

# The MESSENGER

MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

SUMMER 2004



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SUMMER 2004

HOLY FAMILY

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# Provincial Perspective

## VOCATION ISSUE – SUMMER 2004

Dear Readers:

On April 25, 2004, Pope John Paul II beatified six people and offered to the young and not so young some practical advice on discerning God's will in their lives.

Our Holy Father said "I wish to propose this example of holiness." "Request in **PRAYER** the light of the Holy Spirit, so that you will be able to know the divine plan for your life and be capable of walking always on the path to holiness."

The following pages of "**THE MESSENGER**" contain examples of various people, from different walks of life, who are responding to this call of discipleship. **PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL** for this call of holiness to come alive. Each baptized person is called by God to be a disciple with the responsibility to share in the Church's mission.

I encourage you to prayerfully take time to reflect on how others are living out their vocational call. Then, in **PRAYER**, ask the Holy Spirit to inspire and assist you personally in your daily journey of faith.

May God bless you with a generous, loving and caring heart.



Very Rev. Joseph Roelke, M.S.F.  
Provincial



Very Rev. Joseph Roelke, M.S.F.

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## The Mission of Neighborhoods

by **Jo Ann Vatcha**,  
Housing Analyst, City of St. Louis

**S**t. Wenceslaus parish has been home to Fr. Joseph Roelke MSF, for over 14 years. The historic St. Louis neighborhood where the Parish is located started to become ravaged by drug users and overrun with dilapidated rental properties. He and others knew that action needed to be taken. Working together, Fr. Joe and veteran Alderman Martie Aboussie assembled a group of area residents who refused to accept decline as their fate and they went to work.

First, the group decided to focus on housing issues; other groups were working with police and other agencies on social problems like drugs and crime. They surveyed target blocks and learned about strategies and resources they could use. One strategy was to build on the strengths of a good block by addressing one or two

weak links, creating a model for other blocks. A strong core of homeowners still lived on the 3100 block of Ohio, and they eagerly helped identify problem properties that needed to be tackled. The City of St. Louis assigned Housing Analyst Jo Ann Vatcha and allocated Community Development Block Grand funds to purchase four prob-



*Members of the Benton Park West Housing Corporation; (L to R) Maggie Carfield, Fr. Jim Wuerth, MSF, Craig Schmid, Fr. Joe Roelke, MSF, Jackie Robinson and Charles Vestal. Not pictured are: Frank Brettle, Joe Moskus, Ken Ortmann.*



*A future building to be refurbished.*

lem properties on that block. One was demolished. For the other three, they searched for responsible developers to completely rehabilitate hundred-year-old homes. It took awhile, but by 2003, the fourth building had been transformed into new townhouses. A local policeman and a teacher became the block's newest homeowners.

Other problems were even harder to address. Abandoned buildings were a target for a serial arsonist, who struck over a dozen times. One of the housing corporation's proj-

ects was a commercial building. The group met with architects and contractors to plan the renovation and the rehab work had just been completed when the arsonist hit. The building had to be demolished following the particularly devastating fire.

Filling many different leadership roles, at one point, Fr. Joe was called on to reorganize the housing corporation, reaching out to recruit new members who would better represent the diversity of the residents and provide more positive vision. With new energy, the housing corporation has since worked to improve the image of the neighborhood and create homes for renters to purchase and to attract new residents for further stability.

*A Benton Park West Corp. home with renovations in process.*



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***“8 years...18 renovated homes...7 new homes... all sold to owner-occupants.”***

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The results of this 8 year partnership with the City of St. Louis have been truly amazing: 18 renovated homes and 7 new homes, for a total of 25 single-family homes, all sold to owner-occupants. An additional 7 rental units have been renovated, as well as a brand-new building with 74 units of quality housing for senior citizens. Wyoming and Arsenal Streets, hit hard by drug raids and

abandoned property, have become stable and promising sites for more development.

The Benton Park West Housing Corporation isn't resting on their laurels; soon, a brand-new project facing Benton Park will bring both single-family homes and new commercial construction, including the first condominium project in the neighborhood (it took more than 5 years to compile the properties on the site, including an old fast-food restaurant and a gas station with tanks which had to be removed!). These hard-working volunteers have already contributed over 27,000 hours and continue to target buildings and areas in need of attention, advise city officials and

staff, and work to turn around the remaining aging and abandoned buildings and make their neighborhood great again.

Note:

*Very Rev. Joseph Roelke, MSF has been and continues to be the President of the Benton Park West Housing Corporation.*



*A completed Benton Park West home now owned and cared for by the occupant*

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# Mexico Mission Reflections

## Where do Convents Come From?



*Our Lady of  
Guadalupe Church in  
La Esmerelda, Mexico*

33 years!

