



# HAPPY EASTER FROM MERCY WORKS

## Happy Easter from all of us at Mercy Works!

Wishing you an Easter season filled with peace, strength and new beginnings! We want to thank each and every one of our supporters whether you are new or have been with us for a while, the support you give is invaluable and we could not do what we do without it.

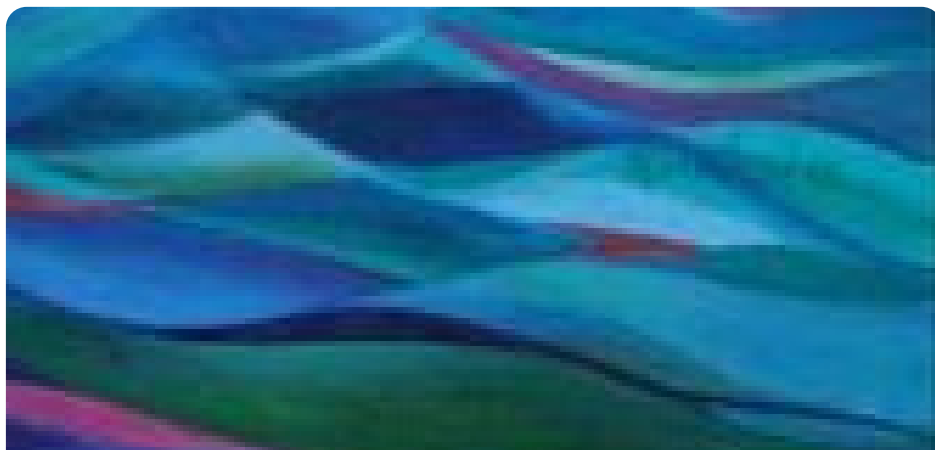
### The New Decade 2020...

We are only four months into this next decade and we are in the midst of one of the biggest challenges we will ever see in our lifetimes. As this pandemic grips our world, we need to remember that the challenges we face today, we face together and the light at the end of the tunnel is getting closer with every passing day.

As uncertainty becomes a new reality for our global community our Mercy mission has never been more important. As a community we must ensure we are taking the necessary precautions to protect not only ourselves but those around us. With each new beginning comes an end with the hope that what has come with this pandemic won't be a part of the future.

Mercy Connect has plans to expand this year. Moving into the city of Bendigo has shone the light of hope and progress, as we connect with new schools and new volunteers. Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste are no exception to this growth and development with the hope that many existing programs will expand into new communities as other projects are now completed.

Any further updates on Mercy Works' response to this crisis will be emailed to our supporters, posted on our Facebook Page and updated on our website.



## “Our Portion of Easter Grace”

Easter offers us many graces, especially the grace of holding onto hope in our lives. In this time of great uncertainty as we all deal with the unfolding impact of COVID-19 this is more needed than ever. In one of her letters to the early Sisters of Mercy on 19 April 1841 Catherine McAuley, our founder, said to “**pray for your portion of Easter grace**”. Our tangible Mercy mission among vulnerable communities attracts many wonderful people who distribute large portions of hope. As I have visited our widespread Mercy Works projects across Australia, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste I see the many graces and the gift of hope alive and well. In our shared Mercy mission, together we increase ‘**our portion of Easter grace**’ and hope in our world. While there are many to choose from, let me share four hope-filled Mercy Works stories.

- For some years Mercy Works in Papua New Guinea has hosted a weekly radio program across the Highlands. We believe as many as 600,000 people tune in to this program. The message is always one of challenge in the face of tough issues and hope to overcome these with community support. The issues include - skills to promote right relationships and non-violence, the empowerment of youth and women and girls, and stories of positive change.

### *A big portion of Easter hope is enkindled among the people of PNG!*

- We even experience life and energy in what could sound like boring tasks. In February the Mercy Works Board directors and staff in our Parramatta office met to discuss and review our Strategic Plan for the next three years. It was certainly far from boring! Instead the room was alive with a creative, positive spirit as together through our many projects we believe we are making a real difference in the world.

### *A big portion of Easter hope among us!*

- In Mt Druitt, western Sydney, where there is a large indigenous community, Mercy Works supports a project that changes lives! As part of the Baabayan Aboriginal Corporation, young Mums and their little ones meet every week to honour their cultural richness through stories, art and dance. Intergenerational healing happens. Friendships are made and strengthened. A sense of community is alive and well. When I visited in early March, the women welcomed me with a sense of pride in all they are creating together.

### *A big portion of Easter hope and healing is encouraged every week in Mt Druitt!*

- Every Friday the Mercy Connect Program in Melbourne, has been running an Adult Literacy Class at the Dandenong Library supporting refugee and asylum seeker adults learn English. In the June 2019 edition of The Bilum, we shared the story of Bibi and her father Daud who arrived in Australia as refugees in 2015. Becoming part of this program has given them the tools to rebuild their lives in Australia, all the while deeply missing family members back in the refugee camp in India. Earlier this year, those important pieces were brought back together, as the family was reunited. We know first-hand how this program gives indelible support to some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

### *Easter hope is to be found in all our relationships, especially those with our families*

During this Easter season together let us all pray for ‘**our portion of Easter grace**’ and so multiply this gift of hope in our world. A virtue that is so needed in our fragile world at this time!

# WHERE THEY BELONG, TOGETHER



Some time ago there was a story in Bllum about Bibi and her father Daud and their experiences in learning English in the Mercy Connect Adult Literacy Program in the Dandenong Library.

For many years Daud, his son and two daughters worked hard to learn English. The children were all at school and making great progress, finally Bibi left school and began tertiary studies, later she was joined by her brother.

They continued to keep in touch with their mother and three other siblings in a refugee camp in India. The siblings all young teenagers remained in the camp with no further schooling available to them.

They tried many times to get a visa to leave the camp and come to Australia so that all could be united. After many tries, in that refugee camp in India they received news that they were free to move out.

So one Saturday morning earlier this year, at Melbourne Airport, Daud was reunited with his wife and three other daughters. Bibi and her brother and sister waited anxiously at home for their Mother and siblings to arrive. There was great excitement, all were so amazed how each of the siblings had grown and matured. There were just so many stories to tell and hear. They were once again a family of Mum, Dad, five daughters and one son getting to know each other and moving on in their lives.

Bibi and her Dad continue to come to the Mercy Connect Language Literacy Class. Now they come with two more members of the family and we look forward to when Mum joins the class.

The literacy class meets once a week and 11 very dedicated Mercy Connect Volunteers work with 29 refugees. Each of who appreciates the support they receive both in learning English and the bag of groceries to take home.

The coronavirus has forced the suspension of lessons for the present, which is obviously very disappointing for the students, but also the volunteers. When informed that the classes had to be halted, one responded, "It is the best time of the week for me"- a sentiment shared by most of the refugees. A method of conducting "virtual lessons" is currently being explored and so it is hoped the program may continue in some form over the coming months.

We now look forward to the time when we can all be reunited and celebrate the works of Mercy Connect Melbourne.

**BY MARY LEWIS RSM**

COORDINATOR, MERCY CONNECT MELBOURNE





# VISITING BAABAYAN

## SR SALLY BRADLEY RSM & SR JENNIE RYAN RSM VISIT BAABAYAN CORPORATION IN MT DRUITT

Being instantly welcomed into a room to be introduced to a group of strangers is not something that you come across every day. Meeting new people isn't always easy especially when a groups bond is as strong as the one you find at Baabayan.

On Wednesday the 4th of March, our Executive Director, Sr Sally Bradley and our Domestic Projects Coordinator, Sr Jennie Ryan had that experience when they visited the Baabayan, Aboriginal Corporation in Mt Druitt.

Both Jennie and Sally had the opportunity to see the program in action, meeting with the young mothers to celebrate their artistic ability, future plans and their children. Giving these mothers a break from caring for their children is giving them the time to develop their skills and knowledge to better prepare themselves and their family for the future.

Mercy Works provides funding for a pre-school educator to provide quality childcare and learning opportunities to these children who would otherwise not have the chance to attend pre-school. This gives the mothers a chance to have some time away from their children to focus on their needs such as furthering their educational opportunities, exploring their artistic expression and discuss plans for their futures.

This group activity expressing incredible artistic talent also nurtures healing of past experiences and offers hope for a much better future for not only the mothers but their children as well.

