

### CONNECTIONS

Fall/Winter 2024 Newsletter www.mscreading.org

## Reflecting on My Return to Papua New Guinea

By Sr. Dorothy Fabritze, MSC

It was sometime during the late sixties that a desire to be a foreign missionary became clear to my teenage soul. By July of 1977 that desire became a reality when I was sent to Papua New Guinea as a young MSC Sister. For the next sixteen years I worked mostly in formation ministry accompanying young women towards their profession of religious vows. I can still see the picture in my mind's eye of the Rabaul airstrip as we lifted up and around the volcano that, one year later, would erupt and bury the convent I had lived in. Truly, I really thought that I would never return.

Low and behold, thirty years later in late 2023, I could hardly contain my surprise when I was asked by our superior general to revisit PNG, my former mission. Feelings of gratitude, apprehension, delight, and curiosity flooded my soul as I allowed my emotions to seep into my consciousness.

My return to PNG was offered to me as a project in preparation for our international congregation's General Conference which would



take place in India in August 2024. I once again found myself back in Vunamalmal. Vunapope, Matanatava, Rabaul, and Port Moresby in February of 2024.

As one might expect, many changes had transpired in my thirty years away. The Rabaul airstrip now no longer functions, and the Tokua airstrip is available only on a limited basis. The province house is now in Vunamalmal and not Rabaul. The country's infrastructure has improved: more roads, vehicles, fresh air markets, electricity, cell phones, and television, and therefore hospitals, schools, and universities are more accessible to the people.

Within our congregation, Papua New Guinea is now a province of sixty-two sisters: sixty sisters from Papua New Guinea and two sisters from Kiribati. Of the sixty, I had accompanied twenty of them in some phase of formation many years ago. The present provincial superior Sr. Dorothy Patiu, MSC and I not only share the same name but also memories of working together. comtinued on page 5

## Lay Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Welcome All to the Mission of Love

By Mary Ann McNally, LMSC

The Lay Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are a group of ordinary people who share in the Charism of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC). Like the Sisters, Lay MSC are called to respond to the love of the Sacred Heart and to make His love present to everyone within their own lives. The Lay MSC are a global community of Laity of the Chevalier Family in more than 30 countries. They gather together with the MSC Fathers, Brothers, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and



Lay Missionaries, MSC Sisters, and Clergy gathered for the Lay MSC Annual Commitment Ceremony in September.

Sisters who share in the vision, mission and spirituality of the heart of our founder, Fr. Jules Chevalier, MSC.

Until recently local Lav MSC were blessed to meet for more than 30 years at our MSC Sisters' Motherhouse in Reading, but with its recent closing we have been welcomed by the generosity of many others. 2024 Lay gatherings have happened at Holy Family in Nazareth and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Bethlehem. Visiting with parishes gives the Lay Missionaries a chance to become known and to spread Christ's love everywhere.

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

## **Mission Update**

## **Reconnecting Through Faith**

By Sr. Rosemarie Sommers

Holy Family School in Nazareth opened its doors in 1910 staffed by four MSC Sisters teaching Grades 1 - 8. In this school I enjoyed my elementary education and the MSC Sisters who taught me, and it is here where the seeds of my vocation

were planted.

Fast-forwarding to 2024, I now am blessed to have returned to Holy Family as an MSC religious presence in the school. I pray with the entire school every morning, often remembering the



saint of the day or a special feast day celebration. I prepare the students for the weekly school Mass and offer my help wherever needed. But my greatest joy this year is teaching our Fifth Grade Religion Class where we are learning about the



Sacraments and the Mass. Teaching was my "first love" so to be in the classroom again interacting with the students is wonderful. Last week we re-enacted the Baptism ritual with our deacon presiding and students took the roles of parents and godparents for our "baby" Lucy's baptism.

