

# SOLIDARITY MATTERS



JUNE - 2020



## **VANUATU RECOVERY APPEAL**

Supporting St Michel  
Technical College

## **CHETANA TRIBAL BOYS' HOSTEL**

Marist College Canberra  
show their support

## **GREETINGS FROM LAVALLA**

Br Tony Burrows details the  
COVID-19 impact

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## EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Australian Marist Solidarity (AMS) is seeking expressions of interest for new members of its Community Engagement and Fundraising Board Sub-Committee. This is an exciting opportunity to contribute to the work that AMS does to improve access to education for vulnerable young people in the Asia Pacific region. If you are interested in joining this committee and would like further information please contact [ams@marists.org.au](mailto:ams@marists.org.au)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

During these challenging times we know that physical distance doesn't need to mean complete isolation. Please join us for this special opportunity to meet some of our AMS partners and hear from them directly!

**Free online events:**

**Br Tony Burrows**  
**LaValla School - Cambodia**  
**Wednesday 15th July**  
**4:30pm - 5:30pm EST**  
**Register at: [https://bit.ly/LaValla\\_Event](https://bit.ly/LaValla_Event)**

**St Louis High School, Kiribati**  
**Wednesday 19th August**  
**4:30pm - 5:30pm EST**  
**Register at: [https://bit.ly/StLouisHighSchool\\_Event](https://bit.ly/StLouisHighSchool_Event)**



# GREETINGS FROM LAVALLA

## By Br Tony Burrows

Here in Cambodia, schools, churches and entertainment places are still closed, but factories, where people work in very crowded conditions, are still operating.

Last month the government announced that schools would remain closed until November. I have since heard, though, that this will be reviewed in June.

While there is distance learning, and it is being hailed as a great solution for students, the fact is that over two million students have no access to this, and most are finding working this way very difficult and probably it is not doing what it's meant to do.

Our teachers are coming to school here each day, They are in regular contact with their students. They are encouraging them to follow the lessons on TV and are sending out worksheets via various forms of social media. I'm not sure how effective this is but at least the students are doing some school work.

Last week a group of our staff visited as many of the families as they could around the provinces. We have brought back a small group of students to live here.

Some of these are students who had major corrective surgery just before Christmas. They really need ongoing physiotherapy and medical attention which they were not able to get at home.

So, all of our health staff are here each day giving these students intensive physiotherapy. We also have a few here whose family situations are such that they were not being cared for and having to fend for themselves.

During their travel, they also found some of our families who needed medical assistance, so we have provided funds for them to see doctors and buy medicines.

As well, we have here eight of our university students who have no access to internet at home. They are following their courses on-line.

We also have staff here now to care for these students when they are not in class or having therapy – cooks, carers etc. Of course, the site needs to be maintained, so maintenance and grounds staff are working. Other staff come in as required. We continue to pay staff their full salary, as they would have nothing to live on.

We are all hopeful that the students will be able to return soon. While everyone here is busy with their tasks, the place is not the same without the students.

Best wishes,  
Br Tony Burrows

**Free online event:**

**Br Tony Burrows**  
**LaValla School**  
**Wednesday 15th July**  
**4:30pm - 5:30pm EST**

**Register at:**  
**[https://bit.ly/LaValla\\_Event](https://bit.ly/LaValla_Event)**



# VANUATU - TROPICAL CYCLONE HAROLD RECOVERY APPEAL

Two months ago, Tropical Cyclone Harold decimated Vanuatu. Some communities have been left without housing and thousands are still living in evacuation centres.

Countries in the Pacific Islands have been praised for their swift response to the threat of Covid-19. After sealing themselves off from the rest of the world to protect vulnerable populations through quick lockdowns and extreme travel restrictions, most nations in the region have remained virus-free.

However, the virus pandemic is impacting everyday life in Vanuatu. It has had a significant impact on the tourism industry due to the resulting travel restrictions as well as a slump in demand among travellers and, of course, limited ability to access the supply chain of essential materials.

Although we are fighting a battle on our own shore, we cannot forget about our Marist family in the Pacific and that of St Michel Technical College.

Education has become a secondary priority in the aftermath of TC Harold with what funds that have been made available going towards shelter, food, and water.

On the same day that Queensland allowed all students to return to school, Monday, May 25, St Michel Technical College also did the same. Though, due to the extensive damage of the school, classes are being rotated as there is not enough room to accommodate all the students together. Years 10/11/12 have classes on Monday to Wednesday and Years 7/8/9 have classes on Thursday and Friday.



Massive disasters require massive response efforts and support of our Vanuatu Tropical Cyclone Harold Appeal has been overwhelming. We would especially like to thank:

- Marist College Canberra
- Marist College Ashgrove
- Red Bend Catholic College, Forbes
- John Therry Catholic High School, Rosemeadow
- The Marist Brothers communities

We are currently in the process of obtaining quotes for the rebuilding of the College and early indicators are that the repairs will cost more than originally expected.

