

Blessed Peter ToRot



A Martyr of the Church

"This has been a real occasion for rejoicing on the part of the Catholics of your nation, and it has been a significant event for all your people. The life of Blessed Peter To Rot is a precious treasure which remain forever yours. It is a beacon shining bright, a signal fire leading you to hold aloft the noble ideals which inspired him: faith in God, love of family, service of neighbour, and unswerving courage in the face of trials and sacrifice."

Pope John Paul II

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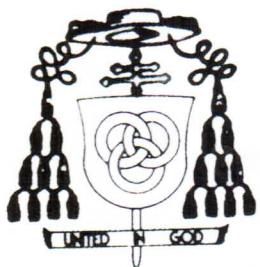
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Blessed Peter ToRot

A Martyr of the Church

"We should remember the words of Saint Augustine, who said that the Church in a nation "becomes the more fruitful the more it is watered by the blood of martyrs" (de Catechizandis Rudibus, 24:44.)"

Pope John Paul II



"Dear brothers and sisters, through the paschal mystery we have been buried with Christ in baptism, so that we may rise to a new life. Now, after hearing the Word of God, and in the presence of the Successor of Peter, who came to confirm us in our faith, hope and charity, and to beatify the servant of God, Peter ToRot, let us renew the profession of faith made at our baptism and commit ourselves to love and serve faithfully God and our brother and sisters in his Holy Church"

Archbishop Peter Kurongku

PAPUA NEW GUINEA - PORT MORESBY - 17.01.1995

Sir John Guise Stadium
Holy Mass by His Holiness Pope John Paul II

Ol brata na susa bilong mi,

Tenkyu tru long bikpela welkam yupela I givim long mi hastede long ples balus. Mi lukim bilas bilong ol manmeri ol I welkamim mi, na bel bilong mi I kirap tru. Bilas bilong yupela ol pipel bilong PAPUA NIUGINI i nais moa moa yet.

(My dear brothers and sisters,

Thank you very much for the big welcome you gave me yesterday at the airport. I saw the colourful decorations of the people there and I was very much impressed. Your traditional decorations here in PAPUA NEW GUINEA are very, very nice.)

1. "Rejoice...insofar as you share Christ's sufferings"

Today, the People of God in Papua New Guinea repeat these words of the Apostle Peter with fervent hearts. You rejoice because the Universal Church recognizes that your fellow countryman, Peter To Rot, shared Christ's sufferings to the point of martyrdom and has been found worthy of being numbered among the Blessed.

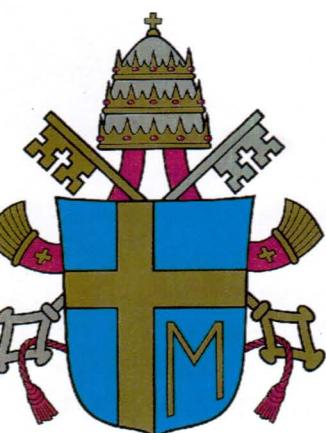
With the joy which this occasion brings, I greet the People of God in Papua New Guinea. I think Archbishop Hesse and the Catholic community of Rabaul would have liked this Beatification to be held in the place where Blessed Peter To Rot lived and was martyred. With love and solidarity, my thoughts turn to all the inhabitants of New Britain - those present here and the great majority unable to attend - who have been affected by the recent volcanic eruption. I gladly greet all my Brother Bishops, all the priests, Religious and laity of this land and of the Solomon Islands, and those who have come from other Islands of the vast Pacific, and from Australia and New Zealand. I extend my hand in friendship to our Brothers and Sisters of other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities. I thank all the civil authorities for their presence at this solemn ceremony.

The first blessed from Papua New Guinea begins a new epoch in the history of the People of God in this country. Martyrdom has always been a part of the pilgrimage of the People of God through history. In the Old Testament Reading of this Mass, the Second Book of Maccabees tells the story of Eleazar's unflinching fidelity to the holy law of God, his readiness to accept death rather than compromise with evil. Faced with the supreme test, he says, "Although I could have escaped death, I am not only enduring terrible pain in my body from this scourging, but also suffering it with joy in my soul because of my devotion to God" (2 Mac 6:30)

Likewise in the New Covenant. Beginning with the deacon Stephen (cf. Acts 7:54-60) and the Apostles James (Acts 12:1-2), the New Testament records that a "great cloud of witness" (cf. Heb 12:1) gave their lives in order to profess their faith in Christ and their uncompromising love for him. And down the centuries, glorious pages of the Church's Martyrology have been written in every generation. The sons and daughters of many Churches in Asia are inscribed in the "archives of truth written in letters of blood" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2474). I myself have had the grace of canonizing the Korean and Vietnamese Martyrs. We can also recall Saint Paul Miki and his Companions, martyred in Japan; Lorenzo Ruiz, the first saint of the Philippines; and Saint Peter Chanel who suffered a martyr's death in the islands of the Pacific.

Throughout this century the "faithful witnesses" have been present in great numbers (cf. Tertio Millennio Adveniente, 37). The wars, concentration camps and intolerance of our own time have yielded a rich harvest of martyrs in many parts of the world! Today your fellow countryman, Peter To Rot, an honoured son of the Tolai people, a catechist from New Britain, has been listed among them. The Church everywhere sings praise to God for this new gift.

The sufferings caused by the recent tragic eruption have drawn the Christian community of New Britain



"I come to my Catholic brothers and sisters in this young nation as the Successor of Saint Peter, to whom the Lord entrusted a special ministry of safeguarding the apostolic faith and of preserving the unity of God's People in love. It is my desire and purpose to strengthen the Christian faithful of this country as they bear witness to Jesus Christ, and to encourage them to remain ever steadfast in the Gospel which they received through the preaching of the missionaries. At the same time, I come to all the people of Papua New Guinea, and to all the other non-Catholic members of the community, to assure them of my concern for their welfare and to invite them to share in the spiritual life of the Church."

closer to the Martyr Peter ToRot. In God's saving plan, "suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption" (*Salvifici Doloris*, 27). Just as the Lord Jesus saved his people by loving them "to the end" (Jn 13:1), "even to death on a cross" (cf. Phil 2:8), so also he continues to invite each disciple to suffer for the Kingdom of God. When united with the redemptive Passion of Christ, human suffering becomes an instrument of spiritual maturity and a magnificent school of evangelical love.

Blessed Peter understood the value of suffering. Inspired by his faith in Christ, he was a devoted husband, a loving father and a dedicated catechist known for his kindness, gentleness and compassion. Daily Mass and Holy Communion, and frequent visits to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, sustained him, gave him wisdom to counsel the disheartened, and courage to persevere until death. In order to be an effective evangelizer, Peter ToRot studied hard and sought advice from wise and holy "big men." Most of all he prayed - for himself, for his family, for his people, for the Church. His witness to the Gospel inspired others, in very difficult situations, because he lived his Christian life so purely and joyfully. Without being aware of it, he was preparing throughout his life for this greatest offering; by dying daily to himself, he walked with his Lord on the road which leads to Calvary (cf. Mt 10:38-39).

During times of persecution the faith of individuals and communities is "tested by fire" (Pet 1:7). But Christ tells us that there is no reason to be afraid. Those persecuted for their faith will be more eloquent than ever; "it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you" (Mt 10:20). So it was for Blessed Peter ToRot. When the village of Rakunai was occupied during the Second World War and after the heroic missionary priests were imprisoned, he assumed responsibility for the spiritual life of the villagers. Not only did he continue to instruct the faithful and visit the sick, he also baptised, assisted at marriages and led people in prayer.

