

VOC



maryknoll lay
missioners

Where The Compassion Of The Faithful Transforms Lives

Voices of Compassion



**Different
Paths to
Conversion**

PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS!



*Make a Difference in the World.
Become a Lay Missioner.*

Maryknoll Lay Missioners (MKLM) offers U.S. Catholics like Rick Dixon, pictured above, the opportunity to respond to their mission call by living and working with poor communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Rick serves Christian Base Communities in a poor, rural area in El Salvador where people have tried to re-settle after having

been displaced by that country's brutal civil war. He offers literacy, education, and skills training programs to help children stay out of gangs and adults to find dignified employment.

How about you? Do you have gifts or skills that would help to bring about sustainable change in poor communities overseas?

If so, we hope you'll consider becoming a Maryknoll Lay Missioner. To learn more, call Alma Garcia at (800) 818-5276, or email her at join@mklm.org. You can also visit our website at www.mklm.org.



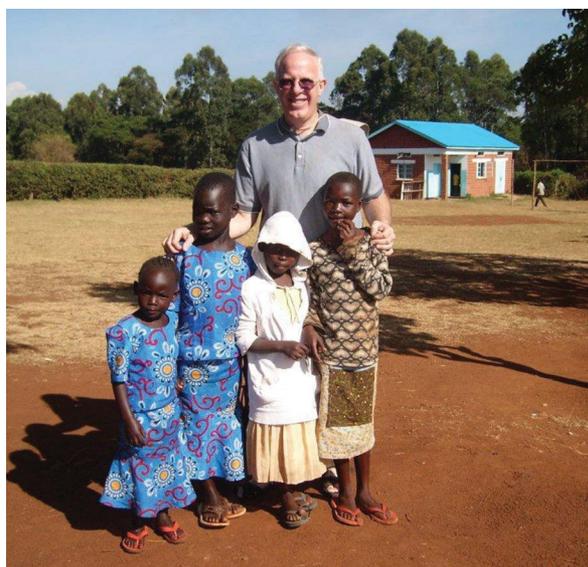
Dear Friends,

Peace and all good things! Here at Maryknoll we are deep in the embrace of Spring. This winter was a difficult one in the Northeast but throughout the cold months we were constantly warmed by the love and consolation that comes in doing God's work.

Spring is the perfect time to pause and reflect on one of our Core Values – Conversion. During one of his Lenten homilies, Pope Francis stressed the importance of conversion as a theme of Lent. As he said in his homily, there are signs that we are going along the good path: *“Hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow, take care of the neighbor, the sick, the poor, the needy, the ignorant.... Care for our brothers and sisters... as the Lord teaches us.”*

Throughout the world, our missionaries have heard the Lord's call. They are caring for their brothers and sisters, and in doing so they are drawing closer to His grace.

In this issue of *Voices of Compassion*, we are fortunate to hear from Fr. Charlie Dittmeier on his experiences of conversion in Cambodia. Missioner Judy Walters writes to us



Sam Stanton, Executive Director and MKLM Missioner, with children in Kitale, Kenya

from Kenya about Mama Nemah and the good work being done at St. Patrick's Parish Clinic. Maryknoll Affiliate, Kathy Gribble, shares her experience on a Friends Across Borders immersion trip to Kenya. I am also pleased to share Missioner Joanne Blaney's story about finding God behind prison walls in Brazil.



Sam Stanton, Executive Director, with children in Kitale, Kenya getting ready to visit Missioners' ministries

In the 1970s and 1980s I worked in Chile. One of the important things I learned there was that the more you get to know the other, the more you get to know God. You strengthen your relationship with Jesus by stepping outside yourself and inviting others into your life. In the latter years of my time in Chile we had more and more contact with the Mapuche Indians. Very few of them converted in the literal sense, but we learned from each other – they from us, and we from them.

Pope Francis calls on the Church to step outside of Herself, to go to the outskirts of existence, wherever that may be. Your prayers and your support are helping Maryknoll Lay Missioners accomplish that mission. Without you, we would not be able to support Missioners in Cambodia, or in Kenya, or in Brazil.

Thank you for helping us to live our mission. Thank you for helping us minister to those we come in contact with, and allowing them to realize the love of Christ through our hands and our works. That is the true conversion we are all working for – to care for our brothers and sisters as the Lord teaches us.

