



# the jesuits in asia pacific 2018

a **faith** that does **justice**





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# Discerning in common

## the way forward

In January, I led my first Major Superiors Assembly as president of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific. We devoted a large part of the assembly held in Sydney to what came out of General Congregation (GC) 36.

When we met with Pope Francis during GC 36, we asked him what we should be doing. Instead of giving us marching orders, he invited us to discern God's will collectively.

In response to his invitation, GC 36 asked Father General to review the process of discerning the universal apostolic preferences (UAPs), which was initiated in 1995 by GC 34 and promulgated by then Fr General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach in 2003.

The result was that Africa, China, intellectual apostolate, interprovincial Roman

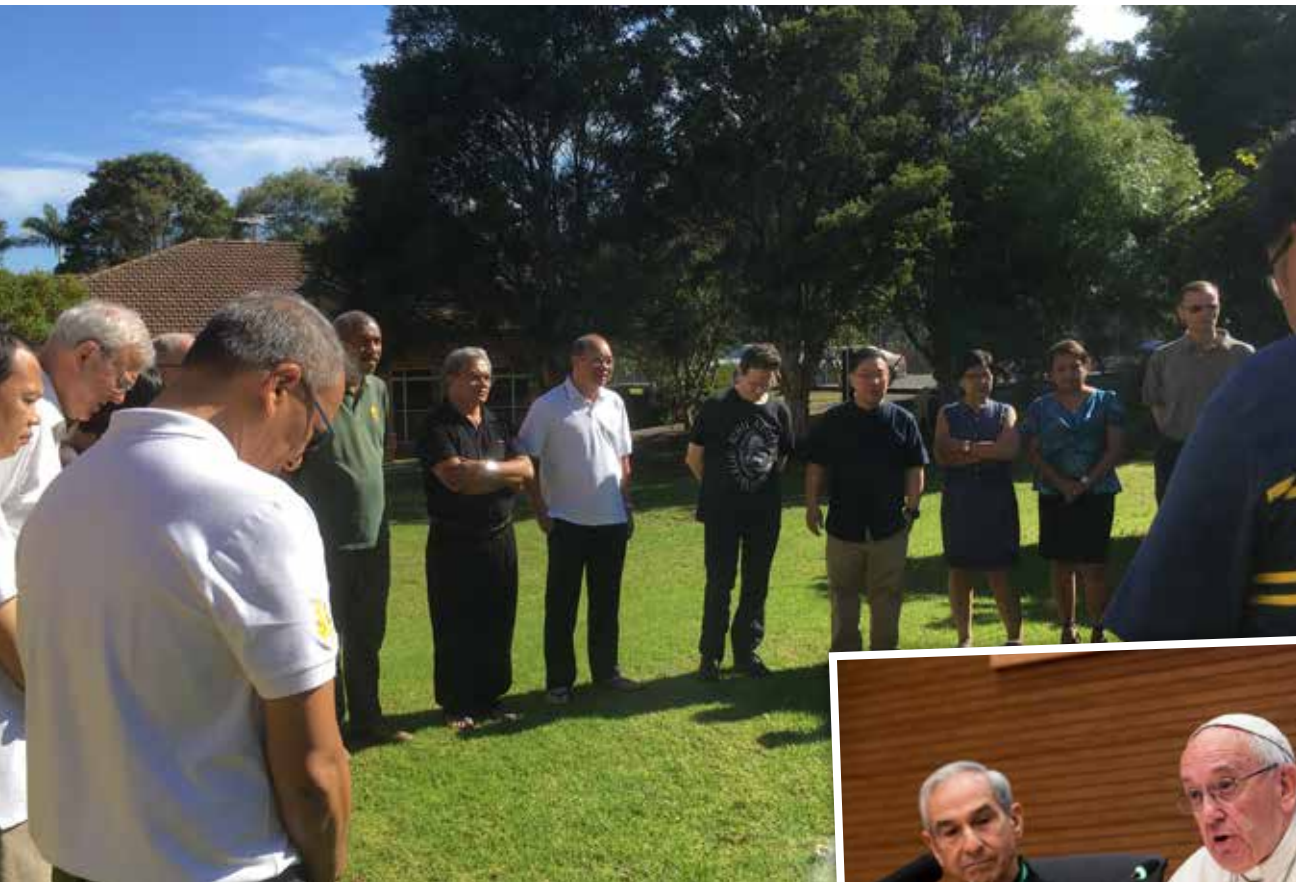
houses and migration became the apostolic preferences of the Society.