In 1989 the parish centennial had arrived – for 100 years this parish had been

**W**hiseled into the keystone of the arch over the entrance to the church of Our Lady of Guadalupe is the date: August 31, 1889. Although there is no written record of it, this must have been the date of the dedication and blessing of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Esmerelda, Mexico. This is one of the most remote churches in the Diocese of Saltillo and for 75 years the community had primarily a visiting priest who came only on special occasions such as feast days. In 1967 the Missionaries of the Holy Family (MSF) were offered and accepted the privilege of providing a fulltime priest for this large territory in Mexico. It was my honor to be their pastor for the next

Christ's presence in a remote part of Mexico! Of course the parish wanted to make the centennial a very special celebration. We even had special commemorative medals struck for the occasion. But the most important facet of the celebration was not to commemorate something that happened a hundred years ago, but rather make it a special event in the spiritual life of the present, the living Church. To this end we went to the bishop and asked if he would be able to find a group of Sisters who would be willing to go to such a remote place and give a mission for an entire year. There were a number of times in the previous years that a group of Sisters had come for a week or

two week mission, but to ask for a whole year was a big request. Divine Providence was in our favor.

Some few years before, a new congregation of Sisters had been formed: **The Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Family**. This congregation started in the state of Zacatecas, Mexico. The Foundress, Mother Olivia Palos, found in the Bishop of Saltillo a willing sponsor for the new congregation. So the Mother House is in Saltillo. As sponsor, the

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***“... the bishop convinced Mother Olivia to favor us with four Sisters for a mission of one year!”***

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the bishop and myself. So the bishop convinced Mother Olivia to favor us with four Sisters for a mission of one year!

This was wonderful news and a great cause for celebration on this 100-year anniversary, but where

would the Sisters stay? Off to one side of the church there is a building with two large rooms. This building was constructed around 1950 to serve as a baptistery because back then the arrival of a priest on the feast days brought people from miles and miles around. There could be fifty or sixty baptisms at one time. Now the baptistery would be used as a temporary convent. The large room was divided into a dormitory with bunk beds, and a parlor of sorts. And then the kitchen in the other room. A two-burner butane stove and a refrigerator, some makeshift shelves for dishes, and pots and pans. All was just on the edge of being comfortable. After all, it was going to be for only a year.



*Fr. Lienert, MSF with Sisters of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Family*

bishop does have a bit of leverage with Mother Olivia. Also, because Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish served such a remote area in the Diocese, the bishop was always more compassionate to us. There was always a good rapport between



The little group of Sisters was very good. They took a true interest in the mission, even though none of them had any previous experience in that type of ministry. As time went on they got to know and like the people, and vice versa. Towards the end of the mission I dared to ask the Sisters that if we built a convent for them, did they think that Mother Olivia would station three of them permanently in La Esmeralda. I was a little surprised, and very pleased, when they replied that they were all but certain that Mother Olivia would agree. It seems that they had been talking among themselves about this, and hoping for this possibility. And so it was, much to our delight.

The place chosen for the convent was a few yards from the new and larger parish hall at the back of the church. In La Esmeralda there are no building codes. One does not even need a permit to build. The fact was that we were already starting to build the walls when it came to me that we did not own the property. It belonged to the Cooperative of the miners.



*The Convent under construction.*

So I went up to the office of the Cooperative and apologized for my thoughtlessness, and meekly asked permission. I was assured that the miners were in favor of having the convent, and that there would be no problems about the property. There was no need for any papers or deed.

I myself drew up the plans with all the details. I do not remember precisely the measurements, but they would be very close to 27' x 62'. A corridor runs down the center the entire length of the building, and off of the corridor on one side there is a small porch, a parlor, a chapel, and two single bedrooms. On the opposite side are the kitchen-dining room, utility room, bath, and two single bedrooms. Later on a storage room was added onto the end.

The walls were constructed of lime blocks which we hand made on site! The floors are of hard cement tile, except the chapel, which was carpeted. All the windows and outside doors are steel. The roof is heavily reinforced concrete with Styrofoam insulation blocks six inches thick. We used high silica sand and gravel from

contracted to do the work. He did all of it himself along with a couple of helpers. I did about half the electrical, and all of the plumbing, plus a lot of other little things to help along. Along the entire length of the building on the side of kitchen and utility room, we built a high walled patio for the clothesline and flower garden.



