

End-of-Financial-Year Giving: Igniting Change and Empowering Youth in Timor-Leste through Education

As we approach the end of the financial year, we can all make a difference and bring hope to communities around the world by supporting them to flourish.

In Timor-Leste, with 97 percent of the population being Catholic and a median age of 21, the voice of the youthful population carries a strong message of hope and change. However, this voice is confronted with a challenging economic landscape and the struggle to find sufficient employment opportunities, especially in rural areas like the Diocese of Baucau.

Venilale, a remote town situated 40 minutes inland from the town of Baucau, is a representation of this reality. The ability for young people to pursue higher education or learn a trade is severely hampered by financial constraints.

“Many students are poor, they lack a lot of things to support them,” says Sr Anita Freitas, Director of the St Maria Mazzarello Vocational School in Venilale.

Recognising this need, the Salesian Sisters established the St Maria Mazzarello Vocational School in 1994. The school is a testament to their dedication as they empower the local community through education and the provision of employable skills that respond to market demands. However, the school is urgently in need of being refurbished to continue welcoming students and offering them quality education in a learning-conducive environment.

With the end of the tax year in sight, now is the perfect time to consider supporting the transformative work of the Salesian Sisters and Catholic Mission. Donations to support the school's operations not only promise significant impact for the youth of Venilale, but also offer tax advantages to donors.

One beneficiary of this initiative, Madalena*, a student at the vocational school, said, “I am very grateful that I can attend this school. I can gain experience... I will open my own cafeteria.”

The resilience of the Salesian Sisters and the spirit of the students continue to shine bright even after a fire in 2001 reduced the school to ashes. Today, the school supports 214 students and stands as a beacon of hope for the youth of Venilale.

“Financial support to keep the St Maria Mazzarello School running to a higher standard means we can continue reaching out to young girls like Madalena*, providing them with local opportunities to secure a future and gain financial independence,” says Fr Brian Lucas, Catholic Mission National Director.

As the financial year comes to a close, Catholic Mission invites everyone to consider making a tax-deductible donation to help change lives and give a voice to the youth of Timor-Leste.

“Giving is not a question of means, but a question of believing it will make a difference for something that is close to our hearts. When I discuss with parishioners, many of them share with me their reason why it is important for them to give to a not-for-profit. For many of them, it is their own way to contribute to the great

work of Mission, to set themselves in action, and to respond to their burning passion and love for others,” says Fr Brian.

Donate now and provide a passage of hope for the youth of Venilale at catholicmission.org.au/passageofhope

*Names are changed to protect identities.

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About Catholic Mission

Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies – the Catholic Church’s global organisation dedicated to continuing Jesus Christ’s mission in the world: that all may have life to the full. Catholic Mission contributes funding and project support to critical church-run initiatives in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. These include spiritual formation, pastoral care, education, health, sanitation, and agricultural programs. Here in Australia, we form people to go out and be missionary in their professional and personal lives; to pray, advocate and act for those on the margins. Catholic Mission has offices in 27 Australian dioceses.