

# MSC Lay Associates Irish Province

**Edition 4  
Oct 2009**

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Welcome to the fourth edition of our newsletter for  
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the MSC Lay Associates of the Irish Province.

The articles from all of you make this newsletter work. Sharing, supporting and helping one another, despite the distance that separates us, comes from the inspiration of what each Group is doing. I look forward to learning from each of you.

This newsletter is published from Harker Heights, TX, but it belongs to every Lay Associate, no matter where you are in the world. It's success only comes from the contributions and the shared love of all.

As Jesus said *"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. John 13:34*

Fr. Chevalier saw the love of God as the source of our Spirituality of the Heart, loving God, loving our neighbor and loving ourselves in an integrated way.

What a blessing to see that happening among our Lay Associates and those we meet. We have readers in many places around the world.

Send us names as you submit articles and we add them to our distribution list. Please share the newsletter with associates who do not have email access.

Please submit questions, comments, and articles to Carol Allred: [carolallred@hotmail.com](mailto:carolallred@hotmail.com) or to Frank Cooney: [FTCooney1@aol.com](mailto:FTCooney1@aol.com).

*A copy of the newsletter is posted on the Irish MSC website: <http://www.msclareland.com>.*

*May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere known and loved.*

**What Being an MSC Lay Associate Means to Me**



Being an MSC Lay Associate means to me having a charism that is lived “here on earth”, on a daily basis.

*Debbie Thompson  
Texas Hill Country*

### **Questions:**

Who can send in an article?

*Anyone can and we hope everyone will contribute.*

Who gets the Newsletter?

*Our list started with the Laity attending the Provincial Conference in Ireland in April, 2008. Since then, we have added other names & email addresses shared with us. Please print out the newsletter and share it with others. The Irish Province is posting a copy on their website for all to share.*

### **Requests:**

Please pray for our Chevalier Family around the world.

Please pray for vocations and our priests around the world.

Please pray for Erkin Aymurzaev as he continues to establish n MSC Lay Associate group in Pyatigorsk.

**Mary Gagiano** from **South Africa** shares with us news from her group and events happening in South

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Africa. Mary, you and your group are in our prayers as you go through your formation program. Mary, the article from Fr. Mike may help and I'm sure he would be happy to answer formation questions at [mobmsc@aol.com](mailto:mobmsc@aol.com)..

### **Report from LAY MSCa – Holy Trinity Parish – Midrand**

Our Formation Program is going fairly well, but some members feel we need more Spiritual Guidance from an MSC Priest. We are trying to liaise with the Tembisa Parishes that we join them in their Formation Program.

With regards to the 150 Anniversary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at St. Brendan's School, Dwars River on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009, unfortunately this was not well attended by the LAY MSCa for various reasons. It was a very moving and inspiring experience. There were many MSC Priests from all over, Daughters of the Sacred Heart and lots of School Children who sang and danced very beautifully. It was really a great success.

The Retreat with Fr. Patsy Kelly on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2009 was a huge success, well attended.

Everyone gained a lot of insight into Spirituality of the Heart. Fr. Patsy gave the Retreat on the Eucharist. He emphasised the importance of the Eucharist and this was the main topic for the day. It was very well received by all and we wish to thank Fr. Kelly for a wonderful Retreat.

The LAY MSCa will be co-ordinating the Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the Holy Trinity Parish, on the 5<sup>th</sup> December and we pray this will go well.

Our Prayer Group is going strong, and The Sacred Heart of Jesus is answering Prayers in various ways.

Please keep us in your Prayers as we try to get the Southern Africa Group going.

### **Requests (Continued)**

Please pray for the MSC Lay Associates in South Africa as they try to get the South Africa Group going. Please pray for their formation efforts that they will be successful.

Please pray for the Harker Heights Group as they grow in formation and work toward commitment.

Please pray for Sara Nash and the St. Albans community as they explore starting a new MSC Lay Associate Group.

Please pray for our MSC Lay Associate Groups in Venezuela that they will grow toward formation.

Please pray for contributions of articles by our Chevalier family, especially the professed, to aid our growth as MSC Lay Associates.

#### **Comments:**

I am not an MSC Lay Associate of the Irish Province, but I would like to get the Newsletter. Can I contribute articles to the newsletter?

