

# Edmund Rice NETWORK NEWS



## THE PHILIPPINES PROJECT

# Eight Months On...

*Yes! Our year of learning language, culture and the education system; and of formulating plans for our future ministry has flown, by two-thirds as at 11<sup>th</sup> November! We **have** learned a little about each of the items listed, but perhaps the biggest learning is how little we really know. Now that is progress!*

There have been three phases. For three months we focused almost entirely on language learning. It is a slow process. We will continue to learn language for as long as we are here. More recently we have engaged a tutor who spends three hours with us weekly. To improve now we need more direct immersion into life away from an English-speaking environment. Some risk-taking will be involved here for older men. John is clearly making the most progress in the endeavour of language learning.

During the month of July we made a series of quick visits to all the Catholic Schools in the Diocese. We were exhilarated but somewhat exhausted by the experience. We visited three colleges – post 4<sup>th</sup> Year Baccalaureate institutions, 19 High Schools (Years 1-4 = Grade 7-10 in Australia), 7 Elementary (Primary) Schools and about 10 'Kindies'. We wrote reports on all these and used them as the basis of a significant meeting with our Bishop, Pat Buzon.

From Mid-August we spent our time visiting the schools again, at a more leisurely pace. This second round is now completed. During these visits we augmented our understanding of what is happening in the schools. Previously we had interviewed the Principals and Directors (usually the Parish Priest). After checking and correcting earlier observations we interviewed almost all the teachers in each school. It was a privileged exercise. We were 'blown away' by their openness towards us. For most of them it was the first time they had been offered such an opportunity to share what is happening for them. We have had plenty to reflect on and pray about in our personal and community prayer.

### Forming a future

Province Leaders, Brothers Laurie Needham (Sydney based) and Luke Quinn (Brisbane based) visited us from 27<sup>th</sup> October to 1<sup>st</sup> November. Reflection before their arrival and during their visit



*The primary class at San Jose Hacienda School with Neil Langan looking on. Our visit attracted many parents that day.*

helped us articulate our growing understanding of what our ministry into the future will be. During this visit we met again with Bishop Pat in their presence. It was a good meeting covering a wide range of topics. We came away clearer on where we are heading and what each of us will do into the future.

At our earlier meeting with Bishop we were asked to consider two areas of involvement: being part of Kabankalan Catholic College, supporting his efforts there to raise the standard of educational endeavour; secondly to help develop the schools into a Diocesan Education System and then to be involved at some level in this work. At that time we indicated our willingness to consider these options, but also that we had a desire to find ways to work for children or youth who are not covered by the education system. Reflection since has effectively divided us into these three areas. ►

Neil and Rod have opted to be involved in the development of the Diocesan Education System. A Steering Committee has been formed and the first meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November. Bishop would like some shape around the system by the start of the 2007-2008 school year next June. This work will be the main focus for Neil and Rod in the coming months. Peter and John will assist on the sidelines with suggestions and advice. Once the school year begins Neil and Rod have offered to work as consultants to the high schools, subject to whatever structures emerge from the work of the Steering Committee.

Peter has indicated to the Bishop and to Fr. Radny Boyag, College Dean, his willingness to negotiate a possible part-time involvement at Kabankalan Catholic College (KCC). The shape of this involvement is yet to be tested.

John is willing to assist the high schools as a 'go-for' person, in the short term. He is however, clearly focussed on finding ways to be involved with out-of-school youth. The need for language knowledge in such work is obvious and is fueling his efforts to learn as quickly as possible. There are places around the country he will need to visit soon to check what is happening. Neil wishes also to be involved at this level and will probably divide his time with the schools' involvement accordingly. There is some possibility that our involvement with out-of-school youth might become our Brothers' major contribution to the Diocese. Time will tell.



We have written previously of the generosity of the teachers in the schools, the paucity of facilities and the huge need to assist what essentially are very poor schools. The development of the Diocesan Education System will be a major effort to improve conditions, especially for those we consider heroes – the teachers. To make a contribution to improvement of facilities we have developed quite a long list of needs. We are not in a position to tackle the big stuff like building replacements, but wish to contribute in a way that will help broadly the educational effort. We have decided initially to focus on two areas.

