

THE MAGAZINE OF MARYKNOLL LAY MISSIONERS SPRING 2021

# VOICES OF COMPASSION



## Healing a divided nation

Peace-building lessons from South Sudan

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**PRAYER** ~ Beloved Mother, ask your son to grant us grace to accompany like you.

Women in a typical Toposa village in southeastern South Sudan. Photo by Steve Evans (Flickr).



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COVER PHOTO BY STEVE EVANS A Toposa woman looks at a tank in Kapoeta, South Sudan (2011).

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## Giving peace

*Peace I leave with you, my peace  
I give to you. Not as the world gives  
do I give it to you (John 14: 27).*

**LIKE JESUS' DISCIPLES** of years ago, we hear these words and cling to their hopeful promise for solace and newness. We receive them as gift, striving to embrace them as a guide for our spiritual journeys.

But what is the peace offered by Christ? Without much thought, many would define peace as simply the absence of conflict or war. And yet, God's peace does not simply exist when people stop fighting each other. This peace is anything but silent and still. It is active and full of abundant life.

Prophets and theologians have described this peace as the peaceable, Godly realm in which justice and mercy reign, where the lion will rest with the lamb, and where children can be children. It thrives when people come together in harmony and community.

Jesus lived in a time of disease, uncertainty, and unrest — as do we. He found ways to rest in God's peace and to bring that peace to those he encountered. He modeled for us the way: to lose ourselves in love and live for the whole of the beloved community. To put aside our own needs to work for justice, to heal and, as Pope Francis likes to put it, "to mercy our world."

In this issue of *Voices of Compassion*, we introduce you to **many individuals who take to heart this vision of Christ's peace**. They seek ways to bring peace to troubled hearts and vulnerable lives, especially in times and situations when there seems to be no peace. They are present to one another, take the time to communicate and to understand — to "be with" — as they sow seeds of peace. They trust the risen Healer stands with them, holding their hearts and hands, empowering them and guiding their journeys.

They provide a beautiful window into the peace Christ gives to us. Their hopeful actions help us to pray: May we trust the Prince of Peace who sends us forth to practice peace, to be peace and to give peace to all whom we meet.

With much gratitude for your continued accompaniment of us,

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Maryknoll Lay Missioners



PHOTO: DENNIS (STOCK.ADOBE.COM)

## Our Lady of Sorrows

BY ABBY BELT

### BELOVED MOTHER,

*It is a strength unparalleled to watch your child suffer,  
scorned, ridiculed, rejected by the world.  
You knew the cup was meant for him,  
and though you could not stop his pain,  
you never left his side.*

### GUIDING MOTHER,

*We implore you to intercede on our behalf,  
as the world journeys through its own Easter journey.  
Many know the agony of accepting their cups,  
for some last year it was  
in hospital storerooms drying eyes,  
in teaching offices taking deep breaths,  
on streets where innocent lives were stolen,  
raising voices once more,  
and on dirt roads in foreign lands, taking decisive action.*

*Many know the falling under heavy crosses,  
the weight of devastating loss of life,  
to viruses, racism, wars and oppression.  
Many have stood, as you did,  
mourning innocent children condemned to die.*

### BELOVED MOTHER,

*Ask your Beloved Son to grant us  
grace to accompany like you,  
especially when that is all we can do,  
courage like Veronica to help others,  
even when the world will mock us,  
strength in our voices to protest what is wrong,  
and advocate what is right,  
and hearts that burn like His, that can rebuild this world,  
on a foundation of the strongest agape love.*

*May we all greet our Easter Sunday together,  
in the great triumph of our human struggles,  
won through unity and unshakable love.  
Amen.*

In Gros Morne in northern Haiti, **Abby Belt** teaches physical education and leads teacher training and continuing education at Jesus-Mary School. She also supports the leadership development of young women scholars at Mercy Beyond Borders.

Learn more about Abby's ministries at [mklm.org/tag/abby-belt](#) and [mklm.org/profile-abby-belt](#).



Women in a typical Toposa village in south-eastern South Sudan. Photo by Steve Evans via Flickr.



