

# Marist Mission Today

Number 89

Marist Missionary Sisters

Fall 2021

*Dear Partners in Mission,*

*Greetings of peace to you all at this festivity of Thanksgiving!*



*As I reflect at this specific time of the year, I realize the sacredness of tradition and how this important event has enhanced this country's way of life for centuries. It is a part of our task as people of God. We are indebted to be grateful for God's abundance, which contains challenges that encourage us to move out of our comfort zone and share that bounty with the least fortunate.*

*I consider Thanksgiving, before Advent & Christmas, as an opportunity to contemplate the blessings of the entire year: to rejoice in what we have received and to learn about being good caretakers of the place in which we live, and to open our hearts to be more understanding about how to do this. We believe that "everything works together for good", and we need to learn what we can do to be better disciples of Christ.*

*Thanksgiving also allows us to express our appreciation to the Master of the vineyard. Pope Francis stresses that **"gratitude is always a powerful weapon. Only if we can contemplate and feel genuine gratitude for all those ways in which we have experienced God's love will we allow the Spirit to grant us the freshness that can renew our life and mission."***

*May we continue to celebrate with gratitude this festival and remember the great people who have worked and sacrificed for this land so that today we may harvest with joy.*

*Thank you for your continuous prayers and generous donations that enable our mission to extend to the least fortunate. Have a grace-filled Thanksgiving, and God bless you all!*

*Sister Helen Muller, SMSM  
Regional Leader  
Region of the Americas*

## *SMSM in Jamaica – Then and Now*



Sister Mary Zita with leprosy patients doing carpentry at the hospital in Spanish Town, Jamaica, in the 1940's.



Sister Atonina (rt) with a sewing student at the Guadalupe Centre, 2021.



Marist Missionary Sisters in Jamaica gathered in Kingston on Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of Sister Anne Quinn, and to thank her for 20 years of loving service to the people and to the Sisters in Jamaica. Bishop Emeritus Reece celebrated the Eucharist with Father Roger from the Gordon Town parish. Sr. Anne departed for Australia on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021. (Front row: Sisters Esther, Rabunna, Rachel, Ilaisaane, Teresia, Anne, Atonina, Prista; Back row: Sisters Senitila, Bishop Emeritus Reece, Monica, Fr. Roger, Sosefina, Mira.

## *Our Story in Jamaica*

The Marist Missionary Sisters first arrived in Jamaica in 1940, when it was still a colony of the British Empire. The British Governor General, Sir Arthur Richards, had formerly been Governor of Fiji and had seen the ministry of our Sisters on the island of Makogai, where they cared for people from many different islands of the Pacific who had leprosy. When he arrived in Jamaica in 1938, he was shocked at the poor conditions at the “Lepers Home” in Spanish Town and determined to have the Marist Missionary Sisters come to bring about the much-needed changes in the care of people who had this dreaded disease.

Over the years, understanding of the disease and the treatment of people who have leprosy (now called Hansen’s Disease) changed dramatically around the world, and the strict isolation of people with this illness was no longer required. In 1969 the hospital in Makogai, Fiji, was closed and by November 1975, the one in Spanish Town, Jamaica was also closed, as there were new medications for people with Hansen’s Disease and they could be treated at general clinics or hospitals as needed.

In Jamaica there has always been a concern among the Sisters to help people to develop skills through which they could earn a living. At Hansen Home there had been training in skills like carpentry or sewing by

which patients could earn some money for themselves. Today the Sisters work with many different people at two Centres where they teach skills that are needed to gain employment in today’s Jamaica.

In Montego Bay, years ago the Sisters started a small “Self-Help Centre” through which they taught people some basic skills, and provided them an opportunity to save their money in a bank. The Sisters also tutored students who needed extra help with their school subjects. Later, the Diocese built the Holy Family Centre, to which many young people come to learn the skills they need to work in the hotel and restaurant industry, as Jamaica became a successful “tourist destination” in the Caribbean. (cont, p. 3)



Above: Sister Prista Haga (top, left) with a group of students who gained certificates at the Holy Family Centre in Montego Bay.





Above: Sisters, Staff and Students at a recent graduation from the Guadalupe Munro Centre.

In the 81 years since our Sisters first arrived in Jamaica, besides the changes in our ways of service, there have also been great changes in our communities. In the early years nearly all the Marist Missionary Sisters who arrived in Jamaica came from North America or from Europe. In recent years our Sisters missioned in Jamaica have come from many places around the world: the Pacific Islands (Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Solomon Islands); Australia, New Zealand, Bangladesh, and Africa (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi). Sisters from many parts of the world are united in one mission: to serve God's people, in Mary's way, according to the needs of the times.



The latest SMSM Sister to arrive in Jamaica is Sr. Pascaline Ntahizaniye, who is from Burundi. She made her novitiate in Senegal and is now in the Seaford Town community.



Sr Monika Pagatele (center), from Futuna, is a nurse who served in Senegal for some years before coming to Jamaica. Now she does home health visits as well as work in the Clinic in Seaford Town, accompanied by Sr Mira Taurannang, from Kiribati, who arrived in Jamaica last February.

**“Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is...Life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you.”**  
Pope Francis



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Reward, O Lord, with Eternal Life, all those who for Your Name's sake, do us good.

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