

The Pivot

Fr. Norberto was Dianne Hanna's counterpart on her first assignment (March 2016 – November 2018). She writes about his leadership below:

Fr Norberto was pivotal in getting online learning in place to that is assisting teachers in Maliana continue to teach during their COVID-19 lock down. Fr. Norberto is, Assistant Parish Priest, Head of Finance and Director of Education as well as many other designations in the Maliana Diocese. I was fortunate to work with Fr Norberto on my first placement and it has been amazing seeing him develop and grow into a pivotal player for the Diocese.

Late last year Fr Norberto was appointed Director of a number of schools and early this year when the school's female boarding house burnt to the ground his leadership was proved like gold in a furnace. The facility became alight late in the evening as the girls were preparing for bed. Most were left only with the clothes they were wearing and lost everything else.

Fr Norberto showed great leadership and compassion in managing this crisis arranging alternative accommodation, holistic rehabilitation programs involving the girls, teachers, male students from the school, community and families. He coordinated charity efforts to provide the girls with clothes and personal effects and to rebuild the boarding house in a timely manner so that the students could resume their studies at the school.

The alternative accommodation found the 100+ students move into the facility where I stayed and as well as gaining 100+ new little sisters I got to instruct them in yoga on one of their days with me. We all had a good time and shared much amusement as I taught yoga for the first time to students who had never experienced it. My love for education strengthened.



When the threat of a pandemic forced all schools to shut Fr Norberto sprang into action again. This time he was able to tap into his innovative side to find resources to instruct teachers in how to teach online. As all in Timor were required to isolate without much lead in time, this preparation to move

to an online learning system had to happen from the individual homes of each teacher with many having to use mobile phone devices to maintain contact with their students and to continue teaching using software they had never experienced before. I was called to assist.

I have now been home for eight weeks and while I continue to work with my host community it is currently limited. Like all Australian Churches my parish of the Holy Cross in Maliana was required to close. I received this news the day after I arrived in Australia and unlike Australia the parish has no mechanisms in place for the staff to work from home, which has meant there is little for us to work on until they are reopened. My limited work with the teachers sustains me and I hope assists them to better connect with our students.

Through Dianne Palms will continue to support the Diocese of Maliana's pastoral works; education; youth services and community development. Your donation will assist return her to placement enabling her to address the challenges they outline [here](#).