# Healing a divided nation

*Peace-building lessons from South Sudan*

BY VICKI ARMOUR-HILEMAN

**I**n 2017, when lay missionary Gabe Hurrish arrived in South Sudan, he was following in the footsteps of Susan Nagele, Liz Mach, Marj Humphrey and Marty Roers — all of whom served in the region at various times throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Over the years, these missionaries witnessed the struggle for independence in southern

Sudan, a prolonged civil war, and the slow progress toward transcending a long history of violence.

Dr. Susan Nagele, who recently retired after 35 years as a lay missionary, explains that the war was rooted in both political and ethnic conflicts, with “the Khartoum government in the north — mostly people of Arab origin — against Black Africans” in the south. To

complicate matters, Susan reports that the south itself was rife with centuries-old intertribal conflict, especially between the majority Dinka tribe and the other ethnic groups in the region.

Remembering what it was like to work in the midst of constant conflict, Susan recalls one night she was assisting a surgeon, working by the light of a solar lamp, when their progress was

interrupted by the sound of gunfire. Susan and the surgeon crouched low to avoid being hit by shrapnel, while the patient still lay on the operating table. That memory has become a lasting symbol for her of the way conflict complicates and impedes efforts to meet people’s everyday needs.

Marj Humphrey, who arrived in 1994, says, “Southern Sudan was the most profound experience I have had in mission. An image that remains forever embedded in my heart is that of lying face down in a fox hole, absolutely terrified, with bombs dropping around us. Beside me, in that narrow little ditch, was a 12-year-old boy, also face down, so close I could feel him trembling, while he prayed a quiet mantra over and over again ‘*Rabbuna fi, Rabbuna fi, Rabbuna fi*’ (God is here, God is here, God is here). What are the wounds, the scars of people who live this reality for years, for decades?”

These sentiments are echoed by Marty Roers, who served in southern Sudan from 1999 until 2002. The suffering he witnessed there permanently changed his perspective, opening his eyes to the “unjust realities of our world.”

While the war for independence ended with the formation of South Sudan in 2011, the problem of ethnic conflict has continued. Susan contrasts South Sudan with Tanzania, where a common language, Swahili, was chosen to help people forge a national identity, and where people were encouraged to think of themselves as Tanzanians first and members of their

tribes second. As a result, Tanzania, home to more than 120 different tribal groups, is one of the most peaceful nations in East Africa.

Susan points out that while South Sudan lacked the national, political leadership needed to mirror Tanzania’s achievements, it did have prophetic leadership in figures like Bishop Paride Taban, the first bishop of the southern Sudanese Diocese of Torit (1983-2004).

During the war, Bishop Taban continually called for intertribal understanding and mutual acceptance among Christians and Muslims. Susan remembers that “Bishop Taban asked people to lay aside their differences and try to clarify their common goals.”

Now a bishop emeritus, Taban has continued these efforts, and in 2005 he founded Kuron Peace Village in remote southeastern South Sudan. Describing the village, he writes: “I have been dreaming of a community where people from different ethnicities and different religious backgrounds can live side by side.” More specifically, the village has three main goals: to produce enough food to alleviate hunger; to provide access to education for boys, girls and even adults; and to promote peaceful co-existence among tribes in the area.

After serving for two and a half years with Solidarity with South Sudan, Gabe began a new ministry at Kuron Peace Village last October. He reports that the intertribal rivalries the village tries to address include cattle rustling and, more tragically, abducting the children of



**Lokii Eliah and Bishop Paride Taban** address participants of the Toposa Peace and Cultural Event in December 2020. Local Toposa chiefs organized the large event in collaboration with Kuron Village's Peace Department. Chiefs and elders of the Jie, Murle, Kachipo and Nyagatom ethnic groups also attended. It included dances and celebrations as well as discussions on peace and reconciliation and the airing of grievances to attending government representatives, including the governor of the state of Eastern Equatoria.

*Below right: Toposa women dancing at the Toposa Peace and Cultural Event. Photos by Gabe Hurrish.*

neighboring tribes.

“Children from maybe 8 years old and up are often out in the fields herding goats or keeping the birds away from the crops,” Gabe explains. “Groups from another tribe will abduct and sell the children in exchange for cattle, the source of wealth and prestige for South Sudanese. Most of the time, the children are gone forever and the family will never see them again.”

