

Mission tales of solidarity, peace and reconciliation

Standing in solidarity with the people of Guatemala

Through his work accompanying refugees in Mexico and in isolated regions of Guatemala, Brother Martin Shea, MM came to know the true meaning of standing in solidarity with people who were wrongly persecuted. One woman he came to know, Micaela, returned to her rural mountain village of Cuarto Pueblo in 1994, along with 2,000 other Guatemalan refugees. Twelve years prior, some of the villagers managed to escape when the Guatemalan army massacred their families and neighbors and burned down their church and cooperative store. Only eight years old at the time, Micaela and her family were captured by the army. Soldiers choked her by twisting a rope and a stick around her neck; it was only the fall into the mass grave that dislodged the stick and saved her life. Marty Shea continues to accompany these families who took up residence amidst the remnants of war—mortar shells, mines, and live ammunition—hoping to force a new life in their home country.

Forgiveness in East Timor: A reflection

Upon regaining consciousness after being critically wounded, one of the first acts of East Timor's president was to forgive his assailant. Nobel Peace Prize-winner Jose Ramos-Horta was shot early February 11 at his home in Dili. He was flown to Darwin, Australia, where he remained in an induced coma for 10 days. He underwent surgery five times. From his hospital bed he issued a statement in which he said he forgave the rebel soldier Alfredo Reinado, who had led the attack, and he asked the East Timor government to support the man's family. Reinado and another former soldier were killed in a shootout with Ramos-Horta's security guards. "The president is very lucid, showing his concern for the country and the responsibility of the head of state," said interim president Fernando de Araujo. "The president also expressed gratitude to the nation and to the Church for their prayers and asked people to stop the violence."

Reconciliation in Nepal: A reflection

The day after Class 10 finished at St. Xavier's School in Kathmandu, students returned to pick up the results of recent examinations. However, a scuffle broke out at lunch between two groups of students. Teachers broke up the fight, but the principal called the students back the following day for a process of reconciliation. The students returned with their parents, entering one of the halls with the principal accompanying them. The students were officially outside of the school's jurisdiction, but they willingly participated, giving and receiving forgiveness as they established peace and reconciliation among themselves. It might have been the first time for many of them to look at a conflict situation, consider their responses and learn another way of settling differences. St. Xavier's motto is "Live for God and lead for Nepal." With a 10-year Maoist insurgency only recently ended, and an upsurge in crime in Kathmandu, it seemed providential that the students would experience an instance of injustice, reconciliation and healing.