

Bimonthly Diary No28 – May 1st 2009 -

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

Our website: <http://www.peterthrupp.com/>

Quote of the Month:

“If I diminish you I diminish myself” Bishop Tutu



HILONGOS NEWS

The above quote was the subject of my last reflection downloaded to the website just recently. It could certainly be the basis of our own prayer life at this difficult time in our history and it is worth noting, that the reason given for our financial difficulties by the new President of the USA, (I am reading his book now) was the selfish greed of a few. Maybe they could take this quote to heart and the desired economic recovery will become a reality. I also loved Peter Harney's article in Heart Beat on the WERN. A lot of wisdom there for us all and a few practical suggestions. Easter is such a wonderful time of the year and please God you all enjoyed the Church Celebrations as we did, though Filipino, or was it Spanish influence, made it quite different to home grown experiences. The latest set of photos downloaded to the website is called "Flores De Mayo" and the pictures tell their own story.

Anniversary:

We have been here in Hilongos for just over 12 months now. It was Saint Patrick's Day 2008 when we first arrived from a six months language course in Davao City Mindanao. We celebrated by going down to Maasin and having a delightful meal together. We pray that the second year will be even more beneficial to the people we choose to serve here.

Visitation:

Brothers Dean and Chris from the OLT spent two very full days with us and we were grateful for their insights and contributions to our community life here in Leyte. It is not easy to cope with a new country and a different culture from our own and it is necessary and valuable to have someone, from time to time, fly in, and help us reflect on our day to day life and help us sort out difficulties that inevitably arise in such a place, so far from home. We were able to help them immerse in the culture a little by taking them to a local birthday party at the end of the two days. The little walk through one of the poorer Barangays was an eye opener also. They bussed to Tacloban at six o'clock on the 27th March to catch an eleven o'clock flight to Manila. Thank you Dean and Chris, we really did appreciate your presence among us.

Our Summer School:

We started a week late, but thanks to a lot of solid preparation, things went OK. Some 70 children turned up on the first day and another dozen, who had not registered, also

turned up a little later so we needed the first day to sort things out. Thelma, Dorrie and Cherrie were our volunteer teachers and they did a great job. Unfortunately I was unable to be of any assistance teaching, but the good news is the team managed well without me needing to be present all the time. Rod, who came down from Kabankalan for a few days, and Carl were a great help and I thank them for their support. The whole venture was a great success and we take this opportunity to thank all at home in Australia who contributed financial support to make it all happen. Carl went off with Rod to spend a week with the community at Kabankalan and he certainly deserves the break. Please God we will be able to come up with a follow-up project in the future for these kids who are the real poor of Hilongos. The final day was May 8th and we celebrated well.

Health:

I have once again come down to another bug this time it appears to be Dengue fever. A week's hospitalisation seems to have stabilised things and I am back at home now and trying to get some energy levels back as I seem to be very tired a lot of the time and these headaches I get don't help much. The latest news is I received a phone call from the OLT this morning and they would like me to return home and get a complete check up. In the light of this phone call I plan to travel back to Brisbane on the 12th May.

Our biannual communities get together and May:

When Rod visited us he brought with him twenty computers of which 10 went to Sogood, which is one hour's drive from us, and the rest were distributed around Hilongos and Maasin. We also met with Sr Judith who has been appointed our facilitator for the Cebu get together. Unfortunately I will miss this meeting but, understand the wisdom of the OLT's decision to return to Australia as soon as possible. Being May, Carl and myself have been experiencing "Flores de Mayo" which really has to be seen to be believed. It's entirely a children's show where the presenting of flowers to the image of Our Lady is the main focus though there are other activities such as the rosary, litanies and processions, which cause the whole pageant to take 2 to 3 hours and it happens every day during May and always finishes with a Mass. Devotion to Mary here is extraordinary.

KABANKALAN NEWS

On May 5th, Founder's Day we requested that the regular 6.00 am Mass be celebrated in Edmund's honour in the cathedral, which was duly done. The icon was displayed and Rod said a few words before Mass. This was a low key start to the public honouring of Edmund in Kabankalan Diocese. In the coming years we hope to gradually make more and more of the day. In the evening we celebrated by opening our house to a shared prayer using power point, Teresa Pirola's "God is in the Ordinary" and Peter Kearney's,

'Where to now Edmund?', followed by what they call here a 'pot luck' (Bring a plate) meal. About 30 people came ranging through the well-heeled but very good and supportive Lea Verela and her Sister Leticia, Fr. Brian Gore and three companions, two teachers and 9 deaf adults and children.

Joe and Anne Stynes have now conducted two of four seminars for teachers on the topic, "Let's Say it in English", so they are well into their work of identifying and responding to their task of finding ways to improve the teaching and use of English in the schools. Two more seminars are planned for next week. The Kabankalan community has been really blessed by the presence of Joe and Anne. Quite apart from any contribution they are making to the schools, and that is considerable, their contribution to the life of the community is quite wonderful.

John has stopped his Alternative Learning System classes for the time being and is using the time remaining to him to help children and youth through the various hurdles they need to cross to re-enter formal school. Twenty children were so helped last school year. That numbers will more than double, we expect, in the coming year. Regular classes begin on June 8th. John will take his holiday before the end of May and will begin with a retreat in Brisbane.

As Thruppy says above, we will have the second inter-community meeting in Cebu 22 – 25 May, using a retreat house for the gathering. It is sobering to think there will only be four of us, plus our facilitator, Judith Routier. Joe and Anne will join us for the last session and final evening on 'building community'. John will go home from Cebu.

Peter Hardiman has been in touch. He seems to have the health problems under control if not fully cured at this stage. Neil Langan too is still seeing doctors in Brisbane and hoping his future will be clarified soon.

Rod has been the Kabankalan link to a project organized by Mr. Ron Ure in Brisbane to bring two special education teachers and two nurses to Brisbane to undertake a 'Hear and Say' course there. This is an early intervention process for very young deaf children that will be potentially life changing for them. Applications for visas to Australia are not easy for Filipinos, but the applications have now been received in the embassy in Manila and we await hopefully the issuance of visas. The intended travel date is May 22 and they will be away for two weeks.

A three day seminar for teachers of Religious Education is planned for May 19-21, to be led by Fr Dom Nolan, an Australian Columban.

John, Anne, Joe and Rod

Until next time Peter T