### Linguistic and technological education

Nationwide a major concern is the decline in quality and use of English. There are many reasons why this has occurred. In southern Negros Occidental even some of the teachers struggle to speak well in English, especially those whose major teaching roles are in Filipino or Social Science – mainly communicated in the Filipino language. Accepting the reality of this decline, we believe we can contribute in a number of ways. However, putting money where it may be most effective long-term, we think assisting at the lowest level where children are beginning to learn to read, at Kindergarten and lower Elementary, is a good place to start. Peter has done studies in Reading Education and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. We are being guided by him in this regard. So we will buy what are called 'Big Books' – big in the sense of easily seen in a group teaching or 'lap-learning' setting. These we plan to buy within the Philippines, presuming at this stage that we can. There are possibilities also for home produced 'big books'. This very effective strategy would not be affected by lack of electricity.

As readers who have followed our exploits will know, Bishop Pat, a Salesian, is an educationalist of considerable ability and experience. He sees Information Communication Technology (ICT) as a key way forward for this society, and wants his schools to be among the leaders in this regard. He has engaged a past student well qualified in the area of ICT to head an improved KCC degree course, starting next June. We will turn to this person for advice in our second area of assistance to the schools – especially for the smaller rural schools – ICT.

*Deaf children at Anawim Foundation trying out their new computers with Peter Hardiman looking on.*

### In this issue...

Eight Months ON!	
Philippines Project.....	1
Personal viewpoint: Bernadette.....	3
Shaping Our Future:	
Christian Brothers Oceania .....	4
Ruben Centre, Nairobi.....	6
Toir: Ireland 2006.....	7
Congregation logo .....	7
Vocations & International Spirituality	
Conferences .....	8

## New Look, New Team

*The next issue of Edmund Rice Network News will have a fresh new look and a new team for 2007.*

Warwick Bryant will continue to be the liaison and contact point at Westcourt, Kim Bale will gather together articles and images, and design the new look pages and Phil Bayne will bring his own style of editing.

Phil is currently writer and editor with the Catholic Education Office whilst Kim teaches at Edith Cowan University and is part-time publisher and graphic designer.

**The web version of this newsletter can be found on  
<http://www.westcourt.wa.edu.au/home/ernnews>**

*Edmund Rice Network News* is published for members of the Edmund Rice Network working in Holy Spirit Province Australia and to communicate news to other provinces of the Edmund Rice Network. We welcome feedback, articles, news and photographs for publication.

Mail address: ERN News, Box 1129, BENTLEY DC WA 6983

ERN Liaison: Br Warwick Bryant cfc Ph: 08 9365 2800

Fax: 08 9365 2814 email: [bryant.warwick@westcourt.wa.edu.au](mailto:bryant.warwick@westcourt.wa.edu.au)

Editorial and Layout: Kim Bale Ph: 08 9592 2129 email:

[kimandpaul@arach.net.au](mailto:kimandpaul@arach.net.au)

There are many ways we think we can be of assistance. Nothing can be done in ICT without computers. Assessing the stock already in the schools – resurrecting some, cannibalising others and junking the rest will be part of this. We have learned that relatively cheap computers can be purchased within the Philippines for about A\$500, tailored to the needs of the schools and prices controlled by bulk purchases. Schools will be required to put some money in themselves. We would assist. Already graduates of our rural high schools are at a significant disadvantage in their efforts to enter College. They simply have too little facility with ICT to compete. This is not surprising. A fairly normal profile for such small rural high schools of say 400 students is they have eight or ten very old computers, of which two or three work. There's not much a computer teacher can do in such circumstances with class sizes of 50 common!

### Reaching out for assistance

With this article we would like to appeal to the ERN, especially the schools, for some assistance in these two areas. We hope that one fund-raiser per school per year across Australia and New Zealand might be possible, while being aware that the schools already support many worthwhile causes. Understanding how it is helpful for schools to have more intimate knowledge of the target being assisted, we would happily respond with information about particular schools and their needs. A\$200 would buy a set of 'big books' for a very small isolated school (K, 1 & 2). Peter thinks a rotating-library concept of sets of these books

should be possible. There would be no chance of a reciprocal contribution from these schools. On the other hand rural high schools could afford something towards purchases of computers, but not enough to make a real impact. We feel a contribution of A\$100 per computer from these schools augmented by a A\$400 contribution through us could begin to make that needed difference. The principle of reciprocity is important.