In mission,

Sam Stanton
Executive Director

Volume 14:
Issue 1

Cover photo: Dee Dungy MKLM missionary (Cambodia) praying with the children prior to breaking bread

Photos contributed by: Joanne Blaney, Kathleen Bond, Margo Cambier, Heidi Cerneka, Charlie Dittmeier, Rick Dixon, Kathy Gribble, Catherine Heinhold, Ana Navarrete, Sam Stanton

MKLM Mission Statement

Maryknoll Lay Missioners is a Catholic organization inspired by the mission of Jesus to live and work in poor communities in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, responding to basic needs and helping to create a more just and compassionate world.

We hope you will join us as a Companion in Mission!

Companions in Mission is Maryknoll Lay Missioner's sponsorship initiative which enables insightful benefactors to make regular, ongoing gifts of support, thus fulfilling our Mission to follow in Christ's footsteps—to live and work among the poor and marginalized. Continuous financial support, whether monthly, quarterly or annually is critical to our missioners in the field doing God's work.

If you choose to become a **Companion** with us in mission, you will join more than 1000 other supporters who are committed to alleviating the effects of poverty, in our attempt to achieve universal social justice and peace.



As you read the first-hand experiences of our missioners in action, in this issue of *Voices of Compassion*, our hope is that you will be moved to join us in our mission. If you would like to give ongoing support, or find out more about the benefits of becoming one of our **Companions in Mission**, please contact Richard Gatjens at 1-800-867-2980 or rgatjens@mklm.org.

Contact Us

To visit us, learn more about becoming a lay missioner or to support us, please visit our website www.mklm.org



Find Us on
Facebook.

I Found Hope Behind Prison Walls

by Sam Stanton

As a child I often asked myself why wars happen. Why can't people get along? As I have matured I have learned how complicated we humans can be and how difficult it is for us to reconcile not only with our fellow human beings but even with ourselves. Greed, pride, mistrust and envy can create anger capable of eating away at our very beings.

The message of Jesus takes us in another direction. It can break down the cycle of violence and destruction but it must begin with the **conversion of heart** of each individual person. In order to make societal change, Christ's message must be leaven in the heart of each woman and man. It is a

In order to make societal change, Christ's message must be leaven in the heart of each woman and man.



Sant'Ana prison



slow but necessary process to build a compassionate society – one which truly cares for all creation and looks for the good in all human beings.

During my recent pastoral visit to our missions in Brazil, I witnessed this **conversion of heart** in a very profound and concrete way. During my first days in the city of Sao Paulo, where ten Maryknoll Lay Missioners

Joanne Blaney, MKLM Missioner, (left) with Maryknoll Sister Hyun Jung Kim and Sister prospect Armeline Sidoine

live and work, I visited several prisons and inside each I witnessed a variety of ministries taking place. In fact, in my 9 days in Brazil I spent 2 full days in prison!

Early in the week I observed Kathy Bond and Carolyn Trumble minister

CONVERSION OF HEART

to pregnant women who were incarcerated, mostly for robberies or drug trafficking. Heidi Cerneka reviewed the sentences of various women in the general prison, while Sirikit Noronha and Katie Coldwell attended to the legal processes. Catherine Heinhold and Joanne Blaney worked with male prisoners and guards in the huge and overcrowded (*an understatement for sure*) “temporary” prison.

The cells are built to house four prisoners but many sleep more than 40. The conditions are deplorable, with literally every available space taken up for sleeping.

Each experience had a very strong impact on me but I want to focus on the last. The men’s prison is just one of the many places where Joanne Blaney from the class of 1991 has initiated processes of restorative justice. In a nutshell,

restorative justice is a process to help people get in touch with their own anger, recognize its origins and, in the end, work for a **conversion of heart**. The goal is for the individual to look at oneself, at others and at the world in a very new way.

This particular jail is for first time offenders waiting for their sentence. The cells are built to house four prisoners but many sleep more than

40. The conditions are deplorable, with literally every available space taken up for sleeping. We went to a classroom outside the main jail and sat with 15 male prisoners – three of whom were convicted of homicide. For the next two hours they talked about their experience of restorative justice, getting in touch with

their own anger, its source and facing the grave actions each had taken.

