful program which saw an impressive 73% of its residents regain their lives without relapse or reincarceration. Truly Sr. Virginia Longcope has achieved her life's mission to share the Heart of Christ with others. "Well done, my good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). ✞

Engage with the MSC Sisters by liking us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/MSCSisters and visiting www.mscreading.org

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- Your tax deductible gift arrives automatically each month and is recorded on your monthly statement
- Your monthly commitment serves as an impactful stream of guaranteed income for our MSC Sisters
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We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Mission Update

Afghan Immigrants Share Gratitude

When Sr. Marie Clark and Sr. Dorothy Fabritze were assisting Afghan refugees in San Antonio in 2021, they befriended a woman who later contacted Sr. Marie to ask if she would be willing to help her friend Edith learn English. Ever since then, Sr. Marie and Edith have been meeting regularly on What's App and working with ESL books. Edith and her husband Venant, who is a member of the U.S. Reserves, came to the U.S. from Rwanda in 2021.

In February of 2024 Edith and her husband, along with their child Mael and their cousin Gael, decided to embark on a journey of gratitude to visit with Sr. Marie to express their thankfulness for her guidance and generosity of spirit.

Sr. Marie and her fellow Sisters enjoyed an afternoon of food, laughter, and love with these grateful friends. Sr. Marie looks forward to continuing her friendship and her studies with Edith and is delighted to have met the entire family. We truly do receive more when we give. ✞

SWEEPSTAKES

Congratulations to our November 2023 Calendar Sweepstakes Winners:

Andy Loeper, Linda Schuler, Maureen Whitehead, Clara Lush, Joseph Burke, Joann Banas, Joseph Bechtel, Peggy Downey, Kathleen Geosits, George Bartell, Gregory, Brother Timothy Waid, OSB, Kathleen Sakasitz, Edward Pohl, Sr., Teresa DeBiase, Barbara Quigney, and Mark Bolognia.

$10,000 Heart of God Raffle Winner

Congratulations to

Thomas Wade of South Carolina!

Thank you to all who played our Heart of God Raffle! YOU helped raise more than $30,000 for the MSC Sisters and their mission to love with the Heart of Christ!

2023 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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Celebrating the MSC Legacy *continued from page 1*

of mission, both foreign and domestic, as experienced by just under 400 Sisters who have called St. Michael Convent home.

Turning to the future, many retired MSC Sisters who lived at St. Michael Convent now call St. Joseph Villa, operated by the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters in Reading, their home. Here our Sisters will continue to host visitors, hold meetings, and conduct daily business. The MSC Province Center at 2811 Moyers Lane, Reading, Pennsylvania, 19605 will continue to serve as a convent and as the Province Center. From here the Provincial Council office will continue to operate and the Sisters will continue to welcome your correspondence.

As those of us with experience have learned, life is ever changing. The challenge before us is how we react to these changes. MSC Sisters choose to respond to this change of residence and routine with gratitude and joy. Gratitude for the years of constancy which St. Michael's has afforded us so that we might live our mission, and joy at the prospect of continuing this mission from a new and very welcoming place.

You, our benefactors, families, and friends are a beautiful testament to our MSC Mission and to all who help us spread the love of the Heart of Christ throughout the world. MSC Sisters are filled with gratitude and love as we say goodbye to St. Michael Convent and move forward with great hope and faith. Thank you for continuing this inspirational journey with us.

MSC Sisters welcome you to correspond with our retired Sisters at St. Joseph Villa, 464 St. Bernardine St., Reading, PA 19607 and 610-777-5556.✝

SAVE THE DATE

MSC Oktoberfest is planned for October 13 2024 at the Reading Liederkranz from 1 – 4.

Join us as we toast to another year of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus' mission of love!

Lay MSC Leadership Change

Lay Missionaries gathered on December 2, 2023 to celebrate the leadership and tireless care of their longtime Spiritual Director Sr. Lorraine Molchanow, MSC. Sr. Lorraine, who served in this capacity intermittently from 1999 through December of 2023, was celebrated for her constant promotion of the Lay Missionary program and her spiritual guidance over the years. To honor her, Lay Missionaries shared stories of memorable moments and lasting gratitude.

Lay Missionary and woodworker extraordinaire Joe Kenas crafted a beautiful gift of gratitude on behalf of the entire group. The wooden plaque is a tribute to the 25th celebration of the Lay Missionaries who, with the guidance of Sr. Lorraine, created the theme "From Root to Blossom to Fruit".✝

Mission Update

Sister Lisa's 40-year Mission Spreads Love of Jesus Around the World

Originally Printed by AD Today

By Gia Myers

Reflecting on the year 1982, Sister Lisa Valentini remembers she was preparing to take final vows as a member of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (I.H.M.) and to teach religion to second-grade students in a Philadelphia Catholic school.

