In Laos Duangmala’s son, Hum Noy, has the chance to learn and thrive at a school for children with intellectual disabilities, supported by Caritas Australia.

Please donate to Project Compassion 2016 and help children living with intellectual disabilities in Laos learn, grow and reach their full potential.

www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion  1800 024 413

MASS TIMES

ST THERESA’S
Drummartin St, Albion
9.00 am Friday
10.30am  Sunday

MOTHER OF GOD
Blanche St, Ardeer
10.00am Wednesday (Pol)
9.00am Thursday
6.00pm Friday (Polish)
6.00pm Saturday
10.30am Sunday (Polish)

QUEEN OF HEAVEN
Holt St, Ardeer
9.00am Sunday
4.30pm Sunday
(Syro-Malabar).

COMMUNION SERVICE
9.00am Wednesday
at Queen of Heaven

LITURGY MEETING
Wednesday 24th February, 7.00pm at the Presbytery.

ARDEER HOUSE NURSING HOME
Mass at 11.00am on Thursday 25th February. All welcome.

RECONCILIATION
Saturday 27th February, 10.00am at Mother of God.

EVENING PRAYER GROUP
Thursdays, 7.00pm at Queen of Heaven. All welcome.

CLEANERS  Saturday 27th February
(QH) S Matthew  (MG) No Cleaning  (StT) A Nadalin

THANKSGIVING  Weekly TG Pledge: $1620
Last Week’s Giving: $1218  Presbytery Collection: $530

COUNTERS  28th February
Team 1:  P Farrugia, D&E Catania, C Xuereb

READINGS  Today  Next Week
Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18  Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15
Psalm 27:7-8, 9, 13-14  Psalm 103:1-4, 6-7, 8+11
Philippians 3:17 – 4:1  1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER  Friday 4th March, 11.00am
This year prepared by the people of Cuba; Jesus said to them, “Receive children, Receive me.”
To be held at St Paul’s Parish, Glengala Rd, Sunshine West. All welcome.

WESTERN HIGHWAY DEANERY
JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY
Celebration of the 2nd Rite of Reconciliation (Sacrament of Penance)
St. Catherine of Siena Parish Church, 28 College St, Caroline Springs on Wednesday
16th March, 7.30pm - 8.30pm. Plenty of parking available!
(6 priests from the deanery will be available for confessions)
The 2nd Rite of Reconciliation is a communal celebration of the sacrament. It begins with the community listening to the word of God which is followed by a homily and an examination of conscience. During the individual confession and absolution that follows, the priests stand at appropriate points around the church. Those who wish to confess their sins approach one of the priests. While no restriction is placed on the individual’s confession, common sense dictates that people limit the time they spend with confessors. More time for integral confession and spiritual guidance is always available at your local parish.
Hum Noy’s story – Knowledge helps our children grow

Education is an important mission, which draws young people to what is good, beautiful and true’ Pope Francis.

Duangmala wishes for a bright future for her eight-year-old son Hum Noy, who is living with a disability. But faced with discrimination and limited learning opportunities, Duangmala feared he might never reach his full potential. Thankfully, a program supported by Caritas Australia has opened up a world of change for this small family.

Imagine not being able to communicate with the people closest to you, even your own mum. Living with an intellectual disability is challenging in any country, but it’s especially difficult when you come from a poor family in Laos.

For eight-year-old Hum Noy, who was born with Down Syndrome, life was lonely and his future uncertain.

In Laos there are almost no support services or facilities for families who have a child with an intellectual disability. Hum Noy has quite severe learning difficulties and his ability to communicate is limited, so when his father passed away several years ago, it was almost impossible for his mother, Duangmala, to manage on her own.

As she looked for work and cared for Hum Noy, she dreamed of a better life and a better future for her son, but didn’t know where to turn to or how to help him. “I just want him to be able to communicate, talk and understand me,” said Duangmala. “I want him to have friends.”

Everything changed when Duangmala was introduced to the Intellectual Disabilities Unit. Supported by Caritas Australia and set up by the Lao Disabled People’s Association (LDPA), this specialised school provides learning support and nurturing care to 50 intellectually disabled children in the capital city of Vientiane. The program also runs a series of workshops for parents, teachers and caregivers to better equip them to care for children with special needs.

Since Duangmala enrolled Hum Noy in the school, the changes in his behaviour have been extraordinary. He’s learning many new skills, including personal hygiene, physical education and communication skills. “Hum Noy is learning how to follow instructions and say the names of his teachers and friends,” says Duangmala. “He likes to draw, play instruments, and when they do aerobics he joins in!”

Hum Noy is no longer isolated, lonely or frustrated. His communication skills are advancing and it fills Duangmala with joy to see him playing with other children. “Now, he communicates better and if he wanders off, he is with his three friends in the neighbourhood,” she smiles. “He even knows how to get home on his own.”

The school has also opened up new opportunities for Duangmala, who has received further training and become a teacher there. She now earns a livelihood to support her family, and is able to use her skills to nurture the development of her son and the other students.

“It’s important to use our knowledge to help our children grow and develop,” she says. “I’m proud that my child has a chance to learn and that I am able to help other children through my work.”

Duangmala’s outlook has completely changed. She feels optimistic when she thinks of Hum Noy’s future. “If there is a special talent he has, I hope he pursues it,” she says. “If there are things he’s able to do, I want him to do them all. I have hope for him. We are very lucky to have this program.”

The Intellectual Disabilities Unit is currently the only program of its kind in Laos, but the impact it is having on the lives of these children and their families is immeasurable. Through supportive learning programs, children like Hum Noy can build vital skills, relationships, and find new opportunities that would otherwise be closed to them.

Caritas Australia and LDPA believe this program has the potential to expand to other provinces across Laos, so more people like Hum Noy and Duangmala can be empowered to create more prosperous, fulfilling futures.