

## LETTER FROM RAILACO NO. 2

THU, 9 MAY 2013

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Vol VII, No. 2

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Greetings from Timor!

- **WELCOME ASSISTANCE ARRIVES FOR MOBILE MEDICAL CLINIC**  
Just after Easter our Mission benefited from the arrival of new volunteers. Dr Andrew Leong from New Zealand has come to work in the Mission clinic and in the mobile clinic. An experienced doctor, Andrew has applied himself diligently to learning Tetun and has already taken on the clinic ministry full-time. He has also made some solo drives to the outlying villages with the mobile clinic. His presence has made a huge difference to the workload of Fr Bong and there has been quite an increase in the number of patients attending the clinic. Andrew's wife, Mary is also working as a volunteer nurse in the hospital of Dr Dan at Bairo Pite, Dili.
- A more recent arrival is Michele Keating, an experienced nurse from Newcastle, who has joined the Mission Station. Michele's role is that of a nurse educator and she will be enhancing the relatively inadequate skills of our local Timorese nurses and promoting health education throughout the Mission areas. This is a great need as many health issues are basically due to lack of knowledge about caring for one's health. Michele is also working with the Christian Brothers in their Mission villages. It was the Brothers' support group in Queensland who obtained the services of Michele and they have very kindly shared her services with us.
- Last Friday, it seemed all village paths led to Railaco! Four technicians from the Fred Hollows' Foundation set up their eye screening programme in our clinic and villagers came from near and far to take advantage of this opportunity. Three technicians did the eye testing: the people who only required glasses were given their script and were attended to by a fourth technician. Happiness is being able to see! The delight on the faces of these poor people as they put on their glasses was worth watching. The people who required surgery of various kinds had their names taken and will be attended to by a Fred Hollows' surgeon in the neighbouring town of Gleno next week.

The Fred Hollows' team arrived from Dili at 10.30 am but many villagers had arrived at 8 am. As the testing proceeded it was evident that the villagers were very hungry as many had walked long distances to get to the clinic. We estimated that we had about seventy people. When Fr Bong stated that we couldn't send them away hungry our Mission staff swung into action and Andrew's

wife, Mary, joined in. Every cupboard, and our wonderful freezer, were raided for food. The eye team took a break to be fed also and we gathered the villagers for a well-earned meal. One dear old man who was told who would be the first to be seen after lunch wouldn't leave his post so we had to bring him his lunch. Having said he wasn't hungry, he then proceeded to demolish a bowl of rice and vegetables that Aussies wouldn't eat in a week!

The Brothers had brought patients down from their villages and they also brought down a little nine year old girl who had a badly broken arm. The drive down from her mountain village must have been extremely painful but there wasn't a whimper out of her. The stoicism of these children constantly amazes me. Our clinic staff gave her some pain killers and tried to make her arm comfortable and a Brother then drove her to a Government station from where she could be taken by ambulance to hospital. She undertook all this without a murmur and I could barely look at the state of her little arm. They are amazing people.

#### GRADUATIONS FROM OUR SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMMES

University and tertiary graduations have been taking place and the following students have graduated with the help of our scholarship programme:

NAME	DEGREE/CERTIFICATE	INSTITUTE
<b>Filipe de Oliveira</b>	Bachelor in Civil Engineering	UNTL
<b>Zelia Belado Pelo</b>	Bachelor of Agriculture	UNTL
<b>Jeronimo Salvador Fatima</b>	Licenciate in Law	UNPAZ
<b>Joaquim Ribeiro</b>	Licenciate in Engineering	UNPAZ
<b>Domingas Goncalves</b>	Bachelor of Law	UNPAZ
<b>Paulino dos Santos</b>	Bachelor of Humanities	UNPAZ
<b>Simforosa de Deus Soares</b>	Bachelor of Agriculture	UNPAZ
<b>Genoeva Fatima Salsinha</b>	Bachelor of Primary Education	ICFP
<b>Noe da Costa Freitas</b>	Certificate Carpentry - Don Bosco Training Centre	
<b>Carlos Pereira Soares</b>	Certificate of Welding	
<b>Vitoria de Carvalho Piedade</b>	Certificate in Computing	
<b>Emelita Martins</b>	Certificate in Computing	
<b>Olavio Soares</b>	Certificate in Welding	
<b>Luzia de Carvalho Piedade</b>	Certificate in Computing	
<b>Emelita Fatima</b>	Certificate of Community Development	Canossa
<b>Imaculada Maria Saldanha</b>	Certificate of Community Development	"

This year we have one hundred and fourteen (114) students studying at tertiary institutes doing Bachelor Degrees and nine (9) undertaking Certificate courses. All these students are from our mountain villages and rely solely on our scholarship monies. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who so generously makes this progress possible.