When the authorities legalised and encouraged polygamy, Blessed Peter knew it to be against Christian principles and firmly denounced this practice. Because the Spirit of God dwelt in him, he fearlessly proclaimed the truth about the sanctity of marriage. He refused to take the "easy way" (cf. Mt 7:13) of moral compromise. "I have to fulfill my duty as a Church witness to Jesus Christ", he explained. Fear of suffering and death did not deter him. During his final imprisonment Peter ToRot was serene, even joyful. He told people that he was ready to die for the faith and for his people.

On the day of his death, Blessed Peter asked his wife to bring him his catechist's crucifix. It accompanied him to the end. Condemned without trial, he suffered his martyrdom calmly. Following in the footsteps of his Master, the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29), he too was "led like a lamb to the slaughter" (cf. Is 53:7). And yet this "grain of wheat" which fell silently into the earth (cf. Jn 12:24) has produced a harvest of blessings for the church in Papua New Guinea!

Yes, the wisdom of the Gospel tells us that eternal life comes through death, and true joy through suffering. In order to understand this we must judge by God's standards and not by man's! (cf. Mt 16:23). This morning's Reading from the First Letter of Peter says: "Happy are you when you are insulted for the sake of Christ, for then God's Spirit...has come to rest on you" (1 Pet 4:14). These words apply to Peter ToRot. They describe the particular "blessedness" of those "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9) who suffer martyrdom in every age of the Church. In God's eyes, those persecuted for their fidelity to the Gospel are truly blessed, for their "reward is great in heaven" (Mt 5:12)

I am particularly happy that there are many catechists here from all over Papua New Guinea. You, dear catechists, are "direct witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers ... the basic strength of Christian communities" (*Redemptoris Missio*, 73). From the beginning, the work of lay catechists in Papua New Guinea has made "an outstanding and indispensable contribution to the spread of the faith and of the Church" (*Ad Gentes*, 17). In the name of the whole Church I thank you for the sacred work which you are doing. May God reward and bless each one of you.

The Martyr's example speaks also to married couples. Blessed Peter ToRot had the highest esteem for marriage and, even in the face of great personal danger and opposition, he defended the Church's teaching on the unity



Pope John Paul II is shaking hands with the Archbishop of Port Moresby, Peter Kurongku.

"May all the people who live in this land strive to build a society in which the dignity and rights of each individual will be respected by everyone. In this great task the Catholic Church will continue to do her part, in accordance with her religious nature and mission, and will generously cooperate with all of the population."

Pope John Paul II

morning and evening. For his children he had the utmost affection and spent as much time with them as he could. If families are good, your villages will be peaceful and good. Hold on to the traditions that defend and strengthen family life!

A special greeting to the many young people who are here. Blessed Peter is a model for you too. He shows you not to be concerned only about yourselves but to put yourselves generously at the service of others. As citizens, you should feel the need to work to improve your country, and to ensure the society develops in honesty and justice, harmony and solidarity. As followers of Christ guide by the truths of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church, build on the solid rock of faith and do your duty with love. Do not be afraid to commit yourselves to the task of making Christ known and loved, especially among the many people of your own age, who make up the largest part of the population.

For the Church in Papua New Guinea the Beatification of Peter ToRot opens a new period of Christian maturity. In the history of the local Church in any country, the first native-born martyr always marks a new beginning. For this reason, as Pastor of the universal Church, I have fervently desired to share this great joy with you and join you in giving thanks to God for the first Blessed of Papua New Guinea.

To the intercession of the new Blessed I wish to commend with special affection the people of Bougainville, who for six years have been suffering the tragic consequences of violence, war and destruction. I extend a special word of encouragement to Bishop Gregory Singkai and the Church in Bougainville, who are bearing a heavy physical and spiritual burden. I earnestly appeal to all sides in this dispute to negotiate a settlement in a spirit of good will and constructive openness. I pray that the discussions which have recently been initiated will soon lead to a just and lasting peace, with respect for the legitimate aspirations and rights of all concerned. May reconciliation and harmony once more prevail, so that the reconstruction which all yearn for can begin.

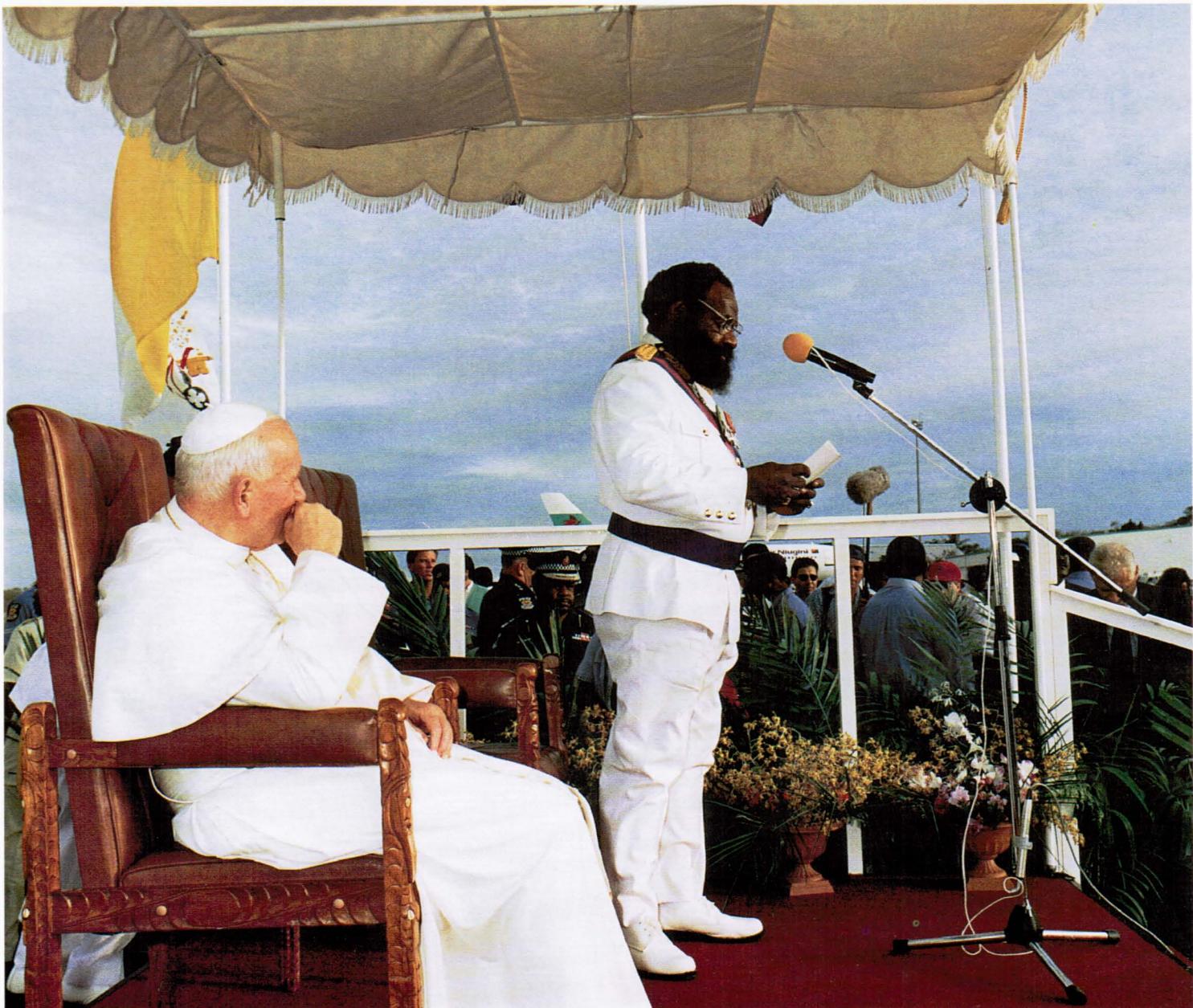
To the people of New Britain, the fellow countrymen of Blessed Peter ToRot, Martyr-catechist of Rakunai, I repeat the words of the Letter of Peter: "Rejoice...insofar as you share Christ's sufferings" (1 Pet 4:13). Your recent tragedy has made you like your Martyr, different in the kind suffering you have had to undergo, but like him configured to the passion and Death of the Lord. The crucified Jesus is the sign of God's unfailing love for every one of his children, for each and every one of you.