Both cattle raiding and the abducting of children lead to violent reprisals, which Gabe says are made more possible by “the many weapons available after 50 years of fighting. I’ve seen children as young as 10 years old carrying AK-47s. Given that there are no jobs and there’s nothing to do, people pick up a gun thinking now people will listen to them. Now they are powerful. They are somebody.”

One of Kuron Village’s initiatives is to send peace teams out to rural villages where they mediate between the Toposa, Jie, Murle, Nuer and other ethnic groups and create a safe space for everyone to share their views.

Gabe believes, “When people stop talking, that’s when they start fighting. Things improve when people look at the other person as a human being. That’s what we are try-



ing to do here, to get each of the tribes to see the other one as human beings and realize they too have a family and children they care about.”

During their visits, the peace teams include women in the conversation and advocate for the education of women and girls. Gabe says that this is a new idea for many of the men who “think if the girls are educated, they will leave their traditional role in the household.”

Liz Mach, Maryknoll Lay Missioners’ longest-serving missionary, who recently retired after 44 years of service mostly in East Africa, believes that this inclusion of women is essential to building healthy, peaceful communities. Working as a nurse in southern Sudan from 1992 until 1995, she especially admired the Missionary

Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church (MMC), a group of religious sisters from Uganda serving in the Diocese of Torit. The sisters established a school for girls in the area, and as part of their education, the girls taught their respective tribal dances to the other students.

Liz recalls an incident one day at the local church when members of the Nuer tribe began to dance one of their traditional dances in which the men wave their arms overhead in imitation of cattle and the women dance around them. Suddenly a young woman joined the dance. She was not from the Nuer tribe but had been educated by the sisters and learned the Nuer dance at school.

The dancers’ appreciation of the young woman’s act

confirmed Liz’s belief that “connection and community can come even in areas of great conflict when people know each other’s traditions. It can be as simple as that — making an effort to learn about each other.” She adds, “Women are often at the forefront of those efforts to reach out at a grassroots level.”

While including more women in communal conversations is part of the Kuron Peace Village vision, education for all is also key. To that end, the village includes schools for children as well as a vocational training center for youth and adults.

For evidence of the power of education, one need look no further than Lokii Eliah, who recently became the program manager for the village’s peace department. In a recent newsletter, he writes it

is a “miracle” that he escaped the fate of the typical Toposa, who in adolescence would be expected “to man up and carry a rifle,” engaging in “deadly expeditions of cattle raiding,” where he might either “kill the shepherds and take their cattle” or be killed himself.

Instead of that fate, Lokii was educated in primary school by the Maryknoll Sisters and still fondly thinks of Sister Mary Ellen Manz, who helped instill in him a love of education that led not only to attending high school in Kenya but, with the help of Bishop Taban and others, to eventually study peace building at the Protestant University in Rwanda. He also spent a semester in Germany.

That education has allowed Lokii, as Gabe puts it, to be a “bridge” between people in conflict. Perhaps he is

also a bridge between the conflicts of the past and the future that leaders like Bishop Taban fervently hope for, where ethnic strife will be exchanged for peaceful coexistence.

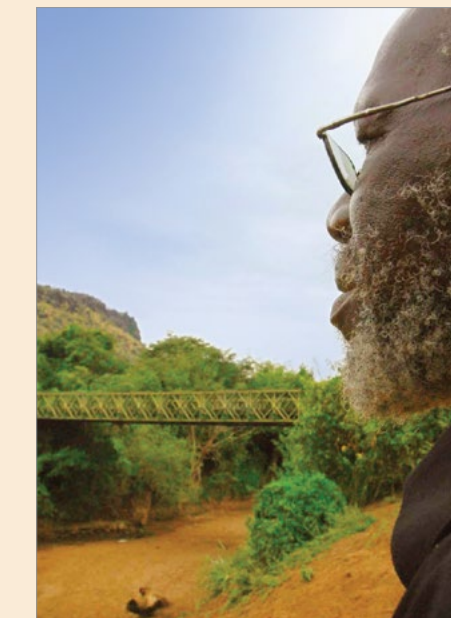
Throughout the years, Maryknoll lay missionaries have been supporting that vision both directly — through ministries like Gabe’s wide range of business assistance to Kuron Peace Village — and indirectly — simply by remaining present through times of conflict.