Now, we are asked to evaluate the progress of these UAPs and to identify any new ones that may be needed. To do this, we are asked to discern in common. GC 36 mandates that the process "should include the greatest possible participation of the Society and of those involved with us in our mission". This very important process covering all levels of governance could affect the life and mission of the whole Society of Jesus in years to come.

We launched the discernment process of our Jesuit Conference at the Sydney assembly. We have almost a year to do this across our seven provinces, three regions and two missions; the reports from all six Jesuit Conferences are due to the General Curia







in Rome by December 1. The major superiors were enthusiastic and hopeful that the outcome will bring about greater clarity of our apostolic horizon.

Although each province and region has its own pressing concerns and challenges, there was eagerness on the part of the major superiors to receive and respond to the mandate given us by GC 36. It was positively accepted and given the importance that it deserves. By discerning the UAPs, we as a Jesuit Conference will give our own input to the universal Society. Doing so will also aid in our own apostolic planning. Our current apostolic plan is up to 2019 and, in planning for the next five years, we will align our direction and orientation along the lines of the discerned apostolic preferences.

It is my hope that by undertaking this process, we may increasingly become a discerning body and not just a group of people who simply plan, decide and implement. As a discerning body, we become more sensitive and attentive to the promptings of the Spirit. This is our way of inserting more fully

into the Church's mission, which is guided by the same Spirit.

It is also my hope that the discerning process will define who we are and what we do. At stake here is our identity as much as our mission. Finally, I hope this process will strengthen our bond as a Jesuit Conference participating in the shared mission. Given our differences and diversities, we are called as one corporate body to respond to the universal mission. May the Spirit guide us as we move forward as one Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific.

**Fr Tony Moreno SJ**  
President, Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific

# Looking back on a decade as JCAP, and looking ahead



JCAP Electors with Fr General Arturo Sosa at GC 36



Major Superiors Assembly Sydney January 2012

**J**CAP. More and more this acronym is used by Jesuits and collaborators in Asia Pacific and beyond. The change of name from Jesuit Conference of East Asia and Oceania (JCEAO) shortly after General Congregation (GC) 35 in 2008 may have seemed to some a cosmetic change. However the 10 years since the discussion began have shown this perhaps foreshadowed the change that was to come over the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific.

With the change of name came new statues to correspond with the clearer mandate given by GC 35 Decree 5, which gave conferences a more pro-active role in promoting the Society's universal mission. Perhaps more important are the changes in way of proceeding which have imbued the conference with a refreshed spirit and life.

For the major superiors, changes in the terms and format of their biannual assembly have gradually cultivated a sense of co-responsibility and solidarity, mutual support and learning among them, as did the pro-activeness of Fr Mark Raper, JCAP President from 2008 to 2017, in encouraging collaboration and cultivating a sense of universal mission. A survey conducted shortly after GC 35 identified significant needs in Asia Pacific to which the Jesuit mission might best respond, and this data shaped the JCAP apostolic plan for 2014 to 2019.

