

MARIST SM AUSTRALIA

Marist Mission Centre

Marist Fathers International Mission Fund
Australian Marist Centre Overseas Aid Fund



Marist Mission Newsletter, Vol. 66, No 4
Christmas, December 2015

Sustaining Hope



Marist Mission Centre
1949 - 2015

In this newsletter...

Marist Sisters

Where the thirst is great

2016 Projects

Sisters Drinking Water PNG
Marist Fathers Centre Africa

Jubilee Year of Mercy

Pope Francis designates
2016 as a Year of Mercy.

Frequent Flyer Points ...

Dear Marist Friends and Benefactors,

*Gift-giving is under threat from the culture of 'more is better'. Credit Card frequent flyer points can be seen as consumerism's new score card. E.g., A road-side billboard near Sydney Airport invites motorists to give **Christmas Gifts of real value.** (don't laugh)....The advice: our National airline's 'Frequent flyer points'. Real value ?*

For Christians, Christmas celebrates the gift of value. Jesus, the image of a merciful God, invites us to share God's gift of unconditional love with family, friends, especially the vulnerable, lonely, the aged, the forgotten, all those in pain. These 'gifts of the heart' have an eternal value. They earn the points that bring real joy and peace.

This Christmas MMC Newsletter spotlights our Marist Sisters whom MMC supports with your generosity. The Sisters are great examples of women inspired by Mary, who give from the heart to those whose lives they touch.

Finally, on a personal note, my third term in the Marist Mission Office concludes this year. My nine years have been full of blessings. Your generosity and the ongoing inspiration of Marist Missionaries in the field have touched me deeply.



However, change is in the air within our Marist world. In 2015, MMC prepared a transition plan and the time to begin the process is fast approaching. I am in my 70's and, while I still have frequent flyer points, I am hoping our Marist Leaders will allow me one last run to somewhere on the Marist Mission frontlines.

May your families enjoy a very happy and holy Christmas with abundant gifts of 'real value' and may 2016 be a year of jubilee for us all.

*God bless you and all your loved ones,
Fr Kevin Stewart SM*



As Marist Sisters, we are called to be a presence of Mary in the Church and world of today. We are being challenged to address and respond to the greatest needs of our time: Thirst for Meaning, Thirst for Belonging, Thirst for Healing and the Thirst for the Care for the Earth.

- Sister Torika SM

Marist Sisters trace their origins to a remarkable charismatic young woman who lived in 19th century post-revolution France.

Sister Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, a companion of the early Marist Fathers, gathered women together as missionaries of Mary's gentle tenderness, walking with those in pain, especially the lonely, the excluded, the forgotten. The Marist Sisters are part of the Marist Family.

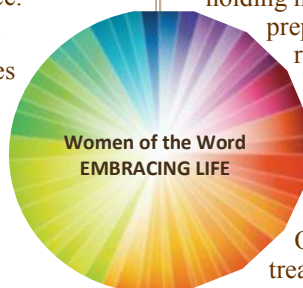
Jeanne-Marie's contribution to the newly-formed *Society of Mary* (Marist Family) was a very practical 'down-to-earth' spirituality' embracing ordinary lives.

Marist Sisters, besides the education of young women, today embrace a host of life-giving ways of reaching out to those in need.

In 2015, MMC support for Sisters ranged from helping Sisters holding hands with malnourished urban kids from poor slums, preparing them to give education 'a go' to advocating for the rights of trafficked young girls. P. 2-3 is a snap-shot of what it means to be a Marist Sister in the world today.

Examples abound. A Marist Sister counsels girls lured into prostitution, another accompanies poor mothers in fledgling efforts as social entrepreneurs. Another is teaching the art of meditation giving meaning to life. One is a dentist to the poor who may never receive any treatment elsewhere. Sisters journey with women prisoners.

The Marist Sisters presence is unobtrusive rather like breathing air. You are not aware that they are there, and yet they really are.





Comforting those in pain

Sister Kalala SM consoling and embracing a victim of a traumatic calamity that claimed the lives of a thousand people, mostly related to one another, in the space of 20 minutes. There were no words for the pain the victims felt, just a comforting Marist hug.



Reaching out to the sick

← Sister Terube SM is part of the Chaplaincy Team of the largest public hospital in Davao City, Philippines. The public health system caters for the poorest.