*Of course. Our goal is to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus everywhere known and loved.*

**Elizabeth (Betsy) Rockwood** from the **San Antonio Group** shares an article with us about her visit to Issoudun for Cor Novum program on Spirituality of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

#### **Visit to Issoudun**

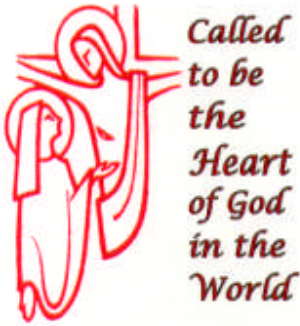
This summer Fr. Mike O'Brien, MSC, Debbie Thompson from the Texas Hill Country Lay Associate Group and Elizabeth (Betsy) Rockwood from the San Antonio Group participated in a wonderful month long program conducted by the Cor Novum Team in Issoudun, France. Forty people, from eighteen different countries, attended. There were MSC priests and brothers, MSC and FDNSC Sisters. Debbie and I were the only Lay Associates.

The program was on the "Spirituality of the Heart" with a particular Marian focus. It was presented on three beautifully integrated levels which included lectures, field trips and worship.

The Lectures were given by the Core Novum Team along with Merle Salazar, FDNSC from the Philippines and Peter Malone, MSC from England. There were usually two lectures each day along with skillfully done simultaneous translations available through headphones. The lectures were followed by time for personal reflection, then small group discussion with one or two other participants followed by a plenary session facilitated by use of the headphones. The lectures began with a focus on the way Mary, the Mother of Our Lord, has been perceived and understood from the early church, through the hierarchical eras and progressed to ways she can also be perceived and understood in today's more egalitarian world view.

An historic understanding of Our Lady of the sacred Heart is represented with powerful beauty in the chapel beyond the altar in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart while a contemporary understanding can be seen before the altar in the Basilica. In the latter, Mary is represented at the foot of the cross as the model of discipleship. Her gaze is on the crucified Jesus, her left hand lifted toward him, open as in receptivity to all that he is. Her right hand is directed downward, open toward the earth as if to transmit who He is to the world. Her feet are firmly on the ground as if to symbolize being in touch with the reality of the human condition.

The Field Trips included our literally walking in the footsteps of Fr. Jules Chevalier, following his life story, as it is unfolded in the villages of central France. It is said that one way to know a person



*(Reprinted from the Missionary Sisters of  
the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus  
Reading, PA)*

### **Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart**

Remember, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the great things the Lord has done for you. He chose you for his mother. He wanted you close to his cross. He gives you a share in his glory. He listens to your prayers. Offer him our prayers of praise and thanksgiving; present our petitions to him. Let us live like you in the love of your Son that his kingdom may come. Lead all people to the source of living water that flows from his heart, spreading over the world hope and salvation, justice and peace. See our trust in you; answer our prayer. Show yourself always our mother. Amen.

***May we be God's Heart in the  
world in all that we are  
and all that we do.***

### **Elizabeth (Betsy) Rockwood (Continued)**

better is to visit their home. This was true for me as I experienced the visual impact of the life of Fr. Chevalier. We saw the house where he was born and grew up, the church where he served as an altar boy and first learned to love and honor Mary. We saw the shop where he is believed to have been apprenticed as a shoemaker and the still magnificent sites where he studied for the priesthood.

We walked to the FDNSC Convent and worshipped in their beautiful Chapel where he had preached. We went to the Issoudun hospital where he ministered to the sick and to a museum, which has a section featuring the history, through compelling photography and artifacts, of the MSCs in Papua New Guinea.

We celebrated Mass in St. Cyr, the historic Church where he served as pastor and whose bells still ring for Mass across the little town of Issoudun. We saw the site of the presbytery from which he was ejected when the French government seized and confiscated Church properties. We stood in silent prayer before the house, on a little winding street, where he had been sheltered and where he had died.

We visited a museum containing personal articles pertaining to the history of Fr. Chevalier and his early followers. Most memorable, to me, was an old, faded primitive sketch of the little barn and broken down buildings where Frs. Chevalier, Piperon and Maugenest lived in the beginning, poor, but full of hope and trust in God and the Holy Mother. We actually lived in the beautiful buildings adjacent to the Basilica of Our lady of the Sacred Heart – all built by Fr. Chevalier on the very site of the barn where they first began.

Worship was integral to everything we did. Soon after we arrived, we celebrated Mass in the Basilica, processing with the flags of our eighteen different countries to the altar. We began everyday with worship which included music, reflection, readings and prayer. In the evening, we had Mass, sometimes in the basilica, once in the convent, once in St. Cyr and many times in the crypt below the Basilica where Fr. Chevalier is buried. There was also a little Adoration Room available twenty-four hours a day whose open windows overlooked the rooftops and little gardens of the town.

