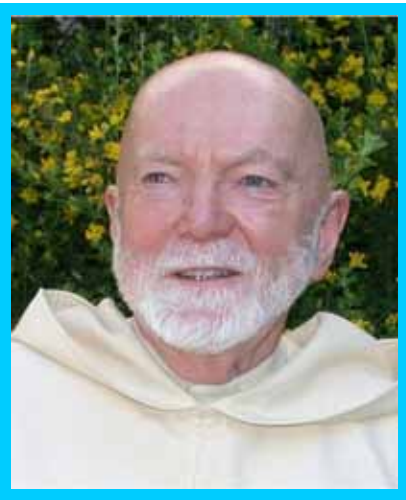


## *The Sunshine of Tala*



Dear Mission Friends:

For those of you who are regular readers of our newsletter, you know well the name of Fr. Anthony Leo Hofstee, O.P. and his legacy of service to the lepers in the Philippine colony of Tala. I don't think I've ever mentioned, though, how beloved he was for reasons unrelated to his commitment to Tala. I have fond memories of when he would come to visit my high school, St. Vincent Ferrer in Vallejo, and invariably upset our Dominican sisters by walking into each classroom and mischievously announcing, "No homework tonight!"

To review his better-known deeds, however, during World War II, while serving as a chaplain in the Pacific theater, Fr. Hofstee discovered the abandoned leper colony of Tala in the Philippines, and made a promise to the people there and to God that he would return and spend the rest of his life there, ministering to those who had been banished from their homes and prohibited from ever leaving the colony. At war's end he kept his promise and for forty years, until his death, tended to the physical as well as spiritual needs of those with Hansen's disease (the medical term for 'leprosy'). He established a hospital, an orphanage, an elementary school, a high school and even a college, with the lepers themselves as administrators and teachers; and he spearheaded countless other strides toward the cure of leprosy and elimination of the stigma attached to that dread disease. **Fr. Hofstee gave the shunned and abandoned of Tala a reason to live.**

Sr. Cora Quiambao, O.P., who replaced Sr. Rosa Yaya, O.P. as director of the Holy Rosary Schools in Tala after many



*Fr. Hofstee, O.P. meeting Pope John Paul II, who asked for HIS blessing!*

years, writes to us, "*For me Fr. Hofstee's name means INSPIRATION anchored with COMPASSION and STEWARDSHIP.*" She adds that she is "*blessed to be assigned here to continue the mission started by Fr. Hofstee, who was certainly inspired by Jesus when he laid down his life so that the lepers and their children could have a better one. Indeed, Fr. Hofstee and his community gave birth to the Word Made Flesh here in the hearts of the people of Tala and those who responded and continue to respond to Father's invitation to help and share their time and resources. Thank you, Fr. Martin, for your continued financial support and most especially your prayers.*"



The citizens of Tala fondly refer to Fr. Hofstee as “*The Sunshine of Tala*” and consider him their patron saint. Every October a fiesta in his honor is celebrated over the course of several days. Last October the fiesta started with an exhibit of Fr. Hofstee memorabilia, and many groups of students from grade schools to colleges came to view the various documents, photos, and keepsakes of his life’s work. His heroic milestones and deeds were put into a power-point presentation and shown over two nights. Several types of contests were held in order to include everyone who wanted to participate somehow in the celebration for their beloved patron. There were contests for best essay, best poster, best slogan, cleanest quonset, and cleanest barrio. A stage play of the lives of Fr. Hofstee and St. Damien was performed, after which some patients from the hospital sang a jolly original song describing Fr. Hofstee’s legacy.

*Above, Hansenite patients attending the tribute to Fr. Hofstee.*

*Below, patients singing a special song in his honor.*

Since they don’t ordinarily leave their hospital rooms, it was their first stage appearance and the huge crowd gave thundering applause. The evening ended with the announcement of the contest winners. The essay writing contest was won by a Holy Rosary College student who has Hansen’s disease. The following morning, however, was the highlight of the festivities when His Eminence Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales, D.D. of the Archdiocese of Manila concelebrated the crowded Mass. The Hansenite patients from both the hospital wards and the barrio were the guests of honor at all the events, since they were the inspiration for Fr. Hofstee’s pledge to devote his life to bringing hope and health to the people of Tala.





*Above, a rare moment of joy and laughter for these patients.*

Another fiesta, for Founder's Day, is held every year on July 30, Fr. Hofstee's actual birthday. This year after Mass the citizens proceeded to the hospital for the blessing of a statue of Fr. Hofstee, a long-awaited tangible reminder of his noble and heroic deeds. The high school students organized a walkathon from their main campus to the grade school in honor of Fr. Hofstee's long treks on foot, whether in torrential rain or under the burning heat of the sun, when burying Hansenites.

*Below, patients attending the fiesta Mass.*



The selfless and tireless Martinian Brothers help sponsor these celebrations by sharing donations they receive to buy simple snacks, gifts, and prizes, as well as by preparing and transporting the Hansenite patients to the festivities, which are, for the most part, their only outings and opportunities for distraction from their illness.

Br. Boboi Penaroyo, O.P., General Superior of the Martinian Brothers, writes, *“Thank you all very much for your prayers and your donations. Please continue to pray for us: for our continued perseverance with and commitment to the apostolate we have embraced here in Tala; for help with the declining vocations in our order; and for an end to the economic crisis we are in.”*



The Dominican Sisters who minister at the schools, the Martinian Brothers, and all who have ever served in Fr. Hofstee's footsteps are indeed the *Word Made Flesh*, living daily by his famous words of wisdom, precepts to which we can all aspire:

***Be compassionate;  
forget yourself and the  
Lord will take care of  
you.***

***It doesn't matter how  
great you are, but how  
good you are.***

***We become great by  
being simple.***

In Christ's Peace,  
*Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P.*



*A Martinian  
Brother  
posing with  
some of the  
Hansenites  
in his ministry.*