What is the process? The offender has to come face to face with those they have harmed. They listen to the impact they have had on the



Heidi Cerneka, MKLM Missioner in Brazil, talking to an inmate in prison

other(s) and get to a point where they can ask forgiveness. It is a powerful experience.

After the prisoners, we met with the warden and guards who had participated in the first phase of the process. They said the process had helped them look at the prisoners as human beings. One guard in particular, who often has to deal with homeless men being brought

in, said that the process had changed the way he viewed the incoming prisoners. He no longer saw them as “bums,” but rather as humans – each with their own history that had pushed them into such a reality. Joanne has carried out this process of restorative justice in prisons, schools, parish communities and other settings. Some might say these are small steps,

CONVERSION OF HEART

but each is a step toward a **conversion of heart**. Imagine if such a process of self-awareness could take place in schools, prisons, parishes, companies and institutions across the globe. How powerful the result would be.

On the following Sunday, two days before leaving Brazil, the Gospel reading for Mass that day was from Matthew, Chapter 5:

... You have heard it said,
You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.
But I say to you, love your enemies,
And pray for those who persecute you,
that you may be children of your Heavenly Father,
for He makes His sun rise on the bad and the good,
and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust...



MKLM Missioner Katie Coldwell (right) and Ariane Carvallho of A Key team

In a nutshell, restorative justice is a process to help people get in touch with their own anger, recognize its origins and, in the end, work for a **conversion of heart**.

As I sat in a small chapel in Perus, a sector on the outskirts of the sprawling metropolis of Sao Paulo, listening to this message, it brought to mind the scenes of the various prisons. It put me in touch with the great works Maryknoll Lay Missioners are doing in Brazil and in the other countries where we minister.

This reflection deepened my commitment to forge ahead and give it my all to ensure the continued good work and success of Maryknoll Lay Missioners. It is all about the simple **conversion of heart** – a new way of looking at the world and each other. *Peace and blessings to each of you who help it happen by supporting our missioners around the world.*

Did You Know?

The three entities of Maryknoll –

- Maryknoll Lay Missioners,
 - Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers,
 - Maryknoll Sisters–
- are each separately funded and operated.

Although we often join together to serve in mission, each entity depends independently on its donors for support.

Maryknoll Lay Missioners serves the poor in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.



To learn more about us, and how your support creates lasting improvements worldwide, visit **mklm.org**.

Conversion Through Action

by Fr. Charlie Dittmeier



Gandhi's quote, "You must be the change you want to see in the world," has appeared in many places and many contexts in recent years, and it is relevant to our thinking about mission, and about conversion, one of the core values of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners.

Fr. Charlie Dittmeier (Associate Priest) talking to Buddhist monks. Far left: returned MKLM Missioner Susan Sporl

The Church's understanding of conversion has developed over the years. For many centuries, conversion basically referred to bringing God and the gospel to people who did not know them. And it often focused on doctrine. The faith was taught and proclaimed and the people believed and assented. They were converted in the sense of Matthew 28:19-20: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, ... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.*

This doctrinal proclamation of the gospel is certainly part of delivering the message of Christianity. Today we understand that God is already present everywhere in the world that missionaries go and that conversion is much more than an intellectual decision to believe. As Missioners, we must not only proclaim the gospel in our teaching, but we must also live out our belief in our daily lives. As Christ says in Matthew 25:35-36:

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me....

People are much more open to accepting the gospel when they see it lived in the Missioners' lives and not just spoken from their mouths. This is what Gandhi means when he says, *"Be the change...."*

As we live and work with people who are poor, suffering, and marginalized, we see people as Jesus saw them.

A young Buddhist man was brought to the St. Elizabeth House in Phnom Penh with a cancer of the face. St. Elizabeth's is a small center for people with serious diseases who come to Phnom Penh for treatment and have no other place to stay.

The young man's cancer progressed rapidly, painfully destroying his face, but the staff of St. Elizabeth stayed with him throughout. As his death became imminent, the youth, always calm and accepting of his suffering, began to talk of becoming Christian, of joining those who cared for him

so lovingly. The priest of the parish and the staff helped him discern this choice, and a few days before he died he was baptized.

people of all religions. Bopha had also experienced a personal conversion as well as a religious one, finding that becoming Christian

People are much more open to accepting the gospel when they see it lived in the Missioners' lives and not just spoken from their mouths.

