

Timorese Jesuits thank Australian Catholics for transforming rural education

Seven Jesuit leaders from Timor-Leste visited Australia in August as part of a growing strategic partnership between the Australian Jesuit Province and the Jesuit Region of Timor-Leste. In both Melbourne and Sydney, the Jesuits from Timor-Leste personally thanked Jesuit Mission Australia supporters for over 20 years of partnership that has transformed education and social services in their young nation.

The visit included special gatherings with Q&A sessions led by Jesuit Mission Australia CEO Helen Forde, where supporters heard first-hand accounts of remarkable outcomes from education and community development projects funded by Australian Catholics.

Rural students achieving 100% National Exam success

Father Hyoe Murayama SJ, Director of the Jesuit run secondary school NOSSEF (Escola Secundaria Católica Nossa Senhora de Fátima) in rural Railaco Timor-Leste, shared extraordinary results that demonstrate the power of Catholic solidarity in action.

“On behalf of our school, I express our deepest gratitude to your generous support of over 20 years to our mission. Every year 100% of our year 12 students pass the national exam and have had over 1800 graduates since 2002,” Fr Hyoe told supporters.

NOSSEF Railaco serves remote rural communities where access to quality secondary education was previously non-existent, giving young Timorese their first pathway to university and professional careers. Father Hyoe expressly thanked St Canice’s, the Jesuit Parish in Sydney, for their sustained partnership and investments in education, healthcare and nutrition in Railaco for more than two decades.

From classrooms without walls to 800+ students

Father Calisto Seco Colo SJ, Director of Colégio de Santo Inácio de Loyola (Loyola Secondary School), described the dramatic transformation of Jesuit education in the capital.

“Our school began in 2013 with 78 students, three classrooms, no windows and no doors. Now we have a beautifully constructed campus with 822 students... about 67% of them are girls. From the bottom of our hearts – thank you for your support,” Fr Calisto said.

University education creating local leaders

Father Isaias Caldas SJ, Rector of Instituto São João de Brito (ISJB) - the Jesuit-founded and run Teacher Training Institute, reflected on meeting Australians whose generosity makes higher education possible for Timorese students.

“It is quite overwhelming the sensation that I'm feeling to see people like you who have been behind the scenes supporting our missions. Seeing you, eyes to eyes, gives me more meaning to what I'm doing due to your generosity,” Fr Isaias said.

Since its inception in 2016, over 300 graduates from ISJB are already serving as teachers and community leaders throughout Timor-Leste.

Clean water and sanitation reaching thousands

While education remains the cornerstone of the partnership, the Jesuit commitment to serving the whole person extends to addressing basic human needs. Father Julio Sousa SJ, Director of Jesuit Social Service, spoke of transformation at the grassroots:

“We have gradually given people from rural areas new opportunities, given them hope, given them life... [since 2018, over 1900] families now have access to clean water and 50 families have newly built sanitation facilities, however, the success of a project should be measured by how many people's lives we have touched,” Fr Julio said.

These infrastructure projects address critical health needs in rural communities where preventable diseases remain major challenges.

Partnership rooted in Ignatian spirituality

Jesuit Mission CEO Helen Forde emphasised that this partnership embodies the Ignatian principle of accompaniment – walking alongside the poor and marginalised as companions in their journey toward dignity and opportunity.

“The work that we do with our Jesuit partners doesn't happen without your generosity, without your prayers, without your friendship, and without your solidarity,” Ms Forde expressed to supporters.

The Sydney event concluded with a moving cultural exchange where the Timorese Jesuits performed songs of gratitude and resilience, including a traditional song written during the fight for Timorese independence. The Jesuits reminded supporters that, as St Ignatius taught, we are called to “find God in all things” and to walk together in companionship and solidarity.

About the partnership

Through Jesuit Mission Australia, generous Australians have supported Jesuit works in Timor-Leste for over two decades, greatly helping local partners and communities transform their education, healthcare, water and sanitation, and social services.

[Click here](#) to see more photos from the event in Sydney.

-END-

Media Contacts:

- Angela Ford, Director of Fundraising & Engagement, angela.ford@jesuitmission.org.au (02) 8918 4109
- Zach Martorana, Communications Officer, Jesuit Mission zach.martorana@jesuitmission.org.au 02 8918 4109



Caption: Helen Forde, Fr Isaias Caldas SJ, Fr Calisto Seco Colo SJ, Fr Hyoe Murayama SJ and Fr Julio Sousa SJ at the Q&A panel in Sydney.



Caption: The Jesuit Mission Australia team.



Caption: Supporters at the event in Sydney.



Caption: Supporters at the event in Melbourne.

Supporting Links:

Photos from the Sydney event

<https://jesuitmission.org.au/news/gathering-jesuits-visiting-timor-leste/>

About Jesuit Mission

Jesuit Mission works in over 10 countries across Asia and Africa to uphold the innate dignity of people living with the effects of poverty, especially the most marginalised and vulnerable. Funds from our supporters:

- Break cycles of poverty through teaching and education
- Protect the health of communities by providing medical care and programs that improve access to clean water and toilets
- Develop independent, sustainable communities through livelihood training and income-generating projects
- Provide vulnerable individuals with pastoral care, social inclusion and advocacy
- Support refugees in crisis
- Enable effective disaster response and relief.