

MARIST SM AUSTRALIA



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

SUSTAINING HOPE AMONG THE VULNERABLE

Marist Mission Newsletter, Winter Vol.66, No.2, June, 2015

Are we in danger of losing our humanity ?



Photo AFP

Do you hear me ?

"Ignoring brothers and sisters at sea is an assault on life. ...broken lives compromise the dignity of the international community and we are in danger of losing our humanity".

Pope Francis congratulated Europe for receiving 100,000+ 'migrants' in 2015 alone. He must be shaking his head hearing of the Aussie 'Gulags' in Cambodia, Nauru & Manus Is., all among our poorest neighbours, struggling politically, economically and socially.

However dressed up, it is crass self-interest, devoid of compassion and mercy and shames us all. Our political leaders, poll-driven on social issues, judge that they have read us well. If they are right, we are in danger of losing our humanity. I don't believe self-interest is our only card. We should remind them of that when we vote!

Self-interest... "the floor is still wet".... Or does it matter ?



Dear Marist Mission Friends,

Humor thrives on the contradictions in life. Our silly choices to back horses both ways reveals a win-at-all costs mentality. In a sense, the choices we make do define us. A simple story: A policeman reports in that a lady has just shot her husband for stepping on a floor she had recently mopped. "Have you arrested her yet?" "Not yet Sir, the floor is still wet!"

We laugh. No horse runs a truer race than self-interest. Media shock jocks and politicians know which way to jump when issues such as refugees or slashing overseas aid make news. This explains the power of modern polling. Yes, "the floor is still wet"

Decisions help define our breeding. Recently, I met with leaders of MMC supported projects in a Thai-Karen Refugee Camp. Discussions ranged across many issues. Is it time to wind up MMC support ? Is it time for the young Karens to go home? 'Surely', life in Burma had improved. MMC had partnered them for 15 years...

Their clear response, 'not yet'. I was now listening carefully.

"Father, our plight continues. The Regime exchanged army uniforms for civilian suits. Change in Burma is just cosmetic. 'Home' as we knew it, no longer exists. Some of us were born in these camps. Our lands are gone. Schools are burnt. Villages plundered. We are afraid to return. No trust"

Then, in that gracious Asian way, they gave MMC a face-saving out...

"But Father, Middle-East and African Refugees fleeing violence are worse off than us. We know what it is like to run for our lives! From experience, we feel for them. If funds are limited, just help them first.

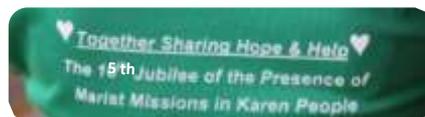
How can you turn away from young people like these? Zero self-interest is rare today. Whether a floor was wet or dry made no difference to them. Let's help the Thai-Karen hostels be their safe-havens for another year.

God bless and my warm thanks.

Fr Kevin Stewart SM

In this newsletter...

- **June 30** - deadline for 2014 -2015 tax-deductible donations
- **Forgotten Young Karen Refugees**
Zero Self-interest
- **Migrant working youth**
One man's inspirational story - ACU on-line learning - the road out of a charcoal factory to a new life
- **Marist Asia Foundation**
On-line Education opening doors for young Burmese migrant workers at Marist Ranong, Thailand.
- **Sister Joan Evan's - 'Retirement'**
An angel in the Klong Toei slums
- **MMC's 'Christmas gift in July'**
Our long-awaited new website is almost ready for launching...
- **Mortar & Cement**
3 'one-off' constructions:
1 beginning June 9; 2nd half-way and 3rd finished. Abused women Street Kids & teachers to benefit.



2014-2015 FINANCIAL YEAR
Donations to
Australian Marist Centre Overseas Aid (AMCOA)
are TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

Your entire AMCOA donation (100%) goes to where the need is greatest.

Please date cheques no later than June 30.
Donations to *Marist Fathers International Mission (MFIM)* are non-tax deductible. Gifts are used to train Marists and for religious and spiritual works.

MMC ONLINE DONATIONS
The online donation facility on the MMC Website accords with best practice for security and privacy

Bequests
Recommended wording is as follows:
"The Director for the time-being of the Marist Mission Centre, a special work of the Trustees of the Marist Fathers for the Province of Australia, 3 Mary Street, Hunters Hill, NSW 2110"





(Kyaw Naing's story)

With a 'key-click' you can access knowledge from anywhere. Youth from refugee & migrant worker backgrounds tap online lectures mentored by MAF. For the highly motivated students, it can break the 'cycle of poverty'.

FROM RUBBISH COLLECTOR TO ACU UNIVERSITY STUDENT

My name is Kyaw Naing. I was born in April 7, 1986. I attended school when I was 5 years old. Our village has only grade 4, so in order to attend grade 5, one needed to go to Long Lo, several miles away. After I passed grade 1, I told mom often times, "Mom, after I complete grade 4, please buy a bicycle for me to study grade 5".

Sadly, I had to leave school after grade 2 because of financial problems.

In 1997, my family went to Kaw Thaug for work. I worked as a water seller. I earned 50 Kyats per day (2015: 1 AUD = 864 kyats) which I gave to my mom.

