



Myanmar



Myanmar—officially The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and formerly called Burma—is a Southeast Asian nation of more than 100 ethnic groups, bordering India, Bangladesh, China, Laos and Thailand. In area, it is slightly smaller than the state of Texas; its population is slightly less than double that of Texas. The capital city is Yangon (formerly Rangoon).



The Irrawaddy Delta is a low-lying region in southern Burma that plays a dominant role in the fishing and rice cultivation industry. The region was devastated in May 2008 by Cyclone Nargis that by official estimates left 84,500 dead and 53,800 missing.

Most of Myanmar's population live along the coastline and make a living from fishing or growing rice.

Myanmar was granted independence from Great Britain in 1948 and was a democratic nation. That ended in 1962 when the military took over the country and it became a dictatorship. For most of these years, ethnic strife has been constant plunging Myanmar into one of the world's longest ongoing civil wars. Many human rights violations were reported by the United Nations and other world organizations. In 2010, the military government was dissolved and free elections were allowed. Myanmar's most famous human rights activist, Aung San Suu Kyi, was released from house arrest after almost fifteen years. Her party won the majority of the governmental seats in 2015 but the military remains very politically powerful.

89% of the people in Myanmar are Buddhist, 6.2% are Christian, 4.3% are Muslim, and many other small denominations make up fractions of percentages. Although Christianity was first introduced to the country in the 16th century, it truly began to grow centuries later. The Catholic faith was brought to the Myanmar in 1954 by the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) from Italy and France.

MCA in Myanmar

In 1966 all foreign missionaries who had entered the country for the first time after independence in 1948 were forced to leave when the government refused to renew their work permits. While Catholics still remain a minority of about 1% of the total population in the country, the Pontifical Mission Societies (the parent group of MCA) gives aid to all to help them grow in the faith.

The Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) helps children in many ways. In the Diocese of Taungngu, 100 boys and girls live in two separate boarding schools. They did not have any electricity and so were unable to continue their studies in the dark of night.

With help from Missionary Childhood, the boarding schools were able to purchase a hydro pump to generate electricity, using the two streams nearby. The total cost of the



project is \$2000.

"We really thank you and your Association for giving us a great help. May the good Lord reward you abundantly," writes Fr John Zaw Wahn, Parish Priest at Sacred Heart Church.

Many families in this remote diocese are struggling. Parents often have to leave their children to go to the cities to find work. The Regional Sisters of Reparation run a shelter in Taungngu where they help these abandoned children live a full and happy life.

Through your prayers and sacrifices for MCA, you help support the Sisters in their important work.

Lucy who



Mother Thein, runs the shelter,

writes: "Your contribution is very much appreciated because everything is expensive and we find it very difficult in bringing up these poor children. Life will be very difficult without your help."

In the Hakha diocese, there is limited access to education. Families who farm the land in this remote area are too far from any school for their children to attend.

The Holy Childhood Orphanage houses 213 children, mainly orphans but also children of the farmers. Now they are able to go to school without travelling great distances. The home provides food, lodging, candles, books, pencils, and clothing at approximately \$63 a year for each child.

Sadly, due to lack of funds, the small orphanage is unable to help all of the children who are in need of it.



Recently, Pope Francis visited Myanmar. He spoke of the

Church's work in Myanmar "doing much to bring the healing balm of God's mercy to others, especially those most in need." He also acknowledged that **"through the generous assistance provided by the Pontifical Mission Societies, the Church in this country is helping great numbers of men, women and children, regardless of religion or ethnic background."**

Thanks to you—our MCA members at work!