She remembers one day reading to the students from a book, which stated that over a billion people around the world have never heard the name Jesus.

"Someone has to tell them," she thought at the time, and that's when she decided to volunteer for a mission trip to South America.

She told her Mother Superior, "I don't know if God is calling me to be a missionary, but if you think He is, I'm willing to give it a try."

In 1983, after taking her final vows, she was sent to Lima, Peru for five years not knowing the language or what to expect.

"I never thought I'd become a sister, much less a missionary," she said.

Today, Sister Lisa is a member of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and she's spent the last 40 years performing missionary work around the world, in places like Peru, Haiti, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. When she's not on a mission, she travels the United States talking to large audiences about her mission work.

Listeners are so taken with her stories that they usually approach her afterwards asking to be taken on her next mission trip. She's now taken thousands of people on mission trips – many of them high school and college students.

Sister Lisa was born and raised in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania, the second oldest among six children in a family of Italian and Irish decent.

She attended Saint Jerome Catholic School – before it became Saint Jerome Regional School – and she graduated from Marian Catholic High School in 1974. In the same year, she entered the religious community of the I.H.M. Sisters at Immaculata College – now Immaculata University. There, she studied Theology and English.

It was after her third day in Peru on her first mission assignment in 1983 that Sister Lisa saw the poor and thought to herself, "I belong here."

Though she found herself assigned to work not with the poor of Lima, but as a first-grade teacher at a school called Villa Maria Academy, where many wealthy families sent their daughters for education.

"One of my students was the granddaughter of the President of Peru," she said. Though it was not how she had imagined missionary work to be. The needy people she observed in the outside neighborhood moved her.

So, she took her students and their parents to visit two local orphanages. She took them in groups every Friday and Saturday, bringing toys and clothes to the orphans. They prayed together, and all of the children played together.

Feeling homesick after five years, Sister Lisa returned home, teaching first grade in a Philadelphia Catholic school. But she saw her old life with new eyes. The many food choices in Philadelphia supermarkets seemed suddenly shocking as she remembered the great need of the poor in Lima.

"I'm not right here," she shared with her Superior General at the time, who responded by offering Sister Lisa the position of Coordinator for Mission Awareness for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

In this role, Sister Lisa visited schools throughout the Archdiocese during the 1990s, sharing stories of her missionary work. Between speaking engagements, she also started going on short mission trips to Mexico and Haiti.

During mission trips, Sister Lisa often worked with groups of 40-100 children. She told Bible stories, played guitar – singing and dancing with the children - and engaged them in activities bringing the Bible stories alive for them.

On one of her Haiti missionary trips, Sister Lisa spent time with Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity – Saint Mother Teresa's order – feeding and holding orphan babies.

In January 1997 - after 23 years as an I.H.M. Sister - Sister Lisa felt called to transfer into The Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (M.S.C. Sisters). She says the M.S.C. Sister's mission "to make Jesus known and loved everywhere" spoke to her missionary spirit.

At the end of 2000, Sister Lisa was fully incorporated into the M.S.C. Sisters, and she was assigned to a mission in the Dominican Republic.

During this time, she hosted thousands of students visiting the Dominican Republic on mission trips, in addition to her work with the poor, and she returned to the U.S.A. for a few months each year to speak at various churches for Mission Appeals, gathering donations to fund the ongoing mission work of the M.S.C. Sisters.

Since 2020, Sister Lisa teaches Religion and Music at Notre Dame of Bethlehem School during weekdays, and spends weekends at a convent in Reading, Pa. "Unless I'm going to some church somewhere in the world to speak at a Mission Appeal," she says with a laugh.

She still visits the Dominican Republic, though she put her mission trips temporarily on hold during the COVID pandemic. She visited seven times a year pre-COVID, and now only visits "at least once a year. I'm hoping to get it back to five [a year]," she said.

"I need to be a missionary," says Sister Lisa, reflecting on her 40 years spent spreading the name and love of Jesus Christ around the world. ✝

Donor Tributes

"I heard Sr. Lisa speak at St. John Vianney's Church in Houston, TX. I do volunteer work at a consignment resale shop. I sell my clothes there and then I use the money to support an organization that touched my heart. This year I chose your international missions. Have a blessed holiday season. - Karen R.

"Sister Mary Loretta was a very sweet woman with whom I worked for many years at Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls in Philadelphia." - Arnold R.

"I am a 1957 graduate of Sacred Heart Hospital School of nursing. I got a wonderful education! Sr. Antoinette and Sr. Dacia were there at the time!" - Joanne M.