JCAP in the last decade has seen, in particular, joint action on common mission concerns such as migration, ecology, youth and dialogue with Islam as well as on new and challenging issues. There



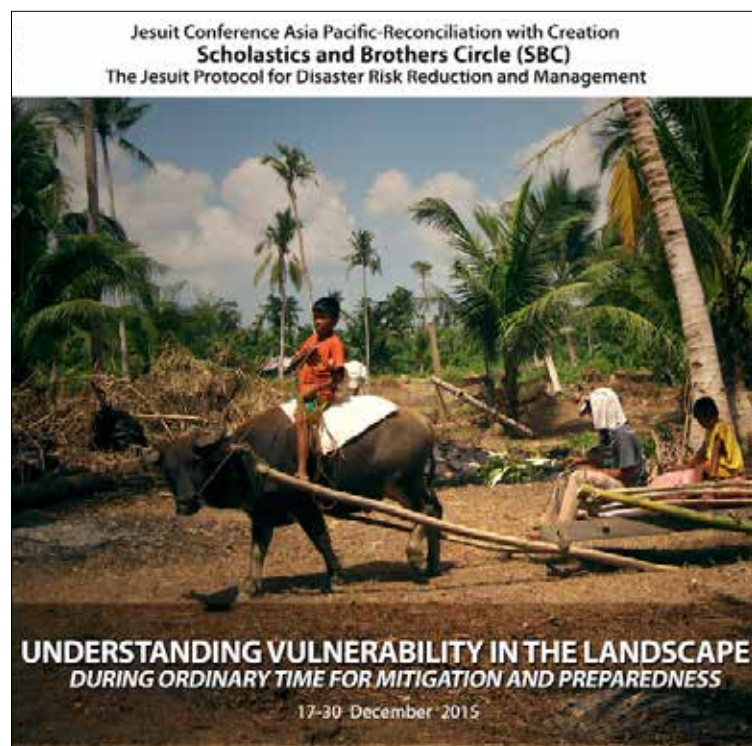


has been greater sharing of resources and expertise among the major superiors. For example, the Solidarity in Formation Fund, a common fund for formation of Jesuits across the conference, helps to facilitate co-responsibility in practical ways, and the JCAP Disaster Response Protocol, which outlines steps for Jesuit collaborative action for disaster risk reduction and management, paves the way for joint action. A greater willingness to make men available for the needs of JCAP and the smaller units is also apparent, and has its own recruitment slogan – “send the best and keep the rest”.

New models of co-operation within JCAP have developed. An informal consortium comprising several provinces has provided an effective support structure for the East Timor Region, while the Chinese, Japan and Korea provinces have had promising discussions about collaboration on common concerns. Also, several major superiors are now on the board or committee of a common work such as Arrupe International Residence and East Asian Pastoral Institute.

The various sectoral meetings have enhanced collaboration for mission. In recent years, a growing number of projects have seen inter-sectoral collaboration to address concerns such as sustainable development and education. In addition, the meetings have facilitated sharing of knowledge and experience, which has been particularly helpful to those newer to their jobs. Some networks function better than others, and it is clear that the most effective model is when the secretary has a core team to work with. Also, funding from JCAP for these activities has been helpful in realising plans and enabling involvement across all of the conference.

The last few years have seen several training and formation programmes organised at the conference level. These are widely appreciated as an effective way to enhance competencies for mission, deepen



charism, instil a sense of being one universal body, and develop a common language and way of proceeding. Some examples are the Local Superiors Workshop, the Leadership Development Programme, workshops for scholastics and training programmes for those in Basic Education.

The JCAP communication channels have developed remarkably over the last decade, and are another factor that has enhanced collaboration and a sense of universal mission. By facilitating the sharing of information and greater awareness of and participation in conference activities, the JCAP website, e-newsletter and social media platforms have helped to inform and sustain the bonds created by the networks.

Recent years have also seen an increase in the number of laypersons leading conference initiatives,



programmes and networks, and they have helped to serve the Society's mission through their expertise, perspectives and presence as collaborators.

