

Asia-Pacific Jesuit Conference



The Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific is one of six Jesuit Conferences that coordinate and facilitate the mission of the Jesuits around the world. Covering Jesuit life and service in Australia, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste, Vietnam, and the countries of the Pacific notably Micronesia, the Jesuit Conference serves to bring an international perspective to and on local initiatives.

The Superior General of the Society of Jesus appoints a president to oversee the work of each Jesuit Conference. The President works in union with an Assembly of Major Superiors comprising the major superiors of the provinces and regions within the Jesuit Conference.

The cooperation fostered by the Jesuit Conference is an “undeniable necessity” for the Society to realise its apostolic mission in an area with at least one third of the world’s population and a large proportion of its indigenous peoples. Christianity is a tiny minority in Asia Pacific which is home to several major religions and to ancient, deep spiritual and cultural traditions. In our Jesuit Conference is the most populous Islamic nation, Indonesia; four of the five countries that adhere to Theravada Buddhism, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand; and all the countries of Confucian culture.

Although only the Philippines and Timor-Leste are predominantly Catholic Christian, the area is a fast-growing part of the Society of Jesus, along with other parts of Asia and Africa. The approximately 1,600 Jesuits in the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific account for about 10 percent of the total number of Jesuits in the world.

The Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific began as the Bureau of Asian Affairs (BAA) in 1967 after the 31st Jesuit General Congregation, which promoted international cooperation under the leadership of then Fr General Pedro Arrupe. The BAA connected Jesuits across the region for mutual solidarity and corporate international initiatives, and facilitated appropriate engagement in regional needs. During the 1970s and early 1980s, it had a number of full time coordinators for apostolic fields such as the social ministries, education, social communications and pastoral activities.

Since then, the vision and scope of the Jesuit Conference have been widened to include a greater role in Society governance and leadership in facing new ‘frontiers’. Today about a dozen coordinators remain in their own ministry bases in various countries, while carrying additional international responsibilities as secretaries for their apostolic sectors.

The Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific is also responsible for the East Asian Pastoral Institute and the Arrupe International Residence.

Interreligious Dialogue

“Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit,

may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination.”

Nostra Aetate, 1965



“Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.”

Nostra Aetate, 1965

Dialogue with people of other faiths is a major dimension of the Jesuit commitment to be companions of Jesus and servants of his mission. This mission includes being prepared to live alongside people of other faiths, acting as good neighbours to them, and being prepared to work with them for the common good.

This is especially important for Jesuits in Asia Pacific, which is home to several major religions and cultures – Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism.

For many Jesuits, the dialogue with people of other faiths expresses itself through the dialogue of religious experience - learning how to listen to what others are saying and to enter into their spiritual lives through prayer and conversation.

For a few Jesuits, dialogue means theological exchange. It demands not just face-to-face debate but a life of study and constant reflection on what God may be saying through these other religious traditions.

In Asia Pacific, Jesuits are particularly active in encouraging and promoting dialogue between with Buddhists and Christians in Japan, Korea, China, Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia.

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We are also building a network that will help us to gain a better understanding of Islam and its role in this region. We engage in dialogue with Muslims in ways that challenge our theological understanding, help us gain greater understanding of religious fundamentalism and support solidarity with Muslims on human rights issues and to foster peace in the region. The effort is spearheaded by a group of Jesuits active in the study of Islam and engaged in solidarity actions with Muslims.