Thinking about why being present matters, Susan recalls an incident in 1995 when she and others from the medical team encountered a hole in the road where a landmine had just exploded. Their truck was stopped by soldiers who informed her the landmine had been meant for her and the other



missioners and medical personnel. “Why would anyone want to kill *us*?” she asked. They answered, “Because you give people hope.”

This hope and presence is at the heart of what Maryknoll lay missionaries offer, both in South Sudan and in many other countries struggling to rebuild after turmoil and upheaval — such as Cambodia, Haiti and El Salvador. In each of these countries, in addition to their particular ministries, lay missionaries support the work of local leaders like Bishop Taban, who recently wrote that he still dreams that someday the people of South Sudan will “live together like the tongue and the teeth.” That means, he wrote, embracing “a spirit of tolerance and forgiveness, ... able to live in peace with others and to build a peaceful organization and a peaceful nation.”



In Kuron Peace Village, **Bishop Paride Taban** is building bridges between people — both literally and figuratively. *Photo by PAX for Peace-NL*

*Top right: Peace Team leaders (standing) Romano Longole (left) and Lokii Eliah lead a meeting with Toposa chiefs at Kuron Village. Photo by Gabe Hurrish.*

*Left: Lay missionary Dr. Susan Nagele working in a clinic in Nanyangacor in 2002. Photo from the Maryknoll Lay Missioners archives.*

*Lower left: Cowherds on the move with their cattle in the vast and remote area of southeastern South Sudan. Cattle raiding continues to be a flash point that ignites violence. Photo by Peter Gostelow via Flickr.*

**Vicki Armour-Hileman** is the admissions manager of Maryknoll Lay Missioners. She is the author of *Singing to the Dead (University of Georgia, 2002)*, a book about her experience as a Maryknoll lay missionary serving refugees in Thailand from 1992 to 1994.



# WOMEN lead the way

*Missioners understand the crucial role women play in transforming communities. They share stories of four women leaders who have inspired them.*

## Melissa Altman on Paula Perez

During the 1979-1992 civil war in El Salvador, Paula Perez, her sister Esmeralda, and their 10 siblings were living in their hometown of Monte San Juan. One night they were warned that the army was going to come and burn everything down. They fled and settled in Zaragoza.

Despite government intimidation, Paulita, as we

called her, worked together with other community leaders and became very active in her new parish's social ministry. The parish was served by the Cleveland diocese mission team, and Paulita knew and worked with two of the four U.S. church women who were martyred in 1980 — Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay missionary Jean Donovan.

In those years, Paulita

helped take care of many children who lost their parents in the war.

I met Paulita when I started working in Zaragoza in 2016. She was one of 15 women who started an association called Mujer y Comunidad (Woman and Community). She knew how to hand-embroider, and one of the other women, María Julia, knew how to sew. The two of them taught other women,

and that's how our women's cooperative, ACOMUJERZA, began.

The community and co-op were always first in Paulita's mind. "We need to remember that this is for the co-op," she would say, always focused on the common good and on bringing in and including others.

I remember the great way Paulita had of dealing with one woman who was always looking for an angle to make some personal profit. She would say, "That's a great idea, but let's think of it for the cooperative. Let's put the community, the women, the children, the people at the center of what we're doing."

I always think of her when I'm in a meeting and someone is missing the point. *How can I do this in a Paulita way, reminding this person of why we're here and reorienting them toward the common good?*

Paulita would never be the person to get up and give a speech, yet she lived a deep faith through her actions, whether it was taking care of the orphans during the war or teaching a mom how to sew. That was her spiritual way to walk.

Paulita was already ill when I met her, but she continued working full time. Unfortunately, her illness progressed and she eventually died two years ago. It was hard watching her decline and visiting her on her deathbed. She and her sister Esmeralda, who is also a pillar of our co-op, are an example of living through trauma, coming through to the other side and still working for solidarity.

**Paula Perez** (left) teaching hand-embroidery to a young woman during a 2016 summer class in Zaragoza, El Salvador. *Photo by Melissa Altman.*



## Liz Mach on Sister Annunciata Chacha, IHSA

I met Sister Annunciata Chacha when I was working with the Musoma diocese and needed help with Jipe Moyo, a shelter that helps children, mostly girls, who have been orphaned or abandoned.