Vanuatu has faced challenges before and is a country with strong resilience and agency. However the current situation is extraordinary and our Marist family there have reached out for our support and solidarity.



Celebrating the Feast Day of St Marcellin Champagnat



## St Michel Technical College Celebrating the Feast Day of St Marcellin Champagnat

On Friday, June 5, St Michel Technical College celebrated the Feast Day of St Marcellin Champagnat.

Amongst the damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Harold two months ago, a small but meaningful celebration was had.

To help support our Marist family in Vanuatu through this humanitarian disaster, please donate to the Tropical Cyclone Harold Recovery Appeal at [www.australianmaristsolidarity.org.au](http://www.australianmaristsolidarity.org.au)





# OPEN LETTER OF THANKS

## FROM BR SAUL

Dear Rev. Brothers, Benefactors, Sisters & Friends...

Greetings from Operation Rainbow - Care and Support with Hope and Vision. We are experiencing the consequences of the deadly disease of Corona virus (COVID-19) which swept in through our countries, causing a panic among people and killing thousands of people in a short period of time. The result is an extraordinary lockdown in most of our countries. This current situation cannot stop us from hoping and visioning for a new life, new sunshine and a new rainbow!

Thanks to all those who put their own lives at risk in fighting against the spread of Corona virus and trying to save the life of everyone affected by it.

I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of so many people working tirelessly behind the scenes:

- Australian Marist Solidarity which funds the overall project costs
- Sacred Heart College, Adelaide
- St Patrick's Catholic College, Dundas, and other Marist colleges in Australia
- The India Village Project
- Scotland and FMSI in Rome deserve a special mention for their valuable support in different areas whenever we approach them

The creativity and thrill brought by the students placed for an internship at the Rainbow Project and the resource persons during monthly gatherings, motivate the children to approach life with hope and optimism.

Finally, I thank Marcellin Club members and the Rainbow staff and all the Marists whose hard work and dedication deserves a round of applause!

Let us continue to pray for one another to overcome all challenges with hope!!

Faternally,

Rev. Bro. Saul Placious, FMS

**Rainbow Director**



International Women's Day celebrations



Operation Rainbow, supported by Australian Marist Solidarity, was established in 2003 by the Marist Brothers to provide support to families and children affected by HIV.

Recently, they celebrated International Women's Day and, in conjunction, held a COVID-19 awareness seminar. Trichy has been marked as a COVID-19 vulnerable zone and has been put under a watch for the next 14 days.

The COVID-19 awareness seminar focused on the challenges women faced and how they can protect themselves and their family from COVID-19.



# COVID-19 IS A THREAT TO CHILDREN LIVING ON THE STREETS IN MANILA



Orphaned, abandoned and runaway children are among the most destitute in Filipino society. Surviving as best they can on the streets in the heart of Manila, they are highly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and malnutrition. The COVID-19 pandemic is hitting this group the hardest, leaving them without access to food, shelter and health care.

Australian Marist Solidarity is receiving regular updates from all of its 70+ projects across the region. In the case of the Kuya Centre, Metro Manila is currently under "enhanced community quarantine." Movement between cities in Metro Manila is virtually impossible and now it has become very difficult to move between local areas (Barangays) within Quezon City. People are requested to remain at home, and only one person per household is able to go out to get food. Therefore, all of the Kuya Center's community and street-based programs have been temporarily suspended since March 17, 2020, leaving the children in a vulnerable situation.

It is anticipated that the poverty in Metro Manila will increase severely as so many people have lost their employment or livelihood. Sister Kate O'Neil RNDM said, "Once our community and street-based programs resume, the needs of the people in our areas of work will be high. There may be more street kids in need of residential shelter, however it is not easy to predict."

Rebecca Bromhead confirmed the ongoing commitment by Australian Marist Solidarity to the Kuya Centre for Street Children. "Australian Marist Solidarity is proud to partner with the Kuya Centre For Street Children and acknowledges in particular the importance of its residential care service during this challenging time, providing safety and belonging for very marginalised children. We are committed to ensuring this service can continue and preparing for the anticipated increased need for their community programs as soon as it is safe to continue."



# CHETANA'S BAGS OF JOY

The movie "City of Joy," (1992) situated in the city of Calcutta finishes with a sentence from Hasari Pal: "All that is not given is lost." This significant sentence has full actuality in these challenging times of COVID-19.

Normally, at this time of year, the Chetana Tribal Boys Home would be a hive of bustling activity. The sounds of seventy boys and young men who live in the hostel would echo in the corridors as they prepared food, played games and completed homework. These students are all from impoverished families and living at the hostel offers them a rare chance to attend school. But the hostel is silent now, as this is far from a normal year.