Mi laik bai yupela i tingim Peter ToRot oltaim. Yupela i mas tingting oltaim long bilip bilong em; yupela i mas tingting oltaim long famili laif bilong em; yupela i mas tingting oltaim long wok bilong em. Bikos Peter ToRot i soim rot long yumi. Em i soim rot long yumi olgeta, tasol moa yet long ol famili bilong PAPUA NIUGINI na long ol yut na long ol manmeri ol i autim tok bilong God long ol pipel.

Yupela amamas! Olgeta wari bilong yupela i ken tanim i go kamap amamas gen. Amen.

(I want you to remember Peter ToRot always. You must think always of his faith; you must think always of his life in the family; you must think always of his work as a catechist. Because Peter ToRot shows us the way. He shows the way to all of us, but especially to the families here in PAPUA NEW GUINEA and to the youth and to all those men and women who preach the word of God to the people.

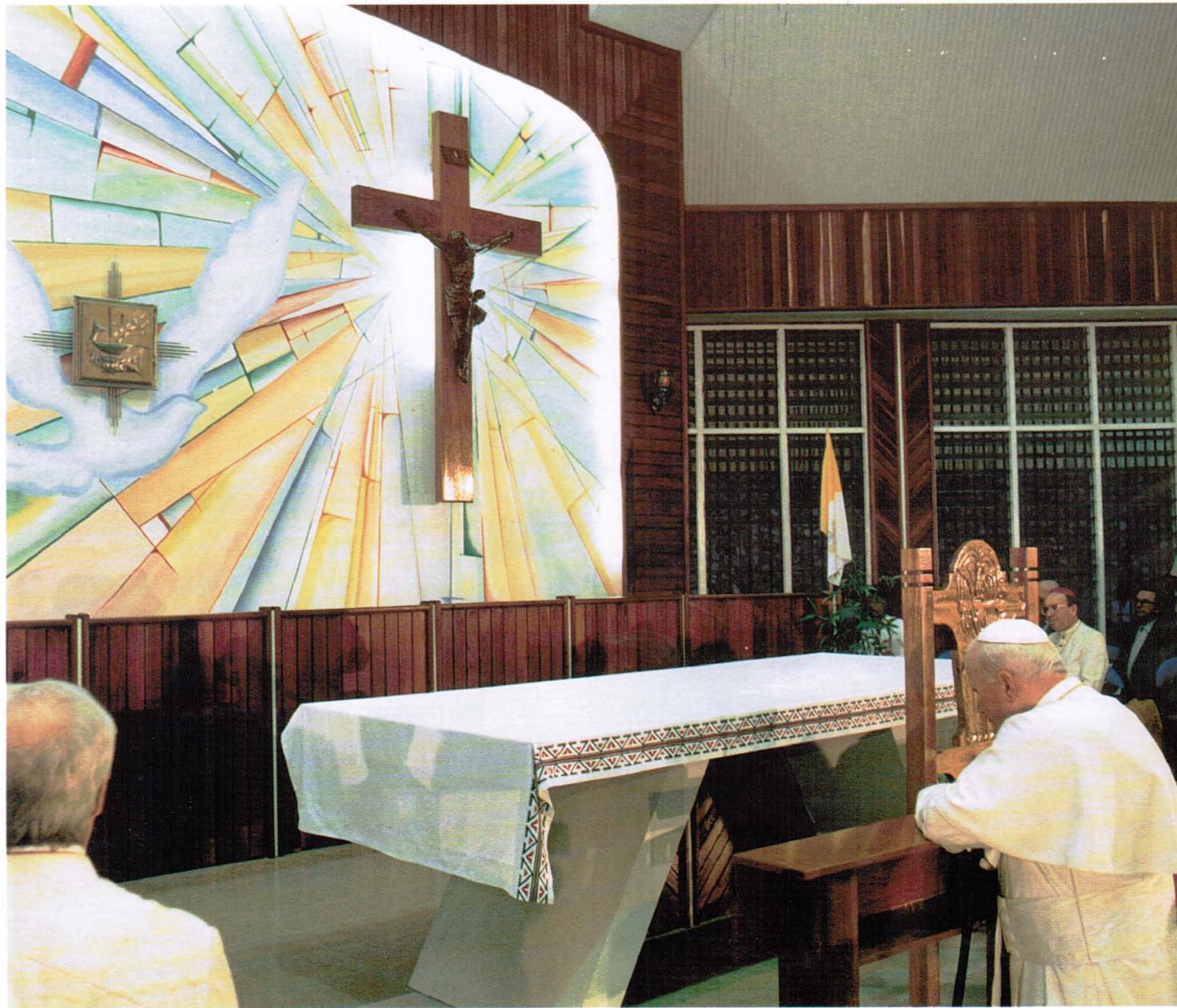
Rejoice! May you sadness be turned into joy! Amen.)



