



PRIME  
MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER  
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEMINAR**

***“15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE DIOCESE OF MALIANA AND THE  
JUBILEE OF 350 YEARS OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS”***

Padre Manuel Luís Hall  
Parish Church of Maliana, Diocese of Maliana  
26 June 2025

Most Reverend Bishop  
Reverend Vicar General  
Reverend Clergy and Sisters of the Diocese of Maliana,

Organising Committee of the Maliana Celebrations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great joy that I join in the celebrations of the Diocese of Maliana, this great family of the faithful, to take part in the prayers and reflections of this jubilee year.

Let me begin by congratulating the Diocese of Maliana, Timor-Leste's youngest diocese, on its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Congratulations to the Clergy and Sisters of the Diocese, and to all those who contribute to the presence of a Church that is close to the people.

I also take this opportunity to express my recognition and admiration to the Most Reverend Bishop Dom Norberto do Amaral, not only for his spiritual and diocesan leadership, but also for his community leadership and invaluable dedication to the people, particularly in Liquiçá, Bobonaro and Suai.

To celebrate this Jubilee is to renew our devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And this devotion must be lived not only in prayers and liturgical celebrations but also through actions, each of us responding to Christ's call to love our neighbour.

Being available to serve the common good is what makes us better Catholics, but more importantly, what makes us better people. Which, I must admit, is not always easy!

The Timorese people know the meaning of sacrifice. Not only did we experience it during the 24 difficult years of an illegal and violent occupation,

but even after gaining national independence, we continue to face daily challenges in our pursuit of better living conditions.

The process of national development and building a solid and democratic state has continued to demand sacrifices from the entire Timorese population.

As you know, it is always easier to destroy lives and break the human spirit in times of war than it is to build a sustainable future in times of peace. That is why reconciliation and national unity are so important to this mission of development.

The process of acknowledging conflict and wrongdoing, and then reconciling, is justice in action—justice that enables us to move forward as a nation. And indeed, it took great courage and kindness from our people to carry out the national reconciliation process.

Timor-Leste's success did not depend on the will of others but on the will of the Timorese people to resolve their past conflicts. This courage and dialogue led to reconciliation with our neighbour Indonesia, and also among Timorese brothers and sisters who were divided after years of conflict—some victims of war, others of ideology.

This is an example that Timor-Leste can proudly share with the world. We are a good example of internal reconciliation, as well as reconciliation with Indonesia.

This example has never been more relevant than it is today. The world faces serious geopolitical, socio-economic and environmental challenges—challenges that can only be addressed with humanism rooted in the highest values of solidarity, tolerance and cooperation.

In following world events, we are confronted daily with the cruelty of war, conflict and poverty.

We see the human misery etched in the faces of suffering millions. We witness, in disbelief, the many conflicts ravaging different forgotten parts of the world, each leaving behind the same trail of destruction. Lives, dreams and communities lost irreparably.

We Timorese know these feelings better than anyone. Fortunately, both in times of war and in peace, we have always had the moral and spiritual support of the Catholic Church.

I want to thank all the Sisters and Fathers for their kindness, solidarity, and spiritual and moral support to the Timorese people over the last, and very demanding, five decades.

We have also had the valuable support of friendly nations and development partners who believed in our project for peace and national stability.

The Jubilee of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is, therefore, an opportunity to give thanks and reflect on the potential of love for others and the power of compassion, mercy and solidarity.

This strength, this hope, is essential for us to overcome not only our individual challenges but, above all, the challenges to our nation's development.

Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year we celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Popular Consultation that led to our national independence. This May, we celebrated the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Restoration of Independence. But we can never forget the efforts and sacrifices of our people in the name of national sovereignty.

Many Timorese, **too many**, gave their ultimate sacrifice so that **we** may now live in freedom and so that our children and grandchildren may know progress and dignity.

Much of this dream of independence was focused on the ideals of living in peace and having the opportunity to fight poverty, to educate our children, and to see them grow up healthy, safe and fulfilled. To realise this dream is a debt of gratitude to those who perished.

Since 2002, successive Governments of Timor-Leste have been working to implement public policies that improve the lives of Timorese citizens.

We are proud of what we have already achieved, but we are fully aware of our weaknesses and the challenges we still face.

Development is a long process that requires financial resources—which are limited; that requires skilled and capable human resources across various governance sectors—which are still insufficient in our country; and above all, it requires great effort and dedication not only from government and public institutions, but from the collective effort of all citizens.

Therefore, I call on you not to lose hope, not to give up on studying, working, and seeking tools to develop yourselves and, through this collective effort, contribute to national development.

In this Jubilee, with open hearts, let us remember that every peaceful night's sleep of our elders, free from fear and insecurity, is a blessing. Let us remember that every smile on the faces of our children is a sign of hope. Let us also remember that every woman and every young person treated with dignity and given access to opportunity is a victory!

And this is only possible because we have a legacy, forged during our time of resistance, of love for others, love for the Homeland, and faith in the values and spirit of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I therefore ask all the faithful of Maliana to dedicate their reflections and prayers during these celebrations to the mission we still have ahead: to work tirelessly for national development.

This is love for others, mercy for those most in need, and forgiveness for acts and omissions that cause us harm.

But it is also love for the environment that sustains us and is our home—that is, our nature and our planet.

Our dear and late Pope Francis left us with a powerful message about the need to care for and respect the environment, alongside caring for people, to ensure a more prosperous and sustainable future, inspiring us to care for our Common Home.

This means treating nature with respect. Respecting our land and marine ecosystems.

We may not always realise it, but by irrationally exploiting marine and land resources or, for example, by carelessly discarding litter—especially plastics—we are contributing to the destruction of our environment, both on land and at sea, and therefore to an unsustainable future for generations to come.

For all these reasons, in this Jubilee of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, what I ask for myself is what I ask of all of you: humility, kindness, and responsibility to care for our People and our Environment.

To serve others, to respect people and nature, to help create harmony and cooperation in our families and communities—this is to commit ourselves to being instruments of peace and love in the world.

In conclusion, may this Jubilee of the Sacred Heart of Jesus inspire us to deepen our faith and live with love and compassion. May we open our hearts to a commitment in which we are all instruments of peace and love in our world.

I conclude by wishing long life to the Diocese of Maliana, so that it may continue to bring light and hope to our communities.

Thank you.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão