

## **“I was born in Bethlehem”**

A testimony of the Lord's faithfulness to Ibu Gomez, the Superintendent of the Assemblies of God (AG) Churches in East Timor: (Presently, the AG comprises 93 churches and 14,000 congregation members.)

I was 24 years old when I gave my life to Jesus through the ministry of an American couple. At that time, I was doing very well baking wedding cakes but I knew that the Lord had called both my husband and I to follow Him, to serve the people of our land.

We were drawn to start ministering in the Atauro Island. We used to row “sampan” (small boat) with sails. It required 12 hours of continuous rowing. It was difficult but those were such rewarding times for us to be part of the harvest field. Today, we see the fruits of our early labour with 17 churches and 5,300 members.

In 1964, the church entered the prolonged season of suffering that lasted over 30 years. I cannot express the pain in words....it was a truly a time of sowing in tears. Our comfort was in laying hold of His Word to remain faithful to the end, for then, there lies a crown for those who remain faithful.

I witnessed many sorrows during the period of war. My husband also died of illness.



In 1999, my house where I am presently staying was bombed and this entire neighbourhood was destroyed. A bomb dropped on my house. My daughters and I still carry embedded metal fragments. We lived in the jungles for there was no where to go. Terror had gripped our people.

One Sunday, my family returned to worship the Lord on the ruins of our house. We stood on the ashes and worshipped the Lord. We wept. All that we had were no more. I searched among the heap and recovered what I could. Even a blackened silver spoon was precious... Across the road, the hostel which was built by the church was also completely destroyed.

That night, we slept on the ruins of our house. Suddenly, I felt a hand slapped my shoulders. I was afraid that it was an intruder. When I opened my eyes there was no one. Then I sensed the Lord's presence. He said, “Saya dilahirkan di Bethlehem (I was born in Bethlehem)”. That one sentence broke me. Our Lord was born in a manger - The King of Kings. What was my

suffering compared to His? That night, the Lord ministered deeply to me. In my spirit, I felt His Hands entered into my heart and removed the many layers of pain that I had buried. The Lord encouraged me to “remain faithful to the very end.”

Thereafter, the Lord brought a miracle. Funds came. We received a significant amount of money from an American couple to reconstruct AG churches and the boys' hostel. Finally, I felt the peace to also rebuild my house. The beautiful place I stay now on the land of my former house is entirely the Lord's provision.

I give thanks to the Lord for He has been so faithful to me. He has preserved me physically, emotionally and mentally. I have been a widow 17 years but the Lord has seen to it that I am not alone. I am a mama to many young people. They are here at the children orphanage and the boys' hostel. A generation with no hope but now they do because there they have food, shelter and faith.

In this life, there is pain and there is victory. What is important is that we surrender our lives to the Lord because He is able to work exceedingly. He will enable us to live a life that is “damai, sejahtera dan diberkati Tuhan (peaceful, joyful and blessed by God) no matter what the external circumstances. Let us all worship the Lord not with our lips but with our hearts. All glory belongs to Him.