*The finished Convent before landscaping.*

the nearby dry riverbed. When the roof was finished I started to get ready to put on the tar and roofing paper which I already had on hand. Manuel, the builder, assured me that it was not needed. He asserted that the roof as it was would never leak. Better, keep the tar and paper for church or the rectory. And the roof never leaked. Manuel, the best builder in town, and very conscientious, had been

Manuel estimated that the construction would take about six months, but it was not until the following Feast of Pentecost when the Sisters moved in. It was an appropriate day because they are the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Family.

For the first few years there were only three Sisters, and then the group was increased to four. Besides working in La Esmeralda, they also went weekly to five other communities in the parish. For this they were provided with a pickup, model '72 Ford, for their exclusive use. The reason for a pickup is that most of the roads are all but impassible for a passenger car. Several of the communities were as far out as forty-five miles, and it was a trip of at least three hours. When they went out to those communities



*At the dedication of the Convent*

they always took other people along with them, and stayed overnight. They were very responsible, and their work was very productive.

**W**hen Mother Olivia heard that I was going to retire, she came to tell me that she was going to take the Sisters away at the same time. But later she relented, and left them stay another year to see how things would work out. In the end, the Sisters left. I have heard that now an American missionary couple with their several children

is living in the convent. At least it is being used for apostolic work for which it was intended.

**Until next time,  
Padre Jaime.**

PS: I am presently stationed in the parish of St. Joseph, Donna, Texas as the second Parish Vicar. This par-



Fr. Lienert celebrates 50 years as a priest June 2004.

**D**o you want to help MSF with mission work? Your prayers, financial support and talent could be most helpful. Send this form and complete your name and address on the envelope in this magazine and mail it to us.

**I want to help MSF's Missions work with:**

- Prayers
- A financial gift which is enclosed
- My skills and talent.



## HOLY FAMILY LIFE

### MISSION

by Fr. Andrea, Spatafora, M.S.F.

The Church's mission is founded on Christ's command to evangelize all nations. The Gospel of Matthew ends with Christ's commission to the apostles (28:16-20). The Eleven gather on the mountain in Galilee where the Resurrected Lord had commanded them to go. The choice of the mountain has symbolic significance. Jesus had earlier been transfigured on the mountain in Galilee before three of his apostles, Peter, James and John. The Transfiguration was an anticipation of the resurrection and a glimpse of the divinity of Jesus. Now on the mountain in Galilee, Christ is

manifested in his glory before all the apostles.

Christ tells the Eleven that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him by God, as indicated by the passive voice. During his temptations in the desert, Jesus had rejected the temptation to receive power from Satan. Jesus now receives all authority from the Father. The Lord's statement recalls the vision of the One Like a Son of Man in the book of Daniel. The figure in Daniel is given authority to judge by God. Jesus gave signs of this authority during his earthly ministry when he taught, healed the sick, expelled demons and forgave sins. During his trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus claimed that authority and now with the resurrection this authority is fully manifest. His authority is universal: he is Lord and Saviour of all the nations. He, therefore, commands the Eleven to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and to teach them to obey all that he had taught. The two dimensions of the commission are to baptize and to teach.

Baptism signifies entry into the Church, into the family of God. Baptism signifies that we have



entered into a new relationship with God who is our Father, who has saved us in his Son, Jesus Christ and who gives us his life through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Baptism also implies participating in all the sacramental life of the Church, which finds its ultimate expression in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is a fundamental task of the Church to give the sacraments to the faithful.

At the same time, baptism is not a magical act that saves us. It implies that we live our lives as disciples, in fidelity to the Word

*Mirabal Family with Gerard Muñoz and daughter in front of a Holy Family painting.*

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of God. The command to teach involves the Church's varied teaching tasks: magisterial teaching, exegesis of Scripture and theological reflection, catechesis, religious education, preaching. The Church's teaching ministry is to lead us to a deep and mature faith.

These two aspects of Christ's commission, the celebration of the sacraments and the transmission of Christ's teachings, are the fundamental actions of the Church's mission. All baptized Catholics participate in this mission of the Church according to the varied gifts or charisms that the Lord has given us.

Whatever our station in life,



married or single, lay, religious or priest, whatever our work or profession, we are called to participate actively in the sacramental life of the Church and we are called to make disciples and to teach by the witness of our lives. Christ promised the Eleven that he would be with them until the end of time. The Lord assures us of his constant presence and help. We can accomplish the mission entrusted to us through the grace of Christ.

