



Celebrating 125 Years Making God’s Love Present

The year 2025 marks the 125th anniversary of the founding of the international congregation of The Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. In gratitude for these years of presence and mission, we have been celebrating in various ways: first by sending emails and posting on Facebook to share our stories of founding missions in 21 countries, and second by hosting an anniversary Mass celebrated by Bishop Alfred T. Schlert and several MSC priests and Allentown Diocese priests at Holy Guardian Angels Parish in Reading, Pennsylvania. During this beautiful liturgy, the HGA choir sang and MSC Sisters offered a book containing an updated version of the MSC History as a symbol of the international MSC mission to love with the Heart of Christ.

All present then attended a celebratory dinner at the DoubleTree ballroom during which U.S. Province Superior Sr. Dorothy Fabritze spoke of young MSC missionaries who, inspired by the martyrdom of their first Sisters in Papua New Guinea in 1904, swelled in numbers and continued responding to the needs of their times - again in Papua New Guinea – and also in Germany, Mexico, India, Korea, Namibia, the Philippines, and the United States to name a few.

Sr. Dorothy emphasized that the principal mission of the MSC Sisters throughout these 125 years continues to be “recognizing and responding to the needs of the times.” For example, in 1927 the Sisters’ Namibian Province identified needs including pastoral and social work, health care and education and by 2022 education and nutrition were identified as the strongest needs in Omakva, Namibia. In response, MSC Sisters established St. Gerhard pre-primary school to serve the poorest of the poor. Most recently, our Sisters work to “ensure a nurturing and supportive learning environment for the growing number of children in the community.”

Likewise in 1976 MSC Sisters extended their mission to Bangalore, India and since then have added ministries in the northern and southern parts of the country. The Bellari district experiences particularly difficult socio-economic conditions which result in poverty and illiteracy. In 2007 MSC Sisters established Sacred Heart

School which began in a shed with 6 students and 3 Sisters. As of today, this school provides 1,400 students with a “holistic educational experience and the inclusion of moral and spiritual values where MSC Sisters work to promote a better understanding between the Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities.”

Constantly addressing the needs of the times and creating indigenous leaders guarantees long term that the MSC mission maintains its relevant and loving service to people in need.

Sr. Dorothy concluded the celebration by quoting Fr. Mario Abzalón, MSC:

“Today let us be grateful for our creative fidelity to a charism that continues to generate life, to heal wounds, and to proclaim through our ministries that the Heart of God is the love that restores, the justice that transforms, and the peace that refreshes. Let us celebrate 125 years with gratitude allowing our past to propel us prophetically toward the future. May this anniversary be a renewal of missionary passion and a reaffirmation that the Spirituality of the Heart remains a living and bold response to the challenges of today’s world.”

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



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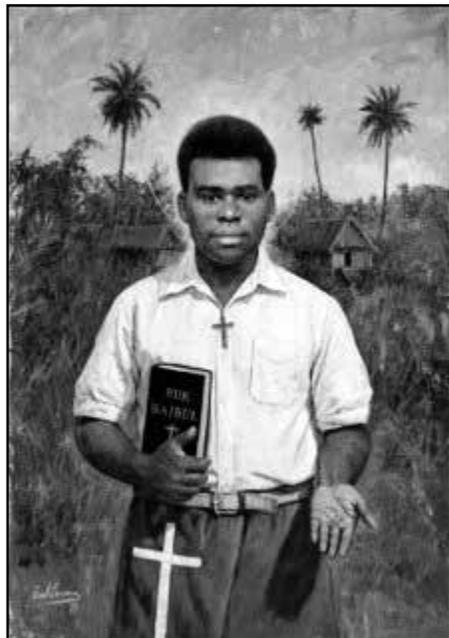
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The Canonization of Blessed Peter To Rot, A Member of the Chevalier Family (MSC)

19 October 2025 at St. Peter's Basilica
Life: Childhood, vocation and mission as a catechist



Peter To Rot was born in 1912 in the small village of Rakunai, Papua New Guinea, a land surrounded by tropical forests, volcanoes and islands. He was the son of Angelo Tu Puia, the village chief, and Maria La Tumul, both of whom were among the first converts to Catholicism thanks to the missionary work of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. His deeply Christian family raised their children with prayer,

simplicity and zeal.