An indication of interest to be part of the program would be welcome. We are happy then to supply whatever is needed on the home front to make fund-raising possible. It may be helpful to know that we will soon be back in Australia for a short break and are willing to visit the schools or other centres. Rod will be in Perth 27<sup>th</sup> November to 1<sup>st</sup> January, Neil will be in Brisbane and environs through February, John will be in Sydney and Melbourne mid-March to late April, Peter will be in Perth also from mid-March. Other considerations (e.g. publishing his book) make the return date for Peter a little harder to predict.

As we reach out for assistance we are conscious we are the front men in this effort of the Provinces in Oceania to 'lift their eyes to where the need is greater' to quote Philip Pinto. Whatever is done here in Kabankalan Diocese is done on behalf of the whole of Oceania. We are conscious of the prayerful support we receive from so many. Thank you. Please continue. Where a response to our appeal for practical assistance is possible, that too will be gratefully received. ■

Neil, John, Peter and Rod

To indicate your interest in this program the most effective way of reaching Neil, John, Peter and Rod is by email.

neil.langan@yahoo.com.au

john.moodie@yahoo.com.au

ptrhardiman@yahoo.com.au

ellyard.rod@westcourt.wa.edu.au

## Personal viewpoint FROM THEBARTON

*Extending an invitation for young adults to join the community is a joint initiative between the Christian Brothers and the Archdiocese of Adelaide, which has been initiated as a way of giving young Catholics an experience of living closer with Christ in everyday life and sharing it with others.*

**I**n June this year, the Christian Brothers Community at Thebarton welcomed two new young adult members, marking the start of a new chapter in the Community's history.

As one of these two new members, I, Bernadette, can say that moving into the community has been a good decision for me and I was surprised how quickly I felt at home and at ease in my new surroundings. Anthony Lindblom (who is a 19 year old full-time student) and I (a 22 year old Media Consultant) were warmly welcomed into the community by the existing members, Brothers John Webb and John Ahern, and we were

soon all into the swing of living in community.

The focal points of this community are prayer, service to others, living together and sharing our experiences. We do this by regularly sharing evening meals and prayer together, gathering for time of prayer and reflection on Sunday morning and also by engaging in some form of service to the marginalised in our wider community.

Evening has become a focus of the community, and we are known to be still sitting around the dinner table deep in discussion a good hour after finishing our meal. Our table prayer and discussions

are the highlight of community living for me, and have been an important part of bringing us together as a community. Around the dinner table we are able to share the varied experiences of our very different lives with one another.

When I told my friends, family and colleagues that I was moving into the community in June this year, many were wondering why on earth moving in with a couple of middle-aged Christian Brothers would be high on the agenda of a 22 year old with a fledgling career and a busy schedule and social calendar.

Living in the community has enabled me a chance to think about where God is calling and leading me. I maintain a busy lifestyle and social calendar, but also enjoy the time I spend in the community, allowing me the opportunity for individual reflection and sharing my faith with others.

In 2007 we will be welcoming a further 2 or 3 young adult members into the community and have just started the process of searching for potential applicants. I look towards 2007 with a great deal of anticipation about what shape the community will take on next year. ■





*Faithful to the call of Jesus and inspired by Edmund Rice,  
we Christian Brothers of Oceania walk with those at the margins  
of their community, particularly young people,  
and, through education, proclaim liberation and justice for all.*

(Mission Focus Statement for Oceania)

**D**ear Brothers and all members of the Edmund Rice Network,

### Extra-ordinary Change

Since the Congregation of Christian Brothers arrived in Oceania it has been most closely identified with education. Over time, however, the Brothers have welcomed lay staff into their schools in teaching, administrative and leadership roles and over the last thirty years also into key roles in management.