Yet, despite the progress made in mindset change and practical action in the service of the universal mission, there is much room for improvement in several areas. These include succession planning and availability for key roles in the conference, and the need for effective mechanisms for more complex joint action such as the Flights for Forests carbon offset programme, the identification of and reflection on emerging issues that need a collaborative response, for example, human rights and evangelisation, and the contribution of Asian perspectives in theology and spirituality. Also observed is the need for more effective planning by units and institutions, with more structured conference involvement; and for province,

conference and universal priorities to be aligned.

In addition, as JCAP embarks in 2018 on the discernment process asked for by GC 36, efforts can be made to realise the potential for shared wisdom and greater coordination in planning responses to mission needs and allocating resources, as well as for more deliberate collaboration and networking for universal mission.

Collaboration and networking across provinces and apostolates are increasingly acknowledged as the essential way of proceeding. This and other lessons learnt in the last decade are among the factors that will guide the new president, Fr Tony Moreno SJ, and major superiors of the seven provinces, three regions and two missions as they discern the way of proceeding for the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific to better serve the Society's mission.



# 2017 at a glance

**8 FEB**

JCAP Education Secretariat launches the “Ignatian Initiative for Teaching Excellence” to address formation needs of teachers in Jesuit primary and secondary schools in the region



**FEB**

**MAR**

**JUN**

**25 MAR**

Jesuit Social Services marks 40 years of delivering social change programmes across Australia



**5 JUN**

Australian Jesuit Province announces divestment from fossil fuels





Fr General Arturo Sosa SJ makes his first official visit to Asia Pacific

13 JUL

In Indonesia, Fr General dialogues with Muslim scholars and concelebrates the Ordination Mass of six Indonesian Jesuit priests



15 JUL

He meets with Buddhist monks in Cambodia, his first time in a Buddhist country



18-22 JUL

He joins the JCAP major superiors in their assembly in Singapore

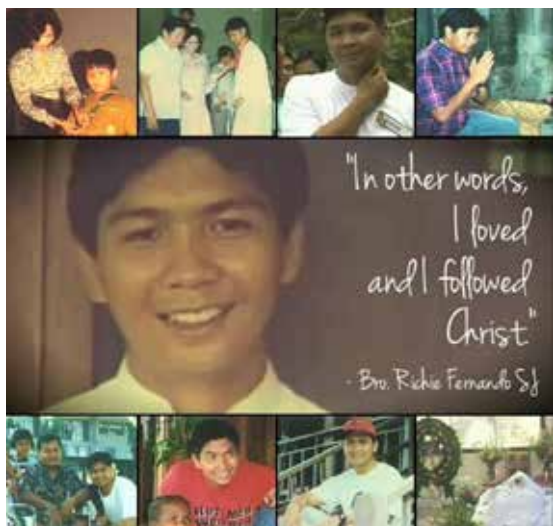


JUL

AUG

30 JUL

Work begins on the cause for the beatification of Filipino Jesuit scholastic Richie Fernando who was killed whilst saving several people from a grenade blast in Cambodia in 1996



19 AUG

Xavier Learning Community, the Jesuit school serving mainly ethnic minorities in Thailand, officially opens



**7 OCT**

The quasi-parish of Railaco in Timor-Leste is canonically erected as a parish



**29 SEP**

The Jesuits take on St Michael's Parish in Nanhlaing village, a conflict zone in Myanmar



**SEP**

**OCT**

**8 OCT**

Ricci Social Services celebrates 30 years of serving people affected by leprosy or living with HIV/AIDS in mainland China and Macau





## 22 NOV

Fr Tony Moreno SJ takes over as JCAP President from Fr Mark Raper SJ who had served as President for nine years



## 2 DEC

Xavier Jesuit School in Sisophon, Cambodia is formally inaugurated



NOV

DEC

## 29 NOV

Pope Francis meets with the Jesuits in Myanmar during his visit to the country



2017  
at a glance

# Towards a culture of encounter with other religions

**F**r General Arturo Sosa SJ referred to himself as a pilgrim when he visited the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific last year. “St Ignatius used to call himself ‘the pilgrim,’ someone actively searching for the will of God. I would like to use that word for myself and for all of us too. I come here as a pilgrim among my fellow pilgrims, not as an expert with all the answers,” he said to lay Catholics in Jakarta, Indonesia in July. It was his first time here and he admitted humbly that he had come to Asia to learn. “Looking from the West you have the image that Asia is all the same but it is very obvious when you are here that there are so many cultures, so many ways of living life, so many traditions. It is a real richness for humanity.”

