

Carmel Contact



from the Australian Carmelites
www.carmelites.org.au

Partnership Giving and Receiving

At Christmas our thoughts naturally turn to gift-giving. Gift-giving can be full of anxiety – choosing something appropriate, worrying about how the gift will be received, does its value truly reflect what we think of the person, have we forgotten someone, and so on.

Receiving gifts can also be filled with anxiety if

we equate the value of the gift with the depth of love it represents. Sometimes people feel hurt or insulted by the type of gift they receive, or if the gift received is of less value than the gift given.

Somewhere along the line we have lost the idea that the gift is only a symbol. Like all symbols, it can never say all that needs to be said, or tell the true value of love and friendship.

Our giving should not be one-sided, or born out of pity. We have an obligation to share with others, as God intended, simply because people in need are our sisters and brothers and they require our help. Through our gift giving we hope to give them the means of life – food, education, employment and health. If we are to think of ourselves as partners with the Timorese people, we have to ask: what can we receive from them?

Perhaps gift-giving at Christmas would not be so traumatic if we could learn to receive from the Timorese people a new sense of the values of family, friendship, solidarity, trust, faith, hope and joy.

Bill Armstrong, former CEO of Australian Volunteers International and parishioner of St Joseph's, Port Melbourne, shares his reflections of the perspective we need to achieve a real sense of partnership with our Asian neighbours.

Globalisation describes a world that is very close and interdependent. It implies the concept of a 'global village'.

However it can also mean a global market place in which all nations have free access to each other's markets - ultimately creating international competition in which the strong and rich overpower the weak and the poor.

This approach ignores the fundamental values of justice, equity and human rights and imposes a system in which many countries are forced to compete unfairly.

So what is the alternative? There is no doubt that we live in a world which is increasingly globalised. It is therefore not something to resist but something to work with and to use positively

While giving is good and necessary, seeing ourselves only as donors can lead to a feeling of superiority. If we are not careful we can begin to believe that we are better than our fellow human beings who do not have the same degree of material wealth we possess.

On the other hand our partners are often referred to as beneficiaries or recipients, implying that all they do is receive and that they have little or nothing to contribute to the partnership. Receiving help which is seen as nothing more than welfare can make one feel inferior and a failure.

Our partners have much to give. Their contribution relates to the way people live; sharing, working together in community and supporting one another as members of the one family. Most of these virtues we, of the affluent world, lost long ago.

We have much to learn from our Asian and Pacific neighbours about living in community and building and sustaining relationships. It is very important that we continue to give, however we should do so in a spirit that respects and identifies the gifts we all bring to that partnership.

We need to learn how to learn from our global partners and to work with them in solidarity to change this world in a way which ensures that all human beings are treated as equals and able to participate. We must be open to examining our own lifestyle and behaviour so that eventually we, along with all our sisters and brothers throughout the globe, can live peacefully in a just and equitable world.

Bill Armstrong



A symbol of love & friendship

Christmas Spirit in East Timor



Above - Local youth enjoy a game of volleyball

Christmas is a time for celebration, sharing of friendships, and family.

Right - Skilled workmen from Java show the local village men welding skills



Left - The polyclinic in Zumalai servicing 13,000 people



Below - Young Carmelite students beginning their studies in Zumalai

In western culture we give gifts as a sign of our love and appreciation for one another. In East Timor the people will celebrate without Christmas trees and gift giving. Instead, like other Christians around the world they will attend Mass to celebrate the birth of Christ.

Despite their daily struggles the people remain extraordinarily happy in the midst of desperate poverty, experiences of trauma, violence, fear, suffering and death. They are people of simple faith, hospitality, generosity, welcome laughter, joy, dance and song.

Through your generosity, steps are being taken to improve everyday life for the Timorese people. As world attention turns to new hot spots and aid dries up for East Timor, the work of the Carmelites becomes increasingly more important.

A major problem confronting the people of East Timor as they try to rebuild their lives is the lack of skills at every level. There is a real shortage of qualified tradespeople, managers, public servants and health workers.

A lack of skills means a person cannot be employed. It's hard to provide enough for a family to live on just from the few crops which survive. Without employment people can't make their lives better. Without employment the young have a bleak future.