Thirann is a young Buddhist woman first attracted to Christianity in the 1990s. Coming to Phnom Penh to study and then working for the Maryknoll AIDS project, she noted how the Catholics helped all the poor, regardless of their religion.

She herself rejoiced in Christianity's hope of personal conversion. We try to do good but sometimes we sin; fortunately we have a chance to repent – to be welcomed back by a loving God, to be converted. That convinced her to be baptized. Baptized with Thirann was another young woman, Bopha, who had come from the countryside to study. She was attracted by the story of Jesus and also by the loving service of the Catholic organizations to

strengthened her to overcome her angry attitude toward life.

Another understanding of conversion that has developed especially since Vatican Council II is that we Missioners are also converted as we encounter the people who receive us. As we live and work with people who are poor, suffering, and marginalized, we see people as Jesus saw them. We learn better what the cross means; and however big we perceive our own cross to be, we must acknowledge that the people we work with are burdened much more than we are. As we accompany them, we gain new understandings and insights about how to carry all our crosses as we walk together. We can better reflect the lives and love God wishes for us.

Come take a trip with us that could change your life



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missioners

Friends Across Borders is Maryknoll Lay Missioners' mission awareness program.

You will have the opportunity to experience what you could never discover in travel brochures, films or books. You will experience what life is really like in communities where MKLM missionaries are living out their faith, and working for, and with, the local people.

We look forward to hearing from you and accompanying you on an experience that will change and enrich your life.

Upcoming Mission Awareness Trips

**CHILE-Notre Dame-Marquette,
February 7 - 25, 2015**

Deadline for signups: October 7, 2014

**CAMBODIA-Cincinnati Archdiocese,
February 14 - 26, 2015**

Deadline for signups: October 15, 2014

**EL SALVADOR-JustFaith Ministries,
March 20 - 29, 2015**

Deadline for signups: November 21, 2014

**EL SALVADOR-Mission Discernment,
June 12 - 21, 2015**

Deadline for signups: February 13, 2015

BRAZIL, June 13 - 23, 2015

Deadline for signups: February 13, 2015

**KENYA-JustFaith Ministries,
June 13 - 25, 2015**

Deadline for signups: February 13, 2015

TANZANIA, August 8 - 20, 2015

Deadline for signups: April 8, 2015

**BOLIVIA-Portland, ME Diocese,
August 8 - 20, 2015**

Deadline for signups: April 8, 2015



Contact Us Today:

CECILIA ESPINOZA

Maryknoll Lay Missioners

Friends Across Borders Manager

P.O. Box 307

Maryknoll, NY 10545-0307

Phone: 914-762-6364 ext. 207

FAX: 914-762-7362

friendsacrossborders@mklm.org

www.friendsacrossborders.org

The Path Is Not Straight

by Judy Walters

Judy Walters has been a Marykoll Lay Missioner since 2010. In Mombasa, Kenya, she uses her skills as a Registered Nurse to minister to the poor and sick of St. Patrick's Clinic.



Judy Walter, MKLM Missioner in Kenya, talking to clinic staff

St. Patrick's was founded to address the health needs of those who live in the slum area on the outskirts of Mombasa, known as "Bangladesh." In collaboration with the Archdiocese of Mombasa and a host of other ministries, St. Patrick's serves a population of more than 50,000 people.

In the spirit of conversion, one of the core values of Maryknoll Lay Missioners, Judy shares this reflection on Mama Nemah, a respected elder in the community of Bangladesh.

St Patrick's probably has the cleanest church, school and dispensary in the whole of Bangladesh slum, all because of Mama Nemah. You will see her mopping floors, cleaning toilets, washing windows – even setting up for Mass and teaching the nursery school children how to wash their hands. She gives life to the saying, *Cleanliness is next to Godliness.*



Mama Nemah

When she is not doing these activities, you will find her sitting on a long bench where she keeps her cleaning supplies – reading her Bible, praying, writing in her journal, or counseling neighbors and friends who have come seeking her wisdom and advice.

