

Lotu Katolik

Catholic Missions in Papua New Guinea and Oceania

VOLUME ONE

1880's



to 2024



By Mary R. Mennis MBE

**Lotu Katolik: Catholic Missions
in Papua New Guinea and Oceania**

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by

Mary Mennis M.A.; MBE

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Preface by His Excellency Cardinal Sir John Ribat



Different congregations came to Papua New Guinea with the idea of spreading the Word of God. At the beginning there were the Marists, the SVD's and the Sacred Heart Missionaries. They came and cared for the people with their health and education and gave of themselves whole heartedly in spreading the Word of God.

I was born in Volavolo Village which was the first mission established by the Sacred Heart Fathers in the Rabaul area in 1883. Later Vunapope was established and then a mission at Yule Island near Port Moresby.

As a young boy I lived on Watom Island and the first missionary I met came to the island to say Mass. My mother collected fruit and vegetables for him, and we got to know him. He was so caring and wonderful, that I decided I would like to be a priest like him and help my people.

I became an altar boy and later Bishop John Hoehne came to the island for confirmation and I took the name Matthew.

I went to school at Volavolo and then attended Chanel College with 24 other seminarians. Fifteen of us went on to become priests.

It is wonderful when Catholic and Protestant Churches in Papua New Guinea work closely together, to journey with the people and help the government solve national crises. In the past, one of the issues that brought us together was the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I was there when we launched an ecumenical movement to address this problem.

Now the issue is refugees. Our aim is to be 'one voice' and in this way we pull the churches together. By the Word of God, all of us have to unite to build His church on earth.

This always reminds me of the Voice of Christ – how he challenges us. "When I was hungry you fed me, when I was sick you came and visited me, and when I was homeless you cared for me." It is a message we cannot forget, or pretend the problem is not there.

Pope John Paul II visited Port Moresby in 1984 to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of the first MSC missionaries on Matupit Island in 1882. At the airport, where he was welcomed with a 21-gun salute, each round was greeted by the welcoming crowd with squeals of delight.

The Pope addressed the people there:

"I come especially as the chief Shepherd of the Catholic Church, to make a pastoral visit in this land. For some time now, it has been a special desire of my heart to celebrate in Papua New Guinea the Centenary of the arrival of the first missionaries who came to you in obedience to Christ's command: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.'"

On 31 March 1984 the Pope also visited Mt Hagen and was greeted by a crowd of thousands of people – the biggest crowd ever assembled in Papua New Guinea. His Holiness mentioned that "the zealous efforts and personal sacrifices of missionaries are well known throughout the world, as is the vitality and fervour of the Church here which the missionaries helped to form."

In 1995 Pope John Paul II came again to Port Moresby to beatify Blessed Peter To Rot. The ceremony was held at the Sir John Guise Stadium in Port Moresby. This time, Pope John Paul II said:

“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 – Blessed Peter To Rot.”

On 15th November 1966 the Hierarchy of Papua New Guinea was erected and Port Moresby was raised to the status of an Archdiocese, with Most Rev. Virgil Copas MSC as the first Archbishop. The Golden Anniversary of this occasion was marked on 30th November 2016 when a thousand people gathered at the Jack Pidik Park. It was also my first public appearance as Cardinal since his Holiness Pope Francis had appointed me just before this occasion. The Governor General, Sir Michael Ogio was present and thanked me for my working relationship with the Government. I replied that it is the faith that has united all the Christians in Papua New Guinea. I mentioned that one problem facing us is the rising sea levels across the Pacific, washing away good parts of our islands already. That is a great threat to us. And the work of the Church is to make governments aware that we are all responsible for the common good of our people.

Inculturation is strong among my Tolai people. When the first Mass was said in our Kuanua language the people were delighted. Someone played a guitar in the church for the first time and my mother danced in front of the altar. Everyone sang songs praising God in their own language. The people now feel that they are the Church - the Lotu Katolik.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mary Mennis for her great work in producing this book Lotu Katolik about the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea and Oceania. The information in the book will help the Seminarians at Bomana when studying this subject. The book will be of interest to many other people as well. Thank you, Mary.

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Roman Catholic Diocese of Wewak

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mount Hagen

Roman Catholic Diocese of Goroka

Roman Catholic Diocese of Kundiawa

Roman Catholic Diocese of Mendi

Roman Catholic Diocese of Wabag

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port Moresby

Roman Catholic Diocese of Alotau-Sideia

Roman Catholic Diocese of Bereina

Roman Catholic Diocese of Daru-Kiunga

Roman Catholic Diocese of Kerema

Roman Catholic Diocese of Bougainville

Roman Catholic Diocese of Kimbe

Most of these dioceses have been covered in this book.

Foreword by Fr Paul Steffen, SVD Professor of Mission Studies at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome

Mary Mennis has already contributed to the history of local cultures and the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea with several publications. As a young teacher working in East New Britain, in the 1960s, she became interested in the history of the beginnings of the Catholic Church on Matupit Island. The result of her research and many interviews made with local witnesses regarding their own history, was her first publication in 1971.

Her first book was: *They came to Matupit: the story of St. Michael's Church on Matupit Island*. Catholic Press, Vunapope 1972, reprinted University of Papua New Guinea Press, Port Moresby 2015.

In Mt Hagen in 1971, when she met Father William Ross, she made many interviews with him and people who had worked with him. The result was published as: *Hagen Saga. The story of Father William Ross, First American Missionary to Papua New Guinea*, (Institute of PNG Studies, Boroko, Port Moresby 1982. – reprinted University of Papua New Guinea Press, Port Moresby and Madang, 2015). Especially her second book on Catholic mission history found many interested readers and made the pioneering work of Fr Ross known to many people in Papua New Guinea and worldwide.

In 2016 she continued with the pioneering work of Fr William Ross and described it in her book: *From Rempì to Rebiāmul. Missions from Madang to Mt Hagen* (UPNG Press, Port Moresby 2016), the way how the coastal Rempì people were involved in starting a new mission in the Mount Hagen area in the Papua New Guinea Highlands. Mennis also helped to preserve the knowledge of canoe building traditions among the people of the Astrolabe Bay with her M.A. thesis: *Austronesian canoes of Astrolabe Bay*. (M.A. University of Papua New Guinea 1982).

In the last four decades, she produced and contributed many more publications to preserve the knowledge of ethnographic cultural heritage and mission history.

Three years ago, she was asked to teach at the Theological Institute at Bomana a course on Melanesian Church History. Mary Mennis was ready to do so and started to prepare her lectures for such an input in PNG. The pandemic, however, did not allow her to leave Australia and give the course at PNG. Instead, the idea was born to transform her class notes into a publication: *Lotu Katolik: Catholic Missions in Papua New Guinea, 1882 to 2020*.

Mary R. Mennis covers in her latest publication the mission history of all dioceses of Papua New Guinea. Each section is enriched with historical photos of the region and of the main actors of the Church in the particular diocese not only in the historical past but even up to the present time.

The introduction gives an historical overview of various Christian missions in Melanesia. Part thirteen contains a number of issues not only of the historical past, but even mentions issues of the present time, being general subjects for the whole of Papua New Guinea like: 1. The Legion of Mary; 2. The Inculturation of the liturgy; 3. The Ecumenical movement between the churches; 4 The localisation of the hierarchy; 5. Overcoming the problems of domestic violence; 6. Combating belief in sorcery; 7. The Movement for a Better World. Mennis adds in this section a brief overview about the history of other churches and missions to understand the history of the Catholic mission in the context of Protestant missions.

Mennis explains why her book “Lotu Katolik” starts each chapter with a study of the original culture of the people, followed by the establishment of the missions and the early missionaries and the troubles they faced, sometimes against overwhelming odds. In each diocese studied

she has endeavoured to make a picture of the progression of the Catholic Church. While this progression was happening, there were many difficulties to overcome: problems of other denominations settling nearby and the friction that occurred; there were difficulties meeting the rules of the Governments in office whether it was the German Government or the Australians; then there were the war years both the First World War and its impact on them and more critically the Second World War when the number of missionaries were decimated and mission stations destroyed; then the rebuilding after war. Since Mary Mennis lived in Madang for eight years (1971 – 1979) she has collected in those years oral traditions of the people in the Madang area. This rich research material with many recorded interviews gives to her writing in *Lotu Katolik* a special flavour and insight into the culture of the people. She used her time in Papua New Guinea to make many interviews with missionaries and local people. All these interviews are used extensively in this book. This is undoubtedly the hallmark of Mary Mennis's historiography. This alone earns Mennis a place in the forefront of Papua New Guinea missionary historiography.

Lotu Katolik has 15 parts or chapters, which covers areas and topics in the following way: Part O: Oceania Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands; 1. Part One: Bougainville, North Solomon Islands; 2. Part Two: Milne Bay The Marists and Sacred Heart Missions; 3. Part Three: Rabaul, Vunapope and the Sacred Heart Missions; 4. Part Four: Morobe, Vaimo and Wabag 6. Part Five: Madang and the SVD Missions; 6. Part Six: Mt Hagen and the Western Highlands; 7. Part Seven: Yule Island and Bereina and the MSC missions; 8. Part Eight: Port Moresby, the Gulf and Western Provinces; 9. Part Nine. Aitape and the Franciscans OFM; 10. Part Ten: Wewak and the SVD Missions; 11. Part Eleven: The Southern Highlands and the Capuchin Friars; 12. Part Twelve: Simbu Province and the Eastern Highlands; 13. Part Thirteen: we find the general topics and Part Fourteen has the conclusions. Part Fifteen is the Bibliography.



Fr Paul and friends in Papua New Guinea

Her book is a study book not only for students of theology but students of the cultures and churches/missions and the society of Papua New Guinea. Mennis quotes in her book from relevant sources enabling students to use these as primary source materials in their studies.

“Basically, the book is a textbook for the students in the Holy Spirit Seminary at Bomana, Port Moresby for their course on the Melanesian church history,” writes Mennis.

But beyond this purpose [of a textbook for the seminarians] the book is also of importance for all

kinds of people of Papua New Guinea and especially for the members of the Catholic Church. It is easy to read.

It is the first popular written book on the history of the Catholic Church in New Guinea and therefore fills an existing gap in the historiography of Papua New Guinea. It is desirable that many Papua New Guineans will come to know and appreciate it and thereby increase their knowledge of the history of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea.

Paul B. Steffen, SVD

Prof. of Mission Studies at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome

Author's Note

In 2019 I was invited to teach a history course at the Catholic Theological Institute CTI in Port Moresby. After I accepted the invitation and spent time preparing the notes, Covid struck, and I was unable to go. Instead, I decided to write a textbook for the students covering the topics. I spent many years in Papua New Guinea interviewing people and collecting stories and used these as a basis.

Rabaul 1962 – 1971. I first went to PNG in 1962 when I was 23 years old to teach in Rabaul. My first posting was on Matupit Island which was connected to the Rabaul area by a causeway. Each morning a government driver would drive the teachers out by four-wheel drive over the causeway in clear view of the looming Tavurvur volcano. Matupit was a small island where the first missionaries of the Sacred Heart arrived in 1882 only 82 years previously. There was a monument down near the beach to mark this occasion. Fr Franke, the then Parish Priest, introduced me to Paulina Ia Dok, his oldest parishioner. Paulina was born in the 1880s and remembered some of the earliest missionaries, including Bishop Couppé and Fr Navarre. As a young girl, Paulina had been offered in marriage to an older man. When she refused to co-operate, her father was angry as he had received a lot of shell money for her. Paulina escaped from Matupit one night by paddling her canoe to Vunapope where Bishop Couppé hid her in the convent. Paulina wanted to marry Stephen To Paivu, the catechist on Matupit. Bishop Couppé persuaded her father to accept this. They married and had many children including To



Keta who helped Blessed Peter To Rot in the many interrogations he endured during the war. I was fascinated by Paulina's many stories and so began my life-long practice of collecting stories in PNG.

Photo: Fr Madigan at rear, flanked by To Keta on his right and Alois To Mailil. Catechist To Paivu and Paulina Ia Dok are seated, surrounded by their other children

In 1964, I married Brian Mennis, a surveyor and our first child John Bernard was named after Fr Bernard Franke. I wrote a book about Matupit Island - *They came to Matupit* - about the first missionaries and the later history of Matupit and Vunapope. When John Bernard was learning to walk, I was asked to tutor a young Tolai man, Benedict To Varpin who was hoping to join the seminary. He needed basic knowledge of Latin, which I had majored in at university. I thought young Benedict would make a good priest and I was proven correct when he became a priest and then the bishop of Bereina and lastly was consecrated Archbishop of Madang.

My book *Tubuan and Tabernacle* is about both Bishop Benedict and Fr Franke. The title itself is symbolic of what Benedict tried to achieve. For decades the German missionaries had banned the Tubuan as evil. Archbishop Benedict and his friend Archbishop To Paivu, both Tolai men, argued that the *Tubuan* was an important part of their culture. They succeeded in reversing the ban on it and now tubuans can be seen everywhere in Rabaul. It is part of the inculturation encouraged by Pope St John Paul II. Interestingly enough Archbishop To Paivu was named after the catechist, To Paivu, Ia Dok's husband. This is not to say that the German missionaries were not interested in the local culture. For example, three of them collected the old myths and legends of the people. Fr Janssen translated them into English and together with Brenda Skinner of the Methodist Church, we published *The Tolai Myths of Origin*. Some of these myths echo stories in Genesis.

Mt Hagen 1971, for six months

In 1971, after nine years in Rabaul, Brian and I and our children spent six months in Mt Hagen. While there I met the famous Fr Ross who was the first missionary to the Western Highlands. In 1934, he travelled for forty days from the coast to Mt Hagen over the mountains with a group of other missionaries and mission helpers. No-one had written his story, so I offered to record his memories on a tape recorder. He agreed to this so long as he didn't have to do any work. My friend, Marj Jamieson, the wife of the Lutheran pastor, Rev Bob Jamieson drove Fr Ross and me out to Danny Leahy's plantation and we had a lovely time poring over his photographs and reminiscing about the old days. Dan and Mick Leahy discovered the Highland people in 1933, they were friendly with Fr Ross and encouraged him to go there in 1934.

I also interviewed Chief Wamp Wan who had met Fr Ross in 1934. He and his people were amazed at seeing white men for the first time. When the first plane flew in, they thought it was a large foreign bird. Chief Wamp and Chief Ninji Kama gave Fr Ross great support in those early years. Some of Fr Ross's workers, particularly Peter Manui, remembered the forty-day trek they took over the mountains including the day of the week where they stayed the night and what they ate. From this I was able to make a map of the trek. In 2014 I was delighted when the Rempi and Rebiamul people decided to follow this map as a pilgrimage route. Up to 500 people traversed part of the route, arriving at Rebiamul in time for Easter. The first book I wrote on the Hagen mission was called *Hagen Saga*. Years later my book *Rempi to Rebiamul* covered missions in Madang, the Chimbu and the Western Highlands.

Madang 1971 – 1979

When Brian became the Regional Surveyor of the north coast, our family lived in Madang for eight years in the 1970s. During this time, I was interested in the culture of the Bel people and made over 100 tapes of their oral traditions in *tok pisin*.

I also made trips to nearby Alexishafen and noted the destruction from the war and saw the many graves of missionaries who had died in the war. In the storeroom at the Mission Centre, I met Brother Gerhoch who had survived the horrors of the war and helped Bishop Wolf up until his death during the war. In the 1970s, scholarly Bishop Noser had his headquarters in Alexishafen and rode his bicycle around the mission campus. The cathedral, built by Bishop Wolf before the war was never rebuilt and the headquarters were shifted to Madang when Archbishop Arkfeld took over. I also made friends with Lutheran Dr Braun and his wife and got their perspective on history. He was a good friend of Bishop Wolf.

In 1979 – 1982. We lived in Port Moresby when Brian was acting Surveyor General of PNG, and I began to write up my research and translate interviews from *Tok Pisin*. When our family left PNG in 1982, I became a teacher again.

In 1994 during four months sabbatical leave, I returned to Madang, and stayed at the Catholic Mission Centre. Archbishop Benedict took me everywhere: up to Bundi in the mountains by a small plane; up the Ramu River by canoe; and to Bogia on the north coast and other inland villagers. It was an eye opener to see the church in action. Bishop Benedict organised singing groups to dance into the church when administering confirmation and the people came from everywhere attracted by the colourful celebrations.

In 2019, I met Cardinal Sir John Ribat in Port Moresby. He is Bishop Benedict's cousin and belongs to Volavalo Village in Rabaul. It was their ancestors who tried to attack the early Missionaries in the 1880s as depicted on the cover of this book. When the missionaries sang the Te Deum while standing on the beach, the chiefs on hearing the beautiful singing changed their minds and welcomed them into the village. Now one of their descendants is the Cardinal

(he is seated in the middle of the photograph on the cover). He holds the very highest position in the church in PNG and another was Benedict to Varpin, Archbishop of Madang.

There are many people to thank in writing this book. First are all the people who I interviewed. Their anecdotes have added colour to the factual history which can be a bit dry at times. Thanks also to Archbishop Young of Mt Hagen who has always supported my work on the missions.

In July 2022, my brother, Dr John Eccles and I spent a wonderful week with the seminarians at the Catholic Theological Institute in Bomana and I was delighted to attend classes with the students of Melanesian Church History. Their lecturer, Fr Peter Silong was using the rough draft of this book as their textbook. While there we met the Principal, Fr Martin Wallace and the Rector, Fr Jacek Tendej and had interesting meetings and dinners with them. We also caught up with the now former Dean, Brandon Zimmerman and his wife Rebecca, the Librarian who helped me along the way. In August 2022, Fr Tomas Ravaioli of the Liturgical Catechetical Institute (LCI) in Goroka contacted me about publishing this book and I thank him also for his interest. Dr. Will Britt, Present Dean, is also giving sound advice on the manuscript. Trudy Graham of the Women Writers' Group in Brisbane did some good editing of the manuscript. My gratitude to all those mentioned above.

My thanks also to my children John, Paul, Greg, and Joanna, and to my printer Christian Scudamore who has helped me so much over the years. My friend Colin Mackerras advised about the text. Also, my friends Trish Tsharke, Ann Aboud and Judy Brown for support. Last, but not least is the great help and support from Cardinal Ribat with information about the Catholic church in Papua New Guinea which he leads so well.

This year, 2024, is the 90th anniversary of the trek Fr Willie Ross and other missionaries and 70 carriers did over the Bismarck mountains and all the way to Mt Hagen. As a commemoration of their pioneering work, forty pilgrims left Rempì on 22nd February 2024 and visited all the mission stations marked on the map I made in 1971. Thousands took part in celebrations. At each station According to Archbishop Young of Mt Hagen there are now over 200,000 Catholics in the Mt Hagen Diocese.

Looking back on my life I can see patterns and guidance in the places I lived, in the people I met and interviewed and the mission stories I collected. I often wondered if God had a plan for my life. If so, He surely led me down unusual paths. For example, my first posting to Matupit Island where the first missionaries landed in 1882 and the nine years in Rabaul; followed by six months in Mt Hagen where I actually met the first missionary there and wrote 3 books about the Mt Hagen mission. The eight years in Madang enabled me to interview village people and these can be found in this book. All these postings were with my surveyor husband Brian and our four children John, Paul Greg and Joanna I can only thank God for this and give Him credit when things were going well. He must surely have a sense of humour in choosing me, now a broken reed. I wrote this paragraph while recovering in hospital from a car accident in June 2021 and now in July 2024 I still suffer the consequences. Deo Gratias.



Family Photo: 1975.

Mary Mennis SFO. MBE M.A
July 2024



Image used for educational purposes only.

1. Wallis and Futuna. St Peter Chanel, Marist Missionary and Martyr in Futuna

2. Fiji

3. New Caledonia

4. Samoa

5. Solomon Islands – South Solomon Islands

¹ <https://www.jeanclaudecolin.org/biography>

Catholic missions in Papua New Guinea – synopsis

PART ONE - Bougainville is initially treated as North Solomons in Church history as the Marists travelled from one area to the other and set up mission stations. In the early days, Bougainville was part of the German Colony and the missionary endeavours to bring peace between warring tribes were appreciated.

PART TWO - Milne Bay where both the Marist missionaries and the Sacred Heart Missionaries worked. The Marist missionaries were the first to set up a mission in New Guinea when they went to the Trobriands in about 1837. Although their mission there was not successful, they still deserve the credit for establishing the first mission in Papua New Guinea. Most of this section deals with the growth of the missions in the Milne Bay Province by the Sacred Heart Missions beginning in Sideia.

PART THREE - The missions in East New Britain including Rabaul and Vunapope. Sacred Heart Missionaries first arrived in 1882 and there is a monument to their arrival on Matupit Island. The previous year in 1881, Fr Chevalier head of the missionaries of the Sacred Heart had received a request from the prefect of the Propagation of the Faith requesting that missionaries to go to New Guinea. He replied that the Pope could rely on their blind obedience to send missionaries there. It was a difficult task but they succeeded, and today there are many mission stations there.

PART FOUR - Morobe, Vanimo and Wabag These three Dioceses are not adjacent, but they have some common history. The Passionists who began in Lae, later moved to Vanimo and the Marianville Fathers took over Lae. The papal decree was signed by Pope John XXIII on 18 June 1959. The first Marianhillers arrived in Lae in February 1960. The Catholic population was a minority, of about 1,750 people. Forty years later, the diocese increased to over 25,000. Wabag was contacted through the Mt Hagen mission originally. Vanimo was begun by the SVD's and then the Franciscans before the Passionists arrived.

PART FIVE - Madang Missions and Alexishafen The SVD Fathers who first arrived in Madang in 1896 were not welcomed by the German officials who had the ear of the Lutheran pastors, so they followed the coast to Tumleo Island and on the nearby mainland. Later they bought land at Sek Harbour near Madang. It became known as Alexishafen and before the war it grew bigger than Madang town itself. Br Gerhoch and Archbishop Benedict gave insights into this history.

PART SIX - Mt Hagen and the Western Highlands Fr Ross and Fr Schaefer ventured in there in the 1930s from Alexishafen. Today the Catholic Missions now spread over the whole of Western Highlands. I interviewed Fr Ross, Fr Noss and Archbishop Bernarding, and Archbishop Young of Mt Hagen and many others while collecting some of this history.

PART SEVEN - Yule Island and Bereina Yule Island is part of the story of the Sacred Heart Missionaries in Rabaul. This chapter then leads up to the establishment of mission centres in the capital Port Moresby which had once been the exclusive domain of the London a strong mission developed there with many Bishops. The early missionaries here were mainly French as the German Government in Rabaul preferred to have German missionaries.

PART EIGHT- Port Moresby, Western Province and the Gulf At first, the Church did not make much headway because this area was first known as British New Guinea and the government favoured the London Missionary Society, the LMS. In 1915, with the establishment of the headquarters of the Catholic Church in Port Moresby, it has a strong presence there with the establishment of parishes and schools. The Church in the Western Province and the Gulf prospered with the arrival of the Montfort Missionaries.

PART NINE - Aitape Although the SVD began in the Aitape area in the 1890s, their numbers were so depleted in the war the Franciscans were asked to take over the area. Years ago, I had interviewed Fr Ferdy Parer in Brisbane and found he had been in the first group of Franciscans to go to the Aitape area. His anecdotes provide a good insight into the developments of the missions there. Bishop Doggett was also a mine of information. Aitape suffered much with the tsunami in 1998.

PART TEN - Wewak and the Sepik areas The SVDs did early work here before the establishment of Alexishafen. The Sepik area was begun by the SVD missionaries, particularly Fr Kirschbaum. Kassa Townsend, a government official moved the district headquarters from Aitape to Wewak. Bishop Loerks was keen to move his mission headquarters from Tumleo to Kairuru Island, close to Wewak. When the Japanese invaded, Bishop Loerk's territory included the Wewak hinterland and the remote Sepik River areas.

PART ELEVEN - The Southern Highlands where the OFM Cap, the Capuchin Order of St Francis established strong missions spreading as far as the inland areas and linking with missions established by the Sacred Heart missions from Bereina. I did not have much material on the Southern Highlands and the Franciscan Cap Order, but I received permission to use their own interesting history called "*Only the Beginnings.*"

PART TWELVE - Simbu and the Eastern Highlands This chapter covers a large geographic area from the earliest contacts by Fr Schaefer and Fr Nilles to the sisters who came and worked tirelessly. Through the lives of the bishops of these two areas we can study the developments in Simbu with its original name of Chimbu and the Goroka area alongside it.

PART THIRTEEN - General topics. In all the missions mentioned above many other orders of Sisters and Brothers came to help in the catholic missions and they will be covered in the various chapters. Overall, their work and the efforts of other denominations like the Lutherans, the Methodists, the LMS and Anglicans have turned Papua New Guinea into a Christian country. Many of the people are very spiritual which gives them hope when the country faces corruption, poverty and the growing fear of sorcery.

PART FOURTEEN – Conclusions and further Discussions

PART FIFTEEN – Bibliography

Part 0. Oceania and the Marists – the beginning

Wherever the Catholic missionaries went in the Pacific and later in Papua New Guinea, they found missionaries of other faiths ahead of them. The reasons for this belatedness can be found in the politics in Europe at the time. Catholic evangelism dates only from the entry of the Picpus Fathers into Polynesia in 1827.

Hugh Laracy gives two reasons why the Protestants had the Pacific to themselves for such a long time.

1. The first is the decline of Spain as an imperial power during the seventeenth century; the Spanish missionary movement, which brought Catholicism to the Pacific, had functioned in close dependence on Spanish expansion. This dependence had been strikingly demonstrated in 1577. An apostolic Franciscan, fired by the reports of Mendana's chaplains, had gathered twenty-two friars at Seville to await transport to the Solomons; shortly before their intended departure, they were diverted by royal decree to the Philippines.

2. The second reason is the absorption of Catholic energies, from the late eighteenth century, in the struggle for survival in Europe. The suppression of the Jesuits, the French Revolution and the conflict with Napoleon largely destroyed the Church's capacity for missionary work.²

And yet once matters settled in France there was a resurgence of missionaries to the Pacific mainly the Marist Fathers, Brothers and Sisters as well as the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart at Issoudun.

1. Wallis and Futuna

Delbos mentions developments in his history. Tried in France by the excesses of the Revolution and the bleeding of the Napoleonic wars, the Church got herself back up progressively and experienced all through the 19th and up to the first half of the 20th century a remarkable Missionary development. Numerous religious congregations, male and female - of which certain ones started in the heart of revolutionary persecutions - saw the day, most launching themselves very quickly in the great adventure of faraway evangelization.

To evoke only the Pacific, it is the case among others of the Marists, the Missionaries of the Sacred-Heart of Issoudun, of the Fathers of the Holy-Hearts of Jesus and Mary (better known under the title of the Picpus Fathers, from the name of the street of their motherhouse in Paris). them, born at the same era, have known a remarkable development in the archipelagos of the "Great Ocean", as well as in Papua-New Guinea, in Australia, in New Zealand, God knows at the price of what sacrifices and generosity. The parishes of France were proud to have given priests, sisters, brothers to the far away missions.

Jean-Claude Colin

Jean-Claude Colin, founder of the Marist Orders was born in 1790 and baptised at St Bonnet-le-Troncy, France, 7th August 1790, as the French Revolution began its reign of terror. His quiet ambition was to be a priest amongst the neglected Catholic people of his nation abandoned in their faith during and after the Revolution. He was ordained in the city of Lyons on Jul 22, 1816.

The next day he was one of twelve young men promising to found a religious family bearing the name of Mary - 'Marists'.

² Laracy, Hugh. *Marists and Melanesians; A History of the Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands*

There would be branches of priests, sisters, brothers, and laity. The young Colin became the founder of the Marist Fathers and worked tirelessly to promote the Marist Family.

In 1836 the priests' branch was approved by the Holy See as Fr Colin offered to send missionaries 'to whatever distant shore' including the remote missions of the south-west Pacific, in exchange for the requested approval. This was granted some months later, by the brief "*Omnium gentium*" of 29th April 1836. By this the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith entrusted to the priest's branch of the Society of Mary the "*Apostolic Vicariate of western Oceania*."³

As the father of the blossoming group of missionaries Fr Colin won the affection and respect of the pioneer Marists as the infant Society of Mary, was called. Under his leadership as superior general, the group expanded in numbers, ministries, and extraordinary missionary influence.



Father Jean-Claude Colin

In the latter years of his life, he perfected the rule and constitutions of the Marist Fathers. He died at La Neylière, France, on Nov 15, 1875. He was 85 years old.

St Peter Chanel, Marist Missionary and Martyr in Futuna



Peter Chanel was professed with the other aspirants as a Marist on 24 September 1836, and was made the superior of the band of seven Marist missionaries that set out on 24 December from le Havre. Chanel went to Futuna Island near Fiji, accompanied by a French lay brother Marie-Nizier Delorme. They arrived on 8 November 1837.

They were well received by Futuna's king Niuliki. And began to learn the language. They suffered deprivations but despite little apparent success and severe want, Peter maintained endless patience and courage. It was a difficult mission, requiring him to cope with isolation and acclimatise to different foods and customs, but it eventually began to bear some fruit.

All went well with the king until his son, Meitala, sought baptism from Peter Chanel. The king was angry and believed Christianity would undermine his authority as high priest. He sent his son-in-law, Musumusu, to "do whatever was necessary" to resolve the problem. Musumusu went to the king's son, Meitala and the two fought. Musumusu, injured in the fracas, went to Chanel feigning need of medical attention. While Chanel tended him, a group of others ransacked his house. Musumusu took an axe and clubbed Chanel to death. Chanel died on 28 April 1841.⁴

³ P278 Delbos

⁴ <https://www.jeanclaudecolin.org/biography>



The Queen of Wallis and her court

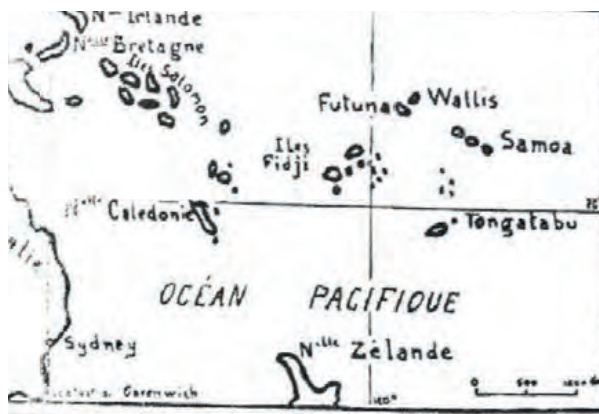
After this persecution raged. The king himself became a part of it, thus reinforcing the opposition of certain chiefs. He even went in person to Nukutea to chase out several catechumens. And there it was, that despite this royal disavowal, the religion, although forced into hiding, still gained ground. At this time, the end of 1839, roughly half of the island was

converted. It is a well-known fact that persecution always favours the gospel.⁵

6

Developments in Wallis and Futuna

The 21st June 1966 was a big date for the Catholic Church in Oceania. It was at that time that numerous missions were transformed. Henceforth, the Church was directly linked to the hierarchy through the Archdiocese of Noumea, to which it was attached to form, with the New Hebrides, the ecclesiastical Province of this name. It was the official recognition that the work of the Missionaries was not in vain, that the faith had taken root in the archipelago, that the goal had been reached, the promise kept. ---The essential thing was in the fact that your community had reached maturity: it renewed itself by its baptisms, it had its religious men and women, its priests and soon its bishop. In the main, it was sufficient for itself.



A part of the Western Oceania

The state of the diocese in 1965 gave it authenticity - it numbered as many native priests as expatriates and 53 religious women of the country as against 22 coming from the outside. The young indigenous priests began to take over from the old missionaries who disappeared little by little, such as Father Antoine Marquet in November 1966. He had arrived in 1911.

He had been professor in the seminary in the beginning, then assigned to Mua, to Hihifo, to Matautu. A great apostle! Four Wallisian priests concelebrated his burial Mass. That says everything!

⁵ P80 Delbos

⁶ P76

2. Fiji missions

The Pope created the Vicariate General of Apostolic of Western Oceania in 1835. It covered a vast area, including New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands, the Gilbert Islands and New Guinea. Jean-Baptiste Pompallier (1802-1871) was appointed the Vicar Apostolic and, together with a group of Marist missionaries, he sailed for the Pacific in



The former church of Sigave at Futuna (Engraving of the XIXth century)

1837. Pompallier made New Zealand the centre of his operations and he was to become the first Bishop of Auckland in 1848.

The Marists quickly spread through the western Pacific, reaching Wallis and Futuna Islands in 1837, Tonga in 1842, New Caledonia in 1843, Fiji in 1844 and Samoa in 1845. The large vicariate was soon divided into a number of dioceses and vicariates. The Vicariate of Central Oceania was created in 1842 under Bishop Pierre Bataillon. However, in the Fiji Islands they found that

the Wesleyan missionaries were already well established and did not welcome the Catholic intrusion as they called it.⁷

The Wesleyan influence in Fiji

In the Pacific, Wesleyan missions were established in the Friendly Islands (Tonga) in 1822 and Fiji in 1835. The Pacific missions achieved considerable success. Strongly supported by George Tupou, the first king of Tonga, Wesleyan Methodism became the official religion of the Friendly Islands, while in Fiji Wesleyans made up about half the population by the early twentieth century. The first mission in Samoa was short-lived (1835-39), but missionaries returned in 1857 and achieved a permanent presence in the Samoan islands. The Fiji archipelago was the first in Melanesia to receive Christianity in 1835 through the links with Tonga and the Wesleyan Mission. The influence of Methodism in Fiji has had considerable influence on traditional social structure and hierarchical leadership that is still evident in the church today (Tomlinson 2009; Newland 2006: 333)⁸



Wesleyan teacher and family

⁷ Methodist Missionary Society 25 Marylebone Road London NW1

⁸ Tomlinson 2009; Newland 2006: 333

The Marists in Fiji

In 1836, the Marists were asked to send missionaries to the territory of the southwest Pacific. In return for eventual acceptance, the group were promised formal approbation, granted by Pope Gregory XVI. The first Marist missionaries in Fiji were Jean-Baptiste Bréhéret and Joseph-François Roulleaux. They first worked at Lakeba Breheret and Br. Annet, arrived in Lakeba in 1844 to establish the Catholic Church in Fiji, they dedicated the mission station at Lakeba to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows.

