



ENCOUNTER

Catholic laity on mission – everywhere

July 2019

Welcome to Encounter!

We are all baptized and sent. Today, missionaries come in all shapes and sizes, all ages and vocations. All of us are called to encounter the stranger and give witness to the love of God poured out in Jesus Christ—whether that is on the factory floor making headlights or on the moon. As you read these stories and reflections, begin to name and claim your own story and share it with us. And share ENCOUNTER with people you know have a heart for mission.



Lay MSC Associates Carry on a Charism

By: Julie Bourbon

They are described as “ordinary men and women doing ordinary things ... while living the Gospel in their own daily lives.” But in the world of mission, the ordinary becomes extraordinary when done for the Kingdom of God.

The men and women who are Lay Missionary of the Sacred Heart (MSC) Associates have answered a call to be more active in the church, to grow in faith, and to, as their mission statement reads, “Be on fire with a deepening realization of God’s personal love for me and every person. To be a visible sign of God’s love and compassion to His people everywhere.”

For Jane Martin, association with MSC runs in the family. Her uncle was an MSC priest, and, perhaps more importantly, her Aunt Matty, now 94, was in the second group of lay MSC Associates.

“She suggested it would be nice,” if I joined the Associates, recalled Jane, who laughingly described herself as “a Catholic school lifer.”

That was about nine years ago, and Jane hasn’t regretted a moment of it.

“I went to my first gathering in Reading [Pennsylvania] and I fell in love with the charism and the whole concept,” she said. Jane began formation that fall and the following summer made her commitment. “I call Red-

ding my oasis, a place of spirituality, rest, calm, away from the hectic, busy crazy life.”

That hectic life includes leading formation for new MSC candidates, being part of the Rosary society, making meals for residents of a halfway house, volunteering at her parish, and helping to care for her aunt.

Lay MSC Associates meet monthly, alternating between their local meetings in Redding and Lehigh Valley and then having a joint meeting of up to about 27 people. They might read and discuss scripture, meet with MSC sisters for conversation, or engage in service.

For Joann Rivera, it a happy accident that she ended up joining the MSC Associates in 1997. Her spiritual director mentioned that the Missionary Sisters needed a receptionist, even though Joann wasn't actually looking for a part-time job. One of the sisters, Sister Eileen, encouraged Joanne to consider becoming an Associate, something she had never pondered before.

“She said you have the ability to be in places we can't be,” recalled Joann of that first conversation, when she explained to the sister that she worked in a factory assembling headlights. It was a perspective- and life-altering conversation.

“Sister Eileen was excited. She said wow, you could pray over every one of those headlights for the safety of the people who received them,” said Joann, still marveling over that conversation, more than a dozen years ago. “It was the most profound thing I'd ever heard for a person who works in a factory, because I never ever gave it that thought. Ever.”

Joann is now the director of the MSC Associates and notes that the founder of the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart—Father Jules Chevalier, who founded the order in France in 1854—had always intended there to be three branches: priests, sisters, and brothers; diocesan priests; and laity. The Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus were founded in 1900.

Two years ago, the Lay MSC Associates celebrated their 25th anniversary. They decided to do a time capsule to commemorate the special occasion and asked Joe Ke-

nas, a retired Navy flight engineer who enjoys woodworking, if he would create one.

Joe—who teaches CCD and RCIA, and is a Eucharistic minister, cantor, and lector—not only crafted the time capsule, he was so impressed with the Associates, he decided to join them!



“I have really enjoyed it a lot. It's very enlightening,” said Joe, who has only one more session in the lay formation process before committing to the MSC Associates. “I feel so much love. It's exciting.”

The time capsule, incidentally, was filled with a treasure trove of items related to the Lay MSC Associates, including a Lay Missionaries of the Sacred Heart prayer booklet, a booklet from their recent anniversary celebration, a picture of Pope Francis, a picture of current associates, a list of active members, and an explanation of the group's theme, “From Root to Blossom to Fruit.”

It's exciting for the Associates when a new member joins them, in no small part because they know that the numbers of priests and women religious are on the decline and that lay men and women such as themselves will need to carry on the charisms of the congregations they are associated with.

“We the laity are going to have to step up and take a more active role. Being a lay MSC gives me the focus and a jumping off place to start,” said Joann. “It's a special group when we're together. You can feel where two or three are gathered in my name. You can feel the spirituality. I take that from our gatherings and hold it with me as I move through the world.”

Article by Julie Bourbon,
ENCOUNTER Editor

Between Our Home Gardens & the Dust on the Moon

By: Rev. Harry E. Winter, OMI

*Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Vatican II Lec-
tionary), July 21, 2019, Year C*

Fifty years ago, on July 20, 1969, Presbyterian Ruling Elder Buzz Aldrin celebrated the Lord's Supper on the moon. The first food and drink consumed on the moon was the blessed bread and wine from Aldrin's church, Webster Presbyterian, near Houston, Texas.

Each year, on the Sunday closest to July 20, Webster Presbyterian holds its Lunar Communion Sunday. This year, many Christian Churches will be joining Webster in spirit. The co-director of the Presbyterian Office of Worship, David Gambrell, suggested the name be changed to Cosmic Communion Sunday.

