

Timorese commemorate Santa Cruz massacre

Brisbane: East Timorese people in Queensland commemorated the 25th anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre with a special mass at St Joseph's School, Spring Hill in Brisbane on Saturday, November 12.

On November 12, 1991, hundreds of young Timorese were slaughtered by Indonesian soldiers in the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, Timor-Leste.

These Timorese had attended a mass at the Motael church and then marched to the cemetery to pay their respects to their recently murdered colleague Sebastião Gomes.

According to the Chega! report from the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste, the Indonesian soldiers shot hundreds of young people at the cemetery.

It's estimated that 271 people were killed, with 250 listed as missing.

At St Joseph's Church in Brisbane, the 11am mass was chaired by Father Wally and accompanied by two Timorese priests, Fr Fausto and Fr Augustinho.

ETCC chairman Mario Ricardo started proceedings with a few words about the significance of the occasion.

The mass was attended by ETCC members and friends of the Timorese, including chairman of Timor-Leste Companions from St William's Church of Grovely, Michael Stevens, and members of St Stephen's Young Adults Ministry (YAM).

In his speech during the mass, Fr Fausto said the November 12 commemoration was a time for Timorese to keep maintaining their unity.

Most of the songs during the service were in Tetum, the national language of Timor-Leste.

After the mass, everyone had lunch together before cutting a commemorative cake and lighting candles as a symbol of respect for those who lost their lives in the country's struggle for independence from Indonesia.

Timorese guitarist and talented singer Justino da Costa “Zu”, together with some enthusiastic friends, sang a lot of Timorese songs during the celebration.

A friendly basketball game at the St Joseph’s hall ended the commemoration.