

It's Our World

LEARNING GUIDE

SPECIAL "EXTRA MILE" EDITION

ALL GRADES

Indonesia

On October 12, 2002, a series of bomb blasts at a night club located in Kuta Beach in Indonesia killed 200 tourists, many of whom were from Australia and the United States.

Sadly, this terrible tragedy is not unique to this archipelago of some 17,000 islands.

Just a few months prior to this incident, a bomb exploded on a bus on the island of Sulawesi. Both attacks were believed to be the work of Islamic extremist groups some of which are suspected of trying to destroy the tenuous peace agreement between Muslims and

Christians signed in December 2001. Indonesia is the largest Muslim nation in the world — Roman Catholics make up a



Bali, Indonesia

mere three percent of the population.

In addition to religious tensions, a civil and ethnic dispute focused on the sovereignty of East Timor (*settled in May*

2002) also contributed to violent outbursts in many parts of Indonesia.

"In this multireligious, multicultural country, the missionary children have a special challenge to be prophets of the Highest," says Father Terry Thomas Ponomban, Indonesia's national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, referring to HCA members in his

country. This summer, Father Terry related a story to the national office about one instance in which young Indonesian Catholics helped make a difference simply by

singing a song.

Father Terry explained that on an evening before a recent Christmas, the mayor of one Indonesian city visited a local church rectory to wish the priests in residence a “merry Christmas.”

The priests asked the young people of the parish to perform a song for the mayor. Deeply touched by this gesture and by the song lyrics themselves, the mayor taught the song to his employees and later introduced it to other schools and children’s groups throughout the city. The lyrics of the song (translated) are as follows:

“Hi friends, let us be open to those people who hold different faiths from us. Hi friends, let us be respectful to those who have different opinions. There are Moslems — ‘Allahuakbar,’ there are Buddhists — ‘Amitaba’ there are Christians — ‘Alleluia,’ there are Hindus — ‘Omsantisanti’ and Confucians — ‘hong cu hon cu.’ All of them are our brethren.

FACTS

- **Official Name:** Republic of Indonesia

- **Capital:** Jakarta

- **Area:** Indonesia, located in Southeast Asia, is approximately three times the size of the state of Texas or 741,100 square miles.

- **Climate and Terrain:** Indonesia, which straddles the Equator, has a tropical climate. The terrain consists primarily of coastal lowlands; however, some of the large islands have mountainous regions. There are some 400 volcanoes scattered throughout the archipelago, of which about 100 are active.

- **Government and Economy:** Indonesia is a military-ruled republic. Its major products include oil, gas and timber. Its largest trading partners are Japan, the United States and Singapore. The currency is the Rupiah. The country’s estimated foreign debt

is \$135 billion.

- **People and Religion:** Indonesia is a vast polyglot nation inhabited by some 216 million people. There are more than 300 ethnic and tribal groups. While the official language of the country is Bahasa Indonesia, there are 583 dialects! Javanese is the most widely spoken of these dialects. Muslims make up 88 percent of the population. Eight percent of the population are Christian, two percent are Hindu and two percent are Buddhist and other native religions.

CHALLENGES TO CHILDREN

While sectarian violence related to the independence movement of East Timor has diminished, religious tensions continue in Indonesia. Christians in the country face discrimination and violence. Young people are threatened as well by violence,

illiteracy,
malnutrition
and poverty.

HOPE FOR CHILDREN

At the Don Bosco orphanage in East Java, children of all ethnic and religious backgrounds are loved and cared for by the Salesian Sisters who run the orphanage and the lay Catholic volunteers who help them.

In addition to providing children with a loving home, the Sisters prepare nutritious meals for the children, offer them medical care and educate them.

With help from students in the United States, children in Cathedral Parish in Flores, Indonesia, now have a new library where they can read, study and do research.

Completed in 1999, the library serves some 3,700 children who attend Church-



Children from the Don Bosco orphanage settle down for lessons after a celebration honoring the feast of St. John Bosco, the patron saint of the orphanage.

run primary and secondary schools. Currently, the library has 200 books and one desk for reading.

“Our collection of books which include bible stories, novels and encyclopedias, helps broaden our students’ perspectives on the world around them,” says Father Martin Chen, director of children’s formation for the parish. “In this way, the children learn how to become missionaries. They learn how to become neighbors to others — especially the poor and oppressed.”

The parish hopes to expand the library

to include many more books and additional tables for reading and study.

IN GRATITUDE

“We express our deep gratitude to our benefactors, especially the

young ones. We are touched by their deep feeling of solidarity with those whom they do not know.”

**Bishop Laba Ladjar, O.F.M.
Jayapura, Indonesia**



Students review books at the Cathedral Parish library.

Activities and Fundraising Ideas

• Sponsor a “storytelling night.” Invite family members, parishioners and members of your community to hear students read fairy tales and legends native to Indonesia (these can be found on the Internet or at your local public library). Charge a small admission fee and sell homemade refreshments to benefit the Extra Mile program.

• Since arts and crafts supplies are expensive and hard to come by, students at the Don Bosco orphanage (highlighted on page three) use recyclables in their art classes to create masterpieces. In this spirit, perhaps your school, parish or diocese could sponsor a community clean up day. Proceeds collected from returning recyclables could be used to support your Extra Mile goal. Use the *Extra Mile Prayer Service* to start your day.

• Through their prayers and pastoral work,

missionaries and local priests and Religious help people in the Developing World understand that Jesus is with them in times of joy, as well as in times of great suffering. Read the poem *Footprints* (available at our website: www.worldmissions-catholicchurch.org) before your Extra Mile walk-a-thon, fundraising activity or in your Religious Education class. Ask participants or students to reflect on the meaning of this poem in their lives. Then ask them to think of times when they were most in need of Jesus; ask that they share their thoughts with the group. Provide paper and crayons for smaller children and ask them to draw pictures that reflect times in their lives when they felt Jesus was “carrying” them, helping them get through tough times.

• Organize a prayer service / candlelight vigil in your parish / diocese

for children of the Missions who suffer from violence or who have yet to hear the “Good News of Jesus.” Use the *Extra Mile Prayer Service* or create one for your parish / diocese. Ask participants to consider a donation to HCA in support of the Extra Mile program to benefit *all* mission children.

• Hold an “Olympic Day” at your school / in your parish. Students can ask sponsors to pledge amounts based on activities in which they participate — for example, high jump, relay race, discus throw, etc.

• For further study about Indonesia, visit the HCA website or *Wild Indonesia Classroom Resources* at pbs.org/wildindonesia/resources.html. This web page provides social studies and science lessons through an on-line classroom companion to *Wild Indonesia*, a program produced by PBS.