

# NEWS from the Jesuits in Timor-Leste

January 2017



## An Eventful Year For Our Education Apostolate

Jesuits engage in education works only as a means to save souls, which is the primary reason of St Ignatius and the other companions in forming the initial foundations of the Society of Jesus. In Timor-Leste, the discernment to start an education project began many years ago, but it was formally started in 2013 with the opening of Colégio de Sto Inácio de Loiola (CSIL). Three years later, we finally opened the Instituto São João de Brito (ISJB), a higher learning institute dedicated to forming high school teachers in various fields of specialisations. We hope to send highly qualified teachers back to the villages, where there is great need for true educators and equipped formators.



### 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>.



Beginnings are always hard and difficult, and it was very true with ISJB. Fr Robert Rivera SJ, the first Rector, decided to start small with an initial intake of 23 students, mainly composed of Jesuit candidates and religious. For the first nine months, classes were held at Casa Gonzaga Jesuit Candidacy House in the capital Dili so as to mitigate the transportation problem. Eventually, ISJB moved to Kasait, under the leadership of Fr Sidelizio Pereira SJ, the newly ordained East Timorese Jesuit. A Josephite nun, Sr Jo Brady, a veteran educator from Australia, has been helping in refining the academic programs of ISJB.

Fr Side and his team have been very busy finalizing the documents for the licensing of the ISJB curricular programs, which were eventually submitted to the Ministry of Education in November. At the moment, they are waiting for the site visitation, which is a step toward the granting of the license.



Once the license is formally granted, they will immediately work on the accreditation of their programs.

Amidst this, the ISJB team has been forming and shaping the course offerings, coming up with new ways of teacher formation for Timor-Leste to balance theory and application in their method of teaching. Initially, we imagined a simple teacher training institute, but with the requirements stipulated by the Ministry of Education, we have to meet the standards of a higher learning institute. We need to have full-time professors, but we are still small in terms of number of students, so we cannot afford to hire more lay teachers. Thanks be to God, Jesuits and other religious have been willing to share their time and talent. At present, ISJB hopes to see more clearly the beginning of its own buildings, which is a basic requirement for licensing and accreditation.



At Colégio de Sto Inácio de Loiola (CSIL), construction commenced on the Administration Building, Library,

Canteen and the Multi-Purpose Hall. A review of the existing policies and procedures was conducted to look for better ways of doing things. There had been resistance from some of the teachers, but the discussions have been fruitful so far. Conversations were conducted to involve our lay partners. Honest discussions with the parents have helped us convince them about the need to increase tuition and fees. Parents were also formally organized to efficiently arrange the transportation of students. There is a need to strengthen our formation programs, clarify our administration structures, and improve the quality of our instruction programs.



There is still much to do, but we have the momentum already, in terms of our school's attractiveness to parents and the quality of students we get for enrollment. While we attract many good applicants, we make sure to be inclusive, to open our doors especially to the needy people around the Kasait area.

The education works continue at Escola Secundaria Católica Nossa Senhora de Fátima Railaco (NOSSEF), the Diocesan Senior High School administered by the Jesuits. Fr Bong Abad initiated renovations of a number of buildings with the help of donors. The teachers were initially apprehensive about the sudden change in Jesuit leadership in the school; however, slowly they managed to cope and have taken a more active role in the school administration. The students posted a 100% passing rate in the National Examinations. Twenty of the 79 graduates qualified to enroll in the National University. More students applied for enrollment so the administration decided to take in 150 students for Year 10. There is also greater need for dormitories both for girls and boys. NOSSEF lost two of its government paid teachers because the Ministry of Education moved them to a public school. While the Jesuit donors are around, NOSSEF will be financially viable. Once the Jesuits leave, it will have to re-invent itself.



All our education works are in their beginning stages, trying to clarify their mission and identity, coping with the challenges, figuring out how to be financially sustainable, and searching for best practices to operate more efficiently and effectively. We lack qualified and skilled personnel, both Jesuits and lay, so we heavily rely on expertise from outside. We have recruited many young teachers, and they need ongoing formation. But before we can do that, we have to convince them that indeed they need to uncover their potential and do more in order to become true professional educators. We have to start planning our financial future, and be more strategic in our decisions and policies. We are fortunate and grateful for the efforts of Fr Mark Raper SJ, our Regional Superior. We are simply blessed with many donors and friends who strongly believe in our desire to contribute to the nation-building efforts of this young country. We hope and pray for the return of the young East Timorese Jesuits to fully engage in all these important projects. To all of you who have been helping us, we offer our heartfelt thanks. May we continue to help build Timor-Leste together.



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