We were talking one day, and I was telling her what an inspiration she

was for me. She laughed. I asked her to tell me her story... did she always have such a deep faith? She laughed again, then began to tell me her story: *"I was born in a good Muslim family, with good Muslim parents. When I was 14 years old, my parents arranged a marriage for me, as is our custom. I did not know the young man, or anything about the arrangement until it was all decided. My parents told me that the young man was Catholic, but not to worry... he had promised to become Muslim. That never happened, and it was I who was made to convert to Catholicism.*

*Twenty years later, and after baptizing and raising our seven children in the Catholic faith, my husband sent me back to my parents. He took our children to his parents' home, and started a new life with a much younger wife. My parents told me it was God's will that I should now come back to Islam. But my children were crying to me: Mama, will you abandon us and go back to Islam? I was very confused, but it was their need that gave me the sense of direction. I went and collected my children from my husband's parents and told them we would find the way together. **It was at that moment that I knew that I wanted to be Catholic with my children, and I***

promised myself that I would be a good Catholic, and help my children to be good Catholics too.

God helped us find the way. We moved into Bangladesh and I found work in a garment factory. I had a charcoal and firewood business on the side, and enrolled my children in government school. My last born is now finishing secondary school. When the garment factory closed, it was at this time that Father Dolan arrived and started St. Patrick's Church here in Bangladesh. I was hired as the cleaning woman and it has been the greatest blessing in my life."

As I listened to Mama Nemah's story I was even more inspired and felt the confluence of two spiritual traditions – Islam and Christianity – shaping her spirituality. True to her Muslim background, she turns to God in prayer often in the day, just as she must have seen her parents do as a child. And because of her life circumstances, and true to her word, she has embraced the Catholic faith. What she is for me is a great soul formed by two great religious traditions. She radiates the joy of the Divine that can't be confined to any one religious tradition.

Conversion Through Immersion with the People of Kenya – a Life Changing Experience

by **Kathy Gribble**

Late last year, along with nine other adventurers and two Maryknoll Lay Missioners' guides, I traveled to Kenya. I have always wanted to visit Africa – I feel that African music and dance express all the best emotions of life. This trip allowed us to immerse ourselves in the lives of the people of Kenya and to witness firsthand the ministries of the Missioners who live in their midst.

The ministries are as unique and essential as the Missioners themselves. In Kitale, our first stop, we visited with MKLM's Cindy and John Korb at St. Monica's Secondary School for Girls, where Cindy is currently working.

We visited over tea and treats with five girls at the school and I felt honored and privileged to spend quality time with these young women. Hearing about their educational aspirations was inspiring and I delighted in their interest in



MKLM Immersion Trip participant, Kathy Gribble, visited Kenya and is joined by two Turkana women

learning a bit about my life and what womanly wisdom I had to share. We all seemed to bond. I was so impressed by the disciplined behavior and hospitality of all the girls there.

The next ministry we visited was with Missioner John O'Donoghue, who has been with MKLM since 2006. John works with the Diocesan

Gender Department in the Kitale Diocese and he took us on field excursions to learn about their Table Banking (microfinance) projects. Through a series of workshops and seminars, the Gender Department trains participants in management, leadership skills, identifying income-generating activities, communication skills

and basic record keeping. During these sessions other topics will also be discussed such as: family law, child's rights, gender based violence and HIV/AIDS.

The clinics' staffs sometimes go into the community and find people suffering from conditions they don't realize can be healed or improved, especially epilepsy and HIV.

We toured three different types of clinics providing basic health care to the poorest settlements. At



Coralys Salvador, MKLM Missioner, (front left) with immersion trip participants sharing a traditional Swahili meal in Mombasa, Kenya

St. Raphael's for instance, where Missioner Kathy Dunford worked, the population being served is in an incredibly remote area serving the poorest of the poor. As a former lab technician, I loved visiting the laboratories and observing procedures for testing for malaria and other diseases. Some of the facilities had small areas for maternity deliveries. I was surprised to learn that all nurses in Kenya are trained midwives. I witnessed comprehensive compassion at these well-organized and clean facilities.

The clinics' staffs sometimes go into the community and find people suffering from conditions they don't

realize can be healed or improved, especially epilepsy and HIV.

In coastal Mombasa, Kenya, we went to the Mombasa Prison, where both men and women are incarcerated.

Respecting human dignity, transforming violent behavior, and enabling treatment seemed to be the theme of this prison. Goals and values were written all over the walls of the entrance, but nothing about punishment.

