

NEWS from

# the Jesuits in Timor-Leste

December 2016



## A Year of Love and Blessings

Dear friends in the Lord,

As we come closer to our celebration of the coming of our Lord into the world, we greet you with love and affection. Amidst work and holidays, celebrations and shopping, gifts and cards, Christmas songs and trees, trips and many other activities of Christmas time, let us keep the essential point: God has loved us so much to give us Himself.

We, the Jesuits in East Timor, our close collaborators and the people we serve have been loved and blessed throughout this year. The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy has poured on us an abundance of God's mercy through you. Allow me to mention some major events, keeping in mind and heart our whole life and ministry.

### Support our work

The Jesuits in Timor-Leste rely on the generous support of our friends, donors and collaborators to carry out our work in the service of faith and promotion of justice. Through this newsletter we share with you news and updates of our many projects and activities, particularly those for which continued support is needed in various ways. If you wish to know more about our work or donate to a project, please email: [etr.development@gmail.com](mailto:etr.development@gmail.com) or visit <https://timor-leste-jesuits.org>.



The opening of the new buildings of Casa Gonzaga, the candidate house, after several months of reconstruction, marked the beginning of 2016. The candidacy program reopened in this new structure, after taking refuge in our residence in Taibesi during construction. The new house became in turn the temporary premises of the teacher training institute in its first year. Instituto São João de Brito (ISJB) finally moved to Kasait in November and occupies a few classrooms of Colégio de Santo Inácio de Loiola (CSIL).



In July, the Region received a great blessing when Bishop Basilio ordained to the priesthood Fr Sidelizio Ornai Pereira SJ in Baucau on the feast day of our founder, St Ignatius of Loyola. Fr Side is the first to be ordained to priesthood from the group of young East Timorese who joined the Society after the independence. The whole Jesuit Region, together with the families and many friends, collaborators and benefactors (some came from overseas) gathered in celebration and gratitude for the gift of a new Jesuit priest. Fr Side received his first mission – to lead the newly opened ISJB, replacing Fr Roberto Rivera SJ who had been so important in the preparation and opening of this same institution. Fr Roberto has since returned to the Philippines.

Fr Side celebrated his first mass for us in an atmosphere of fraternity as we gathered in our Regional Assembly. All the members of the Region, even those pursuing work and studies abroad, came for the three-day meeting in early August. This was a time to reaffirm our vision and mission, to share what we had achieved in our pastoral activities, and to discern how to improve in our life and service to the Kingdom of God in our local context.

This year has been also a year in which the Jesuit Region in East Timor lived its universal dimension more deeply through the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus held in Rome in October and November. The participation of our first elector ever in a GC, myself, was followed with prayers and special attention as the highest authority of the Society gathered to elect our new Superior General and set the direction for the whole Society.

These experiences were only the peaks of our present life and regular apostolic ministries, which are also a continuous work of God. Our life in Railaco, Kasait, Taibesi, Lahane, and Bairro Pite continues to give witness to the local communities.



Our various ministries and especially the ongoing construction of our education project in Kasait, particularly the buildings for ISJB which we will soon begin building, and our new church in Railaco – all are possible only with the support of our friends and benefactors, and the many collaborators who, in one way or another, have generously joined in our mission to serve Christ in East Timor. Sent by the loving mercy of Christ, we all come to a greater awareness that the mission of Christ is something we are all responsible for.



As we come closer to the end of the year, in the spirit of the gift of “the Word made flesh for us”, we express our deepest gratitude to you. You continue to be the incarnation of this gift for us and the people we serve. Virgin Mary has accepted the Word in her body, held Him with love and hope, and delivered Him to the profit of the whole humanity. Each of us is a little Mary as well, when we open ourselves to the Word of God, let Him penetrate and transform us from within, and deliver Him by sharing our lives with those in need. Each of you is a little light of the Virgin Mary in this sense and we witness that in the support you give to our lives and ministries.



In the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy concluded with a Mass at St Peter’s Square and in which I had the joy to concelebrate, Pope Francis sent us a letter. The title of the letter “Misericordia et Misera” (Mercy and Misery) is the words of St Augustine, when he

recounted the meeting between Jesus and the adulterous woman in the Gospel. The Pope’s letter concluded with these words: “The Holy Mother of God always looks upon us with her eyes of mercy. She is the first to show us the way and to accompany us in our witness of love. As she is often shown in works of art, the Mother of Mercy gathers us all under the protection of her mantle. Let us trust in her maternal assistance and follow her perennial counsel to look to Jesus, the radiant face of God’s mercy”. As we celebrate Christmas, which is the meeting of God’s mercy and our sinful humanity, I would like to make these words of the Pope’s



letter as my prayer for you and for all of us.

Best wishes of every goodness. Have a Holy Christmas full of grace to live to the fullness the year to come.

*Fr Joaquim Sarmiento SJ*  
 Delegate of the Superior