At Zumalai we are trying to help people gain skills. Fr Ipong has set up a workshop where people can learn engine maintenance, welding and furniture-making. Sales of furniture and motor vehicle repairs have already brought about \$3000.00 back into the community.

The young Carmelite candidates at Zumalai also learn these skills.

Watching children at play often teaches you something about a society. In Zumalai I am always struck by how much fun the children and youth seem to have with each other. A simple game of basketball or volleyball has them all laughing, yelling and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

They play hard, but there is no sense of the aggressive competition which often mars sport in Australia. Their teams include various shapes, sizes, ages and abilities, and everyone gets a turn.

New basketball and volleyball courts at the Mission provide a healthy outlet for the young, building their sense of community and enjoyment.

Our Youth Centre provides a place where young people can learn life-skills necessary to help prevent depression and hopelessness. With little opportunity for employment it's often hard for young people to remain optimistic and energetic. The Youth Centre training programs help them to meet the challenges together and to find good solutions. Other skills for planning, organisation and management are also developed here.

The Mission provides water and electricity not only to the parish, school and Youth Centre, but also to the medical clinic. Here each day people are treated by a husband and wife nursing team who provide immediate medical care. With the nearest doctor in Suai (45 minutes away by car) the clinic is a valuable and integral part of the local community. In addition to treating the sick and injured, the nurses run programs on hygiene and the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis and malaria.

Images of East Timor

I still have a kaleidoscope of images after my recent trip to East Timor. Fr. Wayne, Fr. David and I went to East Timor to join with our Carmelite Brothers and Sisters in celebrating the Ordination of our brother Manuel Almeida de Costa, O.Carm., which was held at Ossu Viqueque on 28 August 2003.

My first image was the great welcome from our Carmelite Brothers and friendly hospitality from our Carmelite Sisters. All this prepared us for the other images that remain. The number of burnt out buildings in the villages a constant reminder of the difficulties after independence. The difficult drive over the mountains to our parish of Zumalai. The wonderful reception we received from the members of the parish who welcomed us with a ceremonial dance and the traditional gift of a Tais hand woven by the women. Sunday Liturgy in the rebuilt parish Church that had been destroyed by the militia. The thirteen young men who were received as aspirants to the Carmelite Order, a very moving moment for each of us from Australia.

Here was the beginning of new life for the Church and the Order in East Timor. The nine postulants who are preparing to go to the novitiate next year were also there. My first thought was where are they all going to live and how are we going to feed them. Later in the day I saw where the aspirants live, they call it Suffering House. I would call it a shed with bamboo walls. How they keep the rain out I do not know.

Fr Bruce Clark from Coorparoo wrote the following in the parish newsletter on his experience of East Timor.

...I found myself in some sort of culture shock, I suppose. It was not only the climate, the food, the language barrier, or the living conditions. It was the difficulty of being open to the reality of these people. I couldn't be just a spectator or observer. They were welcoming me (us) into their community and their lives. The Carmelite

The experience after Mass was very moving as everyone wanted to take my hand. During the afternoon we walked through the village to the same greeting and passed the water pipe that brings the fresh water for drinking and washing. Everyone seemed to be there standing in the creek that is formed by the water as it rushes out of the pipe.

I saw the well that had been dug on the parish land but which had fallen in much to the disappointment of everybody. I heard of the corn crop that had been washed away in the flood. We went to bed that night by the power from the parish generator because there is no electrical power in the village. It has been installed but the people cannot afford to have it connected.

Fr Ken Petersen O.Carm



Above - Fr's Bruce, Wayne and Ken are welcomed by the people of Zumalai



Above right - One of our young men beginning his training pictured at Suffering House

friars and students, the parishioners at Zumalai, the Carmelite Sisters, the people in general welcomed and greeted us with genuine happiness and openness.

...How hard it is at times to find within oneself the willingness and ability to be open to others and to the challenges and demands of life and faith. I have been reminded that these words of Jesus "Ephphatha, Be opened", come to us in many and varied ways....

