

# realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



## Today's Readings:

The cry of a prophet. Jer 20:7-9  
Think of God's mercy. Rom 12:1-2  
Take up your cross. Mt 16:21-27

## Next Week:

Tips for resolving conflict  
Ezek 33:7-9; Rom 13:8-10;  
Mt 18:15-20

## In a nutshell

The image of the cross looms large in today's Gospel. The prediction of Jesus' passion dashes the disciples' hopes of a quick and easy political victory. Jesus' rebuke to Peter makes it clear that true liberation involves loving self-sacrifice. To share life in the Spirit of the risen Christ we must also share in Christ's passion and death.



## A boy's courage

Lafu was 15 years old in 1999 when the East Timorese voted for independence from Indonesia. In retaliation, pro-Indonesian militia massacred 55 of Lafu's people in Oecussi in early September. Fearing further attacks on their isolated village, the elders decided to send a message to General Cosgrove to plead for help. But who would make the dangerous journey through the militia-controlled territory? Lafu bravely accepted the task.

Carrying the hidden message in the heel of his thong, Lafu took to the hills. That evening he was found by some of the militia who beat him. Says Lafu, 'I was really scared these men would kill me. I saved my life by saying I was from West Timor.'

The next day, Lafu crept away. After a scuffle with Indonesian border guards he succeeded in reaching two Australian INTERFET soldiers who took him by helicopter to Dili to meet General Cosgrove. Cosgrove asked Lafu to return to Oecussi to help plan a military

operation. Armed with a satellite radio, the boy was secretly taken by boat back to a beach in West Timor. From there he carried the radio through militia controlled territory back to his village. Again Lafu's life was in extreme danger. If caught he would certainly have been killed. Within days of his return to Oecussi, the villagers relayed a radio message to INTERFET: the militia was planning an all-out attack. On receiving the message, Cosgrove decided to bring their plans forward. Says Lafu, 'When the people of Oecussi saw the helicopters flying in we didn't know if they were of the Indonesian army or of INTERFET. When we saw they were INTERFET helicopters they all yelled 'Viva East Timor, Viva Oecussi, Viva Lafu!'

Thanks to the courage of a teenage boy, a massacre was averted.

*Source: Catholic Mission*

## Sharing Christ's passion

Many years ago, a teenage girl was driving up a steep hill when she was hit by a runaway coal train. She survived the terrible ordeal, but came out of the accident a quadriplegic. Today this woman requires personal, round-the-clock care. Her mother stays with her throughout the night while a nurse tends to her needs during the day. She receives holy communion regularly at home without being able to say a word. Only her smile tells how happy she is to welcome her Eucharistic Lord whose sacred passion she has shared so intimately and for so long. (PK)



## church below the rooftops

*Think of somebody who witnesses to the Lord's passion in an intense way. What does God want to teach you through the gift of this person's life?*

## Small joys amidst pain

The woman was shopping with her family. She appeared to me to be middle-aged, attractively dressed in soft, feminine colours. She might have felt handicapped by the fact that her right arm was encased in plaster, but she wasn't letting it get her down. Down the centre of the plaster was a row of brightly coloured angel stickers. She was turning a blow into a blessing! (TE)

## Help carry their cross

For when burdens can't be 'fixed', here are four ways to support a loved one who is hurting.

- Phone or send a card just to say 'Thinking of you'.
- Offer a small practical gesture; e.g. drop in a home-cooked meal.
- Just 'be there' as a loving presence.
- Pray. In fact, why not pray now? Stop reading this and pray for somebody who is bearing a heavy cross.



**RealPeople** offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

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