The Indian Government ordered the world's largest lockdown on March 24. Schools and boarding houses, including Chetana, were forced to shut down and send their students into the sea of people as over one billion people attempted to self-isolate.

But vigilance against a virus offers no protection from poverty and soon many of the students of Chetana and their families began to run out of essential supplies.

Many students began to contact the hostel requesting food. The hostel director, Br. Jiji Dhasan, realised the need to feed his students and asked Australian Marist Solidarity if he could redirect funds, usually reserved for looking after students in the hostel, to feeding students and their families. Br. Jiji reported, "In India more people will die because of the poverty than from the virus. Most of the people are struggling for food every day."

Australian Marist Solidarity readily agreed to Br. Jiji's proposal and he received permission from the Indian Government to deliver food. Distribution has begun to the grateful students and their families.

200 bags of essential food (rice, flour, lentils, soybean, sugar, salt and oil) were distributed, with the help of some young people and three Marist Brothers of the Talit Community, to families in need. The bags of food turned into bags of joy.





# MARIST COLLEGE CANBERRA



## SUPPORTING THE CHETANA TRIBAL BOYS' HOSTEL

Marist College Canberra raised funds for Chetana as part of their Champagnat Day celebrations which included fancy dress and lunchtime buskers. Students also participated in a special liturgy to honour St Marcellin. The liturgy also aimed to raise awareness and build solidarity with the Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel by creating messages of hope. These messages of hope will be sent to Chetana as a video package and continue an important dialogue of solidarity between the two school communities. Marist College Canberra has also been busy raising funds for AMS through making and selling pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, a head shave by the College Leaders, cupcake sales and a Taste of Harmony event.



*During my head shave I was filled with mixed emotions, as I was saying goodbye to my beloved hair but also raising awareness for the Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel. The satisfaction of helping these underprivileged children was the underlying motive for the shave, as the embarrassment of having a shaved head was a small sacrifice in comparison to the hardships faced by the Chetana boys. Ultimately, this was a great kickstart to the MSOL appeal, as it made a visible impact on all of the students, encouraging them to participate in the fundraising events.*



Lesh  
2020 School Captain



Margie Beck with an ICFP graduate

# MARGIE BECK – MEMBER (AM) IN THE GENERAL DIVISION

– of the Queen’s Birthday 2020 Honours List

– “For significant service to Australia–Timor Leste relations through teacher education roles.”

Margie Beck is an outstanding Marist educational leader. For the past eighteen years she has shown remarkable determination, ability and perseverance in establishing a culturally sensitive, quality education for the formation of over six hundred student teachers in Timor-Leste.

As one of the foundation staff members at the Catholic Teachers’ College (Instituto Católico Para a Formação di Professores, ICFP) in Baucau, Margie Beck has worked tirelessly in Timor-Leste since 2002.

As she has done throughout her time at the college, Margie oversees Quality Assurance in all aspects of the curriculum program and teaching processes. She continues to take classes as required, provides essential support for the college’s administration, maintains and expands networks for support and financial sponsorship, sources institutions for continuing study for graduates (in Australia, Indonesia, Brazil) and provides regular professional development for college staff.

Margie speaks the local language, Tetum, and this helps her to build strong and effective links within the local Baucau community, and with individuals and families. She is very attentive to students who have difficulties. Consequently, over the years she has secured scholarships for hundreds of under-graduate students; helping them with their tuition fees as well as accommodation and living costs.

After a successful career in Catholic secondary and tertiary education in Sydney, Margie initially came to the college on secondment from the Australian Catholic University (Sydney campus) to help establish the three-year primary teacher education program which included English language teaching for 7th and 8th grades. Since then she has accomplished much more!

Margie’s exceptional contribution to Timor-Leste justly deserves the recognition she has now received from the Australian Government, in the recent Queen’s Birthday Honours.

Paul Gilchrist fms  
Director of ICFP.



# LEARNING DURING LOCKDOWN

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Joaquina Espirito Santo | ICFP Teacher Training College student

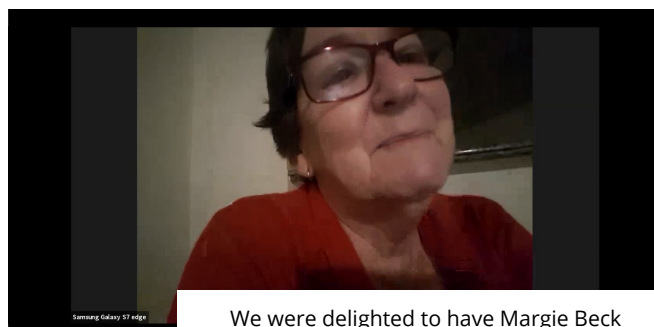


Joaquina Espirito Santo de Oliveira

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our second online event on Wednesday 27 May, 2020.

