



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



**MEDIA
RELEASE**

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The Vatican's Secretary of State begins three-day visit to Timor-Leste

His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Vatican, arrived in Timor-Leste yesterday to begin a three day visit that will feature the signing of a historic agreement at the Government Palace today and culminate in a Eucharistic Celebration of the 500th anniversary of the evangelization of the Timorese people on Saturday morning at Tasi Tolu.

The Cardinal began his visit with a trip yesterday to the statue of Pope John Paul II at Tasi Tolu and participation in a Mass with the students of the Major Seminary at Fatumeta. Speaking at the seminary His Eminence said "I cannot express the depth of the joy that is in my heart to be with you this evening, to celebrate Mass for the first time in this beloved country, Timor-Leste."

The historic agreement to be signed today at the Government Palace establishes the legal framework for the relations between the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Holy See and the Catholic Church. It is a rare occasion that a document such as this is signed outside the Vatican. The process leading to this historic agreement began in 2006 with the creation of a commission to discuss the terms of the agreement.

Leading up to this visit Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo noted "The Catholic Church, over 500 years, has provided a great spiritual, human and material support to the Timorese People, and also contributed decisively to the liberation process of Timor-Leste."

The preamble of the Constitution of Timor-Leste recognizes that "In its cultural and humane perspective, the Catholic Church in East Timor has always been able to take on the suffering of all the People with dignity, placing itself on their side in the defence of their most fundamental rights."

After the signing ceremony the Cardinal will conduct courtesy calls at National Parliament with the President of the Parliament H.E. Vicente Guterres and at the Presidential Palace with the President of the Republic H.E. Taur Matan Ruak. His Eminence will then tour the Timorese Resistance Archive and Museum before participating in a Mass with the local community at the Díli Cathedral at 6:00pm. Following the mass the Cardinal will be attending an Official Dinner hosted by the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste H.E. Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo.



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The central event on the final day of His Eminence's visit will be the Eucharistic Celebration of the 500th anniversary of the evangelization of the Timorese people on Saturday morning at Tasi Tolu.

Spokesperson for the Sixth Constitutional Government, Minister of State Ágio Pereira noted "The Government warmly welcomes His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin to Timor-Leste, recognizing the central role of the Church in our society and valuing greatly our deep and affectionate relationship with the Vatican. It is an honor to have the Cardinal amongst us for the signing of our concordat and to celebrate with us in the 500 year anniversary." **ENDS**



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