What is my personal response to this experience? I was unforgettably moved as I saw the wonder of our Founder's vision for a three branch Society to bear witness to the heart of Christ *everywhere* so beautifully realized in these men and women from all five continents in the world

Then Jesus said;” During my earthly life I was able to offer the people the best Good News possible. I was able to tell them and demonstrate to them that God in me **LOVES THEM WITH A HUMAN HEART, A HEART FULL OF COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS AND TENDERNESS.** Who will now give witness to this truth and keep it before the attention of the Church and the World. Who will embody this love in a Way of Life which will create a New World built on My Love?” Fr Chevalier came forward and said that,, he would gather around him a family of Priests, Sisters, Brothers, Lay People and Diocesan Priests who would devote their lives to giving witness to and proclaiming this wonderful truth and work towards building a New World Built on Love ( Paradigm of Compassion.) Jesus said; “ You and all your family will indeed receive this Special Charism and it will empower you to witness to my tender love for all people but especially the poor, marginalised and oppressed. You will also be empowered to build the world of love that I came to establish and already enshrined in the Reign of God. *Nick Harnan MSC, Cor Novum, Issoudun.*

**Katie Fitzpatrick** of the **Harker Heights Group** sends us an article about the activities of our group.

The Lay Associates in Central Texas have been busy! In June, we were blessed with a visit from Fr. Ciarán MacCarthaigh, MSC, who supplied for Fr. Richard during his summer holiday. During his visit, Fr. Ciarán led a day of prayer and contemplation for the Lay Associates on the subject “Living from the Heart – as in the Gospels”. We had our monthly Lay Associate meeting while he was here and were blessed to discuss “Forgiveness: Part 2” with the author himself. Fr. Ciarán was with us through mid-July and visited with many of our Call to the Heart groups in the parish.

Our meetings have taken us on a spiritual journey, from forgiveness to spirituality. We discussed the “Le Mal moderne” of our time and reading the words of Father Chevalier we thought they could have been written today. We discussed the talk given at the Santo Domingo conference by Norma Campos Salgado on “The Lay Missionaries of the Chevalier Family in the Church of Today.” We moved on to a program on “Spiritual Direction,” then to a discussion of the book, Partnership in Lay Spirituality by Maureen Dolan. We are now exploring our spirituality as MSC Lay Associates.

We are busy working on our formation with the hope of a commitment ceremony next summer.

On Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Mike O’Brien, MSC, visited with the Lay Associates and gave a program including a brief history of the MSC’s and Fr. Chevalier. He also spoke on Spirituality of the Heart.

Our group will have a retreat conducted in May of 2010 by Fr. Donncha MacCarthaigh, MSC, who is the author of: In Her Honour 1859-2009 Our Lady of the Sacred Heart published in Cork in 2009.

Following that retreat, we hope to be ready for our commitment ceremony.

We continue to meet regularly, studying and growing in our spirituality and charism to be the Heart of Jesus in all that we do.

Please keep our group in your prayers as we continue our journey of formation, increasing in our MSC Spirituality, Charism and growth toward our commitment as Lay Members of the Chevalier Family.

**Father Dave Nixon** is the vocations director for the Irish Province. He has provided us an enlightening article on vocations, including the vocation of the lay associate.

### VOCATION: GOD'S CALL AND OUR RESPONSE

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, . . . to give you a future with hope . . . When you search for me you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me says the Lord.”

Those are God's words for each one of us, spoken through his messenger the prophet Jeremiah. God knows each of us by heart and calls each of us by name. If we listen to that call and try honestly to respond, we trust that we will be guided to what's best for us and for everybody else. God's call and our response come together in our personal vocation – the person we become and the way of life we choose. Single life, married life, parenthood, being a lay member of the Chevalier family, being a friend, neighbor, career, the job or career we follow, the groups, clubs, causes, committees we devote our time and energy to: these are all part of our response to God's invitation. For every one of us has a vocation, a call, a personal mission that God invites us to invest our life in.

For some, that means religious life and/or priesthood. In the western world, these options are less popular than in the past – for a whole variety of reasons. I say in this part of the world, because we tend to measure everything by our western way of thinking, without even realizing it. At the moment, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Indonesia have over one hundred young men opting for religious life/priesthood!

This year has been designated the Year of Priests. We as church are challenged to focus on appreciating and promoting the vocation to the priestly life. That doesn't mean this vocation is superior to or better than any other calling. Each of us is called to find the vocation that will help us to have life and have it to the full (Jn. 10:10). But the reality is that priesthood (and religious life) doesn't seem to have as much appeal in our western culture these days. The reasons why are complex and many-sided (maybe the meat for another article!).

