Timor-Leste is still experiencing wonderful rainfall during a long wet season while Victoria is recuperating from horrific bushfires and Queensland and New south Wales are still experiencing floods.

Fr Wayne, Fr Anthony & Peter Appleton were the last Carmelite visitors to Timor-Leste. They visited Dili, Hera and Zumalai. Their trip to Zumalai was very taxing as the wet season causes landslides and potholes to already appalling roads. The wet season though is a wonderful time for planting and the Timorese wait anxiously for it to arrive. During this time anything that is put in the ground begins to shoot.

Vegetable Garden at the Carmelite Zumalai Compound

Enlightment Program

A structured, formal English language Programme will take place at the Carmelite Compound in Zumalai, Timor-Leste in May of this year. It is being called a formal English Language Programme because when you visit Timor-Leste there is always someone wanting to learn and practise their English with you.

The programme will take place with the young Carmelite men in Zumalai who need English to be able to communicate with the Australian Carmelites. Four women who run a sewing group on the compound will also take part in the course. This first pilot programme will be an intensive training course over two consecutive weeks. It will take place over five days with (2-3) hour sessions on each day.

Kevin Melody, an Irish Carmelite from the English Province and I, will implement the first program. Resources are now being prepared, talked about and purchased. It has also been a very positive experience for me and a great advantage to work with another group who are preparing an English Training Programme in Timor-Leste. This is the local government group of Port Phillip City who have formed a friendship with Suai. Suai is in the same district of Timor-Leste as Zumalai. TESL teacher volunteers from the City of Port Phillip will conduct an English language programme for English language teachers at secondary schools in Covalima district which will be implemented during Timor-Leste school holidays.

The plan for the English Language Programme in Zumalai is that it continue into the future with other intensive English Courses also being held. Volunteers will be needed in the early stages of the programme but eventually it will be run by the Timorese themselves for unemployed youth in the Zumalai sub-district. The programme will be continually evaluated in order to assess its content and need.

Village Garden in Zumalai sub-district
and also the drivers of the cars and trucks. Most of these people are “jack of all trades”. They have learnt from experience and observation how to be electricians and plumbers.

Below is a photo of Tom Donohue who stayed at the compound recently with Natalino to his right. Natalino is the chief bread maker. Natalino and the three younger boys are all orphans. They live on the Carmelite compound and attend school which they would not have been able to do in their home villages.

New Study Room in Zumalai

Above is the new study room that was completed last year. It has new desks and chairs that were built by local carpenters. The solar panels which were also installed on the compound last year have been a great asset in enabling study to take place in this room in the evenings. During my last visit to Zumalai, as a result of having the solar power, I was able to discuss a youth centre proposal in the cool of the evening instead of during a hot humid day.

The other building that is in process at present is a new primary school wing of three classrooms that has been financed by Coorparoo parish in Brisbane. When this is completed all the children at the school will be able to attend at the same time instead of the staggered times at present.

The Carmelite Compound in Zumalai is a very busy place. There are children and staff attending the school, large numbers of people attending ceremonies, a choir, youth activities and musical activities at the church and youth centre. Catechists come from the villagers to type letters, rosters and certificates on typewriters not computers. In the late afternoons the compound is alive with teenagers, young adults and children who have gathered to take part in sporting activities. In the early mornings and late afternoons water is collected and in the early evening a hot bread kitchen also operates. This hot bread kitchen consists of a tin, box shaped stove which sits on hot coals and has hot coals placed on the top of it. Into this oven are placed trays with individual balls of dough to feed 20-30 people who have breakfast on the compound each day. The Carmelite compound also acts as the Zumalai hotel as there is no where else for people to stay who Zumalai. Finally, there are the people who run the brick and welding workshops

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

We specially remember and pray for the people of Timor-Leste in 2009. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the final stages of the Timorese people’s long wait for independence. As the dates pass the memories will be vivid for many Timorese people.

May the joy and hope of the Resurrected Christ shine forth in all your hearts this Easter.

Rosemary Patterson

Rosemary Patterson rsm
Carmelite Timor-Leste Mission Coordinator