

# MAST Program 2009

- Bro. Timothy Driscoll, SM

Through the kind invitation of Bishop Christopher Cardone OP, Bishop of Auki Diocese, two Marianist Brothers from New York have come to the Solomon Islands each year since 2003 for the MAST Program. The aim of the MAST Program is to offer spiritual and professional formation to Catholic teachers and education and encouragement for Catholic youth in the three dioceses of the Solomon Islands.



The facilitators for this year's MAST Program were Bro. David Bruner, SM, a first-time visitor to the Solomon Islands, and Bro. Timothy Driscoll, SM who returned to the Solomons for his sixth time as leader of the program. The Brothers arrived in Honiara on June 16 and departed for the US on July 31<sup>st</sup>.

The general theme for this year's presentations was the theme for youth chosen by Pope Benedict for 2009: "We have put our hope in the Living God." To encounter God as the loving source of all life and to live trusting in the promise of God's love is the goal of all Christians. Teachers, like parents have a special responsibility to pass on this faith to the next generation. Young men and women must face the challenge of coming to know God's loving plan for their lives.

Presentations focused on learning to respond positively to God's call: To say YES to Christ, YES to the Church, and YES to the choice for a life of holiness. The example of Mary and the lives of saints like St. John Vianney, Blessed Mary McKillop, and Blessed Damien of Molokai, the leper priest who will be canonized in October, were used to illustrate the different ways in which we can respond positively to Jesus' invitation. Bro. David used the Gospel of Mathew to illustrate what it means for each of us to be both a *disciple*, one who is learning to live the life of Christ, and an *apostle*, one who is sent to bring the good news of Jesus to others. Bro. Tim's presentations explored how the seven "deadly" sins tempt us to say NO to God's call to a holy and happy life, and, more importantly, how "lively" virtues like humility, forgiveness, enthusiasm, generosity and discipline train us to resist sin and respond positively to God's call.

The MAST programs given in the Auki Diocese this year were part of the diocese's year-long Jubilee celebration, marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the diocese by Pope John Paul II in 1984. Bro. Tim and Bro. David were very happy to participate in the blessing of the Jubilee Cross at St. John the Evangelist parish and school at Dala. The Brothers presented a program for Catholic teachers from Dala and the Central Deanery, and later returned to Dala at the beginning of the new school term to discuss Catholic identity with both the teachers and students of the Dala school, the first school to officially come under the authority of the Catholic Church in Malaitai.

The Brothers are grateful to all those who helped to make their time in the Solomon Islands both enjoyable and worthwhile, especially the bishops of the three dioceses and to their gracious hosts at each venue. Cypriano Nuake, Benedict Mona Aefi, and Beata Jio, the education officers of Honiara, Auki and Gizo dioceses, coordinated the details of the workshops and looked after the needs of both the Brothers and the participants in all the programs. Many thanks to them for their hard work and for all that they do for the building up of the Church in the Solomon Islands. The Brothers look forward to returning next year to share once again in the lively faith of the Solomon Islands and to encourage the revitalization of Catholic education.

## 2009 MAST Programs

- 19-21 June Youth Program at Holy Cross, Honiara
- 23-25 June Catholic Teachers Workshop at Don Bosco Technical Institute, Henderson
- 27 June Youth Workshop at Fanualama, Auki Diocese
- 29- 3 July Central Deanery Catholic Teachers Workshop, Dala
- 6-9 July Youth Workshop at Usu'sue
- 13-17 July Catholic Identity Work with teachers and students at Dala
- 21 July Youth Workshop at Gizo
- 23-25 July Catholic Teachers Workshop at Moli, Choiseiul