- We have enjoyed a variety of visitors: Luke Keighery led a group comprising representatives from Sydney and Wollongong Catholic Mission Offices. Fran Kelly from Sydney Catholic Missions (not from the ABC though Fran tells me that she and the ABC Fran have neighbouring holiday houses!); Mike Deasy from Wollongong Catholic Mission Office were here on an immersion experience and were accompanied by their friends who all showed great interest in Timor and its future development. Mike was a former P&F President from St Mary's Wollongong so it was great to meet up again.
- **LEGION OF MARY**  
I had another lovely reunion when Theresia Turner from Armidale came, at the request of the Bishop of Dili, to commence the Legion of Mary here in Timor. Theresia and I lived and worked together in Dili in 2001. Theresia's son, Joseph, also had an immersion experience in our medical clinic when he was a newly graduated doctor. Theresia's first shock came when she expected to stay at the Hotel Turismo only to learn upon arrival that it is still undergoing massive renovations (and has been doing so for the past 2 years!). We enjoyed reliving some of our more hilarious experiences from the earlier years.

- **CONTRIBUTION FROM ROTARY**

Our new Timor Plaza has not only a cinema but also a Conference Centre. It was here that Rotary International had their recent conference. A participant in this was George McLean a Rotarian from Canberra. George paid a visit to Railaco as Canberra Rotary had contributed generously to our school/community/church water project. We were very happy to welcome him and to show him our plentiful supply of water.

- **VISIT FROM THE BISHOP OF BRUNEI**

Very recently we received a visit from the Bishop of Brunei, Cornelius Sim and one of his priests, Fr Paul, who both stayed overnight. Bishop Sim is a 2-yearly visitor to Timor and his diocese funds a number of projects throughout Timor. The Bishop has only three priests in his diocese but they work with a very active laity. We always look forward to the Bishop's visit and he is certainly a Bishop with a difference! When he heard that Lucy had intended making pizza for dinner he told us that in his previous existence he had been a baker (among many interests!). He then said he would knead the dough for our pizza. He not only kneaded the dough he cut up the tomatoes, sliced the mushrooms and spread the cheese! We cook the pizza in a tin oven over a wood fire outside the kitchen. The Bishop's moment of great joy came when he withdrew the giant pizza, beautifully cooked, from the oven and placed it on our table. (See attached photo). Needless to say, we had a great feast for dinner that night and demolished the lot! He celebrated Mass for the community on Sunday morning and delighted the people by saying it in Tetun. He left later that day to inspect some of his other projects in Dili and left behind many friends and a great sense of joy.

- The Bishop was fortunate to come to Railaco at the same time as Xanana had travelled through on his way to Ermera. This meant that hasty, and temporary, repairs were made to the road from Dili to Railaco! While we were happy that the Bishop had a relatively smooth journey, we had been hoping that once Xanana had experienced our pot-holed riven, landslide-strewn, road, more permanent repairs may have been ordered!

- **INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADE**

This is not the case in Dili where we see work being carried out everywhere. One item of curiosity has been the heavily secluded new memorial fountain being built at the big crossroads approaching the airport. This is to be a memorial to six heroes of the Resistance and recently some of the corrugated iron barricades came down to give us a glimpse of the partially finished monument. It is certainly going to be grand on a big scale. We await further developments.

- Also nearing completion is the new stage of the biggest bridge, the Comoro Bridge. The existing two-lane steel bridge has been, by far, the best bridge in Timor. The stage under construction is a corresponding two-lane section that will then provide a four lane bridge at the entry to Dili city. One begins to think as a mountain dweller, and each week we look longingly at the cement, sand and soil, not to mention the earth-moving machinery, and think of where we would like it all to be!

- **RAILACO SECONDARY SCHOOL**

There is no further progress with our school situation. I could weep when I see the deterioration in the school buildings. Am keeping the gardener employed as I couldn't bear to see that destroyed. The students are as gorgeous as ever and, seemingly, blissfully unaware of the deficiencies in the education they are receiving. To be honest, it is probably on a par with that of most schools in the Districts of Timor. It is when one thinks of what they could be receiving that blood rises in the veins!

From May 18 I will be in Australia for a few weeks and relatively out of contact. I will be returning to Timor in June in time for our visit from students from Australian Jesuit schools.

On behalf of the Jesuit Mission Team      Rita