Letter of Thanks

To all friends in Australia

We write to thank you for your generosity to us. The gifts you have sent to us will help our lives as Carmelites in Timor Lorosae. We have many problems and many struggles. Your gifts will help our children and their families.

The blankets will help keep us warm in the mountains and the camp ovens will help us cook our rice each day.

The clothing will be good to wear and the pencils and books will help us to learn in our schools.

We promise to always pray for you.

Obrigado barak (Thank you very much)

From your Carmelite Confraters

Br. Antonio Olavio Exposto



Br Antonio, Fr Ipong and David receiving gifts from Australia

News in Brief

We congratulate Carmelites, Peter Byrth, Jerome Watt and Matthew McPhee who celebrate 50 years of Religious Profession and Greg Moore, 60 years of Priesthood.

Supporters, we are filled with awe! In September we sent out a letter to commemorate the visit of the relics of St Therese to Australia and asked if you would assist us with our mission work in East Timor. We were astounded to receive more than \$35,000. We welcome all of our new supporters.

A very big expression of thanks goes to Br Sean Keefe and the boys and staff from Whitefriars College who held a walkathon to raise money for East Timor on the feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. They raised a whopping \$11,000! What a great effort, well done everyone.

A brief comment from our East Timorese support groups.

In April 2002 the community at Coorparoo responded to the call to support the Carmelites in their mission to the people of East Timor. Together with Mt Carmel Parish, the local Primary school and St Peters Parish at Rochedale we formed a committee called the Friends of East Timor- Zumalai. Our support since 2002 has included, financial assistance and the sending of supplies and prayer. As humans we are called to love all of God's people and to demonstrate that love with action. As a group it has been a "life transforming experience" to answer this call. We have come to see the world through the eyes of the poor in Timor, learning from them what is truly important, what it means to be human and where we ultimately encounter God's Love.

Wentworthville parish has been enthusiastically fund raising for the Zumalai parish in East Timor throughout the year. The first big effort was two successful 'Trash and Treasure' days where donated goods from all over the State were sold. Fr Laurie organised two Wizards Expresses to raise money. Everyone had a great time dressing up as their favourite Harry Potter character. The children in OLMC primary school have also been enthusiastic fund raisers under Sr Margaret's leadership. A walkathon around Penrith Lakes was held on the windiest day of the year. Several parishioners will visit Zumalai in late October to see first-hand what is needed. There is a great feeling of generosity and sharing in a common Carmelite Catholic bond. The next step is to focus this enthusiasm and energy into a worthwhile project that will really help make a difference to the people.

"The Parish of SS Peter & Paul, Kiama includes the small towns of Jamberoo and Gerringong. The community in these centres have taken the people of East Timor to their hearts in a number of ways. Led by the enthusiasm of Fr Paul Gurr, and with the continued feedback of other visiting Friars to East Timor, our community assisted Wentworthville parish by collecting goods such as clothing, toys, bikes, tools and educational material. The parish Social Justice group coordinated the transportation of many trailer loads to Wentworthville.

St Matthew's Church community, Jamberoo has a monthly collection for East Timor, and the Taize prayer group, who meet monthly, offer support by prayer and donations. Our communities are inspired by the determination and tenacity of the East Timorese people, despite the many hardships and sorrows they have endured. Their faith and joy for living a simple life, are living examples to us of the Gospel in action.

Provincial Delegate for Lay Carmelites Bruce Clark O.Carm, met with members of the Lay Carmelite National Council at Middle Park Priory over the weekend August 8-10. A number of important issues were addressed and the particular office of members was assigned as follows: Secretary/Treasurer, Betty Warnock; National Formation Director, Anita Renehan; Assistant Formation Director, Teresa Paradowski; Minute Secretary, Gabrielle Fogarty; Office Support Person, Maria Goral; Promotions Officer, Sue Stuckey; Representative of Community Priors, Jim Brewster.

The Society of Our Lady of Mount Carmel would like to wish you all a blessed Christmas. Thank you to all our members for your wonderful support throughout the year. It is through your gift of giving that we are able to continue our work and make a difference to the lives of many people. May we keep each other in our prayers as we celebrate the Holy Season.

Order Your East Timor Calendar 2004 A Great Christmas gift for family & friends!



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