"Always proud to say I graduated from Sacred Heart Hospital School of Nursing which was one of the very best diploma programs ever!! Thank you!" - Carol B.

"I would like to help sponsor Sr. Dorothy Fabritze in the Nun Run - the General, as I lovingly refer to her from her Circus days! Me and my family are truly blessed to have her in our lives. Thank you, Sr. Dorothy, for bringing so much light, love, and prayers to our world." – Marisa Gill

IN MEMORIAM

Sister Mary Saponara, MSC

1958 – 2024

As in her life and so in her final journey into eternity, Sr. Mary surrendered everything into the tender care of the Heart of Jesus. God alone knows the length and breadth of her generosity while on mission.

From home, Sister Mary developed a love for good food, music, sports, and learning. She identified with her Italian roots and wittingly believed there was no place on earth like Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Sister Mary brought the ideals of family into her community and missionary life. Sister Mary loved her family, the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Church, and the Poor with all her heart. Like so many of our Sisters who had gone before her, Sister Mary was comfortable among the poor. "How blessed are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs" (Matthew 5:3).

Sister Mary began her missionary apostolate in education and taught in Holy Family School, Nazareth; St. Henry School, Philadelphia; Mt. Carmel/ Holy Rosary and St. Ann School in New York NY prior to her graduate studies. In 1993, Sister Mary brought a Master's Degree in Divinity and in Social Work to a new mission in Mexico City (San Ramon Nonato Parish) where she developed successful religious education programs for children and for adults and walked with several Mexican women through an initial formation process. She flourished in Mexico for 25 years where she gave the best of her grace-filled self. Her friendship, intelligence and humanity were deeply appreciated in the parish community. Before embarking for the strange and new in the mission in Mexico, she named that which would be her sustaining grace: "to live in the present moment." What Sister Mary found in Mexico were people easy to love since they do not expect perfection. In Mexico, Sister Mary developed a trusting, prayerful bond with Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Sister Mary was a great conversationalist who gathered information avidly and shared it with anyone who would listen. She had a passion for guiding everyone to the truths and mysteries of our faith. She was most generous with her time, searching out how to walk that "extra mile" with them. Sister Mary was personable and enthusiastic in her relationships. She was, above all, loyal, a missionary to the core!

In Pope Francis' quote "Hearts on fire, feet on the move" he referenced the disciples on the way to Emmaus. "Their hearts burned within them, their eyes were opened, and their feet set out on the way" (Lk 24:13-35). Sister Mary's heart is on fire; her eyes are opened as she enters into eternal life. ✞

Donor comment: *We can think of no better way to honor our niece Mary's life than to contribute to the great work that you all do. – John & Victoria* ❤

Sister Anne Kane, MSC (Lucette)

1940 – 2024

It was Thursday morning, April 4, 2024, when the church community meditated on the words of the risen Jesus "Peace be with you … know that it is I." (Luke 24: 36, 39) "Then Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and commissioned his followers "You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24: 48). These scripture passages speak to the grace which is the life of Sr. Anne Kane.

Sr. Anne was born into a large family of fourteen children. This is where she learned that love is the foundation of life lived together in a family. She imbued a love that specifically was expressed in service to others. Nurtured in this family and imitating her mother's devoted love and life of service, Sr Anne professed vows as a MSC sister on June 30, 1962.

It was the children at Sacred Heart Home, in Coopersburg, Pennsylvania, who became her family, and she was able to share with these young hearts compassion and the importance of a family spirit.

She went on to share this love by teaching, especially the young, in kindergarten and grade one in schools in Reading, Nazareth, and Northampton.

Eventually, Sr. Anne moved on to St. William Parish in Philadelphia where she worked in pastoral care, especially to the homebound. She continued to share the Peace that our God of Love brings "Peace be with you. It is I."

Known for her gift to really understand others in a deeper way, for listening with a loving heart, and possessing the gift of Wisdom, Sr. Anne served the MSC community in Formation Ministry, as Coordinator of the Elderly sisters at the motherhouse, and as part of the Province Leadership.

Sr. Anne's life, her love for others, and service to all were lived evidence that proclaim these words that will be placed on her tombstone "Jesus My Love, My Life, My All." ✞

Sister Francine Fehrenbach, MSC

1930 – 2024

Sister Francine was born in Philadelphia and was warmly welcomed by her parents, two older brothers, and a large extended family. She grew up in St. Helena Parish where she attended the elementary school and then Little Flower High School. It was there that she met our MSC Sisters for the first time. She became very close to Sr. Frances Marie Yandrisivits, who had a tremendous influence on her and was very instrumental in her decision to enter our community. Sr. Francine studied at Villanova and Kutztown University and made her First Vows on August 19, 1952.

