

MISSIONS

Christmas Card Program NEW DESIGN!

New designs and new projects to support are now available. An ideal meaningful gift for someone special this Christmas, the MAMI Christmas Gift Cards are a gift that keeps on giving for the entire year and beyond.

The concept is simple; make a recommended tax deductible donation to one of our six programs and you will receive a Christmas Gift Card, which explains that you have purchased a gift card in place of a gift, and give it to a loved one.

Our regular Goat, Chook and Tool Box gift cards supporting education programs in Indonesia will also be



available. The income generated through the goats and chooks pays for books and school fees. Your gift of an 20-piece tool box to a young person studying to be a mechanic in one of our technical colleges, will help them complete their training.

Help support education in China and India. Books and Educational equipment to assist orphans and internal migrants in China. Help students in India to get to school by buying them a bike or a desk for them to use when they actually get to school. All these practical things which will help young people receive education.

Cards are available online
oblates.com.au/mami or at your local
Oblate College or Parish office.

PIM UPDATE



Luisa Amati, PIMs co-ordinator, met with some of our PIMs from Brisbane. Picture left to right; Joseph Mula, Bev Watkinson, Tony Brown and Maureen Brown. These PIMs are currently working in our Hong Kong and China Oblate missions. We are blessed to have these PIMs returning each year to support our program. Please keep them in your prayers.

Vacancies for 2015

Summer Program – Hong Kong

The Summer Program will run from mid-July and finish mid-August 2015. The requirements consist of four weeks teaching with two classes per day during the week (8.15–10.00am and 10.30am–12.15pm) with the afternoon free. Some Saturday teaching may be required. Experienced English teachers required.

Partner in Mission – Hong Kong

PIMs required to commence either Feb – May 2015 or Sep – Dec 2015. The requirements consist of teaching English full time Mon – Fri.

The program includes some financial support and subsidies, (accommodation, food and stipend) as well as the opportunity to explore the many wondrous sites of Hong Kong.

If you are interested in this opportunity or know of someone who is, please contact Luisa Amati on (03) 9805 8824 or pim@oblates.com.au for further information.

Summer Experience Reflection

The Partners in Mission program runs a range of mission activities in which lay people are encouraged to participate in the Oblate apostolate. The activities in the Mission program include teaching English in Hong Kong and helping in the orphanage in Beijing.

For four weeks from mid-July to mid-August, Val Sherry, Joseph Mula and I had the rewarding experience of working with students enrolled in the Oblate's English Summer School in Hong Kong. The Summer School is run to improve the spoken English of the students and to increase the awareness within the Hong Kong community of the work of the Oblate Fathers.

The Summer School runs from about 8:15am until about noon. The afternoon is available to prepare for the next day and to have a look around Hong Kong. Schools in Hong Kong are different to our schools. The buildings are usually four or five stories high and built around a central courtyard where the children play. At Notre Dame College, where we taught, the priests lived on level five which was their rooftop monastery. We volunteers lived on level six of the Oblate Primary school, some five minutes away by bus. It didn't worry us one little bit that the lift was being repaired. We just saw it as part of the Oblate apostolate of climbing towards heaven!

The School Principal, Stephen Hon, had emphasised that the main need was to give the students practice in speaking English. And Fr Slawek, of the beaming smile, had bounced into the classroom at the first opportunity and told us all that we were to have fun. This was something of a challenge for a secondary teacher like myself who was content orientated and not sure what to do with primary school students.

My students were in Grade Five and on their summer vacation but well-disposed all the

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Our Gift to You Novena of Masses

In his recent exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis publically laid out what he wants to focus on during his papacy and reminds us that we have wonderful 'Good News' which should not only bring joy to our lives but is something we are excited to share. "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew. I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come."

The special Masses of Thanksgiving offered on your behalf is our way of saying 'thank you' for your generous support of the Oblate missions and spreading the joy of the Gospel. You are invited to place your special intentions and prayers of thanksgiving on the other side of this note, particularly the members of your family that have gone to God this year, and send it to the MAMI office. All intentions will be placed in the Camberwell chapel where masses will be offered from the 16th December to Christmas Day

Our Gift to You Novena of Masses

Dear Father,

Kindly include the following intentions in the Christmas Masses.

