



# CCA NEWS



• CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA • ASIAN ECUMENICAL YOUTH ASSEMBLY • MANADO, INDONESIA •

## AEYA Celebrates the Risen Christ at the Asia Easter Celebration



Young dancers in their colorful costumes form a cross shape signifying and celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Photo by: Jeba Singh Samuvel)

**S**ongs and dances of celebration filled the Maesa Open Stadium as participants of the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly, together with thousand members of Christian churches in Indonesia, came together for the Asia Easter Celebration in Tondano, Minahasa, North Sulawesi, April 8th.

The mountains standing firmly against the bright skies provided a dramatic backdrop for the celebration with the theme "Send us your light and truth to lead us." The gathering emphasized the resurrection as the most powerful event in the life of Christ and is the very reason for the celebration.

In a sermon delivered by Rev. Dr. Henriette T.H. Lebang, General Chairperson of the Executive Board of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia and former General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, she expounded on the meaning and relevance of resurrection to the churches today.

"In Christ, there is new life beyond death and futility. Just as Christ has raised from the dead, so we are to live in the newness of life. Thus, commit ourselves to the new-ness of life, to the new-ness of hope. Whatever problems we face in our families, churches, nations and the world, we can overcome them because of the risen Christ."

She also powerfully challenged the participants to be the witness of the light of Christ, and to let the truth shine in the midst of daily lives in order to overcome falsehood, lust, corruption and greed.

"Let the resurrection of Christ inspire us and to renew us to walk in the light and truth. By the power of the holy spirit, we should be changed significantly from being children of darkness to being children of light."

"We should transform from loving ourselves to loving others. From marginalizing and excluding others to embracing inclusivity with the love of Christ and sharing the light with others." "Stop manipulating the truth and to start speaking the truth

and light of God. Keep our integrity as children of Christ and to be witnesses of resurrected Christ through concrete actions. In whatever difficult situation that we face today, the light of God will shine in the whole world," she added.

The event, organized by the Gereja Masehi Injikli di Minahasa (GMIM), or the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa, in coordination with the provincial government of North Sulawesi, was also graced by some national and local government officials of Indonesia.

Dr. Yasonna H. Laoly, Indonesian Minister of Law and Human Rights, in his greetings said "It is indeed true that the resurrection of Christ is an amazing grace. Only by the grace of God that we are saved."

"As young generation, as you see all churches from Asia celebrating the resurrection of Christ today, may it lead all of you in this ecumenical experience and encourage you to share the grace of God."

The Indonesian leader thanked the Christian Conference of Asia for coming to the event and said that the people of Indonesia in North Sulawesi, being inheritants of God's grace, celebrate with the church the resurrection of Christ.

CCA General Secretary, Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, said that the celebration is a very unique opportunity as it provides a common platform for churches and participants all over Asia to celebrate Easter.

"Easter brought us here because easter gives us the strength and the power. That is the reason why we are here to celebrate the resurrection of Christ," he said. He also recognized the initiative of Indonesian churches that worked hard to bring together Asian countries into the event.

The event ended with a high note as Indonesian local artists performed songs for the crowd followed by a parade showcasing colorful traditions of Indonesia and different symbols of celebrating the resurrection. (ISMAEL FISCO JR)

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### EDITORIAL STAFF

ISMAEL FISCO JR.  
(EDITOR)

AJU GEORGE CHRIS  
VAUGHN GEUSEPPE "KOKO" ALVIAR  
(WRITERS)

JEBE SINGH SAMUVEL  
(PHOTOGRAPHER)

IKWILA REWUR  
RANGGA MANGOWAL  
(LAYOUT ARTISTS)

GIANINA FAY VECINO  
MEE MEE HLAING YADANAR HTUN  
(CCA STAFF)

DR. MATHEWS GEORGE CHUNAKARA  
(CCA GENERAL SECRETARY)

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# “Unity in Plurality,” Minister Laoly speaks about the relevance of Christian church in Indonesia

**H**onorable Dr. Yasonna Hamanangan Laoly, Indonesian Minister of Law and Human Rights, spared some time to share his thoughts about the Asia Easter Celebration. In an interview, he spoke about the significance of the event and the presence of Christian church in the local community of Minahasa, North Sulawesi.

“It is a big celebration in Indonesia, and we are so proud that this year, the Easter Celebration for Asia and the Pacific is here. North Sulawesi is one of the provinces where more than 50 percent of the population is Christian. As you see from Manado to here, you can see signs of the Easter celebration on both sides of the street, like the cross and many more. You know and feel that people in Manado and North Sulawesi are celebrating Easter and the Resurrection. This time, all of the youth of AEYA came and we have a big one for today. We are pleased to host it here.”

The minister, who is a self-professed Christian from Nias, West of Sumatra, said that being a Christian helps him in governance and in discharging his duties as a public official.

“Being a Christian myself helps me. In Indonesia, we are a very pluralistic society. Even though majority of the population is Muslim, we have the ideology called “Pancasila”, which is unity in plurality. [I don’t have any problem with that]; we can do our job professionally. As Christians, we must show the public that we can work. We have Christian values, and we use it to make our job useful to the people. We have to be salt and light. You have to show to the people our presence. My presence as a minister must be felt by the people.”