Now, in Australia, they are taking the next step in this journey – a step which will create a new organisation, born of the Christian Brothers and closely linked to them. This organisation will govern what are now called ‘Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition’. These are the schools which are now governed by the Congregation. This organisation will be known as Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA).

Schools not currently governed by the Congregation of Christian Brothers will also have an opportunity to develop relationships with EREA either as affiliate or associate schools.

Alongside this the Congregation within Papua New Guinea, East Timor, New Zealand and Australia is undergoing a significant change which will provide exciting new ways for the Christian Brothers to work and live alongside other members of the Edmund Rice Network as we respond to the needs of the most

marginalised in our societies here in Oceania and in other parts of the world. We will do this by:

- deepening our heart relationship with each other and with our God
- Sustaining and creatively expanding our ministries into the future
- find new ways of addressing emerging needs
- building an organisational structure that promotes our passion for justice
- respecting and cherishing the earth upon which we live
- nurturing each other within the Christian Brothers and the Edmund Rice Network.

### Approval of New Oceania Province

The Congregation Leader has approved the formation of one Oceania Province with a Leadership Team of seven full-time members. The key role of the Oceania Leadership Team is inspirational and prophetic leadership. While trustees and custodians, their focus is not management.

Brothers’ communities and individuals will be grouped in approximately thirteen clusters across Oceania. The Oceania Community Clusters will be discerned by the current Province and Region Leadership teams and be formed within the present geographical boundaries of the four Australian and the New Zealand Provinces and the Region in Papua

New Guinea. Each Cluster will have a leader who is appointed by the Oceania Leadership Team. The Cluster Leader’s key role will be the pastoral care of the brothers in that Cluster. Like the Oceania Leadership Team the Cluster Leaders will not be overly burdened by day-to-day management responsibilities. Rather, they will support brothers and others in fostering and nurturing the charism of Edmund Rice and ensure the physical and spiritual needs of the communities are met and they will collaborate with the Leaders of Life and Mission Teams (see below) to promote the mission of the Congregation.

A number of Teams called ‘Life and Mission Teams’ will be established by the Oceania Leadership Team and will function across Oceania. These four teams will provide focus on Edmund Rice Ministries, Formation within the Edmund Rice Network, Edmund Rice Network Liaison and Finance and Resources. The Life and Mission Teams will enable the day to day implementation of the vision and strategies of the Oceania Province, establish networks for support and collaboration across Oceania and develop close relationships with and support of the Oceania Community Cluster Leaders.

To facilitate communication and a shared vision the Oceania Leadership Team, Cluster Leaders and Leaders of the Life and Mission Teams will meet as determined by the Oceania Leadership Team, possibly twice a year. This gathering will be called the Oceania Forum. One of the key aims of the Oceania Forum will be to explore the potential to respond to areas of need within Oceania. These responses will involve Brothers and other members of the Edmund Rice Network working in close collaboration.

### Workshops

Over the last few weeks there have been a number of workshops in various places across Australia. The workshops have provided an opportunity for staff members from the four Australian Province administrations and Leaders and Board Chairs of Christian Brother ministries which will not become a part of Edmund Rice Education Australia to explore the new model of governance for the new Oceania Province.

The workshops were led by Br Kevin Ryan, Chair of the Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania (SOFCO), and Dr

Debra Rosser, Chair of the Organisation and Resources Team which is working on behalf of SOFCO to develop the more detailed organisational structures for the new Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers. At four of the workshops Br Dean McGlaughlin (Chair of the National Planning Committee for Schools Governance) was present to simultaneously share information on the emerging Edmund Rice Education Australia, which is the body which will take over the governance of the 39 Christian Brother schools in Australia next October. Br Clem Barrett, a member of the National Planning Committee for Schools Governance, was present for the remaining workshop to share this information on the schools issues.