From childhood, Peter was known for his calm, generous and attentive nature. He happily participated in Church activities, accompanied his father to community meetings and showed a willingness to learn. Educated in local Catholic schools, Peter stood out not only for his good performance but also for his humility: even though he was the chief's son, he never boasted about his origins. He had a quiet and steadfast personality.

At the age of 18, he entered the school for catechists, which operated with the direct support of the MSC Priests. There, he received solid theological and pastoral training. One of his formators described him as "a modest and obedient young man who surpassed his colleagues in dedication and zeal." At the age of 21, already trained, he returned to his village to begin his work as a catechist.

At the age of 22, he married Paula La Varpit. The couple had three children, the last of whom was born after Peter's martyrdom. Their family life was exemplary: they prayed together every morning and evening, lived simply, and their home was a place of welcome for the poor and sick. Peter visited the sick, taught catechism to children, organized community prayer times and helped with liturgical celebrations. He was respected and loved by the people.

Over time, his spiritual leadership grew. He had moral

authority: he spoke little, but his life spoke volumes. A missionary described him as "the soul of the community." Peter was the kind of man who united people: young and old, men and women, all saw him as someone trustworthy and close to them.

When World War II began to affect Oceania, Peter continued his service with courage. In 1942, the Japanese invaded Papua New Guinea. Foreign missionaries were arrested, and religious activities began to be monitored. The local parish priest, Fr. Karl Laufer, MSC, was taken to the prison camp in Vunapope. Before leaving, he entrusted Peter with the spiritual responsibility of the Rakunai community.

From then on, Peter officially became responsible for the faith life of the people. He visited homes, organized Sunday prayers, catechized adults and children, prepared weddings, and accompanied the sick. He recorded everything in the parish registers. He acted with such zeal and prudence that, even under military occupation, the faith remained alive and strong in the village. Peter To Rot was, in that time of silence and fear, a burning flame in the heart of the forest.

Life: Oppression, resistance and faithfulness until the end

During the first months of the Japanese occupation, there was still some tolerance for religious practice. But as the war progressed and fears of defeat grew, Japanese officials began to ban public prayers, came to be seen as resistance. In Rakunai, Peter To Rot was at the center of this tension.

In 1944, the Japanese held a meeting with tribal chiefs from the region. They wanted to ensure political loyalty by offering cultural benefits. One of the favors granted was the legalization of traditional polygamy, which had been banned by the Church and previous governments. It was a calculated move: they hoped it would neutralize the influence of Christian catechists. Peter was one of the first to openly oppose it.

As the spiritual leader of the community, he refused to bless polygamous unions. He continued to teach catechism, promote Christian marriages, organize prayers and now, often act in secret. To protect the faithful and avoid direct confrontation, he began to hold nightly meetings in caves hidden in the woods. There, by the light of oil lamps, he read the Bible, explained the sacraments and celebrated the faith.

Peter was summoned several times by the Japanese military police. Interrogated and threatened, he responded calmly: "They want to take away our prayers. But I am your catechist. I will do my duty, even if it costs me my life." The guards raided his home, confiscated his books, searched the meeting places, and watched his every move. Even so, he continued.

He was seen as an obstacle. The moral leadership he exercised bothered those who tried to ally themselves with the occupiers. Even without weapons, Peter was a threat to submission. He courageously defended the sanctity of marriage. He told couples: "Fidelity is a gift from God. Our



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people have the right to receive the whole Gospel, undiluted.” The community supported him, but everyone knew that the risk was increasing.

Despite the persecution, Peter did not hide. He continued to visit the sick, prepare the dying, and evangelize young people. He would walk up to 25 kilometers to fetch consecrated hosts in Vunapope, bringing communion to those who were dying. “God’s work is everything,” he said. His wife, Paula, worried, tried to convince him to stop. He replied: “It is my duty to die for God the Father, Son, Holy Spirit — and for my people.”

His faith was calm and determined. He prayed, fasted, and prepared himself spiritually for the worst. He knew he would be arrested. And indeed, in January 1945, soldiers came to take him away. He was taken to a dark cell, built especially for him. He was serene. When the faithful visited him, he would simply say: “Pray. Our faith cannot be bought.” The darkness of the prison would be only the beginning of his final testimony.