She had joined the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Africa, a Tanzanian order of women religious that was initially founded by Maryknoll. After working for some time on women's issues, she was elected to her order's council and moved to their mother-house in Musoma. Because of her previous experience, we asked her to head Jipe Moyo.

Running Jipe Moyo is a big responsibility, and Sister Annunciata is very good at it, including at fundraising and finances. Unfortunately, as a result, she has had to deal with a lot of criticism from some of the priests in the diocese, who think women should not be handling money and make life tough for her. I admire how she stands up to that criticism and doesn't let it distract her.

Sister Annunciata also prays with the kids and connects them with the wider world. After I moved back home to Minnesota last summer, one of my good friends here had to go on a ventilator and eventually died of COVID. I let Sister Annunciata and the girls know right away. The children were praying for Cindy, whom they knew because she had visited us in Musoma.

Many of the children at the shelter have experienced severe trauma — they may have been raped, escaped child marriages, or been beaten and kicked out of their homes for refusing to



*"I just take it to prayer and give it back to God because that is all you can do."*

undergo female genital mutilation (FGM). Although illegal, the practice of FGM, sometimes called female circumcision, remains a common practice in this part of Tanzania, including in Sister Annunciata's ethnic group.

Luckily she and her sisters were spared because her father, a catechist, could not reconcile it with his Christian faith.

Having had these traumatic experiences, the children need someone like Sister Annunciata who has tremendous compassion and empathy. She spends a lot of time just being with the children in small groups. They might be cleaning, gardening, sewing or making rosaries. When you are doing these things together, you can start talking about issues in a non-threatening way. She does that so beautifully.

There were times, after hearing the story of a child

**Sister Annunciata Chacha, IHSA**, with girls from the Jipe Moyo shelter in Musoma, Tanzania. *Photo by Jerry Fleury.*

who was raped, I went home and just cried my eyes out, but Sister Annunciata listens to those horrendous stories all the time. She told me, "I just take it to prayer and give it back to God because that is all you can do."



# Kathy Bond on Dona Neura

I met Dona Neuraci Cezario Pereira 23 years ago, during my early time in northeastern Brazil. I was working for the Brazilian Catholic Church's Pastoral Land Commission, which advocates for rural people in situations of marginalization.

When Neura was young, she found herself landless, with hungry children and a husband out of work. They were sharecroppers, and the system was rigged to keep

them in debt, oppressed and completely dependent on large landowners — pretty much a feudal system.

She joined the Landless Movement, which was organizing people to occupy idle lands and press the government to enact constitutionally mandated land reform. Neura's husband was afraid to participate, but she convinced him it was worth it to spend two years in a tent, enduring threats of violence, to get their own piece of land.

In the face of police and landowner violence, the community often put women on the front lines, hoping that might prevent the worst violence. Neura became a leader in her tent community, and also helped other communities. They would build their black tarp tents in the middle of the night, and then be on the front line facing threats and violence while guarding those tents.

When her group finally gained land titles, many

people — including Neura's husband — expected the women to step back into their traditional gender roles of domestic chores and child-rearing. But Neura and a few others refused. They invited me, Maryknoll Sisters Efu Nyaki and Connie Pospisil, and our Brazilian colleagues to begin a women's group to help deal with mental health issues, domestic violence and lack of health information and resources. We spent two

years there and then moved on, as was our custom.

One module we offered was about the cultivation and preparation of traditional plants for holistic healing and healthy eating. To this day, Neura uses the recipes she learned for alternative health foods that she sells near my house in João Pessoa. Before the pandemic, I would often go there for their great juices of prickly palm cactus, mint or collard, combined with pineapple.

Neura's story shows me that even if you work with a community for just two years, the ripple effects can last for many years.



Dona Neuraci Cezario Pereira inspects her chaya (tree spinach) on her land in Cruz do Espírito Santo, Paraíba, Brazil. Photo by Kathy Bond (2006).

# Gabe Hurrish on Emelia Yabang

Throughout most of the world, women live life at a disadvantage. It's even tougher in Africa, and many women in South Sudan experience severe oppression. Several men here have told me that "a cow is more valuable than a woman."