Our Sisters last taught at Holy Family in the 1990's. I thank God every day for the opportunity to have a Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart in our school once again. &



You now can search for most of our MSC Sisters on our website by using the Find A Sister option. Type in the name you remember to find a biography or an obituary by choosing About Us on the homepage.



Connections is published bi-annually by the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus 51 Seminary Avenue Reading, PA 19605-2699 We welcome your comments and suggestions

## MEMORIAM



### Sister Theresa Lepera, MSC (Thomasita)

1928 - 2024

We marvel at the great works that God has done in the life of our sister. Theresa. and proclaim God's faithful Love over the past 70 years. God has begun this good work and has now seen it to completion.

Theresa was born in Conshohocken, PA, the third youngest of the fifteen children of Thomas and Carmella Lepera. As a

young adult she met our sister, Sr. Helmtrud, MSC while taking a First Aid Course at Sacred Heart Hospital in Norristown, PA. She worked as a secretary before entering the novitiate. Under the direction of Sr. Aquinata, MSC she prepared for First Profession on May 31, 1954.

Embracing both the charism and the spirituality as a Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart and the knowledge and skills of the nursing profession, Theresa served as the maternity supervisor in Sacred Heart Hospital in Allentown, PA.

During these years she exhibited a tremendous outreach to the poor and found numerous ways to provide for their material needs and to uplift their spirits with love and encouragement.

Transferred to St. Michael Convent, she assumed responsibility for the sisters in temporary yows while being a provincial councilor. Eventually she became Provincial Superior (1977-1983). She quided our sisters with strength and resiliency.

Theresa is known as a woman of great wisdom. She shared this wisdom in word and actions as she accompanied the young sisters during the years of their temporary vows and as she guided the USA Province during the post Vatican II years. She was instrumental in identifying and articulating the charism of the congregation. She spent years accompanying the senior sisters in St. Michael's Convent with compassion and non-judgmental friendship.

In the following years she completed a Clinical Pastoral Education Course and was then assigned to the Mother of Good Counsel Home for homeless women. Here, living in the midst of these women, she was able to witness to a loving and compassionate God. Her love of the poor and a desire for justice guided her years in ministry.

Her last active ministry was at Sacred Heart Villa where again she showed her administrative skills and compassionate heart. She retired to St. Joseph Villa where she was engaged in a ministry of prayer and compassionate presence with her fellow sisters. \$\displaystyle{P}\$

## SWEEPSTAKES

### Congratulations to our June Calendar Sweepstakes Winners!

Thank you to all who played! You helped raise more than \$14,000 for our retired MSC Sisters.

Kris B-Audubon, PA, Rose H-Denver, PA, Theresa B-Ottsville, PA, Susan S-Mooresville, PA, Carol C-Reading, PA, Rita B-Columbus, OH, Christine & Charles B-Reading, PA, Susan M-Dumfries, PA, Robert K-Athens, GA, Robert C-Jamison, PA, Ed & Patti T-Katy, TX, Deborah H-Northampton, PA, Mark C-Canandaigua NY, Robert W-Reading, PA, Jane M-Northampton, PA, and Dean S-Las Vegas, NV

## **Mission Update**

## Lessons on Love and Relationship

By Sr. Mary Ann Lawrence, MSC

Throughout the summer of 2024 I volunteered at The Nature Place, a private nonprofit run eco-park located just down the road from my residence. St. Joseph Villa, Working the summer program with children ages 5 to 8, we roamed

many trails among the 100-acre park and learned to identify various flowers, trees, and animals. In the classroom we enjoyed petting and feeding some animals and created drawings of the many life forms we identified. Other things we learned about in the summer program included safe bike riding, the rules of fishing, and lessons on courtesy and respect for one another and for wildlife.

The children's joy was contagious, and I found myself volunteering with

the pre-school once the school year began. Presently we are learning the alphabet and numbers, experimenting to learn science, singing lots of songs, and walking through the woods to learn more about God's gift of nature. I absolutely love working with children and am deeply grateful to God and the wonderful staff at The Nature Place.