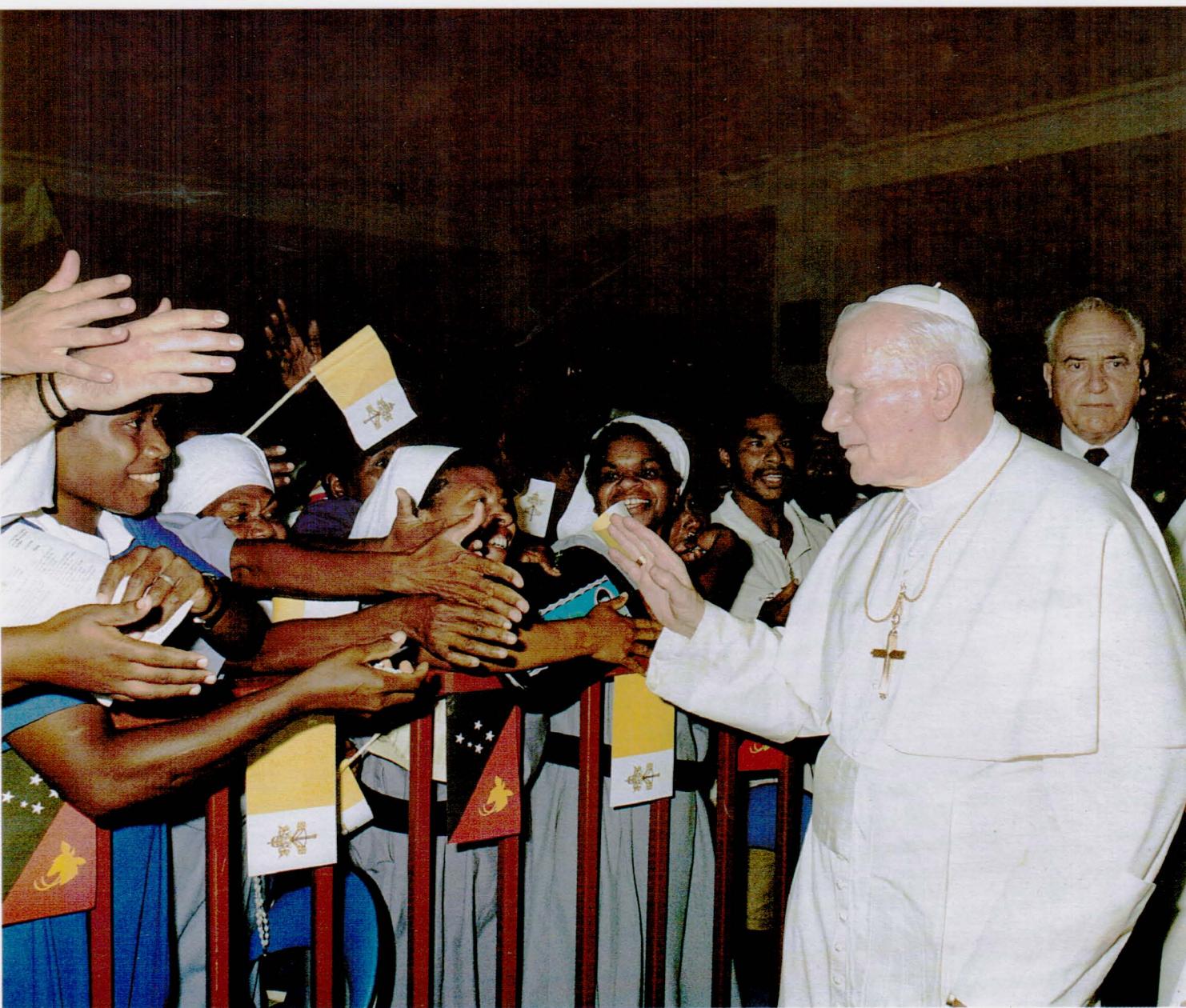
Sir Wiwa Korowi welcoming the Pope at Jackson's Airport.

"Through the beatification of the Venerable Peter Torot you have once again firmly promulgated the Catholic faith and Christianity in the country. Peter Torot is now a symbol of peace, love and unity among different tribes and languages and most of all different churches in Papua New Guinea."

Sir Wiwa Korowi, Governor General of Papua New Guinea



Pope offering silent prayer before the altar at Don Bosco.



Religious Sisters meeting the Pope at Don Bosco.

“Dear Men and Women Religious: In Peter To Rot all Religious have a challenging model of fidelity. Here is a man whose “sincere gift of self” was like that of his Lord who “loved to the end” (cf. Jn 13.1). Like his Lord, he was a “faithful witness” (Rev 1:5). I urge you to live your religious consecration with generosity and unfailing fidelity to the demands of perfect charity. Each of your Religious families brings its own gifts to the Church’s evangelising mission. Your names are too many to mention, but I thank all the Congregations in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands for the testimony and fruitfulness of your consecration and your apostolate.”

Pope John Paul II



Pope John Paul II greeting the happy people at Don Bosco, after his arrival in Papua New Guinea.

“Dear members of the Laity: there is special significance in the fact that the first Blessed of Papua New Guinea was a lay man and a catechist. I hope that Peter To Rot will become a source of inspiration throughout the Church for all who work in the lay apostolate, especially for catechists who “represent the basic strength of Christian communities especially in the young Churches” (Redemptoris Missio, 73).”

Pope John Paul II



“These people - representatives of the Religious, the clergy, seminarians and the lay people welcome your Holiness, with a deep sense of appreciation, with thanksgiving and with a profound feeling of sincerity of your presence here.”

Archbishop Peter Kurongku welcoming Pope John Paul II at Don Bosco



Pope John Paul II blessing a small girl at Don Bosco Church.

"A special greeting to the many young people who are here. Blessed Peter is a model for you too. He shows you not to be concerned only about yourselves but to put yourselves generously at the service of others. As citizens, you should feel the need to work to improve your country, and to ensure that society develops in honesty and justice, harmony and solidarity. As followers of Christ guided by the truths of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church, build on the solid rock of faith and do your duty with love. do not be afraid to commit yourselves to the task of making Christ known and loved, especially among the many people of your own age, who make up the largest part of the population."

Pope John Paul II



The Pope with Archbishop Karl Hesse arriving at the Sir John Guise Stadium for the Beatification Mass for Peter ToRot.

"As you are aware, the central event of my visit is the Beatification of Peter ToRot, catechist and martyr. You can be truly proud of your Melanesian brother; he has brought distinction and honour to your people. Peter ToRot is an outstanding example of a family man, a Church leader and a person prepared to lay down his life for God and neighbour."

Pope John Paul II



Pope John II shaking hands with children after the Beatification Mass at the Sir John Guise Stadium.

“A special greeting to young people... Blessed Peter is a model for you.”

Pope John Paul II



Tolai elders bring the bible to the altar.

"Yes, the wisdom of the Gospel tells us that eternal life comes through death, and true joy through suffering. In order to understand this we must judge by God's standards and not by man's! (cf. Mt 16:23). This morning's Reading from the First Letter of Peter says: "Happy are you when you are insulted for the sake of Christ, for then God's Spirit ... has come to rest on you" (1 Pet 4:14). These words apply to Peter To Rot. They describe the particular "blessedness" of those "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9) who suffer martyrdom in every age of the Church. In God's eyes, those persecuted for their fidelity to the Gospel are truly blessed, for their "reward is great in heaven" (Mt 5:12)."

Pope John Paul II



Archbishop Karl Hesse of Rabaul thanks the Pope for the “Rite of Beatification” for Blessed Peter ToRot, 17 January 1995.

“I regret that I am not able to be with Peter ToRot’s beloved Tolai people on this occasion, but circumstances have not permitted me to go to New Britain. I wish I could visit all the people in the various parts of these Islands, but I can only stay very briefly. Therefore I assure all of you, wherever you are, that I am thinking of you.”

Pope John Paul II





The Pope meets Peter ToRot's daughter, Rupina Ia Mama, during the Beatification Mass.

*"The fact that your first Blessed is not only a martyr but also a lay catechist, a husband and the father of a family, is very significant for the spiritual history of your people. When the early missionaries came to Papua New Guinea they recognized that the word of God would take root only when the people themselves became the active agents of their own evangelization (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 18). Peter To Rot was one those who came forward to help plant the seed of truth among his own people of the Tolai tribe. The priests at Rakunai encouraged and guided him, and he for his part fulfilled with devotion and commitment the responsibilities entrusted to him. Priests and catechists at the Mission Station of Rakunai worked together to build up the Body of Christ, and left a spiritual heritage for the coming generations to imitate."*

Pope John Paul II



The Pope being presented with a small roll of traditional East New Britain shell money (Tabu).



The elders of Tolai people from Rakunai with the Reliquary containing the remains of Blessed Peter ToRot.
Photo; Post-Courier

“During times of persecution the faith of individuals and communities is “tested by fire” (1Pet 1:7). But Christ tells us that there is no reason to be afraid. Those persecuted for their faith will be more eloquent than ever: “it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you” (Mt 10:20). So it was for Blessed Peter To Rot. When the village of Rakunai was occupied during the Second World War and after the heroic missionary priests were imprisoned, he assumed responsibility for the spiritual life of the villagers. Not only did he continue to instruct the faithful and visit the sick, he also baptized, assisted at marriages and led people in prayer.”