Most girls are not allowed to finish school; many are married off at the age of 13 or 14 to old men — being sold for cows or cash as their dowry. All too often their life is drudgery and abuse. During armed conflict, they

are sometimes raped by combatants or used as slaves and concubines.

Many have been abandoned by men or are widows struggling to raise their children. Emelia Yabang, who I met two years ago in Yambio, is helping women facing these challenges.

Emelia impressed me with her cheerfulness and big smile when she came to our teachers' college to sell trinkets such as dish soap, hand lotion, peanuts and baskets. I later found out she is the director of Anika ("We can

do it" in the local Pazande language), a women's group she started with no outside funding or assistance. The group helps women create small businesses, making and selling clothes and many other products.

The women also pray together; faith is a big part of why they do this work.

Emelia also helps mediate domestic issues between husbands and wives. When one of the women experiences domestic violence, the others will take her into their homes.

The group recently brought a court case against one man. In South Sudan, there are two systems of law — civil law, run by the government, and traditional law, administered by the chiefs and tribal courts. In domestic violence cases, the lawyer usually defers to the tribal court, and in 99.9% of the cases, the verdict is decided in the man's favor. So even the fact that the women organized and united to bring this case was a shock to the men who run the law.

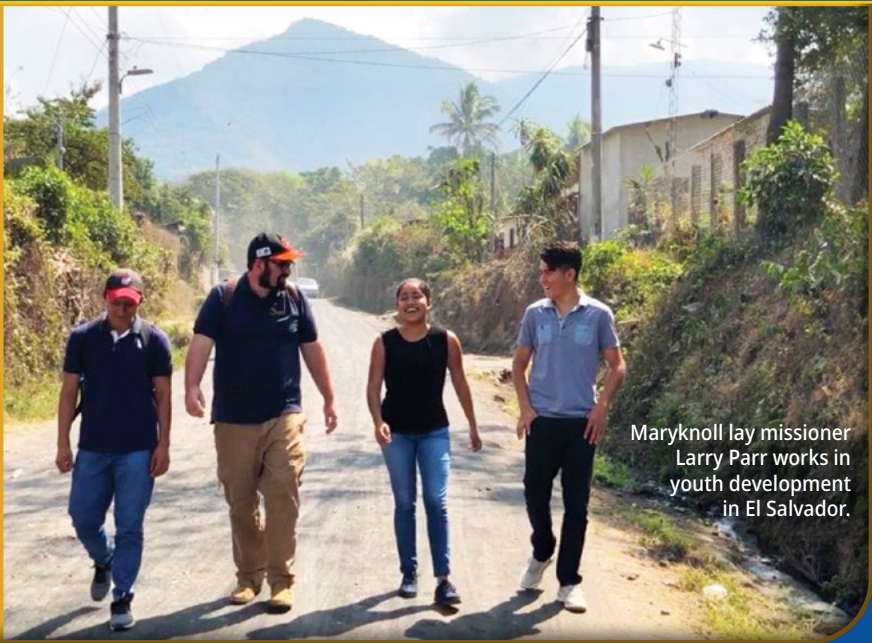
Now well-known in Yambio, Anika continues to grow. During the pandemic, the women helped with public information campaigns and produced hand soap and face masks.

Despite many hardships, women are the ones holding this country together. Women know what the problems are, but they often lack the power to solve them. Working together in groups like Anika, gives them strength.

Emelia Yabang, counting money with Gabe Hurrish at the Anika store in Yambio, South Sudan. Photo courtesy of Gabe Hurrish.



## Wondering what's next in your life journey?



Maryknoll lay missionary Larry Parr works in youth development in El Salvador.

Create a space to listen for God's voice

Come to our July 16-18 VIRTUAL DISCERNMENT RETREAT



Contact [retreats@mklm.org](mailto:retreats@mklm.org) or 914-467-8857 for more information.

Retreat sponsored by Maryknoll Lay Missioners, Affiliates, Sisters, Priests and Brothers



# NEWS

## #WHYSERVICE

In March lay missionaries participated in the #WhyService social media campaign organized by the Catholic Volunteer Network. [mklm.org/whyservice](http://mklm.org/whyservice).