After being in Lakeba for ten years, the Marists withdrew defeated by the influence of the Wesleyans who gained the backing of the chiefs on the island. It was a time of a few successes but many losses. Some people preferred to stay with the old cultural beliefs. Herewith a few extracts from the letters of the priests who were there at this time make interesting reading. In the first letter, Fr Roulleaux wrote to Fr Colin the founder of the Marists who was in France.

Letter of Roulleaux to Colin 12 November 1845.

Fiji Mission, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, Lakeba. 1845.

Very Reverend Father,

Leaving Tonga on 30 July 1844, we saw, from the second day, the eastern islands of Fiji. We saw them come up out of the water one by one as we advanced; and we couldn't look at them without fearing the terrible reefs which surround them. They are small high islands, not very fertile, but well covered with trees. Some are barren and uninhabited. It is to these islands above all that the Tongans come to build their big canoes. There are a thousand or more Tongans, heretics for the most part. Their big chief, rather like our consuls in the colonies, has his permanent residence in Lakeba, the most fertile and the capital of all the eastern islands which, numbering twelve or fifteen, form a small kingdom whose population does not exceed four thousand people I think, counting the Tongans.



A Fijian chief. (George Brown, page 304)

I have nothing truly consoling to tell you of our little mission in Fiji, except a lot of suffering and contradictions. That has been our daily bread for the nearly fifteen months that we have been here. Scorn, insults, calumnies, persecutions, defections, sickness, nakedness, famine, we have been tested in all sorts of ways. We have been really small, and we are still small, or to express it better, we are still nothing. Six newly baptised, of whom three are dead, and six catechumens, of whom four have returned to heresy or to paganism: these are the gains and losses of this first year.⁹

2 February 1845 Fr. Roulleaux went to see the Fijian king of Lakeba who received him rather coldly. He spoke in defence of his gods. He said it is a long time that Jesus Christ has been dead and that perhaps it is a made-up story. "Our poverty hurts them and makes them have contempt for us". Fr. Roulleaux learned that there was a sick woman in a distant village. He ran there very quickly

with Mosese in the pouring rain, but already this person had accepted heresy (Wesleyanism) and was much better.¹⁰

31 March 1845. The brother of Tongavalevale came to bring a small root and he remained a long time with us. He seemed earnest and seemed to want to become a Catholic. At the sight

⁹ P23 Fr. John Crispin

¹⁰ 118 Crispin

of a picture of Our Lord he made several times a touching prayer where he prayed to Our Lord to make things clear to him, to have pity on him, to save him. He wanted a cross, a big one because he is a chief, a rosary and a medal. He did not want to wear them in public because, he said, he still fears the big chiefs.

24 February 1846 It rained all day yesterday, during the night and all morning today. The king has consulted the devil through his priest to know if there would be a hurricane or only rain. The priest replied that there will be no hurricane at all but that the island would be unfortunate and there would be war if they abandoned paganism.

14 August 1849. We learned that the number of heretics (Wesleyans) has increased greatly in Moala. The heretics' ship has returned from Ono. They say that the Pope has been chained up and that he has become a heretic.

August 1850 There was a big assembly of the whole island in the church of the heretics. They gave a quantity of mats and tapa etc. for the spreading of their work.

22 August 1850. We went to see the king who is starting to get an appreciation of heresy. *Page 316*

9 May 1852. Only one of the Fijians who converted last Sunday came back to prayer. The heretics tormented them a lot to get them to go back to heresy. It is more than probable that they have gone back because of these entreaties and have abandoned our religion. These Fijians lack character and resolve. They change their religion, so to speak, like their clothes. They have no scruples. Mafu came to hear the rosary; it was a long since he last came. *Page 363.*¹¹



Five Fijian girls (George Brown 288)

3 August 1852 This morning the "John Wesley" came. It returned from Rotuma. We will know later the news, or rather the lies that it brought. This evening six young boys from the fort came to ask for medals, saying that they wanted to be Catholics. I took a risk, giving them to each one.

12 August 1852 It is eight years today that Fr. Breheret and Roulleaux had been in Fiji.

29 August 1852 Sunday. Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. All our new converts made their communion for the conversion of the island. The younger

Loganimoce came back to prayer, of his own wish. His return filled all our praying members with joy. They sang the litany of the Blessed Virgin with spirit and a burst of piety that I have never seen before in the last eight years. Afterwards we had kava. The young prince told his companions that he has had his fill of heresy, that he would prefer to die than to return to it and that he would wait for the arrival of old Mikaele to build a church. The news of his return reached his father. He sent a messenger to look for him. He called together all his children and declared to them that he expects them to follow his religion.



¹¹ *Fr. John Crispin*

He said that if the island became papist, we would take their women, etc. His children remained silent. It was reported to us that he has renounced our religion again, but we don't know anything more (page 385). 2 September 1852 The king came to see us. We made kava for him. He told us that he was not persecuting our religion, but he used many words to deceive us. We replied to him that he had called our religion a bad religion, a religion that will steal our women and our land etc. He sought to excuse himself. I told him that he could deceive us but that he could not deceive God who sees the depths of our hearts. (Page 386)

22, 23, 24 December 1852. With the help of our Fijians we cleaned our yard, our compound and our prayer house for the feast of Christmas. Our Fijians have made us six bottles of good oil during recent days. We celebrated midnight Mass as usual. At the sound of the lali and the bell several catechumens came to assist. We celebrated two Masses, midnight and morning. The ministers have also made it an obligation to celebrate the feast. It is still a novelty. We have not seen this done before while we have been here.

The Lakeba journal ends on 29 December 1852. In 1853, the two priests buried Brother Paschase, who died in their arms. If there were any conversions, more than half of them went over to the Wesleyans. The persecutions were so violent, and the Catholics were too new in their faith to hope that they would be martyrs. We shall see again the poor fathers in Lakeba in 1855. Bishop Bataillon went to Lakeba, where finding that the station offered only no more than feeble hope, in spite of the heroic efforts of the missionaries for eleven years, he suppressed the station. He told the fathers of Lakeba to abandon their few catechumens, numbering between ten and twelve, three of whom were sons of the chief, and in whom Fathers Breheret and Roulleaux had placed great hope.



Fijian Dance (George Brown 264)

These three remained faithful, because for a long time after the fathers had left these three young men fought with true heroism against the persecutions of the Wesleyan ministers. The oldest was exiled in view of his energetic resistance which he had shown to the Wesleyan minister in Lakeba. The second was killed for the same reason. The third, who is now the chief of the entire eastern district, remained Catholic for a long time. Several years after the departure of the priests he showed great zeal in baptizing those who were dying and wished to be baptised in the Catholic religion. Today he is not Catholic, but he says that Catholic religion which had been obliged to abandon is always the religion of his heart, and he still has a love for it today, a love that will never be extinguished. The bishop decided that there will be only one station in Fiji, that of Ovalau, where there would remain the three priests, Fathers Breheret, Favier and Michel, having with them Brother Sorlin. They will visit the different. The number of Catholics in Lau according to these statistics were 1857 = 21; 1858 = 52; 1859 = 54. (page 402)¹²

¹² Crispin : 402

The Marist Brothers and Sisters

Marist Brothers High School is a **Roman Catholic all-boys high school** situated in Suva, the capital of Fiji. It is a school in the Marist tradition, founded in 1946 by the order of Marist Brothers, which has had a presence in Fiji since 1844.



The Brothers of Fiji celebrate their retreat and were joined by a number of Lay Champagnat Marists. The first Brother arrived in Fiji in 1888 to open their first school. 2013 marks the 125th anniversary of the school at Suva Street. The Brothers have four other institutions in Suva: Marist Brothers High School (established 1937), Saint Marcellin primary school (1963) – celebrated 50 years in 2013, Champagnat Institute (2000) and Marcellin Angels Kindergarten (2009)

The Marist Sisters – recent news.

30 April 2019 The Superior General of the Marist Sisters, Sister Grace Ellul was in Levuka yesterday to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Marist Convent School and to commemorate the arrival of the Marist Sisters to Levuka with fellow nuns and local residents.

Marist Sisters and friends in Fiji



“125 years ago, the first Marist Sisters came to Levuka. The first Marist Sisters who came to Levuka were Sister Melanie, Sister Sabestian and Sister Martha. The theme of the event is ‘Celebrate, Innovate and Rejuvenate’. The Marist Sisters are a religious order of Roman Catholic women who have dedicated their lives to serving others. The Marist Sisters recognise Jeanne-Marie Chavoin as their foundress and Jean-Claude Colin as their founder. The first Marist Sisters arrived in Levuka from England. They were welcomed by the Catholic Community of Levuka led by Bishop Vidal who was residing in Cawaci at that time. Edited by Mohammed Zulfikar.” *Feedback* rosi.doviverata@fjisisun.com.fj

3. The Beginning of the Catholic Church in New Caledonia

On 19 December 1843 some Marist missionaries travelling on the French ship *Bucephale* arrived in New Caledonia. They were the first Catholic missionaries to come to this island. On board were Bishop Douarre, Father Viard and Father Rougeyron and Brothers Taragnat and Marmoiton, the captain of the *Bucephale*, Julien Laferriere, and his officers and crew. Their first port of call in the island was Balade Reef which was marked on maps as a safe landing spot. As the *Bucephale* approached the missionaries saw outrigger canoes putting to sea.

When the ship dropped anchor, it was surrounded by people in their canoes offering strips of tapa cloth as peace offerings. By a stroke of luck in one canoe was an old man called Ouamo, who spoke a similar language to Wallis Island which Fr Viard was fluent in and understood nearly everything the old man said. From then on Ouamo became the official interpreter.¹³

Photograph: Bishop Douarre



Bishop Guillaume Douarre

21 December 1843, Pakili-Pouma, King of Koko, arrived on the beach with a large number of followers armed with clubs and spears. The captain of the *Bucephale* sent a dinghy to meet him, as a sign of respect, but also a group of armed sailors. When he drew alongside the ship, Pakili-Pouma showed a momentary hesitation and then made up his mind, still not fully sure that he was doing the right thing. Bishop Douarre and the captain offered him the gift of a jacket. They offered him something to eat as well. Pakili-Pouma was visibly torn between pride at his new regalia, fear of the unknown, and astonishment at what he now saw around him; especially at a mirror which he circled several times to see if he could see himself behind it.

“After visiting the ship all went ashore, led by the captain followed by Bishop Douarre, Father Viard, the officers and the native chiefs. This time it was Palama, the chief of Balade, who had prepared the reception: there were thirst quenching green coconuts and much talk. The crucial question to be answered was would the tribe agree to look after the missionaries, give them a house, a piece of ground and water? The response was an enthusiastic *fefei* (it’s good!), repeated over and over. From then on, everything happened quickly. The whole of the 22nd of December was spent looking for a suitable piece of land for the missionaries.”¹⁴

In the end Bishop Douarre advised the chief that he preferred to live close to him. The chief was delighted at the idea of having such eminent neighbours. He told his people to clear the ground adjoining the four or five huts where he lived, and this work was begun that very evening. In order to lose no time, and to take advantage of the work force provided by the sailors, they began the very next day to cut down trees. Under the direction of Father Viard and before the amazed eyes of the natives, the magnificent trees indicated by the chief himself were chopped down in record time. At this point in his report the captain spoke warmly of the good relations being built up between the indigenous population and the missionaries.”¹⁵

¹³ Delbos page 31.

¹⁴ Delbos page 35

¹⁵ Delbos *ibid*

First Mass on New Caledonian soil. It was celebrated on 25th December 1843, Feast of the Birth of Our Lord by Bishop Guillaume Douarre, who was then coadjutor of Bishop Bataillon, Vicar Apostolic of Central Oceania. The place was Balade. in the village of Mahamate on the seashore under a great banyan tree whose aerial roots formed a natural chapel. Those present at the First Mass were Fathers Viard and Rougeyron, Brothers Taragnat and Marmoiton, the captain of the *Bucephale*, Julien Laferriere and his officers and men who added honour and dignity to the celebration with a drum roll. The whole native population gathered around their chief Païama.¹⁶

The Bishop drew a parallel between Bethlehem where “the Redemption” had begun, and New Caledonia, where it was beginning on this day. The inhabitants were impressed by the solemnity of the occasion. “The birdsong mingled with the sound of the waves and overhead was the blue sky vaulted like a roof by the greenery all around, and rows of coconut trees “like so many porticos opening onto the sea and to the infinite beyond.” Mingled with the religious tones of the missionaries the Final Blessing of the Bishop drew down upon them, for the first time, the Divine Grace of the Most High.”¹⁷

Once the ceremony was over, it was important to take the maximum advantage of the good will of the captain and his officers and of the labour-force provided by the crewmen and of the tools available on the ship, in order to build a house up as quickly as possible. While the missionaries in the company of the Captain travelled the length and breadth of the land winning friends the Brothers and sailors were busy at Balade under the supervision of Father Viard.

While all this was going on. Captain Laferriere got the chiefs to recognise the sovereignty of France over their land which they called “Opao” - New Caledonia.

The ceremony took place in the captain’s own quarters. He requested all his senior officers to be present so that they in the absence of Bishop Douarre who had asked to be excused might act as witnesses to the solemn act. The bishop had in fact “argued strongly to the effect that his position and that of his missionaries did not allow him to play an official part in a transaction whose terms were so explicit.” It is to the bishop’s credit that he was careful to draw a distinction by this attitude which the captain apparently understood between the spiritual and the temporal without at the same time separating them completely. The 21-gun salute which was fired in honour of the French flag when the new mission-house was opened also announced the departure of the *Bucephale*, for, the following day, 22nd January the French warship was due to set sail again. Captain Laferriere held a final meeting on the launch with the native inhabitants. He made a speech to them translated by Father Viard in which he asked them to look after the missionaries well and promised that another ship would call soon to make a visit.¹⁸



Sketch, said to be the head of Akhi Gou, Hippolyte Roussel's father, drawn by Father Vergast

The mission station at Balade flourished and other stations were subsequently established. During the early nineteenth century, the fortunes of the Catholic Church in France had waxed and waned. The privileges previously held by the Church had been withdrawn. Catholicism was no longer the religion of the State and so the struggling mission received little support. Louis-Philippe promised naval support for the mission but for twenty months, the small band

¹⁶ Delbos page 36.

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Delbos page 38

of Marists remained isolated with dwindling food supplies. The Marists felt that they had been abandoned by France and were fearful of the advance of Protestant 'heresy.' ¹⁹ Fr Rougeyron in a letter to Fr Vidal, 1 September 1853, describes the death of Bishop Douarre as follows: There appeared in our island one of those frightful epidemics which carried off a very great proportion of the population. The Bishop fell victim and it took three days for the scourge to take him to the tomb. ²⁰ In April they selected a site on top of a hill for the new Poucho station. The local people worked enthusiastically to clear the ground and transport the building materials.

Sisters of the Third Order – At first only men priests and brothers had been sent to the Missions of Oceania entrusted by Rome to the Society of Mary. Several courageous women had offered to join them. But Father Colin who lost his mother when he was four was not very familiar with feminine psychology always refused to take up their offers of service. He was unsure how women would fare in the discomfort and insecurity of those early missions, and also how the reputation of his celibate missionaries would fare in the suspicious minds of the Protestants. However, once the Mission was solidly established, it was clear that these women had an important role to play especially in the areas of teaching and medical care. Fr Rougeyron was well aware of this and began to include them in his forward-looking plans for buildings and finance. In September it was decided to send out the first group. Three candidates were willing to go to Futuna. and they arrived in May the following year²¹.

The missionaries - In 1862 they were thirty-seven in number twenty-three Marist Fathers and coadjutor Brothers; four Marist Brothers; four Sisters of the Third Order and six Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny shared between fourteen stations - Island of the Pines, Lifou, Ouva, Wagap, Touho, Poucho, Arama, Belep, Saint-Louis, Conception which was the centre of the Mission and at Bonde. Outposts were starting in the north. at Gomen and Koumac and in the south towards Ouen Island, Unia, Touaourou. Fr. Rougeyron was already thinking of opening new missions. ²²

The catechists - From the day they arrived in New Caledonia, the Marists understood the vital necessity of training local catechists if they wanted their pastoral ministry among the natives to be effective. The experience of other Missions taught them this, as well as the example of all the LMS and the Anglicans who used this system on a large scale throughout the Pacific. It was putting into practice the ideas of Catholic Action, long before that term had been invented; it was the principle of "peers evangelising their peers". ²³The mission was off to a good start but there was trouble ahead.

The reign of Governor Charles Guillain 1862 - 1870

Carolyn Nuttall p 52 described Guillain as a visionary leader; his reforms were rapid and progressive. including smallpox immunisation for European children and natives, an eight-hour

¹⁹ Nuttal p 37

²⁰ Nuttal p 33

²¹ Delbos 125.

²² Delbos 127

²³ Delbos 130

working day, and free schooling, which was compulsory and secular but that along the way, he made many enemies.²⁴

Douglas described Governor Charles Guillain who took over in 1862 as autocratic by training and conviction. He wanted supreme authority over New Caledonia Island as he was the governor. She noted that “The question of Guillain’s relationship with the Marists was probably the most important single issue of the period 1862 – 1870 at least as far as the missionaries and the people were concerned.”²⁵ The local people were forced to work and harsh punishments were handed out. The catechist in the original parish of was told he could keep his job as long as he did not preach. If he preached, he would be imprisoned. Many catechists were imprisoned. Guillain hated the power the Marists had over the chiefs and decided to quell this. He resented the Marists and accused them of opposing the spread of colonisation. In 1864, the Marists sent



Saint-Joseph's Cathedral, Nouméa

a representative to France to have Guillain recalled but he stayed in office until 1870.

Guillain had a certain number of sayings which he never tired of repeating and which fitted in perfectly with the way he behaved: “Christianity is the great obstacle to progress and Catholicism is its most dangerous form. The presence of priests among the natives will delay their being civilised for another fifty years. Your influence (he said to one priest) is an evil which I will seek to curb with all my strength. Never speak to me about freedom of worship. I do not accept it. The spiritual and the temporal touch and overlap at all times. I am the governor so what I say goes.”²⁶

Fr Rougeyron was still working in New Caledonia at this time. He wrote to his Superior General on 10th August, “We are no longer being attacked personally; they have changed their tactics. They have started relentlessly to

harass the best of our Christians and our chiefs, in the hope of getting the others to renounce the faith.”²⁷ Things changed for the better once Guillain left in 1870.

Nouméa, is the Capital of New Caledonia where the Marist Community has been present for over 150 years. The first priest from the Society of Mary arrived in 1842, At that time, Oceania was divided into 3 Apostolic Vicariates and in 1836 Pope Gregory XVI, had entrusted the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Oceania to the Society of Mary.²⁸

Between 1853 and 1863, 10 missions were founded thanks to the efforts of the Marist priests and lay brothers which were oftentimes decisive in the work of inculturation within the heart of the community. The laity assisted the priests and dedicated much of their time to teaching catechism classes. “Without them,” wrote Fr. François Grossin SM, “the evangelization of New Caledonia would never have been the same.” In a matter of a decade, the missions had already been established in the three provinces of the land.

In 1946 there was an ordination of two priests from Melanesia. After 1968, the seminary in Noumea was closed and its students transferred to Fiji Island. New Caledonia now has a

²⁴ Nuttall p 52

²⁵ Douglas 163

²⁶ Delbos 143

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ (Agenzia Fides)

population of nearly 224,000 inhabitants, of which 114,000 are Catholics. There are 29 parishes and 131 other places of worship. There are 14 diocesan priests, 24 religious priests, 11 permanent deacons, 22 religious brothers, and 100 religious sisters. There are also 199 catechists. Alongside the lifestyle of the big city is that of the smaller villages, where religious practice is most common, and the faith is lived with a stronger sense of community. One of the hopeful signs for the life of the local Church is the constant increase, in recent years, of vocations to the permanent diaconate.²⁹

4. Samoa

Prior to the arrival of European visitors, Samoa had a complex polytheistic religion which also incorporated elements of ancestor worship. The war goddess (Nafanua) had prophesied that there would come a new religion which would end the rule of the old. Christian sailors had been visiting Samoa from the late 18th century and had been teaching Christianity and some locals had converted.

The capital of Samoa is Apia. And the population is about 200 thousand people. Most of the people are protestants with Congregationalists being the highest at about 30 percent. Methodists are 12 percent and Assemblies of God are seven percent. Catholics are 20 percent. The motto of the islands is “God be the foundation of Samoa”.

Samoa is in the process of amending its Constitution to declare itself as a Christian country. For Christians in Samoa, the *Constitution Amendment Bill No. 2* (2016), which securely passed the second reading in Parliament in February, could have both positive and negative consequences. According to the Explanatory Memorandum, the object of the amendment is ‘to insert in the Constitution that Samoa is a Christian nation to declare the dominance of Christianity in Samoa.’

This is an important development in an era of increasing religious tolerance and state-sponsored vilification. While the amendment may be favourable to the predominantly Christian churches in Samoa, there is greater need to understand the impetus for such development and its potential ramifications on other religions whose members are integral to Samoa’s social cohesion. Samoa refers to Christianity in the preamble of its current constitution by calling for Samoa’s government to conduct itself “within the limits prescribed by God’s commandments” and for its societal values to be “based on Christian principles.”

Almost all Pacific Island countries, except Fiji, have adopted some acknowledgment of God in their preamble. This practice of ‘christening the constitution’ has been a common feature in many post-colonial constitutions throughout Christendom.

In 1836 Pope Gregory XVI commissioned the Marist Fathers to bring Catholicism to the Western Pacific and missionaries from this French religious institute arrived in Samoa in 1845. In 1842, the Propaganda Fide created the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Oceania that included New Caledonia, Tonga, Samoa and Fiji Islands. Catholic missionaries arrived in Samoa 1845 and today Catholics account for around 20% of the overall population. The percentage of Christians in Samoa is about 99% Christian, the Catholics, being the second largest after the Methodists. In Samoa and other places in the Pacific, Catholics and Protestants competed for converts amidst a backdrop of Imperial rivalries between Catholic France and Protestant Britain. Christianity took firm root in the islands and attendance at Church on Sundays has remained high to the present day. Catholic religious organisations have been

²⁹(Agenzia Fides 28/7/2008)

active in health, education and social work in Samoa, including the work of the Marist Brothers and the Little Sisters of the Poor.

In 1842, the Propaganda Fide created the Apostolic Vicariate of Central Oceania that included New Caledonia, Tonga, Samoa and Fiji Islands. This lost territory with establishment by canonical erection by the Holy See on August 20, 1850, of the Vicariate Apostolic of the Navigators' Archipelago, entrusted to the Society of Mary (Marists). On January 4, 1957, the Vatican changed the name of the Vicariate Apostolic to Samoa and the Tokelau Islands. The vicariate apostolic was elevated to the Diocese of Apia on June 21, 1966, and made suffragan to the metropolitan see of Suva, Fiji. On August 10, 1974, the name of the diocese was changed to Diocese of Apia o Samoa and Tokelau; and it was changed again on December 3, 1975, to the Diocese of Samoa and Tokelau. On September 10, 1982, the diocese was elevated to the dignity of an archdiocese taking the name of the See city, Apia. Simultaneously, the Diocese of Samoa–Pago Pago was created from a portion of the former Diocese of Samoa Tokelau and made suffragan to the metropolitan see of Apia.^[1]

The Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Apia



The cathedral in Apia has been described as the most beautiful in the Pacific. It can hold 2,000 people and the woodwork inside is really beautiful. The ceiling is in the style of an upturned boat symbolising the boats Jesus once travelled in when he told the apostles they would become the fishers of men. The first Catholic missionaries arrived in Samoa in 1845. And today Catholics account for around 20% of the overall population. A 2002 census revealed that out of a population of

176,848 Samoans 24,754 were Catholics. The population of Samoa is about 99% Christian.³⁰ In 2002 there were many celebrations for the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Church in Samoa. The congregation re-enacted the acceptance of Catholicism in the village of Samalaeulu in 1845. Was held at the Don Bosco field in Lealatele. The congregation re-enacted the acceptance of Catholicism in the village of Samalaeulu in 1845. Held at the Don Bosco field on Tuesday, Lealatele was tasked with entertaining the special guests.³¹ (By Sialai Sarafina Sanerivi 17 September 2020.)

5. Missions in the Solomon Islands.

The Solomon Islands received their name from the first Europeans to see them. The Spaniards in 1568 likened the islands to the Ophir of the Bible where the fleet of King Solomon came together to obtain the gold for the Jewish Temple. Over the years, the Solomon Islands was one area few missionaries dared to set foot in. Known for its fearsome warriors and “head-hunters” the first successful mission there was established by the Anglican Melanesian Mission from New Zealand, in 1849 led by George Selwyn.

In 1898, the Marists returned 50 years after they withdrew from Woodlark Island, this time to the Solomon Islands then a British Protectorate. Overall, they succeeded this time and up to

³⁰ web (15 February 2024)

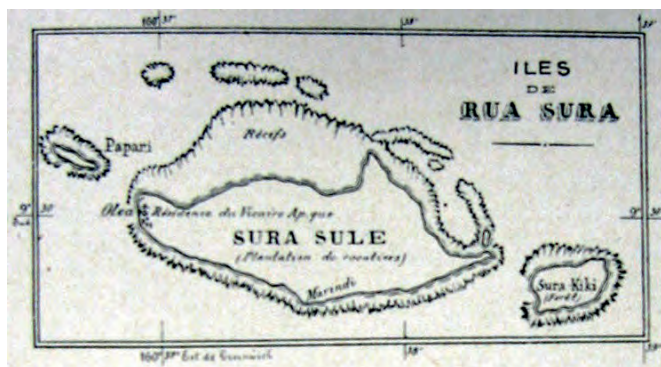
³¹ Sialai Sarafina Sanerivi 17 September 2020

the present have made a very large contribution to the growth of the Catholic Church in that area. The divisions between the North Solomons including Bougainville and the South Solomons once called the British Solomons and now independent are not always identified in their story as the Marists travelled indiscriminately between the two areas, setting up mission stations. So it was that Missionaries of the Society of Mary (SM) resumed their interrupted mission in Melanesia in 1898.³²



Bishop Vidal led the first party of returning Marists to Tulagi, the 'capital' of the British Solomons, on 21 May 1898 aboard the *Titus*, the regular steamer from Sydney. Bishop Vidal from Fiji was now apostolic Administrator of the South Solomons. With him were three priests, Frs Pierre Boullion, Pierre Rouillac and Joseph Guitet and nine Fijian catechists. After they arrived in Tulagi they asked the Government administrator, Woodford, for land. However, he was a pacifist and was anxious to keep the Marists from other missions already established especially the Anglicans.

He generally encouraged missionary activity but did not want rivalry between different faiths. He thought that giving land to the Marists where the Anglicans were already established would cause friction. Because of this he kept the Marists from San Cristobel, Guadalcanal and Santa Isobel where the ill-fated Marist Bishop Baptiste had been murdered in 1845.³³ Then a trader Samuel Keating offered the Marists a small island for 100



pounds. It was called Rua Sua and they made their first base there. This island was off the north-west coast of Guadalcanal, where there were already four trading stations. After he purchased the land Vidal returned to Fiji in August and made further visits in 1899 and 1901.

Letter from Fr Boullion about this occasion:

Search, if you can on the map of Oceania, the Solomon Islands Group. In the group, you'll discover, with less trouble than Mendana, a large Island called Guadalcanal. About the middle of the north coastline, you'll perceive, with the aid of a microscope, --- one island larger than the others. These are the Rua Sura isles. It is here that, since the beginning of June, we've been in the process of settling in. landing at 5 am in the rain, our first thought was to shelter in a leaf-shack on this uninhabited isle, visited from time to time by fishermen. The rain passed, prayers were said, we breakfasted, then work began. A tent for us, another to use as a chapel and that was that in half an hour it was all finished. Do you think we'd need ropes or such for that? Not at all! The Solomon vines are worth all the ropes of France. Do you believe we need knives and forks with our food? No need whatever. A piece of bamboo split in four has the

³² Laracy

³³ Laracy p 40

advantage of being used but once, having no need of purchase and upkeep. You think of us wanting for a bed. Mistake! Four forked stakes in the ground, some branches placed diagonally across the stakes, a mat on the branches, yourself on the mat, a sheet over you. ³⁴If it's a bit hard, you don't feel it while you sleep. ³⁵

By 1910 the mission at Rua Sua housed a printing press and a school for catechists. From this island the Marists ventured along the coast to Guadalcanal and east to Malaita. The catechists trained in Rua Sua were then deployed to various villages. ³⁶



A group of Fijian Catechists with Monsignor Vidal in 1898

The Fijian catechists in the first days of Sura are a silent presence, and a group to be respected. “Two or three always accompanied Fr Roullac on his ship sharing the basics of navigation. Others helped in Fr Bouillon’s little school. The Fijians had undergone an excellent 2-year training in Wairikl. We can imagine the respect they inspired and instilled in the Guadalcanal pikininis”. ³⁷

³⁴ *Map Raucaz* p 81.

³⁵ *O’Brien.*

³⁶ *Footsteps in the Sea* p 72

³⁷ *O’Brien* 100 and 113

It was customary in those days amongst the Protestants and Catholics to bring catechists from other mission areas to help when setting up a mission station. They could set up new mission stations which were off shoots from the main station, and these can be manned by catechists who prepare the people for the sacraments which the priest could then administer.

Each catechist was to instruct the people in the village in which he resided and to resist Protestant influence in the neighbourhood, in return for which head catechists were paid ten shillings per month and their assistants five shillings, supplemented by payments in kind — two loin cloths monthly and two sticks of tobacco weekly.

The main islands of the Solomons group are large and rugged, rising to 2,330 metres at Mount Popomanaseu on Guadalcanal. They lie in two parallel chains running northwest-southeast: the southern chain includes Vella Lavella, the New Georgia Islands, Savo, and Guadalcanal; the northern, Choiseul, Santa Isabel, and Malaita. The chains converge on San Cristobal (Makira Island). The Santa Cruz Islands are a group of small islands located some 345 miles (555 km) east of Guadalcanal; the largest island in the group is Nendö (also called Ndeni Island or Santa Cruz Island). Geologically, the Solomon Islands are part of the volcanic arc extending from New Ireland in Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu.³⁸



Training a Catechist in the Solomons.



3940

O'Brien mentions the passing of a former deity

At Visale, all the people round the coast were mourning the deaths of their old chief, Josepo Kokobi and their young priest, Joseph Pellion. Yet the mourning was not completely sorrowful. Everyone knew that God had blessed them both and that the God of Christians had replaced the benevolent deity Tsopi generously. For the yams continued to thrive, the pigs to proliferate, the turtles and fish to abound. As the lotu' had increased at Visale, a sign on Easter Day, after the church blessing, had confirmed it. On that Sunday while all the villagers were celebrating Mass, the old Tsopi of Pupuraka decided to take his leave.

With a low rumble and a slight earth tremor, a landslide rippled down Pupuraka's steep slopes. Trees and stones fell with it over the village and gently into the sea. After the event, everyone saw it as Tsopi's farewell. The memory of it was celebrated for forty years in song and dance and has passed into the folklore of Visale's church history.⁴¹

³⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica.

³⁹ *Picture Raucaz* :55.

⁴⁰ *Illustrations from the Marist Missions in the South Seas*. p 55.

⁴¹ O'Brien page 130

Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Mary (TORM) arrived as teachers in 1904. They had a good influence over the local women who were too shy to approach the priests. The Sisters taught the village women about the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven and she became the protectress of the village women.

In the 1920s Fr Raucaz wrote “Our good nuns, while sharing in our work, share also in our sorrows and our sufferings. They have ‘paid their own tribute to the unhealthy climate. Of seventeen Sisters who came to this Mission since the beginning, five have already gone to receive in Heaven the reward of their life of charity and devotedness. Of these, one toiled for sixteen years; the others were cut off in the flower of their youth, after a few years of service in Mission life.”⁴²

Catholic Sisters with Children in the 1920s at Wanoni Bay, Makira Island, Raucaz 1928



Meanwhile, Fr Rouillac made sorties along the coast of Guadalcanal where traders rarely visited. On his second visit in December 1898, Rouillac’s boat ‘was surrounded at Moli all day by native canoes bringing yams to exchange for plugs of tobacco, pipes and matches’.⁴³

The people pleaded for a resident missionary and, to support their plea, sold land which sixty men immediately set to work clearing. Rouillac obtained a further foothold in the district in April

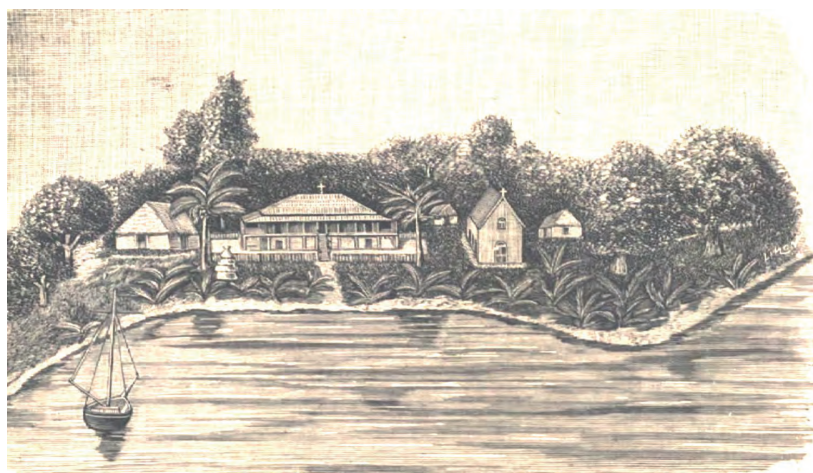
1899. He had met in Svensen’s store at Marau a labourer who had known the Marists in Fiji and directed him to Avuavu (or Longu) fifteen miles west of Moli, where more land was bought, and thirty-six pupils obtained for Rua Sura. The people of Avuavu were delighted when two priests arrived to build Rua Sura’s first out-station in October 1899; the missionaries stayed only six months. The cupidity of the local villagers, who attempted to deny their neighbours access, led to a series of violent disputes which induced the Marists to return to Rua Sura until tempers had cooled. They resumed the post in 1901.⁴⁴



⁴² Raucaz 51.

