

Fly Away to Heaven project: responding to Christ's call to charity

by FR JOHN FOWLES CCS

Today there is an inescapable duty to make ourselves the neighbours of all, no matter who they are. If we encounter them, we ought come to their aid in a positive way, whether they are aged people abandoned by all, foreign workers despised without reason, refugees, illegitimate children wrongly suffering for sin they did not commit, or starving human beings who awaken our conscience by calling to mind the words of Christ "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27).

These are powerful words indeed as we live in a prosperous country enjoying all the material comforts it has to offer. However, one can easily turn a blind eye to those in our world less fortunate than us and thereby escape our Christian duty. Charity that pleases God is that which gives without counting the cost. It is not only concerning what we do, but what we fail to do, that we will have to give an account.

Essential aspect

Benedict XVI reminds us that Christian charity, equal in importance to preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, is an essential aspect of the Church's endeavour.

Spreading the Word of God and ministering the Sacraments at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Thuragoona, NSW, I looked around at our congregation, recently blessed with a new church, and with the need to respond to a wider call to charity, I felt a personal commitment to return the blessings received from Australians across the country to our parish.

While this enormous generosity in raising funds to build the new church was gratefully acknowledged, the obligation to pass on these blessings was evident, especially in view of the plight of our nearest and poorest neighbour, East Timor. It was this that prompted the Fly Away to Heaven Project.

With Christian charity as its prime mover, the Fly Away to Heaven Project has taken on the challenge with a national Fly-a-thon to bring about awareness of the need for the "gift of giving". With this attitude the Project will keep the "Australian spirit" alive caring for those less fortunate than ourselves.

Being both a priest and a pilot, with a keen interest in building, I understood that the dream of assembling a plane as a vehicle to reach those in need was in desperate need of funds. Our prayers were answered with the arrival of a plane kit

ceeds of sales, this will bring a dream into reality for ten East Timorese youths joining in the World Youth Day celebrations in Sydney this July.

And yes, we are "Calling all Pilots" to come fly with us. One young pilot who has responded is Mitch, a young man just 16 years of age who is taking up the challenge to fly the full 12 legs of this mission of outreach. Together with his friend James and their families they went out among the people and soon were in a position to register for the flight of a lifetime.

With their "get out there and give it a go" attitude, they are an inspiration as they undertake this goodwill flight leading up to World Youth Day. We wish them every success with their flight to aid their brothers and sisters in East Timor.

The Fly Away to Heaven Project also aims to assist the orphan children in remote villages and through this we hope that more fellow Australians will join together with us in reaching out to those who depend on us.

Or in the words of the theme song:

When open hands unite, changes are made.

The gift of giving they say has lost its way,

But I am a believer no matter what they say.

Let's fly — on the wings of a prayer,

Shine our light on the dark and despair,

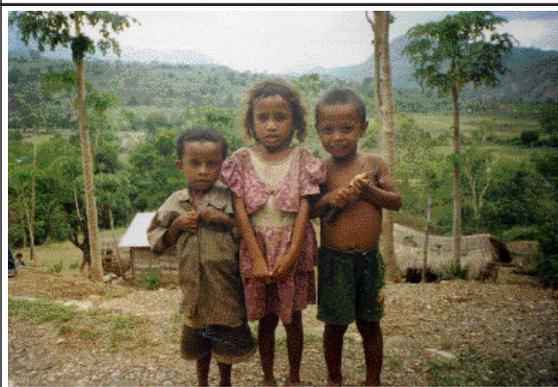
Guided by the lights of Heaven

And those who dare,

Anything is possible when Earth Angels Care.

To assist this cause, donations and sponsorship and copies of the "Earth Angels Care" CD can be purchased from our Website: www.flyawaytoheaven.org.au or by contacting us on flyawaytoheaven@hotmail.com

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Some of the young East Timorese to be helped by the Fly Away to Heaven Project

generously donated (see earlier report, November 2007, page 12).

After three years, the vision was realised when this Jabiru J400, aptly named "Angel Wings", took to the skies last year on her maiden flight to Bundaberg, the home of the Jabiru. The goodwill flight itself will commence on 1 May 2008. The daily struggle for life of many people near to our shores, as in East Timor, has now been given hope.

Touching the hearts of many Australians, the Fly Away to Heaven Project has produced a CD called "Earth Angels Care". With the pro-