In looking at the information discussed on the days and at the feedback sheets these six key issues emerged:

1. People were generally very pleased to have been involved in the workshops, even though specific information about their own jobs/futures could not be given at this stage.
2. In various formal and informal ways the Oceania Province, Life and Mission Teams and Edmund Rice Ministries would continue to have strong and enduring links with the schools under the governance of Edmund Rice Education Australia was a great relief to most people at the workshops.
3. In terms of the change process, people were keen to be involved – not only through regular updates of information, but through dialogue and conversations. The most meaningful conversations are likely to occur at the local level, and the Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania will be in touch with Province and Region Leadership Teams about how this can best happen in each area of Oceania.
4. There was a strong sense from participants that the new Oceania Province should retain a 'local presence' to deliver services and support the mission of the Christian Brothers and the Edmund Rice Ministries. Important because of cultural differences and volunteers for ministry were generally drawn from the local area, and because there would be ministries and communities of Brothers who would need access to some business support services at the local level. Participants also emphasised that

becoming one Province of Oceania provided opportunities to engage together to meet the needs of people on the margins much more effectively. "Think local, act global" certainly applies here!

5. Most of 'the action' of the new Province would occur through the Life and Mission Teams and their constituent. People were keen to be updated on where their own work area would 'fit' in the Life and Mission Team structure, and also encouraged SOFCO to look for ways to ensure meaningful interaction occurred between the Teams.
6. In terms of staffing, people were – understandably – keen to find out about their own jobs. SOFCO is on target to have the staffing schedule ready for June/July 2007 if not earlier in some instances. SOFCO is also investigating ways to share some roles with Edmund Rice Education Australia and believe there will be opportunities across both organisations.).

In total, 120 people attended the Future Structures Workshops held in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane between October 30 and November 16, 2006.

Each of the Provinces hosted and catered for the events and in all cases a sense of genuine openness and sharing was apparent and in the light of the major changes being experienced within the organisation the members of Shaping Our Future Committee and the associated working teams are deeply appreciative of the goodwill shown.

### Leadership Team for Oceania Province

A Working Party was established in early October by the Inter-Province Leadership Committee to ensure that a process was developed and implemented which would allow for the surfacing of the names of seven Brothers for the inaugural Oceania Leadership Team. Each of the Provinces and Regions has been surfacing names of three, four or five Brothers (depending on the number of Brothers in the current Province or Region) so that twenty-eight Brothers can participate in a Discernment Group which will gather in Melbourne in late February 2007. The names of the Brothers that they believe are the best people to form the Oceania Leadership Team will be forwarded to the Congregation Leader, Br Philip Pinto.

He, working in collaboration with the full Congregation Leadership Team, will complete the appointment process by early April, 2007.

In separate discussions the tenure (the length of appointment) of the first Leadership Team has also been under consideration. The position of the Inter-Province Leadership Committee is that the Team needs to be appointed until the Oceania Province Chapter of 2014, but the Oceania Pre-Chapter Gatherings and Oceania Chapter 2008 and the Congregation Chapter 2008 may take other positions on that matter.

### The Journey of Advent

For all of us in Oceania who are followers of the Gospel in an Edmund Rice way this Advent can be a special time of reflection. Advent is a time of waiting, waiting for the celebration of the presence of God among us. It can also be a time of exploring how and where the Word of God which is revealed to us in Creation, in each other, in the story of God's revelation in the Scriptures and in the prayerful celebrations of communities is leading us.

Our work in the Edmund Rice Network in Oceania is at this time to wait, to explore and then to reshape our 'intricate living relationships' held together by the Wisdom of God in such a way that new life will come to us, and more importantly, to those touched by us individually, by our small groups and by our formal projects of service. Let us ponder this during our season of Advent and at Christmas

May you have a wonderful and life giving celebration of 'God among us' at Christmas and may you and your families and communities be filled with hope, courage and the Spirit of God in 2007.■

*Brothers Kevin Ryan (Chair),  
Vince Duggan, Peter Dowling,  
Luke Quinn, Joe Lauren,  
Laurie Needham*

*Shaping Our Future Committee  
Oceania*

This abridged article can be seen in full at [www.edmundrice.org.au](http://www.edmundrice.org.au)

NAIROBI KENYA

# Ruben Centre

*Anyone who has seen the film 'The Constant Gardener' would have some sense of what it's like to be in an African slum. Ruben Centre, a major Edmund Rice initiative in the city of Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, is located in a very poor area (a 'slum'), west of the city.*

It occupies a regular site of about five acres owned by the Nairobi City Council. The area is home to an indeterminate number of people who have come to the city seeking employment and a better life for their families. Sadly they are most often disappointed – somewhere near half of Nairobi's three million people eke out a living in such places.