On an entirely different note, I am a great fan of basketball - Duke University basketball, to be specific, and to be exact, I am a fan of Mike Krzyzewski - more affectionately known as Coach K. As long as I can remember, Coach K's faith, love of family, coaching, and his special caring spirit have attracted me. He and I have enjoyed a pen pal like relationship for more than three years. We have encouraged each other through health challenges and prayed for one another in earnest. Coach K has sent me various gifts and even mailed Duke basketball t-shirts for all our MSC Sisters and employees. Most gratifying to me though are his letters which often include notes such as "Family and faith make life so beautiful." The following anecdote, which begins with a boy named Troy Papich from Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, further illustrates my love for Coach K.

I came to know Troy and his family when Troy was in kindergarten at Good Shepherd School. About two years ago Troy was diagnosed with a rare case of Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Through his own spirit of faith and courage and

many prayers from all who knew about him, Troy survived his battle with cancer and has gone on to help other kids fight the battle too.

During his treatments Troy wrote and illustrated a book

titled "Chemo Dog". He now donates many of these books to children in hospitals fighting cancer. He also speaks for the Make a Wish Foundation and gives all proceeds from his book sales to them so they may provide wishes to other young cancer patients.

Now a healthy 11-year-old, Troy told me he was ready to play some basketball

- enter my link to Coach K. This past summer in one of his letters, Coach K invited me to meet him in-person and attend a preseason game. My dream of a lifetime was coming true! After a bit of communication, Troy, his family, and I traveled to Durham, NC in October to attend a game at Cameron Stadium. We also met Coach K and our

visit did not disappoint.

Coach K's interest in Troy was genuine and my dream was complete! Such joy there is in meeting face to face with someone who inspires love and relationship above all

While in Durham, Troy visited and shared his book with patients at the Children's Hospital. The generosity of Coach K and Troy brought our

relationship goals full circle - to inspire and to be inspired. I am truly grateful for relationships that encompass our love and compassion for God and one another. &





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.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## **MSC Prayer and Accompaniment Ministry** in Korea

In early January, Gyurim Geriatric Hospital, which is near our Motherhouse in Busan and where our three MSC Sisters are staying and receiving primary care, proposed to us to work together for the caring of patients which is the "Prayer and Accompaniment Ministry". This ministry is to visit the hospital



patients, to listen from the heart, to pray and chat with them. When a patient is close to death we offer a prayer for the dying.

According to one of the employees of

the hospital who is in charge of the well-being of the patients, she told us how they came up to offer this ministry to us. They were looking for ways of supporting the physical and spiritual well-being of the patients. They observed Sr. Bernadetta Kim,

## One important aspect of geriatric health is spiritual health.

the first Korean MSC Sister who had been admitted to the hospital some years ago, often praying with other patients, which was so beautiful and made the patients happy. Through this, they realized that one of the important aspects of geriatric health is spiritual health, which also plays an important role in other aspects of health. The employee said that despite being an atheist, she was deeply touched and moved by the presence of our sisters in the hospital and the regular visits of our postulants. This is how we are called to share our charism in a geriatric hospital.

On February 26, we took the first step into the new ministry of "Prayer and Accompaniment". To the elderly who have been lying in a hospital bed for a long time, our sisters' visits are a gift of joy and gratitude. At present one MSC sister is working as a nurse, another sister is doing the ministry of Prayer and Accompaniment, and our postulants are volunteering their services regularly.

We appreciate that even though our elderly sisters are weak and sick and stay in the hospital, they are continuously engaging their missionary commitment. \$\P\$



## Looking for a way to live your spirituality among friends? Become a MSC Lay Associate.

MSC Sisters invite men and women of all walks of life to share in the spirit.

charism, and mission of our congregation as members of our International Lay MSC Associates Program. If you are interested in our mission to share the compassionate love of Christ by living out gospel values in your own life, please contact Lay MSC Director Mary Ann McNally at mamcnally702@gmail.com. ₺

## **MSC Mission Development in** Omakuva, Namibia

Upon our arrival at Omakuva on 31 July 2021. the people in the surrounding area approached us with an urgent



need to have a school. This followed after the community raised concerns that many children are idling around, and some are walking a long distance to go to school. The need had been echoing in our hearts, so we gave this cry to our administration in Windhoek, and they responded positively.