The Reliquary containing the remains of Blessed Peter ToRot being returned to the traditional house after the Beatification Mass by the Tolai leaders from Rakunai Village, East New Britain Province.

"Blessed Peter understood the value of suffering. Inspired by his faith in Christ, he was a devoted husband, a loving father and a dedicated catechist known for his kindness, gentleness and compassion. Daily Mass and Holy Communion, and frequent visits to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, sustained him, gave him wisdom to counsel the disheartened, and courage to persevere until death. In order to be an effective evangelizer, Peter To Rot studied hard for the Church. His witness to the Gospel inspired others, in very difficult situations, because he lived his Christian life so purely and joyfully. Without being aware of it, he was preparing throughout his life for his greatest offering: by dying daily to himself, he walked with his Lord on the road which leads to Calvary (cf. Mt 10:38-39)."

Pope John Paul II



Pope John Paul II during the offertory.

"God of power and mercy, you gave Peter ToRot, your martyr, victory over pain and suffering. Strengthen us who celebrate this day of his triumph and help us to be victorious over the evils that threaten us. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever."

Pope John Paul II



Village people exchanging gifts with the Pope. The Pope presented rosaries to the people.

*“Dia Ol pipel bilong Papua Niugini,
Mi kam long kantri bilong yupela bikos mi laikim tumas dispela kantri na yupela wan wan. God bless Papua
Niugini. Gold bless yupela olgeta.”*

Pope John Paul II



Peter ToRot's daughter during the mass.

Photo; Post-Courier.

"To the people of New Britain, the fellow countrymen of Blessed Peter To Rot, Martyr-catechist of Rakunai, I repeat the words of the Letter of Peter: "Rejoice... insofar as you share Christ's sufferings" (1 Pet 4:13). Your recent tragedy has made you like your Martyr, different in the kind of suffering you have had to undergo, but like him configured to the Passion and Death of the Lord. The crucified Jesus is the sign of God's unfailing love for every one of his children, for each and every one of you."

Pope John Paul II



Peter ToRot's Reliquary being carried to the Pope to be blessed. Photo; Post-Courier

"On the day of his death, Blessed Peter asked his wife to bring him his catechist's crucifix. It accompanied him to the end. Condemned without trial, he suffered his martyrdom calmly. Following in the footsteps of his Master, the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29), he too was "led like a lamb to the slaughter" (cf. Is 53:7). And yet this "grain of wheat" which fell silently onto the earth (cf. Jn 12:24) has produced a harvest of blessings for the Church in Papua New Guinea!"

Pope John Paul II



Archbishop of Rabaul, Karl Hesse, beseeching the Pope to beatify Peter ToRot.

"Holy Father, the Ordinary of Rabaul most humbly asks your Holiness that the Venerable Servant of God, Peter ToRot be proclaimed Blessed."



Pope John Paul II responding to Archbishop Hesse's request to beatify Peter ToRot.

"Embracing our brother, Karl Hesse, Archbishop of Rabaul and the many other brothers in the Episcopate, and the faithful of Papua New Guinea, and after having received the response of the Congregation for the Cause of the Saints, we with our Apostolic authority inscribe in the book of the Blessed, the Venerable Servant of God, Peter ToRot, and we give permission to celebrate his Feastday every year on the 7th of July in the places and according to the norms established by Church Law.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Pope John Paul II



Tolai people at a Mass at Kokopo Show Ground (East New Britain Province) after the volcanic eruption in September, 1994. Photo; +Karl Hesse.

"Archbishop Hesse and the Catholic community of Rabaul would have liked this Beatification to be held in the place where Blessed Peter To Rot lived and was martyred. With love and solidarity, my thoughts turn to all the inhabitants of New Britain - those present here and the great majority unable to attend - who have been affected by the recent volcanic eruption."

Pope John Paul II



Vulcan, left, and Tavurvur, right, in early eruption - 19/09/94. Photo; Gilbanks Family

"The sufferings caused by the recent tragic eruption have drawn the Christian community of New Britain closer to the Martyr Peter To Rot. In God's saving plan, "suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption" (Salvifici Doloris, 27). Just as the Lord Jesus saved his people by loving them "to the end" (Jn 13:1), "even to death on a cross" (cf. Phil 2:8), so also he continues to invite each disciple to suffer for the Kingdom of God. When united with the redemptive Passion of Christ, human suffering becomes an instrument of spiritual maturity and a magnificent school of evangelical love."

Pope John Paul II



Pope at the mass. Pope giving the final blessing at the end of the beatification mass in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

Photo; Post-Courier.

"For the Church in Papua New Guinea the Beatification of Peter To Rot opens a new period of Christian maturity. In the history of the local Church in any country, the first native-born martyr always marks a new beginning. For this reason, as Pastor of the universal Church, I have fervently desired to share this great joy with you and join you in giving thanks to God for the first Blessed of Papua New Guinea."

Pope John Paul II



Pope at the front of the altar after the Beatification Mass blessing the congregation. On his left is Archbishop of Rabaul, Karl Hesse. Archbishop Hesse played a major role in promulgating Peter ToRot's cause

"To all of you I say this: what I see before me is a great hope for the Church! Do not be discouraged about the future of evangelization! Do not hesitate to preach the Good News clearly and boldly, for there is only one true hope for humanity: Jesus Christ, the Word-made-flesh who dwelt among us (cf. Jn 1:14)."

Pope John Paul II



"Mi laik bai yupela i tingim Peter ToRot oltaim. Yupela i mas tingting oltaim long bilip bilong em; yupela i mas tingting oltaim long famili laif bilong em; yupela i mas tingting oltaim long wok bilong em. Bikos Peter ToRot i soim rot long yumi. Em i soim rot long yumi olgeta, tasol moa yet long ol famili bilong PAPUA NIUGINI na long ol yut na long ol manmeri ol i autim tok bilong God long ol pipel."

"Yupela amamas! Olgeta wari bilong yupela i ken tanim i go kamap amamas gen. Amen."

"I want you to remember Peter ToRot always. You must think always of his faith; you must think always of his life in the family; you must think always of his work as a catechist. Because Peter ToRot shows us the way. He shows the way to all of us, but especially to the families here in PAPUA NEW GUINEA and to the youth and to all those men and women who preach the word of God to the people."

Pope John Paul II



Pope John Paul II having a word with the Archbishop Peter Kurongku, at the Beatification Mass.

“Your Holiness,

Thank you for visiting our country of Papua New Guinea again. and we assure you of our continued prayers for the work of the Church in many nations, near and far.”

Archbishop Peter Kurongku



Tolai dancers who performed during the Papal Mass of Beatification. Photo; Post-Courier

"I have felt great joy during my brief visit among you."

Pope John Paul II



Peter ToRot's remains in the A Pal Na Pidik house, while Peter ToRot's daughter and the elders of the village look on.

"I wish to encourage you: May you ever know deeply the presence of Jesus himself as you try to embrace him and his Cross. My prayers and the prayers of the church are with you always."

Pope John Paul II



Blessed Peter ToRot's daughter in front of the Reliquary along with village elders during the Beatification Mass at the Sir John Guise Stadium, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 17 January 1995.

"For his children he had the utmost affection and spent as much time with them as he could. If families are good your villages will be peaceful and good. Hold on to the traditions that defend and strengthen family life!"