I also worked as a garbage collector every evening. While collecting garbage, I saw many students on the road. I was sad, I wanted to be like them but I thought I had no chance to attend school. I even told myself **"You are not to become a student in this life"**. Unluckily, our family income was never enough in Burma. My parents then planned to go to Ranong, Thailand.

In 1999, my family arrived in Ranong for work. We were placed in a charcoal factory where I'm living and working now. Fortunately, I had a friend who finished ten standards in Myanmar. I suddenly said to him, "I want to be like you." He was surprised and asked lots of questions. He decided to teach me for a month.

My first lessons were A-P-P-L-E, B-A-L-L, C-A-T, and O-R-A-N-G-E. He suggested I buy a Burmese text-book and English-Myanmar dictionary. After one month, he went back to Myanmar. I bought many text-books and an English-Myanmar dictionary. I read but didn't understand. I continued my self-studying in free time.

After 8 years, I could read Burmese a little and I knew English vocabularies, but I could not speak English. Luckily, I met my friend again. He introduced me to his friend learning computer at Marist Mission Ranong.

When I was 22 years old, I became a computer student at MMR. While I was learning computer, I heard an announcement **"Teachers will offer English classes in the evening"**. I was so happy and joined the class. My beginner level was taught by one teacher and I did not understand what he explained during class. I just guessed what he meant. Fortunately, I passed beginner class. Then, I joined intermediate level. I was the worst one in the class. But I was the one who put his hand up first when teacher asked **"Who wants to study online at Australia Catholic University?"**

When I spoke English, my classmates laughed and also my teacher did not understand what I'm talking about. But my teacher liked me because I spoke confidently. I recorded the teaching everyday and I listened at home again. After 3 years learning, I could understand what the teacher explained and my English speaking was getting much better.

In 2012, I had the chance to join a "Future Group" which was an MMR group teaching out-of-school kids. Tutors spoke in English and taught in English. I also had to share with others in English. After a few months, my English improved so much that teacher told me I could join the **Australian Catholic University** class next time." I was so happy I could not sleep the whole night. I told my family, I told friends **"Yes, now I can join the ACU class."**



My friends teased me. You are such a dreamer.

You left at grade 2 in Myanmar. How can you join ACU? !" "No, I can do it". I decided to spend all my time in study. I studied so hard. Every day I studied from 7:00 pm to midnight. I listened to English while working in the day light. I wrote vocabularies on the white board in my room and work place. I spent 8 hours per day for study for over a year including Evening Class. My classmates, friends and family all thought that I was "crazy".



My teachers, neighbours, friends, and classmates were surprised by my improvement. After I studied two months in the MMR Bridging programme, I sat the entrance exam for ACU. And I Passed. I was so happy I cried. I could not sleep the whole night.

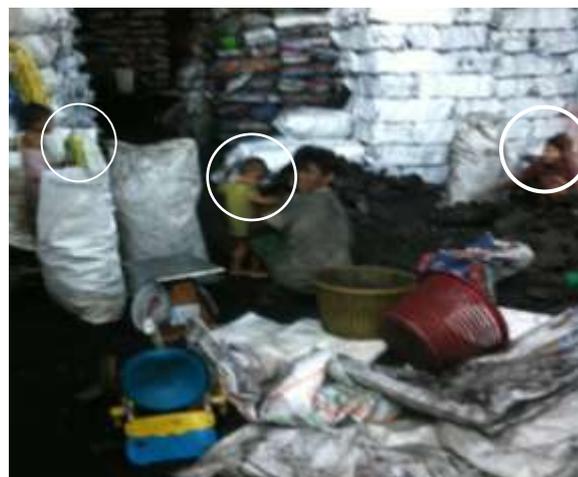
"I'm an Australian Catholic University student".



Kyaw Ngaing's home

"Unless they have a dream and learn, their future is bleak."

Sister Joan Evans PBVM in her 25th year in the slums.





Soon to begin



MMC is budgeting to help re-establish this important Marist mother-child program preparing children for formal education. \$20,000



Marist Sisters Mother-Child Project Davao Philippines

In simple bamboo shacks over the seafront, 27 pre-school aged children are gathered for a few hours each day to give them skills and nourishment that will help them cope with formal schooling, a world far from their mendicant life and street experience. In December 2013, fire swept through the slums. All was destroyed.

18 MONTHS AGO

These people must be devastated. They may not have lived in palaces but this was their home. To lose everything when you already have so little had to be truly awful!

I hope that the government steps in and helps them find decent homes. Yes, with so many now homeless, it will be difficult but they must do something. Sister Torika SM



Sister Monica SM

JUNE 2015

Sister Torika SM visited MMC. She reflected on the 2013 fire in the waterfront slums that destroyed their Marist Centre for poor Badjao Mother-Child that got kids ready for school rather than begging.

“Finally, the government have assigned lots after pushing the poor all over the place. Terrible. We want to build a simple bamboo structure that blends in with the slums but with a septic tank. Sister Monica SM coordinates the project.”