Fr General had a week-long experience of this richness of cultures and religions when he visited Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, and Cambodia, a country that is predominantly Buddhist. He also saw some of what the Jesuit mission is in two very different Jesuit units. Indonesia is the largest province in JCAP with more than 300 Jesuits, and Cambodia is but a mission.

When he met with Jesuit scholastics in Indonesia, Fr General told them to be “authentic according to their own cultures so that they can respect and connect to other cultures”. Although formation in







the Society is individual and personal, it invites Jesuits in formation to be inclusive. The scholastics shared with Fr General how their Jesuit formation has helped them to be authentic since “human freedom” has played an important role in the process.

This same spirit of openness characterised Fr Sosa’s dialogue with Muslim scholars. As he listened to them share how they see the future of Christian-Muslim dialogue, the Venezuelan Jesuit Superior General was mindful that he comes from a very different background. Pancasila (Five Principles), the Indonesian state philosophy, emphasises the belief in one God, a just and civilised humanity, Indonesian unity, democracy and social justice for all. The Muslim scholars appreciated the opportunity to dialogue with Fr General and spoke of how understanding helps build friendship among the different religions. One scholar cited brotherhood with all human



beings as one of the principles of the pesantren, the Islamic boarding school.

Acknowledging the value of the dialogue, Fr Sosa said that Jesuits have to understand the complexity of a pluralistic society, including the conflict between different religions, and the need for both religions to work together for justice and peace. "Religion is not a problem but part of the solution," he said, echoing the words of Pope Francis at the International Conference for Peace in Cairo in April 2017.

Indonesian Provincial Fr Sunu Hardiyanta SJ found much encouragement in Fr Sosa's words. One of the challenges identified by the Indonesian Jesuit Province is radicalism. "Pope Francis says we need to create space to listen to the movement of the Spirit to make reconciliation and peace possible. I heard this very strongly from Fr General," he said.

Peace and reconciliation were also central points in Fr Sosa's meeting with Buddhist monks in Cambodia. During the dialogue, he learnt about the Buddhist peace walk begun by the great Buddhist sage Maha

Ghosananda during the bloody days of the civil war in Cambodia. "It is consoling to see how we share a belief that the path to peace begins from within, from the deep transformation of the inner person, from growing in detachment and in loving kindness," he told them.

Together Fr General, Jesuits and collaborators in Cambodia, and the Buddhist monks blessed the wheels of reconciliation in the Metta Karuna Reflection Centre, a Jesuit work in Siem Reap. Fr Sosa also visited the 1,000-year-old Wat Svayrometh, the oldest temple in Siem Reap, where the chief monk Ven Vuthi invited him to sit among the young monks for a brief exchange.

"It is very unusual to sit in that way in the Theravada tradition; even the king has to respect monks by sitting in a separate seat. I think Ven Vuthi respected us as equal religious friends who deserve to







sit together,” said Fr In-gun Kang SJ, JCAP Secretary for the Buddhist Studies and Dialogue group that promotes the in-depth study of Buddhism, especially among younger Jesuits.

In his encounters with Islam and Buddhism, Fr Sosa was vividly reminded of Pope Francis’ insistence on the importance of creating a culture of encounter and the call to share in God’s work of reconciliation emphasised in General Congregation 36 (D1, No 21). “We need to remember as St Ignatius reminds us that God lovingly labours in the world; and then discern how He calls us to share in His work as individuals and as groups,” he said.