(Optional)

Name:

Address:

Please forward this to:

MAMI Office
P.O. Box 384
Camberwell Vic 3124



MISSIONS

The Promise of Christmas

What is the promise of Christmas? What Christmas is meant to bring is laid out in the biblical texts given us in our advent liturgies. Mostly these are prophetic visions of what things will look like after God sends a messiah into the world. Taken mainly from the Jewish prophets, particularly from Isaiah, these visions promise that the birth of the messiah will turn reality delightfully upside down. What Christmas promises is universal peace, the lion and lamb lying down together; reconciliation, enemies forgiving each other; justice, valleys filled in and deep places raised up; food for all, every sheep carefully tended to; restfulness from our longing, everyone cradled peacefully in loving arms; and healing from all wounds, God himself drying every tear on earth. The Christmas crib is an icon of that peace.

The hymn "Silent Night" captures its spirit. Granted, this is not the whole story or perhaps even the real story. There are perspectives that the evening news doesn't tell; the vast majority of people on this planet are sincere and are trying to deal with all of this as best they can. As well, the vast majority of people on this planet rise each day and turn their faces to God and pray. There's still more belief than non-belief, sincerity than insincerity, sanity than insanity, and goodness than malice on this planet.

Not all is war and violence. So what is the real state of things? Can we sing "Silent Night" and have it mean something? Has Christmas delivered on its promise? Singing "Silent Night" and "Joy to the World" with the same wonder felt by the first shepherds, after just having been told of Jesus' birth by the angels, is precisely what our faith asks of us. And that's an adult, not a childish, task. The Christmas promise has come true, though we need to recognize how: The prophet Isaiah tells us that when the birth of the messiah is announced to King Ahaz, God says: "A virgin will give birth to a son and she shall call him Immanuel" - a name which means "God-is-with-us."

To understand this is to celebrate Christmas without denying or trivializing either the truth of God's promise or the real pain and evil in the world. Christmas is precisely the challenge to celebrate while we are still in pain. Jesus' birth means that God-is-with-us. That fact alone doesn't mean immediate consummate joy or even automatic justice. Our world still looks much the same. In Christmas, God doesn't send a super-hero to rid the earth of evil by forcefully destroying all that's bad. God sends a helpless baby, lying in the straw, needing to be picked up, nursed, and nurtured. That's God's wisdom; the power of a baby.

Babies don't shoot bad guys, like Sylvester Stalone or James Bond at the end of movie, they change hearts by offering a gentler presence. So Christmas doesn't rid the world of evil. For the Christian, just as for everyone else, there will still be sickness, senseless hurt, broken dreams, and cold, lonely seasons when love is far away. Christmas doesn't promise heaven on earth. Rather it promises us, here on earth, something else: God's presence in our lives. And it's that presence, not the power of a superhero to blow away all that's bad, that redeems us. When we sense that God-is-with-us we can give up selfishness, bitterness, and jealousy because we are no longer alone in them. Everything can be born if it can be shared. We no longer walk alone in our pain. When we are not alone then pain and happiness are not mutually exclusive and the agonies and hurts of life do not exclude deep meaning and deep joy.

Avery Dulles once put it this way: "The incarnation does not provide us with a ladder by which to escape the ambiguities of life and scale the heights of heaven. Rather it enables us to burrow deep into the heart of planet earth and find it shimmering with divinity." Fr Ron Rolheiser OMI

(Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Currently, Father Rolheiser is serving as President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas. He can be contacted through his website, www.ronrolheiser.com)

PIM UPDATE

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same to receiving instruction. Some of the students had a reasonable knowledge of English while others had very little confidence in their ability. Most were quite shy, at least for the first week. One of my students, William, had the best grasp of English and would help me out by translating for the less experienced students. Another of my students, Jason, didn't speak or do any work for the first week. Eventually we came to an agreement. He liked flags so he would copy out and colour the flags of the world from the front of an English/Traditional Chinese dictionary. In week three Jason came up and told me in broken English that he wouldn't be coming for three days because of his grandfather's death. When I asked him when and how his grandfather had died we were able to work out in our first real conversation that it was twelve months ago and it had something to do with the brain. When Jason returned three days later he was less interested in flags and more interested in speaking English.

In our free time in the afternoons and the weekends we did some sightseeing. Fellow Aussie teacher Joseph led us around the largest book fair I have ever seen. Another day Val and I visited Macau and explored the Old Portuguese part of the town. The bones of the Nagasaki martyrs (1597 AD) are kept in the Crypt under what remains of St. Paul's church.

All in all a fascinating experience and I was very happy that I could contribute in a small way to the wonderful mission work of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. (Keiron Long)



Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate

Published by the Oblate Office of Mission, M.A.M.I. Centre, P.O. Box 384, Camberwell, Vic 3124
Telephone (03) 9805 8888 Fax: (03) 9813 2696 Email: mami@oblates.com.au Web: www.oblates.com.au