

A close-up portrait of a young boy with dark hair, smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building. The entire image is framed by a thin orange border.

Light up the World

INSPIRED BY LAVALLA CAMBODIA



AUSTRALIAN MARIST SOLIDARITY
SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN KIT 2024





*Access the 2024 School Campaign multimedia and Primary School Kit
on our website under the 'LEARN' tab - available from mid-January.*

Acknowledgements

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Our sincerest gratitude to Dr Sothun Nop, Brs Tony Burrows and Brian Kinsela and all the staff, students and families at Marist Solidarity Cambodia and the LaValla Project. You are a beacon of hope inspiring us all!

Join us

Connect in to hear first hand about our 2024 Campaign and from our partners in Cambodia.

TEACHER BRIEFING

21 February, 3.00pm - 4.00pm AEST
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/710926148247>

STUDENT AMBASSADOR BRIEFING

6 March, 12.00pm-1.00pm AEST
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/710926419057>

STUDENT AMBASSADOR WORKSHOP

17 July, 1.00pm-2.00pm AEST
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/710926609627>

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WELCOME TO OUR 2024 SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN KIT!

It's our pleasure to introduce the focus of the Schools Campaign for 2024: the LaValla Project in Cambodia.

LaValla is a project known and loved by many Australian Marists, due to its roots to the old Marist Brothers Province of Australia. A small group of Australian Brothers arrived in Phnom Penh as Cambodia began to rebuild itself after decades of war and unrest. The establishment of the LaValla Primary School served a key need: inclusive education for young people with disabilities.

Thanks to Australian Marists, LaValla has continued to grow and expand. Still the only Government approved school for inclusive education, LaValla now also offers boarding for high school students with disabilities at the LaValla Village.

The efforts of Marist Brothers and local staff have restored dignity and hope to hundreds of young Cambodians; many of whom have now returned to the school as staff as well as countless others who serve as advocates within their communities.

Please join us throughout the year as we offer opportunities to connect with our Marist community at LaValla. Please let the AMS team know if we can assist you with anything as you share these stories with your school community.

Yours in solidarity,

Rebecca Bromhead
CEO
Australian Marist Solidarity

Dr Nop Sothun
Director
Marist Solidarity Cambodia

Br Tony Burrows
Assistant to the Director
Marist Solidarity Cambodia



Australian Marist Solidarity (AMS) believes that education has the power to eradicate poverty and therefore works to ensure young people have access to educational opportunities.

With the help of our supporters, we can assist locally led grassroots movements in their initiatives to bring hope and access to education for young people in need. We do this by resourcing them to implement the solutions they have identified.

Our **VISION** is of a world where young people have hope and the opportunity to access education.

As Marists, our **MISSION** is to partner with communities in the Asia Pacific region to facilitate access to education for young people in need.

Our work is inspired by the Marist Brother's founder, St Marcellin Champagnat, and his concern for underprivileged people, especially the young.

The Brothers started financially

supporting and managing overseas aid and development programs in the Solomon Islands in 1938, which would mark the beginning of what is AMS today. In 2023, we worked in 15 countries, supporting over 60 programs.

We honor the Brothers by upholding the Marist Way in our work:

- Practicing simplicity
- Offer genuine presence
- Promoting a family spirit
- Modeling love of work
- Following in the way of Mary

We build solidarity, hope and dignity. We believe local people are the experts on the challenges facing their communities. By working directly with community partners, we help them access the skills and resources required to develop quality education and leadership where they need it the most.

To help us focus our efforts to ensure their young people reach their brightest potential, our community partners develop projects around three key areas:

» ACCESS TO EDUCATION

We assist access to quality education for vulnerable children and young people through projects in primary, secondary and tertiary education programs across Asia and the Pacific.

» FACILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

We invest in infrastructure to ensure safe places for learning.

» RESILIENCE AND READINESS

We support programs to build resilience, provide care, and empower vulnerable and marginalised communities to strengthen access to education and workplace-specific skills and knowledge.





AMS now supports communities in 15 different countries within the Asia Pacific Region. Together we bring dignity, education, and hope to some of the world's most disadvantaged youth and their families.





BACKGROUND

Lectio divina is an ancient method of praying with the Scriptures. We pray by attentively listening to the words or phrases which draw us deeper to God.

SETUP

- Create a Sacred Space using cloths, candles and a bible (opened to the passage).
- Nominate four students to read the passage at the separate points of the prayer.
- Beginning with "Prepare for Prayer", follow through each of the movements, allowing enough time for students to engage with the story through each step.

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke 15:11-32

A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance.

When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any.

Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father.

While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.'

But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began.

Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you

and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.'

He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'

PREPARE FOR PRAYER

Before entering into the prayer, prepare yourself physically and mentally. Begin by sitting comfortably, placing both feet on the ground, with posture upright and hands open on your lap as if waiting to receive a gift from God. Then, abandon any agenda, worries or thoughts you bring to this prayer and entrust these things to the providence of God. Ask for the grace to be receptive to what God will speak to you through this Scripture reading.

1. READ

Begin by slowly and meditatively reading your Scripture passage out loud. Listen for a particular word or phrase that speaks to you at this moment and sit with it for a time.

2. MEDITATE

Read the same passage a second time. As you re-engage the text, let the word or phrase that stood out become your invitation to dialogue with God. Allow the word or phrase to wash over you and permeate your thoughts and feelings.

3. PRAY

Read the text a third time. What is

God saying to you in these words? What do you want to say to God? What feelings do these words raise up in you? Share your answers with God.

4. CONTEMPLATE

Read the text a final time. As you do, release the word or phrase you have been praying with. Be still and rest in God's embrace. What gift has God given you to take away from this prayer? To what action might God be inviting you? Thank God for this gift and invitation as you conclude your prayer.

REFLECTION

Remember, Jesus used Parables to make his message easier to digest. So, when we hear the story of the Prodigal Son, we ask ourselves: what does this tell us about Jesus' call in our lives? How does this story inspire our mission of solidarity?

