

*Felix Baghi, SVD**

A BRIEF HISTORY OF STFK LEDALERO

As an educational institute, Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Katolik (STFK) Ledalero (Ledalero Catholic Institute of Philosophy) has continued the function while remaining an integral part of St. Paul's SVD Major Seminary of Ledalero. The initiative to establish seminaries for candidates for the priesthood from the East Nusa Tenggara Province of Indonesia (then still a Dutch colony) was taken by Prefect Apostolic Arnold Verstraelen, SVD, who opened the first minor seminary in Sikka.

This initiative was in response to the appeal of Pope Benedict XV (1914–1922) in *Maximum illud* (30th November 1919) on the urgent need to educate local clergy. And so, the first minor seminary for East Nusa Tenggara was opened in Sikka on the south coast of Flores on 2nd February 1926. Three years later, in 1929, the minor seminary was moved to Mataloko, Ngada, in central Flores. Out of the 26 minor seminarians from the first three intakes in Sikka, a total of 19 transferred to Mataloko.

By 1932 the first intake had completed their studies at the secondary school. However, discussion concerning the continuation of their studies had not yet been finalized. During this transition period, in 1932, five prospective students from the first intake at Mataloko attended philosophy lectures given by P. C. Molenaar, SVD. The following year seven of his students were enrolled in the newly established SVD novitiate, also at Mataloko, with another three novices accepted in 1934, and a further four in 1935. In 1936, the first intake completed their studies in philosophy and began their studies in theology. The same year, the second intake began their studies in philosophy, while the third intake was still in novitiate.

Out of the 14 SVD novices, 10 had graduated from the seminary at Sikka, that is, four from the first intake and three from each of the next two intakes. Out of these 10 novices, six (60%) were later ordained as missionary priests, one of whom became in 1951 the second Indonesian to be ordained a bishop, namely Gabriel Manek, SVD (1913–1989), initially bishop of Larantuka in east Flores (1951–1961), and

* Felix Baghi SVD is the Prefect of Scholastics (the SVD students) at Ledalero.

then when the hierarchy was established in 1961, Manek was transferred to Ende as its first Archbishop (1961–1968).¹

The formation of these SVD novices took place in a building called the *Rumah Tinggi*, opposite the minor seminary of Mataloko. Here, a temporary major seminary for local clergy had been built, while the search went on for a more suitable place. Verstraelen was also waiting for authorization from the Vatican.

The Major Seminary at Ledalero

It was decided that the major seminary would be moved to an 18-hectare site on Ledalero hill in the Regency of Sikka, some nine kilometres from the coastal town of Maumere. Construction began in 1936. On 20th May 1937 the Vatican gave authorization for the establishment of a major seminary. With Vatican authorization, on 3rd June the SVD Superior General in Rome stipulated that the major seminary be moved from Mataloko to Ledalero. Two months later, in August 1937, Ledalero major seminary was officially opened. Paul the apostle was declared the patron of the seminary, and so the institute was named St. Paul's Major Seminary of Ledalero.

The number of candidates increased over time, in line with improvements in schooling and the establishment of new minor seminaries: the Seminary of St. Dominic at Hokeng, Flores (1950), Mary Immaculate Seminary at Lalian, Timor (1950), the Holy Spirit Seminary at Tuka, Bali (1953), and the Pius XII Seminary at Kisol, Flores (1955). Out of those who enrolled in the novitiate, an average of around 40% went on to become missionary or diocesan priests.

To give an opportunity to seminarians who had decided not to continue in the SVD or to be ordained, but wished to complete their studies at Ledalero Institute, a meeting of the seminary committee of the SVD Ende Province on 15th April 1969, with SVD Superior General John Musinski present, specified that St. Paul's Major Seminary of Ledalero be recognised by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Jakarta in order that it could confer recognised degrees. With government recognition the institute was named *Ledalero Catholic School of Philosophy and Theology*. That same year its operational permit was granted by the Indonesian Government.

On 14th June 1971 the government acknowledged the undergraduate programme, and so Ledalero could grant a BA or *sarjana muda*

¹ As the Second Vatican Council opened (October 1962) there were just three native Indonesian members of the 27-strong hierarchy: Djajasepoetra, SJ, in Jakarta, Soegijapranata, SJ, in Semarang, and Manek, SVD, in Ende.

undergraduate degree.² In 1976 the status of STFTK Ledalero was upgraded and on 22nd January 1981 it was granted equalized status for the BA programme, and registered status for the *sarjana lengkap* programme (a four-year bachelor degree). In 1984 the bachelor degree programme achieved recognized status and the name of the institute was changed to Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Katolik Ledalero (STFK Ledalero), which name has been retained since then. In 1990, the bachelor degree programme achieved equalized status.

A master's degree programme was initiated in 2002 under the auspices of the Department of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This programme focuses on contextual theologies. In 2004 the master's degree programme achieved recognized status in accordance with Decree No. DJ.IV/HK.00.5/96/2004.

