

Marist Mission Today

Number 86

Marist Missionary Sisters

Spring 2020

Dear Partners in Mission.

It is a great joy to me, as I begin a term as Regional Leader to greet the many members of our families and friends who have supported our missionary work over the years by your prayers, interest and financial contributions.

In this issue, especially, you will see the long-term effects of your generosity to a particular high school in Shinyanga, Tanzania, where our Sisters have ministered since 2007. Sister Makelita Meni, who has been Principal of the school since 2009 has written an account of the wonderful progress that has been made with your help. It's an inspiring story of how people can be helped, and their lives changed for the better because of the loving support of many.

I ask for your continuing prayers for our Marist Missionary Sisters throughout the world. Though our numbers are small, our desire to reach out to those most in need continues. With your help, our mission will continue. May the Lord bless you, and may we remain united in the spirit of Mary, His Mother.

Sister Helen Muller, smsm
Regional Leader
Region of the Americas



New Regional Council



On January 1st, 2020, a new Regional Leader and Council began their 3-year term of office for the Region of the Americas, which includes Jamaica, Peru and the USA. Sister Helen Muller (right) is originally from Tonga and has previously served in Peru. Her Council (left to right) includes Sister Michelle De Silva, from Trinidad, who has served in Colombia; Sister Patricia Phillips, from the USA, who has served in Jamaica, Papua New Guinea and the USA; and Sister Prista Haga, from the Solomon Islands, who is presently missioned in Jamaica.

Below: Sister Makelita Meni addressing an Assembly of the Buhangija Secondary School Students



**Buhangija
Secondary School
Shinyanga,
TANZANIA**

A Letter from Sister Makelita Meni, smsm

Dear Friends,

It is indeed an honor for me to take this opportunity to convey to you our deepest gratitude on behalf of the staff, parents and students of Buhangija Secondary School, especially the orphans and very poor students. Blessed indeed are you who have reached out with genuine love and admirable generosity to make a difference in the lives of the poor.

OUR MINISTRY IN EDUCATION IN SHINYANGA, TANZANIA

The Congregation of the Marist Missionary Sisters was asked by the late Bishop Aloysius Balina of the Diocese of Shinyanga, to administer Buhangija Secondary School (co-educational) in 2009. There were already two Marist Missionary Sisters who worked at the school since 2007. The school was about to close in 2009 due to financial constraints and lack of effective organization. The staff members were not paid for many months and the “failure” rate of the school was very high. For example, of 150 students who sat the National Examination in one year, 100 students failed. The school was at “the bottom” academically in the District, Region and National levels.

Also, when the Sisters entered this Catholic school in 2007, there was very little emphasis on Catholic Teachings and Faith Formation. The school was very poor in both teaching resources and in competent teachers. Corporal punishment was often used and the increase of unacceptable behavior in many of the students was apparent. Neither the Government nor the Church contributed financially to the development of the school. The school depended totally on minimum school fees for salaries, resource materials, school activities, food, medical supplies, science lab and office equipment, etc. The challenges that we encountered were numerous including unpaid school loans from different local Banks and Parishes.



Sister Makelita with students in a classroom at Buhangija.

TODAY: DECEMBER 2019.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT:

Over the years, we saw a tremendous change in our Catholic Faith within the school. Catholic students and staff members who had not been practicing their faith began to receive the sacraments. Many others had joined the Catholic Community. Students no longer had to live in fear of corporal punishment. Instead of constant disciplinary problems, there was mutual respect and loving support. The students today are treated with human dignity and respect.

Among the students, about 100 joined the Young Marists, and went out regularly to visit people who were considered “outcasts” of society: those with Leprosy and also Albinos. They brought food and water and a caring presence to those who were most in need.

Our motto is: “We are one family in God's love.”

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDENTS: The school is no longer in the disgraced position it was in 2009. In 2018 the 93 senior students gained the following positions at the National Examinations: 8th out of 24 schools at the District level; 26th out of 138 schools in the Regional level and 989th out of 3,998 schools in the whole Nation. This was a phenomenal year for us since we first arrived here in 2007. With the help of generous benefactors, we were able to improve the facilities, providing dormitories for those who needed to board at the school, and



Former Students

(Left) Former Students of Buhangija return to visit. One is now a medical doctor, another has a Master's Degree in Education, and some others are returning to teach at the school.

