

EAST TIMOR UPDATE

Bulletin of The Peter Trust

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Special Edition ORPHANS, FARMS, SCHOOLS

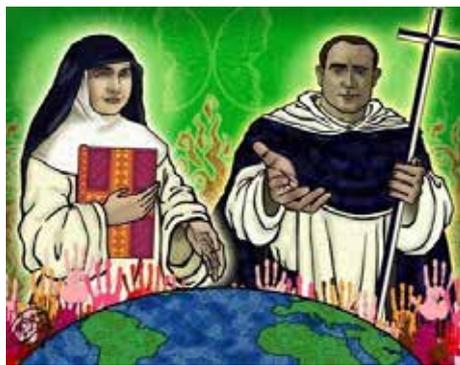
The Missionary Dominican Sisters of the Rosary

This Congregation has undertaken a wide range of work for and with the poor of East Timor to which *The Peter Trust* has given significant support since 2002. This edition of *East Timor Update* recounts some of these efforts which are continuing to the present time and for which there will be a need for years to come.

The Story of these Sisters

It began in 1918 in the Peruvian Amazon, next to the Madre de Dios river. They were founded by Mgr Ramon Zubieta, a courageous missionary who ventured into the rainforest and saw the urgent needs of the indigenous peoples and the injustices suffered by workers in the rubber industry being developed by Western agencies.

He travelled to Spain to urge the Dominican Sisters in Huesca to go back with him, and he was joined by Mother Ascension Nicol Goni and several fellow Sisters. Mother Ascension was the first Western missionary woman to enter into the Peruvian jungle.



The founders

There she discovered her **new vocation**: to be in contact with the impoverished women and children whom they educated and with whom they shared the tasks and challenges of everyday life in the dense forest. The new religious congregation was established that very year.

It was to spread throughout the world and is now present in 21 countries and has Sisters of 22 nationalities.

The Dominican Missionary Vocation

The Sisters are committed to be *servants of the poorest*, 'sharing their lives, accompanying them in their hopes, struggles and suffering'. They are *missionary*, aiming 'to break down barriers and differences, with hopes for humanity of a new heaven and new earth'. In a world in which life is denied to thousands due to a lack of food education identity and freedom 'the Sisters are committed to the *integral liberation* of our peoples'.

'For us to speak of God is to talk

about the need to work for a life of dignity for all and for justice.' 'We stand in solidarity with peoples who dream of a brighter tomorrow'.

The Congregation is *Marian* seeing in the mother of Jesus a model of discipleship. Their activity is rooted in *prayer* 'which nourishes and unifies our project' and has a focus on the sufferings and the potential of women - a special *gender awareness*.

The Sisters are called to seek the truth by the light of the Gospel so as to best respond to the needs in each situation in which they serve.



Junior Sisters gathered for the Feast of St Dominic in Aileu, East Timor, 2017

For further information see the Sisters' website - www.misionerasdominicas.org/ (from which these citations are drawn).

The Peter Trust and the Missionary Dominicans

The Peter Trust was constituted in December 1999 - the year in which East Timor achieved independence after a 25 year struggle against Indonesian occupation. The Secretary, Fr Pat, was soon able to visit the liberated territory and saw at first hand the widespread devastation and impoverishment.

Peter Trust Priorities

From its inauguration in 2001 *The Peter Trust* has prioritised projects in health and education. In this issue of *Update* we look at the continuing need in East Timor for our assistance in these areas.



Sister Marilu OP with Santa Ana orphans



Older boys at the orphanage

He also met with a number of religious leaders and societies who were ably and energetically responding to this situation.

Amongst them were the *Missionary Dominican Sisters of the Rosary*. They were already engaged in providing for the needs of orphans and in the establishment of Primary education. In support of both enterprises the Sisters had organised agricultural small holdings or 'farms' for the raising of livestock and the production of vegetables.

The first assistance given by *The Peter Trust* was to the Dominican **Orphanage** in Santa Ana, in the capital **Dili**, where about 80 boys and girls aged 8-16 were cared for. The Trust provided funds to pay for the mains electrical supply to the building, and for the purchase of rice and for some medical supplies, and for fuel for the generator for those (frequent) occasions when the mains supply failed.

At that time the Sisters had already acquired and arranged for the agricultural/pastoral development of a **Farm** on few acres of land out of town at **Hera**, about forty minutes drive along the North Coast road. Here the orphans spent much of their leisure time at weekends and during school holidays clearing the ground, preparing it for seeding of fruit trees and vegetables, and for the husbandry of cows, pigs, and chickens. A sizeable plantation of banana trees was - and still is - very fruitful. *The Peter Trust* helped in the purchase of a 'rotavator' for clearing the undergrowth and ploughing furrows, and with the costs of a well, water pump and irrigation pipes.