At the heart of this story are the relationships between the father and his two sons. As the story plays out, we see the two sons grapple with the same question: what am I owed? Both struggle to make sense of what is just and fair in the way the father treats them.

Ultimately, the father's mercy and forgiveness towards his sons tells us that justice is less about what we're owed and more about what we can give.

Similarly, our Marist virtues of humility, simplicity and modesty remind us to think less of our own desires and wants. When we're able to have compassion, empathy and understanding for others, we're able to build solidarity together and to light up our world.

OTHER SCRIPTURES

Other scriptures that fit the theme of solidarity include:

Lk 10:25-37

By law and custom, the priest and the Levite would have been obliged to help the beaten man if they had stumbled upon him in their path. By crossing the road and passing on the other side, they avoided this obligation. In contrast, the Samaritan had no cultural responsibility to the man but still helps him. So, what makes the Samaritan "good"? Not just that he helps, but that he goes out of his way to be helpful.

Mt 19:16-30

The young man comes to Jesus, confident that he has observed every law and measure to be found worthy. Yet, even more is asked of him - he is called to give up his possessions. The challenge given to the young man is to put his trust in God - above and beyond everything else. Enduring faith in the presence of God is what comforted St Marcellin even when he faced difficult circumstances.

Mt 14:13-21

The Feeding of the 5000 is a miracle that stands in stark contrast to what we see in many places around the world today - where many have nothing to eat and others can afford to waste food. The key words from Jesus lie right in the middle of the passage, somewhat obscured by the scale of what he does next, "There is no need for them to go away." Yes, confronting the inequities and imbalances in our world can be disheartening, perhaps overwhelming. Yet, as Marists and as Christians, we shine our light when we refuse to dismiss those on the peripheries of our world.



IN CHRISTIANITY

What is meditation?

Meditation is a universal spiritual wisdom and a practice found at the core of all the great religious traditions, leading from the mind to the heart. It is a way of simplicity, silence and stillness. It can be practised by anyone, wherever you are on your life's journey.

In recent times, there has been a major recovery of the contemplative dimension of Christian faith and prayer.

How to meditate:

"Sit down.

Sit still and upright.

Close your eyes lightly.

Sit relaxed but alert.

Silently, interiorly begin to say a single word.

We recommend the prayer-phrase 'Maranatha'. *

Recite it as four syllables of equal length.

Listen to it as you say it, gently, but continuously.

Do not think or imagine anything – spiritual or otherwise.

If thoughts and images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation, so keep returning to simply saying the word.

Meditate each morning and evening for between twenty and thirty minutes."

**Maranatha (1 Cor 16:22) consists of two Aramean words, Maran'athah, meaning, "our Lord comes," or is "coming."*

IN BUDDHISM

What is meditation?

There are many things in life that are beyond our control. However, it is possible to take responsibility for our own states of mind – and to change them for the better.

According to Buddhism this is the most important thing we can do, and Buddhism teaches that it is the only real antidote to our own personal sorrows, and to the anxieties, fears, hatreds, and general confusions that beset the human condition.

Meditation is a means of transforming the mind. Buddhist meditation practices are techniques that encourage and develop concentration, clarity, emotional positivity, and a calm seeing of the true nature of things.

By engaging with a particular meditation practice you learn the

patterns and habits of your mind, and the practice offers a means to cultivate new, more positive ways of being.

With regular work and patience these nourishing, focused states of mind can deepen into profoundly peaceful and energised states of mind. Such experiences can have a transformative effect and can lead to a new understanding of life.

Two basic meditations were originally taught by the historical Buddha. These help develop the qualities of calmness and emotional positivity: the Mindfulness of Breathing and Loving-Kindness (Metta Bhavana) meditations.

How to meditate:

"May I be safe from inner and outer harm."

"May I be peaceful and happy."

"May I be healthy and strong."

"May I be able to take care of myself, joyfully."

Repeat each phrase several times before moving to the next phrase.



BACKGROUND

Before lunch and dinner, the students and staff at LaValla join together in a simple Prayer Before Meals, or Grace. Together, the community joins in a song of gratitude: for the food, but also for their health, their friends and for the opportunity to be part of the LaValla community. The Gratitude Wall is an external representation of thanks. It may serve as a permanent feature in the classroom, which could be added to throughout the school year.

SETUP

- Select a wall or whiteboard which will serve as the Gratitude Wall.
- Next to the Gratitude Wall, set up a small table with sticky notes and pens.
- Cue the LaValla Prayer Before Meals Youtube video.

CALL TO PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his love endures forever. (Psalm 136:1)

LISTEN

We listen to the Prayer Before Meals prayed at LaValla in Cambodia:

REFLECT

In solidarity with our friends at LaValla, let's pause now to consider all the things we're grateful for.

RESPOND

I invite you, one at a time, to come forward to add to our Gratitude Wall. Write the thing you're grateful for on a sticky note and add it to our wall.

Remember that this is a time of prayer. So, while there is movement and activity, please maintain this level of quiet and respect so that everyone can have a chance to add to the wall.

CLOSING PRAYER

Our wall is a visual representation of our thanks to God for the blessings of life, our gifts and one another.

Let us pray.

Generous God, thank you for these things we have posted to our prayer wall, and for all the new things we learn each day. May we use all that we learn to light up our world.

Mary, our good Mother...
Pray for us.

St Marcellin Champagnat...
Pray for us.

St Mary of the Cross...
Pray for us.

And let us always remember...
to pray for one another.

AMEN.





BACKGROUND

The 'three violets' and their associated virtues of humility, simplicity and modesty were proposed by Marcellin Champagnat as being at the heart of what it means to be Marist. They are not behavioural guidelines but rather, spiritual attitudes. If we nurture them in our faith lives – in the way we approach God, and in the way we create relationships with others, then it is likely that we will mirror them in all aspects of our daily lives.

