

Marist Mission Newsletter

in the New Millennium

A publication of Marist Mission Centre, Australia

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Come to the water...

MMC projects continue to bring new life and hope to many in the regions of Asia-Pacific.

Maera Moo Refugee Camp community is an example ...



Top: The waters of Baptism are poured on this child during the Easter Vigil at Maera Moo Refugee Camp in the jungles of the Thai-Burma border. *Above:* Maera Moo is visited rarely by outsiders. Its MMC-funded student hostel is the trigger for a pastoral outreach to the Catholic community. *Right, top:* **Saw Flavian** reverences the cross on Good Friday at MMC Hostel, Maera Moo, as [*right, lower*] **Saw Tobias** reads the bible he asked for from MMC. [*see also 'Dominic's Big Day, pp 4-5*].

Up front

Tax time

Our Winter newsletter is mailed a few weeks before the end of the financial year to give the opportunity of receiving a tax deductible receipt for donations received by Jun 30.

Such gifts are used by MMC for welfare and development purposes in the Asia-Pacific region.

It's against the law to issue tax receipts for donations intended for a religious purpose. Hence two boxes on our donation form.

Willing help

An unpredictable but welcome source of support for MMC comes through bequests. This is a thoughtful and sure way of guaranteeing mission support after the end of our earthly span.

In this newsletter I have included the right words to use when making a bequest in favour of the Marist missions. [see 'Willing Help', p.7].

Mind you, some donors divest themselves of their estate early. I'm thinking of the 90 yr old lady in Melbourne last year who sold her house, moved into a retirement setting — and promptly sent a large cheque to MMC for the missions.

When I phoned her she said: 'Why wait till I die, Father? I want the missions to benefit now from what I have.' A lovely attitude.

Adding colour?

I sometimes wonder whether our black-&-white newsletter is still acceptable in a world so full of colour.

What do you think? I would be grateful for comments from MMC friends. Colour printing is more expensive but the added cost for colour is not what it used to be.

'Snippets'

In the 1970's when I was editor of 'Harvest' many readers appreciated reading snippets from my diary.

MMC friends with Internet access can click on to MMC's website, www.maristmissions.com, and then 'Snippets from Fr Ron's Diary' to be

Masses were offered by Fr Ron in recent months for His Holiness John Paul II and for the following deceased Marists and MMC benefactors...

Mary-Anne Bartolo, Patrick Canning, Patricia Carlos, John Cooper, Frank & Eileen Corless, Margaret Davis, Elmer Paul, Colin Feeney, Aida Freeman, Lisa Goetz, Kathleen Hooper, Nellie Kerin, Catherine Lane, Jack & Nan McQuarrie, Peter Murphy, Frances Pentland, Therese Power, Mary Quilkey, Hannah Russell, Kathleen Ryan, Julia Smith, Joan Whitechurch, Ron Whiting, Sylvia & Dorothy Withford.

able to catch up with random days in my 2005 diary. I hope you enjoy them.

May our Father carry us gently



Br Clement says 'thanks' ...

MMC's mailbox receives many expressions of gratitude from Marist missionaries and our development partners in Asia-Pacific.

Appropriately near the feast of St Peter Chanel SM, first Marist saint and proto-martyr of the Oceania, we received a letter from 78 yr old **Br Clement Bonhommeau SM** from the Marist mission on Futuna in the South-West Pacific.

Translated from the French Br Clement writes: 'I am so grateful for the cash gifts you have sent for the Marists of Wallis and Futuna. May I offer special thanks from each of us?

I am going to use my gift to buy a small printer for my computer. Modern means of communication



have arrived even here. We are 240 Km from Wallis and I appreciate being able to be in quick communication with the people there.

I'm sending you a photo of our parish church which was completely

The parish church of Futuna near the site of the martyrdom of St Peter Chanel SM, Apr 28, 1841.

rebuilt in 1996 after the earthquake of March 1993.