The older members also travelled to the South Coast where at **Natarbora** *St Dominic's Farm* was established to raise crops and also rear horses as well as cattle, pigs and chickens. The boys laboured long hours to dig out an area the size of a municipal swimming pool for the purpose of fish farming. Unfortunately this particular enterprise did not in the end prove to be successful but the other produce of the Farm helped provide food for the orphanage back in Dili and for other efforts to care for the children of the poor and their families. *The Peter Trust*



Sister Mila OP outside the multi purpose building



The water tank and pump at Hera Farm



St. Dominic's Farm



St Dominic's Farm animals



Boys labouring over the fish farm construction



Residents construct security wall



Sister Elsie OP outside the two storey block



The hills around Soibada



The dormitory



Boys with animals at Hera Farm



Girls making school uniform

provided funding for fuel for the motorised equipment used on the farm, and for seeds and seedlings for planting.

Another venture was the **Hostel** at **Soibada**, high up in the central hills. During the period of Portuguese colonial rule this location had been something of a centre for education in the district and beyond but during the time of Indonesian occupation the premises and the provisions made therein fell into disarray. Regrettably the buildings were used by Indonesian Military personnel for the violent interrogation of those suspected or accused of resistance to the Indonesian regime. The property deteriorated, but after Timorese independence was achieved in 1999 the Missionary Dominican Sisters were asked by church authorities in Dili to take charge of the place and establish an educational facility to serve the needs of boys and girls in residence there. Several visits were made by Fr Pat and at that time the age range of the forty or so pupils was mainly between 11-15 years with

four to five Sisters in residence.

In due course the **Farm at Hera** was developed as a base for older teenage orphan (or otherwise un-provided) boys. A residential facility was constructed and an external wall erected, the labouring undertaken by the boys themselves. This was needed for reasons of security and also to confine the livestock within its parameters. A **multipurpose building** was developed for educational and social purposes serving some of the needs of families in the vicinity, and subsequently a **two storey block** was established to provide better standard of accommodation for the boys and those with charge of them. These two edifices were funded by international charities and have proved most useful in various ways until now. *The Peter Trust* continued to support this base with funds for improvements to irrigation and for seed, etc. The site was visited on two successive years by *Peter Trustee* Norah Small, and most recently (2017) by Trustee David Wilkinson.



Girls and boys wearing new uniform



Sisters in residence



Boys in hostel dormitory

Early on in their ministry in East Timor the Missionary Dominican Sisters of the Rosary had established a Primary School in the capital of Dili. This continues to thrive and has not needed any help from *The Peter Trust*. However, the Trust's help has been of great assistance to the newly established **Primary School** on the campus at **Hera**.

Over the past three years an excellent facility has gradually been built to offer education of a high standard to infants and juniors. *The Peter Trust* has been supportive of this venture in several ways but especially through funding **nutritional supplements** for the malnourished children who attend the school. In addition the Trust entirely funded the **construction of a Canteen** building at which substantial meals can be prepared and which offers tuition to mothers and older siblings on the preparation of a well-balanced diet. The Canteen is also proving to be a source of income generation as it is located near to the main road and is also of assistance to the families whose children attend the school.

There have been earnest efforts to establish links between this *Eskola Dominika* as it is titled, and the **schools of Holy Name and St Mary's** in the Parish of Our Lady of Kirkstall in Leeds/Horsforth. It is hoped that this will prove to be mutually beneficial to the children of all three schools through heightened awareness of the very different situations in which they operate.



Children looking at messages from Leeds schools

HERA GARDENS



Boys with Rotovator



Corn & Cabbages



Boys with Bananas



Growing a Tomato Plant

PRIMARY SCHOOL HERA



Lunch Time in the New Canteen



Graduation ceremony at Escola Dominika



Children in class



Procession in honor of Our Blessed Lady

Peter Trustees Thank All Donors



The Trustees have watched with interest and pleasure the development over a decade of these various responses to the needs of the children of what remains one of the four poorest

countries on the planet. All our donors are thanked for their support - by the Trustees, but most especially by the youngsters of this distant land and their families, who are so grateful for all the help that has been given to them to be better provided for in this impoverished country. Please know for sure that your generosity is recognised and your donations have been well used. If you can, please continue in your support for the projects in East Timor of the *Missionary Dominican Sisters of the Rosary* through *The Peter Trust*.