As a symbol to represent all this Marcellin chose this flower that grows wild in the French countryside. When the violets are in season their scent is beautifully prevalent even though the violets themselves are scattered and sometimes hard to find. This symbolises the Marist tradition of being present and doing good quietly.

In our Marist community we look to the violets of Marcellin Champagnat's world and use them to sharpen our focus on our own world, right here where we are.

"Humility is a basic element in our relationships since it has to

do with self-understanding. It means knowing and accepting the truth about ourselves, being honest with ourselves, being free of pretension and self-delusion. Simplicity is the way we live the truth of ourselves, giving us a personal transparency, which allows others to know us and to relate to us as we are. Modesty can be seen as the result of humility and simplicity especially in the respect that we show to others our sensitivity towards them in what we say and in what we do. These Marist virtues give a 'quality of authenticity and kindness to our relationships with our Brothers and with other people that we meet.'

Br Charles Howard, 'Marist Apostolic Spirituality.'

a handcrafted paper bouquet of violets that two Year Six students had made in their own time.

This intricate gift of gratitude was created with thought, care, and love. In a community where material items and wealth are absent – the three virtues are even more observant of being lived in their true form as Marcellin envisioned a community of Marists to be in relationship with one another.

I treasure this paper bouquet of violets as a reminder of how each of these young women authentically live the violet virtues of humility, simplicity, and modesty every day.

*Jasmine Brown
Marist Association Council*

REFLECTION

The entrance walls of LaValla Primary School are colorfully decorated with our Marist symbol of the Three Violets of humility, simplicity and modesty. This symbol is recognized by the students as their school logo and provides a sense of familiarity and family to them for the school in which they belong. On a recent visit to LaValla I was gifted with

SETUP

- Print out a copy of the 3 Violets worksheet for each student (see Appendix).
- Ensure each student has a pen.
- Explain this is a prayerful activity and that students can maintain respect and quiet throughout this time.

OPENING PRAYER

God of all creation,
When we see the three little violets,
may we remember that although they are tiny,
they have their own beauty, their own integrity,
and they are perfectly formed, beautifully made,
just as we are.
Be with us as we try to live in a way
which is inspired by the violets of St Marcellin
so that we, too, can make the fields of our world different, as a result of our presence.
Amen.

HUMILITY

Humility, in its simplest sense, is the ability to consider others and their needs before our own. What could humility look like in your day-to-day interactions?

- Admitting your mistakes:
- Being a team player
- Acknowledging others' achievements
- Being open to receiving feedback
- Allowing others to make mistakes
- Being willing to serve others
- Asking for forgiveness

In the humility violet on your sheet, write down one specific example of how you can grow in humility.

MODESTY

Modesty can be understood in the attitude that you wear. Our attitude affects many aspects of our lives, including the way we treat people, the way we think of ourselves and others, and how we view our relationship with God. What could modesty look like in your day-to-day interactions?

- Being aware of your strengths and weaknesses

- Being humble
- Not being vain
- Thinking before we speak
- Not overstating our accomplishments
- Listening to understand others

In the modesty violet on your sheet, write down one specific example of how you can grow in modesty.

SIMPLICITY

When people have a sense of simplicity in their lives, their direction comes from within, from their own principles and values. They do what they believe to be the right thing. What could simplicity look like in your day-to-day interactions?

- Being grateful
- Being truthful
- Being true to yourself
- Being true with each other
- Being open-minded
- Being approachable
- Taking genuine interest in others

In the simplicity violet on your sheet, write down one specific example of how you can grow in simplicity.

On your sheet now are three concrete ways you can light up the world around you. We are inspired by the Marist community at LaValla, with whom we share these virtues.





Country Background



Historically, Cambodia has been a melting pot of cultures, serving as a transfer point from bigger nations (e.g. China, India) to other South-East Asian civilisations.

Over several eras, including the Funan and Chenla in the 1st - 8th centuries and the Angkor period in the 9th - 15th centuries, Cambodia established a rich cultural landscape - embodied by the impressive structure of the Angkor Wat temple. However, this grand Khmer (Cambodian) Empire fell to decline over the next 400 years, becoming a French Colony.

The 20th Century was marked by turmoil and disruption, beginning with Japanese-occupation during WWII, the post-war fight for independence and political instability.

Most devastatingly, between 1975-1979 Cambodia was overrun by the guerrilla force, the Khmer Rouge. The leader of the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot, established his power through a communist regime. Tragically, more than 1.5 million people were victims of a secret genocide that was hidden from the rest of the world.

Khmer Rouge were overthrown by

Vietnamese forces and Cambodia began the rebuilding process. Political autonomy, a constitutional government and free elections were instituted in the 1990's as the country began to rebuild.

Today, Cambodia is a country of young people, brimming with hope and enthusiasm. More recent investments from Chinese business has produced incredible growth and development across Phnom Penh, the capital. Visitors will be surprised by the optimism of Cambodian people - affectionately known as "the Smiling Assassins" - who live by the Cambodian proverb, "Fear not the future, weep not for the past."



Timeline

100BC - 500 AD

Era of the Funan Kingdom, established in the Mekong Delta.

500-700

Era of the Chan La State, which had both inland and seaside centres.

800-1432

Khmer Empire, with its capital established in Angkor.



1432

King Penhea Yet abandons Angkor, moving the capital to Lovek (north of Phnom Penh).

1863

King Norodom is forced to sign a treaty, making Cambodia a French protectorate.

1865

New capital established at Phnom Penh.

1941

Prince Norodom Sihanouk becomes King.



1975-79

The Khmer Rouge overtake Cambodia, instituting "Year Zero". Citizens are forced out of the cities and into the countryside and slave labour. Under the Khmer Rouge, over 1.5 million people die in a mass genocide.



1965

As the Vietnamese War escalates, Cambodia aligns with North Vietnam against US Forces. The US secretly bomb Cambodia as communist forces move into the country.