Perhaps there are three things we can do:

1. Be grateful to God for our own individual call, vocation, or way of life and show that gratitude by living it out as well as we can.
2. Pray that God's people will be open to the possibility of being invited to priesthood/religious life.
3. Help to create an atmosphere and culture in our families, parishes and communities where priesthood/religious life will be seen as a possible/positive option by finding out about the way of life and keeping it on the agenda of choices.

A recent poster to promote the priestly vocation in England ran as follows: “Your priest is somebody's son. Your son could be somebody's priest!” That really brings home to us the **fact** that vocations to the priesthood and religious life do not appear out of thin air! Families, parishes and communities need to nourish and nurture those ways of life in order for people to explore them as possible ways of being God's daughters and sons.

**Father Michael O'Brien, MSC** has been in formation for the Irish Province for many years. He has worked closely with the three Texas Lay Associate Groups. He has shared this article on formation of the lay associate.

### Some Thoughts on Formation

I have been asked to give a brief description of the formation program of the Lay Branch of the Chevalier Family. Let's begin by asking: why is a formation program required? Formation builds identity and character. Formation does not 'mold' every member into some pre-conceived 'image' of what a Lay MSC member should be. Each member brings something new and distinctive to the group and adds to vitality and splendor of it. Just as in any large human family where each member is shaped by the same parents and by similar experiences of community, cultural and religious environments, yet each remain distinctive and unique. Formation in the family is happening over many years and this gives rise to one's identity and stability. Likewise, it is also true with the Lay Branch of the Chevalier Family.

Fr. Dennis Murphy's research into the original inspirations of our congregations gives us a very clear description of the overall vision and charism of Fr. Jules Chevalier. Fr. Chevalier from the very beginning envisioned three distinct groups who would fulfill his mission;

- Religious MSC Priests and Brothers, and Religious Sisters,
- An Association of Diocesan Priests, and
- A Lay Group.

Confer: **"The Missionary Charism of Fr. Jules Chevalier in relation to the laity"**.

In 1854, Fr. Chevalier founded the MSC at Issoudun, then came the lay group (with their own Rules), and in 1874 he co-founded the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart also in Issoudun. The MSC Sisters were founded in Germany in 1900. In the early 1900's the Vatican announced that only older monastic orders could have Third Orders or Associates. The Second Vatican Council (1962-66) reversed that decision.

Since then many countries have attempted and experimented in the establishment of Lay Branches. Each of the three congregations; MSC Priests & Brothers; FDNSC, and MSC Sisters has established groups of Lay Associates. The Three Generalates in Rome meet on a regular basis and in 1999 they outlined the basis of an MSC Lay Charter giving the purpose, spirit, and requirements of the Lay Branch. In keeping with the vision of the Founder they emphasized that there would be only **one** Lay Branch common to all the groups.

This was further developed in the communiqué of the three Generals in Rome in 2003 where they acknowledged all the work done to date, and of the many meetings locally and regionally (mainly in Europe) and they now set out in greater detail the vision and requirements necessary to be members.

An International Lay Committee had already been in existence and this group was now given the obligation and ultimate responsibility of establishing the basic format of formation, taking into account all the diverse cultures around the world. The emphasis of the formation process is not so much on the academic but on the **experience** of the charism, spirituality and mission. This is what we share with the world.

The International MSC Lay Branch met in Nov.2008 in the Dominican Republic. It endorsed the two-year Initial Formation Process recently formulated by the International Committee in Issoudun. These items and requirements are not written in stone. They will be further expanded and refined by this group after having consulted all groups around the world on an on-going basis, and also making due allowances for local customs and circumstances.

**Father Mike O'Brien** *(Continued)*

The contents and process can be viewed on: [www.laymsc.org](http://www.laymsc.org)

These include;

- Spirituality
- Charism
- Spirituality of Fr. Chevalier
- Devotion to the Sacred Heart
- Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
- Rule of life and the Receiving Community
- Vocation of laity in Church and in the World
- Fr. Chevalier: The Man and the Founder
- Fr. Chevalier and Our Mission Today
- The Heart in the Bible
- The Sacred Heart
- Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
- Towards a commitment as an “MSC Layperson” in the Chevalier Family
- The broader Chevalier Family.

The Lay Branch in San Antonio and in the Hill Country already has groups who have made their First Commitments and the Harker Heights group is now in the process of doing so. Each group will take on the responsibility of training formators who will initiate new members into the family.

The Lay Branch of the Chevalier Family is a distinct, autonomous and self-supporting group. Like any loving family, it will establish and maintain close relationships and connections with all the other members of the Family. Together we can give witness to and fulfill the vision and mission of our Founder, Fr. Jules Chevalier, MSC

Mike O'Brien, MSC