## RECORD ATTENDANCE

This year's joint Maryknoll **Holy Week retreat** focused on "Healing & Transformation." With more than 70 registered attendees, the virtual event was our largest retreat yet. Simultaneous Spanish translation increased accessibility.

## GRADUATIONS

Scholarship students of **Larry Parr's** youth development program in El Salvador recently celebrated graduations. **Juan (left)** became the program's first student to finish a five-year college degree.



## MISSION DURING COVID

Missioners continue to respond creatively to the many challenges of **COVID-19** in their receiving communities. Read their stories at [mklm.org/tag/covid-19](http://mklm.org/tag/covid-19).



## CHANGES AT THE BORDER

### EL PASO, TEXAS

Missioners at the U.S.-Mexico border welcomed the Biden administration's first changes in border control policies, particularly the end of what **Heidi Cerneka** called the "illegal and cruel 'Remain in Mexico' policy." Now, she said, it is most urgent to end Title 42 expulsions, the immediate removal of migrants under a CDC health order, with no opportunity to ask for protection under asylum. At press time, the policy, initiated under Trump, was still in effect. Visit [mklm.org/end-title-42](http://mklm.org/end-title-42).



## 3 OMS FOR HEALING

### JOÃO PESSOA, BRAZIL

**Flávio José Rocha** and **Kathy Bond** gave a weekend retreat in January on "Holistic Health in Times of Uncertainty" at AFYA Women's Holistic Center. The retreat taught holistic and alternative techniques for preventive care and included body work, respiration techniques, meditation and other exercises. Kathy facilitated a yoga practice focused on alleviating anxiety (*see photo*) featuring the "three oms for healing" — ourselves, COVID-19 and the planet.



## EXPANDING MINISTRY

### TACOPAYA, BOLIVIA

**Filo Siles** and **Joe Loney (right)** are expanding their ministry, which serves persons with disabilities in rural communities in the Andes, to those 60 years and older. Many live in remote villages. Through their **Social Justice Foundation**, the two have started with a census to survey the needs. They are planning home visits, transportation assistance to medical facilities, nutritional support, communication assistance and community events.



## COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

### GROS MORNE, HAITI

**Jill Foster (left)** recently led a collaborative art project that connected two local Religious of Jesus and Mary ministries — Maison Bon Samaritain (a home for elderly, frail and infirm persons) and Jesus Mary School. Besides creating colorful alphabet tablets for preschoolers, it helped to form a network of relationships and community support between the elderly and the children. She also recently wrote a proposal for a new project to renew the soil on the mountaintops of Haiti.



PHOTO: POV SOPHIEAP

*Julie Lawler leads a team-building activity at the DDP Deaf Youth Camp Feb. 11-13 in Koh Kong, Cambodia.*

## Cambodian deaf program continues to adapt

Overall, Cambodia has been relatively fortunate in having had little community transmission of COVID-19. After a months-long lockdown of all Cambodian schools, the **Maryknoll Deaf Development Programme (DDP)** in Phnom Penh re-opened to full programming — with physically-distanced classrooms, job-training at local small businesses, and sign-language interpreters actively serv-

ing the country's Deaf community. The program, where **Father Charlie Dittmeier** and lay missionaries **Russ Brine** and **Julie Lawler** work, was even able to hold its annual youth camp in Koh Kong in February. The focus of the camp is to build relationships and the capacities of future deaf leaders. In March, however, new COVID cases led to another lockdown for Cambodian schools, including DDP.

## New board chair Sarah Welch

In January **Sarah Welch (back row, center)** became the new chair of Maryknoll Lay Missioners' board of directors. The first woman in this role, Sarah has taken over the reins from returned missionary **Terry Miller (to Sarah's left)**.

Sarah is a managing director at Novantas, a financial technology firm. She grew up with Maryknoll as a part of her Catholic family life and has been a member of the board for more than a decade. She sees the board's priorities as "navigating change in a sustainable way that is consistent with our core mission and supporting the strategic planning of the Mission Assembly and operational optimization."





