



**MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF SAINT PAUL**  
**477 Royal Parade, Parkville Vic 3052**

**LINK**

***between relatives, friends, benefactors  
and Paulist Missionaries***

**MINISTERING IN A MUSLIM ENVIRONMENT**

Issue 2 / September 2021

We Paulist Missionaries minister in a parish on the outskirts of Lahore, Pakistan, in an area called Juhanna Abad. Pakistan is Muslim state, and the Christians amount to just under 5% in a population of 180 million people.

As pastors, our main concern is the spiritual welfare of fellow Pakistani Christians. The religion one is born in marks a person for life. One's religion is even entered on the Identity Card and is an essential feature that needs to be listed in any CV! One can imagine, therefore, the type of harassment faced by those who do not belong to mainstream religion of the land: Sunni Islam.

Christians are free to practise the faith and we are allowed to minister to our people. Our churches are full every Sunday; daily Mass is much less attended. Families are reached through regular visits by the Parish catechists. Christians have a very strong devotion during the Fridays of Lent, when people attend numerously. Here life is very challenging—and this is even more so for Christians—our people identify closely with Christ crucified.



Celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Pompei together with the parish community.

Prejudice manifests itself in many different ways. Students complain that in public schools they have to face so much scorn or isolation from their peers and, at times, even from their teachers. Muslims will not do any work which they consider as impure—like public cleaning for example. Christians have to take on these jobs and therefore, by association, they are often looked upon as dirty and people who never wash!

The Church in Pakistan invests very heavily in schools and education, and our schools are held in high regard even by



The school children in our parish welcome our Superior General during one of his visits to our mission.

most Muslims. In our parish we run We run a High School for boys, and charge only nominal fees, from \$2 to \$5 monthly, so as to encourage parents to send their boys to school. Many are exempted even from paying any fees, and are also helped with free books and stationery. We have also instituted a special fund to help students with their higher education, as this is extremely expensive here, and well beyond the modest means of our Christians. Moreover, our Church catechists keep us informed about those parishioners who may need medical care, and then we help out.

We Paulist Missionaries have teamed up with the congregation of Medical Sisters, and receive funds through our benefactors; with this money we can buy any medicines that are required and which are then distributed free of charge to the poor. These religious sisters offer their service to everyone and they never ask about the religion of the people who call on them. Their intention is to offer a loving service as a reflection of Christ's love for everyone.

Although the physical conditions in which we live are tough, helping our Pakistani Christians is a real joy. We know that through our help we can help them forge their own identity in the midst of so much suffering and stiff challenges. All this makes our presence in Pakistan very meaningful indeed.



Using our school premises to assist parishioners to apply for government subsidies during the COVID pandemic.



In our house we welcome young men as we journey with them on their journey of vocational discernment.



A group of lay missionaries offering ministry in our parish

Various groups of young people visit Pakistan for a missionary experience. Recently a group of three medical doctors, two fully qualified nurses, a chemist, and two teachers spent some time in our mission.

This picture was taken at a village where a large number of brick workers live; these are modern bonded slaves who work long hours for a pittance in the attempt to pay off some debt to the landlord by manufacturing bricks. We were not even allowed to visit their place of work! These young people paid for their own trip and



raised funds to buy medicines to distribute to the people who required them. They dedicated their annual leave to come to Pakistan and offer their services there for free.

This village had never had a medical camp before, and they were extremely grateful. For this purpose they offered us their church to set up as a clinic. The doctors spent over seven hours examining these people and giving them whatever medicines they required.

The people in the village had a stand-by generator in case the electricity supply was switched off; which it did. The funny side of it is that after some time, the generator also decided to call it a day, and the medical group had to spend the last three hours giving their service to the people in sweltering heat of 40+ degrees!

Fr Gerard Bonello mssp  
Regional Superior MSSP

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Dear Friends

In the first issue of the 'Link,' Fr John, our Provincial Superior, said that this newsletter aims to share with you information about our various ministries.

Among our various ministries in Australia we reach out to members of the Maltese community. Within this community there has been a tradition of celebrating the feast of the Nativity of Mary, also known among as Our Lady of Victories, a feast that is very close to the hearts of these migrants. This feast is celebrated annually on the second Sunday of September at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. Obviously, both last year and this year we have been unable to celebrate this feast due to the health restrictions caused by the COVID pandemic.

This feast is celebrated to commemorate and thank God for the birth of Our Lady. Celebrating a birthday always brings happiness to the one celebrating and to her family and friends. On 8 September the Maltese also celebrate the end of the Great Siege of 1565, when the Knights defeated the forces of the Ottoman Empire. Every time we commemorate the birthday of Our Lady, we can confidently hope for great peace in our heart. The Maltese have always turned to Our Lady in difficult times to intercede to her Son Jesus on their behalf.



The statue of Our Lady, which is taken to the Cathedral each year for this celebration, was blessed by Cardinal Gilroy on 14 July 1963. During the year the statue is housed in our chapel at 19-21 Stanley Street Sydney, in a niche which can be admired both by people who visit the chapel and also by anyone walking past De Piro House.





The celebration begins with the procession with the statue of Our Lady. During the procession the Rosary is prayed accompanied by the choir. The Knights of Malta and children dressed in traditional costumes, lead the congregation around the cathedral. At the conclusion of the procession Eucharist is celebrated.

Nowadays, for the benefit of the younger members of our community, most of whom neither understand nor speak Maltese fluently, Mass is celebrated both in Maltese and in English. The celebration is always attended by a large crowd and many come from distant rural areas by coaches. For many this is also a moment of building the community among these migrants.

We are very grateful for the many volunteers who provide light refreshments at the conclusion of the celebration.

The senior members of the Maltese community are still grateful that we Paulist Missionaries can accompany them in the daily struggles and express grateful for the pastoral care they receive from their chaplain with whom they can communicate in their native language.

The Australian Church and community is grateful for the great contributions of the Maltese migrants over the years.

Fr Tarcisio Micallef mssp  
Migrant Chaplain in NSW



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