1960

King Norodom Suramarit dies, Sihanouk becomes Head of State.

1955

Sihanouk abdicates throne to pursue a political career. His father, King Norodom Suramarit, becomes King.

1953

Cambodia wins independence from France, becoming the Kingdom of Cambodia under King Sihanouk.

1941-45

Japanese forces occupy Cambodia through WWII.

1979

Invading Vietnamese forces overthrow the Khmer Rouge in 1979. The former way-of-life is reinstituted with the establishment of the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

1993

King Sihanouk is restored as Monarch, with the establishment of the Kingdom of Cambodia. General elections are held, supervised by the United Nations.

1997

Deputy Prime Minister, Hun Sen, mounts a coup and becomes the new Prime Minister, a position he would hold for nearly 40 years.



1998

Pol Pot (leader of the Khmer Rouge) dies in hiding and the Khmer Rouge finally disbands.

1999

Cambodia is admitted into ASEAN, creating stronger links to the rest of South-East Asia.

2004

Cambodia joins the World Trade Organisation, further enhancing its international presence.

2005

The UN approved a war-crimes tribunal to try surviving Khmer Rouge leaders.

2023

A Cambodian advocacy group, Mother Nature Cambodia, was awarded the Right Livelihood Award. The group was cited for its "fearless and engaging activism to preserve Cambodia's natural environment in the context of a highly restricted democratic space".

2023

Prime Minister Hun Sen is succeeded by his son, Hun Manet, as Prime Minister.



2023

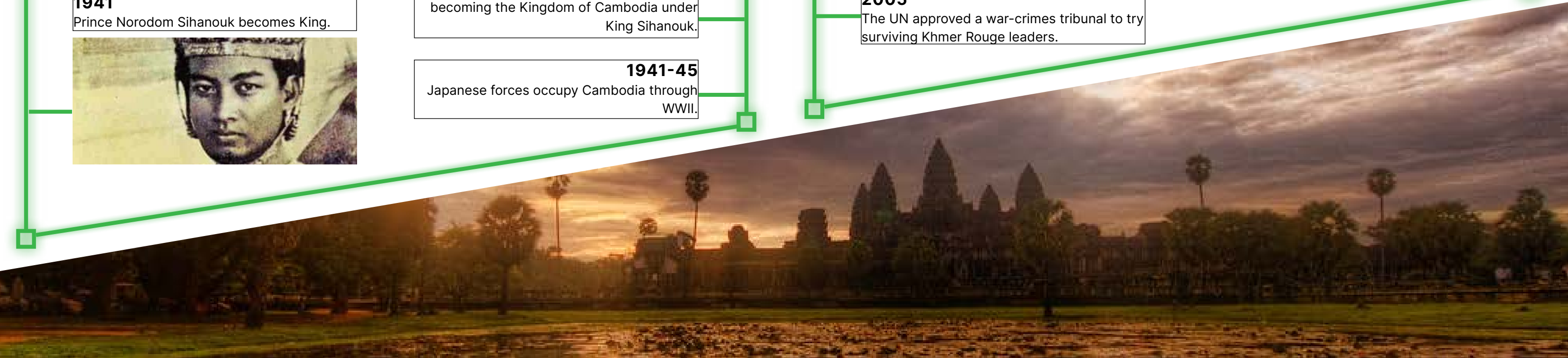
Cambodia hosts the 2023 Southeast Asian Games, featuring more than 12,000 participants from Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, Vietnam and Cambodia.

2014

Disputes over the 2013 election results lead to anti-government demonstrations and labour disputes. Protests were forcefully broken up, including the shooting and killing of dozens of citizens by police.

2012

Former King Sihanouk dies of a heart attack, aged 89. His funeral is attended by tens of thousands of Cambodians.





Cambodia is situated in the southwestern part of the Indochina peninsula, bordering Thailand, Laos and Vietnam and bounded by the Gulf of Thailand. It has a total land area of 181,035km² - an area slightly smaller than the state of Victoria. The country is administratively split into 20 provinces, 2 municipalities, 172 districts and 1547 communes.

The landscape is dominated by plains, accounting for two-thirds of the land area. Surrounding

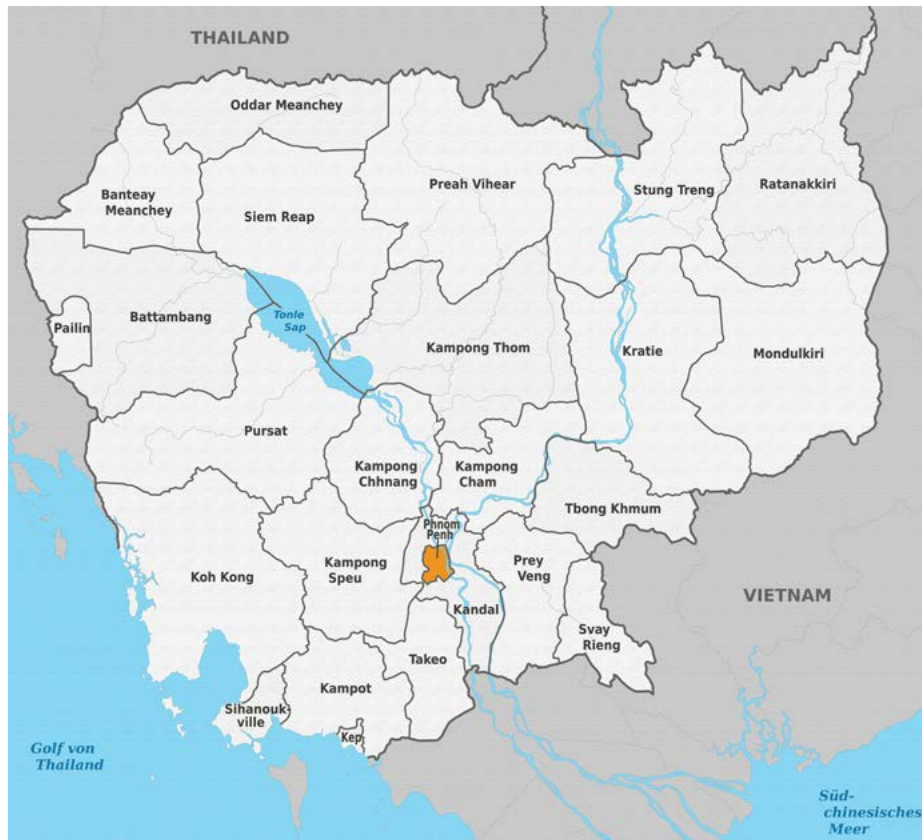
the plains are dense forests and mountain ranges, and the Gulf of Thailand to the South.