# WALK WITH US

*WITHOUT LEAVING HOME*



PHOTO Sam Janson

## All around the world, it's been a tough year.

Schools went remote to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and students without computers and Wi-Fi were unable to continue their education. Jobs disappeared, and people struggled to support their families. Markets shut down, and people in rural areas faced food insecurity.

In the face of this crisis, others might have turned away. But you couldn't. You didn't.

## Your faith called you to respond.

So you rolled up your sleeves. And over the last year alone, through your support of Maryknoll Lay Missioners, . . .

- You helped integrate restorative justice practices into courts in **Brazil** at a national, systemic level.
- You created safe spaces with Wi-Fi access and computers in **El Salvador**, so at-risk youth could remain in school and engage in distance learning during the pandemic.
- You utilized a community-based rehabilitation approach to help people with disabilities achieve social inclusion, learn vocational skills and eliminate discrimination in rural **Bolivia**.
- You advocated for refugees' education and for girls and women's rights with African governments in **Kenya** and throughout East Africa.
- You paved a path for families in **Cambodia** to imagine a different future for children who are deaf — a future where they can support themselves and be “heard” in a society that has often excluded them.
- You built financial management systems needed to help nonprofits in **Tanzania** grow and better serve local communities.
- You participated in a community-based reforestation project in **Haiti**, working toward the planting of 40,000 trees.
- You helped asylum seekers win their cases in immigration courts at the **U.S.-Mexico border**.
- You supported local peace teams in **South Sudan**, working to create bridges of understanding across long-held intertribal rivalries.

## What a difference you have made! But the work is not complete.

The world is still in crisis, and the needs are increasing. Further, with many loyal supporters needing to cut back this year, your efforts are needed now more than ever.

That's why we have started the **Bill Vos Initiative, Walk With Us**, a matching-gift campaign with a goal **to raise a total of \$3 million** in two phases.

And here's the good news: In Phase One, a core group of benefactors have raised or pledged base gifts totaling \$1 million. Now, for Phase Two, we need to match that base gift 2:1, raising another \$2 million by the end of 2022.

We are hoping you will step up once again, walking with us to ...

- Strengthen the response to urgent needs, such as migration, climate change, food insecurity, human rights, racism and disparity of wealth.
- Increase the number of lay missionaries, deepening the relationships with and commitment to vulnerable communities where we serve.
- Build the capacity of local partners to care for their own communities through a variety of educational opportunities and leadership training.
- Continue to offer ministries in areas such as human rights, restorative justice, educational equity, agricultural programs and health care.
- Expand and deepen local and global partnerships in both the U.S. and mission countries.
- Broaden recruitment and mission education strategies.
- Enhance the formation, support and retention of lay missionaries, offering language and cross-cultural training, spiritual growth and opportunities for ongoing vocational development.

Last year you made a difference.

This year we hope you will again walk with us — and with the people we serve in Africa, Asia and the Americas — as we work together to bring hope to those who need it most.

## Thank you!

### THE BILL VOS INITIATIVE

Our new  
**WALK WITH US CAMPAIGN**  
invites you to accompany  
marginalized communities  
in this time of global crisis.

Give at  
[mklm.org/walk-with-us](https://mklm.org/walk-with-us)  
or call 914-236-3453



PHOTO Jerry Fleury





**maryknoll  
lay missioners**

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P.O. Box 307  
Maryknoll, NY 10545-0307

[mklm.org](http://mklm.org)



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*Celebrate Pentecost with us*

**Sunday, May 23, 7 to 8:30 pm EDT**

**A VIRTUAL BILINGUAL EVENT**  
in Spanish and English

Celebrate together with the Maryknoll  
Lay Missioners community and  
inspiring Catholic musicians



Pedro Rubalcava & Athenas



For more information  
and to register, visit

Para más información y  
para inscribirse, visite

[mklm.org/Pentecost-2021](http://mklm.org/Pentecost-2021)

## VEN A CELEBRAR EL DÍA DE PENTECOSTÉS

**Domingo 23 de mayo de 2021,**  
7 a 8:30 pm (Hora del Este)

**UN EVENTO VIRTUAL BILINGUE ESPAÑOL/INGLÉS**

Únete a la comunidad de Misioneros Laicos  
Maryknoll y inspiradores músicos católicos



**maryknoll  
lay missioners**