Life: Faithfulness until the end

Peter To Rot was already in prison. His cell was small, stuffy, and windowless. The soldiers only took him out of there from time to time to tend to the pigs. But even in this humiliating confinement, Peter remained serene. He prayed. He was grateful for the food brought by his mother and Paula, his wife. He did not complain, he did not fear. When asked about his imprisonment, he calmly said: “I am here because of marriage and faith. I will die for it.”

One day, Paula went to visit him accompanied by their two young children. She hoped to move him. Pregnant with their third child, she asked Peter to accept the Japanese request, to say that he would stop being a catechist, just to be released. Pedro, with tenderness and firmness, made the sign of the cross and replied: “I must glorify the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and thus help my people.” He asked her to bring him his catechist’s cross — he wanted to keep it with him until the end.

That same day, he confided to his mother that the guards had called a Japanese doctor to give him an injection. He said, “I don’t know what that means. It’s probably a lie, because I’m not sick. Mother, hurry home and pray for me.”

At dusk, Peter washed, shaved, and put on clean clothes. He sat in front of the cell entrance and prayed. It was as if he knew. And he did know. That night, the soldiers and the doctor came. Despite efforts to hide everything, a prisoner witnessed the injection being administered. What followed was a long and painful agony. Peter suffered in silence. And, like Christ, without opening his mouth, he gave up his spirit.

The next morning, the soldiers announced, “Your catechist is dead.” Even under surveillance, a crowd rushed to his funeral. The people already venerated him as a martyr. The news of his death spread, and his story began to be told in all directions. His fidelity spoke louder than any decree. His surrender bore fruit. In his village, in the following years, priests, religious, and vocations arose — all formed in the witness of that catechist who preferred to die rather than deny his faith.

Peter To Rot is the first saint to be canonized in our Chevalier Family. And he is a layman. Married. A father. A catechist. Father Chevalier’s dream is realized in him: the Kingdom built not only by priests and religious, but by lay people who

IN MEMORIAM



Sr. Virginia Longcope, MSC
1938 - 2025

Born in Allentown, PA, Sr. Virginia was the daughter of the late Harding and Rose Virginia (Deutsch) Longcope. Discerning her religious vocation and embracing the charisma of God’s Love for everyone, she made her First Profession of vows on June 30, 1961.

Earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education from Villanova University, Sister Virginia served as an elementary school teacher in Pennsylvania parish schools in Coplay, Limeport, Nazareth, Reading, Northampton and Philadelphia for 23 years. While teaching in Nazareth, PA and with no musical talent of her own, she organized a Folk Music Group which enhanced the liturgies in the local parish.

She discerned that she had a special gift to work with troubled children, so she volunteered with a program in 1985 to help delinquent youth in Allentown. She felt called to this ministry and pursued a master’s degree in social work in South Carolina with the goal of working in prison ministry.

After working a few years at Palmer Work Release/ Correctional Center in Florence, SC, Sr. Virginia envisioned starting a halfway house for non-violent offenders. In 1993 her vision became a reality when she opened Stephen’s Place in Bethlehem, PA where she served as the Director for over 30 years. Quoting those who knew her:

“Sr. Virginia always saw the goodness in others, believing in their goodness and potential! She’d say, for example ‘Everyone is different.’”

“No matter what, she always lived the gospel! She listened when someone spoke to her, hearing what was said and what was not spoken. Leaving her, one always felt better for having spent time with her!”

“Her whole life prepared her for her special work with the residents of Stephen’s Place!”

“She provided a home where everyone was loved and appreciated. This was something which these residents had not experienced in their past.”

Sr. Virginia was recognized for her dedication and accomplishments and was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from De Sales University on May 21, 2005. She was also recognized by the Diocese of Allentown for her service in March 2015.

She will be remembered for her warmth, her sense of caring, her determination and dedication to duty as she capably carried out her various ministries over the years. I’m sure our spiritual founder, Father Chevalier must have loved her, for she, like he, saw obstacles as means, and both accomplished so much.

Your Sister in the Heart of Jesus,
Sr. Dorothy Fabritze, MSC
Province Leader

live and proclaim the love of the Heart of Jesus in the world. Peter had no pulpit, but he had faith. He had no power, but he had courage. He died without human glory, but he lives on as a seed of the living Church.

His cross as a catechist remained in his hands. And his example remained with us. May we never forget him.