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Curt Klueg facilitates the Alternative to Violence Program (AVP) at the prison. We learned that most participants in AVP are serving life sentences. It

was phenomenal meeting with guards and prisoners and hearing of their experiences working together in AVP. Compassion and joy seem possible even in prison. These Kenyans focus on the innate goodness and dignity in every human person. This prison seemed a holy place.

My experience of individual people in Kenya confirmed my sense that Africans are less inhibited by pretense and are more open to experience and appreciate any other person, any guests – especially

ones different from themselves. I have seen how they help strangers and work together to survive in community. I don't think they would understand the degree to which our American culture values individual independence. I find myself envying those who are so community connected and supported.



The celebration of mass in Kenya

This experience has made me more aware, more grateful, more compassionate for needy people in my community, and more loving and hopeful for all of God's great diverse human situations and challenges.

Kathy Gribble is a Maryknoll Affiliate from the Appleton, WI Chapter and also a member of JustFaith Ministries. Kathy serves on the Affiliate Board of Directors and participated in a Friends Across Borders – JustFaith immersion to Kenya in 2013.

Matchmaker

by **Matt Boyle**

Like many of you, my first experience with Maryknoll was when the Maryknoll Magazine arrived at our house in Fairfield, Connecticut. The Missioners were priests, Brothers and Sisters at that time, and Maryknoll Lay Missioners (MKLM) was perhaps just a glimmer in the minds of a few creative thinkers. Looking back today, those few visionaries had tremendous foresight to see so clearly the critical role that the laity would play in our Church, in the decades to come.

Prior to coming on board at MKLM earlier this year, I began to immerse myself in its amazing history, and soon discovered that the organization depends solely on its own funding, separate from the other entities of Maryknoll, to keep its Missioners in service. Being involved in fundraising for many years, I know how the generosity of others can help the people that MKLM Missioners serve achieve their fullest potential.

I have such a deep respect and admiration for Missioners, and it is

exciting for me to have already met with several of our Missioners over the last few months. Some of the stories they tell are inconceivable. The photographs are often heartbreaking. But the heroic faith-filled spirit of the people they serve is nothing less than a constant, inspirational gift to us all.

To me, the best definition of fundraising is being a matchmaker, bringing together truly caring and generous people that the Lord has blessed with abundance, with those less fortunate and in desperate need of someone's compassion and assistance. I am so very grateful that God has given me this opportunity to use my talents to help match generous donors with the people our missioners so selflessly serve.

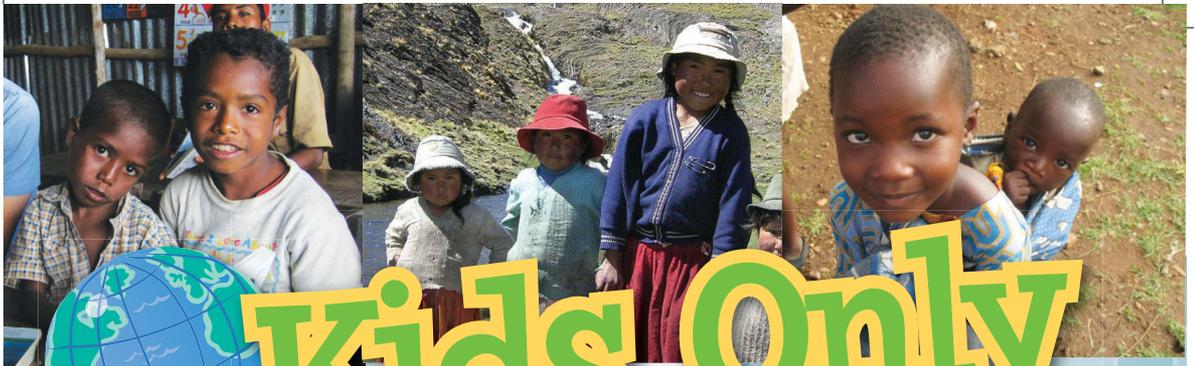
Matt Boyle is the newly appointed MKLM Director of Mission Advancement. He can be reached at (914) 236-3488 or at mboyle@MKLM.org.



Maryknoll Lay Missioners meets the charity standards of the Better Business Bureau.