Accommodation in slums varies from basic one-space corrugated iron structures to shanties made from poles, plastic, dried mud and cardboard. There is no water laid on, primitive passages between buildings serve for access and there is no real sanitation. Visiting a Nairobi slum can be soul searing experience, but the dedicated volunteers who work there find the people cheerful, resourceful and hard working. In spite of such misery and often ill health, they place enormous hope in the possibility of an education for their children which may open the way to a better life for them.

## Place of Hope

In the midst of such conditions of deprivation and injustice, Edmund Rice Ruben Centre stands as a symbol of safety and hope. It includes a well run school, years 1 to 8 (about 1000 children), a medical clinic for them and the nearby community, a nutrition program and a social outreach. There is a practical element to the education program with dressmaking classes making clothing and uniforms for the pupils, metal work and wood work training. The teachers, some of whom are Brothers, are competent, dedicated and hard working, but poorly paid. Despite the fact that Kenya prides

itself, quite rightly, on free primary education, only a very small number of teachers at Ruben seem to receive salaries from the Ministry of Education.

Ruben Centre is almost entirely supported by St. Patrick's Province and the Edmund Rice Foundation, both centred in Melbourne. Each school day the children are served a nourishing meal of maize, beans, lentils, green vegetables and a meat based sauce – and on some, but not all days, there may be chicken or goat meat. This meal is essential to the children's health and well-being and for this reason they hate non-school days! At present lunch is provided by the Save the Children Fund – in itself a testimony to Ruben being recognised as free from endemic corruption. The Australian High Commission has provided the infrastructure for a reliable electricity supply and hygienic toilets to remedy the previously unhealthy situation.

## Qualified staff

The clinic at Ruben is in a new, well designed, purpose built and spotlessly clean stone building. The qualified nursing sister in charge is a Kenyan Loreto Sister who has a small, dedicated diagnostic nursing team. A medical doctor from the Jesuit sponsored hospital for sick children in Nairobi visits the Centre one day each week. The clinic also has a pharmacy supplying free or very low cost drugs and medication. Volunteers from overseas with expertise in particular fields come from time to time to work at Ruben Centre – including some qualified medical practitioners.

The social outreach element at Ruben is headed by an African Sister, a qualified social worker, with a small staff. Her team provides counselling and support to parents, others as well as to the children. Volunteer women from the local area work with her and visit the very poorest people, making contact, informing them of what is available at the Centre and helping them come to the Clinic for diagnosis and assistance when they are ill.

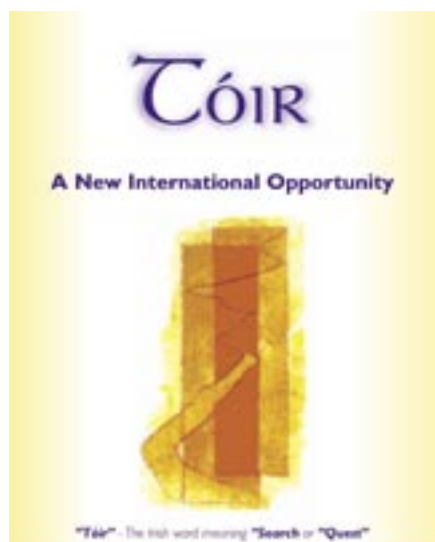
The Centre is managed and co-ordinated by Barry Callan, an inspirational Christian Brother from Geelong, Victoria. Before volunteering for Kenya, Barry spent most of his life as a Brother in Papua-New Guinea and the Pacific.

The Spirit of Edmund Rice is manifestly alive and well in Ruben Centre, Nairobi. ■





## IRELAND 2006



*The word toir comes from the Irish language and it means a journey of reflection, discovery and spiritual growth.*

The Toir immersion happened this year in July in Ireland, and for me it was an intensely powerful and interesting experience. In this reflection I would like to share some of this experience with you. My main motivation for applying for Toir was my limited knowledge of the man, Edmund Rice, what motivated him to devote a large part of his life to the education and well being of catholic boys in Ireland. I have read about his work and his passion, but to fully appreciate the

ethos and the incredible phenomena that is the Christian Brothers, one really needs to go to the cradle where all of this was born – Ireland.

