

Marist Mission Today

Number 90

Marist Missionary Sisters

Spring 2022

Dear Partners in Mission,

Many of our readers know that we, Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, are “heirs of our pioneers”: Marie Françoise Perroton and eventually ten other women from France who set out to



the South Pacific islands in the nineteenth century to serve in the missions begun there by the Marist Fathers and Brothers.

But perhaps few know how we began in the Americas. This year, 2022, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of our origins here. It began with a young working woman in Boston, Mary Decker, who was a parishioner of the Marist parish, “Our Lady of Victories” on Isabella Street in Boston.

She heard about the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary and wanted to join them. In fact, she may have met some of them in Boston, on their way to the Pacific. Mary went to France and was the first American to make her novitiate there, taking the name, “Sr Mary Rose of Lima”.

After she made her first vows, Sr Mary Rose returned to the USA with Mother Mary Pia, a French Sister who had grown up in New Caledonia and later served as a missionary in Fiji. Mother Pia was appointed the superior of the new convent in Boston, where the Sisters would welcome new members as postulants.

With the help of Father Sollier, their pastor, and members of the Third Order of Mary and other generous benefactors the Sisters soon had a home that would serve for the first stage of religious formation – the postulancy – for women who wanted to become Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary. It was the beginning of our story in the Americas.

Sister Helen Muller smsm
Regional Leader

100 years since our Beginning in Boston



Mary Decker, from Boston - the first American to become a Missionary Sister of the Society of Mary. She took the name, “Sr Mary Rose of Lima”.



Father Joseph Sollier SM who asked the Society of Mary to purchase a small apartment building next to the church to serve as the first home of the SMSM in the USA, where they would welcome new members.

“He said to them, ‘Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.’ (Mk 16:15)



1924

Sisters Mary Rose and Pia (seated)
Sisters Mary Mark, Remi, Angel and Kevin.

Growth of the Marist Missionary Sisters in the Americas

As the numbers of women wanting to become Marist Missionary Sisters grew, a large convent was built in Bedford, Massachusetts, that became the novitiate.

Called to serve the abandoned people with leprosy in Jamaica, our Sisters arrived there in 1940. Over the years we established 18 missions across the Island and continue to serve the people of Jamaica in 3 communities today: in Kingston, Montego Bay and Seaford Town.

Responding to the call of the Church for missionaries in Latin America, we left for Peru in 1960. Beginning in Lima, teaching in schools run by the Marist Brothers, we soon moved out from the city to more remote areas. Our Sisters continue “to bring a little of Mary’s presence” to their missions today in Lima, Chulucanas and Huarmaca.

Some Sisters were missioned in Colombia for many years until our ministry there was turned over to the Local Church. For the missionary, there is the moment of letting go and stepping aside so as to honor local leadership and responsibility for the mission. A graced and bittersweet moment.

The American province also administered missions in Tanzania and Bangladesh until they were turned over to other Provinces in our Congregation.



Isabella Street in the 1920's: The Sisters' house is to the right of the Church.

International Communities for Mission

Although we are this year celebrating the centennial of the presence of Marist Missionary Sisters in the Americas, it is also important to recognize the “internationality” that exists throughout our congregation. Unlike many religious congregations, we do not necessarily remain assigned to the same geographical area in which we made our first vows.

Even while developing a new “American Province or Region” from the 1920’s on, American Sisters continued to be sent out to the South Pacific, Africa and Asia. And here, in the Americas, in our communities in Jamaica, Peru or the USA, you will find many Sisters from other areas of the world. This is because “as missionaries, we are especially called to be witnesses to universal love.” (Constitutions 166)



Sisters at a feast day dinner in Waltham MA are from Tonga, Sri Lanka, USA, Brazil, and Samoa.



Sisters at the Assembly of the Region of the Americas gathered in Waltham, MA in 2019.

Those who have gone before us...



Sister Mary Wieggers, SMSM

April 17th, 1930 - March 7th,
2022

From: Saskatchewan, Canada

Missioned in: Peru



Sister Lucille Levasseur, SMSM

June 21st, 1928 – March 18th,
2022

From: New Bedford, MA

Missioned in: Fiji

Those beginning the journey



The Sisters above are Novices in our community in Belmont, MA. They are Sisters Teresa Nyawira George, from Kenya, Shila Gomes, from Bangladesh, Kubai Katuka John, from North Nigeria and Liezl Noya Ladaran from the Philippines. Sisters Teresa, Shila and Kubai will take make their first vows on April 28th, the feast of St Peter Chanel.



Thinking of becoming a Marist Missionary Sister?

Learn more: Visit our websites: maristsmsm.org & smsmsisters.org
Contact: vocations@maristsmsm.org

Did you know? When you visit maristsmsm.org on your **phone, tablet or computer**, you can

- Request prayers
- Make an online donation
- Sign up for our news posts
- Download the most recent 6 issues of the MMT.

Wills – Memorial Gifts

If you are planning your bequests or memorial gifts you can help us to continue to bring the good news of God's love to those in need in many parts of the world.

Our official name and address for legal documents:

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OR: CURRENT RESIDENT

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