⁴³ *Footsteps in the Sea* p 72,

⁴⁴ *Laracy* p 45.



Rua Sura in 1900.

In the early days a trader brought some young men from Tanarere to visit the missionaries at Rua Sura. Fr Raucaz wrote, "The Fathers made good use of the time these natives spent at the station to learn their language.

Most of them, led by the Fijians, were courageous enough to venture into the chapel, and when some prayers were translated into their language, they learned them quickly and recited them. Later, when they went back to their own place, they helped to make relations easy with the missionaries when they visited."

The missionaries wanted to visit many other people in their homes, get acquainted with them and persuade them to send their children to the school at rua Sura. With this end in view, they bought a small cutter; unluckily in July 1889. This was wrecked on a reef at Moli. Finally, they bought the *Eclipse*, a schooner of 19 tons. Henceforth the sea was no obstacle to the progress of the Mission, but on the contrary helped to spread the good news by carrying its preachers in all directions, including, for example, the stations of Avuavu and Tangarare.

The year 1904 is interesting in the lives of the missionaries through Melanesia. It was the year that ten missionaries were murdered in the Bainings in Rabaul. It was the year in Madang that a big but unsuccessful revolt was planned to kill all the German officials. It was also the year recounted by Fr Raucaz that he nearly lost his life in a murder plot.

It happened because that was the year when many of the indentured labourers from the Queensland sugar cane fields were being repatriated. Some were dropped off at Avuavu whether it was their territory or not. By this time, it was mission territory.

Fr Raucaz wrote of the occasion: The chief of the village on Longu, to which Avuavu formerly belonged, claimed right of toll, as he had been accustomed to do in the past. But the Father thought it his duty to oppose this because these natives had landed in Mission territory. The black chief was deeply vexed at this action, which deprived 'him of a gain which he looked on as a right. He went off, hate in his heart, swearing to take revenge on the missionary. He had not enough courage to carry out any attack himself, but secretly sought helpers to murder the Father. These he easily got by promising them a large share in the plunder of the Mission station. A few days later, a great crowd of natives from the bush came to the station and behaved very suspiciously. The faithful Aloisio, well acquainted with native ways, warned the missionary, but the latter would not suspect any treachery." In the end the plot was thwarted and a court case found the chief guilty and he was sent to jail.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Raucaz Pps 110 – 113

Raucaz wrote “From the year 1910, the movement towards conversion became more marked. Parents brought their newly born children to be baptised. Humble chapels were put up in the



Guadalcanal : A natural grotto, formerly head-hunters headquarters.

villages. The Protestants were by no means idle on their side and this double pressure had some good in it. The people were in a way forced to make a choice. We have already mentioned the populous centre of the Malageti. The Catholic religion began to take root there during the year 1911. Two Protestant bodies were already installed j so that it was not without difficulty and much uphill work that the true faith was enabled to penetrate.

The missionary went there after the feast of Easter. To help in “the good work he brought

with him a young native who was full of faith and especially full of good will, but humanly speaking there was but little that he could do, for he was blind. Here was renewed a story not unusual in many foundations that it is with’ means apparently weak and insignificant that God accomplishes His work.”⁴⁶

Raucaz again: “During the year 1912, an important event took place ‘at Avuavu -⁴⁷ the founding of a convent. As long as nothing is done for the conversion of -the heathen women, there can be no serious progress in the faith. With them, nuns alone can exert a real and lasting influence. It was in the month of May that the first three Sisters landed at Avuavu. Two girls, only, were waiting for them to form the first germ of a school. From the time of the arrival of the Sisters the influence of the faith grew more and more in the hearts of the people. They began to understand the duties which it imposes and to submit to them.”

A beginning was made at Tangarare, on the western end of the weather coast. Rouillac bought land there in May 1899 and two priests occupied it in June 1900. They were welcomed by Rile, the leading man of the district, and, when he died some months later, Samu, chief of the village of Ravu took over. He wanted tobacco and cloth from the missionaries.⁴⁸

In March 1901 the Tangarare people looted the Eclipse when she ran aground in 1902, and even threatened Rouillac when he attempted to stop them. “However, the death of Guilloux on 27 May while trying to free the vessel — and the consequent need to placate the dead man’s spirit — inspired a change of heart. Beginning in the villages, to the north of the station, near the scene of the wreck, the adoption n of Christianity throughout the district, dates from that incident’.⁴⁹

It is interesting to see the attitude of the Government Officer Woodford had to the missionaries: Woodford’s actions betokened no hostility towards the missions. Rather, he welcomed them and, while concerned to reduce opportunities for sectarian conflict, was determined that their ‘civilising’ influence (an aid to administration and an assurance to investors) should be widely distributed. He ‘endeavoured, therefore, to get the various Missions to agree upon separate spheres of action. Where agreement was not reached, the end was achieved by disallowal of

⁴⁶ Raucaz 118.

⁴⁷ Raucaz 1928 p120

⁴⁸ Laracy p 46

⁴⁹ Laracy page 19

land. For Protestant missions (except the Seventh Day Adventists) the territorial problem scarcely arose for there was substantial recognition of common ground.

Methodists and Anglicans readily came to an agreement whereby the former confined themselves to the western part of the protectorate and the latter to the eastern part, while the S. S. E. M. and the Anglicans agreed not to compete against each other on Malaita. The Marists would enter no such pact, although it seems that in 1900 Woodford offered them a monopoly on Guadalcanal if they would do so. There were sound practical reasons for the Marists refusal: to accept formal limitation of their field of work as this could curtail the future expansion of the mission.⁵⁰

Laracy studied the reasons the Marists established a big following among the Solomon Islanders when they went there in 1898 when their predecessors had failed fifty years earlier in Milne Bay.

First house of Catholic missionaries at Visale, Guadalcanal, 1900s, courtesy of Raucaz 1928

The immediate answer is that conditions of life there had changed: the islanders' needs were different and the status of Europeans had been elevated. Explanation, therefore, requires that conversions be seen within a wider framework of complementary Melanesian and Catholic ideologies and European impact on the Solomon Islands. In its most literal sense 'conversion' implies 'turning from something to something else: you put earlier loyalties behind you'; the



Solomon Islanders accepted the religious authority of the missionary and rejected, at least nominally, the behaviour and elements of a traditional system of spirituality, now disallowed, a process formally signified by baptism. Despite differences of language and culture, Catholic and Melanesian beliefs could both conduce to the islanders' sincere and valid adoption of Catholicism, if not to an understanding of it.

The Marists had the advantage in numbers of missionaries in the evangelisation of Guadalcanal. For most of the period up to 1920, the Anglicans had only one European missionary, compared with eleven Marist priests, two lay-brothers and four nuns, the first of whom had arrived in 1904.



First Church in Guadalcanal

Guadalcanal was steadily ringed with mission stations, which eventually claimed over half the population. In addition to Rua Sura, Avuavu, Tangarare and Visale, there were other posts abandoned mainly because of sickness — Soumak area near Aola (1905), Moli (1903-7), Marau (1904-15) and Savo (1909-11). Concentration of Marist resources on Guadalcanal. By 1936,

Catholics exceeded 5000 on Guadalcanal and had risen to 3000 on Malaita, while by 1947 Malaita, with nearly 6000, was ahead of Guadalcanal. Meanwhile, from about 1920, the increase in the North Solomons outstripped that in the southern vicariate as the Marists, with

⁵⁰ Laracy page 44

twenty years start on their Protestant rivals and a less dispersed population to deal with than in the South, intensified their activities in Bougainville and Buka. In 1920 the North had just over 4000 Catholics, but by 1936 it had more than 21,000.

Laracy

Catholicism, focused on beliefs and behaviour dictated by an authority which transcended circumstance. This did not impair its comprehensiveness. Within the terms of their theology the Marists could easily accommodate a wide range of motives for conversion. The essential condition was faith in the rightness of Catholic doctrine and required a minimum of theological appreciation, which was readily satisfied. Sacraments it was believed, make their sanctifying



A Chapel in the district of Visale, British Solomons.

impact on the soul regardless of deficiencies in the neophyte's understanding. The islanders' conversion was made to appear less a break with indigenous custom than adaptation of it by use of overt similarities between Catholicism and traditional religious beliefs: the externalisation of spiritual power in material objects such as the Eucharist, blessed medals, Holy Water and rosary beads.

The dominant European impact on the Solomons was exerted through the labour trade which from 1870 recruited islanders for work on plantations in Queensland, Fiji and Samoa. As the trade developed, instinct for adventure, desire to escape punishment and above all demand for European goods for themselves and their relatives led young men to sign on with enthusiasm. By 1904 almost 19,000 Solomon Islanders had been taken to Queensland. In demonstrating the white man's affluence, it prepared the way for the adoption of Christianity while by bringing the islanders to the notice of other religious bodies, it contributed to the breaking of the Anglican monopoly in the Solomons. Contact with the labourers in Fiji fired both Marist and Methodist interest in the area.⁵¹



Sisters and students at Tangarare, Guadalcanal 1920s courtesy of Raucaz 1928

Although the Marists suffered some failures (Aola 1905), Moli (1903-1907) and Savo (1909-1911) and ended up concentrated at Rua Sura, Avuavu, Tangarare and Visale, they always had more staff on Guadalcanal than did the Anglicans. In 1914, the Catholic Mission had twenty-four priests and fourteen sisters on the island (AR, 1913, 4); in 1920 it had eleven Marist priests, two lay brothers and four nuns there, while there was only one Anglican priest.⁵²

Convents were established at various Mission stations: Tangarare (1904), Visale (1908), Rua Sura (1911), Avuavu (1913), Wainoni Bay (1915), Ruavatu (1927), Mbuma (1928), Rokera (1933) and Takwa (1937). (Laracy 1976, 50)

⁵¹ Laracy p 36

⁵² Laracy 1976, 44-45; O'Brien 1995, 124-126)

In 1900, the Protectorate's Annual Report recorded thirteen Catholic Mission staff-eleven priests and two sisters. The missionaries established a temporary presence on Savo Island in 1900. The Catholics arrived at the Shortlands in 1898, and in 1903 Marist missionary Father Josef Forestier arrived on Tambatamba Island off Choiseul. (O'Brien 1995, 151-156)

The South Solomons prefecture was elevated to an apostolic vicariate in 1912 (including Guadalcanal, Makira and Malaita) with the same elevation granted to the North Solomons in 1930 (Buka and Bougainville).⁵³

Bishop Berthreux died in 1919 and was succeeded by Bishop Louis Raucaz, another experienced missionary. In 1923, Visale replaced Rua Sura as the Marist headquarters. The substantial Visale Cathedral was destroyed in a severe earthquake on 25 January 1925 and rebuilt in 1930. Visale had an imposing Cathedral containing the remains of Bishop Epalle, a printing press, an electric light plant, a telephone service, a movie projector, and an excellent water supply. There was also a boarding school for 150 boys and girls.



(Pictured: Father Henry Bertheaux later Bishop, Date 1910. Raucaz 1928)

The common language was French, spoken by all members of the Mission staff. The first language of instruction was Ghari, with mission texts produced from the 1900s in Ghari and other languages. Ghari never became the Mission's lingua franca in the way that Mota did for the Melanesian Mission and instead Pidgin English was adopted as the main language of communication with villagers. All mission staff were expected to learn the languages of the areas to which they were assigned. Bishop Raucaz died from malaria in June 1934 and was succeeded by Jean Maria Aubin, who remained Bishop until he was seventy-nine.⁵⁴

Wartime. On July 6, 1942, the Japanese moved a force consisting of troops and labourers to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and began constructing an airfield. The Allies recognized that land-based planes operating from this field would seriously menace bases in the New Hebrides and New Caledonia as well as Port Moresby in New Guinea. Immediate steps were taken to eject the Japanese, utilizing forces that were available in the South Pacific. (*Britannica*)



A Solomon Pirogue.

The Guadalcanal campaign, also known as the Battle of Guadalcanal and codenamed Operation Watchtower by American forces, was a military campaign fought between 7 August 1942 and 9 February 1943 on and around the island of Guadalcanal in the Pacific theater of World War II. *Wikipedia*

⁵³ Corporate Entry: Catholic Church.

⁵⁴ <https://www.solomonencyclopaedia.net/objects/D00000057.htm>

The war in the Solomons and effects on the Missionaries⁵⁵

During the Second World War, Bishops Aubin and Thomas Wade (North Solomons) and their Marist priests, brothers and nuns went into hiding within the Solomons. This followed a missionary tradition that accepted possible martyrdom, although many of the sisters were later evacuated to New Caledonia and Australia.

For some of the evacuated original clergy, particularly Sisters, this was their first time outside of the Solomons since their arrival early in the century. The first Japanese contact with the Marists was in the North Solomons, where they were paroled so long as they did not contact American or Australian authorities. Their food was commandeered, and their radios were confiscated. Early relations were amicable, but Bishop Aubin refused to help recruit labour for the Japanese development of what later became the Henderson Airfield and once the Americans landed on Guadalcanal relations cooled because the Japanese were suspicious of possible Marist collaboration with the Allies.



Two sisters were killed at Tasimboko and a third fled to the care of Coastwatchers, and four missionaries at Ruavatu were bayoneted. Visale became unsafe, forcing Aubin and his staff to move to Tangarare.

When the American commander ordered their evacuation: between October and December 1942, two Marist priests, eight brothers and

nineteen sisters left the Solomons, most to New Caledonia. Bishop Aubin was allowed to stay, along with six priests on Malaita and two on Makira. At Wainoni, Makira, another priest and two nuns refused to leave and since the Japanese never reached that island they managed to keep the Mission station running at close to normal.



Rev. Arthur Duhamel, S.M.

According to war records the Guadalcanal campaign during World War II was one of the more savage battles in the Pacific theatre. Between August 7, 1942, and February 9, 1943, thousands of US Marines and soldiers gave their lives in fighting.

Fr, Emery de Klerk of Tangarare, joined the Labour Corps as a recruiter and intelligence adviser. Once the war turned against the Japanese, the Marists in the South Solomons were fairly free of the conflict, but those in the North Solomons continued to suffer and some were killed; Bishop Wade and his remaining staff were forced to leave. The final death tally was two priests and two nuns killed in the South Solomons and four priests, six brothers and two nuns in the North Solomons.⁵⁶

In the South Solomons the war destroyed the Visale, Ruavatu and Marau mission stations, and in the North Solomons all stations except Poporang. When staff returned after the war they had to begin from nothing, and, particularly on Malaita and Makira, Maasina Rule (q.v.) created a new social and political environment. The Marists fared quite well from their relationship with Maasina Rule (q.v.), gaining many converts, though one by-product of

⁵⁵ <https://www.solomonencyclopaedia.net/biogs/E000055b.htm>

⁵⁶ *Laracy page 110 - 150 in South Solomons*

the movement was land claims against the Marist stations on Malaita, particularly at Tarapaina.⁵⁷

Neither threats of death nor promise of great reward by the Japanese could turn them from their holy purpose so Father Duhamel, Father Engberink, Sister M. Odilia and Sister M Sylvia were bayoneted.

The rectory where Fathers Duhamel and Engberink were living when the Japanese took them captive.



*Marist Missions Stations in the Solomons in the 1930s*⁵⁸

Mission stations as follows:

<i>Island of Guadalcanar.</i>	
1. Visale.	4. Avu Avu.
2. Tangarare.	5. Rua Vatu.
3. Gausava.	
<i>Island of San Cristoval:</i>	
6. Wanoni Bay.	
<i>Island of Malaita:</i>	
7. Langa-Langa.	8. Rohinari.

Claire O'Brien speaking about the war:

“Solomon Islanders for the most part were passive spectators of this rude intrusion, hardly comprehending the skywide barbarity. Like the flying foxes disturbed in their caves, like frigate birds in their flight, the people withdrew from dangerous areas, left their seaside hamlets and made new dwellings inland. While the invading forces used Guadalcanal as a depot and launching pad, the indigenous witnessed the warriors of north and east in deadly combat; saw battleships sink in Iron bottom Sound and fiery planes scream into their once peaceful seas. 22,000 young Japanese died of hunger in the valley behind Honiara, after the airfield they had built was wrested from their control by American troops. Today overlooking this sight, there stands a majestic Peace Memorial erected by the Japanese to honour all those who died in the Pacific battles.”

⁵⁷ Laracy 1976, 128-134; O'Brien 1995, 183-188)

⁵⁸ *The Marist Missions in the South Seas 1931*

In some places, practically all the pigs of the natives were killed, [and] the coconut palms and sago palms cut down. In some few cases whole gardens of whole villages were stripped . . . and even not-bearing plants were uprooted. This was now a question of life and death for the natives.⁵⁹



Photograph: The National WWII Museum 2002.069.144. used for educational purposes only

“Determined to achieve a decisive victory, Japanese forces massed for an all-out attack in October 1942. Meanwhile, the Marines finally began receiving fresh reinforcements, including soldiers from the US Army. The Americans strengthened their defences at Henderson Field and launched aggressive jabs to keep the Japanese off-balance. When the Japanese Seventeenth Army launched the assault on October 23, 1942, over four days, tenacious fighting by US Marines and soldiers threw back the attacks. American losses were significant, but Japanese losses were devastating.”

Some missionaries managed to escape in 1944 including, Sisters Lidwina and Ludovika and Fathers Seiuer, Mueller and Junker. They escaped from a prison camp over the mountains and through the jungle. Tom Hungerford, who was among the party of Australians to rescue them recorded it in a story called *The Nuns' Patrol*.

“Two local men carrying a rough litter in which a tattered wisp of a man, wasted and bearded, lay back with his eyes closed. He was followed closely by a second old man leaning heavily on a jungle sapling. Then one of the most pathetic spine-tingling figures I’ve ever seen - a tall raw-boned woman clad in the heavy black habit of her kind but with the mud spattered kirtle held up over skinny legs in borrowed army trousers, and outsize suede sneakers. Then a second litter, holding a second nun, incredibly old and fragile -- dressed in jungle greens and a nun’s habit crouched in the mud and slush of a pad miles behind the enemy lines. We saw it, marvelled and will never forget it, and count our lives enriched by the privilege.” Thanks to the AIF, this battered group was eventually flown to Sydney.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Laracy 117.

⁶⁰ Tom Hungerford quoted O’Brien p117



Father John J. O'Neill, U.S.N. (extreme right indicates the graves of Fathers Engberink and Duhamel and Sisters Sylvia and Odilia to a group of Marist Missionaries.

Left to right: Brother Lucius (Rotterdam), Brother Henry (New Zealand), Brother Paul (Philadelphia), Fr. Fluet (Lawrence), Fr. Hebert, S.M. (Maine), Bishop Wade, Fr. McConville, S.M. (U.S.), Bishop Aubin, Fr. Lebel, S.M. (Maine), Fr. Sullivan, S.M. (Australia).

Marist Brothers in the Solomons

“In 1939, three Brothers, John, James and Ephrem arrived on 23 August 1939 in the Solomons and greeted by Fr Emery de Klerk according to the Annals of the Marist Brothers. The brothers adapted quickly to a different scene. They saw the food gardens but immediately saw how the system could be improved. They found the agricultural system ‘interesting but woefully prehistoric!’ They soon began a full programme. In class the boys were attentive and intelligent’. Br James took over the kitchen and had problems with wet wood. In the tidal creek a wily crocodile is caught in a trap designed by Br James and John. It is killed, cooked and eaten with gusto”.

“It was a two-way system. The brothers learnt the traditional ways of fishing and cook turtles and how to plant yams. Before the war came the Brothers great achievement was to combine academic studies with appreciative practice of traditional skills. Thus the hobby sessions urged boys to explore further into their own tribal expertise, especially in making fishnets and building canoes. They learnt to combine their abilities with the practical use of maths and simple science. They learned to use language with accuracy and understanding, and above all to question in order to widen their grasp of the truths of the faith. Then the war began and the Brothers were taken away to Vanuatu on a U.S troopship. During their four-year absence they kept in touch with the mission. The boys carried on and began teaching others”.

Br Ephrem wrote in 1943: “To understand the work these boys can do for the spread of the faith, let me give you some examples. I have just heard of the death of Toma Anisimae, who spent three years at our school and was there when we left. later, he returned to his village and at the time of his death was conducting a school of forty pupils. Others were carrying on his good work.”⁶¹

⁶¹ *Annals of the Marit Brothers*

Marists' Melanesian District integrates with Australian Province. The Marist District of Melanesia became part of the Province of Australia last month, cementing the historically close ties between the two Marist entities and responding to changing circumstances. The integration of the Melanesia District into the Australian Province was announced in January this year by Marist Superior General, Brother Ernesto Sanchez and took effect on July 20. It was marked by an online prayer and ceremony, in line with the current COVID-19 restrictions. Br Ernesto gave an address, former Provincials and Leaders of the District offered reflections and prayers. "Many Australian Brothers have worked in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Some have served as leaders of the District of Papua New Guinea-Solomon Islands or, District of Melanesia, as it became more recently. Brothers from Melanesia have trained and studied in Australia. Brothers have laboured together; taught together, lived and prayed together and made deep and lasting friendships. In more recent years, this has extended to Marist lay women and men. Br Peter said the merger means that the Province is one of the most international and intercultural in the Institute, now including Brothers, Marists and ministries in Papua New Guinea, the autonomous District of Bougainville, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, as well as Australia, East Timor and the community and school in Cambodia.

"We have been blessed and enriched throughout our history, and we are again now at this historic moment," he said. "Change can occur quickly and suddenly, but effective transitions take time. Marists in Australia and Melanesia are entering a new phase of our relationship. It is a journey we will travel together over years. We will learn and grow together. We will continue to walk together in Christ." ⁶²*This article is taken from 'Christ Life', an online report from Br Peter Carroll FMS, Marist communications.*

After the war in the South Solomons

"After the war, Bishop Aubin settled in a small house at Kakambona just outside of Honiara. Initially, a leaf chapel in Honiara was used each morning as a church for the Langalanga wharf labourers, and by day as an office. The remains of the Visale printing press were brought to Honiara and set up at Kakambona, where the Bishop made his headquarters at Tanagai. St. John's School was built at Rove, and Villa Maria Training College was built at Visale on the



foundations of the old church, taking its first students in 1959. A temporary Holy Cross Pro Cathedral was built on a hill where it was thought that Mendaña had planted his cross in 1565. Like the Anglican's temporary cathedral, it was a large Quonset hut left over from the war. ⁶³

In 1957 the current cathedral, Holy Cross Cathedral in Honiara, was blessed and opened to the public."

The Church recognised the need to train indigenous priests and in 1946 sent twenty students to Fiji to study to become Marist brothers. All but three completed the course and three became Native Medical Practitioners (q.v.). Teacher training began at Keita in 1949 and at Tarlena in 1953 (both in the North Solomons), and at Visale in 1961, following the British Solomon Islands Training College (q.v.) curriculum. ⁶⁴ A teacher-training school for girls was begun at Asitavi in 1957. In 1951, a minor seminary was started at Tenaru near Honiara in a large

⁶² 'Christ Life', an online report from Br Peter Carroll FMS, Marist communications

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Laracy 1976, 147 & 155)

Quonset hut the Americans had left behind near St. Joseph's School. (O'Brien 1995, 221) Priests and nuns were no longer allowed to teach without having formal qualifications. (Laracy 1976, 147).

TOWARDS UNITY. A certain group of Solomon Islanders sat together in Honiara one day to discuss a matter of concern. The group of nine were representatives of four churches: Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and South Sea Evangelical. These thoughtful men, ---- could see a land marching towards independence. --- It seemed therefore to the concerned group that the churches could be a most potent factor in the preparation for a united nation. -- The meeting concluded with a resolution to form an association of Christian churches to encourage the Christian understanding of fellowship and collaboration.

The resulting Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) was set up with three member churches: Anglican, Catholic and Methodist in 1967. A church service at St Barnabas (Anglican) Cathedral marked the Inauguration. The large congregation came from each of the five Christian churches of Honiara and Cizo. The first aim of SICA was to consult together to find ways of Christian service to the community and people of Solomon Islands and in so doing to further a sense of unity and fellowship between participating members. The Constitution was signed by Bishop John Chisholm of the Diocese of Melanesia, Pastor E.C. Leadley, Chairman of the Methodists, Bishop Crawford of Cizo and Bishop Dan Stuyvenberg of Honiara Diocese. --- SICA'S first concern was to draw up a religious education syllabus for schools. ⁶⁵



It also set up sub-committees for Christian communication through the media, bible translation into the vernacular, disaster relief and a Ministers Fraternal regular meeting to discuss problems associated with urbanisation' a new phenomenon in Solomon Islands. Though it has fluctuated in energy and had an occasional disagreement, the association would be seen alive and active as ever after its 25th anniversary. ⁶⁶

September 2017, Honiara - The role of churches in development and nation-building is the focus of discussion by faith leaders at the opening of the Solomon Islands Church Leaders Conference in East Honiara, co-convened by Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) and Solomon Islands Full Gospel Association (SIFGA) and facilitated by World Vision Solomon Islands. ⁶⁷

The **Catholic Church in Solomon Islands** is part of the worldwide Catholic Church, under the spiritual leadership of the Pope in Rome. Catholic evangelisation of the Solomon Islands archipelago in the nineteenth century was mostly in the hands of the Marist Fathers. There are just over 90,000 Catholics in Solomon Islands; just under a quarter of the total population.

⁶⁵ Laracy

⁶⁶ O'Brien page 230 - 231

⁶⁷ World Vision Homepage

The country is divided into three dioceses: the Archdiocese of Honiara, the Diocese of Gizo and the Diocese of Auki.

“In December 1966, the Catholic Church in the Solomon Islands is about a hundred years old. It was established by the Marist Missionaries who dedicated their resources to serving the people of the Pacific islands, at times, even unto death. Today others share their mission - the Dominicans, Vincentians, Salesians, and MSp - a missionary congregation from the Philippines. The Vincentian Fathers and Brothers run the Holy Name of Mary Seminary at Tenaru in Guadalcanal, founded in 1995 and serves the three dioceses. It is under the care of the Congregation of the Mission”.⁶⁸

Dominicans in the Solomons

Dominicans ran the Gizo-based diocese, and Marists the Honiara-based diocese. There had been discussion about introducing the Dominican Order since 1937, in recognition that the Marists lacked the capacity to serve all of the Solomons, but the war halted progress and it was not until January 1956 that Dominican priests, friars and sisters set out from Australia to Gizo. They purchased Loga, an old Lever Brothers plantation a short canoe trip from Gizo and set to work. They also purchased a Mission ship, the *Salve Regina*. At Visale, a new church was dedicated in October 1966, able to hold eight hundred. The first Solomon Islander to be ordained as a priest was Michael Aike (age twenty-five) from Rohinari, Malaita, on 10 December 1966. He was followed in December 1967 by Donasiano Hitee, thirty-three, from Tarapaina in South Malaita, and, also in 1967, Timothy Bobongie, twenty-nine, from Kwaloai in Malaita's Lau Lagoon. The fourth Solomon Islander to be ordained was Lawrence Isa from the Shortlands, raised to the priesthood by Bishop Crawford at Gizo in 1968. During 1967 Honiara was raised to the status of a parish and the Order of Solomon Islands sisters, Daughters of Mary Immaculate, continued to grow. Three completed their novitiate in December and took their vows as nuns, bringing the total in the Order to seventy-four. They were able to staff eight of the Church's convents and two completed their training as nurses at the Central Hospital.⁶⁹

The Salesian Order

The Salesians came to the islands in 1995. Solomon Islands is among the poorest of the Pacific islands. It will need the constant support of committed and dedicated persons for many years to come. Its primitive setting, with cultural differences, inclement weather, lack of travel and communication possibilities and the constant threat of malaria add to the many hindrances to living and working. The Salesians and those who volunteer their time and energy are committed in their service to the people they love.

Filled with zeal and determination, they continue to give of their very best, the Don Bosco way. Salesian missionaries provide primary and secondary education as well as technical training and workforce development to poor youth in the Solomon Islands. In addition, missionaries provide supportive social development services to help youth meet their basic needs so they can focus on their schooling. Salesian missionaries live and work in the communities they serve so they are perfectly positioned to respond in times of crisis and ensure that aid reaches those most in need. Salesian missionaries in Gizo, the capital of the Western Province in the Solomon

⁶⁸ From <https://www.solomonencyclopaedia.net/biogs/E000055b.htm>

⁶⁹ Wikipedia.

Islands, launched the new St. John Bosco Primary School to educate 205 students from first to fifth grade.⁷⁰

Historic ordination for Solomon Islands



Bishop Houhou receives his mitre from Archbishop Kurian

“The young Catholic population of the Solomon Islands has joyfully welcomed the episcopal ordination of their first locally born Catholic bishop. Fr Peter Houhou, who had been vicar general of the Archdiocese of Honiara and administrator of Holy Cross Cathedral, became the new Bishop of Auki earlier this month in a jubilant, emotional and culturally rich celebration at St Augustine Catholic Cathedral.

“With Catholics making up 120,000 of the Solomon Islands’ 600,000 population, spread over more than 300 of the nation’s 900 islands, Pope Francis’ announcement in July this year was seen as greatly significant and as recognising the Church’s commitment to the country’s young Catholic congregation. Fr Ambrose Pereira SDB, Papua New Guinea’s secretary for communications and youth, said the Solomon Islands were first evangelised 120 years ago. “Travel around these ‘islands lost in time’ is extremely difficult, dangerous and time-consuming,” he said. “Many of the islands lack the basics of infrastructure and connectivity and the people are scattered on the different islands. “Solomon Islands is a young country with a very youthful population. Young people form the majority of the population. Education is a major issue. Employment is another. Crime, drugs, abuse, domination, and violence are among the issues the country needs to deal with.

“The Church has been playing a major role in education as well as in catering to the needs of the young. The ordination commenced with emotional cultural rituals. The whole family of Bishop Houhou, from different parts of the Solomon Islands, presented him to the Church. During the ceremony, Bishop Houhou paid tribute to his predecessors, the late Bishop Gerard Loft SM and Archbishop Christopher Cardone OP. He highlighted the work of the Marist missionaries and diocesan priests who had built the Church and the Catholic faith of the people. In particular, he mentioned the first two local priests: Fr Michael Aike and Fr Donasiano Hite’e. Bishop Houhou invited all in the diocese and the Church to work together to strengthen the Catholic faith in the Solomon Islands. He also called on the provincial and national governments to work together to address the many issues and challenges that face the community and society.”

⁷⁰ https://salesianmissions.org/salesian_country/solomon-islands/

Women in the Solomons against sexual violence



The Australian Government, through *Pacific Women*, has committed approximately \$34.8m over 10 years (2012–mid 2022) on initiatives to support women's empowerment in Solomon Islands. The Australian Government's current investments through its Gender Equality program in Solomon Islands are detailed in Australia's Gender Equality Program.⁷¹



Information found in the UN Joint agencies Information Booth: Break the SILENCE.

End the violence which is a growing problem in the Solomons. Photo: UN Women

Solomon Islands falls under the umbrella of UN Women's Fiji Multi-Country Office (MCO) based in Suva. The MCO covers 14 Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), working to progress gender equality and women's empowerment in the Pacific through four key programmes: Women's Economic Empowerment; Ending Violence Against Women; Advancing Gender Justice in the Pacific; Increasing Community Resilience through Empowerment of Women to Address Climate Change and Natural Hazards Programme.⁷²

⁷¹ Australian Govt. web site.

⁷² UN Joint agencies Information Booth



Herman To Paivu, on the left, and George To Bata at their deaconate ordination in Bougainville with Bishop Thomas Wade.

PART ONE. Bougainville: North Solomon Islands



Bagana volcano on Bougainville Island is located on the mountainous spine and is hard to reach due to the rough terrain. Bagana emits volcanic gases frequently during the year and exudes thick lava flows. **Bagana means the Great One** and according to pagan belief, the spirit of that name dwells in it.

Bougainville Island was named after Comte de Bougainville who visited the area in 1768. He also saw Buka Island at this time after sailing north-west from Choiseul Island, but he did not land there.

He wrote about the Buka people in 1768:

In the afternoon three canoes put off, and came to reconnoitre our vessels, each of them carrying five or six negroes: when they came within musket shot they stopped; and it was not till after they had stayed there an hour, that our repeated invitations could prevail on them to come nearer.

Some trifles which we threw to them, fastened to pieces of wood, contributed to give them a little confidence; after which they came up to the ship, showing some cocoanuts, and crying **Bouca, Bouca Onelle**: these words they repeated continually; and, after some time, we did the same, which seemed to give them pleasure.