May St Peter Chanel intercede for



Good news for YODIFEE

Physically disabled children *[above]* from Cambodia's 'Youth with Disabilities Foundation for Education and Employment' [YODIFEE] will soon have a new home thanks to MMC support and the generosity of the people of Nara, Japan. The centre will be known as 'Villa Maria' and comprise a number of one-level buildings on wooded land near the outskirts of Phnom Penh *[below]*. Annual concerts in Nara remembering Marist missionary, Fr Tony Glynn SM, have raised funds for needy



The Whining Prayer

Today, upon a bus, I saw a girl with golden hair — and wished I was as fair.

When suddenly she rose to leave I saw her hobble down the aisle.

She had one leg and wore a crutch but as she passed, a smile.

Oh, God, forgive me when I whine. I have two legs, the world is mine.

I stopped to buy some candy.

The lad who sold it had such charm I talked with him, he seemed so glad.

If I were late, it'd do no harm.

And as I left, he said to me: "I thank you, you've been so kind.

It's nice to talk with folks like you. You see," he said, "I'm blind."

Oh, God, forgive me when I whine. I have two eyes, the world is mine.

Later while walking down the street, I saw a child with eyes of blue.

He stood and watched the others play. He did not know what to do.

I stopped a moment and then I said, "Why don't you join the others, dear?"

He looked ahead without a word. And then I knew, he couldn't hear.

Oh, God, forgive me when I whine. I have two ears, the world is mine.

With feet to take me where I'd go. With eyes to see the sunset's glow. With ears to hear what I'd know.

Oh, God, forgive me when I whine. I've been blessed indeed, the world is mine.

Far left: YODIFEE director, **Peter Ouch**, with amputee, **Yat**, representing MMC in Nara, Japan, at a presentation by the Glynn Memorial Concert committee. The group is committed to helping needy children in other parts of Asia. Their vision will assist the Villa Maria project. *Left:* YODIFEE student and polio victim, **Chek Ban**, will no longer climb steep stairs like these when Villa Maria

PHOTO FEATURE

MMC's Fr Ron Nissen shares highlights of an Easter retreat at Maera Moo Refugee Camp on the Thai-Burma border.

Dominic's Big Day

My first visit to this remote camp was on the back of an elephant, the mountainous roads too steep and slippery even for four-wheel drives.

The Catholics asked for Mass before I left. In the pre-dawn dark we celebrated a simple Eucharist in the small bamboo church, the people bringing tiny tots forward for Communion and savouring their own personal moment with Jesus.

An elephant to catch!

Communion took forever — and I had an elephant to catch! Before the final blessing I asked the people: *'How long is it since your last Mass?'* *'A year'*, they said.

In the intervening years I have come

here for Mass whenever I could, sometimes baptizing infants and welcoming others, too, to the Church and the Eucharist.

Dominic's decision

This Easter I chose Maera Moo as the place for my annual retreat. One of the young men at MMC Hostel — Saw Nay Blut — had written me: *'I want to become Catholic, Father Ron.'* He had witnessed the devotion of this simple community, including their love of the Eucharist on those rare occasions when a priest could visit.

I was more than to happy to include some pastoral chores in my days of retreat, adding to the instruction already begun by Naw Therese who, with her husband Paul, look after the hostel children.

I had brought the makings of a hymn book as well as the comb binder I use during our management workshops at Maesot. Our working bee was a lot of fun.

A saintly choice

Nay Blut was keen to have a Christian name. He checked out many saints before opting for



Above: '...the instruction already begun by Naw Therese'. Below: '... the makings of a hymn book... our working bee was a lot of fun.'



Above: 'Daniel, and Dominic were eager to do the paschal decorations.' Right, above: 'the laying on of hands and the anointing of Confirmation'. Right, lower: 'The Catholic lads of the Hostel were especially keen for a snap.'





Left: 'We had a few singing classes... and were well prepared for the liturgy' Above: 'Each day celebrating a little Mass... in the dormitory or in La Neyliere.'

'Dominic'.

Paschal preparations

I had brought two large candles from Maesot, one for the Hostel and another for the church. Fellow-hosteller, Daniel, and Dominic were eager to do the paschal decorations.

We had a few singing classes and the Hostel youngsters were well prepared for the Triduum liturgy.

Prayerful days

As a retreatant I couldn't have wished for a more prayerful time. In the crowded church on Thursday evening washing the feet of twelve refugees was appropriately humbling.