In September 2022, the MSC sisters in Namibia saw the great need to build a school in the Omakuva community in order to accommodate children from marginalized families. Efforts are underway to strengthen early childhood education and enhance teaching and learning at St. Gerhard Private School. Partnerships with civil society, and local and international donors are also contributing to the advancement of education in the school



fostering innovation and collaboration in pursuit of educational excellence.

St. Gerhard Private School is situated 40 km from Ruacana

and 100 meters north of the main road to Outapi. The school is in Omakuva village, Epalela community, Onesi circuit, Omusati region. The school opened its doors for the first time on 13 February 2023 with three staff members and 69 learners from pre-primary to kindergarten.

Currently, we enrolled 130 learners mainly from marginalized communities along with 7 staff members. St. Gerhard Private School has undergone significant transformations in its education system over the past year. Efforts were also made to recruit qualified teachers to ensure that the quality of education is maintained to a Namibian child.

While significant progress has been made in expanding access to education in the Omakuva community, challenges persist in ensuring quality and equity in the schooling system such as having a playground, sport facilities, educational resources and so on. Even though we had some challenges our learning outcome was upright. Moreover, teachers put more effort to impact knowledge and use English as a medium of instruction that enhances the learner's ability to grasp the content well. It fascinates the community to bring the children in a large number and it inspires us to add extra classes.

In a nutshell, the growth of education in St. Gerhard Private School reflects the learner's journey towards self-determination, self-discipline, and progress. &

### Reflecting on My Return to Papua New Guinea continued from page 1

When I was a missionary in Papua New Guinea, our Leadership Team was a mixture of nationalities. Today it is all Papua New Guinean.

After landing in PNG for my visit, Sr. Dorothy Patiu drove me in a Jeep into the area of Rabaul where she pointed to a grassy hump along the road and said, "That hump of ground is the former Tavur Street convent which you left thirty years ago. It was buried during the eruption of the volcano!"

Today MSC Sisters continue to minister to the people of PNG as schoolteachers in primary, secondary, and higher education facilities. One of our sisters is teaching in the technical college as a mechanic. Other sisters are nurses and nurse administrators in Vunapope and in various mission locations throughout the country, while some of our sisters are trained catechists who have responsibilities similar to the diaconate here in the USA. We also have sisters who minister to young mothers and their children who are experiencing difficult situations and find themselves in need of a residence, counselling, childcare, etc.

Our sisters have been trained to serve in the various levels as formators in the Matanatava novitiate. Currently five women are in the formation program and multiple sisters have made temporary vows.

Sr. Dorothy Patiu also drove me to Rakunai to visit a church in the parish where Blessed Peter To Rot is honored. He has been declared "Blessed" by the Catholic Church as a martyr during World War II. He was killed because his activities as a catechist were seen as detrimental to the invading forces during the war.

I also was able to meet the woman who is now the Religion Coordinator for the East New Britain Province. She visits the village schools to supervise the teaching of religion and provides in-service opportunities for the teachers. Thirty years prior, I was the first to hold this diocesan position for both the East and West New Britain Provinces.

The Laity of the Chevalier Family (also known as Lay MSC) is active on New Britain Island. I attended one of their meetings in Vunapope during which they reported on their participation in the International Lay MSC meeting held recently in the Philippines. The speech given by the Director of the Lay MSC was very inspirational and motivational.