They did not stay long by the ship but made signs that they would go and fetch us some cocoanuts: we applauded their design; but hardly had these treacherous men got to the distance of twenty paces, when one of them shot an arrow, which happily did not take place; they then rowed off as fast as possible, and we despised them too much to punish them.

These Negroes have short woolly hair; their ears pierced and drawn down; and many had their hair stained red, and white spots painted on different part of their bodies. It appears from the redness of their teeth, that they chew the betel; and we had seen that the inhabitants of Choiseul Island use it also; for we found in their canoes small bags of the leaves, with areca and lime. We had from these canoes bows of six feet long, and arrows armed with very hard wood. Their canoes are without out-riggers, but large enough to carry two men a-breast. ¹

¹ Notes by bougainville B. Jinks 1973:1

The Boudeuse of Louis Antoine de Bougainville



This island, to which we gave the name of Bouca, (Buka) seemed well peopled, if we may judge from the multitude of huts with which it is covered, and by the signs of cultivation. We saw a beautiful plain, on the declivity of a hill, planted entirely with cocoa and other trees.

Note: Buka Island had previously been visited by the Englishman, Carteret. The word ‘Bouca’ (Buka) means “what”. Presumably the islanders were asking who the visitors were, or what they wanted.



Louis-Antoine, Comte de Bougainville (12 November 1729 – August 1811)

Both Bougainville Island and the Bougainvillea flower were named after Comte de Bougainville (Britannica).

Bougainville was a French admiral and explorer. A contemporary of Captain James Cook, he was famous for his expeditions, including a circumnavigation of the globe in a scientific expedition in 1763, and voyages into the Pacific Ocean.²

² *B. Jinks 1973:1*

Blackbirding in Bougainville in 1871

Douglas Oliver, in *Black Islanders*, tells the story of a blackbirding party which, in 1871, captured a group of eighty-five unsuspecting Bougainvilleans who had taken their twenty-man canoes to the black-birding ship out of curiosity or a desire to trade.

The blackbirders enticed them on board and immediately chained them. Imprisoned below decks with another eighty Vanuatuans and Solomon Islanders, the Bougainvilleans, desperate to regain their freedom, began to rip the ship apart and set fire to it. Regrettably, the incident ended with the shooting of about seventy of the Bougainvilleans. The blackbirding captain, unwilling to risk further incidents with these fiercely independent people, instructed his men to throw the remaining Bougainvilleans overboard. Some jumped into the ocean and made it safely back to shore where they recounted what had happened.



“Blackbirds Tamed” from *Illustrated Monthly Herald*, 1872

This story illustrates the Bougainvilleans’ desire for freedom and independence. After PNG independence, successive national Governments discovered to their chagrin that the Bougainvilleans aspiration for autonomy was strong.

The German Era 1884 – 1914. In 1884 the German Government annexed North-Eastern New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago including Bougainville, New Britain and New Ireland. The Germans’ purpose was to exploit a new source of raw materials and to secure a strategic outpost in Germany’s Empire. The German copra plantations on Bougainville used local workers under a basically unjust system of indentured labour in the production of copra. Following the blackbirders, the German planters did little to restore the Bougainvilleans’ trust in Europeans.³

³ *McCane* 121.

Church boundaries of the Northern Solomons:

1898. Established as Apostolic Prefecture of German Solomon Islands.

1904 Renamed as Apostolic Prefecture of Northern Solomon Islands.

1930: Promoted as Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Solomon Islands.

1959 lost territory to establish Apostolic Vicariate of West Solomon Islands

1966. Promoted as Diocese of Bougainville

Germany claimed Bougainville in 1884 whereas the British established sovereignty over the Southern Solomons. Burns Philp began a regular service from Sydney to Papua via the Solomons in 1896. Thus, it was that when Marists again entered the Solomons in 1898 circumstances were markedly different from what they had been for their predecessors: the process of subdividing the former Vicariate of Melanesia was already well under way, expatriates were less isolated, supplies and assistance were more available, and security was more assured.

Photograph: Bishop Broyer SM 1846 – 1918

“In 1898, Bishop Pierre Broyer SM, vicar Apostolic of Samoa, was charged with establishing new missions in what was then called the North Solomons. Marist Frs. Karl Flaus and Eugene Englert were sent from Samoa to begin the new mission. They were greatly helped in this work by two Samoan catechists, Kario and Lino. They founded their first mission at Poporang in the Shortland Islands. In 1901 they established their second mission at Kieta. Over the years 30 missions were established on Bougainville, Buka, Nissan and the Carterets. No difficulties arose with the German New Guinea administration, as they valued the missionaries as auxiliaries in developing the protectorate, gave full encouragement. Moreover, in April 1899 the Marists were authorised by the Imperial Government to open a seminary at Meppen, in Germany, for the specific purpose of training German missionaries for Samoa and the Solomon Islands.”⁴



Northern Solomon Islands mission stations in 1931⁵

Shortland Islands 1. Poporang. *Choiseul Island*: 2. Sirovaga. *Bougainville*. 3. Kieta. 4. Koromira. 5. Tunuru. 6. Muguai and 7. Turiboiru (Buin). 8. Moluna. 9. Sovele, 10. Banoni, 11. Buka Passage. 12. Timbutz. 13. Teop. *Island of Buka*. 14. Burunolui. 15. Lemanmanu 16. Hanahan. 17. Gagan.⁶

⁴ *Laracy* 50

⁵ *The Marist Missions in the South Seas 1931*: 91.

⁶ *The Marist Missions in the South Seas 1931*. 79

Chief Goral of Shortlands Island which is next to Bougainville

Although long familiar with Europeans, the Shortlanders were impressed by the Marists and their belongings and buildings like their prefabricated house. Delighted by the response and noting that, “even the children, wore the loin cloth, the Marists rejoiced that Providence was favouring their enterprise”. But their optimism was short-lived. The main reason: Polygamy was incompatible with Christianity.

Polygamy was very important in the Shortlands and could not readily be forsaken. It had vast social ramifications and was a basic prop of the traditional social structure throughout the Solomons, where the labour of several wives was a key means of producing wealth and hence obtaining high rank.

Chief Goral said that he had no wish for missionaries to settle in his islands because ‘they would insist on his giving up nearly all his wives’. Polygamy was of particular moment in all the islands of the Bougainville Straits, where it seems to have been practised in the Shorthands on a scale unequalled in other parts. Elsewhere, leaders rarely had more than three or four wives and for most men monogamy was normal. In the Shortlands, chief Goral’s death in 1894 created perhaps a hundred widows and his son Kopana, who died in 1901, left fifteen.⁷

“In the 1880s Captain Alex Ferguson of the *Ripple* vessel was pleased to count the powerful Goral as his friend and he experienced several years of peaceful and profitable trading thanks to his favour. On his part, Goral, favoured and trusted this honest Scot as he traded goods between the Bougainville Straits and Sydney. But the villagers of Numanuma, on the nearby coast hated Goral and any friend of his was their enemy. When Goral’s enemies saw the *Ripple* in the bay they paddled canoes over and killed him and some of the crew. Others were rescued by Rev. George Brown, the Methodist minister.



A Solomon Chief.

On hearing the news, the chief dispatched his men in canoes to the scene of the massacre, they surprised the enemy and about twenty of them were killed. Goral continued to wield power with considerable ability and a flexible set of values into the 1890s. When he died he passed on his authority and much of his shrewd wisdom to his sons who continued to exercise these qualities into the twentieth century. Long before his death, old man Goral had a dream.

The gist of this dream was bequeathed to his sons and has come down through his descendants in various versions. “Some strangers would come with news of a Great One. Listen to them.” The sign would be one stick crossed against another. Mysterious, and as yet unravelled, the prediction was kept alive by the sons of Goral.”⁸

⁷ Laracy 54

⁸ O’Brien 138

Bishop Broyer, was concerned at the plight of women in the Shortlands

Broyer wrote to Mother Denyse, superior of the novitiate in Lyons of the Sisters of the Third Order of Mary (Later Marist Sisters) asking them to come. These Sisters worked in Oceania with the Marist Fathers, aiding them in the apostolate with women. The Bishop asked Mother Denyse if she could send sisters to this new mission, so different from those in Oceania.

The first Marist missionary sisters — Sr Claire (née Étiennette Rochette) from France and Sr Ignatia (née Magdalena Schaal) from Germany — arrived in Poporang on the Shortland Islands on 6 April 1901. In 1903, Sr Boniface (née Wendelina Grueber) from Germany and Sr Mathieu (née Marie Couesse) from France came to the mission on the Northern Solomon Islands. In 1905, there were again two new arrivals — Sr Claver (née Marie Vinke) from Germany and Sr Placide (née Marie Anne Letort) from France. Up to 1914, the Marist missionary sisters sent a further 10 sisters, six of them from Germany, three from France and one from Luxembourg. All in all, 16 sisters were sent to this mission between 1901 and 1914, of which at least 10 were German-speaking.⁹

Sr Marie-Claire arriving in 1901, described the women when she and Sr Ignace were allowed to visit the women's enclosure in the tribe of Paramata:

A huge shed, dark inside, its dirt covered with mats on which thirty to forty women of all colours crouched naked to the waist; the majority having teeth red from chewing betel nut and shaggy hair bleached with lime. Poor dears, yet they are creatures made to the image of God. I was moved to tears.¹⁰

Many women became part of the chief's harem through kidnapping or being bought by the chief and spent most of their lives in huge enclosures. The Bishop believed that the Sisters would be welcomed by the village women as whenever a priest approached the women hid. However, even the Sisters had difficulty setting up their schools as some thought they were like magicians.

The Bishop wrote:

At my arrival, every man awaited me on shore, not a single woman to be seen. We came to Ouari's dwelling. Behind this hedge, thirty to forty women, all wives of Ouari, were busy making pottery. The chief refused to send their girls to school. 'They say that the nuns are holy women and so would bewitch their females and steal them away. In a letter of Bishop Broyer to the Procurator in France reasons for concern for the Shortlands. In Shortlands, the chiefs have sometimes ten, fifteen or twenty wives. "During my stay at Poporang, the son of Goral was about to die. He had fifteen wives and like his father, he granted them their lives."¹¹

The mission archives have papers and correspondence between Broyer and German officials and companies accounts of the North Solomon Mission, and relations with the German mission seminary in Meppen.¹²

⁹ Steffen: p 34

¹⁰ O'Brien 146

¹¹ O'Brien 146 -148

¹² Web site

Governor Albert Hahl. When Albert Hahl became Governor of German New Guinea in 1902 he encouraged the missionaries as they helped establish peace amongst the local people. However he also introduced the spheres of influence trying to keep missions of each religion to concentrate only in certain area and not encroach on other religious denominations. *Dr. Albert Hahl (1868 - 1945) was a German colonial administrator. He was Governor of German New Guinea from 1902 to 1914.*



The German-English treaty, concluded in April 1899, shifted the boundaries between the German and English parts of the Solomon Islands. Santa Isabel, New Georgia and the Shortland Islands no longer belonged to the Germans but to the British Solomon Islands. Therefore, it became necessary to have a central station on Bougainville, as well as the central station at Poporang on the Shortland Islands (started in 1899). As early as 1899, the governor of German New Guinea, Rudolf von Bennigsen, had called on the mission to acquire land on the Solomon Islands according to the missionary need, wherever available. When he saw the intense agricultural work of the Marists during his visit to Poporang in 1900, he urged them to come to Bougainville and work intensively in agricultural projects there as well ¹³

Laracy:

The Bougainville people were happy to sell land to the Marists and in 1900 an initial thirty-five hectares were bought at Kieta, on the east coast of Bougainville. In 1901, land was bought on Buka Island by the Marists thus opening contact with Buka. Some land was bought on the west coast islet of Pororan and in 1902 more was obtained at Patupatuai on the Buin coast from the villagers of Kihili, who wanted mission protection against an expected attack from the Shortlands. In 1913 the Marists held 500 hectares at Kieta, 1000 at Buin, 120 at Koromira, 200 at Torokina and 125 at Buka, in addition to land at seven other places.

Occupation of the sites was slow, owing mainly to malaria. Of the priests who worked in the prefecture between 1899 and 1904 seven, including three who died there, remained less than two years. By 1904, when the prefecture became canonically independent of Samoa and Joseph Forestier was named prefect apostolic, there was only one Marist post, Kieta, outside Poporang. Nor had that been founded without difficulty. Other dates of acquisition were Torokina 1904, Koromira 1908, Burunotui 1908, Rerebere (west Buin) 1909, Borobere (east Buin) 1914. ¹⁴

On 17 May 1885, agreements were made between Germany and the United Kingdom over the islands of Bougainville and Buka in the area of the German sphere of interest. On 20 September 1905 a station was built with a post office and customs. Since 1902, there was a Catholic mission in Kieta.

¹³ Steffen 2021:30

¹⁴ Laracy 1976 :41



Township of Kieta in recent years



Back in German times there were few difficulties with the colonial administration and the missions. The German New Guinea administration valued the missionary's auxiliaries in the development of the protectorate and gave full encouragement. Moreover, in April 1899, the Marists were authorised by the Imperial Government to open a seminary at Meppen, near Osnabrück in northern Germany, to train German missionaries for Samoa and the Solomon Islands.¹⁵

Poporang remained until 1910 the seat of the apostolic prefect of this mission for two colonies. To avoid further confusion of names, on 21 January 1904, Propaganda Fide changed the name of the prefecture *German Solomon Islands* to *Northern Solomon Islands*.

Map used for educational purposes

¹⁵ Laracy 1976: 51.

Fr Maurice Boch

Maurice Boch was born in Alsace and trained in the army.

In 1897 Boch had been a subaltern in a French cavalry regiment, when a sermon preached by Bishop Broyer at Sedan aroused his interest in Pacific missions and inspired him to join the Society of Mary. The decision was bitterly opposed by both his apparently bigoted German Protestant father and his French Catholic mother, counting on a military career to boost the family fortunes — to no avail. Boch reached the Solomons in 1908 and soon became a popular figure with a reputation for open-handedness. Boch was also a man of combative dislikes whose detestation of Germany (understandable in view of his background) was exceeded only by his horror of Protestants.¹⁶

Boch mused about himself:

Does solitude depress me? Not at all! For despite having no socias, I have a companion: my pipe, my very dear pipe which, humanly speaking, satisfies me completely. There was a time when, sporting a mane like a horse and with natural teeth, I was well equipped to conquer pretty features and fine qualities. But were I still marriageable, instead of being a Marist, and was my hair still elaborately done, and did my mouth contain an ivory keyboard instead of black, worn stumps, I would prefer my pipe to the prettiest girls in the world Would it not be wise for the next Chapter to prescribe the pipe for all Marists? This move would at once double our forces and would thus provide a socias at all stations. (ibid).



VERY REV. FATHER RIEU, S.M., (SUPERIOR GENERAL), VERY REV. FATHER BOCH, S.M., (then PREFECT APOSTOLIC), REV. FATHER CONLEY, S.M., ON BOARD THE "RAPHAEL"

There was much animosity between the Catholics and the Methodists. Boch trained up catechists to go into villages to claim them before the Methodists. For more details of conflicts between the Catholics and Methodists (*see Laracy 54 – 56*)

Laracy;

“The Marists certainly enjoyed a long de facto monopoly which may be explained by the fact that their immediate rivals, the Methodists, were too busy elsewhere. Later on, feelings ran

¹⁶ Laracy 1976: 58.

highest in Siwai. The Methodists, who eventually attracted half the population, were reinforced in 1928 by an influx of teachers from New Georgia.

“The Marists were ready for them. The year before, Boch had equipped a squad of catechists in south Bougainville with bicycles in order that they might more quickly visit threatened villages, challenge Protestant emissaries and report back to their priest. In November 1928 he issued instructions that forceful catechists, even insufficiently trained ones, be placed in each village and station work subordinated to visiting, even if it meant making the schoolboys ‘a troop of peripatetic scouts accompanying the [priests] . . . from village to village’.

Visiting Siwai two months later and observing the bitter sectarian competition, the Government Anthropologist, W.P. Chinnery, suggested to Boch that the missions reach a *modus vivendi*, only to be told, If the Protestants wish to have peace with us, let them go where we are not. “Where our influence is established . . . there will be a fight for each individual village if necessary.” Fighting did break out shortly afterwards; Methodist and Catholic factions destroyed each other’s chapels at Osokoli and Hukuha.

Like Boch, Wade continued to scatter missionaries singly, less to hold ground already won than to extend Marist influence in hitherto neglected areas which in the 1930s were being opened up by government patrols completing the task of pacification.¹⁷

Mother Mary Rose ssm saw Mount Bagana in 1934 in her tour of the mission stations. She was invited by Bishop Wade to visit the missions in the Solomons wherever her Sisters were stationed. On 20 August 1934 at half past five in the morning, the *Malaita* reached North Solomon waters and dropped anchor between a big densely wooded island called Shortland, and a little island to the south of it called Faisi where a government station was maintained to look after the interests of the British Solomons.

Fifteen minutes after the *Malaita* had dropped anchor, the launch from the Catholic mission on Poporang Island, brought me to the station in time for Mass by Father Boch, the resident missionary - ever cordial and pleasant, who regards problems, trials and privations as the heritage of every apostle - “just part of living a missionary life.”

Their next port of call was Bougainville, largest of the Solomon Islands with gigantic mountain peaks, some of them ten thousand feet high and covered with forest. Right in the middle of the island is a steaming, live volcano, called **Bagana (the Great One)** because, according to pagan belief, the spirit of that name dwells in it. “Belly b’long him no good,” remarked one of the boys, “he sing out too much.”¹⁸ At that stage the Solomons were divided into the Northern Solomons incorporating Bougainville, Buka and the Shortland Islands which were ruled by Australia as part of the Territory of New Guinea and then the Southern Solomons known as the British Solomons.



Mother M. Rose and Mother M. Pia in the Southwest Pacific profit by the shade of an umbrella.

¹⁷ Laracy p 64.

¹⁸ Decker. Page 80

Mother Mary Rose:

At the end of August 1934, we first sighted some of the houses of Kieta village, about half-way along the eastern shore. A short while later, as we entered beautiful Kieta Harbor, the bells in the mission church tower rang out 'a joyful greeting. There on the shore stood His Excellency, genial Bishop Wade, a native of Rhode Island, and with him our dear Sisters, and a large group of natives waving a welcome.¹⁹



MAN AND WOMAN, RUVIANA, SOLOMON ISLANDS.

How thrilling it was to set foot on this island, where only half a century ago, the natives celebrated the winning of battles by roasting their conquered enemies at victory banquets. Of course, the coming of the missionaries and the presence of civil authority have contributed to make fighting unpopular, so that for the last twenty-five years there have been practically no wars here. As most of the stations are near the coast, we usually travelled by the *Raphael*, the "flagship," so to speak, of a tiny mission fleet. Not by mere chance did it get its beautiful name.

The *Raphael* was one of many mission boats used over the years to transport goods to lonely mission stations. Sometimes they carried the Bishop on his rounds of the stations with his encouraging words and sympathetic voice or in this case carrying Mother Mary Rose and her companion as they visited the many stations where the sisters of their order now worked in medical clinics or a village school.

A twelve-hour run northward along the coast brought us to a village called Timbutz, where Father Allotte, a missionary for more than thirty years, and Father Lebel, his young assistant, together with the boys and girls of the mission, waved a welcome from the shore. Next day most of the two thousand Catholic communicants of the parish were on hand as His Excellency administered confirmation to a large group of children in a ceremony which was truly touching and sublime, for, of course, in this humble mission church, hidden in the tropics, the King of Kings is just as lavish of His love and mercy, as He is in St. Patrick's Cathedral or historic Notre Dame.²⁰

Meanwhile, some two hundred canoes had gathered along the water route to escort them to the dock. There were various styles and sizes of canoes. Some had a graceful upward curve at both bow and stern; some were plain, long and heavy; some were balanced by an outrigger "all were gaily decorated and crowded with natives who had come out to welcome us. Five hundred persons had gathered on the shore and knelt there to receive the Bishop's blessing, as he stepped from the boat and led us along a gaily festooned pathway."²¹

¹⁹ Decker ed 1948: 80

²⁰ Decker ed 1948: 83.

²¹ Decker ed 1948: page 86s and 93

We made our way to the church, which serves more than two thousand baptized Christians. Indeed, Buka Island, with a total of six thousand in the fold, is almost entirely Catholic. Father John Conley, the priest in charge, since 1926 has been working here with extraordinary success. The bishop has come to administer confirmation to 300 people in the parish. The people were notified of our coming by the beating on a large wooden drum – a singular broadcasting system.



A garamut slit drum from Papua New Guinea

Father John Conley described the drum: “It is about seven feet long, two and a half feet wide, and two and a half feet high, made from a tree trunk with crude iron instruments, sharpened and shaped for that purpose. Its only opening through which the work of hollowing is ingeniously done is a narrow slit at the top about one inch wide and six feet long. When beaten with a bundle of some eight rods, each about a half inch in diameter, its sound, is heard at a distance of three or four miles. It will by different rhythms announce the arrival of the missionary, the visit of a government official, the outbreak of war and similar events of importance.”²²



Photo: The Marist Missions in the South Seas. 1931

After Mass, at Turibolru, North Solomons.

²² Decker ed 1948: 93

Blazing the Trail. Letters of Rev Emmet McHardy S.M. 1904 – 1933

Missionary to Bougainville



Message from Bishop Wade on Emmet's death:

"Father McHardy was peculiarly fitted by nature for foreign missionary work. God gave him to us for a very short period but in that time he accomplished wonders. Constantly cheerful, he had just the manner to win and to hold the natives. Great was their sorrow when he left them; earnestly they prayed for his return, and they simply sighed aloud, when I personally told them that he had experienced eternal birth.

"Father McHardy had a welcoming and happy smile for everyone. That was one of the resolutions of his life. He was faithful to it, serving all smilingly, cheerfully and willingly. God sees the need of harvesters and yet He removes one and tells us calmly to ask Him for another! "Pray the Lord of the Harvest that He send labourers into His harvest." May the spirit of unselfish sacrifice of these letters awaken in

other young hearts the desire to devote themselves to the service of the Lord in the Vineyard and inflame the hearts of all with a burning zeal in the cause for which Father McHardy gave his life, the propagation of the Faith to the waiting multitudes yearning for a Saviour."²³ *Bishop Thomas Wade S.M., North Solomons*



The Marist motto is "Ignotus et quasi occultus (Hidden and as it were unknown)" and few have given it more faithful service than Fr Emmet. He wrote innumerable letters home to his parents, and they tell the story of his life in the Solomons. It is interesting to compare his experiences with those the Marist missionaries had in Fiji where initially they were hastily rejected by the village chiefs who belonged to the Wesleyan religion.

In Bougainville when Fr Emmet worked there was some rivalry between the Methodist and Catholic churches. In 1930 the Northern Solomon Islands were made into a Vicariate, and Father Thomas J. Wade, S.M., an American, a native of Providence, Rhode Island, was consecrated as the First Bishop. One of Bishop Wade's young apostles is the author of the following letters. Fr McHardy was born in 1904 and died 17th May 1933 aged only 29 of a tropical disease.

²³ *Bishop Thomas Wade S.M., North Solomons*

The following are some excerpts from Fr Emmet's letters ²⁴

Description of the mission in Kieta. Saturday, June 15, 1929



Our place at Kieta is beautifully situated on the headland overlooking the southern end of Kieta harbour; immediately in front of us is a narrow strait separating us from the precipitous sides of a large Island that almost blocks the mouth of harbor; to the left, set in great bush clad hills, lie the tranquil waters of the bay; to the right, stretching away to be lost in blue haze of mountain and sea, is a white coconut-fringed bay. And a few miles out to sea is a white line of foam that marks our encircling coral reef; and all day long, even on the calmest days, there rolls over to us the boom of the breakers; in a really rough sea the noise is tremendous.

Photo: Fr Conley and some of his students from Saving the Solomons.

St. Theresa's Catechist School, Burunotui, Buka, Saturday, June 15, 1929.

Fr Emmet wrote: "I am up here for a while to see how Father Conley runs his Catechist School, and to learn "Pidgin" English which is found up here in its most classic form! Up here Father Conley, one of the young American Fathers, has a very fine Catechist school. He has about eighty-five boys, and they seem to be a happy, intelligent lot. After two- or three-years' instruction in Theology and English they are sent back to their respective villages, there to hand on the faith they have received. And the work that some of them do is marvellous."

Kieta, Bougainville, New Guinea Territory. Saturday, July 27th, 1929.

Every weekend I have been over to my new place (Tunuru). Everything is going well there; the new Church is nearly finished. A fortnight ago I was right out in the bush for a couple of days and enjoyed it. It is pretty hard getting to the various mountain villages (one is quite ready to drink a coconut when one arrives), but it is worth it. Then in villages where the priest had been before, there were baptisms to be made. I had heard that some of the villagers in the mountains right up behind my place were very keen to see a priest, so I persuaded Father Seiller to come along with me in that direction, the district was just as new to him as it was to me for he had confined his activities to a large district round Kieta. One Sunday after morning Mass we started off in the "Raphael." A couple of hours brought us to my new station at Tunuru; there, everything was going well; the boys were wasting no more time than usual, and the new Church was beginning to look something more than a mere stack of spars. However, we stayed there the first night, and next morning I heard the confessions of my boys and said Mass for them. And after that, with six boys as guides and carriers, we started off. The first day's journey was easy, for we went only about six miles across an isthmus to a large village on the sea shore called Rorovana.

²⁴McHardy sm, 1935. p22



Canoes from Buin out in force to welcome the Superior General, Fr Rieu S.M 1929 ²⁵

On Tuesday. 10th, September our Superior General, arrived up from Faisi on the “Gabriel,” and immediately we all saw that he was a straight eight. He was most kind in his enquiries as to how I was getting on.

The Fathers from Buka and the north of Bougainville had come down the day before on the “Rosa,” our Buka schooner (four tons). and on the evening of his arrival all the Fathers of the south came in on the “Raphael” and next morning Father Binois arrived in from Poporang on the “Victoria.” and all the Fathers of the Prefecture were together in Kieta-and, as I anticipated. We had fun. With Father General and Father Rausch there were twenty of us. ²⁶

**Kieta, Bougainville, New Guinea Territory.
September 26th, 1929. (Letter from Emmet McHardy)**

The retreat began on the biggest feast of Our Lady for the Society, and ended on the feast of Our Lady of Dolours; on the Sunday, lest we might be sad at having to go back to our stations on the morrow she was with us to remind us that whatever little inconvenience we might have to endure would be as nothing when compared with her sufferings for us, and her inspiration surely gave us all strength.



Photograph: Little Village Chapel run by a catechist.

And then on the Saturday we had the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross to remind us in a peculiar way of our special vocation, for we are trying to exalt the Cross away out here in the Solomon Islands. Surely the little retreat could not have been better arranged!

On Tuesday morning I was just preparing to go back to my outfit when Father Boch called me aside and told me that he wanted me to accompany him north on the trip with the General. I was a bit staggered, but after a while I consented. On Wednesday the General and Father Rausch went off down to Koromira to see the station which Father Rausch founded; they wanted me to go, too. In the evening we were gathered together again at Kieta, and on the Thursday morning we started northwards; the General, Father Rausch and Fathers Servant and Mountauban went off about 6 a.m. on the “Raphael”.

On Friday morning the Father General administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to about sixty natives at Timbutz, a great ceremony. Almost immediately afterwards Father Boch and I set sail in the “Gabriel” for Burunotui to acquaint Father Conley of the General’s arrival. It was

²⁵ McHardy sm, 1935: 26

²⁶ McHardy sm, 1935: 46

about four in the afternoon when we arrived there, but our warning was hardly required for all the schoolboys were tricked out ready for the General, and the perfectly good welcome intended for him was given in greater part to us, for the boys thought he was on the “Gabriel”²⁷ (p 47)

The Father General saw the majority of our 10,000 Catholics, and he saw the very good dispositions of many of the 50,000 pagans. As he was leaving he told us he was proud of the great work we were doing, and he asked us to pray that he might get more men to send us, for everywhere he saw we have wonderful chances for developing our Mission, and for advancing the cause of Almighty God. And so we are waiting patiently now to see just what will come of it all.

Sunday, October 13th, 1929

Most of the houses of native materials and properly used, make a very good solid house, and one that is eminently suited to the climate, whereas timber houses harbour bugs and mosquitoes, and all sorts of things!



The new Tunuru mission 18 months after beginning. House cook, Father's house, House Lotu, house boy, schoolhouse Tas'all

Of course, the chapel has been finished a good while now, but it still has only sac-sac on the roof. This place will never be short of water, for this must be about the wettest place on earth.²⁸ The language still takes a lot

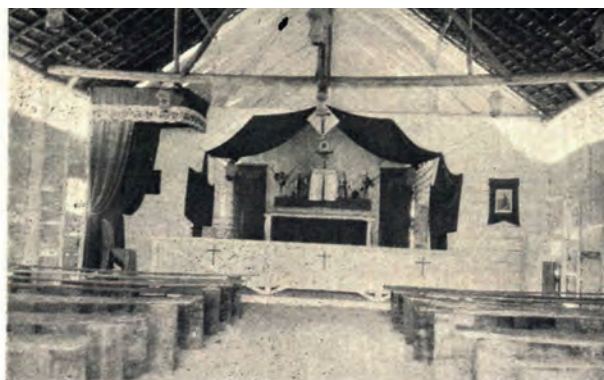
of time and it will be a good while yet before I am quite at home with it; however, I can hear confessions both in “pidgin” and Nasioi, and when I go to the bush I can carry on a bit of conversation, and that is a start. And then medical work takes a good deal of time; the natives know that there are good medicines here, and so they come along at the slightest pretext. Intravenous injections are particularly popular with them. They see the wonderful way in which such injections clean up yaws and tropical ulcers, and they get the idea that they are good for everything! One old bird with a nasty gash in the foot came along the other day for an injection, and he was a bit annoyed because I only washed and dressed it!

And after [the presbytery] I have only to build a school and a house for “boarders.” I have about twenty work-boys; these “make paper” for three or four pounds a year, and even though they are far from skilful, they are very good and willing, provided they have someone to show them what to do. So you see I am just the boss! The boys here are nearly all from Buka, and they are intelligent (pps 68- 69)

²⁷ McHardy sm, 1935: 47 and McHardy sm, 1935: 61

²⁸ McHardy sm, 1935.; 63.

At last Tunuru is functioning as a Catechist school; just three weeks ago I thought the buildings and general arrangements were sufficiently advanced to admit some boys. Already there are thirty-three boarders! All ideas of discipline and school life are new to them.²⁹ This time the trip was much more extensive, for we travelled right through the mountains back to Tunuru. And in doing so we had to pass through more villages that had never seen a priest before. On the whole they were well disposed, and from several I got a boy for my school. Please God, they will do well, and go back as Catechists one day to found the Church in their own mountains.³⁰



INTERIOR OF NEW CHURCH, TUNURU (NATIVE MADE), DECORATED FOR RECEPTION OF BISHOP WADE, S.M.



SOME LITTLE EVOS REGISTERING DIFFERENT EMOTIONS ON FACING THE CAMERA

There was Midnight Mass, preceded by the Baptisms of five of my pupils (I called one John- my cookie! and another William). They are a fine bunch of lads-the first real fruit of Tunuru. They were all dressed in a single white lava-lava, with a brightly coloured belt and with a little chain and cross around their necks. There was a crowd, probably five or six hundred, the great majority of them, of course, being still unbaptised. I was glad to see my chapel hopelessly too small. Later they sang and danced, just as they do at their own “sing-sings”.

Father Emmet McHardy was born in 1904 and died 17th May 1933 aged only 29 of a tropical disease. He was doing excellent work in his mission and was loved by the village people at Tunuru. Bishop Wade said of Emmet. “God gave him to us for such a short time but in that time he accomplished wonders. Constantly cheerful, he had just the manner to win and to hold the natives. Great was the people’s sorrow when he left them to return home when he was ill; earnestly they prayed for his return, and they simply sighed aloud, when told that he had experienced eternal birth.” There is no doubt that his faithful parishioners mourned his death with a special ceremony followed by the customary feast which he would have enjoyed in spirit.

Father William Weber succeeded Father McHardy at Tunuru and was baptizing many more people at his station, according to a record he made. “But a short while afterwards, this hard working, self-effacing priest, then in his early forties, was taken prisoner and killed by the Japanese. Native parishioners, who had heard a commotion in the Japanese camp, suspected foul play. Stealing behind the Japanese lines they discovered a fresh grave, and when they dug down they found the body of their beloved missionary. He had been beheaded, and his head, his mission cross and his glasses had been placed upon his chest. This heroic apostle from Paderborn Germany had sealed with his blood a decade of service and sacrifice in the vineyard of the Master”³¹

²⁹ *McHardy sm, 1935.: 97*

³⁰ *McHardy sm, 1935. 119*

³¹ *Decker ed 1948: 95*

Life as a nun

“The Sisters from France were auxiliaries to the Marists in the Pacific, in their apostolate with the women. They continued their efforts to achieve pontifical recognition as a religious order. It was likely that Sr Irene, fresh from Brittany and Fiji, was unconcerned about such matters “for her hands were full at that moment with sick babies and mamas hopeful for help. Sr Bartolemy would not live the thirty years that would see the sisters approved by Rome as religious Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, or more popularly called Marist Missionary Sisters.”³²

In a letter written In December 1904 Bertreux mentions the sisters who had come to Tangarare in the south Solomons. “The station consists as yet of several leaf houses, which serve as chapel, classrooms, boys’ and girls’ dormitories, Fathers’ house. There is also a timber house, built as a house for the Fathers. This has now been given to the Sisters. They have been acclimatising” (Ibid).