Discernment is key. As Fr Sunu said, “We learn from the Venice experience of coming together as friends to discern their mission,” he said. “If the Jesuits today can do this, we will be able to animate the broader community, everyone who serves and who works with us.”





# Pope Francis and the Church on the peripheries

“**R**ejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost” says the shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:6). Putting aside the question of whether Catholics in Myanmar can be compared to the lost sheep, the point of emphasis here is that the country has been lost for more than half a century under authoritarian regimes that have had little consideration for human rights including the basic right to religious freedom. Unknown to most people outside the country, Catholics, who make up just over one percent of Myanmar’s 52-million population, have been suffering silently “like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter” (Jer 11:19). They have lost lives, homes, schools and churches but not their faith, which is alive and thriving.

The visit of Pope Francis, the first Roman pontiff ever to visit the country, brought much joy and hope to the local Church. It had not imagined that a papal visit would be possible anytime soon. In fact, the invitation to the pope had come from the civil government elected into power in 2015 by the majority of the population, which is more than 80 percent Buddhist.

Coincidentally, during the months of preparation to welcome the pope, the country faced more challenges such as armed conflicts and refugee crises in addition to its long-standing challenges of oppression, drug abuse and poverty. The pope himself said that the trip posed huge challenges but these had made him even more determined to make the trip. Perhaps it had been a great help to the government that he



visited when the country was under a lot of unwanted pressure over its refugee crises. The happiest to welcome him, of course, were the Catholics who travelled from different parts of the country to see the pope in person and celebrate the Holy Eucharist with him.

For many of these pilgrims, the long journey was tiring and expensive but this was quickly forgotten once they were with the pope celebrating the mystery of God's love together. It was truly a grace-filled moment of consolation with much religious enthusiasm. Relishing the experience that could also be seen as public recognition of their existence in the country, they hoped that his visit would bring about positive development especially in the areas of peace and justice that had been so very elusive for so long. It was a time when they felt the presence of the good shepherd who cared for his flock and searched for the least ones. Crucially, the public Mass was a concrete expression of the people's faith in the Lord who would never leave them alone in need. Witnessing this had made me feel much energised as well.

As a local Jesuit who shares the same joy and sorrow of God's people in the country, I believe the pope's visit to be a sign that the same Lord is calling the Jesuits who bear His holy name to join Him in responding to the cries of the people. They have been crying out to God for help for more than half a century of suffering. For decades, the military authorities have violated their human dignity, forcing tens and thousands of them out of their homes, turning them into internally displaced persons or



refugees in camps along the eastern border. To these and other least ones of society, the pope told us (the Jesuits in Myanmar) during our private meeting with him in the country, we must reach out like a shepherd who recognises both the "smell" of his sheep and the "smell" of God. In other words, we must discern the most appropriate ways to respond to the Lord's call so that the needs of the broken hearted and those on the peripheries can be better fulfilled.

Finding how God wants us to respond to the immense needs of the people and living it out in reality has been a top priority for the Jesuits in the Myanmar Mission. Pope Francis emphasised the point I find most striking in his quotation from Pope Paul VI – "Wherever, at the crossroads of history, there are Jesuits. ... Go to the crossroads. We must be men of prayer alive in the crossroads of history!"

I feel that we are right at the crossroads of history in my country, even unworthily resembling the crossroads experience of the first Jesuits. Their original dream of going to the Holy Land was made impossible by external reasons and they then chose to serve the Lord as Jesuits in the Church and gave witness to the Gospel through diverse ministries. Following their example, the Jesuits in Myanmar are striving to give witness to the joy of the Gospel in a country where the local Church and the majority of its citizens suffer silently under an authoritarian regime. Amidst the great needs of the people we serve, we endeavour to prioritise a few ministries over other possibilities in a realistic way so that our apostolic mission may also have certain depth underlying our quest for God's greater glory.



**Fr Wilbert Mireh SJ**



# The Jesuit vision for Northern Thailand communities

**A**s 2018 began, a new Jesuit school in a rural part of northern Thailand approached the end of its first semester. Xavier Learning Community (XLC) had marked its official beginning on August 19, 2017 simply with a mass and dinner.

