



E-BULLETIN # 27

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5,16)

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scholarship promoting lay ministry

Not too long ago the Bulletin carried a description of an AU initiative in support of aboriginal tertiary education through the establishment of a scholarship trust. Two years after its commencement the Region decided to create a similar but wider fund to promote the vocation of dedicated lay people who might need support to further their practical or academic formation – the **Vincent Pallotti Scholarship Trust for Lay Ministry**. Our Assembly considered this was in line with the charism inherited from our Founder in recognising and encouraging the vocation of the laity.

While the Trustee is the Society – which contributed the initial funding – administrative responsibility is in the hands of the Australian UAC. A Trust Committee is made up of an SAC member and four academically qualified lay people who have an historical association with the Pallottines. Annual interest from Trust's existing deposit varies, but is roughly \$5000/annum.

Sample requests that have been supported are as follows:

- the very first grant was made to a Religious Education coordinator at a Catholic secondary school wanting assistance to complete 2 units of a Master of Arts [Theology] degree at the Australian Catholic University
- grant approval was given for teaching materials to a young Jesuit-educated Melbourne volunteer, working in a child care situation in Cambodia, ensuring poor children get regular schooling support
- an application was approved for a Perth organist and music student to develop his skills through a Master of Studies [Musicology] course at Oxford University, UK – his intention being to return home and contribute to the development of the prayer life of the church through enhanced liturgical worship – strongly supported by his local Archbishop
- a cluster group of four women, all of whom live in a rural setting, and are extensively involved in local parish ministry, shared a grant to each enrol in an online Certificate IV course with an interstate Pastoral Counselling Institute
- a middle aged couple who travel around Australia in their own car were assisted with expenses in their specialised Ministry to Newly Marrieds – they are founders of a rapidly expanding group of dedicated people who meet with other couples at parish level and endeavour to encourage the deepening of the love commitment of

parents in the belief that this is an immeasurable support not only to each other but also to the faith of the next generation

Across 4 years of operation 19 applicants have been successful, 64 have been passed over. Invitations are advertised in parish bulletins, university bulletin boards, our Region's newsletter, Catholic papers/periodicals. Further additions to the Trust's very modest interest bearing deposit are regularly sought.

Ray Hevern sac [AU] – Shelley – AUSTRALIA
29.07.12
ray.h@pallottine.org.au

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a new ministry of welcome

The [Divine Word Missionaries](#) have welcomed the first group of asylum seekers into their communities at Boronia in Melbourne and at Marsfield in Sydney, as part of a new ministry aimed at fulfilling the mission to "Welcome the Stranger" in our midst. The Janssen Spirituality Centre at Boronia is now home to 10 young men, while Marsfield has so far welcomed eight men.

Fr Michael Hardie SVD (pictured right), who is the Director of the Janssen Spirituality Centre, says the men, aged from 20 to 26, are mostly of Afghan and Hazara ethnicity.

They have recently been released from up to two years in Immigration Detention after arriving in Australia as boat people and are now living in what is known as Community Detention until their asylum claims have been processed. If they are recognised as refugees, they will be given either a Protection Visa or a Bridging Visa.



According to Fr Michael, while the young men face many challenges, the experience of welcoming them into the community of the Divine Word Missionaries has been "wonderful".

"There are challenges in any new ministry. I wondered how we might begin it and how it would unfold," he says, "but what has been revealed to me since the men arrived here is really something remarkable."

Fr Michael says that because the young refugees had spent so long in the regimented environment of an Immigration Detention Centre, and because of their traumatic experiences in their homeland and on the journey to Australia, his first priority was to build a supportive community.

"We decided that we would start a ministry with these young men based on community," he says. "It couldn't be 10 or 12 people living in separate rooms and not

connecting with each other. It had to be a community, united in some way, with common understandings, liking and warmth for each other.

"The idea was that if we could build a community based on warmth, hospitality, welcome and respect, then they would get to know each other and it would be a peaceful place. The good news is that so far it has worked out that way."

The Society of the Divine Word AUS Province is working with Jesuit Refugee Services and CatholicCare Melbourne to accommodate the young men and to meet their varied needs while they await the processing of their asylum claims.

Under the conditions of Community Detention, the men can go out and move around freely, as long as they return to their registered accommodation with the Divine Word Missionaries at night. They receive a small allowance from the government to cover food and travel and have access to medical services, but cannot work or take part in fee-paid education or training.

A CatholicCare case worker oversees the situation of the men and works with them in developing skills, training and socialisation which will help them to adjust to life in Australia when their claims are accepted.

"The Catholic Care people also organise activities for them. We've had trips to the gymnasium, sports clubs and to the movies," Fr Michael says. "I've been impressed by the generosity of everyone we've met. People have been so generous with offers of help, food, bicycles, clothing, bedding, as well as emotional support and acceptance, which is so important."

Fr Michael says that all of the men have suffered from the stress of their journeys by boat, and from their long time of waiting in Immigration detention. Their suffering still continues today, mainly from the uncertainty of not knowing when their claims might be processed or what the outcome will be. Depression is a constant problem for them. "Because we don't know what will happen, there is always the possibility of despair, but through the community we are building here and the support we are able to give, we are working together to create an atmosphere of hope so that despair does not dominate."

While this particular ministry with asylum seekers might be new to the Divine Word Missionaries AUS Province, Fr Michael says the nature of the initiative fits in directly with the Mission of the SVD and the Janssen Spirituality Centre.

"The young men staying with us are all Muslims. For us, as a multicultural and inter-religious congregation, to have Muslim men living in a Catholic house is a witness of our charism of outreach to people of other cultures and faiths," he says.

"These young men, refugees and asylum seekers, are the marginalised ones in our society today. Because our outreach as Divine Word Missionaries is always to the marginalised, to have them here with us fits our vision and mission statements perfectly."

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