Cambodia is home to Tonle Sap (Great Lake) - the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia. Cambodia's other major water source - the Mekong River - cuts across the landscape top-to-bottom.

Seasonally, Cambodia experiences its driest months during the Northern Hemisphere's winter

(December-April). The monsoon season occurs across May-October, during which time 80% of annual rainfall occurs.

Phnom Penh is the Nation's Capital, with a population of over 2 million people. The total population numbers at 15.1 million people, the majority of which live in rural areas. Some ethnic groups live in the mountains. Buddhism is the national religion, with small numbers identifying at Christian and Muslim.



Cambodia is often cited as a country with a high number of persons with disabilities. Estimates of the number of persons with disabilities in Cambodia vary significantly from one source to another depending on the definitions used.

In 1997, the Asian Development Bank reported that 9.8% of Cambodians are persons with disability. In 2004, the National Institute of Statistics found that the percentage of persons with disabilities is 4% of the total population.

Surprisingly, in the most recent release of the General Population Census of Cambodia 2008, the estimation of the percentage of the total population to be persons with disabilities was only 1.44% of the total population. According to statistics from the Cambodian government, almost a

fifth of the people with disabilities in Cambodia have amputations, mainly due to the land mines. 11% have visual impairments, and 5% are deaf or hard of hearing. One fifth of the people with disabilities in Cambodia are children. The vast majority of Cambodians with disabilities live in rural areas. It is established that persons with disabilities generally belong to the poorest among the poor with very limited access to resources, basic social services, education, vocational training and employment.

People with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups in Cambodian society. It is estimated in 2007 that 28.3 per cent of the population survive on less than USD 1.25 a day, and 30.1 per cent live below the national poverty line.



- » **43% OF CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY ARE UNABLE TO READ**
- » **86,000+ YOUNG PEOPLE (UNDER 20 YEARS) HAVE A PHYSICAL DISABILITY**
- » **45% OF CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL**





All children have the right to learn, whatever their circumstances. Adequate support to learning is crucial for them to develop to their full potential. However, in Cambodia many children are falling behind, particularly those who live in rural and urban areas.

Cambodia has made terrific progress in educating its children. Since 2007, the number of children enrolled in preschool has more than doubled. The number of children enrolled in primary education has increased from 82 per cent in 1997 to over 97 per cent in school year 2017/18.

While progress is tangible, children in Cambodia are still failing to reach learning standards appropriate for their age. At the primary level, nearly 25 per cent of children in Grade 3 cannot write a single word in a dictation test. Only 27 per cent of 3- to 5-year-olds are developmentally on track in literacy and numeracy, and by the time they are 17 years old, 55 per cent of adolescents will have dropped out of school.

Cambodian children continue to fall behind in school for a number of reasons, including not being adequately prepared for school, experiencing poor quality teaching

and learning, and attending school irregularly. This eventually leads to many of them dropping out altogether.

Inadequate learning in the early years of life, coupled with insufficient nutrition, leaves children behind. There are not enough qualified teachers, and the quality of learning environments is poor. There is a lack of basic infrastructure, such as water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, which particularly impacts adolescent girls and children with disabilities. Violence is a problem in schools, with teachers using corporal punishment.

Children with disabilities still experience discrimination. Many parents cannot understand the value of education and most cannot afford to send their children to school, particularly in rural and deprived areas.

Education is critically important to Cambodia's development. The country's development strategy focuses on its younger population as a major contributor to sustainable development and economic growth. The government continues to allocate substantial public budget to education to reform the education sector.



MARIST SOLIDARITY CAMBODIA

Marist Solidarity Cambodia (MSC) is an international non-government organisation, an integral part of the mission of the Marist Brothers, which promotes empowerment and advocacy, and provides education and referral for children and young people with disabilities.

THE LAVALLA PROJECT

In 1996, Brs Robert Badior and Br Paul Turner were appointed to Cambodia to establish a community for the Marist Brothers of the then-Province of Sydney, Australia. Br Terrence Heinrich joined this community in 1997, and through a process of consultations and surveys, established what would become known as the LaValla School - an elementary school for young Cambodians with physical disabilities. Classes commenced on June 22 1998 at a rented premises in Phnom Penh.

25 years later, the school has its own campus on the outskirts on Phnom Penh in Takhmao. The only government approved school providing a full primary education to young people with physical disabilities, LaValla has 100 students in Years 1-6.

LAVALLA VILLAGE

Upon successful completion of Grade 6 at LaValla Primary School, students with the capacity to go further are encouraged to continue their education. The LaValla Village, also situated on the property at Takhmao, was established to provide housing, meals and transport for students to attend the Vocational Skills Program or secondary schooling at Hun Sen High School Takhmao.

Pictured: (above) Br Tony Burrows (far left) and Br Brian Kinsella (back right) with staff who have served at the LaValla Project since its inception; (right top) students at the original school site in Phnom Penh; (right middle) Brs Terry Heinrich and Daryl Slater; (right bottom) AMS CEO Bec Bromhead, AMS Board Member Mark Elliot and MSC Director Dr Nop Sothun at the LaValla Village.