When the Eleven see Christ they fall on their knees in adoration but, at the same time, some of them doubt. The apostles are able to recognize Christ because of their faith. At the same time, the apostles also experience doubts. The Lord is not simply visible to the eyes; one must believe in order to recognize his presence. Doubt is part of faith. Every adult believer is called to appropriate faith for him or herself. Questioning and even doubting

are part of the process that leads to faith. It is only when we have struggled with the questions and doubts that faith becomes a personal commitment. This is evidenced in the Gospel of John, in the story of the apparition of the Risen Lord to Thomas. Thomas refuses to believe until he has experienced the Risen Christ but when the Lord appears to him, Thomas makes the first explicit profession of faith in the Risen Lord, saying to Christ: "My Lord and my God."

**Fr. Andrea Spatafora M.S.F.**



## *Where there is a Will there is a Way!*

Remembering the Missionaries of the Holy Family  
in your will is a very special gift.

*Please remember us as the*

**Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family  
North American Province.**

*Contact our Provincial Office  
if you have any questions (314) 577-6300.*

# MSF Vocation Efforts Renewed in North America

*“The Future of the World and of the Church passes through the Family”*

is a quote from Pope John Paul II. Vocations are a key part of the Church’s future. Fr. Phil Sosa, MSF has been leading the vocations effort on a part-

## THE MSF VOCATION TEAM



Fr. Phil Sosa, MSF



Fr. Ignatius Triatmoko, MSF



Bro. Robert DeLong, MSF



Fr. Camillo Botello, MSF

time basis in addition to his responsibilities as being the pastor for one of MSF’s largest parishes. The arrival of Fr. Ignatius Triatmoko, MSF from the Indonesian Province of Java began the renewal of vocation efforts. Fr. Ignatius has strong experience in the discernment process from his previous assignments in Indonesia. Adding to the effort is the recent assignment of Brother Robert DeLong, MSF as the Vocations Director and Fr. Camillo Botello, MSF as a member of the Vocation Team. Fr. Camillo was ordained to the priesthood last Fall and had an extraordinary discernment process that began with his conversion to Catholic Faith. The joy of religious life for all these men is evident and having a vocations team of priests and a brother is a blessing.

While the vocation team plans are in development, the initial plans include opening up the MSF Formation House in San Antonio, TX for retreats. The purposes of the retreats will not be limited, but it will be requested to include a reflective period about encouraging vocation: If you are a parent are you open to a religious vocation in your children? If single; have you considered a call? Do you have friends or relatives that need encouragement to consider a religious vocation? These reflections during a retreat can be helpful.

**More plans are in process—**

**Please Pray for Vocations**

# 30 Days of Prayer for Vocations

**August 15 is the Feast of the Assumption of Mary.** Before this Holy Day, can you say a brief daily prayer for our two missionaries that are information and for future men to find their calling to serve God with the Missionaries of the Holy Family?



**Br. Robert DeLong, MSF is taking his Perpetual Vows on August 15.** These vows are his final commitment to serve God with the Missionaries of the Holy Family as a Religious Brother.

**Frater Mario Galindo, MSF is renewing his Vows on August 15** while he continues his third year of studies at Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, WI.



## Prayer for Vocations

*Lord God, creator and ruler of your kingdom of light, in great love for the world you gave your only Son for our salvation. His cross has redeemed us, His death has given us life, His resurrection has raised us to glory. Through Him we ask you to send more dedicated lay people, priests and religious to carry on the ministry of your Son. We seek also the intercession of Jesus, Mary and Joseph to bring more vocations to the Missionaries of the Holy Family. Give to those you call the faith to hear and the courage to accept.*

**AMEN**



### JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	27	29	30	31

### AUGUST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<b>15</b>	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Please consider mailing in your calendar of prayers as testimony of your support. Your letters of support to Br. Robert & Fra. Mario would also be very welcomed.

**Mail to: MSF PROVINCIAL OFFICE**  
**3014 Oregon Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118**



*Please Support the  
MSF VOCATION  
PROGRAM  
Feast of the  
Assumption of Mary*



**The Feast of the Assumption is the traditional day MSF Members make their profession of vows.**

**Please support our renewed vocation efforts and our current men in formation in the following ways:**

- Prayer – Please join in the 30 Days of Prayer for our Vocation Team, our men in formation and for future candidates to respond to God's call.
- Financial support – The annual cost of one seminarian with tuition, room, board, health coverage and expenses is about \$20,000 a year.

***With 400 supporters offering \$50 or more we can cover the expenses for one year for an MSF seminarian.***

***Can you contribute \$50 today to be a MSF Seminarian Supporter?***

Please send your tax-deductible contributions to our Provincial Office using the envelope enclosed.