Every Christian who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior and is baptized is a witness to what Jesus has accomplished on our planet. Aldrin's action reminds us deeply that Jesus is Lord and Savior not only of humans, but of everything animate and inanimate on our planet and its satellite.

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The Scripture readings for today, especially St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians, help us appreciate what Aldrin's church and he did. When St. Paul stuns us by stating that something is missing in the sufferings of Christ, and that he, Paul, fills up what is missing, we begin to appreciate the vital importance of our actions. Presbyterian Biblical scholar William Barclay calls Paul's statement "a daring thought" ([The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians, The Daily Study Bible Series](#), rev. ed., 1975, p. 126).

St. Paul continues Colossians by explaining that the mystery hidden in ages past is now unfolded, with Jesus at the center. Christ is our hope of glory, and eve-



ry Christian is called to proclaim that glory. Webster Presbyterian Church went as far as the moon to do it.

What are we and our church doing to proclaim the mystery of Christ, our hope of glory? Most of us will not be astronauts, but Paul makes it clear that every Christian in every age is called to make Christ known to every person and race and culture.

When poet laureate Archibald MacLeish reflected on humans circling the moon, Christmas Eve, 1969, he linked our adventure with humility. His short essay "Riders on Earth Together," concluded with these moving lines: "To see the earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold—brothers who know now they are truly brothers."

Our Gospel today proposes the account of Martha and Mary—Martha busy with so many tasks of hospitality, Mary seated at the Lord's feet. We note that Jesus does not reject Martha's ministry. He calls Mary's the better part, telling us that both the tasks of hospitality and the choice of being at His feet in admiration are important.

Is it probable that Aldrin's celebration of Communion is the more important part, but the work of getting to the moon and exploring it is necessary too? This may lead us back to Paul's view that somehow, he fills up what is lacking in Christ's suffering. Christian ministry is varied, with so much of it hidden.

Missiologist Stephen Bevans, SVD, underlined the new, cosmic dimension of our joint witness, when he wrote: “To think in terms of the vast amount of time, the 13.8 billion years since the Big Bang, to think of the vastness of space in this universe of billions of light-years in diameter, to think in terms of the complexity of cosmic and biologic evolution—such a perspective changes completely our understanding of doctrines like creation, redemption, Christology, ecclesiology, and mission itself” (“My Pilgrimage in Mission, International Bulletin of Mission Research 43 [Jan. 2019, 1]:89).

If Christ’s “blood is on the rose, and in the stars the glory of His eyes” (Joseph Mary Plunkett), is it not the

responsibility and privilege of every Christian to make that known? Between the roses in our home gardens and the dust of the moon?

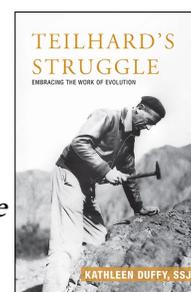
This piece was originally posted on the website of the American Society of Missiology (asmweb.org)



Rev. Harry E. Winter, OMI, is the coordinator for the ministry of Mission, Unity and Dialogue (MUD) for the Oblates of Mary Immaculate USA province. He is semi-retired in Tewksbury, Massachusetts, and maintains the MUD website (www.harrywinter.org).

USCMA Happenings

- **August mission trip to Appalachia** | Short term trip to Appalachia on August 5-9, 2019. Meet and learn from those local grass roots activists who work to restore the health of God's creation. For more information contact Paul Bork 716-796-8919 or email pbork@maryknoll.org.
- **Comboni Fest** | Saturday August 17, 2019. Join us in Chicago on August 17th for an evening of celebration and worship. Comboni Fest starts with a beautiful outdoor Mass held on the grounds of the Mission Center. This year Fr. David Bohnsack will celebrate his 25th anniversary with us and share stories from his missions in Africa. For more information contact (708) 354-1999 or visit their website.
- **USCMA Online Membership Meeting** | Save the Date—September 19, 2019 at 2 pm ET. This is the annual online membership meeting that reviews the “state of the association” and outlines future directions. Sr. Nancy Schramm, OFM, the new President, will give a Presidential Address.
- **Extended Workshop for Returned Missioners** | September 17—26, 2019. Attend this extended workshop for returned missioners in St. Louis, MO. Hosted by From Mission to Mission, September 17 – 26th , 2019. [Apply now by clicking here](#). Visit their [website](#) for more information.
- **Maryknoll Contemplative Retreat** | September 20-22, 2019. Join Maryknoll in a contemplative retreat, at Maryknoll Mission Center in Ossining, NY. Online registration is available on their [website](#).
- **Books for Review** | USCMA receives complimentary books about missiology, theology, and spirituality for review. Our feature book this month is *Teilhard's Struggle—Embracing the Work of Evolution* by Kathleen Duffy, SSJ. For this book or a current listing, [email](#) Nichole Petty, the USCMA Office Manager.



The United States Catholic Mission Association is a national alliance of individuals and organizations committed to the mission Jesus entrusted to his Church. Through its members and services USCMA animates missionaries, prepares them for mission, accompanies them through mission, and form them for leadership. ENCOUNTER is made possible in part, by a grant from [Catholic Communication Campaign](#). You build bridges of global solidarity by supporting USCMA. Donate at uscatholicmission.org. Copyright 2019.



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