

# Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka is an Island country located off the coast of India. People from Northern India first came to Sri Lanka to live hundreds of years before Jesus was born and followed the Buddhist religion. It was not until the 16th century when Christian missionaries arrived in Sri Lanka that people heard the Word of the Gospel. For centuries, Sri Lanka – or Ceylon as it was then called – was known for its coffee. In the late 19th century the world market turned its attention to another commodity and the country's production shifted, becoming one of the world's largest producers of tea.

Ceylon declared its independence in 1948 and changed its name to Sri Lanka in 1972. The years that followed were filled with civil war and strife between the ethnic Sinhalese majority and the Tamil people who wanted to form their own country. The situation was made much worse by the devastating tsunami of 2004.

On December 26 of that year, a 9.2 magnitude earthquake struck the area, causing a tsunami, or large tidal wave, that devastated the coastal

areas of countries from Indonesia to India, reaching all the way to Africa. Sri Lanka was the second hardest hit country after India.

Not only were over 35,000 lives lost on the island (out of a population of about 21 million) but over half a million people were displaced from



their homes and their livelihoods. The power of the wave was strong enough to destroy everything in its path. Most Sri Lankans depended on the sea for their main support, whether they were fishermen or worked for the tourism industry along the coast. In minutes, their homes, schools, jobs, towns and ways of life were destroyed.

Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) members around the world sprang into action to pray and sacrifice for the most vulnerable in this catastrophe: the children. Through MCA's efforts, schools were rebuilt, hospitals refitted with supplies, and life was brought to a "new normal".

## MCA in Sri Lanka

The work continues today. In the Diocese of Galle, Sri Lanka, Bishop Raymond Kingsley Wickramasinghe (pronounced: Wick-rah-mah-SIN-gee) has been working to bring the Catholic faith to the people of his diocese for the last four and a half years. Though there are over two million people living in the area of his diocese, which is larger in territory than the Archdiocese of Boston, only 8,000



are Catholics. This means that he and his priests and Sisters travel great distances under difficult conditions to tend to their flock. Bishop Raymond, pictured at left with a Missionary Childhood

Christmas Angel from Saint John the Evangelist School in Canton, Mass., is very grateful for the support that is sent to his children. In an email to our office, he said, "I am very grateful for the children who join us to shower immense blessings of the Lord on our people and especially our needy children. God loves them and you!"



Because of support from the Missionary Childhood Association, children are able to come to the Cathedral Parish of Saint Mary. They attend Religious Education classes, first readying themselves for Reconciliation and then for First Holy Communion. They

learn about Christ's True Presence in the Eucharist and know that as they grow in their Catholic faith, it becomes their job to share Him with those around them. Because of this, Bishop Raymond has made sure that they also then become members of the Missionary Childhood Association!



The bishop had this message for all of us:

"Dear Friends, the Church's mission stands in need of the contribution of each and every one of her members. In the walks of life to which the Lord has called you, in living out your Baptism may you be courageous witnesses to the God of Jesus Christ. For this I entrust you to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes, Mother of all peoples, and I warmly impart the Apostolic Blessing to you and to your near and dear ones. Many Thanks."

In the most recent report from our headquarters at the Vatican, the Missionary Childhood Association sent \$18,000 to the Diocese of Galle, which represents sacrifices by MCA members worldwide. The donations were used to fund Religious Education programs, maintain an orphanage and teach life skills to children, among other things.

Children in Galle also were the recipients of MCA Christmas Angels that were decorated by the second grade class St. John the Evangelist School in Canton! (See above)

**Missionary Childhood Association**

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