May the Christmas star of light continue to be a constant source of hope to the people of Timor-Leste and to each of you.

Many more visits by internationals to the Carmelite Zumalai Compound are now taking place. In 2009 there was someone visiting Zumalai for nearly every month of the year. Positive developments are certainly taking place. Electricity, although only for two hours a day, has been installed in Zumalai town and a tower has been promised with mobile phone access.

Suai, the capital city of Covalima district where Zumalai sub-district is situated is set to become a very important city for the petro-gas industry. The Government has already acquired land for future development and the President has promised to reopen the airport and port facility in Suai. Signs of hope help us all to move forward especially during this coming season of Advent and Christmas.

Another wonderful sign of hope is that the three new primary school classrooms on the Zumalai compound will be completed by the end of the year. The classroom foundations were begun in September and Sean Keefe OCarm, Richard Pendavingh and Tom The present classrooms can be seen in the background of this photo.

Fairman who visited during September and October took the photos of the foundations being laid below.

The Foundations are being laid

The classrooms are being built during the last four months of this year when all Timorese schools are on holidays. There has been a change in the time of the school academic year which brings it into line with Australia. The teachers have attended professional development which has mainly been Portuguese Language Training.

All the materials for the new building were organised, planned and purchased before September. Some materials were brought from Dili, others from Indonesia and the stone and sand from Zumalai sub-district. All materials were transported to Zumalai in the Carmelite tip truck. Trades people of which there are very few in the remote area of Zumalai also had to be found. School finishing early meant that some of the cement could be stored in a vacated classroom. The present classrooms have also been able to be used for accommodation for the workers.

Mount Carmel Primary School in Coorparoo have funded all of this project and have been waiting patiently for its completion.
Hilton Visit
During October I visited “Our Lady of Mount Carmel” Primary School in Hilton, WA. The Carmelites no longer run the parish but I experienced the Carmelite spirit as being very strong both in the school and also in a parent group to which I spoke. The children and parents were also very interested in hearing about the Carmelite projects in Timor-Leste and seeing photos of the projects that they are supporting.

A group of school students called “Carmel Care” has been formed at the school. (see photo below) Mary Kinsella is the Coordinator of the group. It is made up of creative year 6 and 7 students and their goal is to enhance the lives of others in their immediate community and in the Timor-Leste Carmelite mission. The group has lunchtime meetings to plan activities to raise awareness and funds for the people needing their help.

During this stage consultations for understanding and agreement will take place with the local government, local village leaders, NGO’s and the local people. The full implementation of the project could take a number of years.

The Carmelite Compound is like the Zumalai hotel as it is the only place where westerners can stay. There is a school, Church and workshops on the compound. The present plan is to catch rain water from various building locations on the compound into water tanks and then move the water via pumps up the hill behind the property into much larger storage tanks. Once the water is at a reasonable height, gravity will serve to push the water down the hill.

“Water is a human right not to be bought or sold! For humanity to enjoy its full dignity, an adequate supply of clean water is indispensable.” These quotes are from “Water is free Beverage” by Deidre Mullan

The 2009 “Carmel Care” Group

Water Project
Since the beginning of the Carmelite Mission in Zumalai which began on August 16th 2001 international visitors have been enquiring about ways to help with the establishment of a safe drinking water system. Over the years the Carmelites have discovered that it is a very complex issue especially because of issues linked with the Timorese culture.

Recently the Carmelites held a fundraising charity ball and auction at the St Kilda town hall. The event was a great success with funds raised for the project exceeding the target. The project will now be implemented and take place in stages. The first stage of the project will take place on the Carmelite compound.

This Mother and Child Sculpture is from Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Hilton

Christmas Blessings and special thanks to all who have supported the Carmelites during 2009.

Rosemary Patterson rsm
Carmelite Timor-Leste Mission Coordinator

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