The administrators of Ledalero Institute have made efforts to improve the quality of its teaching over time, with fairly satisfactory results. Since the implementation of the accreditation system, STFK Ledalero has always been accredited Grade "B" with a score of 358, only three scores short of attaining Grade "A". The latest accreditation was carried out in 2016.

Initially Ledalero seminary and STFK Ledalero only enrolled two types of students, namely SVD seminarians and diocesan seminarians. At first the diocesan seminarians resided at Ledalero Seminary, but in 1955 an inter-diocesan campus was built at Ritapiret, a couple of kilometres up the road from Ledalero. STFK Ledalero has since enrolled lay students, many of whom were former seminarians.

Widening the Scope

The Carmelites (O.Carm) began to send students to Ledalero in 1995, the Rogationists (RCJ) in 2005, the Vocationists (SDV) in 2007, the Camillians (OSCam) in 2010, the Stigmatines (CSS) and the Somascans (CRS) in 2012, the Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord (CJD) in 2014, and the Barnabites (CRSP) in 2015. Several sister congregations have also been sending students. In 1985 the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) were the first to send students to STFK Ledalero, followed by the Congregation of the Followers of Jesus (CIJ), the Sister Oblates of the Holy Spirit (CSV), and more recently other sister congregations. The admission of students not affiliated with any religious congregation began in the 1990s.

² Directorate General of Higher Education of the Department of Education and Culture decree No. 257/DPT/B/1971.

The number of students has risen dramatically over the years. At the end of the 1960s the total number of students was 68. In the 1970s the number had risen to 375, an average increase of 37.5 students a year. In the 1980s the number of enrolled students noticeably increased to 1,116, an average increase of 112 students a year. In the 1990s the number of students increased to 1,339, an average of 134 a year. A decade ago, the number of students totalled 1,454, an average of 145 students a year. Over the last eight years, the total number of students significantly increased to 1,517, an average of 190 a year. Thus, over these 50 years the total number of students enrolled at STFK Ledalero comes to 5,869, an average totalling 117 students a year.

In December 2018 the student body of STFK Ledalero totalled 1,109, that is, 961 bachelor degree students and 148 master's degree students. The biggest group among the 961 bachelor degree students are diocesan seminarians (246 students, 25.6%), followed by the SVD (228 students, 23.7%), laymen and women (204 students, 21.2%), Scalabrinians (64 students, 6.7%), Carmelites (51 students, 5.3%), Rogationists (42 students, 4.4%), Camillians (35 students, 3.6%), Somascans (33 students, 3.4%), Vocationists (20 students, 2.1%), Stigmatines (16 students, 1.7%), and other religious congregations (22 students, 2.3%). Diocesan seminarians (44 students, 29.7%) are also the biggest group at the master's degree level, followed by the SVD (43 students, 29.1%), laymen and women (25 students, 16.9%), Carmelites (13 students, 8.8%), Camillians (8 students, 5.4%), and other religious congregations (15 students, 10.1%). Other congregations that send their students to STFK Ledalero are the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and occasionally the Trappists.

The number of lay students has grown over time. However, this is the result of an increase in the number of former seminarians continuing their studies at Ledalero rather than an increase in the number of lay students enrolling, which remains very small. The number of lay students increases as seminarians leave the seminary.

The increase in the student body of STFK Ledalero largely depends upon two factors. The first factor is the number of seminaries, both minor and major, in Nusa Tenggara. Until the end of the 1950s, Ledalero depended on only one minor seminary, that of Mataloko. Since the end of the 1950s, a number of other minor seminaries have been opened and send their alumni to Ledalero, such as Hokeng, Lalian, Kisol, and Tuka seminaries. Since the mid-1980s several other minor seminaries have been established: St. Rafael's at Oepoi, Kupang in Timor, Sinar Buana at Weetebula in Sumba, and in Flores, John Paul II in Labuan Bajo, and Mary, the Mother of All Nations, in Maumere.

Many students from these minor seminaries enrol at STFK Ledalero. In addition to minor seminaries, several major seminaries have also been established in the vicinity of Ledalero. Thus, an increase in enrolments is to be expected.

The second factor is the reluctance of former seminarians to transfer to another study programme when they leave the seminary. Although from the perspective of job opportunity, philosophy and theology do not offer many opportunities apart from teaching or working with the Department of Religious Affairs.

Focusing on the education of candidates for the missionary and diocesan priesthood, STFK Ledalero does not enrol as many students as other institutes of higher education. The biggest annual intake is around 200, while the total number of bachelor's and master's degree students is only around 1000.

As an educational institute for seminarians and missionaries, graduates from STFK Ledalero do not work only in Indonesia but increasingly abroad. For several of the religious congregations, the assignment of missionaries to different parts of the world depends upon those who graduate from STFK Ledalero. For instance, around 500 SVD missionaries have worked abroad since the beginning of the 1980s. Indeed, it can be said that STFK Ledalero is a key source of cross-cultural missionaries working in all five continents throughout the world. This is a remarkable contribution that East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, is providing for the world.