Our Good Friday was in the Hostel: some scripture, the fifth sorrowful Rosary mystery and a simple veneration of the cross.

For the Vigil I had been taught how to sing 'Christ, our Light' in Karen.

'Come to the water'

We used our newly-practised Easter hymns. Sung with admirable gusto, 'Come to the water' prepared the moment for four baptisms [three babies and Dominic] followed by the laying on of hands and the anointing of Confirmation. Then came First Holy Communion.

After the ceremonies there was much congratulating of Dominic and photos with his newly-acquired

Catholic family. The Catholic lads of the Hostel were especially keen for a snap.

Party time

An enterprising camp merchant manages to bring a ute-load of ice to Maera Moo on most days, an extraordinary luxury to cool soft drinks for our Easter party.

We have loads of musical talent, too, and potential for more. MMC had funded a keyboard some years ago but it has not been much used. I tickled the ivory for the kids and, I think, engendered new interest.

Fourth Holy Communion

Each day of my retreat I celebrated a little Mass at the Hostel either in the boys' dormitory [our largest gathering place] or in 'La Neyliere', the small guest house named after Marist Founder, Fr Jean-Claude Colin's, place of prayer and retirement.



Above: 'We have loads of musical talent... and potential for more' Below: 'I tickled the ivory for the kids... engendering new interest'



Fr Mike Shea CSsR writes to supporters of the Redemptorist Mission to HIV/AIDS children in Thailand. MMC proudly supports Fr Mike in his work.

Greetings from Sarnelli

Yes, greetings from Sarnelli House! Last week, we took in a 4-year-old little girl named "Wow", who has AIDS. Her mother is still alive, but in bad shape.

On Monday Wow went to the University Hospital in Khon Kaen for a TB test. Three other children, Soi, Jo and Sawn, are again critically ill in the Nongkhai hospital. We also took in two sisters (7 & 4) and their 2-year-old little brother. Their parents are ill with AIDS and can barely cope with helping each other. The two girls are OK but the boy needs an AIDS test.

'No whizzing'

Right now we are saving up for the kids' annual pilgrimage to the Redemptorist Center at Pattaya in the last week of April. I told the nursery kids that anyone who was still whizzing in their beds would have to stay home. I was just kidding.

Moving my gear

School is out and the little girls of Viengkhuuk House clamour to come with me to the gym. They're helping me move my gear from Viengkhuuk to a site near Sarnelli.

Actually, they are driving me nuts.



'One mother off to the sausage factory.'



'we have over a hundred kids...'

But they are so cute and think they are so helpful that even when I growl at them they are blissfully unaware that danger is near.

Their favourite piglets

Our three Mama pigs all have had big litters and one mother will be off to the sausage factory since she killed all her piglets. The boys are walking around with their favourite piglets. Our cook, Phi Wan, has barred them from the kitchen after finding pig poop under the table.

I've stopped preaching...

A lovely young AIDS lady came in on Thursday. Her son died two years ago from AIDS. She is pregnant again and asked for money for an abortion. She and her husband are dirt poor. No-one wants to hire them.

I have stopped preaching to people. I give them incentives to have the baby. Our program supports the couple during the pregnancy and we get anti-retroviral medicine for her in the last trimester.

We will take her baby as soon as it is born and pay her for three months as she recovers from the birth. We'll help both parents get jobs and monitor them regularly.

This mother began to cry and sob. At first I thought she wasn't getting the message but really she was so relieved and happy not to have to kill the fetus.

Pregnant with twins

Another Catholic lady came in to say she was pregnant with twins. She already had six kids and her husband had left her. If I didn't agree to take the twins when born she'd get an abortion. So we'll help her too.

We have over a hundred kids, half of whom have AIDS, and the rest are orphaned or abandoned by AIDS infected parents. We care for sixteen other AIDS children at home with their parents.

Post script..

We just lost a one month old baby boy. I had taken in the 15 yr old mother when she was pregnant.

The day was so ungodly hot (44 degrees) that she took the boy into an air conditioned room and laid him on his stomach in the cool. Then she fell into a deep sleep herself. When she woke the baby had smothered.

