

# SALESIAN

WINTER 1999-2000

*Faith... Hope... Love...*



*Sister Marlene Bautista, F.M.A.  
Forming the future of East Timor*



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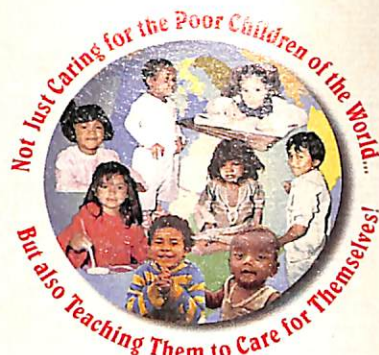
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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR...

Dear Friend of Salesian Missions,

It's easy to see a theme in this issue of SALESIAN. But each of us  
might give it a different name. HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DESPAIR would  
certainly be appropriate. LOVE CONQUERS ALL would be another, as well  
as FAITH OF OUR FATHERS. Faith, hope and love are those virtues that  
carry all of us through life, no matter what our religious or spiritual back-  
ground. All three come through loud and clear in the cover photo of  
Salesian Sister Marlene Bautista, who remained in East Timor with her  
young charges and the people in spite of the recent terrorism that held  
the nation in its grip.

The four articles appearing in SALESIAN carry the same theme - that  
extraordinary witness to faith, hope and love against overwhelming odds -  
whether it is the Polish martyrs of Auschwitz and Poznan during the  
Second World War; Bishop Belo and the people of his beloved East Timor;  
the refugees returning to their homeland in Kosovo; or the Salesians  
working with the Inca Indians of Bolivia in the poorest area of one of the  
poorest countries in the Western hemisphere. The witness of these  
Salesians is evident in their total dedication to the people in their care, no  
matter what their political, ethnic or religious background.

In spite of the atrocities, terrorism and overwhelming disregard for and  
destruction of human life that surrounds us, we are constantly uplifted by  
those who have the moral compass to guide us to what is truly beautiful,  
pure, sincere and holy. There are many in our midst. Let us recognize  
them and thank God for them.

On a sad note, we bid farewell to Father James Chiosso, S.D.B., who,  
after thirteen years in the Missions Office, is retiring to the Marian  
Shrine in Stony Point, NY. This past summer Fr. Jim celebrated 50 years  
of priesthood. He remains in good health and active at the Shrine and  
Retreat House. While here, Fr. Jim administered the Foundation Grants for  
many mission programs. Assuming his task is Father Peter Malloy, S.D.B.,  
who hails from Philadelphia. His most recent assignment was at John  
Carroll High School in Birmingham, Alabama. Welcome, Father Peter.

Gratefully,

*Fr. Terence W. O'Donnell*  
Father Terence O'Donnell, S.D.B.





*While in exile, Bishop Belo meets with Pope John Paul II at Castel Gandolfo, outside Rome, on September 13, 1999.*

## Bishop Carlos Belo and East Timor

**B**ishop Carlos Belo and East Timor are two names that can never be separated. One automatically evokes the other. Carlos Belo is an indigenous native of East Timor and the first to be a Catholic Bishop of his own land. He is also a member of our Salesian community. The first 25 years of his life unwittingly prepared him for the past 25 years, which he has dedicated to both Church and country in an extraordinary way. He has been thrown into the spotlight, not by choice, but by circumstance.

He is not politically involved, but speaks as the moral authority for justice and peace in a country that has endured the military trauma of Indonesia since 1975, with very little support from the international community until now.

East Timor's history is not unlike other countries where totalitarian powers devastated millions of lives during this century. Most Westerners are unaware that East Timor lost 10% of its population in support of the Allies during the Second World War. It is estimated that they have lost 25% to 35% of their population due to the illegal invasion by Indonesia in

1975 up to the current reign of terror. This is the tragedy of East Timor.

East Timor occupies half the island of Timor and was a Portuguese colony from 1514 to 1974. According to the UN, it still remains under Portuguese administration until it assumes its independent status. The island was coveted for its sandalwood and East Indian spices. The Dutch, who eventually controlled all of the East Indies known now as Indonesia, also settled in the other half of the island (West Timor) around 1613. The island of Timor was formally divided in the Treaty of 1859 between Portugal (East) and the Netherlands (West).

There were many local tribes in East Timor that were often at war with themselves and posed little threat to the colonials, who took advantage of the situation and the people. The tribes did manage to unite somewhat in 1893, when they began the Great Rebellion against the Portuguese. The Portuguese, like all colonial powers, treated the locals as possessions. But, for the most part, there was an element of peace and security.

During the Second World War, East Timor was occupied first by the Australians at the beginning and then by the Japanese. The Timorese supported the Australians and the Portuguese, but because of this, the Japanese persecuted them and, during the occupation, the Allies were forced to bomb the island. The war, which left the country



in ruins, also claimed 50,000 Timorese lives. After the war, West Timor remained a Dutch colony until 1949 when it became part of the new Indonesian Republic. East Timor remained a Portuguese colony until 1974, when it was granted independence by Portugal, which would administer it during its process of self-determination.

Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo was born on February 3, 1948, near Baucau, East Timor, then a Portuguese colony. He was the fifth of six children and the youngest of four boys. His father, Domingos Vas Filipe, died at the age of forty, as the result of injuries inflicted by the occupying Japanese for shielding the Portuguese. Carlos was three. His father was a catechist in the local church and earned enough to support the family. After his death, the family had to pull together with their mother, Ermelinda, to keep their small farm going. Though



On April 25, 1974, while Carlos was completing his studies in Lisbon, the Portuguese Armed Forces staged a bloodless military coup against the 48-

After one year of teaching, the situation in East Timor became so dangerous that Carlos' superiors decided that it would be best for him to leave. He taught for a year at a Salesian school in Macao. In late 1976, he returned to Portugal to complete his studies to be a priest.

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In July of 1976, President Suharto took advantage of this policy of non-interference and annexed East Timor to Indonesia. Only Australia recognized the annexation, although the US and other major powers passively accepted it by refusing to interfere in Indonesia's affairs. The East Timorese resistance movement took to the mountains and continued its fight for independence. Indonesia declared war, resulting in the loss of an estimated 200,000 East Timorese lives. Young Belo had very little communication with his homeland. What he did receive was usually censored. The island was sealed from the press, visitors and the rest of the world.

In 1980, Carlos Belo was ordained a priest in the Salesian Society and returned to East Timor in July of 1981, after a year of further study in Rome. His return this time, after another six years of absence, was quite different. Indonesia had closed East Timor off from the rest of the world. The young priest saw subjugated people, who had no voice in their own self-determination. It was a military state ruled by foreigners once again.

Father Belo returned to the Salesian school in Fatumaca. As he settled in, the tragedy of the situation began to overwhelm him, but there was little that he could do. On April 15, 1983, his whole world was changed. Pope John Paul II

chose him to be the Administrator Apostolic of East Timor. He would be the acting Bishop without the title. He would also be replacing the popular and outspoken Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes, a political move that served Indonesia as well as the Vatican.

Father Carlos, as well as the rest of East Timor, thought this was the wrong choice: he was only 35; he had been away for twelve years; he lacked parish experience; there were other more-qualified priests. The local clergy did not accept him and refused to attend his installation. The distrust of his fellow priests wounded him. But the new Monsignor was not deterred. He had accepted this assignment out of obedience and actively visited the parishes, especially the youth. Slowly, Monsignor Belo began to speak out against the Indonesian military atrocities. He began to take on the role of mediator. And his friend, the exiled Dom Martinho, whose place he had taken, became his spokesman in Portugal and the US.

However, Monsignor Belo refused to get politically entangled on either side of the issue. He slowly won the hearts of the people and became the quiet, but strong moral force for justice on both sides. It was not an easy task and he virtually became a prisoner in his own land. By the time he was named Bishop five years later in 1988, he was well received by all his clergy and the people. His way of strong, steady and calm pur-

suit of the final goal had won all, except for the radical resistance movement of East Timor, who saw him as too weak, and the Indonesian government, who saw him as too meddling.

On October 12, 1989, Pope John Paul II paid a personal visit to East Timor. The visit showed the Pope's show of solidarity with his Bishop and the people and finally put their cause square in the face of the international community. Unfortunately, shortly after the Pope's visit, things got worse. Indonesia was starting to feel the sting of public outcry and took it out on the youth of East Timor, who were becoming more vocal, no matter how badly they were brutalized.

On November 12, 1991, a decisive turning point in favor of East Timor came about at the cost of great sacrifice. A combination funeral procession and demonstration of about 3,000 young people, moving from the Church of St. Anthony in Dili to the Santa Cruz cemetery, culminated with an ambush by the Indonesian military within the cemetery. While dozens were left dead in the cemetery, others were beaten, pursued or simply disappeared. Many died of their wounds, afraid to go to the hospital. The counted deaths reached 271. Fortunately, a British filmmaker had recorded the entire scene and was able to smuggle it out. It was presented on British television and picked up on US TV. Other foreigners and reporters present were killed or beaten. The atrocities in East

Timor became undeniable and foreign journalists were once more expelled.

Indonesia's answer was to place the blame at the foot of the Church and specifically Bishop Belo. They put pressure on the Vatican to replace Belo. "The big lie" was working in Indonesia's favor. And, although Indonesia was reprimanded by all major powers, no economic sanctions were imposed.

