

SOLIDARITY, SUBSIDIARITY & EAST TIMOR Discussion Guide

THE STORY

Thousands of East Timorese people fled their homes due to civil disturbances which began in May 2006, becoming internally displaced people. Many turned to the Church, including the local Jesuit community for safety and assistance.

In July 2006 Phil Crotty SJ and Steve Curtin SJ of Jesuit Mission in Australia visited East Timor. A brief report of their visit can be found at <http://www.jesuitmission.org.au/index.php?page=86> (or link to a downloadable version on the Catholic Australia site).

Further background can be found on the Jesuit Mission website at
<http://www.jesuitmission.org.au/index.php?page=10>

SUBSIDIARITY

- Can you see the principle of subsidiarity at work in this story? Where and how?
- In this story, whose views of what the needs of the people are, and what should be done are presented?
- In Phil and Steve's narrative, who is making the decisions and leading the action? Who is seen as having responsibility?
- Sometimes in our efforts to help others we inadvertently impose our way, hindering the freedom and responsibility of others. How can we express our solidarity in ways that respect the right of East Timorese people to be the key decision makers in the matters that most affect them?
- Which aid and development agencies active in East Timor do you think best respect the principle of subsidiarity?

SOME QUESTIONS & PROCESSES

Read the story and spend some time in personal reflection. You might like to play some East Timorese music quietly in the back ground. Decorating the venue with photographs or textiles from East Timor may also help you to imagine yourself journeying with Phil and Steve.

Invite each person to share a thought, feeling or phrase that moved them during their reflection on the story.

You may wish to use one or more of the questions below to guide further discussion. These questions draw attention to two of the key principles of Catholic Social Teaching: solidarity and subsidiarity.

It may be helpful to provide handouts of the paper Four Key Principles of Catholic Social Teaching (link) as a reference.

You might like to begin your gathering with a simple prayer and conclude by gathering up the concerns of the group in prayers of intercession.

SOLIDARITY

- How is solidarity manifested in this story? Identify who expresses solidarity with whom, and how.
- Does this story present you with insights into solidarity as a Christian virtue?
- Are there instances recounted in this story where solidarity is lacking? What are the consequences for the people?
- Steve Curtin speaks of Jesuit Mission and the Church in East Timor being on a journey, accompanying the people. Is this a helpful way of talking about solidarity? Why / why not?
- How might solidarity be built up in this situation?
- In what ways can Australians express their solidarity with the people of East Timor?