Pope John Paul II



Rabaul Choir Group, Sir John Guise Stadium, from Rakunai and other areas of Gazelle Peninsula of east New Britain Province. Photo; Post-Courier

The Martyr's example speaks also to married couples. Blessed Peter ToRot had the highest esteem for marriage and, even in the face of great personal danger and opposition, he defended the Church's teaching on the unity of marriage and the need for mutual fidelity. He treated his wife, Paula, with deep respect and prayed with her morning and evening.

Pope John Paul II



The Pope arriving at the Parish Church of St. Joseph at Boroko for the "Blessing of the Sick".

"This is why I come to you today, to assure you that the Church, like Christ himself, is close to you who suffer. She commends you to the Lord. She prays that he will give you the consolation and hope which will bring you peace."

Pope John Paul II



The Pope, assembled prelates, laity and sick at St. Joseph's Parish Church, Boroko, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea for the blessing of the sick.

"I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet you and to say a few words of encouragement. Caring for the sick and the suffering has always been a special concern of the Lord's followers. From the Church's earliest days, when missionaries brought the Good News of the Gospel to far distant lands, they also brought love and compassion for people suffering from disease. It was this charity which caused many native peoples to welcome these messengers of Christ and made them wish to learn about God who inspired such selfless acts of kindness."

Pope John Paul II



Archbishop Peter Kurongku, invites Pope John Paul II to address the sick at St. Joseph's Church.

"Our meetings during these past two days have given me much hope. Everywhere I have met people with a real desire to serve God and to walk in his paths. In your faith you will find the wisdom and inspiration to meet the challenges facing your country. Faith demands solidarity with those affected by the tragic volcanic eruption in New Britain."

Pope John Paul II



The Pope has a quiet word with young parishioners of St. Joseph, Boroko.



Pope John Paul II at the blessing of the sick at St Joseph's Church.

"Jesus' Passion and Crucifixion is not a stumbling block for you, but a source of joy and hope. Accepting your suffering in this way, you allow others to see the true dignity of the human person. You reveal a God who loves us so much that he became one of us in order to share our pain and sorrows."

Pope John Paul II



The Pope with the two nephews of Peter ToRot (L to R); To Kelepo with To Kuripia and Father Rokus meet the Pope at the Papal Nunciature in Port Moresby. In the background is Ia Mama ToRot. Kelepo died in his sleep on the 26th of March 1995.



Pope with Archbishop of Port Moresby, while the Nuncio looks on.

"I am deeply grateful for the warm hospitality which the people of Papua New Guinea have shown me. I express my sincere thanks to all those who made this pastoral visit possible, especially His Excellency the Governor-General, the Prime Minister and the distinguished members of the Parliament. My thanks go likewise to my Brother Bishops, the clergy, Religious and laity, many of whom have made quiet and unseen sacrifices so that this visit might bring happiness and strength to others. I also thank those who have assisted me so generously, those who have ensured the orderly running of the events and those in the media who have made it possible for my voice to reach people in other places."

Pope John Paul II

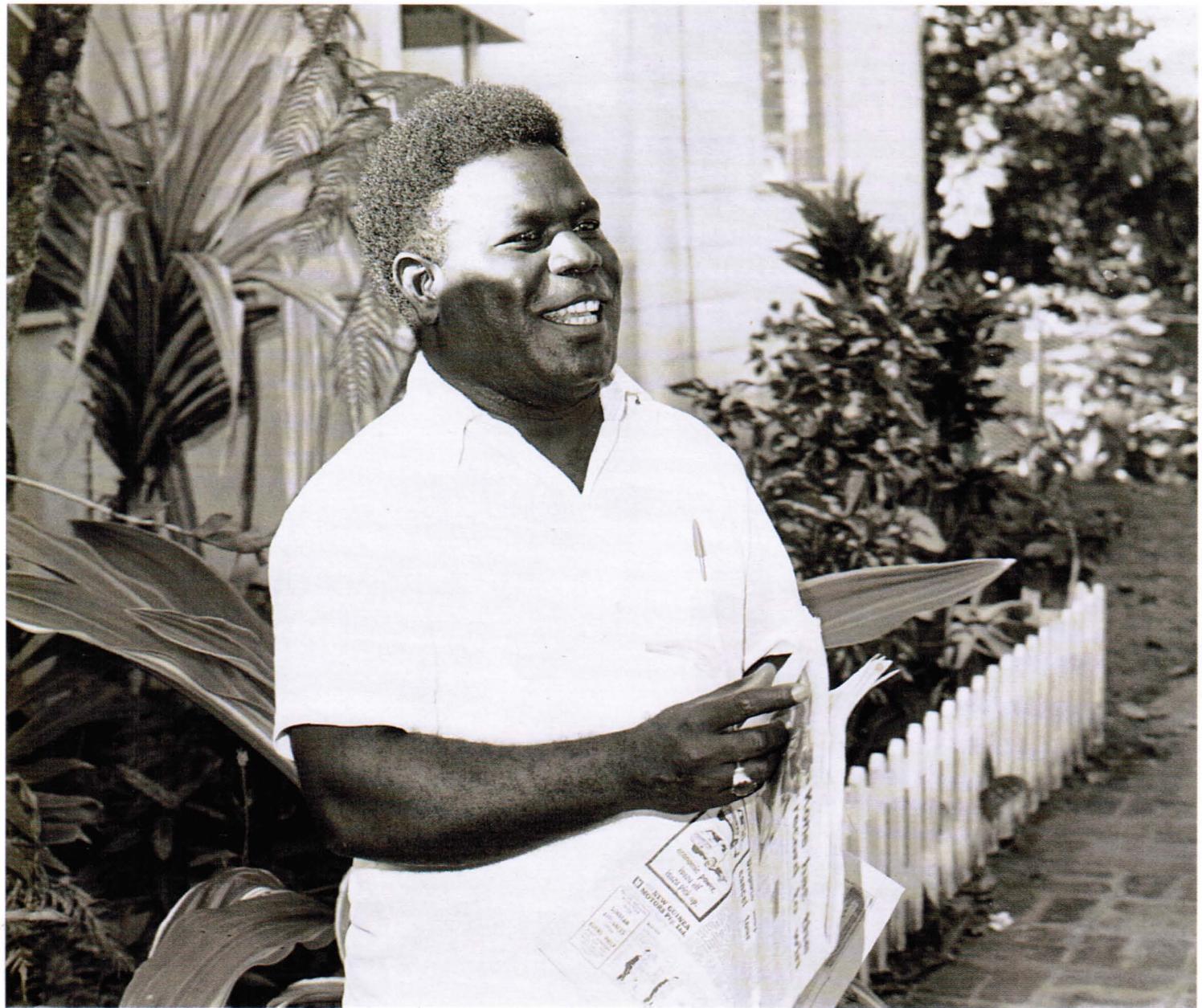


The Pope welcomes Rupina Ia Mama at the Papal Nunciature in Port Moresby. Rupina had previously met the Pope at the Beatification Mass for her father on the previous day.



"With the joy which this occasion brings, I greet the people of God in Papua New Guinea."

Pope John Paul II



Bishop Gregory Singkai, Bishop of Bougainville in 1975. Photo: Barry Middlemiss

"To the intercession of the New Blessed I wish to commend with special affection the people of Bougainville, who for six years have been suffering the tragic consequences of violence, war and destruction. I extend a special word of encouragement to Bishop Gregory Sinkai and the Church in Bougainville, who are bearing a heavy physical and spiritual burden. I earnestly appeal to all sides in this dispute to negotiate a settlement in a spirit of good will and constructive openness. I pray that the discussions which have recently been initiated will soon lead to a just and lasting peace, with respect for the legitimate aspirations and rights of all concerned. May reconciliation and harmony once more prevail, so that the reconstruction which all yearn for can begin."