In 1975, a communist regime known as the Khmer Rouge conquered the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. The Khmer Rouge held power in Cambodia for just under 45 months (April 1975-January 1979) and left up to 3 million Cambodian civilians (particularly ethnic minorities) dead through starvation, torture, execution, medical experiments, untreated diseases, forced marches, forced labor, and other forms of violence. However, even after 1979, the Khmer Rouge remained active in remote regions of the country; thus, fatalities may be higher than documented.

The Khmer Rouge ruled a totalitarian state in which citizens had essentially no rights – they abolished civil and political rights, private property, money, religious practices, minority languages, and foreign clothing. Citizens could be detained for the slightest offenses, and the government set up vast prisons where people were held, tortured, and executed.

The Khmer Rouge based their policies on the idea that citizens of Cambodia had become corrupted

by outside influences, especially Vietnam and the capitalist West. The Khmer Rouge referred to people who supported their vision as “pure people”.

Within days of taking power, the regime killed thousands and forcibly moved millions of people out of the cities. Citizens were forced into reeducation schools, which were essentially places of state propaganda. The regime forced citizens to live communally, in order to destroy the family structure.

On December 25, 1978 Vietnam invaded Cambodia. The Vietnamese sought to remove the Khmer Rouge from power. At first, survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime considered the Vietnamese to be liberators, but they were soon viewed as occupiers.

Vietnamese troops stayed in the country until 1989, with armed clashes between Vietnamese and Cambodians going on throughout the 1980s. A post-Pol Pot government with some democratic features, led by a reestablished monarchy, took

over. Yet the Khmer Rouge did not disappear until much later, and continued to hold Cambodia's seat at the United Nations for twelve years.

On October 23, 1991 the Comprehensive Cambodian Peace Agreement (commonly referred to as the “Paris Peace Accords”) was brokered by the United Nations, ending the twelve year civil war in Cambodia. In May 1993 the first free elections in more than twenty years were held.

In January 2001 the Cambodian government established the Khmer Rouge Tribunal to try leadership of the Khmer Rouge for crimes against humanity. Trials began in 2009 but have led to only three convictions. The vast majority of the perpetrators suffered no consequences for their actions.



Learning Activities



BACKGROUND

In Cambodia, the gift of a red string bracelet is a gesture of friendship and blessing. This local practice comes from Buddhism, though it can also be found in parts of Judaism, Hinduism and Christianity. Many visitors to Cambodia have received a string bracelet made by a LaValla student.

In this activity, students will make a red-string bracelet. Once completed, they will exchange these bracelets with other students, as a sign of friendship and blessing.

This activity could be a class or cohort-wide activity. Alternatively, it could form part of a forgiveness ritual on a retreat, or the bracelets could be sold as a fundraiser.

SETUP

Materials required:

- string
- scissors
- AV setup
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SN-9NFyWG5Q>

PROCESS

- Move students into smaller groups of 4-5 people, ensuring each group has enough materials for each student.
- Play the instructional video, pausing after each step allow students to keep up.
- Once students get the hang of the process, they can continue without the video and make as bracelets as they can.

TIPS

- Watch the instructional video before running this activity to be able to jump in and help students who get stuck.
- Make a few example bracelets for students to use as a model.
- If a student picks up the process quickly, or already knows how to make the bracelets, enlist them to help other students who get stuck.
- Rather than melting the tie at the end, you could use a dot of craft glue to hold the end knots.



BACKGROUND

Many schools have a school song - an anthem the community sings with pride and gusto. A school song often carries the school's legacy, values and history.

The LaValla Song, captured in the shared video, was written by the school's Principal. It is a song of hope and thanks.

In this activity, students will compare and contrast their own school song with the LaValla Song.

SETUP

- Materials required:
- AV Setup (to play video)
- LaValla Song video (included with Kit)
- Recording of local school song (if available), or lyrics.

PROCESS

- Begin with your local school song. In small groups of 4 or 5 students, examine the lyrics of the song. What values are communicated through these lyrics? How do these words inspire you? What's the core meaning of the song?
- Now watch the LaValla Song. What values are communicated through these lyrics? How do these words inspire you? What's the core meaning of the song? What differences do you note between your school song and the LaValla Song?
- If you were to add to or re-write your school song, what would you include? What do you think is missing? Is there something that needs to be emphasised?





BACKGROUND

300 kilometres to the north-west of Phnom Penh is Siem Reap, the ancient capital of Khmer civilisation. Siem Reap is home to approximately 50 Buddhist and Hindu temples. Angkor Wat features prominently on the Cambodian flag, while Ta Prohm (pictured right) famously appeared as the backdrop of the 2001 film, Tomb Raider.

SETUP

Create resources bundles to include:

- Straws
- Paddlepop sticks
- String
- Paper clips
- Blue tac

PROCESS

Students are broken up into groups. Each group is given a resource bundle. As a team, they work together to build a structure using only the materials provided. Their structure must be free-standing i.e. cannot be strung, hung or leaned against something else. At the end of the building time (20-30mins), points are awarded for the most original structure and the tallest structure.

The structures are then displayed in a central place and the final points are awarded for the structure that stands the longest. Ideally, the structures are built to last days or weeks, adding to the competition of this activity. Final placings are determined as follows:

- 1st Place - Longest Standing Structure
- 2nd Place - Most Original Structure
- 3rd Place - Tallest Structure



BACKGROUND

Cambodia's temples are a gateway to another time, filled with history and treasures. For Cambodian people, Khmer statues are sacred objects, believed to contain the spirits of gods, kings and ancestors. Unfortunately, tomb raiders took advantage of decades of conflict in the 1960s-90s to loot antiquities and artefacts from sacred sites, smuggling them out of Cambodia and into Western museums.

One such museum is our own National Gallery of Australia. In July, the Gallery held a special ceremony to return three rare bronze Buddhist statues, believed to have been stolen from Cambodia in 1994. The statues are just a small representation of more than 100 stolen artefacts residing in Australian galleries, museums and private collections.