Lay MSC Welcomes Six New Members

Welcome and congratulations to our six new Lay MSC Associates: (front row) Nancy, Yolanda, Jess, Carol, Diane and Marianne. These lovely women celebrated their commitment during our annual retreat on October 4 conducted by Fr. Marty Kern and held at his parish Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Bethlehem.

During this spiritually uplifting day, Fr. Marty challenged the Lay MSC to live as St. Francis of Assisi lived; to hope by trusting radically in God, to be peacemakers, and to care for all creation. In doing so, Fr. Marty suggested that each of us ultimately “entrust our lives to the spirit of Sr. Francis and the Heart of Jesus that beats for us.”

As lay missionaries Fr. Marty’s encouragement takes on special meaning. It reminds us to live Jesus in our daily lives so that the Sacred Heart of Jesus may be loved everywhere! Now and forever.

SWEEPSTAKES

Congratulations to our June Calendar Sweepstakes Winners!

Thomas S – CA, Jean M – SC, Bette F – PA, Gisela G – PA, Francis M – PA, Joan B – PA, Sharon H – NJ, Maggie R – PA, Christine Z – PA, Frank G – NY, Walter H – PA, **Wendy B – PA**, Gloria P – IL, and Diane S – PA



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.

Mission Updates

U.S. Province – Mission in Peru

Sr. Marie Clark, MSC spends some of her time in Lima, Peru at Stella Maris Clinic, a medical center begun and staffed by MSC Sisters. Next door to Stella Maris is St. Luke’s, an MSC school for students from kindergarten to sixth grade. In September Sr. Marie participated in a special project with the students at St. Luke’s.



Each grade was assigned a country where MSC Sisters are in mission and then someone from that mission came to their class in person or by Zoom to share information about the Sisters’ ministries.



Sr. Marie Clark told stories of MSC missions in the United States. The students showed greatest interest in the sisters’ circus ministry. As expected, pictures of circus clowns, the sisters’ travel camper, and a photo of Sr. Mary Seibert with her favorite llama created quite a stir and a flurry of questions.

One student then asked Sr. Marie about her favorite Peruvian food. When she replied “fish,” he said, “Me too! I like mine fried.” So many things we have in common with each other – whether here in the U.S. or far away in Africa, or in Peru – our commonalities far outweigh our differences and therefore call us to meet and to love one another with the Heart of Christ.



Hello from Sr. Bernard Overkamp, MSC

From her home in Kutztown, Pennsylvania Sr. Bernard hopes that the spring and summer provided much joy for all who garden. Her tomatoes offered both nourishment and joy for not only her but also for her neighbors and for other MSC Sisters with whom she shared the bounty. May you be blessed with food on your table and the joy of sharing it with others. Sr. Bernard would like you to know that she prays daily for your health and intentions.

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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2811 Moyers Lane, Reading, PA 19605.

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

International News

MSC Missions In Africa

Currently there are 52 sisters living in **Namibia**, 3 sisters living in **Angola**, and 3 sisters living abroad. The sisters live in 14 communities throughout the country of Namibia.

In the past few years, the MSC Sisters' Namibian province has made great efforts to promote vocations and will continue to do so. Most of the temporary professed sisters are receiving good professional training.

The sisters are engaged in a variety of ministries, some of which they have been carrying out for many years: managing hostels and accommodations, working in hospitals and health centers and teaching.



St. Gerhard Private School in **Omakuva**, which our sisters created in 2023, aims to help the vulnerable and marginalized

children. It currently educates 151 children from pre-kindergarten to grade 2 and is in a poor remote area where the people are disregarded and neglected by the government. The sisters are trying to give quality education to the children so that they can gain their dignity in society. They hope to add additional classrooms and a hostel for the children soon.

The school's recently celebrated inauguration was attended by Hon. Erginus Endjala, the governor of the Omusati Region, the regional director of education, the local traditional authority, the Omakuva headman, guests, priests, sisters, parents and the schoolchildren. It

was a beautiful morning and afternoon full of speeches, traditional dances, and songs. The program ended with the governor officially cutting the ribbon to the entrance of the school and Father Andreas Petrus, OMI blessing the classrooms and convent rooms. A traditional meal was held afterwards.

In 2014, the sisters established a community in Cuvelai, **Angola** after investigating the great needs of that area. This is the first mission area for them outside of Namibia. This part of Angola is extremely poor with many illiterate children roaming the streets. The education system is very poor; classes often are held under trees with little or no books. Parents are unemployed and depend on their small fields for cultivation. Education is not a priority for them and children do not always attend school.

