



NEWSLETTER

MSC Lay Associates Irish Province



Edition 3 June 2009

Index of Articles

Welcome

News from:

England

South Africa

Texas Hill Country

What being an MSC Lay Associate Means to Me.

Questions, Comments & Requests

Forgiveness: Part II

*Father Ciarán Mac Cárthaigh
MSC*

MSC Associates: Sharing the Ministry of Jesus

Father Jerry O'Mahony MSC

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

The articles from all of you make this newsletter work. Reading about what others around the world are doing is inspiring. In so many ways, we can come together and learn from one another. I'm excited about what each group is doing. We can truly support and help each other, despite the distance that separates us.

This newsletter is published from Harker Heights, TX and we plan to have an edition quarterly. It has been delayed this spring because one of your editor's has been overwhelmed with her other heart activities. We hope to do better next time. The newsletters do not belong to us, but to every Lay Associate, no matter where you are in the world. We will only be successful if everyone shares and contributes to it. What a blessing to see that happening. We have readers in many places around the world. Send us names and we add them to our distribution list. Please share the newsletter with associates who do not have email access.

Please submit articles about your group and your activities, along with pictures when possible. Since the photographs make it difficult for many of you to receive the newsletter, we will note when they are available. If you can receive them we will send them out, otherwise we will post them on the Irish website.

Again, we are pleased to have two outstanding articles from MSC priests published in this edition.

Please submit questions, comments, requests, feedback and articles to Carol Allred: carolallred@hotmail.com or to Frank Cooney: FTCooney1@aol.com.

*A copy of the newsletter is posted on the Irish MSC website:
<http://www.msccireland.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 love; knowing the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, accepting that love into my life, and sharing that love in all that I do.

Carol Allred

Harker Heights, Texas

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.

Sara Nash from **England** shares with us what is happening in her part of the world. Sara, you are in our prayers as you begin to build a Lay Associate community in St. Albans.

Spirituality in the heart of England

In 2006, during the English Assembly for the MSC, four of us in the English Province (two priests and two lay people), were asked to form a "Spirituality commission group". Since then, we have met together regularly over the past three years and prepared events that concentrate on different aspects of the MSC spirituality. Some of these involved members of all MSC parishes gathering together to listen, reflect and pray together. During Lent a small group in St Albans met weekly to hear our own priest's experiences, celebrate Mass and discuss the MSC charism and its place in the world today. Although this three year programme finishes in October, there are several other initiatives that hope to spread the message of Jules Chevalier. In September, for example, members of the various Pastoral parish councils from all the MSC parishes will meet in central England for a one-day retreat led by Michael Screen MSC to learn more about the Spirituality of the Heart with the intention of the laity taking the message back to their parishes.

One of the MSC priests of the of "Spirituality commission group", Ton Zwart is also part of the Cordate community in Aston, Birmingham. This is a true example of Jules Chevalier's vision of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart working in action. Three confreres from different MSC chapters have joined together to try to make a difference and bring the love of God to the heart of Aston (a suburb of Birmingham). Living in the middle of a mainly Muslim community Fr Carl (from England), Fr Mark (from Belgium) and Fr Ton (from the Netherlands) support various neighbourhood projects –helping teach English, working with Churches together, and even stacking shelves at the local supermarket.

Here in St Albans we are fortunate to have at present four priests, one only just ordained, but we are conscious that given the shortage of ordained ministers this number is bound to drop. It is hoped that the laity will continue to spread the philosophy of Jules Chevalier with guidance from the ordained MSCs but not led by them. Nick Harnan MSC part of the Cor Novum team in Issoudun is encouraging us to look again at forming an association for Lay members of the Chevalier family. Following the September meeting, it is hoped to introduce the idea in St Albans with a series of talks and retreats, culminating in the commissioning of new Associates during 2010.

Requests: *(continued)*

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

Please pray for the MSC Lay Associates in South Africa as they grow in formation.

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

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.

Mary Gagiano sends us an update on the activities of the **South Africa MSC Lay Associates**.

Report from LAY MSC – Holy Trinity Parish – Midrand.

The Midrand group meets every 3rd Sunday of the month. We have also started our Formation Program which is going very well. There is a lot of enthusiasm and the sharing is very spiritual and beneficial to all. The other groups have also started their Formation Program.

The Prayer Group in Midrand is going very well, but it is quite amazing that since starting our group, there are so many people in need of extra prayers. We all pray every day for everyone on the list to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and our Prayers are definitely heard in many different ways.

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred heart have invited us to join them to celebrate the 150 Anniversary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at St. Brendan's School, OLSH Mission, Dwars River on Saturday 30th May 2009.