Similarly, 30 antiquities were returned to Cambodia from the US in August. These included carved bronze and stone Buddhist and Hindu statues, believed to be more than 1,000 years old.

Cambodia's US Ambassador, Keo Chhea explained the significance of the return of Khmer artefacts, saying, "It's like a returning of the souls of our culture back to our people. We're very grateful."

Chhea notes that the theft of Cambodia's art is a "global problem", one that has sparked a complex, multi-nation investigation that includes Cambodian government officials and lawyers, French academics and American federal prosecutors.

Looting and repatriation (the return of stolen cultural materials) is a topic affecting many cultures and countries. The argument for repatriating artefacts recognises that many cultures were looted as a result of colonisation or war crimes. The return of artefacts and antiquities is a gesture of reconciliation between nations and peoples.

There is some opposition to returning cultural items, some claiming it would leave museums bare. Another argument is that some nations simply don't have the infrastructure or facilities to house and protect ancient artefacts.

PROCESS

Allow some time for students to read up on the topic (see references page for additional sources), then split the group into two teams to debate one of the following topics:

- It is morally correct, and reflects basic property laws, that stolen or looted property should be returned to its rightful owner.
- Cultural objects belong together with the cultures that created them; these objects are a crucial part of contemporary cultural and political identity.
- Universal museums enable a lot of art from a lot of different places to be seen by a lot of people easily. This reflects our modern globalist or cosmopolitan outlook.
- Most objects in museums and collections, at the time of their acquisition, were legally obtained and therefore have no reason to be repatriated.



Ready in: 20 mins
Serves: 2

INGREDIENTS

- 300g beef steaks, sliced
- 1/4 cup light soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 1 tablespoon tomato sauce
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 2 garlic cloves, finely sliced
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

TO SERVE

- 2 small tomatoes, sliced
- 1 cucumber, peeled and finely sliced
- 1/2 small red onion, finely sliced
- iceberg lettuce leaves

DIPPING SAUCE

- juice of a lime
- 2 teaspoons fresh ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt
- or 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon water

METHOD

1. In a large bowl, mix beef with soy sauce, oyster sauce, tomato sauce sugar, fish sauce and ground black pepper and garlic. Marinate at least 20 minutes or up to one hour.
2. Combine dipping sauce ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.
3. Decorate two dinner plates with sliced tomatoes, cucumber and onion and set aside. Place the lettuce leaves on a separate platter.
4. Heat oil in a wok over a high heat and stir-fry beef until cooked. Divide between the two dinner plates.
5. To eat, wrap beef, tomatoes cucumber and onion in a lettuce leaf and dip in the sauce.



BACKGROUND

Khmer, is the official language of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Khmer is one of the oldest languages of Southeast Asia. Currently, Khmer is spoken by 14 million people who live in Cambodia and by sizeable communities who live in the Mekong Delta area in Southern Vietnam and northern Thailand.

SETUP

Setup a maze or small obstacles in an open part of the room.

- blindfolds
- treasure - a ball, toy or small object

PROCESS

Students break into pairs and nominate one partner to be blindfolded. The other partner is the Guide's role is to direct their partner through the maze or obstacles towards the "Treasure" at the end. However, their directions must be given using the provided Khmer phrases!

DIRECTIONS

English	Khmer	Pronunciation
Turn left	Baht schweng	bart-shweng
Turn right	Baht saddam	bart-sadam
Stop	Chop	chop
Here	Tini	tinny
Go straight	Da trong	da-trong

OTHER KHMER PHRASES

Hello (formal)	Chom reap sour	chom reap sore
Hello (informal)	Susadei	soos-a-day
How are you? / I am fine	Soksaby	soks-a-bye
What is your name?	Chhmua ei?	cham-moo-ey
My name is _____	Knyom chhmua _____	knyom-cham-moo
Goodbye (formal)	Chom reap lear	chom-reep-lear
Goodbye (informal)	Lee hi	lee-hi
Yes		
(used by males)	Bah	bah
(used by females)	Jah	chaa
No	Ot teh	ot tei
Thank you	Arkun	ar-koon
Excuse me	Som dtoh	som-toe



Fundraising Ideas



This is a year long activity, you will need to start in Term 1 to have plants ready for sale in Term 4. You could tie this fundraiser in with your school environment group, or with any RE classes studying Laudato Si!

STEP-BY-STEP

Here's a month-by-month outline on how to run this event for your own school.

1. In early February, meet with your environment club or create an environmental team of staff and students.
2. In March, find a suitable place in the school to set up your own nursery.
3. In April, plant seeds and propagate cuttings. Get staff or parents to contribute cuttings or plant seeds for this activity. Useful plants are Australian natives, herbs, succulents and shrubs. Local seed suppliers may support your efforts.
4. In May-July, make sure your team has a roster for watering and transplanting the growing plants into bigger pots over
5. In August, as you get close to Spring, advertise the Plant Sale in the school newsletter. Make your advertisement catchy, for example: "AMS Spring Plant Sale: Welcome to Spring – get your garden breathing and blooming again!" You can get flyers organised with the plants you have for sale and the prices. If you are using cuttings, then you are making 100% profit! Take photos of students getting involved in planting to show off their expertise.
6. As you publicise, you can include a quote from Pope Francis in Laudato Si ("Praised Be") who has proclaimed that we create an "ecological citizenship": "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs" (n.1)
7. In September, host the sale. Show photos of students getting involved in planting to

the year. This is important! You want to sell flourishing, healthy plants!

show off their expertise.

8. In October, donate the profits to AMS to support their work in the Asia Pacific region and... get ready to do it all again next year!





There aren't many fundraising activities more successful than a good old fashioned sausage sizzle! For extra impact why not pair it with a gold coin free clothes day or favourite sports team jersey day.

Note: Different schools prefer to manage supply orders and meal payments in different ways, so make sure you speak with a teacher before finalising any plans.