### A history before education

Ireland in the times before Edmund Rice, during his lifetime and even now, has experienced religious tension. It is a situation of Catholics against Protestants and this was created by the English invading Ireland. The British Protestants ruled the land and the Irish Catholics were subjected to a great deal of negative discrimination.

In the times of Edmund education for Catholics was virtually non-existent, the little that occurred, was in secret, in places like hedge schools. A hedge school was basically a little nook in a hedgerow where children and a teacher would hide in order to have a lesson. Why – because the British did not want the Irish Catholics to be educated, to keep the people poor and uneducated was a means of controlling the population.

One of my vivid and lasting impressions is that this division and discrimination on religious grounds still exists today. To walk areas of Belfast known as Falls Road and the Shankill is both depressing and intimidating; the catholic – protestant passionate hatred is there and certainly weigh very heavily. And then you look at the beautiful and bountiful land and you wonder why so much negativity. To me part of the answer lies in the passion, the sense of ownership and the cultural pride which the Irish people have and are prepared to fight for.

### Negativity to positive beginnings

We saw evidence of this passion used in destructive ways. We saw the bullet holes in the walls of the GPO in Dublin, the charred remains of houses burned because the occupants did not belong to the same religion. We saw the poignant reminders of innocent people killed; the mural of the little girl who was killed in the cross fire at Londonderry, or Derry, as the Irish prefer to call it.

So the passion has been, and still is, used in negative and destructive ways. Edmund Rice could have chosen to go down that track as well, but no, with the grace of God he used his passion in a positive way. Edmund soon realised that the one way in which the poor Irish Catholics could fight for equality was through the empowerment of education. He set out and used his money; he solicited influential people and encouraged the poor Catholic boys to come to the schools which he established. A monumental task, I am certain that faith in Jesus played a major role in fulfilling the undertaking. One has but to visit the simple beginnings of his school at Mount Sion in Waterford to feel the Holy Spirit at work. How else can one explain the incredible worldwide spread of the Christian Brothers? I personally could not stop to marvel at the determination, passion and faith of this man Edmund Rice, whose vision changed the life of millions of people.

I feel privileged to be a teacher at a Christian Brothers school. ■

*Alex Rast, St Paul's College, S.A.*

## Congregation Logo

Seeking an internationally accepted Congregation Logo commenced at the 2002 Chapter. This gradual journey provided opportunities for members of the Congregation to reflect on our identity as a Congregation and come to a consensus of a Logo representing us as we are today. The Congregation Logo was agreed upon at the meeting of Leaders in the Philippines, January 2006.

### Logo Interpretation

The central symbol of Christianity, i.e. the cross, is also central to our identity as Christian Brothers. This cross shape derives from Celtic spirituality, also at the root of our Congregation spirituality. Symbols of the Trinity are within the central circle, the cross and the free flowing movement of the branch. A stylised E incorporated into the logo highlights the significance of Edmund Rice.



As disciples of Christ, Christian Brothers are continually called to let go and leave behind all that prevents us from living faithfully the values of the Gospel and from promoting the Kingdom of God. Shown symbolically by the movement of the circle away from its regular pattern. Our call to internationality, flowing from our Founder's time and continuing to this day, is not just in geography but also in us as mobile disciples meeting the needs of the times.

The new leaves and shoots express a continually renewing spiritual journey, offering new life to the Congregation, bringing hope to our Brothers and to our world. Yet even the new leaves continue to express our growth through fragility, by their links to the cross and in the risks of branching out.

Further meaning will be found as we reflect on the logo and take inspiration from what it tells us about our story and our challenge as disciples. Share any other meanings of the logo with one another. ■

## Coming Events...

### VOCATIONS CONFERENCE & INTERNATIONAL SPIRITUALITY CONFERENCE

*In April 2007 two significant events in the life of the Congregation of Christian Brothers and the Edmund Rice Network will take place.*

The first, a Christian Brothers International Vocations Conference, will be held in Auckland New Zealand from April 11–17. It will involve Brothers and other members of the Edmund Rice Network from the first world regions of the Christian Brothers (North America, England/Ireland, and New Zealand/Australia).