A Sister of the Third-Order Regular of Mary and her larger girls.

Father Duclos, Visitor of the Marists in the Pacific also went to Tangarare. He wrote: “I went to see the two sisters of the Third Order of Mary, here now for several months. They came to start a class for young girls, and since its commencement they are filled with hope. I found the dear sisters full of courage and lively with a devotion which out measures their physical strength. Needless to say, they too have had to pay ‘like everyone else, the price as passport to this place, with Its debilitating climate and its periodic attacks of malaria.”



Photo The Sisters DMI

The congregation of the Little Sisters of Nazareth in the North Solomons was begun in 1937, and it had ten professed members by 1941. That sisterhoods developed with relative ease is easily explained. Life as a nun had much to attract women who, unlike men, had little alternative to village life; it was more comfortable and offered a means of satisfying relatively sophisticated tastes developed during several years at the station school. Moreover, church laws imposed on nuns none of the educational qualifications which impeded the training of the indigenous male clergy.³³

³² O’Brien 123

³³ Laracy 107



Official U.S. Marine Corps Photo
Major General Allen H. Turnage, U.S.M.C.
and
His Excellency, Bishop Jean Marie Aubin, S.M.

The War Years in Bougainville

“By 1942 the Marists’ net had spread throughout the Solomon Islands, an impressive feat involving about 120 missionaries stationed at thirty-four mission posts — twenty-two in the North Solomons and twelve in the South. It was, however, an essentially limited achievement; the maintenance of the network remained almost wholly dependent on the continued supply of European resources. Nevertheless, when Marist missionaries next fled the Solomon Islands during the war they left behind them a considerable flock calling itself Catholic.”³⁴

Well over 30,000 Solomon Islanders were baptised Catholics, two-thirds of them in the North Solomons. Another 50,000 were adherents of one or other of the four Protestant missions. All had been gathered by a broad movement in which almost half of the total population, especially those in the younger age groups, had turned from paganism to Christianity. When World War II broke

out most of the German missionaries had to leave or were interned, but they left behind a strong Catholic community which proved able to survive the war years.³⁵

Father Boch was on Poporang Island in the Shortlands on Monday of Holy Week, 1942, when an excited native thrust his head inside the missionary’s hut to tell him that the Japanese fleet was in Tulagi waters. Father Boch and his companion, Father Lepping, a native of Philadelphia, dressed quickly, celebrated Mass, and watched the Japanese take possession of the government house 10 the distance. At 8.00 A.M. a boatload of Japanese arrived at the mission station, proclaimed their capture of the Shortland group, and after robbing the missionaries of the



Australian Dept. of Information Photo
Father Byrnes, Australian Army chaplain offers Mass in the bush, while guns shell the enemy one hundred and fifty yards distant.

little money they had, and nearly all their clothing, forbade them to say Mass or have anything to do with the natives. On September 2, 1942, the two priests were imprisoned in a shed. Four days later Father Boch was rudely awakened at three o’clock in the morning, taken aboard a destroyer, and questioned. On his refusal to act as interpreter in a village where the Japanese sought vital information the chief inquisitor rose and exclaimed, “No mercy!” But Father Boch’s hour had not yet come.

On September 7 Fr Boch and Father Lepping were taken by a Japanese destroyer to Rabaul, There, with other prisoners, including other Marist Fathers, some Marist Brothers, and seven Missionary Sisters they lived in a concentration camp on a daily allowance to each person was

³⁴ *Laracy 1976: 64*

³⁵ *Laracy 1976: 65*

twelve ounces of rice which was mouldy, dirty that it had to be washed seven times before it was fit to eat.

“Remember,” said the sentries repeatedly, “if one prisoner escapes-all die.” The Sisters had to live in one big hut with the male prisoners. They had no privacy, no medical aid in times of illness, and no protection from bombs, and they were assigned to the most humiliating tasks. Two Japanese girls (Catholics) after providing an entertainment for the soldiers were brought to inspect the prison camp. On seeing the plight of the Sisters, they wept. Within a short time the missionaries were transferred to Vunapope where they were welcomed by Bishop Scharmach and the many Sacred Heart missionaries.³⁶

Fr Conley's Death

In 1939 Father John Conley took charge of the mission on Nissan or Green Island, forty-two miles northwest of Buka, and when war spread to the South Pacific he remained at his post. He could have escaped from the Japanese had he so wished, but he wanted to stay with his people,



Official U.S. Navy Photo
in kneeling in silent prayer beside the graves of their buddies and shipmates,
members of the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy at the cemetery at Bougainville in the Solomons.

to minister to their spiritual needs, and to try to talk the invaders into giving the natives a better deal than they themselves might obtain. While on his way to visit members of his flock in high, wooded Pinipil, a little island to the north, with a population of some fifteen hundred Melanesians, he was captured, and transported by warship to Kieta, around whose harbor the Japanese had built a powerful base.

There, according to persistent reports from the natives, he was beheaded on December 10, 1943. His body has been discovered and buried and the grave is marked. Though gone from the Solomon Island scene to receive the reward of his Heavenly Father, this wonderful missionary lives in the hearts of his fellow Marists and the people he served so well. The inspiring story of

his spirit of sacrifice has already kindled the fire of missionary zeal in the hearts of youthful ecclesiastical students. They long to follow his example. Father Florence Wache, another valiant and veteran missionary who had been imprisoned with Father Conley, is listed as having died of wounds on the same day, December 10, 1943.

During the war.

Most village people left their coastal villages and withdrew inland, where the foothills and slopes, some built makeshift dwellings for the duration. Others took their families across the mountains to Avuavu and the security of the weather coast.

*Photograph Missionary Sisters and village children are rescued from the pursuing Japanese. The chaplain is Fr John Fisher S.J.*³⁷



³⁶ Decker ed 1948: 97.

³⁷ O'Brien p 219

Buka Island On March 9, 1942, nine Japanese warships arrived off the coast of Buka. Father Hennessy was visited and questioned but not otherwise molested. Shortly afterwards he went north to the neighbouring mission station to warn Father Lamarre and his assistants, giving a detailed account of the two-hour Japanese visit, and concluding with the words,

“The next few days will tell. If they return soon, I’m finished!”

“Why not seek safety in the mountains of Bougainville?”

“By Bishop Wade I was placed in charge of Lemanmanu. There I will stay, cost what it may!”³⁸

Later he carved on the wall of a Japanese prison in Rabaul, “In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped. I shall never be confounded.”

“About the twenty-second of June 1942, eight hundred and fifty soldiers and two hundred and ten civilians, including Fathers Hennessy, Brennan and McCullagh, were ordered to embark on the *Montevideo Maru* bound for Hainan, an island off the coast of China. The vessel had reached a point north of Luzon, Philippine Islands, when it was torpedoed by an American submarine with the loss of all on board. So died Fr Brennan and Fr McCullagh and their friend, Father James Hennessy, heroic missionary of the Solomon Islands, beloved comrade of the Marist Fathers. In 1946 Archbishop Cushing established the Father Jim Hennessy Mission Club for Men, which now has an astonishing total of five thousand members. Besides honouring the memory of the heroic priest whose name it bears, this unique organization spreads knowledge of the missions and contributes to their support.



Official U.S. Marine Corp.

About this time Father Joseph Lamarre and Brother Joseph Redman, arrived at the Vunapope mission camp after a year’s imprisonment on Sohano Island in Buka Passage, and five months more of prison in a Rabaul Concentration Camp. They were so weak they could scarcely stand. Father Lamarre responded quickly to treatment and was soon able to be on his feet again. Brother Joseph was still ill in the infirmary when it was destroyed, on 11 February, by a bomb dropped during an American raid. *Photograph: Reverend Thomas Wade, Bishop of the Northern Solomons*

and Vicar for the South and West Pacific at a field chapel on Guadalcanal Father Brunswick of Maine assists

“Boch and a seminarian found him dead under a pile of debris, his face discoloured but intact, his limbs crushed. Sadly they placed his body in a bureau drawer, the only coffin available, and after reciting the usual prayers, buried him in the mission cemetery. Vunapope. Humble, zealous and heroic, Brother Joseph had given the full measure of devotion. He had known well and had understood the words of Our Divine Lord.”³⁹

“When the Japanese occupied Kieta on 1 July 1941, Bishop Wade was visiting a neighbouring mission station at Tunuru, so the Commanding Officer immediately sent him a message stating that “unless he reported at Kieta within twenty-four hours he would be considered an enemy of the Japanese Empire.” Then, probably fearing that the Bishop might escape, the Japanese officer dispatched a schooner to fetch him. But His Excellency, like the Good Shepherd, was thinking of his flock. He was determined to confront the invader courageously and demand

³⁸ Decker ed 1948 77 -78.

³⁹ Decker ed 1948: 83

respect and protection for all his people. The Commanding Officer seemed to be a gentleman. He did keep the Bishop a prisoner in the mission rectory but treated him with respect. He was an exceptional man not like many other Japanese officers. In the middle of August a big battle was brewing in the South Solomons, so the Japanese in Kieta suddenly sailed away to the south on August 6, 1941.⁴⁰

Nw that he was free again, Bishop Wade made good his escape over the mountain trails in the jungle, where loyal native guides protected him, and he established his headquarters. For many months he visited his missionaries and ministered to his people, always keeping hidden from the enemy. But when news reached him that the Japanese considered all missionaries as spies who should be arrested, he warned his helpers and aided them to keep hidden.

Bishop Wade also arranged with Admiral Halsey to have eleven Sisters, three Brothers and two elderly priests evacuated by submarine, communicating with the Admiral by means of a secret short-wave radio transmitter operated by an Australian. Bishop Wade remained on the island with Fathers James McConville of Ireland, Albert Lebel of Brunswick, Maine, Henry Hebert of Biddeford, Maine, Roland Dionne of Van Buren, Maine, and Richard O'Sullivan of Cooktown, Australia. But the situation was becoming more and more critical and the health of the missionaries more and more precarious. The valiant missionaries however, continued to work, and when a second submarine appeared off the coast with orders to pick up all within reach, they boarded it reluctantly. It was hard for them to leave their people. Taken by submarine to Guadalcanal, they were put aboard a boat bound for New Caledonia, where they had an opportunity to rest, and receive medical care.⁴¹

Word must have reached even General Douglas MacArthur of the great work being done by the Marists, Priests, Brothers and Sisters in the Solomon Islands. In 1943 when Bishop Wade requested permission to return to the mission stations through Colonel Edmund C. Sliney, Chaplain C. U.S.A. he visited General Douglas MacArthur to pass on the request seeking permission for Bishop Wade to return to his missions. The General suddenly halted him with the words: "Cease firing, Father! You don't have to build up the case or boost the cause of Bishop Wade and his noble band of helpers. He and his Marist confreres have built up their own cause by their services here for the past one hundred years. They don't have to ask favours. It is we who are in debt to them. You tell the good Bishop that I will permit him and his key men to return to their post at once, even in the thick of the fighting."⁴²

Fr Steffen Noted: "Because of its station system with schools, plantations and craft enterprises, the Marist Mission required the help of lay brothers, who hardly existed in the tradition of the French Marists. It was not until 1905 that the German Marist Mission House in Meppen could send three missionary brothers; at times there were only five brothers in the mission. In 1913, the mission had at least six fathers, four brothers and 13 sisters. ---- There were only 45 Europeans on Buka and Bougainville in 1915, of which 23 were Marists (Laracy 1976). The mission used the island for recruiting plantation workers, especially for New Britain."⁴³

In 1941 three Marist Brothers arrived: Brothers John, Donatus and Augustine. It was the first time the Brothers had opened a school on Bougainville. Previously, the Marist Missionaries (priests) had provided schools for the people of Bougainville, Buka, Nissan and Carteret. Brother John had been visiting Malaita during the school holidays in July 1941, and thus missed

⁴⁰ Decker ed 1948 102

⁴¹ Decker ed 1948; 103

⁴² Ibid p 10

⁴³ Steffen 2021:34.

the radio messages about his appointment to Chabai. This letter was written from Kieta just a few months prior to his execution.



Photograph Brother John

Brother John wrote to his superior Brother Andrew:

Just a brief reply to your thoughtful note given me by Br Augustine. Br Provincial has no doubt told you of my delay. I am grateful to be still in missions and not brought back to civilisation. True, you took me away from my “island of dreams”, Malaita — not that I hope for martyrdom (hardly possible, not now) but I could see how responsive and zealous the Mala boys were and what a vast amount of work was yet to be done. If ever there’s question of a school for Malaita, I’m on the waiting list but I’m also anxious to take possession of my new school. Fr Boch is hurrying me up, as it’s time for the mail. I hope most sincerely to see you on your visitations. I am, dear Brother, Yours sincerely in MJJ.⁴⁴

The three brothers John, Donatus and Augustine were executed in Sohano in October or November 1942. They were beheaded by a Japanese war sword, and their bodies burned on Sohano Island. The Japanese considered the sword to be an honourable means of execution for respected opponents. It is perhaps an indication that the Japanese admired the courage of the Brothers. (*Ibid*)



A church destroyed by bombs.

The war in the North Solomons. From a web article⁴⁵

During the Second World War, Bishops Aubin and Thomas Wade (North Solomons) and their Marist priests, brothers and nuns went into hiding within the Solomons. This followed a missionary tradition that accepted possible martyrdom, although many of the Sisters were later evacuated to New Caledonia and Australia. For some of the evacuated original clergy, particularly sisters, this was their first time outside of the Solomons since their arrival early in the century. The first Japanese contact with the Marists was in the North Solomons, where they were paroled so long as they did not contact American or Australian authorities. Their food was commandeered, and their radios were confiscated. Early relations were amicable, but Bishop Aubin refused to help recruit labour for the Japanese development of what later became the Henderson Airfield and once the Americans

⁴⁴ *McCane p 40*

⁴⁵ <https://www.solomonencyclopaedia.net/biogs/E000055b.htm>

landed on Guadalcanal relations cooled because the Japanese were suspicious of possible Marist collaboration with the Allies.

Two sisters were killed at Tasimboko (Tadhimboko or Tathimboko) and a third fled to the care of coastwatchers, and four missionaries at Ruavatu were bayoneted. Visale became unsafe, forcing Aubin and his staff to move to Tangarare. The American commander ordered their evacuation: between October and December two Marist priests, eight brothers and nineteen sisters left the Solomons, most to New Caledonia.

Bishop Aubin was allowed to stay, along with six priests on Malaita and two on Makira. At Wainoni, Makira, another priest and two nuns refused to leave and since the Japanese never reached that island they managed to keep the Mission station running at close to normal.

Fr Emery de Klerk of Tangarare, joined the Labour Corps as a recruiter and intelligence adviser. Once the war turned against the Japanese the Marists in the South Solomons were



fairly free of the conflict, but those in the North Solomons continued to suffer and some were killed; Bishop Wade and his remaining staff were forced to leave. The final death tally was two priest and two nuns killed in the South Solomons and four priests, six brothers and two nuns in the North.

*Red and blue outline shows
some areas of Marist Influence.
Map copied for educational
purposes*

Fr Boch's Death in 1953. O'Reilly remembered:

Fr Boch died in Bougainville in 1953. Some months later Fr Patrick O'Reilly SM, Editor of Missions recalled his first visit to Solomon Islands and he wrote of the veteran who introduced him to Faisi where the first missionaries had landed. At Faisi Fr Boch found himself truly at home amidst his beloved Alu people.

A profound spiritual bond existed between this priest and his people. O'Reilly had been particularly impressed by the catechists, two of whom he mentions in particular: Maeke of Chief Goral's line and the blind Bitlae, Boch's right hand man for many years. It is in the process of interminable conversations around a gramophone, an illustrated magazine, while smoking pipes together, that Fr Boch has this remarkable empathy with the Alu. It is based on knowledge of their language, their mentality and their attitude. According to the official records - Father Maurice Boch, S.M. Prefect Emeritus of Northern Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea was born 1875. In May 1920, he was appointed Prefect of Northern Solomons. During the war he was arrested by the Japanese but survived. Dying eight years after the cessation.

Bougainville after the war ⁴⁶

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of steady growth and consolidation for St Joseph's School at Rigu. Against the backdrop of exploration, development and operation of the new Panguna mine-site and the development of nearby Arawa town, the school continued its mission of

bringing secondary education to young Bougainvilleans. This period was characterized by gradual development of new curricula, as the Australian syllabuses were gradually replaced, amid much trial and error, with locally produced material.



School children 1982

Photograph: Tenaru Community c. 1969, with Provincial Brothers Raphael Tura, Edwin Meresinihinua, Donald Mahon, Bernard Kangku, Christopher Giles, Othmar Weldon (Provincial), Chanel Diki, Howard Sukuatu, John Paul Mauro



The large community of Brothers at Tenaru from 1958 to the early 1970s included many of the young Melanesian Brothers.⁴⁷ The community, with its abundance of youthful energy, worked hard at school, managed a huge farm which produced ample food for students and Brothers, repaired pumps, tractors, roads, plumbing, generators and buildings, and raised animals for food and sale. The Brothers also enjoyed regular picnics, fishing trips, walks up to the nearby Tenaru waterfall, and, during holiday times, trips to the more distant mission stations.

⁴⁶ McCane *fms*, L. 2004 : 201

⁴⁷ McCane *fms*, L. 2004 : 201

Silver Jubilee of the Marist Brothers 1966

1966 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Marist Brothers' presence in Bougainville. Firminus Bobo, a Rigu teacher-trainee of the time, recorded his impressions of the celebrations in Rigu's annual school magazine, *The Chronicle*: A Mass of thanksgiving was to be the important feature. We wanted to have a special feast, the Brothers wanted to give a banquet and we had to have a concert. Bishop Lemay celebrated the Mass, which was attended by many



priests, Brothers and local people, and all the Marist Sisters who had assembled for their retreat. The Assistant-General, Brother Hilary, and the Provincial, Brother Bertinus, were special guests. Julian had composed the music of the Mass, and a great deal of preparation had been put into the singing. (*Rigu Magazine*).

The photograph: first four Solomon Islands Brothers to be professed. This was taken on their first profession day, 2 July 1956. Benedito Laumanasa (Brother Alphonsus), Malakia Sukuatu (Brother Howard), Isaac Meresinihinua (Brother Edwin) and John Tura

(Brother Raphael). McCane: Melanesian Stories.

Visit by Queen Elizabeth to Bougainville in 1974



Photograph used for educational purposes only

In February 1974 Queen Elizabeth II visited Bougainville with her entourage of Prince Phillip, Princess Anne, Captain Mark Phillips and Lord Mountbatten. The Rigu choir, which by then had 380 voices, performed their signature medley of songs from *The Sound of Music*, first performed eight years earlier at the 1966 choral festival. The school captain, Patrick Tsirato, presented the Queen with copies of the Choir's recordings. Another initiative was the formation of a drum and fife band, which always led the school when they participated in the annual Anzac Day procession. Wherever they performed, the band boys created quite a sensation, with their smart white uniforms and polished performances.

The Bougainville Crisis

From 1964 the mining company CRA (Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia Ltd) carried out extensive exploration and surveying of the Panguna copper deposits. Helicopters buzzed the skies above Kieta and plans were afoot to construct a road into the mountains to the exploratory drilling sites. The mine provided some significant advantages for the nearby Catholic school, including scholarships for further studies, as the company's support for education was one way of improving its public image. "The benefits derived from the copper will be considerable," reported the *Marist Monthly* of October 1965 "but in 1965 no one was aware of the crisis that lay ahead, but by 1969 the same journal carried the following prophetic entry?

"Beyond the boundaries of our school, Bougainville people are involved in a rising action of protest against the seizure of land. It is uncertain what the eventual reaction of the people will be, but this could materialize into revolt."⁴⁸

One of the basic errors of judgement over the payment of royalties was the ignorance of the traditional laws of inheritance of the land. This was a matrilineal society and land was passed down through the sisters or women of the clan. "Under Nasioi customary law, land ownership is matrilineal, passing from mother to eldest daughter. However, the Australian patrol officers in the 1960s registered the men as titleholders rather than the elder sisters who were the traditional caretakers of the land.³⁷ The BCL rent and compensation payments failed to take into account the complex traditional systems of land ownership in Bougainville."⁴⁹



On 12 April 1989, Niugini Nius, one of Papua New Guinea's two daily newspapers, published an undated letter from the leader of the militant landowner group, former BCL employee Francis Ona. In it he set out the revised demands of the militant group, which included compensation of Kina 10 billion (about \$US12 billion) for environmental and other damage caused by BCL's operations (BCL claims that this is more than double the total revenue generated by the company since mining commenced in 1967).

Photograph of Francis Ona

The letter from Francis Ona stated: 'We are not part of your country any more ... We belong to the Republic of Bougainville and we are defending our island from foreign exploitation.'

Despite a substantial police and military presence, continued guerilla activities against mine installations and employees forced the closure of the mine in May 1989, and it remained closed throughout the year. With the security situation largely unchanged, in January 1990 the mine was placed on a 'care and maintenance' basis and the company began to evacuate its employees from Bougainville. Many Bougainvilleans feel that the development of the mine has robbed them of their land, irrevocably changed their way of life, and left them with little of the wealth they believed the mine would bring. As a prominent member of the Panguna landowner group

⁴⁸ *Marist Monthly* October 1965.

⁴⁹ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/completed_Inquiries/jfadt/bougainville/BVrepindx

said in 1989: 'Land is marriage – land is history – land is everything. If our land is ruined our life is finished.'⁵⁰

Francis Ona, the leader of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army was a surveyor at the mine and a strong voice in the New Panguna Landowners Association, demanding 10 billion kina (A\$14.7 billion) in compensation from Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) for environmental damage caused by the mine. [As a surveyor he had previously attended survey conferences where he was considered to have a belief in his own importance in Bougainville. This would have been in the 1970s before the crisis erupted.]

In an article James Tanis pointed out that there were many grievances felt by the people of Bougainville and that Francis Ona's revolutionary language probably resonated with his people for different reasons. Here is a synopsis of his main points James is from Bougainville and he shows that Francis Ona initially had the support of his people and he knew what their grievances were.

Francis Ona led the first BRA operations against the mine in late 1988 and remained the key 'Big Man' on Bougainville. Panguna mine, operated by Conzinc Riotinto Australia, closed in 1989 after conflict over the mine became violent. The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) and the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) were deployed to the island, and grievances over the mine turned into a general separatist insurgency. The riot police were sent in but without clear direction and were drastically unable to restore law and order. Almost immediately, they proved to be beyond the law themselves and were responsible for considerable excesses. Homes, hospitals, schools, churches, convents, vehicles private and government, were burnt to the ground while the riot police were proving to be less and less effective in attaining some degree of stability. The abuse to the civilian population by the riot police themselves was extensive. Human right violations were reported.

The BRA was the main separatist force in Bougainville, declaring independence from Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 1990 after PNG forces withdrew from the country. Following a period of anarchy, the PNG forces returned to areas of Bougainville where they had local support. The Bougainville Resistance Force (BRF), aligned with Papua New Guinea (PNG) and PNG Defence Force, was founded to oppose the BRA.



Even Arawa's General Hospital was not spared the destruction

"On 31 January 1997, Prime Minister Julius Chan secretly signed a contract with a private military consultancy firm, Sandline International. The British-based firm with South African connections, using mercenaries and high-tech equipment, was to equip, train and assist the

PNGDF to conduct a special military operation designed to defeat the BRA and take control of the mine. In mid-1997, talks were held in Honiara and Burnham in New Zealand resulting in a truce, as well as agreement to de-militarize the island. However, largely as a result of the Sandline affair, Julius Chan lost his seat in the June 1997 elections. When Parliament met again on 22 July, Bill Skate was elected Prime Minister. The impetus for peace came with his

⁵⁰ (Perpetua Serero, cousin of Francis Ona quoted in *Post-Courier* 1 May 1989)

election. He had previously opposed a military solution.⁵¹ As it was thousands of innocent people died in the crisis. *(web)* If the Sandline contract, had gone ahead, it would have resulted in large scale violence and potentially have inflamed and protracted the conflict on Bougainville. Francis Ona Bougainville secessionist leader died in 2005 aged only 52. The self-proclaimed king of the island opposed the recent election of the island's new autonomous government. Bougainville's new president, Francis Kabui, expressed sadness at Ona's death, believed to be caused by malaria.⁵²

Sir Peter Barter, Bougainville Affairs Minister

PNG's Bougainville Affairs Minister Peter Barter expressed sadness at the death of Ona, saying in a statement his greatest wish was for Ona to play a real part in Bougainville's peace process, which he had done indirectly. "Regardless of our opposing positions, I have always respected Francis for what he believed in." In his 15 years as a Member of Parliament, Sir Peter served as Minister for Bougainville Affairs and Minister for Inter-Government Relations. He was integral in brokering the peace agreement, in 2007 relinquishing his seat in parliament to take on the role of Paramount Chief Masalahana (*Peacemaker*) in Bougainville. The Multi Party Trust board meetings are held the day before the JPNCC convenes.



Sir Peter arriving at Buka airport

The Joint Panguna Negotiation Committee (JPNCC) has been boosted by the support of eminent businessman and former senior political figure Sir Peter Barter. Sir Peter has been appointed as the Independent Chair of the Multi Party Trust Fund that administers the funding for JPNCC projects which include social, economic and environmental studies relating to the possible re-opening of the Panguna mine.

After an eight-year absence, Sir Peter was warmly welcomed back to Bougainville by a greeting party including a traditional dance troupe. He addressed the people at Buka airport. "One of the reasons I have chosen to be here today is to see whether or not we can move forward and create an economy, which is needed to make this province truly autonomous," Peter Barter's peace strategy had been developed with Theodore Miriung and involved empowering Bougainville's traditional leaders to draw the warring factions together. The Australian Government was impressed by the plan and had offered to provide assistance for its development. The Bougainville Peace Strategy was eventually implemented on 29 May 1998.

⁵¹ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/completed_inquiries/jfadt/bougainville/BVrepindx

⁵² July 26, 2005 Sydney Morning Herald

A decade of violent conflict: description of the conflict

Ambulances wrecked in Arawa. Wikipedia



From 1988 to 1998 the most violent conflict in the Pacific region since the Second World War erupted on the islands of Bougainville, now an autonomous region in Papua New Guinea.⁵³ A desire for self-determination, land disputes and environmental damage related to mining all helped fuel the conflict. In 1989 these grievances resulted in the outbreak of a number of localised violent incidents and the closure of the Panguna copper mine. The intervention of the Papua New

Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) escalated the violence into eight years of conflict. Over the years of fighting, different armed factions emerged, including the Bougainville Revolutionary Army and the Bougainville Resistance Forces. A large proportion of the population was displaced and up to 20,000 people died because of the conflict.

A series of peace negotiations took place, which led to the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) in 2001. The BPA granted Bougainville autonomous status. The agreement also stipulated that there would be a referendum on Bougainville's political status, which took place in November 2019. Almost 98% of voters backed independence, with just over 2% voting to remain part of Papua New Guinea with 'greater autonomy'. This vote marks a key moment in the Bougainville peace process but does not mark the end of the process.

Australia became involved in peacekeeping activities on Bougainville in 1994, when it provided logistic support to the South Pacific Peace Keeping Force (SPPKF) whose role it was to provide a secure environment for the Bougainville Peace Conference. A government sponsored group also worked to help the people. Traditional methods of conflict-resolution have been used to build peace in many parts of Bougainville.

The Department of Post-Referendum Consultation and Dialogue within the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), to support veterans – from the rank and file and senior leadership – to transition into non-militarised community and leadership roles. We also work with civil society, ex-combatants and the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) to secure a peaceful post-referendum period through supporting processes of analysis and information sharing. .⁵⁴

⁵³ [-r.org/programme/pacific/bougainville-conflict-focus](https://www.r.org/programme/pacific/bougainville-conflict-focus)

⁵⁴ [org/programme/pacific/bougainville-conflict-focus](https://www.r.org/programme/pacific/bougainville-conflict-focus) Conciliatio Resources is an international organisation committed to stopping violent conflict and creating more peaceful societies



Archbishop Hesse and the Church's involvement with the crisis

The National Government sent in the Papua New Guinea Riot Police and with its failure to establish law and order, it sent in the Papua New Guinea Defence Forces. The Roman Catholic Church sent in Archbishop Karl Hesse MSC.

Cardinal Tomko celebrates the Holy Eucharist in the Hahela church, with Hesse Buka, November 1993



In October 1993 Cardinal Joseph Tomko visited PNG and Archbishop Karl Hesse in particular. During his visit he asked Archbishop Hesse to be the Apostolic Administrator of Bougainville. The situation was delicate as Bishop Gregory Singkai was the appointed spiritual shepherd of the Church on Bougainville. Archbishop Hesse knew that Bishop Gregory was a sick man in exile in Honiara but that the priests, brothers and sisters and thousands of the faithful were feeling lost and abandoned. The Church on Bougainville needed support, needed hope, needed to see that Christ was there suffering with them. Hesse replied, "I will accept the request to go to Bougainville, but not as an Administrator, only as an 'Assistant' to Bishop Gregory." Cardinal Joseph Tomko accepted this.

Archbishop Hesse worked as Assistant to Bishop Singkai from November 1993 till he became Apostolic Administrator in the year 1995 – after he and Bishop Singkai had met in Honiara, the place of his chosen exile. Bishop Gregory mentioned to Archbishop Hesse, that he would feel relieved if he would accept the position of Apostolic Administrator. Archbishop Karl agreed. Then, Bishop Gregory sent a letter to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in Rome to make that appointment.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Gough: *Barbarically and Brutally Bougainville Burns*



In 1995 Archbishop Hesse (right) visited Bishop Gregory Singkai, in the middle of the picture, in his chosen exile Honiara, Solomon Islands

Hesse: When we were flying along the mountainside towards the East Coast. We saw from 6,000 feet high the many villages and camps in the bush, the strongholds of the (BRA). I estimated that the number of people living in the hills is as high as 25,000. Some do not want to come out and others are too afraid to do so." The region's social and economic frameworks were indeed shattered.

Archbishop Hesse made a pastoral visit to Buin and Siwai in 1997

August 5 – 16 1997 Bp Hesse wrote:

"Over the past two months I have made two extensive trips to Bougainville and have had the fortunate of being able to meet with and enjoy the wonderful welcomes of many people who have not had an opportunity to meet with a Bishop for many years. The first visit was to Arawa, Asitavi, Tinputz, Hantua, Buka and Nissan. There were many tensions but despite these the welcome of the people was genuinely warm and their expression of faith genuinely deep. In Arawa I was refused permission to travel to Francis Ona's village. There were tensions in Asitavi and the women there had gone into the bush to try to seek guarantees of peace. Tinputz was still recovering from the shock of the attack during which John Momis was kidnapped. I was still deeply conscious of the tension people had to live with.

"On the ground in Tokaino, one of the four Parish centers in Buin, the sisters and I were greeted by Fr. Francis Kigina, a native of Buin, and a group of people. *Mis*, traditional sign of wealth and respect, was laid around my neck; a song made us feel welcome among the people who had waited for far too long to see a Bishop coming for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Soon I had to listen to a sad story. Some people were ambushed by BRA supporters. Two men were killed and one woman was badly injured. One of the men had looked forward to being confirmed in the forthcoming celebration at Tokaino. Another sad story I was made aware of: BRA shot at the car in which Fr. Baria's brother was driving four schoolchildren home to Rorovana, a settlement of West Solomon people. The car turned over. The BRA injured the kids, lying on the ground, with gunshots. Together with the driver they had to be brought by chopper to Sohano hospital, Buka.

7 August 1997, Confirmation at Masikuru

"The church was packed, people hanging outside on the church walls. A quick count told me that about 1,200 people had assembled for the church service. 292 candidates presented themselves for the sacrament of confirmation. I was surprised about the clean and proper dresses of almost all the believers of whom many came from the nearby Government controlled Care Center. Some of the Army personnel who are overlooking that center turned also up for the service. After the service, words of thanks and gratitude were expressed. The newly confirmed sat at the table with the Bishop, locally produced rice was the staple food I was asked to tell my life story, since the faithful had no chance in the past to come close to me. This was my first visit in the Tokaino parish. The school had not been used for many years and the children are missing out on education.



Women have been playing an important and often times a leading role in the peace process

Concerning Health Services, I was shocked to realize that for the population of the two parishes (eight to ten thousand people) there is only one Health Center.

A two-hour walk from Tokaino together with some church workers brought us to Masikuru. Here at Masikuru there was no army presence. The BRA allowed all the Catholics to leave the vast bush sections to take part in the service. Many people saw each other for the first time since the beginning of the crisis. Most of the candidates to be confirmed came from the BRA controlled areas.



Together with the 163 candidates for confirmation we were brought in procession into the church. The liturgy was well prepared, bamboo bands led the singing. At the end of the Eucharist celebration Fr. Joseph thanked the congregation for the well conducted liturgy but also for the presence of each believer. At last it had been possible for the Bush people after a period of at least 6 years crisis to meet their brothers and sisters during this wonderful celebration. Fr Joseph said that the visit of the Bishop they had waited for so long had come at the right time to join again the people of the different sides.

Photograph above: Sisters who kept the faith alive for the people below.



