

# A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE

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This year we had the privilege of spending time in the beautiful mountain village Remexio in Timor Leste. Our experience was extremely positive, we were welcomed into the community and built many friendships. We loved working with the local teachers, modelling a range of teaching strategies and relevant educational pedagogy. Witnessing the diligent manner in which students approached their study was inspiring. Students commonly walk for hours to attend school and can frequently be found studying out of school hours. The pride the students and staff take in their school grounds was clearly evident as groups would spend time in the afternoon attending to the garden.

The people we met in Remexio were extremely generous, accepting us into their modest homes and keenly sharing food and cups of tea with us. 'Sit down, eat more' was a common instruction, always said with a large happy smile. We quickly learnt the tetun word 'kolega' meaning friend. The children's cheerful voices would frequently be heard calling out our names as they ran to play soccer or sing songs with us. We spent time learning about local health resources and projects - a current initiative was visits to remote villages to provide immunisation and health information.



The Catholic Church is alive and well in Timor Leste with over 90% of the population identifying as Catholic. The inspiring work the Church did in assisting vulnerable Timorese during Indonesian occupation is a recent clear example of living the Gospel message, even under the difficult and dangerous situations encountered. The hope the Church offers and the connection people have with Jesus is evident by the large crowd that gathers for Mass. On a Sunday we needed to arrive thirty minutes prior to Mass beginning in order to get a seat in the large church! Three times a day the church bell would ring and everyone young and old would stop whatever they were doing and pray. In Australia my Catholic faith is something I am frequently challenged on, and need to justify or defend. It was a wonderful experience to be praying in a church full of joyful people, to be part of a church so strongly associated with establishing education, health and other key human rights.

Singing would awake us at 6:30am every morning and the choir would frequently practice throughout the day, filling the town with the sound of beautiful voices praising God.

Amongst the laughter and singing there were sad and challenging times. Meeting a young mother whose children were sick due to the rain coming through their thatched roof, friends sharing their experiences of violence during Indonesian occupation, mothers who refused to seek medical attention for childbirth related issues and being made aware of the alarming prevalence of domestic violence. Some experiences were extremely overwhelming, however the students and teachers were a clear sign of hope for this beautiful country.

Top Photo: Anthony and Casey with a local family. Samuel, Louisa and their daughters Merian, Afani, Michella and Mluchia. Samuel is a nutritionist and Louisa is a midwife.

Middle Photo: Pictured with Fr. Johnny. We came to know Fr John through his connection with Damascus.

Singing songs with the kindergarten students



The early learning centre, primary and secondary schools are full of children excited to learn. Many secondary school students are keen to continue to tertiary education. Unfortunately many students withdraw from their university studies, as learning how to use a computer from scratch combined with coursework and financial difficulties prove too much.

The secondary college in Remexio currently has no computers, putting students at a clear disadvantage when they begin university. We are currently raising funds to purchase computers for the school. All donations are appreciated and will go directly to the purchase of computers. Two qualified computer engineers currently in Timor have volunteered to provide training for teachers and students.

For more information please go to the facebook page: [www.facebook.com/lwsremexio](http://www.facebook.com/lwsremexio)

Soft toy crocodiles made by women in Remexio and wristbands made by students from the secondary school are available for purchase via the facebook page.

To donate please go to <https://www.chuffed.org/project/remexio>

*Thank you for your support,  
Casey and Anthony Baxter.*

Below left: Anthony and Casey with the secondary school teachers  
Below right: Pictured with Year eleven students.