Thanks for all the help from your benefactors. Sister Torika SM

Begun this June



A multi-purpose skills-training Centre for abused young women and girls at the OND Sisters in Kidapawan, Philippines. It is largely financed from designated donations made through MMC. Construction began on June 9.



Ongoing - Vanuatu



Fire destroyed the accommodation centre for in-service training of teachers in Port Vila. The super storm did not damage the construction which, when finished, will provide rooms for 10 teachers and principals meeting at the one time.



Finished & Blessed



The Pope Francis Drop-In Centre for kids living on the streets was blessed last Easter. Congratulations to Fr Lionel Mechavez SM for bringing it in on-budget. It will accommodate a further 27 boys as a half-way house, getting them back to school and home if possible.

The slow road to recovery - Vanuatu

Bishop Jean-Bosco SM, the Marist Bishop of Vanuatu emails MMC thanked MMC donors and Marists for the **\$100,000 raised in the recent MMC appeal.**
“Merci beaucoup, thank you, thank you, thank you”.

Fr Ignace SM (parish priest of Paray, Port Vila) coordinates the relief and sent MMC the photos. He reported meeting with the people, prioritising emergency responses and beginning the long-term recovery of livelihoods and crops.



Emergency shelter



MMC is an interim member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and a signatory to its Code of Conduct regarding values, ethics and good practice.



A DYNAMO BEHIND THE SCENES

Sister Joan Evans, 82 years young from WA, has no plans to retire from helping poor kids in the Klong Toei slums of Bangkok get an education.

"24 years ago when I first walked into the slums, home to 200,000 in 43 units, there were two things I saw every day. Kids not in schools and mums struggling to give milk to their babies. That's how I began"

As a teacher, her great satisfaction is seeing children achieve. She makes no judgement of those whose lives are so desperate they find themselves forced into prostitution or drug dealing just to feed themselves and their families. Sister's main focus remains on education. It is the way forward. *"Unless they have a dream and learn, their future is bleak".*

Getting slum kids to school is Sr Joan's joy



MMC would like to continue support for Sr Joan's mission. (\$5,000)

With your support, MMC helps Marists from poorer regions access affordable technology packages and through them bring knowledge to young students in the poorer corners of Asia-Pacific.

Fr Robert Taria SM, Bougainville, is newly assigned to St Martins, Honiara, Solomon Is. His simple request is for a laptop computer to open his new students to the wider world of knowledge. (Cost \$750)



Fr Justin Ratsi SM assigned to a new Marist Parish in Port Moresby also needs a computer for teaching and liturgical power-points. (\$750)

Kate Introna is a compassionate Aussie palliative-care nurse from Newcastle, NSW.

Kate works in a cluster of family homes for children orphaned when parents died from HIV/AIDS. Some children have the disease. 155 are cared for by the Redemptorists and dedicated volunteers like Kate in Nongkai, Thailand. 13 of the 17 teenagers graduating in 2015 are living with HIV/AIDS. In 2014, MMC sent \$30,945 designated donations to the Sarnelli programs.



The 2015 Outreach Program is keeping us busy with families still being ostracised because they have HIV.

We visited a mother and her 5 month old son who have been kicked out of her parents home because of having HIV and are living in a shack in the rice paddies with no running water or much shelter for the wet season.

Thankfully, we can help with food and milk for the baby and will try and rebuild their shelter for them.

Blessings to all, Kate

www.sarnelliorphanage.org

Fr Bob Barber SM (pictured in the slums of Bangkok) has taught in Australian Marist Schools and is a veteran of the Marist African Mission.

Fr Bob has been re-elected as Australian Marist Leader. He begins this new term in 2016.

Fr Bob is chair of AMCOA, Australian Marist Centre Overseas Aid Fund and chairs the Board of the Trustees of the Australian Marist Fathers Province. He asks a prayer in these challenging times from all our Mission Friends. www.maristfathers.org.au

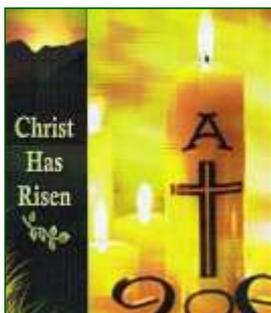


MARIST ASIA FOUNDATION (MAF)

Marist Asia Foundation (MAF) is now the legal personality of **Marist Mission Ranong (MMR)** given by the Thai Government to the Marists in Ranong. It is a mile-stone that marks their dedicated decade of service among vulnerable Burmese kids and migrant families struggling for economic security.

One irony - some Burmese whom MFA/MMR serve, the "disposable non-entities" of Pope Francis, are paperless economic refugees who, at best, have quasi papers. The lack of legal status makes Burmese families ripe for exploitation in the labour markets and vulnerable to being dumped back across the border. MFA now provides a small 'legal umbrella' for care, education and protection for these vulnerable Children.

Fr Kevin Medilo SM,
Director, MFA



Our Beloved Dead

Marists remember with gratitude in all their Masses our deceased friends, relatives and benefactors, their families and all who have died in Christ.



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KAREN MARIST REFUGEES - THAI-BURMA BORDER



VANUATU - THE SLOW ROAD TO RECOVERY

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