

FEBRUARY 2016 AT NOSSEF RAILACO, EAST TIMOR

Our dear donors, benefactors, and friends,

Lenten Greetings from Railaco! We would like to share with you some news from us here at the Catholic Senior High School in the mountains of East Timor.

Every first Monday of the month, we do the flag-raising formally and very solemnly as required by the Department of Education. Everyone comes on time in their official school uniform. The teachers stand by the balcony area of the administration building. The students spend time to practice the marching and to master the flow of the ceremony. Recently, the **Year 12 Science António de Lisboa** class did not ask to be excused from any of their classes to do the rehearsal. Instead, they used their short free periods to review the protocol. Their class adviser, **Mr. Julio Soares Madeira**, gave his usual rousing exhortation.



Language is a major obstacle for our learning processes at NOSSEF because our books are in Portuguese but our teachers can only explain clearly in Tetum. They were trained in the Indonesian language, so the shift to Portuguese is taking so long. Thus, we need more dictionaries to increase the vocabulary of our teachers and students. We are lucky this year because the parents of our long-time donor, **Catholic Regional College (CRC) Sydenham** in Australia, donated some monies for school supplies and learning materials. We bought several Portuguese dictionaries and one big Bahasa Indonesian dictionary.



With the increase of our student population, we have commenced the construction of a three-classroom temporary school building while the discussion for a bigger and sturdier 2-story building is on hold. Initially we thought it would be quick and easy to build, but we had difficulty sourcing the materials like sand, rocks and wood. The company who is constructing the national highway promised to help us in securing the necessary soil for the foundation, but they never came. So we had to ask the students to dig some earth. We



tried to announce at the parish so as to seek help from the community, but nobody came to extend assistance. Working with the local community has remained a big issue, something that we have to work on seriously, if we think sustainability, collaboration and synergy. We are just lucky because of the generous assistance we get from abroad; however, we cannot be forever dependent from donors. Thanks to **Mater Christi College** who has been a major donor to our construction works and other school needs.

Instead of the usual dancing and singing, the Student Council organized the students to do **community service** for the celebration of **Valentine's Day**. They walked along the main road and collected garbage. Segregation of wastes is still something to be taught, but we simply wanted to inculcate the value of environmental care in response to the Pope's *Laudato Si*. We also wanted to raise the consciousness of the students on how they can love and care the earth we live in.



To make their place homier, the boys of the temporary dorms planted flowers in the front yard and some vegetables at the backyard. The two houses are now named as **SCHREITER** House and **PITZAL** House in honor of the two German priests who gave the seed money for the construction of the two simple houses. Later, **Mater Christi College** and some of its alumni have also contributed for the acquisition of double-deck bed frame, kitchen utensils and other house needs.



After a year of waiting, our metal futsal goal posts have arrived. The Council of Parents earlier promised to do it, so we continued using the old bamboo posts. The boys were so eager to put in place our new acquisition, which arrived in time for our inter-class friendly games.



In observance of the Lenten season, we had our annual **Stations of the Cross** participated by the entire school community. It was a very solemn communal liturgical activity.



We ended February with another **community service**, this time working on the parish grounds, pulling out weeds that have grown taller because of the heavy rains. After an hour of labor, we returned to the school to do the re-varnishing of our chairs. With very minimal instructions, everyone took turns in handling the brush. Members of the Student Council re-painted the markers and lines of the basketball and volleyball courts. After all the works, everyone gathered around the futsal field for the friendly match between **Year 11 Science Loyola** class and **Year 10 Science Don Bosco** classes.



Saturdays are beaming with life at NOSSEF with students moving around for various activities. Those who are enjoying free lunch at the canteen are also around to do some minor services such as collecting firewood, folding food wrappers, cleaning the rice, tidying up the dining hall, washing the comfort rooms, organizing books at the library, helping the staff for any urgent task, and pulling out weeds at our backyard garden.





Afternoons at NOSSEF are also alive with students gathering for group study and or sports activities. Right after class, the dormers would return to their house to fetch water, collect firewood, cook rice, and rest for a while. After attending mass at the parish, the boys from the neighborhood would come to play ballgames. Shouts of happy lads reverberate in the air up until almost dinner time so that Fr. Bert has to continually remind them of their schedule. Some of the dormers spend the early night studying at the classrooms because of very limited space in their living quarter and also to avoid the noise of other boys endlessly chatting.

NOSSEF is entering into a new phase, one that is moving towards greater stability with more students coming to us, and teachers becoming more faithful not only to their job but most importantly embracing the vocation of forming young people. We are still struggling with language of instruction, poverty of our students, lack of support from the local community, insecurity with our finances and uncertainty of the commitment of our personnel, but as a whole, we are happy with all the support we are getting and the significant strides that we have been making.



We are continuously grateful to you our dear benefactors, donors and friends. With all your support, all these are possible and are happening. Thank you very much!

Fr. Roberto M. Boholst, S.J.
Director