→ Sister Sheila SM provides dental surgery to urban poor children at the Marist Fathers Street Children's Centre near the large public market in Davao City, Philippines.

Journeying with prisoners

On Wednesdays I work in the Women's Correction Centre in Suva. I began this ministry when I returned from PNG. These years with women are precious. There are 55 women from all over Fiji. Five are Catholics. I journey with them all.

I also see the women in remand, those waiting for their case, just to listen and encourage them. Many have just arrived and haven't settled down. Everything is strange. They are lonely, frightened, missing their family. We introduced a series of what 'Yellow Ribbon Follow Ups' referring to compassion that restores dignity in their lives. - Sr Lavinia SM (in Fiji)



→ Sister Sheila SM is the Marist Coordinator at the Davao City Jail taking care of the pastoral needs of the men and women inmates, coordinating other catholic groups who want to help in the jail. Marist Fathers have also assisted at the jail where male prisoners are packed in rather inhumane conditions like sardines..

Protecting the vulnerable...

Sister Edna SM, on the staff of Talikala Foundation for Women & Children teaches Life Skills to trafficked young women and children. Sister tries to develop their communication and coping skills, conflict resolution, decision making and problem solving. Sister also gives input on Child Abuse Prevention in schools, government agencies and civic organisations. →



Sister Monica SM (above) who worked many years in a Street Children's Centre coordinates a Badjao Children's Centre bringing a maternal presence that encourages and prepares tribal minority children from a waterfront slum to give school a try instead of begging or working on city streets.



Marist Mission Centre is a signatory to the Code of Conduct of the Australian Council for International Development.





Touching the heart of God...



Christian Meditation began in Fiji in 1994. Missionary Marist Sister Denise (SMSM) invited Marist Sisters Lavinia & Marlene to join their meditation team visiting schools in Viti Levu, Fiji. Class by class, Sisters Lavinia and Marlene instruct children and their teachers on how to “embrace life.”

Sister Marlene reports:

It can be tiring going from class to class however, this is a small price to pay compared to the never failing wonder we see when children and their teachers accept and experience meditation.

If daily practice of Christian meditation is rooted in their young lives, it will be an invaluable treasure to strengthen them throughout their lives.



Sister Marlene SM (below) with her team who give adult workshops on basic Christian Communities all over Fiji.



Sister Vika SM (Fiji) engages in the special education of young children. Education has been a traditional priority of the Marist Sisters and other Marists where there is a need.



Sister Rosemary SM passes on the Marist Spirit through a program aptly called "A Liveable Spirit".

The program was designed to induct Marist lay partners (originally teachers) into ongoing Marist ministry.



Sister Hazel, aspiring to be a Marist Sister, teaches young mothers therapeutic massage skills in a women's development program in Agdao, Philippines.



Pope Francis proclaims 2016 a Jubilee Year of Mercy



Every work of aid, if it is not to fall into efficiency or assistance that does not promote persons and peoples, must always be reborn from this blessing of the Lord that comes to us when we have the courage to look at the reality and at the brethren we have before us.

As I wrote in Proclamation of the Jubilee of Mercy: "Let us open our eyes to see the miseries of the world, the wounds of so many brothers and sisters deprived of dignity, and let us feel ourselves stirred to hear

their cry for help. May our hands hold their hands tightly, and let us draw them to ourselves so that they feel the warmth of our presence, of friendship and of fraternity. May their cry become our own and together may we be able to break the barrier of indifference that often reigns sovereign to hide hypocrisy and egoism" (n. 15). Pope Francis (December 2015)



Our Beloved Dead

As another year closes, Missionary Marists remember with profound gratitude all our Benefactors and especially your loved ones who returned home to the Lord in 2015. For those who were close to you, you will miss them at Christmas. May they enjoy the fullness of eternal life.

What is still to be done ?

As 2015 comes to a close MMC received two requests for assistance from two very poor regions where the Marists are present. Bougainville and the Cameroons in Africa.

Missionary Marist Sisters (SMSM) are looking for a water tank to avoid the skin diseases and intestinal problems from drinking and bathing in river water by switching to rain water for drinking etc.

The Marist Fathers in the Cameroons are requesting assistance to purchase basic equipment for their Centre for Children with special needs (disabilities).