The army and the BRA agreed to help from the Red Cross who gave out 6,000 boxes with clothing, cooking pots, towels, soap and spades, each of a value of about K200.00, to almost all families living in the Buin area, without discrimination as to which side they distribution. This gave the poor people, a great sign of hope that all people could be seen and treated as one.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Gough: *Barbarically and Brutally Bougainville Burns*

The Martyrdom of Gabriel Kungkai, a catechist

The archbishop heard of the death of Gabriel Kungkai from catholic worker Monika: Gabriel had been working in Toriboiru. At the beginning of the Lent Season he carried the Blessed Sacrament and the Lenten Ashes from the Turiboiru Church to the Catholics in the (BRA) area. On his way he passed a roadblock set up by the Security Forces. He realized that the men at the roadblock became suspicious about him going to the (BRA) area.

Gabriel did go to the (BRA) area with the Blessed Sacrament and Ashes. To avoid bringing danger to the Catholics he did not call the faithful together for the planned church service. He shared his fear with the (BRA) Catholics and went to his village to stay with his family. He informed his family members of the fear that he had, and he put the Blessed Sacrament in a safe place.

“The Security Forces soon arrived. Gabriel was hiding in his home. The Soldiers called out for him. When he did not come out of his home they began to shout at his family members. They made it very clear through their words and actions that they were determined to arrest him. Gabriel gave himself up to the soldiers. What followed is shocking.”

“He was beaten severely by the soldiers. He was then forced to ride on his bicycle to the Care Centre where he was further beaten. Here they made fun of him by pushing him on his bicycle through the town centre and before all the people to see his embarrassment and humiliation. His bleeding was now serious.”

“This did not stop the Security Forces from beating him again and again. They then dragged him out from the Centre and fired a full round of the machine gun into his body. This burst of fire ripped his body apart. His slain body was left lying on the road.”

“The Parish Priest together with some Church leaders found the bloody remains of Gabriel’s body. They were shocked and indeed stunned by the brutality and horrified by what the Security Forces had done. He was buried with a simple church service.” A true soldier of Christ had paid the ultimate price.”

“Indeed, there was little throughout the entire island that had not been ‘attacked’ in some form or other. Just to be there for the people was, it would appear as much as the Archbishop could do.”

Catechist Peter Kulahan was also murdered. The catechist Peter Kulahan also was murdered it would seem because he attended the spiritual needs of the (BRA) people in the bush. This was brother against brother in the terrible nature of any civil war and the Church so often being ‘the meat between the sandwiches.’ It is understandable that His Grace Archbishop Karl Hesse returned to Vunapope with a heavy heart.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Gough: *Barbarically and Brutally Bougainville Burns*.

Visit of support by Superior Brother Benito Arbues SM in 1997



From left: Brothers Benito Arbues (Superior General), Pius Knikie CFC, John Malina, Brian Horto, John Tukana, Brendan Neiy

Anna-Karina Hermkens in 2018 wrote: Marists, Marian Devotion, and the Quest for Sovereignty in Bougainville. *Social Sciences and Missions*, volume 31, issue 1-2:

In Central Bougainville, which is part of the autonomous region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Catholic faith introduced by Marist missionaries has been instrumental in building a national Bougainville identity and sustaining the political struggle for sovereignty.



According to many of my interlocutors, the roots for this strong devotion to Mary are present in customary Bougainville culture. They argue that the matrilineal system and traditional gender relations are factors that facilitated the acceptance of Mary and conversion to Catholicism. But it was especially during the devastating ten year-civil war that Mary, or Mama Maria as she is locally called, became of immense significance.

The Fatima Statue in Bougainville

“As a Bougainvillean priest stated: “It was mainly Marian devotion that kept people going”. Praying to Mary facilitated communication with Jesus and God, whose aid was desperately needed to deal with hardships brought about by an economic blockade and the violence that pitted various political and religious groups, as well as ethnicities against each other. The rosary was part of people’s daily lives, Mothers, fathers, elders, soldiers, and children carrying it on their bodies and reciting its prayers every day. ---- The seeds for this devotion to Mary were planted by mainly German and French Marists, in the beginning of the twentieth century. --- Marists act from their love for Mary and with the compassion of Mary, aiming to bring others closer to God through their teachings of faith and practical skills. In 2016, the International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima came to the region, symbolizing hope for political and economic renewal. Coined as “Bougainville rises from the ashes,” ---Leaders from the main four Churches in Bougainville (the Catholic Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecostal Churches, and United Church) recently united in the Bougainville Christian Churches Association (BCCA), urging for moral and spiritual clarity to facilitate independence. (Niugin News 12 April 1989.”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Anna-Karina Hermkens

Bishop Kronenberg



In 1999, Bishop Henk Kronenberg was ordained to re-establish the diocesan administration from scratch. To date, after a decade of restoration, the Diocese has reinstated many services. Under the leadership of Bishop Bernard Unabali, who succeeded Bishop Henk Kronenberg in 2010, the Diocese tried to identify ways to sustain and improve these services further. The Diocese is divided into six deaneries and 31 parishes. Parishes are divided into Christian Communities, which again are formed by the smallest unit in the Diocesan structure, the Basic Christian Communities or Liklik Kristen Komuniti (LKK).

In September 2009 bishop of Bougainville, Henk Kronenberg was the sole recipient of the highest award in the 2009 PNG Independence Day anniversary honours list. Bishop Henk was bestowed with the title of “Chief” for dedicated service to the people of Bougainville and the Catholic community. A statement from the Government House said that Bishop Kronenberg was awarded the “Grand companion of the Order of Logohu” for his contribution to the development of the Catholic church as a missionary priest of the congregation of the Marist fathers. He has been bishop of Bougainville since 1999.

Bishop Kronenberg said he was very grateful for this kind of recognition in Bougainville and gave credit to all committed lay people who were hardworking and heavily involved in the church over the years. “For the past and all those who have worked hard and never got a medal and it has been given to me. At the moment, this is also for those missionaries, sisters, brothers, priests and others who were part of the job,” he said. He said he was appreciative for the church in Bougainville saying it had a bright future. He was in Bougainville at the beginning of the Bougainville crisis before he went to work in the seminary in Port Moresby.

In 1999, he returned to Bougainville and was ordained the bishop of Bougainville. Bishop Kronenberg said Bougainville was a beautiful place with good people but the crisis had caused a lot of damage financially and mentally to the people which he described as a pity. He said nowadays there was too much violence, consumption of marijuana and homebrew and it was sad to see youths, who were products of the crisis, did not know the normal way of living before the crisis.



Queen of the Society of Mary,
protect the missions of Oceania!

Bishop Bernard Unabali

Bishop Bernard Unabali (1957–2019) was a Papua New Guinean who served as auxiliary bishop of Bougainville, from 2006 to 2009. He then served as bishop of the diocese from 2009 until his death on 10 August 2019.

Photograph Bishop Unabali

Bishop Bernard Unabali worked hard during and after the crisis. Catholics in Bougainville received the Bougainville Diocese pastoral plan, called *Renewal into Balanced Life*. The pastoral plan is the outcome of a diocesan senate held at Tsiroge in north-west Bougainville in July and August 2011 following a survey of all 33 parishes after the Bougainville crisis.



The 12-year plan is Bishop Unabali's program for a healthy society in post-crisis Bougainville. The bishop uses the Panguna pit as symbolic of environmental and civil war destruction. The rainbow coming out of the pit symbolises the hope for a better life in Bougainville in this post-crisis era.

The aftermath of the crisis continued to harm the society and many discussions were held to find the best solution. The twelve-year plan was issued for Catholics in 2014 as the Diocese looks forward to implementing it in 2015.

Bishop Unabali said: "To help Bougainville after the crisis, the priorities of the plan show a way of preparation for action. The plan will be the voice of the Catholic Church in Bougainville. The post conflict era is challenging for Bougainville with politics, development and social concerns taking centre stage and making us question our values as Bougainvilleans as we embark on renewal as Church and autonomy as a political community," he said. "It will be implemented at all levels - families, Christian communities, early childhood, primary and secondary schools, youth, marriage preparatory stages, priests, the laity and the elderly".



Bishop Unabali said prayer and spiritual life is a number one priority as the core work of the Church is to help people grow in faith. "The Church will focus first on prayer and spiritual life before implementing the other priorities," he said.

The Catholic Church is the biggest church in Bougainville. Besides the pastoral work, the Diocese is one of the main providers of social services in Bougainville. These services are offered to everybody, regardless of denomination. The Diocese co-operates closely with the Autonomous Bougainville Government and other church agencies, especially in the education and health sectors. Between 1989 and 1997, Bougainville suffered from a civil war that cost the lives of at least 10% of the population.

This conflict was caused by the operation of a large copper mine and by the wish of many Bougainvilleans to be independent from the rest of Papua New Guinea. In the beginning of the crisis, the entire administration and most public institutions had to be closed. Medical and other

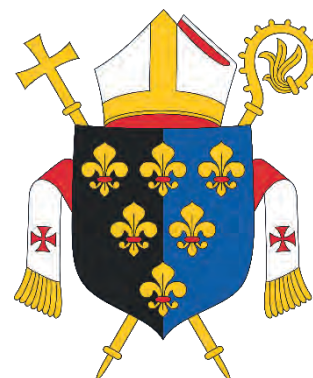
public services collapsed and in the course of the war almost the entire infrastructure was damaged or destroyed, including those of the churches. The Catholic Diocese of Bougainville lost most of its infrastructure, much of its human resources and almost all sources of income.



Some of the volunteers who do a wonderful job helping the missionaries

Prelates of Bougainville

Fr Forester – 1920	
Fr, Maurice Boch, S. M.	(1920–1929)
Bishop Thomas James Wade, S. M	(1930–1960)
Bishop Leo Lemay, S. M.	(1960–1974)
Bishop Gregory Singkai	(1974–1996)
Bishop Henk Kronenberg, (S. M.	(1999 - 2008)
Bishop Bernard Unabali	(2009–2019)
Bishop Dariusz Kałuża	(2020–present)

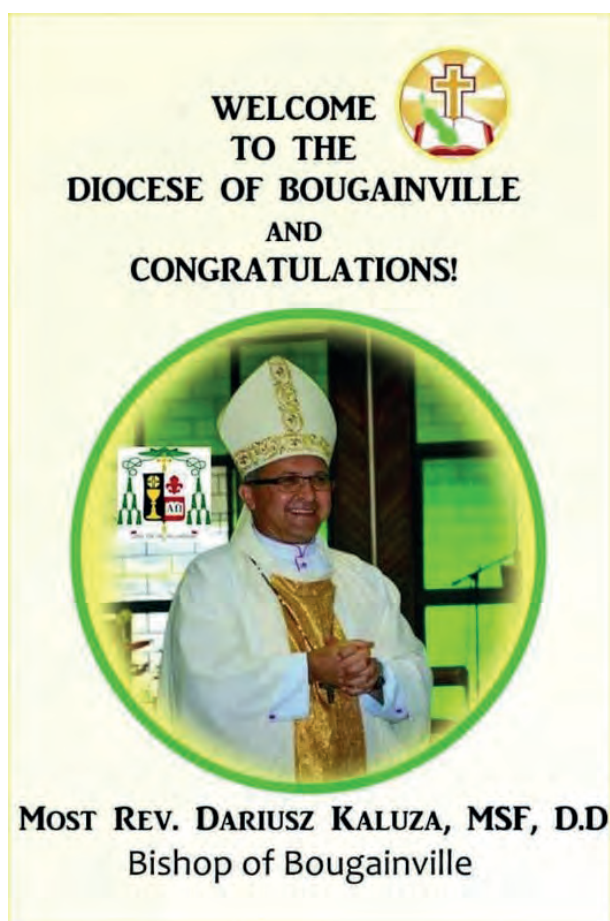


Bishop Darius 2020



Bishop Dariusz meets his new flock in Bougainville in 2020

Pope Francis appointed Bishop Dariusz Kałuża, M.S.F., as bishop of the Diocese of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea.



Bishop Kałuża was born in Pszczyna, Poland in 1967. He professed religious vows in 1987 and was ordained a priest in 1993. He has served in a number of pastoral roles, including parish vicar in Poland, and as a missionary in Papua New Guinea in the diocese of Mendi, as parish priest, pastoral vicar of the archdiocese of Madang. In June 2016, Pope Francis appointed him Bishop of Goroka, also in Papua New Guinea. According to the 2020 edition of the *Annuario Pontificio*, there are roughly 160,000 Catholics present in the diocese which represents 62.5% of the population. There are 33 parishes, 42 priests, 87 men and women religious and 12 seminarians.

Bougainville News Special Edition: Today August 30, 2021, we Commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Bougainville Peace Agreement



The Catholic Diocese of Bougainville has a new Bishop, DARIUSZ KALUZA MSF who was installed yesterday at the Our Lady of Assumption Pro Cathedral Hahela Parish on Buka island. The ceremony was witnessed by the Apostolic Administrator, the Clergy, Religious and the Lay faithful from all over Bougainville who came for the ceremony.

The ceremony was also witnessed by Cardinal JOHN RIBAT and other Bishops from PNG, including the Apostolic Nuncio and on Bougainville the ABG President.

The Voices of the Bougainville women

8 November 2019. [Facebook.com/Bougainville-Womens-Federation-1393307517660195](https://www.facebook.com/Bougainville-Womens-Federation-1393307517660195)



Bougainville women leaders ended the week-long, Peace Dialogue, Reconciliation and Forum making their commitment by signing “a Statement of Commitment” in maintaining a sustainable peace now, during and after Referendum. The women committed themselves in working in partnership and strengthening their network and working hand in hand with one another inclusive of young women as “Women of Bougainville with “one voice, one mind and one nation”.

Bougainville News Special Edition: Today August 30, 2021, we Commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Bougainville Peace Agreement



Part Two. Milne Bay and Sideia

Milne Bay includes Woodlark (Marua Island) as well as the Trobriand Islands. They are an island people depending on trade and self-supporting crops. The diet on Kitava and Kiriwina Islands has been described as the best in the world.

A racing canoe at Alotau (M. Mennis)



A yam house, Milne Bay

In this island culture, the humble yam is like gold. They're not only the staple crop on Kiriwina, but also symbols of wealth that have great cultural and spiritual importance and play a role in all major life events. Yam houses, which are used to store the yams, are painted with distinctive patterns in red, black and white and decorated with strings of shells. (web)



A chief of the Village at Alotau

*A young village girl at Alotau
(M.Mennis)*



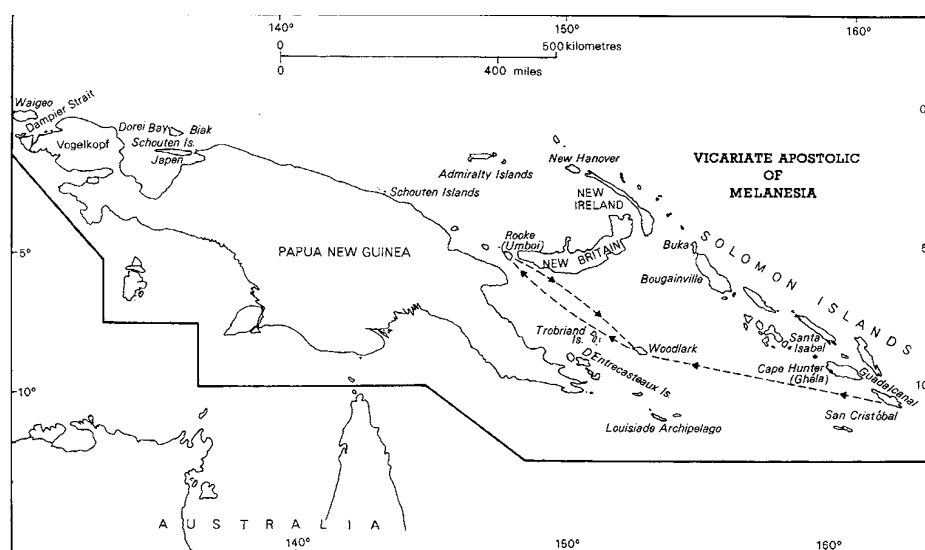
The Marist mission in Woodlark Island, Milne Bay 1847

The Marist mission in Woodlark Island, Milne Bay 1847

In 1833 the newly created vicariate of Eastern Oceania was entrusted to the Picpus Order by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. They were given the task of evangelising the western half of the Pacific and the Marists were also recommended for the task. They were at that time an informal grouping of diocesan priests but their leader, Jean-Claude Colin, agreed to accept the mission. Fr. Jean Georges Collomb was in charge of the group of Marist missionaries. From San Cristobal the Marists proceeded to the island of Murua (or Woodlark) in Milne Bay, Murua had been enthusiastically recommended to Collomb by a whaler, Captain Cayle, who had been there three times and reported on it most favourably.

According to Collomb's information the island was “

31 miles long, quite close to New Guinea, about 80 leagues from New Ireland, closer than that to both New Britain and the Solomon Islands, and very close to the Louisiade Islands'. The population was approximately 3,000 and the people were 'all Polynesians manifesting great goodness of character'. Cayle said that the island was quite high, could be seen from a distance, and was almost entirely flat. A map showed two mountains and Collomb was told that a delightful river provided sweet water. In addition, there were chickens, yams and an abundance of food in general. 'For this reason whalers go there to renew their supplies, although as yet no anchorage has been discovered except at a nearby island to the west. Collomb pointed out that Cayle's information on Woodlark dovetailed perfectly with that supplied by the captain of *Protheus*.¹



62 The Marist missionaries abandoned San Cristóbal Mission after twenty months on 3 September 1847 in favour of Woodlark Island. From there they expanded in 1848 to Rooke (now Umboi) Island,

which they also abandoned on 17 May 1849 in order to rejoin the personnel at Woodlark Island. (Chapters 20, 29, 30, 31, 35).

¹ Wiltgen p 454

² Map and description Wiltgen 454

Collomb was born in 1816. He was ordained in 1839. In 1846 he was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Melanesia and was consecrated as bishop in Sydney. He wrote 'My episcopal ordination took place in the beautiful wooden chapel of the Apostles Saints Peter and Paul in Sydney on 23 May' 1846.

On Sept. 15, 1847, Collomb started the mission in Woodlark Island. On 25 April 1848, he decided to open a second station on Umboi island. This was in the straits between New Guinea and New Britain. In June 1848 letters came from the Vatican praising his work and addressing him as Excellency as was fitting for his new role as Bishop.

"We were most happy to receive letters from Your Excellency a short while ago and we cannot but highly commend Your Excellency's circumspect zeal. We also exhort you in the Lord to continue with vigour in making every effort at cultivating the vineyard entrusted to you."

This letter had been dictated by Pope Pius IX himself, who wanted it sent to Collomb in his own name, along with the testimony of his paternal benevolence towards him.³

Back in Europe, Jean-Claude Colin, leader of the Marists received the above letter addressed to Collomb from the Vatican, but he had been absent from his Lyons Office for some time. Hastily he wrote to the Vatican acknowledging receipt and posted the letter and papal brief on to Collomb in Rooke Island on 11 August 1848, but Collomb would never receive them, because by that date he was already dead.⁴ When the schooner *Mary Ann*, hired by the Procure to bring reinforcements and supplies, arrived at Woodlark a year later, on 29 April 1849, Montrouzier went on with it to Rooke. There he found that Collomb and Villien were dead (16 July and 13 November 1848, respectively).

He found two survivors, Fremont and Brother Optat, sick, dispirited and ostracised. He evacuated them to Murua where, two more priests had arrived in April, the number of Marists there was brought to eight. However, over time the situation at Woodlark deteriorated. Lack of progress in the apostolate had led to greater emphasis on a monastic type of life. By late 1850



the missionaries found themselves more than ever despised as wretches whose country, it was said, must have been as worthless as themselves or they would not have left it and whose words, accordingly, were hardly to be taken seriously.⁵ They subsequently withdrew from Woodlark on 10 July 1850. Despite this failure, nothing can take from the fact that the Marists set up the first mission station in Papua New Guinea.⁶

Family group on Sideia Island. The bulra decoration worn by the man is a distinctive ornament made from a pig's tusk.

³ Wiltgen 454

⁴ Wiltgen 462

⁵ Map and description Wiltgen p 454

⁶ Laracy

Ross Mackay pointed out other reasons for their failure while giving the Marists credit for setting up the first mission in Papua

The distinction of being the first to arrive in Papua belongs to the Roman Catholics. The Marists, entrusted with the task of evangelising the western Pacific, settled on Woodlark (Murua) Island in 1847. Woodlark was a most inappropriate place for such a venture: it was isolated, relatively large but with poor soil, large tracts of inland swamps and had a small population who had a battle to eke out a bare existence. The attempt proved abortive and the Marists, disappointed and weary of any signs of success, departed four years later, handing over its priests who elected to remain - and the very meagre results - to the Milan Foreign Mission Society (PIME).⁷



The P.I.M.E mission. Missionaries from an Italian missionary order of Catholic clergy, the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (P.I.M.E.), sent five priests and two brothers to Woodlark Island in 1852. Giovanni Battista (John) Mazzucconi was killed there in 1855 by an islander called Avicoar who opposed the missionaries and their religion. The rest of the missionaries withdrew in 1855.

Fr. John Mazzucconi P.I.M.E. martyred September 1855

Puarer, a native of Woodlark Island felt linked to the P.I.M.E missionaries and asked if he could leave with them when they retreated on 14 May 1856. Thus, it was that on 16 August 1856, Puarer of Woodlark left Sydney with the Milanese aboard the Granite City, bound for Manila. There on 27 December 1856 he became the first identifiable baptised Catholic of the Vicariate of Melanesia; and, indeed, the first identifiable baptised Christian of any denomination in what would, in 1975, become the sovereign nation of Papua New Guinea. (Laracy)

The ten years of Catholic activity in Milne Bay are “a cautionary tale against faulty technique and recklessness”. Preoccupied with their own spiritual life, the missionaries made little effort to accommodate them selves to the habits or thought of those whose souls they sought. They were peeved when people did not respond quickly and they deliberately disregarded indigenous political boundaries. Eventual withdrawal after a toll of eight lives had been taken, five in acts of violence, was harsh proof that the blood of martyrs could not be relied upon to be the seed of Christians. Yet it may be doubted whether anything the missionaries might have done could have overcome the dangers inherent in their environment. They had no defence against the malaria. As a result, until 1880 the Catholic Vicariate of Melanesia remained without any missionaries.⁸

⁷ Ross Mackay, *ANU Thesis 1999*.

⁸ Laracy, *Hugh Marists and Melanesians; A History of the Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands*.

Political division – British New Guinea

Milne Bay became part of British New Guinea in 1883-84 and was gradually brought under the administration of the colony by visiting and resident magistrates and patrol officers (kiaps). The British New Guinea administration encouraged the Protestants. The Overseas Mission Department of the Methodist Church commenced work in the Trobriand Islands as early as 1894. Most of the first Methodist missionaries were Fijians. When Milne Bay became part of the British New Guinea any Catholic advances were put on hold.

Sacred Heart Statue at Sideia Milne Bay



The Kwato mission, Milne Bay



Charles Abel, son of William Charles Abel of the Kwato Mission

William Charles Abel, missionary, and his wife Elizabeth, a Congregational minister and agent of the London Missionary Society (LMS), arrived in British New Guinea in 1890. They set up many mission stations in the Milne Bay area. They were antagonistic to the Catholics. In 1917 the Kwato mission seceded from the LMS, which rejected Charles Abel's policies of encouraging self-sufficiency through the development of plantation enterprises and teaching boatbuilding, agriculture, and management skills. Charles Abel became leader of the Kwato mission after the death of his father in 1930. He continued the plantation enterprises, but his leadership differed from his father's owing to a significant change in religious direction.

The Anglicans in Milne Bay

In 1889 A.A. Maclaren was appointed the first Anglican missionary to PNG to the region and in 1890 visited with Copland King. They purchased land at Samarai for a mission station. Maclaren died at the end of 1891 and King withdrew to Australia.

In 1892 King returned to Dogura and built a mission house. In 1898 Montagu John Stone-Wigg was appointed Bishop and by 1901 there were eleven stations along the coast of north Papua (in what are now Northern (Oro) and Milne Bay Provinces) and Anglican influence had extended along 480 kilometres (480,000 m) of the coast.

The Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul in Dogura, Milne Bay Province, is the largest Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea. It seats 800, and was consecrated in 1939, three years before the outbreak of war in the South Pacific and survived the traumatic Japanese occupation of Papua New Guinea during World War II.

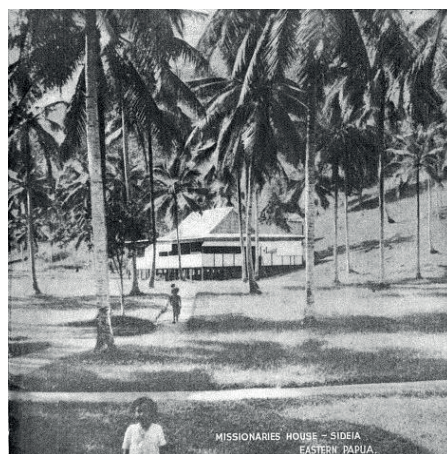
The Sideia Mission Station formed in 1932



Most Rev. Fr John Doyle

In 1929, the Holy See entrusted the Mission of Eastern Papua to the Australian Province. In August 1930 Father John Doyle MSC visited Samarai to investigate the possibilities for a new missionary foundation there. He visited many islands and found that the Kwato and LMS missions were in a strong position everywhere and the people closed their doors in his face. However, a Mrs Patching had willed 214 acres on Sideia Island to Bishop de Boismenu and although it was a poor physical area it was decided to set up a mission station there. Initially the new mission remained part of the Vicariate Apostolic of Yule Island, under Bishop Alain de Boismenu MSC.

On April 22nd, 1932, Father Francis Lyons MSC, accompanied by a group of lay missionaries from Yule Island: Camillo Loula and Basilia Obi, together with her husband, Solomon, and their two young children, and a young man, Edimondo, dropped anchor in a small bay on Sideia Island in Eastern Papua. Their quiet arrival marked the beginning of the Mission of the Australian MSC Province in what is today the Milne Bay Province of PNG.



Photograph: Early mission at Sideia

There were several reasons why Sideia was chosen. First the land was given by Mrs Patching, secondly the position of Sideia was central and not far from Samarai thus offering reasonable communications with the mainland; thirdly it had a reasonable sized population. Fr Lyons approached the shore of Sideia on a launch full of cargo and some nanny goats for the new mission. The only means to carry this over the perilous reef was in an old canoe. He wrote, "I can still see the goods making the perilous crossing. On shore, there was water on one side of us and bush, bush, bush on the other three. It did not take long to find the sago-palm dwelling that a native boy had erected some time earlier in view of the coming of the missionary."

By Christmas that year four acres of mangrove swamp had been cleared, a fifty-yard jetty built, a church erected and, a large bungalow and dwellings for the helpers including Francis Kulukulu, Tuba, Goroliya, Donisis, Aukka, Motuweiya and James Deko.⁹

As already mentioned, in those days Sideia was surrounded by Protestant missionary organisations: the London Missionary society, LMS at Kwato, the Methodist missions, and the Anglicans.

⁹ McGhee



Fr Lyons with workers at Sideia

The fact that the Catholics were setting up mission stations did not run smoothly. Those Protestant mission stations in Milne Bay opposed the new Catholic missions, in particular what they saw as the lax habit of allowing their catholic adherents to garden and fish on Sunday. Activities banned by the Methodists at that time. The permanent settlement of Sideia in 1932 generated criticism from their nearest Methodist neighbour, the Reverend George Lassam at

East Cape. His report to the Synod summed up what could be called a 'protestant response' to Catholicism.

Methodist opposition from Rev George Lassam, 1933

On Bwasilaki the Roman Catholics have erected several churches in close proximity to two of our own stations. Through bribery, presents of tobacco, biscuits, rice etc. coupled with the chicanery usually associated with that church a measure of success has been achieved, and many of the people attend the Catholic services, ignoring our own. With promises to teach them English many of the children have been taken to the RC HQ on Sideia Island adjacent to Bwasilaki. Perhaps the worst aspect of the whole matter is the fact that the loose RC standard regarding the observance of Sunday is raising doubt and uncertainty in the minds of our class members and church officers. In a land where gardening is of paramount importance it is readily understood that a religion that permits its followers to utilise the greater part of Sunday in garden work would be more popular than one which prohibits such conduct; and one that counsels fishing after Sunday services has a greater appeal to primitive] people than Methodism. We thank God however that none of our church members have been defected [sic], but have, in spite of the inducements held out by the RC church stood firmly by our church. We have stationed some of our best teachers on Bwasilaki, and by constant supervision hope not only to arrest the drift, but also to build up our own cause.¹⁰

Ross Mackay commented that this statement "though only one man's response, was consistent with the general Methodist attitude as the Catholics ventured further into the province."¹¹



¹⁰ 24 Annual Report to 1933 Synod, MOM 20 l. quoted by Mackay

¹¹ Ross Mackay, ANU Thesis 1999.

Extension of the Catholic missions

In the 1930s Fr Lyons had built two churches on Bwasilaki Island due east of Sideia and with a population then of 1,000 people. Land on the island had been given to the church by Bindilo and Kiwiwi. Fr Tomlinson arrived to help and soon had a third church built. He waded through swamps to reach the small coastal hamlets on the coral flats which were delightful.

Br Dixon, Fr Lyons, Fr Tomlinson, Br Garrod, Br Vogt



In April 1933, Brother Joseph Dixon arrived to help Fr Lyons with the school which had 30 boarders. Later Brother Vogt arrived and became the chief builder of the mission. He was assisted by four local men: Michael Dindilo. Alan Kaioke, Aloysius and Antony. (*ibid First Fifty Years pdf*).¹²

Born in 1909, Vogt began his missionary work in 1935 and spent the rest of his life following his vocation, until his death in 1985. A small, thin man, his skills were in building in which he made life a lot more tolerable for all his colleagues by designing and building accommodation that survived the vagaries of tropical life. Brother Vogt was indispensable to the mission. There was no brother who set a better example for regular religious exercises, he was 'most useful' in all spheres of work and there was no need to 'hunt around to find things in his favour.'¹³

Fr Lyons – Realist – looking back Father Lyons had first gone to Yule Island in 1931 and served his apprenticeship with the French missionaries there. Yule at this stage was the headquarters of the Catholic mission in Papua. Fr Lyons was to make the second and successful attempt to establish a mission in Milne Bay when he began the mission at Sideia in April 1932. Fr Lyons recognised that progress would be slow as the mission was surrounded by Protestant missions including Kwato, the Anglican Church and Methodist churches. Fr Lyons' idea was to gather children from all parts of the islands and educate them and then send them home.



Father Tomlinson devoted much of his time to the mission at Basiliki Island. In 1938 Fr Tomlinson became the first religious Superior. He was tireless in helping the people. Unfortunately, he got cerebral malaria and died in 1939. He is buried in the Sideia cemetery and is well remembered. Fr Doody took his place and soon many more priests, Brothers and sisters arrived from 1937, Bishop de Boismenu made a visit from Yule Island.

The altar of the first church on Side

¹² McGhee 1982

¹³ Ross Mackay, ANU Thesis 1999

Students at Sideia 1954; at Hagita 1970 and Sideia 1980 respectively. MSC report



Sister Paul was welcomed at Sideia in 1935. Later Sister De Pazzi taught in the school at Sideia and quickly established a reputation as a character because of her penchant for hard physical work and her small stature. Known as 'a small bundle of missionary energy' she donned rubber boots and blue overalls and worked.



Foundation in the Trobriand Islands

Young Trobriand boys put on a display for a cruise ship 1915 (Brian Mennis)



Fr Baldwin was the first priest to begin work in the Trobriands when he went there in May 1937. He sailed from Sideia aboard the Trinity a 20-ton 50-foot vessel. In the previous year he had purchased a house in Gusaweta and he took up residence in the old bungalow and began to attend to the sick. Brother Vogt assisted with the building.

Trobriand Teacher John Baptist, his wife and children.

Fr Dwyer - photograph



Fr Baldwin studied the Trobriand language in Gusaweta and the work continued with new missionaries. Fr Dwyer arrived in 1938. A new church-school was erected at Okaikoda on Kiriwina Island in 1939. Sisters Finbar, Paula and Catherine worked in the school and lifted a burden of work from the priests' shoulders. Later OLSH Sisters also joined the MSC.

Mission stations were established on the islands of Basilaki and Samarai, and in the Trobriand Islands, as well as on the mainland at Ladava.¹⁴

¹⁴ McGhee 199

The war years

When war broke out there were three central Catholic stations, Sideia, Ladava in Milne Bay and Gusaweta in the Trobriand Islands. The mission work continued until the outbreak of the war. When the news of the Japanese advance became known the missionaries in Milne Bay were picked up on board the ship *Elavala* and were taken to safety. They were all ordered out of their mission stations, unlike the situation in Madang/Alexishafen where the missionaries were not ordered out. They opted to stay for the duration, and many lost their lives.

The final departure of the missionaries from Milne Bay was on January 1st, 1942. Many of the MSC priests volunteered as chaplains of the army. Father Baldwin had gone to Yule Island at the outbreak of the war and was able to return to Eastern Papua within a few months. His was a lonely trip to save things from the wreckage and encourage the people. Almost all the mission buildings had been destroyed. His launch was hit by zeroes. He was able to keep in touch with the students from Sideia, Basilaki and Ladawa. He only managed one visit to the Trobriand Islands which were the hardest hit.

After the Japanese invasion, village people had various degrees of interaction with the Japanese. The people who had not been evacuated before the invasion had to hide while the Japanese moved through their villages. Milne Bay was easy striking distance from the main Japanese airbase at Rabaul in New Britain. For many months, prior to the Battle, Japanese ships sailed around the islands to the north and east of Milne Bay.

Kwato Mission provided many recruits for the Allied war effort. The local people from this Mission were highly skilled in carpentry and also spoke English, so they were sought after by both the Australians and Americans. The Milne Force that was based at the Fall River Base at Gili Gili needed skilled men. So, Mr Cecil Abel took many of his men there.