The second, an International Spirituality Conference, in Vancouver Canada, will involve Brothers and other members of the Edmund Rice Network from all parts of the Congregation (regions listed above and Papua New Guinea, Africa and Latin America).

Both significant gatherings will also involve Presentation Brothers and members of the Presentation Family who, like the Christian Brothers and the Edmund Rice Network, claim Edmund as their founder.

#### Vocations Conference

'Called to a Deeper Journey - Te Ara Wairua' is the theme of the 2007 Vocations Conference. It will explore one of the key insights of the 2002 Christian Brothers Congregation (International) Chapter, which focussed on 'Seeking New Brothers', and help the whole ERN, particularly the Christian Brothers, move from 'vision to action'.

Various aspects of the conversations will explore the global context in which we all live and work, the human and the

theological context (viewing ourselves and religious life in relation to God and the world). The Conference will inspire passion, for mission and for humanity!

Similarly, the Conference will explore how Brothers can continue to build relationships with young people which will be mutually beneficial in helping the young people in deepening their reflection on life experiences in the light of the Gospel call and will also deepen the Brothers understanding of their vocation in the context of the Edmund Rice Network, the Church and the world.

#### Spirituality Conference

'Mitakuye Oyasín - Connecting Spirituality' is the theme of the International Spirituality Conference. The Conference will: reflect on a spirituality which is inclusive of all those who experience faith, love and a desire for justice; explore a spirituality which can not only accommodate but be nourished by different understandings and experiences of religion and faith, leading to a bigger and deeper experience of God; explore the deepening of spirituality from recognising the presence of God in all creation and the struggle for ecological justice in our world today. This Conference is also inspired by the 2002 Christian Brothers Congregation (International) Chapter - to explore the challenge of a 'Hear Centred Spirituality'.

#### Background & future

Both Conferences follow the 'Flare Up Like Flame' Conference in Kolkatta, this time last year, which explored deeply the call to a Quest for Justice.

In relation to the Christian Brothers and the other members of the Edmund Rice Network in Oceania (New Zealand, East Timor, Papua New Guinea and Australia - and recent outreach to The Philippines) these Conferences come at a profound time. Recently the Congregation Leadership Team of the Christian Brothers

gave formal approval for the Christian Brothers in Oceania to move from its present mode of governance, in five provinces and one region, to becoming one Oceania Province. This change will take place on October 1, 2007. Simultaneously the 39 schools in Australia which are currently governed by the Congregation will move to be governed by a new organisation called Edmund Rice Education Australia.

These new organisational structures will nurture the growth of the special gift of the Spirit, the insight into how to live the Gospel of Jesus, given to us by Edmund Rice. Over the last 30–40 years many people besides Christian Brothers have been inspired by the life and work of Edmund. These changes aim to respond to this phenomenon, providing opportunities for people to grow in their understanding of their experience of Edmund's way of following the Gospel, to help them to support each other and structure ways that support them moving into 'doing things' for others in formal projects (ministries) and in informal ways.

A recent Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania newsletter stated how these changes are to help us:

- deepening our heart relationship with each other and with our God
- sustaining and creatively expanding our ministry projects into the future
- finding new ways of addressing emerging needs in Oceania and elsewhere in the world
- building an organisational structure that promotes our passion for justice
- respecting and cherishing the earth upon which we live
- nurturing each other within the Christian Brothers and the ERN

If the Edmund Rice Network is energetic in both its action for service and justice, in its prayerful reflection on the Word of God and its celebration all of this in the Eucharist, it will nurture vocations to Christian Brotherhood, and in turn Brothers will continue to nurture, in new and different ways, others within the Edmund Rice Network. ■

Further information about these conferences can be found at:

[www.edmundrice.org.nz](http://www.edmundrice.org.nz)  
[www.edmundclt.org](http://www.edmundclt.org)