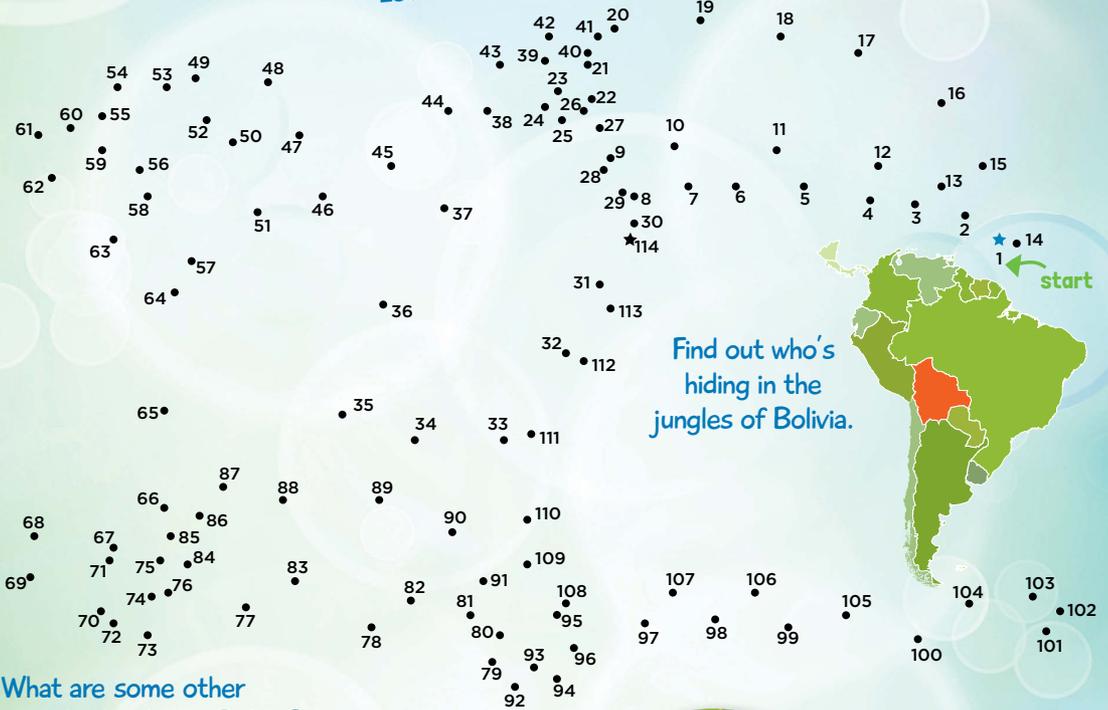


Maryknoll Lay Missioners is a proud member of the National Catholic Development Conference.



Kids Only

Maryknoll Lay Missioners help people in many countries.
Let's find out something about Bolivia.



Find out who's
hiding in the
jungles of Bolivia.

What are some other
animals that live in Bolivia?



The spectacled bear is the only bear species in South America.



The Amazon River is home to a freshwater dolphin called the Amazon river dolphin. Some are grey and some are pink!



The Blue Morpho is one of the largest butterflies in the world with a wingspan of 6 to 8 inches.



The Glass Frog is green, but its abdomen is see through!



You Can Forever Change a Life, a Family, a Community

Jesus called us all to serve and to spread His Word through word and deed. However, as Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few.” Today Maryknoll Lay Missioners (MKLM) has over 60 missionaries in Asia, Africa and the Americas responding to His call. We are very grateful that through the generosity of our benefactors, MKLM has been able to send workers into the field for over 35 years.

The precious gifts of our benefactors allow MKLM to keep each missionary in mission, help grow the MKLM presence

in these countries, and hopefully, will help us spread Christ’s love and compassion to people in other countries in desperate need.

One of the ways you can help, and we humbly ask for your prayerful consideration, is naming MKLM as a beneficiary in your will or your retirement account. Your future gift will enable new missionaries to follow in the footsteps of our current missionaries — who are following in the footsteps of Christ, and allow MKLM to serve people in need for the years and decades ahead.



If you would like to discuss how you can make a commitment, through your will or retirement account—to change a life, a family, a community—please contact Matt Boyle, Director of Mission Advancement, at 914-236-3488 or mboyle@mklm.org.