In terms of the law and human rights situation in Indonesia and the role that the Christian church is playing to address these issues, he said: “Nothing is



perfect. We are progressing in human rights. There are some criticisms of course, as (it is) in many countries.”

“In Indonesia, we can manage. We value human rights in our work and our society; and law enforcement is nothing perfect. But we are making it now better and better for the future. I think this government, the administration of President Jokowi, is showing a good progress in many aspects – politi-

cally, economically and socially.”

“The Church also plays an important role in the society, not only among Christians. The Church does not play politics, does not involve in politics; but it is teaching congregations and Christian communities to be good citizens, to obey the law, to respect human rights, to maintain the plurality of our society, to become an example to other people, to become a witness in many respects.”

Minister Laoly is joined by Drs. Royke H. Mewoh, regency leader of Minahasa; Olly Dondokambey and Steven Oe Kandouw, Governor and Vice-Governor, respectively, of North Sulawesi, and other local government officials who graced the Asia Easter Celebration held at the Maesa Open Stadium at Tondano, Minahasa on April 8th. (VAUGHN GEUSEPPE “KOKO” ALVIAR)





# What does the “resurrection” mean to young people today?

Easter is an occasion celebrated by many Christian denominations — one that has passed on from generation to generation. In some Asian countries, Easter has now transformed to an ecumenical gathering participated in by many young people. But what does the resurrection mean to them today? We asked AEYA participants:

“I think it is hope. In New Zealand at the moment and for years, we’ve had a lot of mental health issues – depression, anxiety are high; we have one of the highest youth suicide rates in the world. When I think about Jesus and his Resurrection, I think about him giving us hope. We can look forward to eternal life because Jesus died for us. And, that’s something to look forward to.”

– Piula Lasi, 24, New Zealand



“It is so great to celebrate Easter with people from many countries across Asia. I think it is the best way to share the Good News to others. Together, we can praise God in the name of Christ; it is very nice. The Resurrection means a thanksgiving, a declaration of the victory of God from death. We are free because of this.”

– Vong Socheat, 21, Cambodia



Resurrection is hope because Jesus sacrificed his life even if he was not a sinner. It is at the same a victory, victory of truth; of good against evil; of right against wrong. I have a hope that I’ll see my God in Heaven and, at the same time, in this world where there is a lot of evil, there will always be victory for the truth and the right. I want to be on the side of the right.”

– Bansan Thomas George, 29, India



“As a Christian from Timor Leste, I thank Jesus for his Crucifixion and death to help people across the world. He wants us now to know what the realities of life is. In all of these, I need to become close to Him and be a good person in my life. Timor Leste faces many problems. Easter reminds me to do my best for God. I know God is with me all the time, giving me opportunities to be a good person.”

– Tong Meufo, 24, Timor Leste

“In Taiwan, some Easter Church services are held outside, with nature, early in the morning. We would give out red eggs for everyone. Red means joy, the egg symbolizes life. I think it is the joy of a new birth. It makes us respect every one of God’s Creations. We have many groups, different languages, and different cultural background in Taiwan. It reminds us to respect each, even those from different religions.”

– Li-Ho Huang, 23, Taiwan

“Resurrection is at the center of our Christian belief. It is Jesus’ Resurrection that makes us Christian, that gives us Christian faith. It is our responsibility, then, to belief in it.”

– Naw Kree Moo, 31, Myanmar

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## The choice we must make

**Readings:**  
**John 3:19; John 14:16-17**

**E**aster is an integral part of our calendar as Christians for through this we affirm that God is a victor against death. But not only is it a reminder of the power of God, it is also a symbol of our re-dedication to both hope and commitment to the Truth and Light.

Our theme at the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly is a prayer to send God’s Light and Truth to lead us (Psalms 43:3). Indeed, we need to pray for God to lead us, especially in these times when unrest reigns. But the theme should not just end up with praying. We need to work and do God’s mission.

From John 3:19, we read that Light and Truth was given to us through Jesus.

“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”

Jesus has already come! The Light and Truth has already come; but was met with the darkness in the heart of the people. The darkness

and the choice to do evil instead of walk with goodness are evident even now.

The Filipino delegates here in Manado for AEYA 2018 come from ecumenical formations representing Christian denominations and our youth organizations in the Philippines. We have been reminded time and again that we must be in solidarity with different denominations and faith; and to always take the side of the marginalized, the down-trodden and the oppressed — our rural and urban poor, overseas Filipino workers, prisoners and the wrongfully accused, among others.

We are all part of the Philippine Ecumenical Youth Council, which prides itself in a strong vocation for just and lasting peace. But even with the richness of opportunities to herald the Truth and Light in the Philippines, we are still left to choose.

Darkness is present in our midst. In Asia and across the world, we see the injustices thriving, when greed reigns and compassion is dead, when our eyes and ears are covered to deny the suffering of

the least, last and lost of our sisters and brothers, the cry of all Creation.

