

Marist Mission Newsletter

in the New Millennium

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Thanks a million!

Grateful people from countries of the Asia-Pacific region say “Thank you!” to MMC supporters.

This newsletter features the visit to Australia of 18-yr old Cambodian youth and polio victim, Chik Sochea [‘Ban’], to express the thanks of the many individuals and groups assisted by MMC. Ban [*see below and pp. 3-5*] represents the growing number of beneficiaries now living with greater dignity, health and education through their links with MMC Australia.

Above: For five years MMC has promoted health, education and income-generating projects amongst the rural poor of Bangladesh. The families of these children in Shakipur district, northern Bangladesh, hope to benefit soon from MMC and AusAID support in a forthcoming project. **Below, left:** A Bangladeshi woman with her malnourished child at the Mymensingh clinic established by MMC. **Below, right:** Youngsters of Shakipur, Bangladesh.



Above: Ban and his hand-powered tricycle at Bicentennial Park, Sydney during his “thank you” visit.

Up front

Tax time

Our hard-won and ongoing accreditation with the Australian Government enables MMC to offer tax deductible receipts for donations finding their way to works of overseas development, health, education and welfare.

MMC's allegiance to the ACFID Code of Conduct [not to mention the increased scrutiny of non-government organisations and charities] means that we are careful to use these funds in accordance with government guidelines.

If you genuinely need a tax receipt then simply tick the box on our donation form. If you don't then we can use your gift more widely including for religious purposes, especially the support of the Marist Fathers' missions internationally.

Pledged giving

Many MMC friends offer support through regular credit card donations. It is my custom to send a response letter and tax receipt [if requested] after each donation.

It's been suggested [by a monthly donor] that one annual receipt for pledged giving is adequate.

Our Donor Services supervisor, Roza, is working on this. We envisage an annual acknowledgment and receipt around tax time.

Online giving

Other donors have asked about giving 'online' [through Internet banking]. We hope to have a safe system in place before long and will notify donors through this newsletter.

Bike Ride

Our story opposite [*Ban says thanks*] makes passing references to this year's *'Cycling for Seminararians'*. Once again I am humbled by the generous response of MMC friends to our annual appeal for the Big Ride. As we go to press sponsorship has reached a marvellous \$58,000. Some donors

Great!

AYDP

Having supported leadership courses for young people for some years MMC is extending these opportunities.

In our next newsletter I hope to bring news of our latest initiative for young adults: MMC's Asia-Pacific Youth Development Program.

A two-week seminar in Thailand in June will bring together twenty-five young people from eight nations of the Asia-Pacific region to develop a network of young leaders and draw on MMC's experience of leadership and management development.

Masses and prayers

You'll see below the small notice indicating Masses I have celebrated in recent times for deceased benefactors and immediate family.

When I discover the death of an MMC donor [sometimes through a bequest notice or the advice of a relative or friend] it is my custom to offer Mass for that person as soon as I can. Other requests for Masses I pass on to Marist missionaries overseas. It is a valued source of support for them.

Please understand that I am not usually available for such Mass requests myself. There are not enough days in the month!

MMC donors, living and dead, and their families are regularly in my prayers [and those of Marists throughout the world] including at MMC office at 8.30 am Mondays to Fridays when our little staff pause for prayer before the day's work.



Masses offered by Fr Ron in recent months for deceased Marists and MMC benefactors

Beryl Beard, George Beattie, Michael Buckley sen, James Harding sen, Maria Loiacono, Thomas Lynch, John McNeill, Henrietta Ochelen, Bill Watson, Eric Welsh, Shane Wolford.

Ban says thanks

During the month of April Cambodian youth, **Chik Sochea** [**Ban** to his friends] visited Australia to say a big 'thank you' to MMC supporters.

A infant polio victim, Ban has been provided with new opportunities for education and employment through MMC support. At our invitation he came to Australia to meet MMC supporters in three states to express his feelings of what it means to have access to a life of hope and dignity.

MMC's **Fr Ron Nissen** describes snippets of a month journeying with Ban...



Above: 'Jim Lemon, has worked an instant miracle of creating the tricycle for the coming adventure'.

Below: 12 months old, Ban was afflicted with polio, severely disabling both legs.





Ban will be accompanying me on my annual 'Cycling for Seminarians' Big Ride. It will be a ride with a difference.

Fri, Apr 02: We're off. Nimul, Ban and I have attached the trike to the trailer and my bike to the roof. Farewell Hunters Hill.

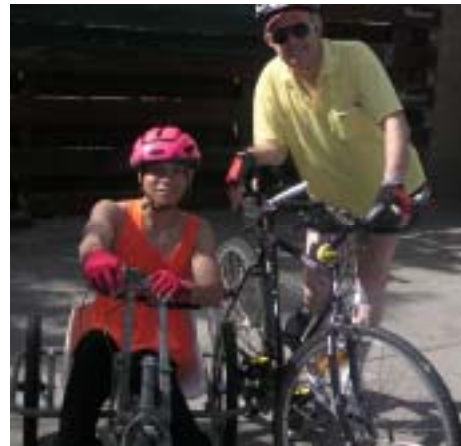
Sun, Apr 04: Palm Sunday in Melbourne. The hospitality is warm indeed. Frs Pius and Aidan make us welcome in the Marist community and in St Paul's parish as well.