New Administrator for Buhangija School



Sister Makelita recently left Tanzania after 12 years of service there. After some rest and renewal, she is reassigned to Jamaica. The new Administrator is Sister Lucinder Mologai (left), from Papua New Guinea. She has been teaching at Buhangija for the past 6 years. Prayers and best wishes, Sr. Lucinder!!

Letter (continued)

improve the water and food supplies. We sponsored more than 60 orphans in the past years and students that come from very poor families. Among students we sponsored- with your help - many have become medical doctors, nurses, teachers, mechanics, accountants, business owners, good and solid parents, religious, seminarians, farmers, policemen, soldiers etc.

Why and how did the school develop positively and achieve these results?

God has truly blessed Buhangija Secondary School through the gradual change in attitudes brought about by the efforts of the Sisters, teachers, students and family members. But these changes were also brought about by each one of you, our benefactors, who have supported this school through your interest, prayers and financial contributions.

You have genuinely touched the lives of the poor with your admirable generosity and compassion. The orphans and students have voiced their hearts full of gratitude to each one of you. They ask this question; "Where would we have been today if you hadn't reached out generously to us?"

Sincere thanks to all who have helped us with the development of this school over the past 12 years, and hopefully, will continue as far as possible.

In Mary our Mother,
Sister Makelita Meni, smsm

Those who have gone before us...



**Sister Mary Damiana Bordes,
smsm**

**July 18TH, 1926 – December 2nd,
2019**

Read more about her life:

[http://www.smsmsisters.org/
new.php?a=6a&id=1048](http://www.smsmsisters.org/new.php?a=6a&id=1048)



**Sister Mary Jeannette Misiura,
smsm**

**August 10th, 1924 – December 3rd,
2019**

Read more about her life:

[http://www.smsmsisters.or
g/new.php?a=6a&id=1049](http://www.smsmsisters.org/new.php?a=6a&id=1049)



Thinking of becoming a Marist Missionary Sister?

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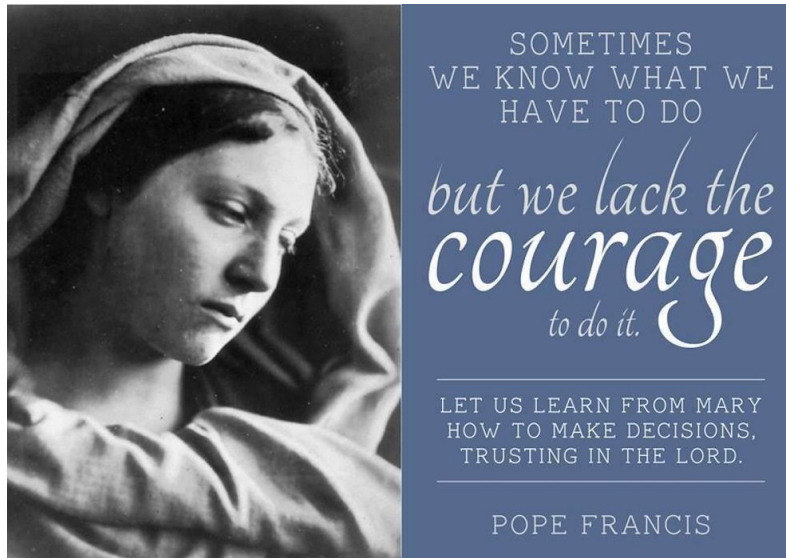
Sister Mary Jane Kenney (left), completed her term as Regional Leader on January 1st, and has now been missioned to the staff of Mary's Guest House, a transitional home for women victims of human trafficking, in California. Prayers and best wishes!

Wills – Memorial Gifts

If you are planning your bequests or memorial gifts you can help us to continue to bring the good news of God's love to those in need in many parts of the world.

Our official name and address for legal documents:

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