Looking back on my thirty-year absence from Papua New Guinea makes obvious to me that this MSC Sisters' very first mission country and the founding reason for the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, has been blessed by the Sacred Heart of Jesus; it has been allowed to grow and develop to the honor and glory of God. As in other places around the world, the Papua New Guinea culture is influencing the lives of the people

and the communal worship of God. Our congregation is blessed with religious vocations and these sisters also have recently begun sending MSC Sisters on mission to Christmas Island, Germany, and the Philippines – our indigenous leaders now have moved into the realm of missioning to other places. Creating such leaders and expanding the MSC mission is exactly what we, our donors, and our friends aim to accomplish. Congratulations belong to many people

far and wide for this success and certainly we give gratitude for the goodness of God.

MSC Sisters are moving into the future with trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus who speaks those words so often quoted in the Bible, "Do not be afraid. I am with you." These consoling words have been my mantra since that night early on in my years in Papua New Guinea: one evening around midnight I found myself in a small rowboat, drifting on the Pacific Ocean because we had run out of fuel for the outboard motor. As we drifted, I waited, I prayed, I feared, and I prayed more. At one point I turned towards the back of the small watercraft

and saw that the parish priest traveling with me was sound asleep in the boat. I recalled the Gospel story of Jesus sound asleep in the boat, and while I prayed, I heard, "Do not be afraid, I am with you." It was then by the grace of God that my little boat simply washed ashore, returning me to my place of mission.

I have referenced this miraculous experience multiple times in the past 40 years and I found myself graced once again at the outset of my recent visit to Papua New Guinea. This time it was February

7th, 2024, and I was in the Brisbane, Australia airport waiting for my flight to Port Moresby. I was happy to be travelling to Papua New Guinea but at the same time apprehensive about what I might find, how I would be received, etc. As I stood amidst people walking to various airport gates, I saw an older gentleman walking towards me who appeared to be from Papua New Guinea. As he got closer, I saw that he had

Fear thou not; for I am with thee

Isaiah 41:10

something in his hands and he said to me, "Can I give you a card?" I answered "Yes." He gave me a card the size of a holy card which read, "Do not be afraid. I am with you." I quickly lifted my eyes from the card, wanting to thank him but he was gone! Was he just one of those evangelists who hand out messages? Was he an angel with a personal message of hope and confidence for me? Whoever he was, to me, this was a clear message for me from God and hopefully a message for our sisters in Papua New Guinea, and for all of you who read this reflection: Do not be afraid. God is with us. †

### Lay Missionaries continued from page 1

On September 28th the Lay MSC'S were invited by Fr. Simone, Pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace Brodheadsville, PA to celebrate their annual retreat and commitment ceremony.

Retreat Director Brother Bernard Seif, SMC, PHD, EdD, DNM a Salesian Monk and Clinical Psychologist, is a behavioral therapist and author who has traveled extensively throughout the US and Asia giving retreats and workshops. The Lay MSC were blessed by Brother Seif's presence and insight and by the beautiful surroundings of the parish and some delicious food.

The annual renewal of commitment is very important to the Lay Missionary of the Sacred Heart. It is a sign that we are promising

to recommit ourselves to be a visible sign of God's love for one another and for people everywhere.

If you are a person who has shared God's love and are interested in gathering with other like-minded individuals, the Lay Missionaries of the Sacred Heart may be for you. As Brother Bernard said on retreat, "Listen to God's will every day", and "listen with the ear of the heart."

If you are interested in hearing more about the Lay MSC'S, contact Lay Director, Mary Ann McNally, LMSC at mamcnally702@gmail.com.

# Sonnenschein Brightens MSC Oktoberfest

The sun shone on MSC Oktoberfest 2024 in various ways: our guests were stellar; the atmosphere was festive and music-filled; the food delicious; and our raffles a winning bright spot. Highlights of the day include Sr. Dorothy's welcome in which she praised God for the sun that allowed us to celebrate outdoors, and she shared news of MSC missions in Papua New Guinea and India where Sisters teach thousands and serve as the loving presence of God among various religions. These missions, and our friends and donors, enable MSC Sisters to live their commitment "to love people everywhere with the love of the heart of Christ".