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**Vocation Team Gifts**

The cost for forming a Vocation Team and conducting a Vocation Campaign is significant. If God has placed a passion on your heart for growing vocations please consider making an ***IMPACT GIFT to the MSF Vocation Team Program***. Your gift can help grow our Vocation Team efforts to a greater level.

Please contact our Provincial Office. We would be glad to discuss gifts of securities, real estate, gift bequests, will or trusts.  
All inquiries will remain confidential.

**MSF PROVINCIAL OFFICE**

**Phone (314) 577-6300 or email [GParasch@MSF-America.org](mailto:GParasch@MSF-America.org)**



# SELECTIVE HEARING LOSS

*...or*

*“I didn't hear you.”*

*(Translation:*

*“I wasn't listening.”)*

A parent once told me she was contemplating a hearing check for her son Nicky. More and more, when she asked Nicky to do something - such as hang up his coat, hang up the phone, untie the bird - she would have to amplify her volume several notches before gaining his attention. Whereupon Nicky would answer, sometimes innocently, sometimes testily, that he hadn't heard her before. Mom asked me

if I thought Nicky might have a hearing loss. Possibly, I said, but I couldn't make that diagnosis. I did ask, however, if Mom noticed any evidence of hearing problems in situations other than when Nicky was asked to do something - for example, when, he was watching TV, playing with friends, or having a general conversation.



MSF is pleased to provide you this reprint from Dr. Ray Guarendi's book titled *You're a Better Parent than You Think*. Dr. Ray is a popular Catholic radio personality and guest speaker offering parenting advice in concert with Catholic values. More information about Dr. Ray's books and tapes can be found on the internet at [www.DrRay.com](http://www.DrRay.com)

She said she hadn't. On a return visit, Mom said Nicky's hearing had been assessed and found normal. This confirmed my suspected diagnosis: Selective Hearing Loss. The primary symptom of this condition is - deafness to anything a child doesn't wish to hear.

I asked Mom what she did whenever Nicky blocked out the sound of her voice. She confessed that she would usually repeat herself or else just forget the whole matter because it wasn't worth the exhaustion. You can see the dynamics. Nicky had found a way to escape his responsibilities, or at least to postpone them to a more convenient time.

Selective Hearing Loss (SHL) is an affliction prevalent among children. It can appear in the first several years of life and usually becomes chronic in the teen years. In fact, the adult form is said to be epidemic among marital partners. SHL is manifested by multiple "I didn't hear you's," which typically recur in the presence of some parental, request or directive. This is not to say that a youngster's symptoms are never quite genuine. In the advanced stages of this disorder, many kids truly learn to tune out certain combinations of words, like "The garbage needs taking out," "It's time for bed," or "Did you take a bath?"

Is there a cure for SHL? Yes, a relatively elementary one: Make sure it is worth your youngster's while to hear you. How can you do this? In a conversational tone of voice (about 50 to 70 decibels, not the standard 75 to 100 parents unintentionally learn to use to wrench a youngsters attention), make your request once, stating the consequence for ignoring the request. In Nicky's case, for

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***“Selective Hearing Loss (SHL) is an affliction among children. ... tune out words like, ‘It’s time for bed’ or ‘Did you take a bath?’”***

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example, Mom could have made herself heard much more quietly by saying, "Nicky, supper is in ten minutes. Please be on time or you won't be able to go outside afterwards"; or "We have a new rule, Nicky: all homework must be completed before the TV is turned on"; or "Nicky, if I have to hang up your coat, you'll have to wash and dry my dishes."

But what about those times when Nicky actually didn't hear his mom? Should he be held responsible then? You bet he

should! The problem is Nicky's chronic disregard for Mom's voice, not whether Mom's voice carries well enough to be heard. After a few lessons of feeling the



results of his lax regard for his mom, Nicky would learn to be a little less deaf.

At this point, before I forget, I should alert you to a backup technique youngsters use in case the "I didn't hear you" isn't available. That is the ubiquitous "I forgot." Sometimes it is just not possible for a youngster to claim SHL. Perhaps he uttered an "OK,

Dad," or gave an accepting nod, or maybe even looked up from the TV as you spoke. This is when the "I forgot" can be remembered. Garfield may not be able to claim hearing loss, but he can plead Juvenile Memory Deficit (JMD). Handily, the cure for JMD is identical to SHL. That is, a request is made memorable through consequences. Your words will gain renewed status as Garfield finds he will be held responsible for remembering them.

All kids will periodically ignore or forget what you say to them, and I'm not advocating that your every request come equipped with consequential weight. If, however, your youngster seems chronically plagued by either or both of these disorders, you can use the remedies indicated to alleviate his symptoms and free you from the "I'll keep telling you over and over so you'll listen and not forget" treatment. Not only does this treatment lack any curative powers, it abets your kids in doing the very things you don't want them to do - ignore and forget.