With your help, MMC hopes to give a gift of real value to support the needs of the Sisters and Fathers this Christmas and the people they serve.

What has been done ?

As 2015 comes to a close building projects receiving assistance through MMC have almost been completed. Among them, the Marist Seminary in Fiji has undergone major renovations to accommodate new needs for the training of young Marists.

The multi-purpose centre in Vanuatu has been restored and the livelihood projects are up and running. The Skills Training Centre for abused young women victims of violence in the Philippines is almost ready to be blessed this Christmas. Teachers accommodation on Tanna Is is on target (1 house per year) and extension to the Marist Fathers house in Malaita also in the Solomons has been completed.

Annual major ongoing operational support to the Marist Fathers (Asia), Missionary Marist Sisters (Bangladesh), the Marist Brothers (Cambodia), the Marist Sisters (Philippines), PIME Fathers (China) and the Thai-Burma Refugee Camps continues. Disaster relief has also been a priority and support through the Marist Fathers General Administration in Rome for Oceania and International Marist Missions has been substantial. (details in next Newsletter).



Compassion keeps the flame of hope alight!

1. Cameroon: Special needs

A Problem

In the Bambili Village where the Centre is located, people still hold traditional beliefs that a child with a disability is "bad luck". The child is often kept in houses or in dark corners in the kitchen for fear and shame. Abject poverty accentuates this rejection and exclusion.

Acute depression and lack of belonging is the consequence. Basic education and skills training has been impossible. The communities are very poor.

The Marists are working hard to change the culture of exclusion. The Centre is a public statement of Marist belief in the value of every child.

The Cameroon Reality

- 20 pupils ranging from 8-20 years.
- Numbers now increasing by 20% per year.
- The Children have a variety of challenges arising from cerebral palsy, visual and hearing impairment, slower learning together with other physical challenges.

The Response

- A Centre has been established with rooms for woodwork, home economics and crafts, a computer room/tailoring workshop and dining and toilet facilities.
- Community-based support groups have been established.
- Trained staff are in place.

Assistance required

- Physiotherapy Equipment
- Transportation for Children
- Agriculture Equipment (hoes, spades)
- Cooking Equipment (gas bottles)
- Sewing Equipment (sewing machines)

Budget \$ 45,000

Marist Missionary Sisters (SMSM)

Bougainville, PNG: Safe Water

- Water is an essential for health.
- The traditional source (River) has been polluted and has been deemed unsafe.
- Rain water is abundant but storage lacking.

Vanuatu one year on ...

Veteran Missionaries, Fr Morlini and Fr Rodet, have seen many



cyclones come and go in Vanuatu. Super storm Cyclone Pam tested the resilience of the people but one year on recovery is on track and smiles abound.



The "Hen House" project of the Marist Community in Tanna Is. which was among the worst hit areas of Cyclone PAM.



Assistance required

- 2000 gallon storage tank
- 200 gallon head tank/stand
- Electrical water pump

Budget: \$ 4,751



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Postal: Locked Bag 5002, GLADESVILLE NSW, 1675 Office: 3 Mary St, Hunters Hill NSW AUSTRALIA 2110

Tel: +61 2 9844 2275 Fax: 02 9816 1737 (www.maristmissions.com & www.maristfathers.org.au)

Fr Kevin: director@maristmissions.com Jane: admin@maristmissions.com Annie: donations@maristmissions.com

Please note: The Marist Mission Office will be closed for the Holiday period (December 21-January 15, 2016)



I would like to support

- Marist Fathers International Mission (MFIM)
- Australian Marist Centre Overseas Aid (AMCOA)

My details are as follows: (please print clearly)

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Preferred greeting e.g., Bill / Peggy _____

Family name _____

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- Australian Marist Centre Overseas Aid (AMCOA)
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My donation:

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Or Fax to (02) 9816 1737 or donate online.

For general information: please contact Jane 02-9844 2275

Regarding donations: Please contact Annie 02-9844 2275

Office hours: Monday - Thursday 9am - 3.30pm

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*Happy Christmas
and a peaceful
New Year from a
grateful MMC
Team and the
Marist Family.*



Compassion and caring keeps the flame of hope alight!



*Protection and
Education
Marist priorities*