We are hoping that many of the LAY MSCs from the Gauteng Region will attend.

The Gauteng Region has arranged a Retreat with Father Patsy Kelly on the 21st June 2009. The theme will be Charism and Spirituality and we hope many of the LAY MSCs will be able to attend.

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

Debbie Thompson from the **Texas Hill Country Group** shares with us some of their groups recent activities. They also serve meals in a local food kitchen on a regular basis.

On March 21st three people from our group, along with others from the San Antonio group made their commitment as MSC's publicly known in the Ceremony of Commitment. We extend a grateful thank you to Fr. Mike O'Brien who so lovingly prepared, shared and presented the material with us in preparation for this special day. We also send a grateful thank you to Fr. Pat O'Shea who facilitated a wonderful day retreat for us prior to our Commitment Ceremony that afternoon.

Debbie Thompson (*continued*)

One of our group will be attending the “Spirituality of the Heart: Yesterday, Today, Towards the Future” held in Issoudun, France from July 19th through August 16th. So there will be a lot exciting news to share with everyone upon return.

Dorothy Martin sends her heartfelt thank you to all of you who have been praying for her so fervently for her back surgery. She has done splendidly. She got an A+ from all her therapists at rehab and returned home on May 28th. Prior to her going to the hospital we had a wonderful group gathering of prayer, blessings, and Fr. Mike anointing all. Please keep her in prayer for a speedy home recovery.

Our prayers are with all, that the *Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved* through, in and around each of you.

Father Ciarán Mac Cárthaigh MSC was Provincial Leader from 1993-2005. He was enthusiastic, zealous, encouraging and persistent in promoting mutual collaboration of laity and MSCs in the various ministries throughout the Province. It was mainly due to his thrust and drive that laity are now mutual participants in all the Assemblies, Conferences and Chapters of the Province.

Father Ciarán sent us the following letter and article on Forgiveness. We publish Part II in this newsletter.

At the outset, before I begin my short input on forgiveness, which I have divided into two parts, I wish to congratulate Carol Allred and Frank Cooney for their initiative in producing the *Newsletter: MSC Lay Associates Irish Province*. I had the pleasure of getting to know them this summer (2008) when supplying for Fr. Richard O'Rourke MSC at Harker Heights. I also noticed that they requested contributors for the *Newsletter*. Thus, my effort to contribute. I also take this opportunity to greet all those Lay Associates and Laity that I got to know over the years in USA, Venezuela, South Africa, Russia, Ireland and England.

**Forgiveness:
Part II:**

At any given time in the decision and process of forgiveness, I may not even have the desire to forgive the other person. I feel so much pain, violation, injustice and infringement that I just *want to even the score. This is a normal defence. However, it is what I do with it that matters.*

The fact of the matter is: **Christians are called to forgive**, even their enemies, and forgiveness is often extremely hard. Knowing that we are called to do it and being unable to do it, points to one of the main difficulties we face. “I cannot do it and I should do it”. God does not change from a loving God into a vengeful God when people find it impossible to do what their hearts and minds tell them what to do.

Admitting that “I cannot” is the first step. We need to admit to ourselves and to God that we are powerless to forgive some who hurt us and then ask God, in trust, to help us. This step requires that I want to be healed. I might not want to forgive. But can I at least pray for the desire to forgive, that is, can I tell God the truth about how I feel, about my heart, and ask God to help me overcome this unwillingness even to want to forgive someone. Can I admit my own desire for vengeance? Often the truth is not pretty. Often we want to appear before God in our best clothes, as it were. But to do so we have to deny a lot of our own reality.

Forgiveness: Part II

By Father Ciarán Mac Cárthaigh MSC

(continued)

In the long run the one I most harm by not forgiving is myself. To hold on to a hurt or grudge saps my psychological and spiritual energy, paving the way for negativity, cynicism, passive aggressiveness and spiritual deadness.

In the whole process of forgiveness, we must be aware of **The Myths of Forgiveness**. We can distinguish six such myths:

Myth 1. Forgiveness and Reconciliation are the same.

- Forgiveness is an act of the will. It is the decision to let go of the desire to get even with someone who has hurt me. Each individual has complete control over forgiveness.
- Reconciliation, by contrast, is something over which we have no control. We can seek reconciliation but if the other party refuses there is virtually nothing we can do (except pray). We must realize that in forgiving and seeking to be reconciled we have done all that can be done. There is no need for guilt.

Myth 2. Forgive and forget.

