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ASIA/EAST TIMOR - The Jesuits: apostolate in prisons in Dili, encouraged by Pope Francis

Dili (Agenzia Fides) - The apostolate in prisons, especially with young prisoners, is one of the special ministries for the Jesuit community in Dili, capital of East Timor. As reported to Fides, the second Sunday of each month, the Jesuits celebrate the Eucharist in Becora prison in Dili and there are many activities of cooperation and help of the detainees. The social services in prisons – they refer to Fides - gained momentum and new gesture of encouragement after Pope Francis, who chose to celebrate the Holy Thursday Mass in a youth prison. Also because the population of East Timor is made up of 75% of young people under the age of 30, and also the prison population is full of young people.
As reported by Fr. Noel Oliver SJ, one of the religious who carries out the pastoral minister in the prison, "in the prison they greet us with a smile" and "prisoners actively participate in the Mass," animated with the help of four sisters, "they read the readings and sing in a choir, with great intensity and professionalism."
Another important note is "the queue of prisoners waiting to go to confession." Another Jesuit, Fr. Quyen, reports that prisoners are eager to receive the sacrament and receive the mercy of God, opening their heart to divine grace. "In prison there is an atmosphere of peace," says Brother Noel, who tells a story: "A prisoner, who served four years of his seven-year sentence, wants to return to his family. The young man, declaring himself innocent, shows no sign of resentment or hatred, trusting in God's love. "
East Timor is, with the Philippines, one of the two Asian nations which has a large Catholic majority. The local Church has always said it wants to contribute to the growth and development of the country. The Jesuits working in East Timor assist refugees, have a parish where they carry out pastoral work and are active in the field of education. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 30/04/2013)

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