

Monthly Diary No 16 – May 08

REGISTERED NAME: Edmund Rice Brothers, The Philippines, Inc.

For more photos and reflections go to our website: www.Peterthrupp.com

Quote of the Month: By Mahatma Gandhi

“Happiness is when what you think, say, and do are in harmony”



Latest News: Rod has just got word that his 93 year old father is very unwell and may be dying and so is making his way home as I write this newsletter. We ask for your prayers for his father and the family at this difficult time. Peter Hardiman is home at this time too.



Franks Birthday Party: April the 9th was Frank’s birthday so a party was arranged and we took the opportunity to have a house blessing at the same time. It turned out to be a good opportunity to invite all those people who have been so kind and generous to us since our arrival here at Hilongos (Photo 1). Among our guests were the Bishop (White top No 2), Fr Celso the Parish Priest (Stole No 2), Sisters from Maasin, the Staff of St Teresa School, Dr Eleanor (Seated No 1) and Forty guests in all were entertained. Frank did the traditional welcome and thank you speech. Fr Celso blessed the house and the Bishop officially welcomed us to his Diocese. Towards the end of the evening Frank blew out the candles and cut the cake. We had in a local catering firm to do all the arrangements, which turned out to be a wise move as the whole evening turned out to be huge. As they say a photo is worth a thousand words so I include just three here, others can be found on the website. His birthday did start at 11.30 the night before with singing at the front gate apparently an old Filipino custom.

Visitors: Tony Hemenstall, our cluster leader, visited us on the 12th April on his way home from the General Chapter. He spent five days with us after visiting the brothers in

Kabankalan. John and Neil will visit us on the 25th and we will celebrate both ANZAC day and Carl's birthday together. We have just been told John Corbet will also visit us in May.

Bells of St Teresa: Let me say a few words about our dear old bell tower. It is over three hundred years old built by the Spanish and it along with the church and Convento is surrounded by a medieval wall with a fort like appearance. They certainly built things to last and the photos will give you an idea of the extent of what

exists today. Anyway back to the bells which seem to ring off and on all day. We are wakened by the bells ringing 40 times at 4.30 am and then three times at intervals of 5 minutes until Mass commences at 5am.

This procedure is repeated throughout the day each time a mass is scheduled. The bell is also rung of

course at the consecration each time. I am informed that the bell ringing comes from the old custom of calling the farmers from the fields. These days' people have watches of course but the old custom still persists. We

can participate from afar as the microphone system is hooked to loud speakers which also are attached to the bell tower; it kind of demands your attention regardless

of the time of day. Carl thought that someone actually lived up in the Tower but I have done some investigation of my own and have actually climbed the Tower. I found that a man

named Crisanto lives in a very poor dwelling near the church. He tells me he climbs those stairs at least 20 times a day every day and he has a permanent limp so it's not easy for him.

There are three bells. A baby bell, a middle size bell (for weekdays) and big berth. All three are only rung on Sundays. The present church was completed in 1968 but the parts of the original church can still be seen. The bell Tower is part of the old church and wall. Our



week day mass's are full on with sermon, collection and full Choir much like Sunday so there is no such thing as a low key mass here. You can Google the word **Hilongos** as it makes interesting reading for anyone into Spanish history. Leyte has First World War fame.



Hilongos houses: Houses here in Hilongos fall into three categories; the very poor, the poor, the middle class. . The poorer dwellings are on stilts as they are built on no-mans land and are affected by the incoming tides each day. By far the poor and very poor are in the majority (Above) being town folk who make a living driving tricycles, running small stores, farming, or fishing. We are living in a house belonging to the lower range of the middle class I would guess. Basically it is a simple, clean, small five room house and is made of a combination of brick and Bamboo which is common enough here. We are happy with it and I included a photo of it in the last Diary so I am adding a couple taken from the inside which will show three bed rooms, a bathroom and some living space. The space has been divided into chapel, common room and kitchen and dining room. When we arrived there was a minimum amount of furniture so we have been gradually adding necessary items. Billy, our local carpenter, has been very busy making cupboards and other smaller items. His latest creation was a beautiful bamboo screen to help us create a sacred space for our chapel. The Blessed Sacrament was put in place just this week. Carl is sacristan.



Kabankalan news: John has been successful in encouraging some 12 of his 07 charges to go on to elementary School and is gathering a new group of children (15 so far) for his unique Educational Programme when the School starts again in June. Peter Hardiman continues to teach the seminarians and from what I hear has the students eating out of his hands. The depth of his insights and innovative teaching techniques are rapidly giving him guru status. Rod continues his rounds of the Diocese and the work done in assisting all the catholic schools is truly remarkable. The computer upgrading programme has been continuing thanks to the wonderful support he has been getting from back home. Neil continues to be Master of Hospitality and helps with the day to day running of the household as well as finding time to do some tutoring for the local Catholic School. He is also joining John's programme as an extra teacher. The latest news is that a block of land has been purchased and plans for two small houses are being drawn up. Approval soon.

Hilongos: We have officially joined the School faculty. Carl will be teaching Christian Living to all the Secondary Classes, Frank is teaching Science and Maths and I will be teaching a couple of Maths and some Computer Classes. We are in the process of moving the computers out of the Convento and into a room closer to the school. We hope to update the computers to windows XP before the new scholastic year begins. Teachers are expected to teach eight one hour lessons per day, starting at 7.30 and finishing at 5pm. As you know the teachers wages here are very low so that has its difficulties as they are unable to attract the best teachers. However the ones they do have tend to be quite dedicated. We will need some help from Australia as there are few text books and the Library is only that in name. Frank and I will try to gather some support for the School when we return for our break. Frank is off to NZ in April and I am going to Perth in May. Until next time. P X T