TIMOR-LESTE MISSION
CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE
17.04.13

The season of Eastertide has begun and with it comes the singing of Alleluia. The Alleluia interjection of praise and happiness is what I want to sing for the Timorese people. On my recent visit to Timor-Leste, I experienced in the Timorese people a new enthusiasm and hunger to learn. Gabrielle Fogarty, a Lay Carmelite and Mary Dowling accompanied me on this visit.

English Language and Computer Classes
Mary Dowling and I taught English to the ten pre-novice Carmelite students in Fatuhada, Dili. It was an intensive programme of four hours on most days over a two week period. Throughout all my English classes in Timor-Leste, this was a class more eager to learn. The students were also keen to practise their English out of class hours and to do this they would often sit beside us for meals. During each lesson Mary and I team taught together and alternated drama, oral, writing and reading activities. English Programmes on the computer were also used to follow activities that the students were learning. Like all young people the Carmelite students loved the computer activities.

A short excel programme was also taught to the Carmelite students by Gabrielle Fogarty. The purpose of this programme was to help the students manage finance. Six Carmelite students were involved, one of whom was able to build on previous skills that he had learnt.

Zumalai
Down in Zumalai, in the remote south west of Timor-Leste, where the people are still very poor and survive through subsistence living, the people are having a new motivation to move forward. On the Carmelite Compound the Catholic Secondary School now has two classes, a year seven and year eight. There are five new borders to replace the three who left as a result of completing their Senior Secondary education in Zumalai. This makes a total of ten student borders.

The plans have now been drawn up for the new Boarding House. It will be built on a flat section of land at the side of the primary school. There have always been two wet seasons in the Zumalai area and with climatic conditions changing all over the world, the wet season still hadn’t arrived during our visit to Zumalai in March. As a result of these climatic changes many of the skilled tradespeople have moved to other areas to find work. The
Boarding House is now planned to begin in the dry season in the month of August when the skilled workers will return.

The previous Community Centre/Youth Centre has now become their home and has been renovated and an extension added to provide a living area for the four sisters. They have a room each, a dining room and small chapel. A large generator has also been installed to help the sisters do their own cooking.

Gabrielle, Mary, Rosemary and Nine of the Borders

Student Study Area—Moises in the White Jacket was absent from Top Photo

On the Carmelite Compound also, a new group of Religious Sisters from Portugal have come to live and minister there. They belong to the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Mary. During my recent visit to Zumalai I was invited to have afternoon tea with the sisters together with Fr Bruce and Br Antonio, who is able to speak Portuguese. They had only been in Zumalai for a week when we visited. They are a lovely group of women who want to take their time working out how they can best minister in the Zumalai area through meeting the people and coming to know their needs. Their Congregation has a strong focus on education.

Scholarships

There are 17 scholarships being supported this year covering primary, secondary and tertiary education. During my recent visit to Timor-Leste I was able to meet up with more than half of these students. Many of them had moved to new schools. It is always a delight to meet them again, experience their smiles and see how they have grown.

Farewell Message

This will be the last “Timor-Leste Update” that I will write. I therefore want to express my thanks to, the Carmelite Friars, Lay Carmelites and Carmelite Family with whom I have worked closely over the last 9½ years. I will be resigning from my role as Carmelite Timor-Leste Mission Co-ordinator in June of this year.

Working in the role of Carmelite Timor-Leste Mission Co-ordinator has been a privileged experience for me. I will always treasure the opportunities that I have had to work and walk side by side with the Timorese Carmelite friars during my visits to Timor-Leste each year. I have also enjoyed coming to know and building up relationships with the supporters of the Carmelites in the Carmelite Parishes throughout Australia.

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