As the students, aged 19 to 24, prepared for their first semester examinations at the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, the directors of XLC met to explore the roadmap of the steps that must be followed to become Xavier College. Yet even Xavier College is itself envisioned as only the first step toward fulfilling the dream of the Jesuits in Thailand for Xavier University, a Catholic and Jesuit educational institution serving students from all over Thailand, especially the ethnic minorities in the north.

This vision evolved from the long-standing Jesuit commitment to education in Thailand. Since the 1970s, Jesuits have taught in Thai universities, served as student chaplains, and offered courses on leadership training and spiritual formation to secondary and university students. The idea of opening an educational institution can be traced to a meeting of Jesuits in Thailand held in Hua Hin in 2008 where it became clear that the younger Jesuits wanted to go beyond student chaplaincy. They felt that there was a need for quality education for the poor and disadvantaged youth of the country. Among the most needy, it was felt, were the young people from the ethnic minorities, the so-called hill tribes in the mountainous districts of northern Thailand, who are often at a linguistic and cultural disadvantage in the national school system.

By 2010, there was a growing consensus that it would be good to have a common apostolic project that the Jesuits in Thailand could work on together.

The Chiang Rai region is one of the most underdeveloped regions in the country. There are only two major universities, and both are not only quite selective but also have tuition fees that most ethnic minority families cannot afford.

The Jesuits hoped that by opening an educational project in the Chiang Rai region, other religious



orders of men and women would establish their own educational projects. They hoped too that their educational efforts would fit into and enrich the pastoral activities of the local Church.

Their interest in starting their own educational project reached the ears of Jesuit leadership in Rome. In 2011, the then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr Adolfo Nicolás, instructed the Jesuit superior of Thailand to explore the possibility of opening a Jesuit educational institution of higher learning. The question was raised whether the Thailand Region of





the Society of Jesus had adequate human and financial resources to establish and maintain an institute of higher education. To this end, the Jesuits in Thailand made a five-year strategic plan in 2012, noting which apostolates were to be prioritised, what new ventures might be initiated, and which apostolic activities would need to be curtailed. The strategic plan that was sent to Fr General showed that the Thailand Region was capable of maintaining its current apostolic works in Bangkok and Chiang Mai and able as well to undertake the new educational apostolate in Chiang Rai.

The Thailand Region purchased 8.3 hectares of land in Chiang Saen, north of Chiang Rai near the “Golden Triangle”, where the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos intersect. It is an area that is home to many indigenous communities in Thailand with their rich traditions and cultures, and where there are limited basic services, low levels of education and limited higher education opportunities.

In July 2016, the Thai government officially granted the Society of Jesus permission to establish the Jesuit Foundation for Education, with the right to open a college. Finally, in December 2016, the new Superior General, Fr Arturo Sosa, gave definitive permission to open Xavier Learning Community.

As the roadmap for implementing the Jesuit vision for education for the northern Thailand communities is studied and followed, XLC carries on its work of education and formation.

Of the first batch of 44 students admitted in August 2017, the vast majority come from the ethnic minorities, mainly Karen, Akha and Lahu, with some Lanna or Northern Thai as well. The second batch enrolled for 2018 is even more diverse.

According to Fr Sugiyo Pitoyo SJ, Superior of the Thailand Region, XLC will take in 35 to 40 new students each year until it reaches 140 to 160 students in 2020. In their fourth year of studies, the students will be able to choose one of three tracks – English for Eco-tourism and Hospitality Management, English for Sustainable Business Management and English for Teaching. These three tracks will be the majors offered by the future Xavier College.

“The Xavier Learning Community is like a small seed sown by the Jesuits that has grown with the support and help of many people,” said Fr Pitoyo. “We hope that we will continue to receive the support and prayers of everyone.”

**Fr Thomas Michel SJ**



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