In 2018 MSC Sisters built a kindergarten. Today the sisters not only teach in the kindergarten, but they also do pastoral work with the youth on weekends. In the Omakuva region, organic farming is currently being developed by our sisters in collaboration with workers. There is also a farming area in Cuvelai that the sisters attend to. In both areas, the sisters hope to expand this agricultural ministry soon.

MSC Sisters also started baking Eucharistic hosts in Omakuva as an income generating project. They hope to expand this project along with expanding more accommodations. Presently, leadership is looking for new possibilities to begin a new ministry that responds to the needs of the time.



Monthly Donor Spotlight: Loving Relationships

MSC Sisters introduce to you Mike Krawczyk, a member of our Heart of God Society and one of our generous and faithful monthly donors. In this edition of Connections, we wish to share with you the story of Mike's journey with the MSC Sisters, and how this special relationship compels him to make such a commitment. Below are Mike's own words:

"As a cradle Catholic, I attended Catholic schools (St John the Baptist and Central Catholic High School, Allentown) and was taught by various religious order of Sisters. From them I learned the value of being called to serve and this played a significant role in my life and in who I am today.

Fast forward (a couple of decades), to the MSC Community and Sr Agnes, in particular, who entered my life at the most apropos and crucial time, when I was dealing with my aging parents, long distance. Given my parents were unable to attend Mass, St. Agnes assisted them for years by bringing them the Holy Eucharist and just visiting my homebound parents. Sr Agnes's visits (hours at a time) were a blessing. My mother referred to Sr Agnes as "Our Angel!" and she always welcomed Sr Agnes warmly into their home.

Not only did Sr. Agnes help my parents during their difficult years, but Sr Agnes also kept in touch with me as I went through the emotional rollercoaster of grief upon losing my wife, Elena. For years, Sr Agnes would

regularly check on me while I retreated into isolation sending her prayers and best wishes. I believe the power of prayer works and I thank Sr Agnes for helping me overcome my grief.

It is hard to describe in words how my contribution to the MSC Sisters makes me feel, though, I do get a sense of joy and connection knowing that I am able to assist the Sisters who heard the call to serve the Lord and answered it. Supporting the MSC Sisters is a small way for me to repay the blessings I feel I received, and those are priceless."

Sr. Agnes has great gratitude for Mike's faithfulness and love. The two friends met again in September of 2025 at St. Joseph Villa where Sr. Agnes currently lives. For Sr. Agnes relationships like this validate her vocation and her desire to continue living the MSC mission, true confirmation that our lives and relationships inspire one another.



Should you wish to become a monthly donor, please email cwhtimoyer@mscreading.org or sign up online at <https://mscreading.org/support-our-mission/donate-now/>.

MSC Oktoberfest 2025

The excitement of MSC Oktoberfest still lingers for our MSC Sisters and their guests. Although the threat of severe weather pushed us inside, guests still traveled from Pennsylvania and neighboring states to enjoy German music by the Joe Kroboth Band and delicious food and drink served to all by the Reading Liederkrantz staff. According to several of our guests, October 12, 2025, goes down as one of our best Oktoberfests to date.

Not only did guests and sisters appreciate the food, music, and dancing, but they also tried their chances at winning from among 75 valuable raffle baskets, bidding on seven silent auction items, and competing to win the 50/50 raffle. Hopes were high and almost everyone went home with something – if not a prize, then feelings of joy, friendship, and love.



MSC Sisters thank all who attended and all who sponsored our Oktoberfest celebration: our Annual Event Sponsors, Oktoberfest Sponsors, Mission Friends, and Sisters' Meal Sponsors.

The Sisters offer special thanks also to the Oktoberfest Committee (Andrea Bensusan, Regina Barletta, Nancy Chaiko, Janet Decembrino, Sue Kasopsky, Carol Noga, Carm Sosik, and Barb Spinka) and the event day volunteers (Kathy Blume, Annmarie Dallao, Rosemarie Sullivan Sandman, Tony DiGirolamo, Mike Gallagher, Ed Gensemer, Annika Jorgensen, Barb Levan, Joseph E. Rudderow, Rick Spinka, Bernie Whitmoyer, Erin Whitmoyer, and Matthew Whitmoyer). A complete list of Oktoberfest donors can be found at MSCreading.org.

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