We were delighted we could introduce you to Joaquina, who is a student at ICFP in Timor-Leste. Joaquina tells us below a little about herself and how COVID-19 has impacted on her studies.

AMS will continue to offer monthly online events to introduce some of the people we support. Keep an eye on our social media channels for more information.



We were delighted to have Margie Beck join our online event

*My name is Joaquina Espirito Santo de Oliveira and I am from Baguia, five hours travel from Baucau. I am studying a Bachelor of Teaching at ICFP. I want to be a teacher so that I can help children do better for the future. We need good teachers who are properly trained in Timor-Leste.*

*I love the happy, friendly atmosphere at ICFP. There are good relationships between the students and with the teachers and we share our knowledge. It is very different from other universities. During the lockdown it was very confusing for many people, especially about travel restrictions.*

*Outside of Dili, it was hard to get information and the Minister's messages were not always clear. However, there have been lots of reminders from the Health Department about washing hands and keeping social distancing.*

*We continued our studies on-line using the WhatsApp program. There was good participation amongst the students, and everyone connected at our usual class times. We did very well. All the activities were very good. When things get back to normal it will be good to see my classmates and to work with my teachers face-to-face. We must remember the rules about hygiene and social distancing.*







# COVID-19 DISRUPTS EDUCATION IN RURAL BANGLADESH

On March 18, 2020, all schools in Bangladesh were closed with a complete lockdown across the country. On Sunday, May 31, the lockdown was lifted with millions heading back to work in densely populated cities and towns, even as the country logged a record spike in deaths and new infections.

The Prime Minister has said, that if the situation does not improve, the schools could stay closed until September.

The country had, as at 1 June, reported 47,151 infections and 650 deaths, although experts warn Bangladesh is not conducting enough testing and the actual toll is likely much higher.

The health infrastructure is poor and the confinement to home is quite impossible for most families as they are living in very poor conditions.

St Marcellin School has decided to keep paying their personnel during the pandemic. However, some teachers have not yet come to get their monthly salary since they are confined to their homes which, in some cases, are quite far from the school.

During the pandemic, the tea garden workers keep plucking the fields despite their concerns. The government says that they are not at risk since they work outside. Of course, they are being paid their little salaries during this time. St Marcellin School is offering them bags of food every month through their Feeding Program and they have

also started sponsoring a nutrition program for the daily laborers in the nearby city of Sreemongol, with the help of local volunteers, in collaboration with the local Rotary Club.

Construction to finish the Hostel for Boys in Giasnagar has been brought to a halt. The company Paul Construction and Consultant sent its workers home more than one month ago. The owner, Mr Tapan Paul, is currently unable to enter India under strict lockdown, but the school anticipates work will commence again in July.

Project Director, Br Eugenio Sanz Sanchez, travelled to Spain for a family visit on March 1st and has been unable to return to the school due to travel restrictions. He is hoping that over the coming weeks, since the lockdown has ended in Bangladesh, he will be able to return as soon as possible.





# AGOSTINHO'S LIFE-CHANGING BIKE

## KATILOSA STAFF STILL CHANGING LIVES DURING LOCKDOWN

KATILOSA staff Adelino and Emduno visited Agostinho Soares, a father to 8 children, in Caicua, Suco Waigae in April this year. In 2007, Agostinho became infected with Leprosy on both legs and this effected his ability to work and support his family.

Leprosy Mission in Timor Leste, in cooperation with Ministry of Health, provided medical treatment in Baucau Hospital for Agostinho who was then referred to National Rehabilitation Center in Dili for further treatment. During a physical assessment at the National Hospital in Dili, a tricycle was provided to Agostinho so he could continue performing his daily duties to assist in supporting his family.



Last month, during the state emergency lockdown for COVID-19, Agostinho's tricycle broke which meant he could no longer move around and perform his daily duties to help support his family. During the lockdown Adelino and Edmundo still managed to visit Agostinho and fix his tricycle.



## OUR PROJECTS NEED ONGOING SUPPORT

Please consider making a monthly donation to AMS.  
This enables us to better plan for the support we can  
provide our projects.

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"WHAT YOU LEAVE BEHIND IS NOT  
WHAT IS ENGRAVED IN STONE  
MONUMENTS, BUT WHAT IS  
WOVEN INTO THE LIVES OF  
OTHERS."  
*Pericles*

Remember Australian Marist  
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## **Solidarity Matters**

June 2020

### **Cover Image**

A classroom at St Michel Technical College with  
damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Harold

### **Editorial**

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EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE MARGINS THROUGH  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING