

# Understanding Islam

## Asia Pacific Theological Encounter Program

*A response by the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific to GC 35, decree 2, n 24 "to plunge ourselves more deeply into that dialogue with religions that may show us that the Holy Spirit is at work all over the world that God loves."*





## Called to the frontiers of culture and of religion

*“We need to strengthen and support those Jesuit and collaborators actively involved in the fourfold dialogue recommended by the Church, to listen carefully to all, and to build bridges linking individuals and communities of good will.” (GC35, Decree 3, n 22)*

The Asia Pacific Theological Encounter Programme (APTEP) is a four-week program developed to help the Society of Jesus respond to the challenges of the Church, especially in Asia, in the area of interreligious dialogue.

It aims to

- 1) Respond the call of the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus to build bridges of understanding and dialogue
- 2) Respond to the challenges of the Catholic Church in an Asian context, in relation to the triple encounter, with the problem of poverty, the pluralism of religions, and the variety of cultures
- 3) Provide an environment for Jesuit Scholastics to get together and reflect on matters in the direction of developing a Contextual Theology.

### **Contextual setting in Indonesia**

Indonesia is home to the world's largest Muslim population, yet it has great diversity in terms of religion, ethnicity, race, culture, and language.

Yogyakarta, where APTEP is held, is located in Central Java, about 600 km east of the national capital, Jakarta. It is a student town, a cultural town, and a centre for tourism with the Borobudur and Prambanan temples located nearby.

### **Ignatius House of Studies**

The programme is conducted by the Indonesian Province of the Society of Jesus, in the Ignatius House of Studies in Yogyakarta. Ignatius House of Studies has served as the primary formation house for Indonesian Jesuit scholastics studying theology and preparing for the priesthood since 1958. Its library contains a collection of 180,000 books, mostly in Theology, and it also offers electronic access to easily 15,000 books that deal with Islamic Studies in different languages.



*"The APTEP offered a comprehensive study of Islam. This, as well as living with them for a week, paved me an objective way of looking at Muslims and their religion. The biases that I had with them in the past were corrected. My direction is pointed towards reading more about them as well as an open disposition to experience more their ways in my home island Mindanao." ~ APTEP participant, 2011*

## **The program**

APTEP is accredited by Sanata Dharma University, the Jesuit university in Yogyakarta Indonesia, whose name means "Gift of loving service".

### **Duration and structure**

Four-week program during which participants will study Islam from different angles and gain an understanding of how it faces problems of life, modernity, cultures, social developments, etc.

They will have three weeks of classes and discussions with Muslim and non-

Muslim professors on Islamic Studies as well as contextual theology from within and without Indonesia, and a weeklong immersion in an Islamic boarding school.

### **Participants**

10 to 15 Jesuit scholastics or non-Jesuit seminarians who have completed at least one year of theological studies.

### **Directors**

Director: Fr JB Heru Prakosa SJ

Assistant: Fr Greg Soetomo SJ



For more information on the Asia Pacific Theological Encounter Program, contact:

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*“To be religious today is to be interreligious in the sense that a positive relationship with believers of other faiths is a requirement in a world of religious pluralism.” (GC34, Decree 5, n 130)*