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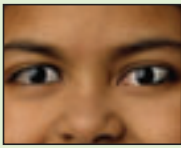
***You're a Better Parent Than You Think!***

Pages 182-184

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Fireside Edition 1992



# REFLECTIONS UPON FAITH

By Gus A. Cantu III

**A**t my age many teens tend to neglect the doctrines of the church and begin to experiment to find their own identity. The Church has been long established and is based upon tradition and doctrine. It is obvious that many teens shy away from it. It becomes another authority figure limiting actions and telling them what to do. I was appalled that when I attended my catechism class, so few knew the Ten Commandments. They see it as just another activity because it is not part of their identity. It seems that teens abruptly shed their childhood when they reach a certain age and innocence is lost: an effect of the society that they are thrust into. Why? Am I not the same person in essence that I was five-ten years ago, only improved by experience and gaining in wisdom?

It is a big worry too that nowadays teens are increasingly faced with many “problems” that were unheard of just a few years ago. The media is constantly bombarding them with immoral images. These

images are broadcast so frequently that society’s acceptable sphere of behavior is increasingly pushed to new unsavory borders. When I was a kid there used to be the sanctuary of Bugs Bunny on TV. Now, all I see is alcohol advertisements and media that would have never been aired due to censorship. It seems that TV has grown up with me and become mote mature while the audience remains static. I care what the children see, broadcasters don’t.

I have been through difficult times myself. Everyday I’m being faced with these “problems” that we are warned about by adults

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***“When I was a kid,  
there used to be the  
sanctuary of Bugs  
Bunny  
on TV”***

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who "Used to be kids." Everyday is a new challenge. Everyday is a new disillusionment. I now see that people can change but my faith must not, lest I be changed also. I carry around the Bible in my backpack and I object to the removal of "Under God" from the pledge, but I am no "Jesus freak" or Ned Flanders. I believe that these persona or generalizations of faith and belief in Christ are detrimental to religion. If you don't

believe me, watch the Bible network on TV. Just once don't you think to yourself that televangelists or these "special" religious programs way of presenting religion is a little hokey, or maybe a little melodramatic? It sensationalizes religion and separates it too much from nominal life. Religion is not sensational. Sensations find their origin in materialism. Religion finds its origin in the divine and as far as I see, the only place we

may find the divine is in the mind of the followers, because that is where faith and religion take root. We must consider that religion is not an obsession that takes over your life. It is simply a faith, and faith is simple. "Faith is simply simple." Faith is not harsh or emotional. Faith is not obsessive or attributed, nor is it ornamental. Faith is fundamental. It is part of who you are and it can't be changed.

Therefore, when I journey out into the world I will continue to carry a Bible in my backpack and go to school, and my faith will be a part of me always, regardless of the "problems."



*Mr. & Mrs. Gus Cantu, Jr. Family—  
Backrow L to R: Cruz, Gus III,  
Gus Jr., Cassandra, Front row –  
Mrs. Maria Valdez*

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# A PROFILE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE

## Fr. Stanislaw Sawata, MSF

By **Fr. Wim van der Weiden, MSF**  
Superior General, Congregation of  
the Missionaries of the Holy Family

Since becoming the Superior General of the Missionaries of the Holy Family (MSF) in 1995, I have tried to visit at least one time all the members of the congregation in the places where they live and work. MSF has over 900 members serving in over 20 countries. These personal visits are often heartwarming, occasionally sad and disappointing; but almost always these encounters are very refreshing and fortifying. In 1998 I traveled to Narrowla in White Russia to meet for the first time with Father Stanislaw Sawata, MSF.

When I learned of his work, I spontaneously remembered the things I heard as a young

seminarian about the Blessed Fr. Damien who volunteered to work among the lepers, the outcasts of society in the 19th century. My visit with Fr. Stanislaw has been one of my most emotional visits. I say this because Fr. Stanislaw Sawata, MSF has sacrificed his health and his life for his suffering parishioners, much like Blessed Fr. Damien did over 100 years ago to work with the lepers. Here is a very brief version of his story:

Most people will remember the name Chernobyl. In April 1986

**Photo  
to Come**



Fr. Stanislaw Sawata, MSF

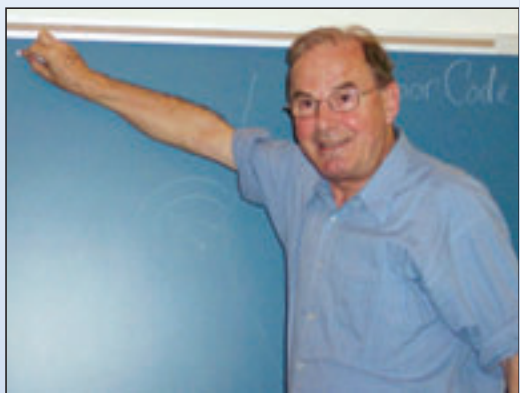
Chernobyl Nuclear Plant in Ukraine.

there was a very serious disaster at the nuclear plant of Chernobyl in Ukraine on the border with White Russia. In a very short time many people died in the adjacent region of White Russia because the radioactive cloud was driven in that direction by a southeastern wind. Not only did people die; but thousands were contaminated with radioactivity and subsequently developed several diseases, mostly cancer. The region northwest of the power plant in half a circle within a radius of 15 miles from the plant was so strongly contaminated, that it was declared uninhabitable. The following half circle, also about another 15 miles deep was declared closed for young people, but the elderly who were already contaminated and sick could stay if they wished. The contamination of this region is so severe that almost everyone has cancer or will have it. Among these elderly people thousands of them are Catholics, mostly from Polish origin.

A few years after the accident in 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. For the first time priests could enter the former Soviet Republic White Russia. A Polish Missionary of the Holy Family, Fr. Stanislaw Sawata, was one of the first to volunteer for the new and difficult mission of revitalizing Catholicism in Russia. For a few years he was the pastor in a newly erected parish which was a safe distance from Chernobyl.

He along with a number of priests worked to give renewed life to the Catholic community that had been suppressed during the 70 years of communism. For the missionaries these were difficult years in Russia. Because of extreme poverty, many of the most elementary necessities were put on rations and often even were not available.

In Chernobyl only visiting priests would come for a few days to celebrate Mass and distribute other sacraments. These priests stayed a couple of days at a time because of the health risks. After a few years, the Catholics in Chernobyl asked their bishop,



Fr. Wim explaining the radioactive fall-out area of the Chernobyl accident.

Cardinal Swiatek of Minsk, to send a priest who would become their parish priest - and stay. The Cardinal had great appreciation for this request and wanted truly to help them. With so many sick and dying people the presence of



a priest on a daily basis was very crucial, but the grave health risk caused the dilemma. The cardinal knew that a priest sent to this parish probably would get cancer and then have an early death. He did not dare assign someone to this place. Nevertheless, in a meeting with his clergy, the cardinal spoke about the request and asked for a volunteer. Father Stanislaw was very aware of the consequences and offered himself to go to Chernobyl.

In 1998, when I visited him, he had already been serving in Chernobyl for nearly four years. I remember very well the strange feeling that I had during my two-day visit. During the day there were many things to discuss and to visit, but at night, in bed, there was this persistent thought, 'there is such strong radioactive contamination here'. Even if you are aware that you will not get sick when visiting for a few days, it is nevertheless a strange experience to consciously take "risks". After the first night Father Stanislaw asked me if I slept well. I told him of this strange and anxious feeling about possibly becoming contaminated. He told me about his own similar experiences during the first months and years. He said that every time he was not feeling well, every time that he felt something unusual he had the anxious thought, 'Oh, boy, now it starts, I have cancer!'. He would go to the doctor and every time

the doctor would say, "No, Father, nothing serious, don't be afraid, this is not cancer." Three, four years passed, but never was he was free of this anxious feeling. During the day, he had much to do as a parish priest, but in the evenings and the nights, alone in the rectory, he was often plagued by this anxiety about his health.

Therefore, he said to me (and I paraphrase),

***It was a relief in 1997 when the doctor said to me, 'Yes, Father, now it is there, you have cancer, leukemia!'. It may sound strange, almost crazy, but these words of the doctor became for me some kind of liberation. Naturally, after that I had my difficult hours, days even that I felt down, but generally, this diagnosis of the doctor was something positive. Now I could relate more easily with my parishioners: almost all of them were sick, almost all of them had some kind of cancer. Now I was truly one of them! And above all, I was free from the anxiety about my health; what could come had already come, and I knew my fate. The feeling of solidarity with my parishioners has become much stronger.***

The Cardinal suggested to Fr. Stanislaw to take a month long leave to Poland every few months to help slow down the process and to gather new forces; but Father

Stanislaw did not want to go since he knew there would not be another priest to take his place during his absences. Two years ago one of his younger confreres, Fr. Wojciech Walczyna, MSF volunteered to continue the work of Father Stanislaw. Fr. Wojciech is a Missionary of the Holy Family Priest from the Poland Province, and he too knows he faces the same health risks. The Cardinal has given Father Stanislaw another small parish where he is dedicating his last forces to his small flock. His illness proceeds very slowly.