Ban and I begin our kilometre challenge in West Sunshine. I have a height and speed advantage but am no match for Ban at an arm wrestle.

Tue, Apr 06: The Fernon family are typical of those many MMC friends generous and constant in their support. They give us a grand welcome in the Wagga countryside.

Ban and I attempt a ride, distracted by visiting the zoo and thwarted by a welcome storm and much-needed rain.

It's important that we visit rural Australia. So many MMC friends live on the land and give generously from it despite the seasons.



Above: 1. 'Ban and I begin our kilometre challenge in West Sunshine. I have a height and speed advantage' 2. 'Frs Pius and Aidan make us welcome in the Marist community and in St Paul's parish



Above: 1. 'distracted by visiting the zoo'. 2. 'typical of those many MMC friends generous and constant in their support. They give us a grand welcome.'

Wed, Mar 31: Roza and I have come to Sydney airport early. We don't want to be late to welcome our special guests: director the 'Project for Employment of Lavalla Graduates' [PELG], Nimul Ouch, and his young charge, Ban.

We have warm jackets for our Cambodian friends on this chilly Autumn Sydney morn.

Thu, Apr 01: No, it's not an April Fool's joke. I am serious about cycling here and there in the company of a polio victim. My new friend, Jim Lemon, has worked an instant miracle of creating the tricycle for the coming adventure.

Below: 'We're off. Nimul, Ban and I have attached the trike to the trailer and my bike to the roof. Farewell Hunters Hill.'



Fri, Apr 09: The Marist Brothers convinced me in my youth that it was wrong to go to the Easter Show on Good Friday. Faithful to their spirit I cycle in the Homebush precincts, not venturing to enter the festival places. Ban is at my side — no, he is behind me — as we notch up some ‘klicks’ for the Big Ride.

Tue, Apr 13: It’s volunteer day at MMC and an important moment for Ban to acknowledge the faithful band of volunteers whose generosity is truly Marist, ‘hidden and unknown’, across the years.

Wed, Apr 14: Morning tea at Gwen Hawthorne’s. We are aware of the many MMC friends whose fidelity is legendary.

I celebrate 12.05 pm Mass at St Pat’s and invite MMC friends to the crypt to meet Ban. The office is closed today and the little staff of MMC is at hand to be with Ban and Nimul as they say their ‘thank you’s’ to the people of St Pat’s.’

Sun, Apr 18: I always enjoy my occasional Masses at Villa Maria. Even though I live next door in the monastery I have few opportunities to mix with the people of the parish. Many are MMC friends from way back. Ban is available after 8 o’clock Mass to say thanks to them.

Right: ‘Ban is available after 8 o’clock Mass to say thanks...’

Below: “The little staff of MMC is at hand to be with Ban and Nimul as they say their ‘thank you’s’ to the people of St Pat’s.”



Above: ‘An important moment for Ban to acknowledge the faithful band of volunteers’. **Below:** ‘Morning tea at Gwen’s... aware of many MMC friends’



chapter has occupied me in recent days. Ban has been relaxing with the Kneipp family at Kiama.

This morning we leave at dawn for points north, stopping only to notch up more mileage for the Big Ride.

Sun, Apr 25: My Anzac weekend thoughts turn to those who live — and die — faithful to Gospel values. Our missionaries and MMC supporters come to mind.

We are in Brisbane, meeting donors and other friends at Mater Dei and The Gap. Fr Tony gives us a gentle welcome. Mary Johnston and the lay Marists have arranged sausage sizzles and morning teas.

In between Masses I manage a few more kilometres over the hills and dales of Ashgrove.

Sunday night sees us at Annerley. Fr John Worthington is our host along with the friendly folk of Mary Immaculate.



Above: ‘Stopping only to notch up more mileage for the Big Ride.’ **Below:** ‘a few more kilometres over the hills and dales of Ashgrove.’





Above: Mary Johnston and the lay Marists have arranged sausage sizzles and morning teas.' Below: 'Fr Tony gives a gentle welcome.'



Above: 'With the friendly folk of Mary Immaculate.' Below: 'The folly of an arm wrestle with Ban... a formidable opponent'.



Mon, Apr 20: we are at Lennox Heads and with Kevin and Marie Sullivan [TOH parent couple of 2001]. They have arranged a gathering of parishioners this evening.

I am a bit weary from today's hours on the saddle. The landscape is not flat.

The Carters are part of our evening group viewing digital images of Ban and his disabled Khmer friends on the Sullivans' lounge room wall. Joey [TOH 2001 and 2002] engages in the folly of an arm wrestle with Ban. 18 years of relying on the upper body makes the latter a formidable opponent. Ban wins.