Fr Baldwin wrote:

“The adult Catholics everywhere I found surprisingly good, whilst the percentage of bad Catholics was reduced by the grace of those days. Many of them were working for the allied army”. In 1943, Fr Baldwin re-opened at Sideia, again staffed with the local teachers.¹⁵

¹⁵ McGhee Chapter 17

After the war

Though the war years brought great material destruction and many setbacks, the local people – many of them only school children – not only remained loyal to their faith but also displayed zeal and initiative in finding ways to preserve and even spread their faith (as an example: one boy had 33 baptisms to his credit!). In 1944 the first missionaries were able to return to Sideia and begin the re-construction of the mission. Because the mission consists of so many isolated islands, boats were essential and some of these were actually built on the missions themselves.

¹⁶

*Photograph: Trobriand
Islands.*

(M. Mennis 2015)



One local villager said: “The government had to compensate us for the damages done to our things to our houses, clay pots and costumes and traditional materials like fishing nets, hunting nets. Anything valuable that was destroyed during the war was compensated for through the war claims Tribunal. We were asked to list the things damaged and the government paid us.” (Laudiyole Lolo).

Ladava Mission had been begun before the war and was now visited occasionally from Sideia. Brother McGhee and Fr Twomey then went to live to the American base at Ladava, Fr McGhee then served as a chaplain for the American troops at Gamadoudou and the Australians at Hagita. In October 1945 when the Angau forces finished activities, the mission was able to take over the many Quonset buildings left behind. These were used as school rooms and chapels at Ladava. The brothers also made numerous trips to Sideia with materials in a large barge. Later when Fr McGhee was transferred to the Trobriands, he found the natives lives were entirely

ruled by sorcery and magic. Anthropologist, Malinowski said that the Trobriand Islanders maintained an interesting form of syncretism that combined traditional belief in magic with Christian ideas. ¹⁷



In the Trobriands a man shows a nut crusher used in magic (M.Mennis)

¹⁶ McGhee Chapter 18

¹⁷ (Malinowski 1974)

1. John Doyle – the First Bishop of Sideia, 1957

In 1951 the Catholic mission was erected as a separate Prefecture Apostolic with Monsignor John Doyle MSC as the first Prefect Apostolic. In 1957 the mission was raised to the status of a Vicariate and Monsignor Doyle was ordained as the first bishop. In 1967, the Vicariate became the Diocese of Sideia.



Bishop Doyle with A.D. Sisters including Mother Genevieve at the rear

During Bishop Doyle's time, the mission changed from the Eastern Papua Mission to Prefecture Apostolic and then Vicariate Apostolic of Samarai to Diocese of Samarai and then to its present status, Diocese of Alotau.

Bishop Doyle was not new to the mission; in fact, he did the first survey of Sideia in the 1930s.

When he became bishop the numbers of Catholics were meagre. There were only 2, 700 Catholics belonging to the Mission. The initial thrust of the mission had been to establish mission stations and set up schools anywhere it was possible to ensure contact with the village people.

Many years later the first local priest was ordained: Father John Mathew Sinou MSC. a native of Tewara, a small island off the eastern coast of Fergusson. Sinou's early life was one of poverty. Born in September 1939, his father died in 1941 and, with his family close to starvation, he was adopted by his uncle and moved to Fergusson. During the war this family experienced even more privations and their village community and gardens were bombed by Allied forces - Australian forces.



Years later with Bishop Doyle's support Sinou went to the MSC minor seminary Ulapia near Rabaul in 1957 where he finished his secondary education and began studies for the priesthood. Transferring to de Boismenu College, Bomana, he completed his studies and was ordained by Doyle at Sideia Cathedral on 7 March 1969 and offered his first mass the following morning with a congregation of 1,000 people.¹⁸

Bishop Doyle saw this as the culmination of his mission work when one of his own people became a priest to carry on the work he had begun there in the 1930s.¹⁹

¹⁸ Kevin McGhee p35

¹⁹ Sinou's Own Account Kevin McGhee p35



Jerome Kekenai, Monsignor Doyle, Fr Atchison Kelogeya 1951²⁰

The missionaries and people of Sideia thanked God for the graces received and earnestly seek His Blessing for the future.

Cathedral at Sideia



The first church-school at Budoya

²⁰ Photographs Kevin McGhee booklet

The von Trapp Family in Milne Bay

The world-famous Trapp Family Singers – the basis of *The Sound of Music* became interested in becoming missionaries. At their final concert in Sydney they met Father Kevin Murphy, a pioneer priest who invited them to the Milne mission. Maria, Rosemary, and Johannes arrived in November 1956 and settled at Budoya on Fergusson Island to work with Fr Atchison. Maria was the daughter of Captain von Trapp and her name was changed in the *Sound of Music* to avoid confusion.

On Fergusson, Maria von Trapp and her siblings lived as islanders, in huts made of bush materials without electric power, running water, or doctors. Communication with the outside world was by the mail boat and the radio. They ate what they grew in their gardens or ate fish brought in by the men in their outrigger canoes. (web site). Johannes returned home to the United States in 1959 and his sisters the following year. Maria, alone, returned to Papua, did the E.Course in Rabaul to upgrade her teaching qualification and, lived for a time in Budoya.



I met Maria in Rabaul when she did the E Course in 1962 and so I knew her personally. Maria wrote to me (Mary Mennis) from Budoya Mission via Samarai.

Photo; Maria von Trapp. Mary Mennis and daughter, Joanna Port Moresby 1980

Dear Mary,

I was delighted to get your letter and to hear that you are married now and already have a baby boy. Congratulations – I am very happy for you. It was very nice of you to think of me during your happy time. – Thank you very much.

At the moment I am at in Budoya, all by myself as the Fathers and Sisters have gone over to our “Vunapope” to make their retreat. I asked them to leave me here as I want quietness and peace to catch up with all the things I did not get around to do during school time. I had to take over the 4th Standard from our sister here who got sick and left. We worked hard getting our native Mass ready and drill the school children and grown-ups in it. 6. Jan 1965. ²¹



It was said at the time that Maria travelled the length of the island on foot and, where she could find a track, on her bicycle, rounding up altos and sopranos and basses and training up the choir that endures to this day. She even included local songs into melodies and superimposed them into hymns. Maria Trapp then moved from Budoya to Port Moresby where she set up a house of Prayer in Boroko and lived near us. We made contact with people in the local villagers together.

²¹²¹ Letter from Maria von Trapp

2. Bishop Desmond Moore Second bishop 1970 – 2001



Bishop Des Moore was born in Adelaide in 1926 and was ordained in 1957. For his first 12 months in PNG, he was based in Port Moresby where he worked with the bishop and the parish priest.

After two years, Fr Moore, who was then the religious superior for the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Port Moresby, was posted to Milne Bay and, on March 7, 1970, was appointed bishop of the 20,000 sq km diocese of Sideia, succeeding the founding bishop of the diocese, Bishop Francis John Doyle MSC. “There I was for the next 31 years,” Bishop Moore says.

When he was elected Bishop of Milne Bay, he was episcopally ordained Bishop in Port Moresby and went to Milne Bay 10 July 1970. Sideia welcomed him with a flotilla of boats with flags flying and accompanied him through the reef where once Fr Lyons had first approached the island.

In 1996 Bishop Moore was knighted for his work in Papua New Guinea. Ever humble, he accepted the award without fanfare, as a mere representative of the many religious and lay missionaries working in the region at the time.

*Photograph: Bishop Moore at Alotau*²²



Epilogue 1982, What of the future? Bishop Moore answered:

The whole purpose of missionary work had been the establishment of the church, that is to make God’s love and purpose known to the people of this place, to make a beginning of receiving all who wish for the Kingdom of the Father, through baptism and to institute a local “People of God” or Church

It has been, and still is, a positive purpose to simply introduce people to God and Jesus, his son, make them aware of his love and the appeal of St John very clear to them. “Let us love God because he has loved us first.” And as a direct result of this preaching by word and example give opportunity to the Holy Spirit to raise up here in this place (Diocese) a community of people who love God and who worship Him in the way He wants in union with Christ and live with one another as Christ taught and showed us. Of course, this is all the work of the Lord, who in his graciousness, has asked for, and received, the help of us, His people. It takes time, simply because it is in the world and God does it only with and through the cooperation of those who love him. The object of the whole exercise is “a people who love God and the members who love one another.”

²² Kevin McGhee’s Booklet

And the rest, the work of education, of health, of development etc is incidental to it, and is done with human frailty. I believe the church here is established and growing. I believe it will continue even without missionaries if God made that disposition. But I also believe that now is a time of co-operation for all who are here, helping one another to the main end. And the main end includes within it all sorts of development, that the people of God may grow in every way, spiritually, mentally socially and even physically --- better food, health etc. In all this, missionaries can greatly help, while still pursuing their main aim of making God and Christ known and loved more.



*Fr Abbott and Fr Earl and staff
on Good Enough Island*

The Church is always seeking converts. Once it was converts of pagans to Christ in the Catholic Church. But now and in the last twenty and more years we have been greatly enlightened by the

Holy Spirit and I think that for the Church's missionary endeavour in our situation the great light has been two-fold, to recognise that other Christians are not pagans, not outside the Church, but are truly Christians and that there is more to man and woman than a spiritual soul which can be introduced to everlasting life, that man is a living being whom God loves and for whom Christ died, and that the whole of the person, his integral human development is God's plan for the world. First church-school in Budoya.

For the future then I see the church as never in competition with the other churches, never out to proselytise, or entice people into "our church" certainly never in opposition with other Christian churches But the truth shine so that I may be seen. ... the truth which says, in Christ's own words, "by this will all men know that you



are my disciples, if you have love for one another. This truth will shine in the goodness of the lives of people in their work as pastors, as teachers as nurses as parents as employers as employees ... indeed in everyway. And this will lead men and women to the light of Christ, to respond to his love and by the grace of the spirit to find the Truth, the True Church and the One and Only God. (Interview with author. The FUTURE then: "the same endeavour, but with somewhat clearer aims, to establish the church totally local but where all may live together, "neither Greek nor Roman neither man or woman" but all one in the love of Christ." D.C. Moore Bishop of Alotau.

Fr Sam Miyon MSC ordained by Bishop Moore in 1977

Obituary Note of Bishop Moore.

In 1970, Bishop Moore was ordained bishop of the 20,000 sq km diocese of Sideia, succeeding the founding bishop of the diocese, Bishop Francis John Doyle for the next 31 years. He was even knighted for his work in 1996. The MSC website reported he accepted the award without fanfare as a mere representative of the many religious and lay missionaries working in the region at the time. Bishop Des was a man without any pretensions to be anything else but himself. He respected the formalities demanded by his Office, but apart from that was content to be what he would have described as ‘a pretty ordinary bloke’. He could often be found on the wharf helping to load one of the mission boats, or organising the passengers and deck cargo with typical energy – sometimes to the amusement of the crew. Often, he would be out and about around Alotau – at one time on a motor scooter. He could be found in the offices of business houses and stores, bringing with him always a breath of fresh air; people enjoyed his forthright views on everything from the price of roofing iron to how the country was being run.



Bishop Moore and John Guise

Bishop Des was always a dedicated shepherd who cared personally for all his sheep – or ‘donkeys’ as we would sometimes be called when we had annoyed him more than usual. His house was always open to anyone in need or distress, and most left him helped or comforted. When he was home he was always available on the mission radio network for a yarn or to discuss any problems that arose in the far flung parishes of his diocese. To quote Russ, “I have to say personally I have never met anyone so charitable and so witnessing to God’s love in his lifestyle.” The missionaries and people of Sideia thanked God for the graces received and earnestly seek His Blessing for the future.²³



Tourism is a big industry with cruise ships coming.

Photographs (Brian and Mary Mennis)



²³ MSC Website.

The Golden Jubilee of Sideia 1932 – 1982



Compiled by Brother Kevin McGhee MSC

This anniversary was celebrated while Bishop Moore was bishop of Sideia-Alotau.



MSC Missionaries

The Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was founded by Fr Jules Chevalier in France on 8 December 1854. Even in his seminary days he had a particular love for the Heart of Christ and consecrated himself to the task of making it known throughout the world. He soon gathered a group of priests who share his ideals. Their motto is 'May the Sacred heart of Jesus be everywhere known and loved.' They first came to New Guinea in 1882 to Rabaul and then spread to Yule Island and the Sideia area in 1932.

(OLSH) Sisters.

In 1874, Fr Chevalier gathered a small community of women together and called them the 'Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.' In 1882 a widow Marie Loïse Hartzer, joined the community of women and Fr Chevalier told her it was the will of God that she led the group. Marie Loïse Hartzer became the first Superior General of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart. (OLHS). In 1887 four Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart arrived in Papua New Guinea in response to the request of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart to minister to the women there. Since those early times the sisters have been involved in education and healthcare with the people as well as many other works.



Sister Antoninus, Provincial with Sisters at Sideia Retreat 1982

Sideia from the sea



Convent at Budoya

*photographs from Fifty Year
Celebration booklet*

75th Anniversary of MSC Mission in Milne Bay with Bishop Panfilo



Official Report: In 2007 there were a number of celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Mission of Eastern Papua - today the Diocese of Alotau, Papua New Guinea.

On 22nd April 1932 Father Francis Lyons MSC, accompanied by a group of lay missionaries from Yule Island: Their quiet arrival marked the beginning of the Mission of the Australian MSC Province in what is today the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea.

The islands of Eastern Papua were at that time part of the Vicariate Apostolic of Yule Island (entrusted to the care of the French MSC Province) but had been rarely visited by Catholic Missionaries. Protestant Missions were already well established on some of the islands. The first attempt at the evangelization of New Guinea had, in fact, been made in Eastern Papua, on Woodlark Island. In 1852 Italian missionaries of the Society of Foreign Missions of Milan (PIME) started a mission there but after a few years were forced to

withdraw. A few years later the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were able to establish a permanent mission in Rabaul in 1882 and thus begin the work of the evangelization of the New Guinea islands.

Then in 1929, the Holy See entrusted the Mission of Eastern Papua to the Australian Province – its first foreign mission, although Australian MSC had been working among the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory for many years. In 1930 Father John Doyle MSC visited Samarai to investigate the possibilities for a new missionary foundation. It was decided to make the first foundation on the island of Sideia. Initially the new mission remained part of the Vicariate Apostolic of Yule Island, under Bishop Alain de Boismenu MSC.

The mission slowly spread to other islands. When the Japanese invaded Milne Bay in 1942 mission stations were already established on the islands of Basilaki and Samarai, and in the Trobriand Islands, as well as on the mainland at Ladava. OLSH Sisters had also joined the MSC. The war years witnessed the complete destruction of much of the mission. Though the war years brought great material destruction and many setbacks, the local people – many of them only school children - not only remained loyal to their faith but also displayed zeal and initiative in finding ways to preserve and even spread their faith (as an example: one boy had 33 baptisms to his credit!).²⁴

²⁴ *Fifty Year Celebration booklet*

In 1944 the first missionaries were able to return to Sideia and begin the re-construction of the mission. Because the mission consists of so many isolated islands, boats are essential and some of these were actually built on the missions themselves. In 1951 the mission was erected as a separate Prefecture Apostolic with Monsignor John Doyle MSC as the first Prefect Apostolic. In 1957 the mission was raised to the status of a Vicariate and Monsignor Doyle was ordained as the first bishop.

In 1967, the Vicariate became the Diocese of Sideia. Two years later the first local priest was ordained: Father John Mathew Sinou MSC. In 1970 Bishop Desmond Moore MSC succeeded Bishop Doyle as the second bishop. Today Bishop Francesco Panfilo SDB is the leader of the Church in what is now the Diocese of Alotau.



On Sunday 22nd April 2007, many MSC, along with Bishop Panfilo and many other priests and sisters together with laity from around the diocese gathered in Sideia to celebrate the anniversary of the arrival of the first MSC. The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Francisco Padila was the main celebrant at the Eucharist in the old cathedral. Further celebrations are scheduled for June. These will be held in Alotau, the present centre of the diocese, on the occasion of the Feast of the Sacred Heart.



A dance group at Alotau (M. Mennis)

In this report **Father Paul Stenhouse** MSC describes the celebrations on the Island of Sideia marking the 75th Anniversary of the Arrival of the First Australian Missionary, Father Frank Lyons MSC, 22nd April 1932.

In perfect weather, the Catholic Mission boat the *Morning Star*, filled to capacity with visitors, or people returning home, anchored off Eastern Papua's Sideia Island late in the morning, on April 22, 2007. As the tide was low we couldn't reach the jetty. But we could see in the distance the crowd of adults and children that had been patiently awaiting our arrival. The excited buzz of anticipation on the Star was audible. We waited patiently for the Miva, a smaller mission vessel with a shallower draught, to pull alongside and take off our passengers, amongst whom were the Papal Nuncio to PNG, Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla, and Bishop Francesco Panfilo, SDB, bishop of Alotau-Sideia. We were coming to Sideia to celebrate with the local villagers, the schoolchildren, priests, sisters and teachers, the 75th anniversary of the arrival on Sideia of the first Catholic priest in modern times – Father Francis Lyons, MSC – on April 22, 1932.

Many hundreds of villagers and schoolchildren, dancers, sisters, priests and brothers, waited at the jetty to greet the Papal Nuncio, Bishop Francesco, the Father General and the crowd of well-wishers who accompanied them. Visitors had come from neighbouring islands. Schoolchildren looked very neat in their uniforms. Dancers and musicians proved that the local and Catholic culture could blend harmoniously and joyfully. Children held up a banner that read: "Foundation Anniversary of Catholic Mission Sideia: April 22, 1932 – April 22, 2007. We thank you and love you with all our hearts". On the previous evening, after Mass in the Sacred Heart Cathedral at Alotau, a replica of the World-Youth-Day Cross carved from Papuan rosewood, had been solemnly taken by some fifty young Milne Bay Catholics, to Sideia by boat, where it awaited its installation and blessing in a special ceremony. Father Michael Sims, MSC, Superior of the MSC Community in Eastern Papua, and for twenty years parish priest of Sideia, was taken off the *Morning Star* aboard a native canoe, and ceremonially landed at the spot where Father Lyons probably made landfall. Before the Mass, the arrival of Father Lyons was recalled in song and dance, and much was made of his description of the 'crazy canoe' that met him and his companions 75 years ago.

The Papal Nuncio was principal celebrant at the Mass which was enthusiastically attended by close to a thousand people who crammed into the former Cathedral. During the Mass the work of pioneer MSC priests and brothers, and OLSH and MSC Sisters, local catechists, lay people and especially lay-missionaries, was recalled and justly praised. The strongest impression that I took away from the celebrations organized by the people of Sideia, their bishop, priests, religious and teachers, was one of optimism, hope and deep faith. Today, a third of PNG's population of six million is Catholic.



3. Francesco Panfilo (born in 1942) was appointed Bishop of Alotau-Sideia in 2001, He was the third Bishop

In 2001, Bishop Francesco Panfilo SDB was the leader of the Church in what is now the Diocese of Alotau. He said “When I became the Bishop of Alotau, I experienced life as a real missionary! The geographical location of Alotau in Milne Bay Province was difficult, but I enjoyed reaching out by sea to people in the remotest places of the islands.”



Bishop Panfilo travelled by canoes to reach some of the island people in his diocese.

Quoting the words of Don Bosco “Young people must not only be loved, but they must know they are loved.” The Archbishop encouraged his confreres and the church to continue loving the young. The church has to grow in formation not only the clergy and the religious but also the lay leaders within the church. He said, “They should not only know

but practice the Gospel.” Archbishop Panfilo also encouraged the parents, teachers and leaders in the communities to be responsible to educate their children and lead by example.

Archbishop Francesco Panfilo sdb reflected on his years at Alotau.

From a transcript of his Good Night to the Salesian Family on 24 February 2021 at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. He had been 23 years in the Philippines.

In 1997 I was appointed as the provincial delegate for PNG. I went into a bit of a crisis when I was asked to come to PNG, not because I didn’t want to come to PNG, I knew PNG. I had always believed that the Lord had given me a missionary vocation, nevertheless I told Fr. Capelli who was the provincial: “If you transplant a mango tree that is thirty-two years old, you are in the risk of losing the fruits!” Because I was thirty-two years in the Philippines and anyway, I said, “oh okay if you insist.” I came to PNG in 1997.



I arrived in PNG on the feast of Saint Dominic Savio May 6, 1997. On the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, I was invited to concelebrate with Fr Capelli at the mass of Mary Help of Christians at Gabutu. After communion as we sat down, the congregation sang, ‘The Galilee song’. It was the first time I heard the Galilee song, and I followed the lyrics. It said, “So I leave my boats behind; leave them on familiar shores; set my heart upon the deep; follow you again my Lord.” Reflecting on the song, I thought that the Lord was talking to me and saying: “Leave your boats in the Philippines. Now you are in Papua New Guinea.” *The Galilee Song is about leaving boats behind. Bishop Panfilo included a boat in his Coat of Arms for Alotau-Sideia.*

The Lord speaks to us in very concrete ways. Permit me to share an experience. I was concluding the second term as Rector of Don Bosco Mandaluyong. So, I went to the Shrine and I sat down in the shrine and there I saw the response of the responsorial psalm

of the mass of that day: “Here I am Lord, I come to do your will.” When they called me, Fr. Lazaro said, “Are you ready to receive your obedience?” I said, “Look, I was in the shrine and the responsorial psalm said, ‘Here I am Lord I come to do your will.’ And I was appointed a third term in Mandaluyong. As I said, I have experienced the Lord speaking in very concrete ways. In 2001, I (Fr Panfilo) was invited by the Nuncio and his secretary for a dinner to the Honorary Consul of Italy. At about 4:30 the Nuncio called me and said, “Can you come and see me at 5 o’clock? While Fr. Val talks with the secretary and I’ll talk to you and then at 6 o’clock we will go for dinner.” So, we went there, and the nuncio added: “the Holy Father has appointed you as Bishop of Alotau”. Of course, I told him “You better give me some time to think.” But I remember him saying, “You are a Salesian, you have to obey the Pope.”

During those days, our novices were staying here, and I was explaining to them one of the most beautiful historic documents of John Paul II (Novo Millennio Ineunte). You know that in the year 2000 we celebrated the Extraordinary Jubilee of Redemption. At the end of that Jubilee many bishops were happy that the jubilee was over because they were tired. And here comes the Holy Father, who says: “This is not the time to sit down; instead, it is the time to set out into the deep, ‘Duc in altum’”. And so, I decided to take as the motto of my episcopate those words: “Duc in altum.”

I didn’t know anything about Alotau and Milne Bay Province. I didn’t know that there were so many islands. Later I realized that my motto was very appropriate: ‘setting out into the deep’. In fact, I had to set out into the deep because Milne Bay Province is 240,000 square kilometers. The diocese is the biggest diocese in PNG. 240,000 square kilometers of water and there are only islands. I was able to visit all the parishes, some even twice a year. You travel to Misima and Trobriand Islands by plane, but you travel to the rest of the islands by sea. Once Br Jess asked me: “Is it easier to be a provincial or a bishop?” “It’s easier to be a bishop,” I said. “I had to become a Bishop in order to be the missionary I dreamt of when I was a young seminarian. Going to isolated places, meeting people has been a very wonderful experience for me.”



As always, there were challenges, but I was quite happy in Alotau. In 2010, during the month of January the Nuncio with his secretary, Fr. Colnago, from my own diocese, came to Trobriand Islands and they stayed there for a week. At that time, I knew that there were talks of a possible change for me. I remember one day at the table after the meal, the Nuncio made a few comments. I felt it was a bit of a reproach and so I said: “Why are you planning to change me when I could stay here and do something good. I have seen so many beautiful changes in the Trobriand Islands.” We then had a small argument. Then Nuncio replied: “Anyway, the whole thing is in Rome, it’s up to them now to decide.” From there he took up his appointment in Rabaul in 2010.²⁵

²⁵ Archbishop Francesco Panfilo sdb farewell speech

4. The new bishop of Alotau 2010. Bishop Rolando Santos, C.M.

Bishop Roland who had already spent 10 years in Papua New Guinea was made bishop in 2010. He had previously worked in Alotau-Sideia diocese as formator of seminarians and as executive secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands from 2000 to 2010. He returned to Papua New Guinea after having served as the head of the Congregation of the Mission Philippine Province as its eighth Provincial Visitor for less than a year.

Bishop-elect Santos will be ordained and installed in Papua New Guinea on July 3. On Saturday a special thanksgiving Mass was celebrated at the Santuario de San Vicente de Paul in Quezon City ahead of his departure with 44 co-celebrants that included Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales of Manila archdiocese and Bishop Antonio Tobias of Novaliches. During the Mass, Bishop-elect Santos knelt before Bishop Tobias, who blessed his Bishop's Cross made of bamboo and said: "Receive this Cross as a sign of the love of Christ. May you preach God's love and never falter."



Cardinal Rosales also gave the bishop-elect his blessings. "God works in mysterious ways. We thank you for accepting to be bishop to the people of Papua New Guinea. We may not be there in person but rest assured that our prayers go with you," the cardinal told him. Bishop-elect Santos was born in Malabon City on March 21, 1949, and ordained a priest on June 1, 1974. He was assigned as director of novices in 1981-1983 and served as director of the Daughters of Charity from 1988 to 2000 before volunteering for missionary work in Papua New Guinea.



Coat of Arms for Bishop Rolando Santos

Bishop Santos wrote: "There is a need for dialogue between the government, the criminal group which rages in the area, sowing violence and destruction, the churches and the people in general on how to restore peace and order to Alotau," insists Mgr. Santos. "Differences should be resolved peacefully - he concludes - and respect for the rights and dignity of every person should be restored. Above all, we need to pray and implore God's help and forgiveness. There is hope for a better tomorrow if we all act together."²⁶ The door of the house they attacked 7 of

our priests" - says the Bishop - "they entered their rooms and stole their laptops, cell phones, cash and other valuables. They took away a new outboard motor, solar panels, projector and a TV.

²⁶ (AP) (Agenzia Fides, 26/3/2021)

OCEANIA/PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Call for dialogue by the Bishop of Alotau to restore peace and order after an attack on the house of diocesan priests. Friday, 26 March 2021

Photograph: The new Bishop of Alotau



Bishops of the Alotau-Sideia Diocese in order

1. **Bishop Doyle** born 1897, ordained 1926 consecrated bishop of Sideia in 1966 stayed until 1970. Died 1973.
2. **Bishop Desmond MOORE**, M.S.C. Born 1926 Bishop of Sideia 1970 Bishop of Alotau- Sideia 1975 – 2001. Died 2020
3. **Bishop Francesco PANFILO**, S.D.B. Born 1942. Ordained 1974 Bishop of Alotau-Sideia 2001 – 2010. Then Archbishop of Rabaul.
4. **Bishop Rolando SANTOS**, C.M. born in the Philippines 1949. Became Bishop of Alotau, Sideia - 2011, Consecrated June 2011.

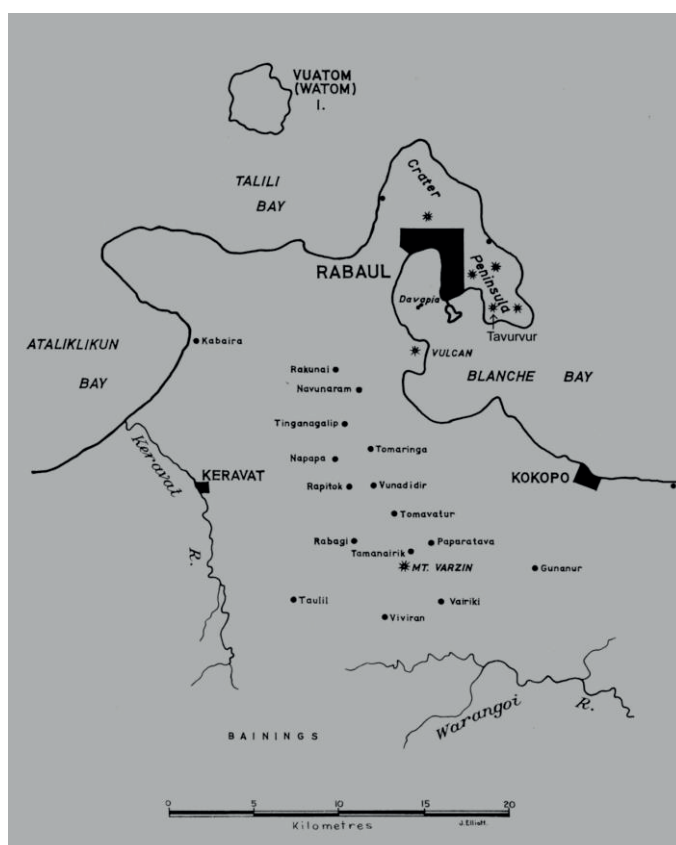


The original grave of Blessed Peter To Rot.

PART THREE. Rabaul and Vunapope



On the Feast of the Epiphany, 8 January 2017, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) inaugurated the Blessed Maria Troncatti Convent in Tapo, Kokopo, at the request of Archbishop Panfilo of Rabaul. The Archbishop had invited them to work in Tapo parish and School. Seventy percent of the population of the Archdiocese of Rabaul is Catholic.



Vunapope

Rabaul is a township in the East New Britain province of Papua New Guinea. The town was planned and built around Simpson Harbour within Blanche Bay. It became the capital of the Australian Mandated Territory of New Guinea until 1937 when it was first destroyed by a volcano. There were plans afoot to shift the capital to Lae but World War II intervened. Later it was the capital of the Province until 1994 when it was destroyed by another volcanic eruption.

Photograph taken in 2008 - Tavurvur was still smoking (Brian Mennis)

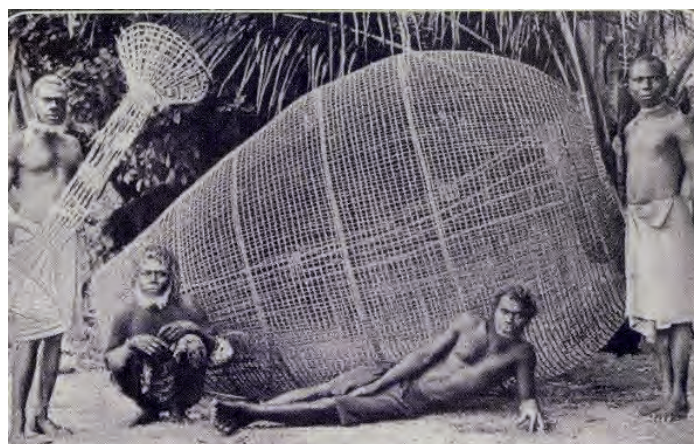


The Tolai people have always adapted to the changes in their history. For centuries they were self-sufficient growing their food and catching fish off the coast. The fish were caught in large *vup* fish-traps hanging from a *babau* raft and anchored with a *peo* basket filled with large stones lowered one hundred fathoms or more to the base of the harbour. The men made these traps in the *matanoi* a special place near the beach.

The earliest accounts of these *babau* are found in the writings of Rev. George Brown, who wrote *Melanesians and Polynesians*. During his years there he photographed the large *babau* fish traps made from split bamboo.

Photograph of the babau trap Rev George Brown. (1910¹)

Wilfred Powell mentioned that when a chief wanted to go on a trading voyage on one of these canoes, “He generally first consults one of these wind-makers, and pays him to make the weather fine.— They are sharp clever men these wind-makers, indeed were they not they would soon lose their custom. When pretending to make the wind blow in the right direction, they take burnt lime in their hands, and throw it up in the air singing a sort of chant all the time.”



¹ Brown: *Melanesians and Polynesians* 1910



A New Britain Village, Gazelle Peninsula, Page 178. Wilfred Powell, 1883

Powell in 1883: The houses of these people are as a general rule not of a very high order, being often only small huts made of bamboo and thatched with either grass or sugar cane leaves. For each village two large houses are built, one for the men, the other for the women. No man is allowed in the woman's house, and nor is any woman allowed in the men's house; the latter is generally used for a council house. These houses are generally built in the form of an ellipse, the eaves of the thatch coming down to within three feet of the ground, but inside the walls are six feet high, over which the roof arches to about eighteen feet. The inside is carefully blackened with the smoke of coco-nut shells. --- The outside enclosure is planted with variegated plants and the ground is kept beautifully clean; the whole being enclosed with a bamboo fence.²



² Powell 1883: 178

The Tolai myths of Origin

The Tolai myths describe two brothers, To Kabinana and to Purgo who were always arguing. To Kabinana was the bright one who created all the good things whereas To Purgo was the spoiler who created chaos. Some of the myths describe their beliefs in their origins sounding similar to the Book of Genesis.

One myth describes how To Kabinana went fishing with the *tabaran* spirits. First, he had to pass the test of having his head pressed to identify him. He had prepared for this by covering his head with a dried wild taro leaf. He passed the test and went fishing with the spirits. They caught many fish and that afternoon, To Kabinana carried a basket full of fish along the beach where he met his brother. To Purgo, seeing all the fish, then wanted to go fishing with the spirits.

To Kabinana explained what he had to do to approach the *tabaran* sprits so they would accept him and take him fishing. However poor To Purgo got it all wrong as usual. When the *tabarans* pressed his head, they poked a hole in the wild taro leaf as he had omitted to dry it out over the fire. The spirits were angry with him. "O wretched creature," the *tabaran* spirits cried! You are acting the fool with us and you want to run off with all our fish!" They ran after him and he shouted frantically. "Help! Help my brother, blow the conch shell, beat the *garamut*!"