For the Missionaries of the Holy Family, it is a grace to have

in our community such a confrere, who tries to live his vocation as a missionary by making such a great sacrifice. Perhaps we would all do well to consider what kind of sacrifice God is asking of us.



**Very Rev. Wim van der Weiden, MSF**  
*Superior General of the Missionaries of the Holy Family*

## MSF MISSION STATEMENT

**W**e, the Missionaries of the Holy Family of the North American Province, are united in religious community according to the purpose of our Founder, Father Jean Berthier, who dedicated our future and ministry to the ideals of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Guided by the Holy Spirit we respond to the missionary task of the Church and contribute to the evangelization of all for the coming of the kingdom of God. Our Mission to evangelize encompasses far away places, different cultures and wherever the Good News needs to be proclaimed. According to the gifts and talents of our members, we are moved to:



- Draw Others Close to the Gospel
- Promote Vocations
- Stress the Pastoral Care of Families Jesus, Mary and Joseph, enlighten us, help us and save us.

*Amen*



# THANK YOU

ALL THE PRIESTS AND BROTHERS OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY WANT TO EXPRESS THEIR SINCERE THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS. YOU ARE REMEMBERED IN OUR PRAYERS.

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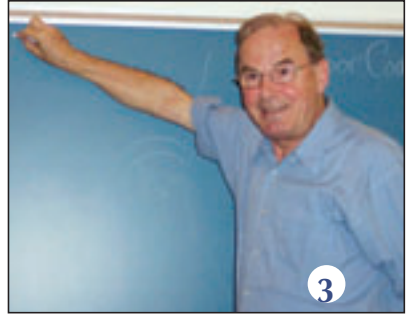
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1



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7

# AROUND THE PROVINCE

1. Lenten Appeal Prayer Requests are on the alter in Lent and through the Easter Season. The needs of MSF supporters are remembered at Mass and in daily prayer.

2. **Fr. Ignatius Triatmoko, MSF** has arrived in the North American Province and is shown here making new friends! **Fr. Ignatius** will be strongly focused in the area of Vocations and Formation.

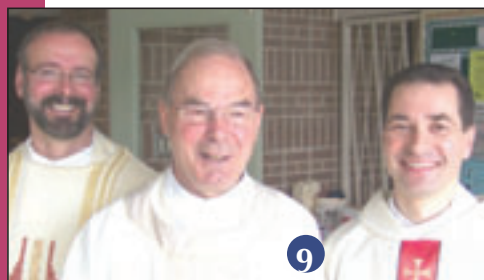
3. As Superior General **Fr. Wim van der Weiden, MSF** travels to each of the 15 Provinces throughout the world. This visit to the North American Province was for over one month. He visited most of the members personally. Here **Fr. Wim** is shown explaining the radiation fall out situation that took place in Chernobyl many years ago and he tells the Assembly about **Fr. Stanislaw, MSF** and his mission work to

represent the Church in that area. You can read more about this in the Profile of Service Section in this issue of *The Messenger*, page 23.



4. **Fr. Simon Brozowski, MSF** had the pleasure of meeting **Mel Gibson** at a special showing of the *The Passion of The Christ* at the Little Sisters of the Poor Home in Louisville, KY.

**Fr. Simon** is the chaplain at the home.



5. **2004 Anniversaries.** Shown here after celebrating Mass at the Assembly. (L to R): **Fr. Simon Brozowski, MSF – 40 years, Fr. James Lienert, MSF – 50 years, Fr. John (Jack) Kilberg – 25 years, MSF and Fr. Albert Trevino, MSF – 20 years.** Not shown is **Fr. Art Ochwood, MSF – 45 years.**

6. The Assembly participants regularly had Mass and prayer.

7. **Fr. Joseph Roelke, MSF** (left)– North American Provincial and **Fr. Wim van der Weiden, MSF** (right) – Superior General for the Missionaries of the Holy Family share a light moment at the Assembly.

8. Every three years the North American Province gathers to hold an Assembly meeting. This year it was held in St. Louis, MO in April of 2004. The Assembly Meeting had over 25 members from the province present

9. **Fr. Dan Hawkins, MSF, Fr. Wim van der Weiden, MSF and Fr. Andrea Spatafora, MSF** after celebrating Mass at St. Martin de Porres Parish in Ottawa, Ontario Canada.



*“Majestic and  
Glorious is Your Work”*

PSALM 111:3



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