Pope John Paul II



The Pope praying before the reliquary containing the remains of Peter To Rot

"The villagers of Rakunai were drawn to Christ and helped to follow him by the radiant charity and zeal of Peter To Rot. His spiritual maturity showed in his apostolic maturity. He paid particular attention to those who had become lukewarm in the practice of the faith or who had abandoned it. As a catechist devoted to the spiritual welfare of others - even in situations where he risked arrest and imprisonment - he went in search of the sheep who had gone astray, and did not rest until he had found it (cf. Lk 15:4). How the young Churches of this part of the world need men and women of Peter To Rot's calibre! I encourage you to renew your faith and your commitment. Remember: "You are the light of the world...let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to the Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5:14,16)."

Pope John Paul II



Bougainvilleans at Arawa in 1989. Photo; Barry Middlemiss

"I am especially aware of the whole country's concern for the suffering people of Bougainville. To you, people of Bougainville, I send a special word of encouragement. If you have been treated unjustly, I invite you to remove bitterness from your hearts. If you bear arms unjustly, I urge you to put them down and seek reconciliation."

Pope John Paul II



The Pope presents a reproduction of a mosaic of Our Lady of Perpetual Help to the Governor General of Papua New Guinea.



Pope John Paul II greets the Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea 18/01/95

"We should all be grateful for the immense amount of good work that is done in a quiet way throughout Papua New Guinea by the Catholic Church. For more than a century, this country has benefitted from the positive spiritual influence and the sheer hard work of the Catholic Church."

"The country was greatly honoured by the beatification of Blessed Peter ToRot."

"Within the context of the universal Catholic Church, it was almost like a coming of age, to have one of our own sons recognised in this way. It has proven and will continue to prove a point of inspiration for many Christians in this country."

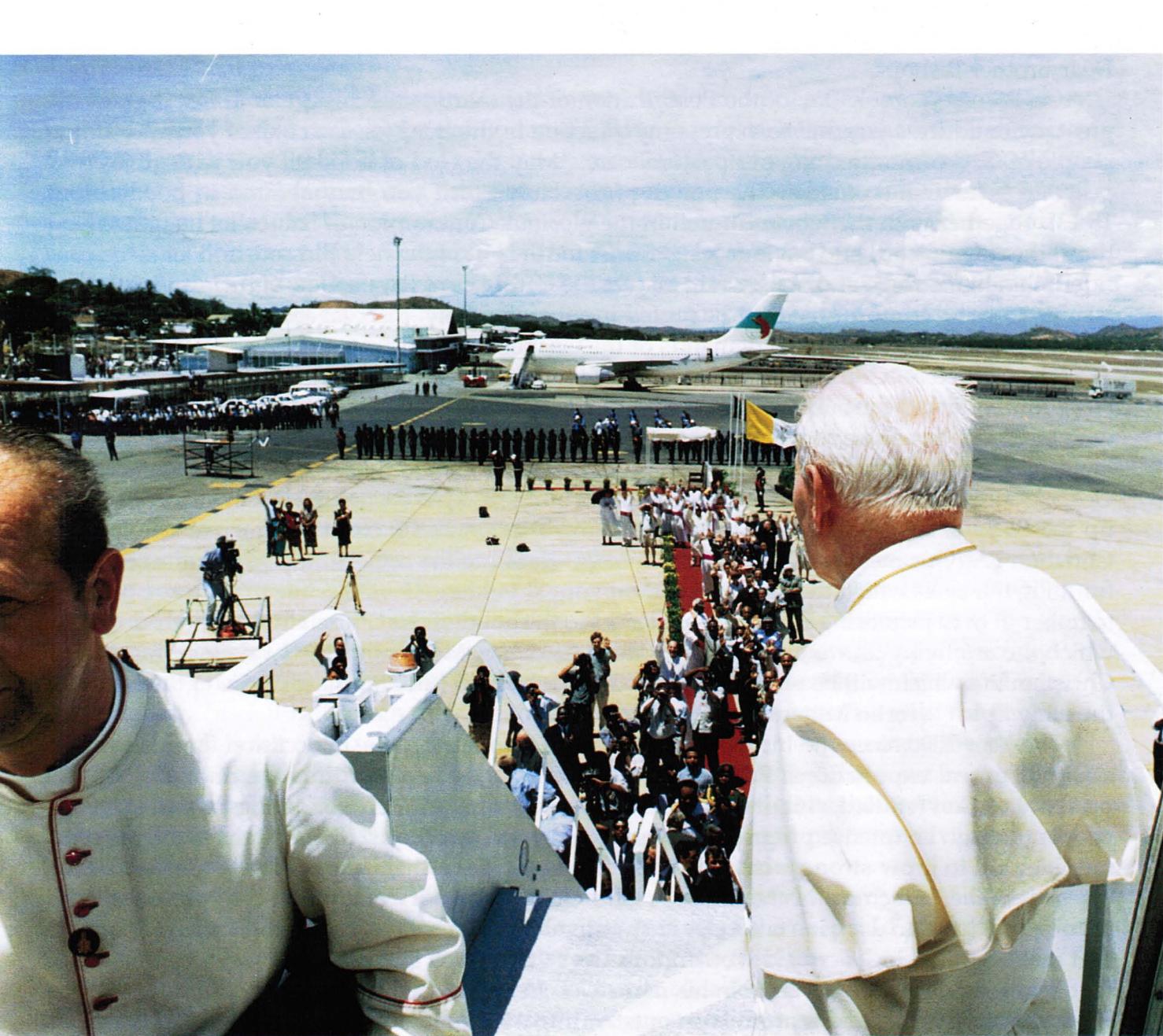
Sir Julius Chan, Prime Minister.



Pope John Paul II at his departure, standing right, Governor General, Sir Wiwa Korowi, standing left behind the Pope is Defence Force Commander Brigadier General Tony Huai.

"I am particularly happy that there are many catechists all over Papua New Guinea. You, dear catechists, are "direct witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers ... the basic strength of Christian communities" (Redemptoris Missio, 73). From the beginning, the work of lay catechists in Papua New Guinea has made "an outstanding and indispensable contribution to the spread of the faith and of the Church" (Ad Gentes, 17). In the name of the whole Church I thank you for the sacred work which you are doing. May God reward and bless each one of you."

Pope John Paul II



Pope Departing Papua New Guinea

"Dear Friends: As you look out upon your beautiful land with its jungles and mighty rivers, its mountains and deep valleys its volcanoes and limitless seas, give thanks to God whose goodness is without end. With your many different languages and traditions you are a wonderful tapestry which God is weaving into the image of a diverse but united family of peoples upon whom he wishes to shower his blessings. I pray that his peace will always reign in your homes and in your lives!"

"God bless yupela olgeta. God bless Papua New Guinea!"

Pope John Paul II

Dear Brother Bishops,

On this memorable day of the Beatification of the martyr-catechist Peter ToRot it gives me great joy to address you and to express my affection in the Lord for each one of you and for the people of God committed to your pastoral care: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom 15:13). Together with the whole Church in the glorious Communion of Saints, let us praise God the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for the gift of the new Blessed, and let us be confident that his courage as a martyr will inspire the Catholics of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands to be ever more steadfast in professing the one, holy, catholic and apostolic faith, and ever more faithful in living the demands of the Gospel.