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Select a small Committee to prepare the fundraiser. It might be your Solidarity or Mission Group, your School Leadership Group or a Game Changers group.
2. Advertising can be done through posters being displayed throughout the school in the weeks leading up to the selected day, as well as reminders in Homeroom, School announcements and social media advertising if available.
3. It is often best to have a pre-order for the sausage sizzle, to make sure there is no waste and that the budget provides for the costs and a donation to AMS.
4. The organising committee could create a google form for orders or use an existing school template payment form that can be returned with the payment to homeroom or the finance office.
5. Organise with the appropriate school staff member to make an order of sausages from the local butcher, rolls from the local baker and buy soft drinks from the supermarket. Sometimes you may have a local butcher or baker that is happy to cut the cost of these items if they know you are doing this for a good cause, so provide a little information about the work of AMS when you approach them.
6. On the day: prepare the table, supplies and BBQ. Cook the sausages the period before lunch to ensure it's ready for distribution (please note: most schools will require a staff member to do the cooking, please follow your own school policy).

7. Students can line up to mark off their name and collect their meal or alternatively, group of students can distribute the meals to designated places for each class group.
8. Don't forget to share with students where their support will be going and send the funds in to AMS after the event.



Trivia Nights are a great way to bring the extended school community together for a great night and to learn a little about the great work the school is doing with AMS to support vulnerable young people across the Asia Pacific region to access education.

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Create an event community to plan and run this fundraising event. You'll need to get organised quite far in advance so that you can advertise with a lot of notice. This way, families will be able to put the event in their calendars.
2. Ask your school business office what the preferred way is to sell tickets to trivia night. The two most common ways to manage this are through an internal school system or using the free community event site, Eventbrite.
3. Advertising can be done using posters distributed throughout the school, school-wide messages, social media page, learning group messages, local radio and reminders by AMS student ambassadors.
4. Things to be organised:
 - Space e.g. Hall
 - Tables and chairs
 - Projector
 - Trivia host
 - Trivia questions with a few rounds, heads and tails challenge, bonus rounds
 - Student volunteers to mark answers sheets, entertain during the night e.g. HSC music and drama performances
 - Lucky door prize / raffle
 - Prizes, these can be sourced from places in your local area e.g. dinner vouchers, meat tray, florist, massage vouchers, cinema vouchers, football tickets, football jerseys and bottles of wine
 - Possibility to sell cans and packets of chips on the night
 - Decorations
 - Microphones
5. On the night make sure that you have a few presentation slides to share about the work of AMS and the 2023 stories about our Marist community in Bougainville. This will help attendees connect with the work that they are supporting by participating in the event.

6. After the event, make sure you share with the school community the success of their efforts and then send the funds in to AMS.

Tip: Use the event as an opportunity to share stories about AMS and the country and project where your funds are being allocated. You can even take it one step further and contact AMS for video links or a personal welcome message from our team to play on the night!



Note: most visitors to LaValla are drawn into competitive games of basketball or volleyball with staff and students. This is another way students prove to visitors and themselves that despite their physical disabilities, they are capable of incredible feats!

This fundraising idea utilises sport as a shared experience. Through a volleyball game or basketball shoot-off, school communities fundraise in a way that is accessible for their students and LaValla students.

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Choose which sport will be played. Students at LaValla love volleyball and basketball, but sports like soccer or touch football are also inclusive and require little setup.
2. Funds are raised by charging each team or participant an entry fee. Determine a price point which is accessible for everyone and that will also raise the most funds.
3. Set a due date for team registrations and for the event itself. Tip: allow multiple dates

so that all teams are able to participate, or in case of delays and cancellations.

4. Advertise the event at assemblies, in the newsletter and in daily notices.
5. When registrations close, plan out rounds, ensuring every team/participant is included.
6. Host the tournament or contest, using a central place. Music helps create a fun atmosphere for other students to spectate.
7. Donate the funds raised to AMS!

Extra tip: approach some local businesses to donate prizes for the winning teams. Prizes will entice even more teams to register!



Often local cinema's offer screenings for fundraising purposes and this is always popular with a high school audience, but is something that families and the broader community can also support and enjoy.

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Get in touch with your local cinemas about the prospect of hosting a fundraising night. They will have a list of the dates of new release films that are being shown. They often have movie deals like a movie and popcorn deal. You can get part of the profit - this can be up to \$5.00 per combination ticket sold.
2. A good thing to do is to create a survey form for all students with three or more family movies and see which is the most popular one to book. Get them to do this in the roll call time of the day so all the school is talking about what movie they will see.
3. Publicise the event around the school. Posters will need the date, time, cost and movie that is showing, this can also be advertised on the schools social media page if applicable.
4. Use this kit and the resources on the AMS website to prepare a short speech before the movie starts. Attendees will appreciate if you share a little about AMS and our Marist community in Bougainville so that they have an idea where their funds are going and what they are supporting.
5. On this night you can also sell raffle tickets on entry for prizes. Ask for parents or staff donations of prizes and sell the tickets at a reasonable price, drawing the lucky winners at the end of the event.
6. *Tip: Why not ask the cinema if they can provide you with some lucky door prizes of movie tickets.*
7. One of the best parts of this fundraising idea is that it provides a night out for families and a nice relaxed social opportunity for the broader school community.
8. After the event don't forget to have the school transfer all the funds raised to AMS.



VIDEO RESOURCES

1. Assembly Video 2023:
2. LaValla Grace:
3. The La Valla Song:
4. Red wristband tutorial:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SN-9NFyWG5Q>

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How to Donate

Make direct deposit donations to:
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Please email the details of your donation to:
ams.accounts@marists.org.au

To make a cash, cheque or credit card donation, fill in this form and mail to:
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australianmaristsolidarity.net.au

or scan the QR code to donate.



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*All donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Post: Send this coupon using the reply paid envelop included (no stamp required).

A gift in your will can leave a legacy to transform the education of future generations of young children. Once you have remembered your loved ones, would you please consider leaving a gift in your will?

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