The following year she began her teaching ministry at Holy Family School in Nazareth. For the next 40 years Sr. Francine taught God's little ones in various schools in the Diocese of Allentown, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Palos Heights, Illinois, and Athens, Georgia. After she retired from full time teaching, Sr. Francine served as school librarian in Philadelphia and Nazareth. She also tutored students at Easton Catholic High School.

I, Sr. Rosemarie Sommers, was blessed to have Sr. Francine as my second-grade teacher at Holy Family School in Nazareth. She was a wonderful teacher, loved by her students. She was compassionate and caring, patient and kind, and had a special gift for making learning fun. She was "the Fun Nun." That year she also prepared us to make our First Holy Communion. I was so inspired by Sr. Francine that, already in second grade, I began to think that I wanted to be a Sister like her and teach little children. The seed was planted even at that young age.

Sr. Francine was a joy to live with in community. Just like in the classroom, she was full of fun and had a great sense of humor. She enjoyed watching sports especially cheering on her beloved Philadelphia teams. She was a good listener, always interested in what was going on in your life and ready to offer her support. Her caring ways extended to everyone she met.

In her retirement years, Sr. Francine first lived at Sacred Heart Villa and then, in 2019, moved to St. Joseph Villa, the retirement home of the Bernardine Sisters. While she resided at Sacred Heart Villa, she was in charge of car maintenance. She knew a lot about cars since her father owned and operated a gas station for many years. Recently her health began to decline. On Sunday, she received the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, while surrounded by her Sisters and her niece Beth and husband David, as one of her favorite hymns "Precious Lord" was sung. The next day, our loving God called Sr. Francine home to Heaven.

In her final message to us, Sr. Francine wrote: "Fill not your hearts with pain and sorrow but remember me in every tomorrow. Remember the joy, the laughter, the smiles. Because I will remember you all and look on with a smile. Understand in your hearts I've only gone to rest a little while. As long as I have the love of each of you, I can live my life in the hearts of all of you." ✞

Advance the Missionary work of the MSC Sisters beyond your own lifetime…

Remember the MSC Sisters when making or changing your Will.

Povide your attorney our official title and address:Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Inc.,2811 Moyers Lane, Reading, PA 19605

Inquiries may be directed to Carrie at cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org.

Against the Wind – Nun Run 2024

Bob Seger's song "Running Against the Wind," captured the scene for this year's Nun Run participants. Pushing against the wind at three consecutive hills left them seeking shelter in the hall at Holy Guardian Angels Regional School following a challenging race and walk.

Once inside, they found a warm spirit of camaraderie and joy shared among more than 200 people enjoying food and music, purchasing chances to win raffle baskets, and cheering for 5k race winners. MSC Sisters presented male/female awards in 8 different age groups and awarded trophies to the Overall Male Matthew Bates, Overall Female Colleen Boyer and the Masters 60+ Male Scott Laman and Female Dina Hayduk.

The Sisters and their Mission Advancement Staff, Carrie Whitmoyer and Claudia Rudderow, wish to thank their many volunteers and supporters: the Nun Run Committee (Andrea Bensusan, Fran Burkhart, Kathy Blume, Nancy Chaiko, Janet Decembrino, Joni Garza, Sue Kasopsky, Carol Noga, and Barb Spinka); DJ Ted Robidas; Singer Dave Decembrino; Photographer Barbara Levan; Course Set Up Crew (Ed Gensemer and Bernie Whitmoyer); many race day volunteers (Mark Garza, Tony & Ellen DiGirolamo, Carm Sosik, Rick Spinka, Rosemarie Sandman, Annmarie Dallao, Joann Rivera, Joe Rudderow, Michael Rudderow, Bob Houlihan, Vicki Rahn, Christine Rozzi, Paola Rozzi, Erin Whitmoyer, HGA School Track Team, Berks Catholic students, and the Knights of Columbus St. Francis De Sales); Tim Kolasa at Gethsemane Cemetery; Fr. Hoffa at Holy Guardian Angels Parish; and numerous in-kind donors.

Ensuring the financial success of our Nun Run fundraiser, are more than 200 sponsors and donors: our Annual Event Sponsors; Nun Run Gold, Silver and Bronze sponsors; Nun Run Patrons; and prize/in-kind donors. MSC Sisters extends sincere gratitude to these friends whose compassion, kindness, and shared mission drive their commitment to MSC Sisters. God is so good through you and is even better to us and to those whom we serve when we combine our resources. ✝

View many more Nun Run pictures at mscreading.org.