The Church is "God's building" (1 Cor 3:9), whose Architect is Christ himself (cf. Mt 16:18). Her foundations, the ground of her durability and solidity, are Peter and the other Apostles. We who by God's design have succeeded to the apostolic ministry are charged with sustaining and increasing the household of God in the Spirit (cf. Christus Dominus, 1-2). As servants of the Gospel, our principal task is to "strive to excel in building up the Church" (1 Cor 14:12). To build up the Body of Christ in love entails both evangelization and a constant inner renewal of the Christian life. Our meeting here in Port Moresby gives me the opportunity to encourage you in fulfilling the tasks which the Lord has laid on your shoulders. It enables me to urge you to work together in ever increasing fraternal solidarity for the good of the Church in this "hour of grace" which we are living as we approach the Third Christian Millennium, "that new springtime of Christian life which will be revealed by the Great Jubilee, if Christians are docile to the action of the Holy Spirit" (Tertio Millennio Adveniente, 18).

The Year 2000 since the Birth of the Saviour is not meant to be an occasion for false enthusiasm or unreal expectations. Rather, because the measurements of time are imbued with the presence of God (cf. Ibid., 16), it can serve as an opportunity for consolidating the faith of your people through an intense programme of preaching and catechesis. If Christians and their communities are to grow stronger in faith, they must mature in their knowledge of Christ and his mysteries. The Catechism of the Catholic Church can be a very effective aid in presenting the fullness of Christian doctrine faithfully and systemically. Sound preaching and catechesis are the best means of helping men and women to believe "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they may have life in his name" (cf. Jn 20:31). In this, the heroic figure of Blessed Peter ToRot, catechist and martyr, is an outstanding model.

I am aware that in recent years there has been an influx of new religious movements and sects in this region. They thrive, at least in part, because some aspects of their activities fill the void left by the loss of traditional values and ways of living, a loss accompanying the massive changes in economic, politics and social life occurring throughout Melanesia. I urge you to continue your pastoral efforts to meet this challenge. The best and most adequate response lies in enabling every baptized Catholic to heed the exhortation of the First Letter of Peter: "Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15).

At the present time and during the coming decades, the Church in Melanesia will pass from being a predominantly missionary Church to one that is more and more indigenous. This is the normal pattern of the development of ecclesial life, and in the life of each particular Church it constitutes a very delicate moment. The *Plantatio Ecclesiae* is the work of brave and dedicated missionaries - men and women - who gradually prepare the community, and especially Christian families, to produce the priests, Religious and lay leaders it needs. In this way, the Church becomes firmly rooted in a people's life and culture. This is a long and sensitive process, needing much patient wisdom and heroic effort. In thanking God for the missionaries, principally the members of Religious Communities, who have worked and continue to work with such

Congregations which have members in your local Churches to do all they can to maintain and even increase that presence.

I am aware of the difficult circumstances in which you and priests exercise your ministry. In this context I wish to encourage you to remain close to priests, helping them to "fan into a flame the gift of God" (cf. 2 Tim 1:6) which they received at Ordination. Permanent intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation is necessary so that priests will be able to fulfil their spiritual service to God's People. This support is of special importance during the early years of priestly life. In these "decisive years" young priests "must benefit from a personal relationship with their own Bishop and with a wise spiritual father and from times of rest, of meditation and monthly recollection" (Congregation for the Clergy, Directory for the Life and Ministry of Priests, No. 93).

As the Plantatio Ecclesiae advances and Institutes of Consecrated Life move into a new stage, their prayer, their faithful observance of the evangelical counsels and their fraternal life become more and more a requisite for the Church's witness to holiness. In the particular Churches, consecrated men and women must be increasingly esteemed for what they are rather than for what they do! When society shows signs of fragmentation and certain aspects of consumerism and materialism cause a decline in traditional values. Religious must renew themselves in the light of the particular gift of their Founders and Foundresses, a gift received from God and approved by the Church (cf. Redemptionis Donum, 15). Only this way will their witness be truly prophetic, a constant reminder of the presence of God's kingdom in the world.

In a special way I urge you to foster the spiritual and ecclesial maturity of consecrated women, recognizing and promoting their specific contribution to the Church's life and mission. In many cases it is through their activities, carried out in close contact with the people, that the Church is felt to be lovingly present and the Gospel becomes genuinely incorporated into the fabric of a given society, a village or community. In order that this form of elevating and transforming "inculturation" may bring positive results, Religious themselves need to foster a genuinely Christ-centred spiritual life, as well as a serious and contemplative study of Sacred Scripture and knowledge of the teachings of the Magisterium.

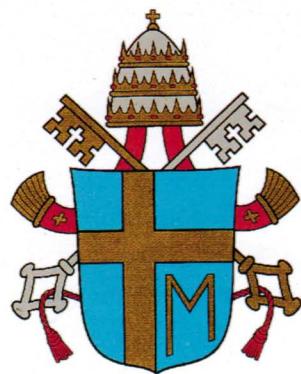
Yes, in many different ways the Holy Spirit is ever building the Church into "the temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6:16)! One of the principal channels for a deep and penetrating inculcation of the Gospel in a society is the Christian family, the fundamental nucleus of "the household of faith" (Gal 6:10). The deliberations and publications of your Conference show that you have taken the strengthening of family life as one of your pastoral priorities. Because this fundamental community of persons is not of man's making but originated "in the beginning", at the very dawn of creation (cf. Letter to Families, 2 February 1994, No. 18), the family must always be helped to rise to the level of the Creator's original plan: "a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

In Blessed Peter ToRot the faithful have a teacher of the holiness of marriage and of the family, one who confirmed his preaching with his blood. he was a devoted husband who prophetically lived the Gospel injunction that spouses are "mutually subject" to each other "out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:12) (cf. Mulieris Dignitatem, 24). He was a caring father who "honoured" his children (cf. Letter to Families, 15). Blessed Peter's death was decided upon largely because of this unbending defence of the sacramental dignity of marriage. May the faithful always hear in your teaching an echo of the voice of the Redeemer - in your appeals to marry sacramentally "in the Lord" (1 Cor 7:39), in your recalling the values of fidelity and mutual love, and in your invitations to spouses to live the full truth of conjugal chastity. This is all the more important since marriage for the baptized has been raised to the dignity of

a sacrament.

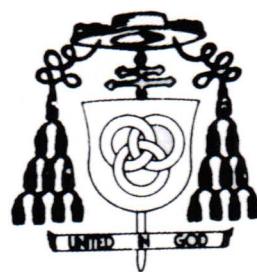
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate: thankful for "your partnership in the Gospel" (Phil 1:5), I assure you of my heartfelt support. I pray for you and your co-workers in the Lord. Through divine grace and the maternal protection of Mary, you are building up the Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, shaping it into a worthy dwelling place of God. May God abundantly bless your ministry.

With affection I impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and comfort in Christ the Lord.



“Together with you, we thank and praise God and our Holy Mother Mary for making this (visit) possible.”

Archbishop Peter Kurongku







Archbishop Karl Hesse of Rabaul thanks the Pope for the “Rite of Beatification” for Blessed Peter ToRot, 17 January 1995.

“I regret that I am not able to be with Peter ToRot’s beloved Tolai people on this occasion, but circumstances have not permitted me to go to New Britain. I wish I could visit all the people in the various parts of these Islands, but I can only stay very briefly. Therefore I assure all of you, wherever you are, that I am thinking of you.”

Pope John Paul II



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