Thu, Apr 29: It is my privilege to be with Ban as he makes his way back to Cambodia. Grade 11 school awaits. Nimul has returned a week earlier than planned through the demands of work at Lavalla School.

It was MMC's support of the Marist Brothers in establishing this primary school for physically handicapped children that brought us into contact with both Nimul and Ban.

Nimul's vision for assisting disabled youth into secondary education and employment has given birth to 'YODIFEE' [Youth with Disabilities Foundation for Education and Employment]. MMC is proud to support this great project.

Fri, Apr 30: The month is over. So is the Big Ride [phew!]. An overnight flight to Bangkok then on

to Phnom Penh brings to an end a remarkable journey with a remarkable young man.

Sadly, Cambodia has little time for its disabled. Australia is far more aware and caring of our handicapped.

Ban has taught me that physical disability is not something to be pitied. Rather, I marvel at the courage, adaptability and unfailing good humour of this young Khmer.

He came Down Under to say 'thank you' to MMC and our supporters.

But thank you, Ban, for the gift of your visit. We know our work is



Above: 'It's a privilege to be with Ban as he makes his way back to Cambodia. Grade 11 school awaits.' Below: YODIFEE's youngsters welcome Ban at Phnom Penh airport.



Your donor dollar

MMC friends are confident that their gifts assist many worthy projects in the Asia-Pacific region. Following are glimpses of some of the people currently benefiting from MMC support...



Left, top: Meal times are at floor level at ‘YODIFEE’ [Young People with Disabilities Foundation for Education and Employment] in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. These girls, all polio victims, have access to hostel accommodation and secondary education thanks to MMC support. *Left, below:* Chon is a member of the YODIFEE community. MMC is assisting him to become a computer technician. *Below:* The director, **Amar Gomes**, and three students [l to r: **John-Paul D’Rozario**, **Ujjal Costa** and **James Mondol**] of MMC-supported Don Bosco Students’ Home, Dhaka, Bangladesh, will be among the participants in MMC’s Asia-Pacific Youth Development Program. The first AYDP seminar will



Below, left to right: 1. **Sothea** [22] assists with the administration of the YODIFEE project whilst studying English literature at Phnom Penh’s Norton University. At age 11 he became one of Cambodia many landmine victims. Sothea has been offered a place MMC’s AYDP. 2. In impoverished Shakipur district, northern Bangladesh, MMC and AusAID support brings training and income generating projects to rural communities. 3. At Don Bosco Students’ Home Dhaka City, Bangladesh, **Sabud** can pursue science studies at a local college, thanks to





Priests and Brothers of the Society of Mary [the Marist Fathers] have laboured in the South-West Pacific for 158 years, the first Catholic missionaries in the region. MMC continues this tradition by links with local agencies throughout Oceania. *Above, left:* **Sr Lorraine Garasu CSN** hands over the leadership portfolio of the Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum to **Marcelline Tunim**. MMC has channeled Australian funds to BICWF over a ten-year period. *Above, right:* MMC funds supported the recent Catholic Women's rally at Nila, Central Solomons. Conference leaders, *l to r*, **Janet Burabura**, **Francesca O'Grady**, **Beth Ferguson** and **Evelyn Tango** led five hundred women participating in the rally.

Below, l to r: **1. Jeffson Tomiets** and **Bridget Selan** are two of Bougainville's four participants in the forthcoming MMC Asia-Pacific Youth Development Program seminar in Thailand. **2 & 3. Br Visesio Teugasiale SM** at Hahela, Bougainville, pictured with trainee, **Edwin Taria**, as part of his vocational training ministry. With MMC help Br Visesio is upgrading his training facilities enabling local youth to develop carpentry and building skills. ☺



Above and right: MMC's first task is to support the international mission of the Marist Fathers, including the formation of young men like these seminarians at Marist College, Bomana, PNG.

Missionary faces at MMC



Clockwise from above: 1. Solomon Islands contingent to the 'Living the Dream' conference on family life, *left to right:* **Dorothy, Tarawa, Bishop Bernard O'Grady OP, Meere and Vincent**, with **Br Darryl Slater FMS** [far right] of Lavalla School for handicapped children, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. 2. **Fr Brian Wilson SM** [Fiji] and paintings of French villages of Marist history: Cerdon [left] and Lacoux [right]. 3. Oceania Marist provincial, **Fr Michael O'Connor SM** with MMC's Fr Ron Nissen.

Below: **Fr Paul Mahony SM** celebrates our Tuesday Mass with MMC staff and volunteers.

Below: Marist novice from the province of Germany, **Christoph Kolchman** [left] farewells his brother **Sebastian** en route to lay missionary work in the South Solomon Islands. The Society of Mary's International English-speaking novitiate is now located at Ermington, Sydney. *Further below:* MMC staff members, [l to r] **Veronica Warton, Anne Warren and Roza Vukovich** celebrate Anne's birthday. ☺



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