The choice is always before us, whether to love or reject this darkness. But, given our duty as Christians, the choice must be clear. As we pray for Light and Truth to lead us, we must also pray for continuing grace and mercy; for courage and wisdom. Because Jesus lives and calls us young Christians to reveal his Kingdom in the “now.” His example invites us to express faith through worship and our active works of love and compassion.

Even with the distractions and falsehoods around, the despair of the world must be met with an eagerness to fight for the dignity of human life and all Creation. We must love service to the people; choose love, mercy and compassion; call out hate and end it. When we accept the Light and Truth that came in our midst, the prayer unlocks our ability to change the world for the better!

Let us make the choice — and make the Light and Truth shine upon everyone.



As we seek the Light and Truth, may we do what God requires of us: “To do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). Amen (CONTRIBUTED BY: ZHARA JHANE ALEGRE)



# ASIA EASTER





# CELEBRATION













# Did you know about these unique Easter traditions in Indonesia?

Yesterday's Asia Easter Celebration was an experience participants are unlikely to forget in a long time. Not only did it showcase the colorful Indonesian culture but also the great importance that Christian churches in this country, particularly the province of North Sulawesi, give to this occasion. But did you also know that Easter is celebrated in different unique ways in different parts of Indonesia? Here are three Easter-related traditions that are observed in various parts of the country:

## 1. Semana Santa

The local community in the town of Larantuka, East Flores, celebrate "Semana Santa" or a five-day Holy Week. The ritual commences with Rabu Trewa (Ash Wednesday), where congregations gather in chapels to pray and remember the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot. This is also a time where congregants mourn and reflect in order to purify the soul, therefore transforming the town into a Town of Mourning.

On Maundy Thursday, congregations participate in the Tikam Turo ritual where the following day's 7km procession is prepared by placing candles along the road. Another ritual on this day takes place in the chapel of Tuan Ma (the Virgin Mary), where the statue of the Virgin Mary will be bathed and dressed in a piece of black, purple or blue velvet cloth to signify mourning.

The ritual reaches a peak on Good Friday or Sesta Vera, which is the day of crucifixion. The highlight of Sesta Vera is when the statue of Jesus Christ is

carried and placed at the centre of the ritual beside the statue of Mother Mary (Mater Dolorosa — the mourning mother).

The following Sabtu Santo (Holy Saturday) and Easter Sunday (the day of Resurrection), mark the end of the Holy Week.

## 2. Kure

"Kure" is an Easter tradition celebrated by the Kote community in the town of Noemuti, North Central Timor. On Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, Catholics walk as pilgrims from one house to another to pray together and reflect on the Passion of Christ.

The word Kure is derived from the Latin word 'currere' which means to run or to walk. Parishioners say that the tradition is a legacy of Portuguese missionaries who introduced it in 1642.

The ritual commences with the cleaning of crucifixes and statues of Jesus Christ and Mother Mary and ends with the offerings of money, fruits,

vegetables and palm dedicated to God. These offerings are later distributed to the pilgrims, prayer groups and other attendees of the ritual.

## 3. Memento Mori

In Central Kalimantan, the ritual of "Memento Mori" is celebrated by the Christian communities. Memento Mori is Latin for 'remember, you will die' and it is believed that it was introduced in the 19th century, during the Dutch colonization.

This ritual is carried out on Holy Saturday and involves the congregation of family members at the burial sites of their loved ones. The family will gather throughout the night until dawn the following day where they will light candles and arrange flowers above the grave sites. At the break of dawn on Easter Sunday, a tent will be provided by the church for pilgrims to continue their Easter celebrations and worship.

Source: [www.imdonesia.travel](http://www.imdonesia.travel)



Colorful floats depicting different aspects of the Resurrection during the procession at the Asia Easter Celebration attended by different Christian churches (Photos by: Jeba Singh Samuvel)

# Indonesian "Idols" bring young fans to their feet during Asian Easter Celebration

The Maesa Open Stadium in Tondano, Minahasa, North Sulawesi, was filled with joyous shouts from thousands of young Indonesian youth, during the Asia Easter Celebration on April 8th.

Their excitement was targeted mostly at two singers

who both won different editions of the popular 'Indonesian Idol' series: Joy Destiny Tiurma Tobing, who won the talent contest in 2004, and Regina Ivanova, 2012 winner.

They both made the young fans jump to their feet as they rendered popular Christian songs.

Tobing, who was an established gospel singer before she won the 2004 contest, said the youth should adhere to the teachings of Christ and honour his name: "Promise the Lord that you will be his obedient children and keep away from anything that make him sad," she said, before launching into some real heartfelt soul music.

Ivanova, who used to be a singer in a cafe, appeared for six Indonesian Idol auditions before being one of its most successful contestants in 2012. She also launched into spirited renditions of popular gospel music, making the youngsters jump and shout in excitement.

"I thank the Lord for giving us all another Easter to celebrate. This year's celebration was special because I got to spend it with so many young children," she said.

The excitement of the young fans was palpable and

one of them put it into words: "I have always loved and followed Regina Ivanova's music. She has a beautiful voice and great stage presence. In my opinion, nobody sings Gospel music as well as she does. I was really privileged to be a part of the Asia Easter Celebration," the young fan said.