- We have seen earlier in Part I that we are challenged to remember and forgive rather than forgive and forget. We have extraordinary examples of forgiveness, such as, a mother whose son was killed in 9/11; a father whose daughter was blown up in the Omagh bombing; a couple whose daughter had been kidnapped, raped and murdered; and a priest whose parents and seven siblings were murdered in his town in Yugoslavia – all forgave. Moving to the decision to forgive prevented them from being destroyed – physically, emotionally and spiritually – by the people who had done the foul deed.

Myth 3. Forgiveness is easy.

- Alexander Pope addressed this myth most directly when he concluded that to err is human and to forgive is divine. Forgiveness is not the normal response. Revenge and get even is the normal one. Referring again to the inaugural speech of Nelson Mandela, he said, **“Men of peace must not think about recriminations and retribution. Courageous people do not fear forgiveness”**. Forgiveness is not the action of the weak, but rather the virtue of the brave. Picture Jesus on the Cross. He forgave his tormentors.

Myth 4. Forgiveness must be communicated to others.

- Forgiveness must be chosen. It is an act of the will, but **it need not be communicated**. Sometimes it cannot because, for example, the person is dead. In the case of sexual and other abuse, it can be better not to communicate forgiveness to the abuser since doing so, may put the person again in contact with or in control of the abuser. We do well to remember that forgiveness need not be communicated to the other.

Myth 5. Forgiveness is a gift to the one who has offended.

- The ultimate reason for forgiveness is because we need to be healed. Forgiveness is both a Christian value and a gift to oneself. Forgiveness is the trait most strongly linked to happiness (Cf. Louis Smedes, and Christopher Peterson). Forgiveness contributes to the healing and wholeness of the forgiver and is not a gift to the one who offended. Martin Luther King Jr. declared that the person who chooses not to forgive is devoid of the power of love. No one deserves to have power to live in your head and turn you into a bitter, angry person.

Myth 6. Forgiveness approves the behaviour of the offender.

- Forgiveness never condones the behaviour of the offender. Rather, the focus is on the courage, compassion, wisdom and mercy of the forgiver. We forgive so as to be free and healed. Again we stress that forgiveness is the greatest gift that that one can give to oneself.

Forgiveness: Part II

By Father Ciarán Mac Cárthaigh MSC

(continued)

Forgiveness is an act that results in the healing of the spirit, mind and body. Remember that *"Ours is a spirit of ... forgiveness"* (No.32.).

I conclude with a little short story. A former inmate of a Nazi concentration camp was visiting a friend who had shared the ordeal with him. *"Have you forgiven our captors?"* he asked his friend. **"Yes"** came the reply. *"Well, I haven't. I am still consumed with hatred for them"*. In that case, said his friend, gently, **"they still have you in prison"**.

Forgiveness locks the door of my prison cell. Forgiveness is my key to freedom.

Ciarán Mac Cárthaigh MSC

Father Jerry O'Mahony MSC is part of the Southern United States Group of the MSC Irish Province. He serves St. Francis de Sales Church in Sherman Oaks, California. He shares the following article with us.

MSC Associates: Sharing the Ministry of Jesus

Recently I received an e-mail from a former parishioner when I was in Cape Town, S. Africa in the 60's. The parishioner wrote to tell of the death of their parish priest. He became ill at Mass one morning. Two parishioners accompanied him to his room where he died within a few minutes. Realizing what was happening, they read the Prayers for the Dying.

Remember, a priest doesn't have a monopoly of the Spirit. It is given to all in baptism. Given to be exercised in ministry of some kind. Assisting this priest-pastor in his time of death was a great feat of thinking and response, I say.

Maybe not always in time of death, but our MSC Associates celebrate a similar outreach to professed members in many ways, all ministerial. This when sharing our MSC assemblies, retreats, Eucharistic liturgies, by your loyalty to your fellow associates and professed MSC community. You share, most noticeably in your MSC spirituality of gospel compassion. By your charism of MSC like-mindedness you generate a spiritual energy and example to inspire us.

Hopefully, we MSC priests also give to you. A like-to-like ministry. Thus you have an identity, life and mission distinctly yours, something much more than a mere adjunct of the professed members. All you have to do is read and reflect on the women that were prominent in the life and ministry of Jesus. Again, St. Paul in his letters is grateful for the good women who were part of his ministries and provided him with hospitality and money when in need. All that furthers the mission of Christ is ministry. All that benefits the MSC mission is ministry, no matter how minimal. A consoling thought.

Is not ministry the fruitfulness of baptism? A baptism that lacks a ministry is like a 'flu shot without effect, sterile and dead.

"Go forth and bear fruit abundantly" is the command of Jesus. Then and now. It is ours.

Jerry O'Mahony MSC