The presence of various family and friends, another highlight of Oktoberfest 2024, encouraged our Sisters in their mission of love. Ed Mortka, nephew of our beloved Sr. Teresita Nolden, MSC and his wife Karen made the trip from Harleysville to celebrate, and the Hildebrand Family came together at MSC Oktoberfest from as far as Florida. Stan and Doris Molchanow drove











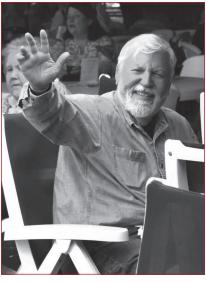


in from Philadelphia to enjoy the afternoon with Stan's twin MSC Sisters Lorraine and Theresa Molchanow, while Mike Wilkin and his wife Maureen celebrated with us in honor of Mike's second grade teacher Sr. Nanette Wisser, MSC. Folks from St. Mary's Kutztown, Good Shepherd Camp Hill, and St. John Ottsville gathered in the spirit of love and affirmation of the MSC mission as well. And our Sisters were thrilled to welcome many first time Oktoberfest attendees which included Nun Run participants and folks who were just meeting MSC Sisters for the first time. What a joy it is to gather and to share the love of our God who is so good!

Speaking of good, MSC Sisters thank everyone who had anything to do with the success of Oktoberfest — whether you sponsored, donated, volunteered, and/or prayed for us, YOU assisted our efforts to fundraise in support of our MSC mission and lives. We are grateful and we continue to pray for you daily. Together, may we continue to come together in support of one another. &















## MSC Sisters thank the following **Annual Event Sponsors:**

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## **Donor Tributes**

I heard Sr. Lisa in Long Beach CA yesterday and her message of love that the sisters share in this world was wonderful. God bless you all in your missionary work. You are all God's love in action in this world. Thank you for being the loving face of God to all you meet. — Wendy L.

My school (Holy Family Nazareth) grades 1-6! until 1964! Loved HFS! ♥ - Stephanie T.

Gift in memory of Sisters Brita, Artimia, Winefred, Annette ... All Great Teachers AND ... Amazing Women! — Mary G.

Sister Kathleen was a special gift from God to me. May she continue to R. I. P. with God in heaven. — Michelle G.

Great website to read about all our sisters we had as teachers. As well as some teachers of our parents and children! Thank you for sharing! ♥ Joan F.



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To consider membership, visit www.mscreading.org for information and registration or contact Carrie, 610-207-5862 or cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org.



## Thank You, Seibert Squad!

MSC Sisters extend much love and gratitude to the Seibert Squad who completed their annual fall Nun Run in honor of their beloved Sr. Mary Seibert, MSC! Each year the Seibert Squad includes the Nun Run as a focal part of their family reunion in

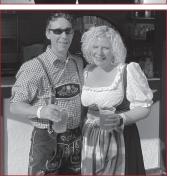


support of their Gold Sponsorship and of Sr. Mary and the MSC Mission. Thank vou. Seibert Squad! May vou continue to reunite in faith, hope, and love! Y

## Love the **MSC Nun** Run

MSC Sisters must share with you the sweetest story of love. In April of 2023 two unsuspecting people signed up to run the Nun Run 5k. Little did they know that their chance meeting that day would turn into a loving relationship. By the time they celebrated MSC Oktoberfest 2024 with us, Matt Bates and Liz Polley were engaged to be married! We wish Matt and Liz all the blessings and love of a lasting marriage blessed by God. We are very excited for the day they both say "I do." Y





## NUN RUN 2025



Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 12, 2025 at HGA Regional School when we will lace up our walking and running shoes for our

16th Annual **NUN RUN 5K fundraiser** 

to benefit our MSC Sisters!

Let's make Nun Run 2025 our **BEST NUN RUN EVER!** 

