

# mary's meals

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Press release

**Catholic university  
bestows its highest  
honour on charity  
Mary's Meals**

Tuesday 22nd Sept, 2015

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## Catholic university bestows its highest honour on charity Mary's Meals

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Mary's Meals – the charity which provides school meals for more than a million impoverished children around the world – has been recognised with a prestigious award by the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, USA.

At a ceremony held on campus on 20th September, Mary's Meals founder and CEO Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow was presented with the Poverello Medal, the University's highest non-academic honour.

Cast in steel to signify simplicity and poverty, the medal acknowledges organisations and individuals who imitate St. Francis of Assisi, 'Il Poverello' (the little poor man), through their strong character, practical charity, and service to the poor.

Franciscan University president Father Sean O. Sheridan, TOR, said: "Mary's Meals sets an example for us by following in the footsteps of St. Francis in acts of charity to the poor, the downtrodden, and those abandoned by society in some of the world's most impoverished countries. We are pleased to be awarding the Poverello Medal to such a worthy recipient."

Mary's Meals began by feeding just 200 children in Malawi in 2002. Today it is reaching 1,035,637 hungry children with a nutritious meal every day they attend school in 12 countries across the world – including Malawi, Liberia, Kenya, Zambia, Haiti and India.

The charity consists of, respects and reaches out to people of all faiths and none, and its founding was inspired – in part – by Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow's Catholic faith. The work of Mary's Meals is named in honour of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and is often described by its founder as 'a fruit of prayer'.

Magnus said: "It is truly humbling that the Franciscan University of Steubenville has chosen to honour Mary's Meals as an organisation that is 'following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi'.

"I want to thank the Franciscan University for believing, in conferring the Poverello Medal on Mary's Meals, that the realisation of our vision – that every child should receive at least one good meal every day in their place of education – is possible in this world of plenty.

"It's wonderful to accept this award on behalf of the thousands of people all around the world who are part of this mission. Thanks to their selfless efforts and acts of love, we are now feeding more than a million children every school day.

"However, with 59 million children around the world out of school and hundreds of millions suffering as a result of chronic hunger, our work is only just beginning. I'd like to invite others to join the Mary's Meals movement, so that no child today will be without food and no child should miss school because of poverty."

Previous recipients of the Poverello Medal – which recognises Mary's Meals for exemplifying "the call of Christ to love the least among us" – include Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day and Jean Vanier.

Support for Mary's Meals is global, with fundraising groups springing up in Australia, Austria, Canada, Croatia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, UAE, UK and USA.

It costs just £12.20 / €14.50 / \$19.50 for Mary's Meals to feed a hungry child for an entire school year. The nutritious daily meal draws children into the classroom, where they can receive an education and a means to escape poverty in the future.

A book by Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, charting the extraordinary story of Mary's Meals, is out now. *The Shed That Fed A Million Children* is published by HarperCollins 360 in the US and by William Collins in the UK.

His Eminence Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, gave his backing to the book, saying: “Jesus teaches us that the greatest of all virtues is charity, and that the spirit of charity is motivated by generosity, sacrifice, and loving our neighbour as ourselves.

“*The Shed That Fed A Million Children* is a great testament to the wonderful things that can be accomplished when people work together to share God’s love and reach out to those in need. It’s a modern day miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish.”

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## Notes to editors:

- Mary’s Meals began in Malawi in 2002 when its founder Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow met a young woman called Emma who was dying from AIDS. She was sitting on the mud floor of her hut surrounded by her children. When Magnus asked her 14-year-old son what his dreams were in life, his stark reply was: “I want to have enough food to eat and to go to school one day”. This was a key part of the inspiration that led to the founding of Mary’s Meals.
- As part of the Sponsor A School initiative, two Mary’s Meals school feeding projects in Malawi – St. Francis and St. Clare Kitchens – are sponsored by a Franciscan University of Steubenville club founded in 2010 by theology professor Dr. Andrew Minto. For one school alone, the Franciscan students raise over \$12,000 annually to cover the cost of feeding all of the children for a whole school year, while students in Franciscan University’s study-abroad programme in Austria also fundraise for Mary’s Meals.
- The Franciscan Mary’s Meals club recently helped students at Bishop John King Mussio Junior High School in Steubenville get involved with this cause. The Bishop Mussio students raised enough money this year to open their own kitchen at St. Dominic’s School in Liberia, Africa, which they named “Cynthia’s Kitchen” after Cynthia Phillipson, a classmate who fundraised for Mary’s Meals in 2014 and passed away unexpectedly last autumn.
- Find out more about Mary’s Meals at: [www.marysmeals.org](http://www.marysmeals.org)
- Follow Mary’s Meals on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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