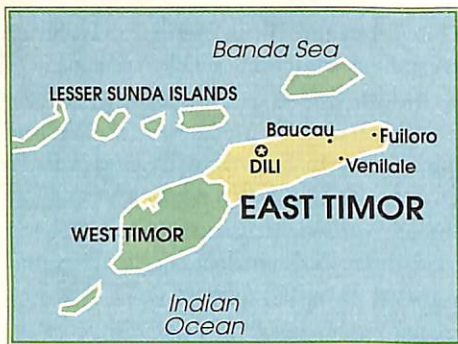
In June 1993, Bishop Belo made his first visit to the US and Canada. It was at this point that Congressman Tony P. Hall of Ohio, who had followed and fought for the cause of East Timor since he took office in 1979, met with Bishop Belo and began the process of nominating him for the Nobel Peace Prize. Other countries soon followed suit.

Meanwhile, back in East Timor, the Bishop came under constant attack both by the Indonesian government, which called him the fomenter of unrest, and



*Sister Marlene Bautista with the children of Dili.*





by the youth for not acting quickly and for not supporting their demonstrations. The Bishop knew these would only result in more deaths and more military. He felt for the young, because they had all lost fathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers and friends in this struggle for freedom. But he did not want to lose anymore. The future of East Timor depended on their youth.

East Timor was also becoming more Indonesian through Integration, whereby Indonesians were constantly brought in to take over the important positions. The idea was to simply overwhelm the East Timorese by sheer numbers of foreigners, who would support Indonesia.

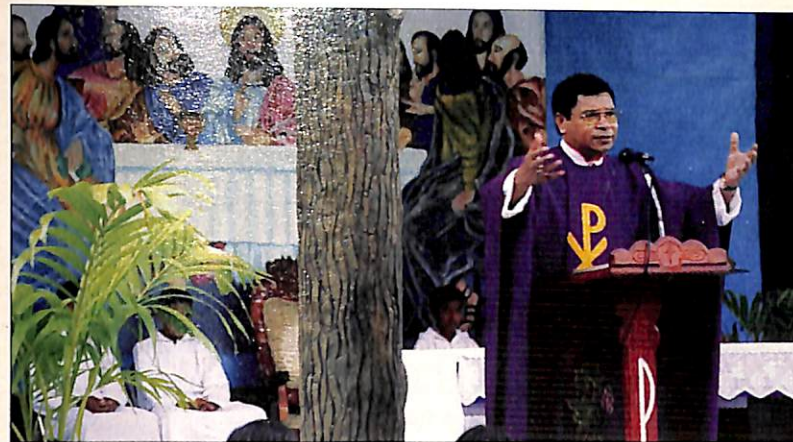
During the next few years, Bishop Belo made more contacts with the international community through personal visits. He kept the problem of East Timor alive and in the face of the Indonesian government, which could not deal with his moral authority.

In October of 1996, Bishop Belo and

Jose Ramos-Horta, Chief International Spokesman of East Timor's resistance movement, were awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. This was a humiliating blow to the Indonesian government. Belo used this influence to bring the cause of East Timor to the international community. He called for Indonesian troop withdrawal, but instead local militias were increased with outside Indonesians and the situation became intolerable. The Indonesian government, sooner or later, always countermanded every positive step made by Bishop Belo.

The tide turned once again as Indonesia's economy began to fall, a new President was elected, and public opinion began to mount in favor of East Timor. Finally, in January of 1999, Indonesian President Habibie suddenly began a movement towards independence for East Timor. He called for a referendum vote by the people of East Timor to accept autonomy or independence.

As a result of President Habibie's drastic move, the powerful Indonesian military felt betrayed. Bishop Belo and Portugal appealed for immediate disarmament of all sides, the immediate withdrawal of Indonesian military and the support of an international peace-keeping force to be in place before, during and after the voting to help ease the transition to independence. All they got was an international nod of encouragement and a UN observation team to



*Back in East Timor, Bishop Belo celebrates once again with his people.*

regulate the voting on August 30, 1999.

When the referendum for independence passed by 80%, the East Timorese thought they were finally looking at a light at the end of a very long tunnel. Instead, it was a powerful locomotive bent on destroying everything and everyone in its sight. The military, which essentially ruled East Timor, was hell-bent on a "scorched earth" policy for East Timor. There was no one there to resist them and the results were brutal. The international community had effectively left the fox in charge of the chicken coop.

Because of its moral authority over the people, the Catholic Church, its people and institutions, were particularly picked as open targets by the Indonesian military. Young men, political foes, clergy and those even suspected of favoring independence were at risk. The UN delegation, which was there to

supervise the referendum, saw enough to convince them that they were witnessing a major humanitarian disaster. The UN team and all reporters were also at risk and lost their share of personnel in the ensuing carnage.

The month of September 1999 finally revealed to the rest of the world what this small, unknown and ill-treated country had experienced for the past 24 years. Let us pray that the movement for self-determination will restore the cultural, religious and ethnic identity of the people as well as the political and economic welfare of their country in a secure, peaceful and just setting. Anything less would be the real tragedy. ■

*Some resources from Arnold Kohen's book, FROM THE PLACE OF THE DEAD: The Epic Struggles of Bishop Belo of East Timor; St. Martin's Press, 1999.*





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