My workers made a plywood coffin and built a nice little tomb. It was a pitiful funeral with only about



'we built a nice little tomb'

twelve mourners. Everyone else is in Pattaya for the week.

You are on that list

The kids pray every night in their little chapel for those who take the place of their parents and show them interest and compassion and help us with the work. You are on that list.

I think God understands

They are great little pray-ers despite the fact that about ten of them are

Your donor dollar

Gifts to MMC find their way to needy people in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

Typical of these are the children [right] of a new 'jungle primary school' at Chuntai, Mizoram in N.E. India. Refugees from Burma and the violence of its military dictatorship, these youngsters now have a chance for education denied them in their own country. MMC support makes this possible.



What's in a website?

There are two kinds of MMC supporters: those connected to the Internet and those who are not. We value them both!

For the latter we offer a word about MMC's website...

'www.maristmissions.com' went online on Our Lady's feast day of Dec 08, 2004. This means that a kind of 'filing cabinet' with many files about MMC was set up out there in the mysterious world of cyberspace. Access is disarmingly simple [when you know how] by way of one's computer linked to a telephone line or its faster, more powerful sibling, 'broadband'. You also need to pay an Internet Service Provided [ISP] for the privilege of this connection.

Turn on the computer, then,

connect to the Internet, punch up [type] www.maristmissions.com and, voila!, you have a small stack of colourful pages detailing the world of Marist Mission Centre, Australia.

Our 'site map' lists:

- 'Home': an index page
- 'About Us': MMC's history, policies, staff and volunteers
- 'AYDP': pictures and text on Asia-Pacific Youth Development Program
- 'Spotlight': on particular projects [incl. MMC's tsunami response]
- 'Giving': how to donate to MMC
- 'Links' to other Marist, project partner and other websites
- 'Contact Us': handy addresses
- 'Snippets from Fr Ron's Diary': pictures and pars from this month, incl. updates on the Big Bike Ride.
- 'Newsletter': if you want to look at previous numbers or print your own.

When you're visiting the kids, try it;



Left: MMC's Administrative Supervisor, **Anne Warren**, with Executive Director, **Fr Ron Nissen SM**, on Dec 08, 2004 when www.maristmissions.com went online.

The latest revision was made on another Marist feast, Apr 28.

Willing Help

... providing ongoing support through missionary bequests to the
Marist Mission Centre

In many parts of the world Marist missionaries and the neediest of peoples benefit from the ongoing generosity of MMC supporters.

Mentioning the Marist Mission Centre in your will ensures that this 'willing help' carries on.

Long after death the work of a generous lifetime continues to bear fruit from missionary bequests.

Furthermore Marist benefactors, living and dead, are remembered daily in the Society of Mary's community prayers across the globe, a long standing tradition of the Marist Fathers.

Please make your missionary bequest in favour of:

*"The Director for the time being of
Marist Mission Centre,*

*a special work of the Trustees of the
Marist Fathers for the Province of
Australia, 3 Mary St, Hunters Hill,
NSW 2110."*

The faces of MMC



Recent visitors to MMC's Hunters Hill office [clockwise from top left]: 1. **Fr Anton Verbraeken SM**, Holland. 2. **Frs Derek Finlay SM** [Vanuatu] and **Norman Arkwright SM** [Solomon Islands]. 3. MMC supporter, **Joseph Morsch** [Brisbane]. 4. **Fr Kevin Redmond SM** gives a first blessing to **Joseph Morsch**. 5. **Fr Kevin** with MMC volunteers **Val and John Burton**. 6 [below]. **Fr Oscar Ichiba SM** [Nara, Japan]. 7. Winner of MMC's 'Karen Student of the Year, 2003', **Patrick Maw** [Myanmar] beginning studies at Good Shepherd Seminary, Homebush NSW. 8. Young volunteers gather for lunch at a quarterly newsletter mailing. 9. **Carmen and Paul Vella** [Pendle Hill, NSW] with wooden crosses for Christian children in Asia.



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MMC is proudly a member of the Australian Council for International Development and

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Fr Ron's diary