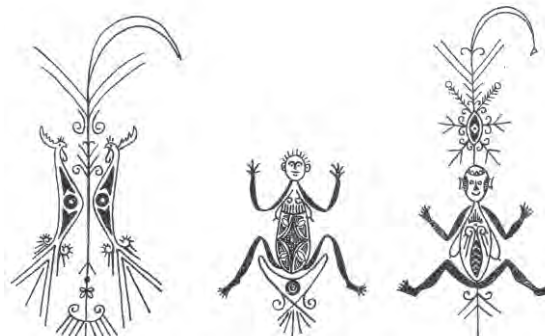


"Stop shouting," ordered To Kabinana as he blew on the conch shell, beat the *garamut* and hammered on the *kudu* drum with this had. After the *tabarans* ran away, To Kabinana asked his brother what he had done. "Well, I wrapped a wild taro leaf around my head," answered To Purgo. "It was a fresh green leaf. They poked a hole in it when they pressed my head." "That's just like you! You senseless creature!" ranted To Kabinana. "You should have dried it out over the fire first. Because of you, people will fight over fish. Our descendants will help themselves to the fish in other people's nets and they will be punished for it." (Tolai Myths of Origin 1973: 83).

Many of these origin myths feature. To Kabinina and To Purgo: the one being the good brother and the other being the protagonist. They are a study of the good and evil. Some of the myths are relevant today. For example, To Kabinina explained that death is necessary. He said "We must all die. If everybody lived forever, we would be sitting like stones on the beach with no room to move or grow food."

Archbishop Herman To Paivu said. "My Tolai people had religion. Some belonged to a secret Ingiet society and made gods out of wood or stone. They believed in various higher beings. The members of the Ingiet secret society were forbidden to eat pig and that is the reason for the lack of pigs in this district even today. The chiefs sought to obtain as much *tabu*, shell money, as possible in order become higher beings in the spirit world. To obtain *tabu*, they traded in taro, fish, coconuts and women for marriage. They had the idea of sacrifice as they would place well-cooked food in the bush to be eaten by the departed spirits. Every Tubuan is supposed to have a stone, a *paluat*, which enriches the clan."

Motifs symbolizing spirits of the dead which are invoked for love, or fertility ceremonies.



The Two Brothers (told by To Kanini of Paparatava)

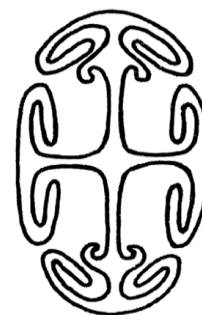
The Kaia was all alone. He lived in deep darkness.
To Kabinana and To Purgo had not come yet.
There was deep darkness: only deep darkness.
To Kabinana and To Purgo came and with them the sun.

Both said:

It is still night, but tomorrow the sun will shine.
So there will be time of day and time of night.”
Both created these areas. Both made the gardens.
The two parted. To Kabinana went up to Reimber
and To Purgo came here to Paparatava.

To Kabinana made the land over there. It is all flat and there are no rivers.
To Purgo made all the gorges here. They came together again.
To Kabinana asked To Purgo ‘What have you done?’
To Purgo answered, “I made all the gorges.”
To Kabinana said, ‘You spoiled this area with those gorges, but I have
made that other area well.’”

Right: ³One of the many figures, which the Tolai drew in the wet sand. The designs are part of a game called, “Where did I begin?” in which people had to guess where the drawing was begun. The Tolai were concerned with origins.



The Tubuan

An important part of the Tolai culture is the tubuan. They have their own sacred place called taraiu. Young boys can be initiated by paying many fathoms of shell money. They are taught the rules of society.

As the leaves hide the man's body and the mask hides his face, the only way you can tell who is the *tubuan*, is by his legs. In the traditional culture, the *tubuan* acted as judge and jury on people's behaviour in the village. They would visit couples who were quarreling and fine them *tabu*. If people neglected their children the same happened. People paid up, afraid of sorcery worked against them. At funeral services, the *tubuan* took part in the distribution of the *tabu* shell-money... For a fee they would dance at ceremonies and are now very much a part of the Tolai culture. The



society became very strong on the Duke of York Islands.

Photograph Matupit Island tubuan. 1960s Brian Mennis

³Janssen: *Tolai Myths of Origin*. 1973)

Epstein wrote in the 1960s about the connection between the *tabu* and the *tubuan*s.

“But an account of *tabu* purely as a commercial institution would give a very inadequate understanding of its significance for the Tolai, and of its function in their society. *Tabu* in fact permeated the entire culture and, as Danks observed, there was not a custom connected with life or death in which this money did not play a great and leading part”⁴

*Photograph Brian Mennis.
Big men and their tabu coils in the 1960s*



Rev George Brown arrived in East New Britain in 1875

In 1875, nine years before the German arrived, Reverend George Brown, a Methodist Minister, landed at Port Hunter at the Duke of York Islands. He brought eight Fijian and Samoan teachers with him and set about establishing the first mission in the area. He bravely went unarmed on his visit to Matupit Island. The visit went smoothly and the Matupit people told him they did not want traders but were anxious to have a Fijian teacher. They could not bear to think that their great rival, Nodup, had two teachers whereas they had none.

Without delay, the *lualua*, chief, To Porapora, sold Rev Brown some land on the point overlooking the volcanoes and he set about building a house for the teacher. However, the Nodup *lualua* was so angry at the idea of losing one of his teachers that he attacked To Porapora who happened to be carrying a musket. Blood would have been spilt if Rev Brown had not intervened. Despite this trouble, Peni Caumi, a Fijian, went to live on Matupit and took his family with him. For some time, life went on as usual on Matupit Island. George Brown succeeded in bringing peace between the Matupit and Kininigunan people in 1876, a peace that has never since been broken. Kininigunan is now the site of Vunapope Mission.

In April 1878 four Fijian missionaries started to cross New Britain on an exploratory trip. They were intercepted and killed on the orders of the chief, Talili, who may have been concerned about losing control of limited trade routes if peaceful relations among villages began to spread in the interior. Brown, on hearing the news, went from his headquarters at once to the village where the missionaries' families were gathered and found them huddled in a hut, wailing while warriors were threatening them, Talili having urged that they all be killed. Brown's consultants all advised immediate retaliation to prevent further murders. His decision was to organize two simultaneous raids from opposite sides of the island and to destroy the gardens and burn the villages of those complicit in the killings. This was done and peace restored.

⁴ *Danks; 1887: 316*

Fr Benedict To Varpin in 1977 pointing out To Tolitur's name and that of his son, Talet. Both of them helped the new missionaries in Volavolo.

This monument was in the grounds of the Volavolo Parish. (M. Mennis)



People on Matupt Island at the time the first Protestant and Catholic Missionaries arrived there

Women dancing at Volavolo in the 1960s



Queen Emma and partner Farrell came to East New Britain in 1878

The sisters Emma Coe (1850 – 1913) and Phebe Parkinson (1863 – 1944) were born of a Samoan mother and an American Jonas Coe. Because they were of royal Samoan stock, Emma saw herself as a princess and later became known as Queen Emma. After Emma left Samoa in 1878, she traded with partner Farrell, a New Zealander, and set up a trading post at Mioko on the Duke of York islands in East New Britain. She built a house, Gunantambu, at Ralum, Kokopo in 1886.



Phebe and her husband Richard Parkinson arrived to help Emma. They spent most of the rest of their lives in the Gazelle Peninsula near present-day Kokopo. They set up plantations and traded copra with the local population for beads, tobacco and knives. Phebe and Richard built a house at Kuradui Plantation near Raluana. The Tolai were given access to the shores and to their *matanoi*. Parkinson was a surveyor but also a scientist. Phebe was well loved by the Tolai people.

Queen Emma and Farrell bought up large areas of land in New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville and various smaller islands. Emma had a personal bodyguard of Buka boys armed with rifles. She cleverly registered her land with the American consul in Sydney. This meant that the German Company could not take it off her when they arrived in 1884.

After the Sacred Heart missionaries arrived there was friction between Farrell and the missionaries over land which had to be sorted by the German government. Emma invited Bishop Couppé to her hotel for a meeting. When he was told that the bar that was being used was once the altar on the ill-fated Marquis de Ray's expedition of New Ireland he was very upset and never went there again. Apparently, the altar had never been blessed.

Emma's sister, Phebe was recognized by all and sundry as a benevolent, caring and sensitive person and was known as "Miti" (lady of high stature). Phebe died in the POW camp in 1944.⁵

Photo Richard and Phebe



⁵ Mennis: *Tubuan and Tabernacle*: 2007

The German Colony, 1884 to 1914

In November 1884, Otto Finsch, on board the *Samoa*, and two German warships, the *Elisabeth* and the *Hyane* sailed into Mioko in the Duke of York Islands and the German Imperial flag was raised and later that same month at Matupit Island and then on the north coast of New Guinea.

Photograph: Hoisting the German Imperial flag at Mioko, the Duke of York Islands



Unfurling bright flags and the acquisition of land from the villagers in return for a few axes or trinkets was enough to establish possession over large areas of land in those colonial times. The New Guinea Kompagnie was granted sovereign powers by the German government and given powers to carry out trading, development of plantations and mining. The new colony on the mainland was called Kaiser Wilhelmsland and the whole area was called the Bismarck Archipelago. The village elders who accepted gifts of axes, beads and

material did not realise they were handing over large tracts of land permanently.



In January 1896, Albert Hahl arrived at Herbertshohe as the new Imperial judge for the Bismarck Archipelago and a new era was begun. By now the New Guinea Kompagnie wanted to concentrate on its commercial side and was happy to off-load the administrative work to the new Governor. Hahl was soon learning the *kuanua* language and familiarised himself about the Tolai culture.

He learned about their discontent at having large areas of their land being taken over for plantations and set up reserves of protected village land in unused parts of these plantations where people could live and garden without the interference of the plantation owners. Doing this brought peace to the Gazelle Peninsula.

Aparam To Bobo became a spokesman for the Vunamami clans. His status as a leader was acknowledged by both the Tolai people and the

German Government when the first of many reserves was set up. In about 1903, Governor Hahl bought land around Simpson Harbour to set up the town of Rabaul. He paid 750 marks for 150 hectares incorporating areas of land later used for the administration quarters and housing for the town. The name means mangroves and the area was a swamp of mangroves.

The coming of the Sacred Heart missionaries

In 1881 the Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, John Cardinal Simeoni, wrote to Fr Chevalier, head of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC), requesting them to undertake the difficult task of the evangelization of New Guinea.

Very Reverend Father,

For several years the Vicariate of New Guinea has been vacant because no Religious Community has been anxious to take charge of it. The Holy Father has a great interest in this important country where there is no Catholic mission, but where protestant ministers are working. He knows well, Father, your zeal and the zeal of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. In spite of having few priests in his order, Fr Chevalier accepted.

“In offering the Holy Father our profound respect please tell him that he can count upon our blind obedience and upon our absolute loyalty.”

As a result, Pope Leo XIII gave the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart the immense vicariate of Melanesia and Micronesia as a missionary field. The first MSC missionaries left Europe in September 1881: Father Durin, the superior, Father Navarre, Father Cramaille, Brother Fromm and Brother Durin, nephew of Fr Durin. They left Barcelona bound for Manila, from where they were expecting to sail directly to New Britain. However, they experienced terrible storms, long stoppages and trouble with ships. The journey which should have taken three months, took 12 months. The missionaries had to backtrack to Batavia but, before they arrived there, Father Durin, the superior, became so ill he had to return to Europe with Brother Durin. There were now only three missionaries left: Fr Navarre, who became the new Superior, Fr Cramaille and Br Fromm. Eventually they went to Sydney where the *Chandernagore* was due to sail for New Britain.

They landed at Matupit Island on 26 September 1882. Their arrival was described by Father Navarre in a letter dated 3 October 1882:

Blanche Bay is one of the most beautiful bays I have ever seen, the coast is fertile and is inhabited. The Chandernagore anchored in this bay, near the Island of Matupit where a German mercantile house has established its headquarters. We went ashore on 29 September 1882, the Feast of St. Michael, a coincidence we considered auspicious. The same day after calling on Mr Mickelson, the representative of Mr Hensheim, I made it a point to have an interview with To Litur who is said to favour the Europeans and especially the Catholic Missionaries. He had been appraised of our arrival and expected to see us. The captain and Mrs Poufain of Nantes accompanied us and four or five natives led the way.⁶

After their arrival they heard that there had been a priest with the Marquis de Ray's failed expedition. He had hoped to set up a mission at Volavolo but had been attacked. [Father Rene-Marie Lannuzel was the first Catholic priest in the Rabaul area. He had come out with the Marquis de Ray's expedition but, when this failed, he contacted Mr Hensheim and discussed the setting up of a Catholic Mission near Rabaul. He travelled over the saddle between the North Daughter and the Mother (Kombiu) volcanoes to Nodup where To Litur, the *lualua*, befriended him. Later he shifted to Volavolo where he was attacked by tribal warriors but managed to escape. After some time, he left New Britain and went to Auckland, New Zealand

⁶ (Mennis, 1972: 33-34)

where he became a parish priest, no doubt regaling his new parishioners with tales of wild New Britain.



Monument to the arrival of the first MSC priests to Rabaul (Photograph M. Mennis)

In 1883, the newly arrived Sacred Heart missionaries bought land near Kininigunan Village and built a house where the Kokopo Club was later established. Father Navarre described the site as being “most desirable, commanding as it does a view of the sea which permits us to watch the vessels bound to Meoko and Port Hunter on the Isle of the Duke of York. The new site will be a good starting point when we visit different sections of the Bay, on the peninsula of the Gazelle, and is a most healthy spot”. They moved into their new native-material house in April 1883. Two months later the house was burnt to the ground in the middle of the night and the missionaries were lucky to escape alive.

Mr Mouton and his father heard the bamboo exploding and rushed to help. “We found the missionaries (sic) moving all they could from the fire, they saved very little but fortunately for them the fire started at one end and they saved the main important matters such as documents etc. Mouton recoded: “By the statements of the native which I managed to investigate, the cause of the fire was one of Farrell’s doing – He paid a gun to a native to do it”⁷ (Mouton 1974: 76). Farrell and Queen Emma had bought large areas of the Gazelle Peninsula for plantations. The last thing Farrell wanted was missionaries. He did his best to discourage them.

Having stayed the next few days with Mr Mouton and son, the missionaries went to Matupit to buy some new clothes from Mr. Hensheim’s store. Fr Navarre decided to go to Sydney to replenish stocks and supplies lost in the fire and to meet new missionaries arriving from Europe. Hearing a boat was due to leave the Duke of York Islands, they set off there with Mr Mouton on the 3 July 1883. They ran into a terrible storm. For six hours they were tossed by the angry billows, shivering with cold and, exhausted, they had no knowledge of their whereabouts, sailing at random in their frail craft.⁸

Br Fromm wrote:

“Mr Mouton, the trader, wanted to bring us to the Duke of York Islands so we could catch the boat going to Sydney. But on the way a very strong wind came up after we got as far as Pigeon Island. The sail broke and the boat was washed ashore at Makadao, part of the Duke of York Islands. We slept there the night in the house of a Methodist missionary. We left again next morning but just drifted until

⁷ Mouton 1974: 76

⁸ Waldersee, 1995: 111)

nightfall and we did not know where we were. In the morning we rowed hard and came up to Volavolo.⁹

They approached the shore apprehensively. To Litur of Nodup had told them scary stories about the Volavolo people. They were his traditional enemies and not to be trusted. It was early morning and the coastline was lit by the rising sun. Fearfully the missionaries regarded the shore. Who was hiding behind those coconut trees along the beach? Seeing the boat approach, armed warriors gathered on the beach. They had seen white men before and had dealings with traders and blackbirders but they were in no mood to have more people land on their doorstep. Holding spears and clubs aloft, they danced and shouted: "What do you want? Who are you? Will you steal our men like the others?" The chiefs began to argue amongst themselves. "That tall one in the hat I'll kill him." "Well, the other one looks good to me." Aware of the threats against them, the four men bravely stepped ashore. Their names were Fr Navarre, Fr Fromm, Fr Cramaille, and Mr Mouton. They faced the prancing tribesmen and turned to God for protection. A small group against so many fierce tribesmen they lifted their faces to the sky and began to intone the *Te Deum*.¹⁰

Deum in Latin in clear ringing voices:

Te Deum laudamus: te Dominum confitemur.

Te aeternum patrem, omnis terra veneratur.

Tibi omnes angeli, tibi caeli et universae potestates:

tibi cherubim et seraphim, incessabili voce proclamant:

The *Te Deum* is a hymn of praise to God acknowledging him as the eternal Father. It pictures the company of the cherubim and seraphim angels who proclaim God's holiness and majesty in unending song, and links them with the white robed army of martyrs singing songs of praise to God, as in the Book of Revelation 7: 9-12. When the missionaries got to the words about the white robed martyrs they glanced nervously at each other, wondering if they would join that throng very soon.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.

Pleni sunt caeli et terra maiestatis gloriae tuae.

Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus,

te prophetarum laudabilis numerus,

te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus

Bravely they faced the armed warriors who by now were listening with wide-eyed wonder. Never before had they heard such voices, such wonderful music and those foreign words. They were entranced. They whispered to each other,

"We cannot kill these men. They know magic words: a secret language and wonderful songs!" The lilting music of the missionaries' hymn won them over. Amongst the group was the *lualua* (*chief in Kuanua*) of Volavolo Village, who was particularly taken with the words of the hymns. "These songs would be good for serenading," he whispered to the others.

⁹ Waldersee 1995

¹⁰ This oral tradition was told at the funeral of Archbishop Benedict's mother



(This is a representation of the arrival of the missionaries by Blasius To Una
Commissioned by M. Mennis in the 1960s)

Portrait of Fr Navarre



At once, the *lualua* decided that he would give these newcomers land and build them a house near his village. He must keep them there and learn the secret language himself. It was July 1883, and this first meeting between the missionaries and the people of Volavolo has become part of the tribal folklore of the arrival of the first missionaries there. Did the missionaries ever realise it was the blessed hymn, the *Te Deum* that saved them? Amazingly, Benedict To Varpin, grandson of The *lualua*, went on to become a priest, the Bishop of Bereina where Fr Navarre had also worked a century before and finally an Archbishop of Madang before he retired. By then Benedict could read and write and sing in the Latin language; his grandfather would have been so proud of him. Benedict To Varpin said of this first meeting: My grandfather, heard the new missionaries singing the *Te Deum* and he thought it would be a

good song for serenading and welcomed them. ¹¹(*lualua* is a Tolai word for a chief). (Interview M. Mennis)

Volavolo, the First MSC Station in New Britain

The missionaries settled there and established the first Catholic parish in Papua New Guinea and from there they went to Yule Island. But even though the Volavolo leaders welcomed them and offered them land, it was not all plain sailing. There was still much opposition from the villagers.

Br Fromm wrote in 1883:

We stayed at Volavolo but our health suffered. Fr Navarre got malaria again. We did not have a bed to sleep on and often had to go without food. We were very poorly off. We ate some of the native food - some was good but other we could not

¹¹ Mennis: *Tubuan and Tabernacle*

eat. We wondered if it had been poisoned. The Volavolo people cursed us and wanted to fight us and frightened us with their spears.¹²

On 4 October 1883, Father Navarre and Brother Fromm sailed from Matupit in an English man-of-war for Sydney to get more supplies. Meantime, Father Cramaille kept the new mission station going and began to make a dictionary of the Tolai language.

In January 1884, in Sydney, Fr Navarre met the new missionaries arriving from Europe including three more priests and one brother. However, they had to wait two months before they found a ship to take them to New Britain. They arrived at Matupit on board the *Catherine* in April 1884. Early next morning, they took a canoe to Malaguna and walked over to Volavolo, probably following the same route as Tunnel Hill Road does today. Father Cramaille and Father Vatan were delighted to see them.

In 1884, Fr Navarre went to Yule Island and was consecrated its first Bishop on 30 November 1887. His new mission suffered poverty and hardship in those early days although more missionaries continued to arrive. Four Sisters came to begin a convent and school there although the Mission was still impoverished.

In 1887, Navarre decided New Britain should become a separate prefecture-apostolic and Fr Couppé was named as the first Bishop of New Britain. It is just as well that Couppé and Navarre had quite separate areas of operation as they had quite different ideas and personalities.

The orphanage which was later set up at Volavolo and run by the Sisters.



¹² *Mennis: Tubuan and Tabernacle*

Fr Couppé's letter to Fr Chevalier in October 1889:

"I have never been at ease with Bishop Navarre. Ever since the difficulties I had with him in Sydney, there has remained a cloud between us. He is far too reserved with me and I with him, especially when we have different ideas on important issues."¹³

Each in their own way proved great builders in their mission stations. It is disputed as to which place was the first mission in New Britain, Nodup or Volavolo. Although the missionaries initially lived at Nodup for 6 months, they decided it was not central enough and bought land at Kininigunan near present day Vunapope. After setbacks already described, they began the mission at Volavolo, which thus became the first permanent mission ahead of Vunapope. In the centenary book, *Yumi Pipel Bilong God 1882 – 1982*, mention was made that Volavolo was the first Catholic Mission Station in New Britain. "*Volavolo i kamap olsem*

Meanwhile in those early days, it was decided to extend the Volavolo mission with a two-storied house as the location was surrounded by many villages and the population was quite intense. A convent was built for the Sisters who arrived in 1891. Then an orphanage was developed for which Volavolo became well known. Some children previously sold into slavery were brought there for education and care.

There have been many outstanding men who were parish priests at Volavolo including Fr Reischl, Fr Laurence Biermann, Fr Tor Hecht, Fr Holz, Fr Herman Taliva, Fr Albert Guat and Fr Herman To Paivu. The Cardinal, John Ribat MSC, was born there and is Benedict's cousin.

The Volavolo Mission became the central place for 6 parishes including Watom Island, Nodup, Tavui and Korere. Fr Sebastian was Parish Priest there when Tavorvur and Vulcan erupted in 1994. In 2000, the Parish Priest was Fr Alois Escher MSC but, by 2002, there was no resident priest but only visiting priests from Vunapope.

The old *LuaLua*, who gave the land to the missionaries, had many descendants and relatives amongst whom are priests, sisters and brothers. Six priests were ordained from Volavolo – Fr Velim, Fr Hermann, Fr Albert, Fr Cornelias, To Vauta, and two Archbishops: Benedict To Varpin and John Ribat who is now Cardinal Ribat MSC in charge of the whole Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea. The Volavolo mission is very blessed with these vocations and the parish remains strong and vibrant. Monsignor To Paivu, Parish Priest there for many years, had a strong influence amongst the youth and many vocations have been accredited to his teaching.

Rev Fr. Bley MSC had quite a bleak view of the people's lives before the missionaries.

"They gave themselves to fighting, immorality, stealing, killing of infants and everywhere there was fear and sadness. The men of one place could not go to another place for fear of being killed. They were afraid to walk outside in the darkness because of the fear of evil spirits and fear even of their friends. Even inside the house they were afraid of the evil spirits or an enemy putting poison in the food or something. The devil degraded and held in chains the men of former times and was not happy about them following the light afterwards".¹⁴

Some of this was true as described already but it was not all darkness in the time of the *tubuan* as the people did enjoy their lives to a certain extent. It is doubtful the race would have survived if they were always killing each other and were completely downtrodden by fear. They had a

¹³ Waldersee 1995.

¹⁴(Adela) 1968:9)

great sense of humour and enjoyed conviviality with each other. The men went out fishing in their canoes or laid their fish traps and provided for the families; the women supported each other when they could and everyone enjoyed the market days when various groups came together for gossip, trading and bride purchases.



Another illustration of the Tolai people meeting the first missionaries. (Cover)

The dances by the *tubuan* were seen as entertainment, but it was a secret society and women were not allowed near the *taraiu*. The *tubuan* could also fine people for trespassing or other misdemeanours. The payment was in shell money. It must be remembered that they had developed a way of life that helped them survive for thousands of years far from any European influence. They had their own artefacts, trade routes, and ways of building houses and large fish traps. They used the forests for materials for their tools, food and clothing. As shown, they had spiritual beliefs, which left the people living in fear: a fear of sorcery or warfare or of being extorted but, at the same time, they had their feasts to celebrate life and their market days.

German New Guinea and Vunapope

After 1884, the Sacred Heart missionaries had to contend with German political and economic interests as well as the traders, the Wesleyan missions and the local tribes. At first, the Neu Guinea Kompagnie ran the new German Province, but local sovereignty was handed over to the Reich in 1899 with the capital of German New Guinea at Herbertshoe (Kokopo), New Britain. Earlier in 1895, even before the takeover by the Reich, Albert Hahl had been appointed Imperial Judge.

He was a short, stout man who did more than any other German to improve relationships with the people. In 1902, he became Governor of German New Guinea.



An early view of the “bung” market in Rabaul

Over the years, Dr. Hahl was on friendly terms with many of the Tolai leaders and spoke their language, *Kuanua*. Pacification was Hahl’s main objective (Firth, 1983: 93) and, as a result, three quarters of the

revenue was spent on protecting the colonists, on the police and the government steamer, which was the main means of contact between the different settlements. Governor Hahl understood the attitude of the people. When he discovered that chiefs paid their village workers with food and feasts after a house or canoe had been built, he decided to do likewise. When a village finished the road past their villages, German officials organised a feast to celebrate and the workers were paid in food rather than money. The system worked, much to the amazement of other government officials.¹⁵

Development of the Mission at Vunapope

Fr Navarre had thought Kininigunan would make a good, central position for a mission station and had bought land there, but the dispute with Farrell had caused them to put these plans off. Subsequently, there was a court case with Queen Emma and Farrell on one side and the Catholic Mission on the other with the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie also wanting a piece of the pie. “The German Government decided the matter with a Solomon-like judgement: The land north (sic) of Kokopo was to go to Queen Emma; 40 hectares south (sic) (Vunapope today) was to go to the mission whilst the disputed land around Kokopo was kept for the German Government itself.”¹⁶

The result of the court case was a two-fold blessing: first it showed that the mission was accepted as being part of the establishment and secondly the land allotted to them was in an excellent position. The mission was initially dubbed as the place of the “popies” by the opposition, but the Catholic missionaries thought to take on the name and match it with *Vuna* which means place in the local language: hence the name Vunapope was adopted.

The German Report for 1889-90 mentioned that “The activities of the Catholic Mission have also been extended - - Two brothers and two fathers of the same order arrived from the mother



house in Salzburg and have a good command of German. They will be followed by five sisters of the same order, who are travelling out via Australia.”¹⁷ It was now imperative that Catholic missionaries came from Germany or could at least speak German. French missionaries were now sent to Papua where they did wonderful work on Yule Island and Bereina.

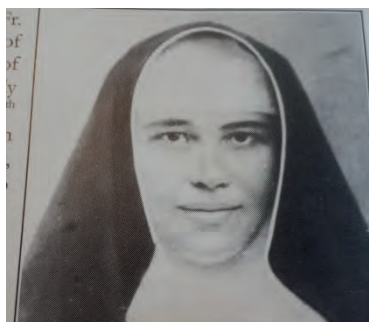
Bishop Louis Couppé MSC and his Tolai altar boys Ludwig To Katula (standing) and August To Kadalama from Volavolo in Germany 1900

However, one French priest who did stay on in Rabaul was Fr Couppé who spoke German fluently. Louis Couppé was born in Romorantin in the Diocese of Blois, France, on 26 August 1850. He was ordained a secular priest on 30 May 1874 and entered the MSCs in 1880. While on his way to New Britain in 1885 to join other Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, he became gravely ill with typhoid fever. He finally arrived at Yule Island on 1 July 1886 where he met Fr Navarre. Four years later, in 1890, he was consecrated Bishop of New Britain in Antwerp, Belgium.

¹⁵ Waldersee 1995.

¹⁶ Adela, 1968:19)

¹⁷ Sack & Clark, 1979: 54



Interesting is the fact that Sister Anna (Katharina Utsch) MSC was professed in Germany on November 1902 with other Sisters. They were formally received into the novitiate on March 25 1900 with Bishop Couppé the main celebrant. The two Tolai youths that he brought with him on his journey to Europe in 1900 were altar servers at the ceremony.

Sister Anna (pictured) was murdered later at St Paul's in the Bainings in 1904.

MSC Sisters with mixed-race children in Vunapope orphanage



Early Photograph of FMI Sisters at Vunapope



Vunapope became the centre of a Cathedral, a presbytery for the Priests and Brothers, and an orphanage. Convents for the sisters were also built. Couppé travelled extensively on horseback, by foot or by boat around the coast looking for locations for new mission centres.



The Baining's Martyrs

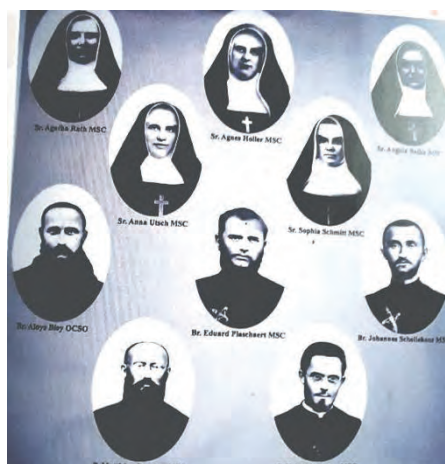
"In the two years up to 1886, six new priests arrived at Vunapope, amongst them was Fr Rascher who began work at St Paul's in the Bainings. He came from the same part of Germany as Governor Hahl. Because of this, Hahl visited St Paul's whenever he could. One result of this was that the line between Church and State became rather blurred there. Fr Rascher, in effect, became the German representative in the area, a job he was reluctant to have. Work on the mission had been progressing well and a sizeable church, convent and presbytery as well as a school was all built in those early years. The missionaries were preparing for the opening of the Church when disaster struck."

"A few problems were beginning to emerge to hinder the peace of the mission. When they bought land for a large plantation, there were problems with the people who believed they could still have access to it and often made raids on the plantation. When Rascher complained to the German authorities nothing was done. Another problem was the threat that the mission unwittingly, posed to the trade between the Bainings and the coastal people. Traditionally, the coastal people traded fish, shells and salt inland to the Bainings in exchange for *taro*, spears, tools and other trade goods. "When the MSCs set up a large plantation in the area some of this traditional market was diverted to the disadvantage of the Baining people"¹⁸

¹⁸ Waldersee, 1995: 507

The people of the Karar Range above the mission were getting angry because the mission had a ready supply of salt, tinned fish, food and tools and their traditional goods were no longer in demand. To Maria, the main perpetrator in the revolt against the missionaries, had been nurtured by the missionaries from his earliest years when he had been saved from slavery and was boarded at the orphanage at Volavolo.

To Maria was angry with Fr Rascher who admonished him for wanting to marry Savunut, a married woman. To Maria's anger grew and he organised angry people from Karar Range to support him but was unable to persuade the people in the nearby villages to join him. Even Dr Hahl knew about the rumours of the revolt and was prepared to send a detachment of troops to the mission but Fr. Rascher felt nothing would happen to him.



13th August 1904. The Bainings martyrs. 5 MSC Sisters, 3 Religious Brothers, 2 MSC Fathers were brutally murdered

Fr Rascher knew of the simmering trouble and tensions. Students had warned him that “the people on the Karar Range had designs on his life”. Regardless, he again dismissed the rumours (Waldersee, 1995: 508). However on 13 August 1904 a terrible massacre took place in St Paul's. Ten missionaries were killed in a short space of time: two priests, three brothers and five sisters were murdered by To Maria and his henchmen. The missionaries were preparing for the opening and dedication of the new church.¹⁹ (Michael, 1957: 32, 33)

In the German Annual Report for 1904-05, only one paragraph mentioned the massacre: “Ten members of the mission of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus were killed at St Paul's on 13 August 1904. The rising of the natives remained confined to its point of origin, a section of the inhabitants of St Paul and the natives of Mt Karar and the Krau Valley. None of the guilty parties escaped punishment”²⁰

St Paul's Church in the Bainings



Fr Rascher was forewarned and had done nothing. Whatever the causes, the massacre at St Paul's was an absolute tragedy for the mission and for Bishop Couppé personally as he knew all those killed: they were two priests, Fr Rascher and Fr Rutten; two brothers, Johann Schellekens and Edward Plasschaert; a Trappist lay brother Ludwig Bley; and five young sisters Anna Utsch, Sophie Schmidt, Agatha Rath, Angela Balka and Agnes Holler. They became known as the Bainings Martyrs. Their tragic deaths encouraged many other missionaries to

take their place including one sister who escaped the massacre. She returned later to work in that same mission for forty more years.²¹

¹⁹ Michael, 1957: 32, 33).

²⁰ Sack, 1979: 251

²¹ (Waldersee, 1995: 509

Spheres of influence²²

In 1890, the German Administration divided New Britain up into spheres of influence. The mission stations already functioning were allowed to continue, but the Methodists had to keep to the area west of Malapau and the Catholics to the East and a few other non-Tolai areas. The two Catholic Missions to the east of the dividing line were Malaguna and Volavolo which were allowed to continue as they were already in existence.

Archbishop Rochus wrote: “The colonial authorities sponsored a policy for promoting mission ‘zones’ or ‘spheres of influence’ that is, the various Church missions were restricted in their work to specified areas of the country around Rabaul. Such a policy saw Catholic missionary activity confined to a small area of the Gazelle Peninsula. Bishop Couppé vigorously opposed such a policy fighting it both in the Kokopo and directly with the masters in Berlin. He argued that such restrictions served only to suppress the religious rights and freedoms of the people as well as those of the Church. He also argued that the people had the right to choose the kind of education they wanted for their children.”

The Vunapope mission continued to grow in numbers over the following years. A few years later, the German Report for 1909-10 was quite glowing in their praise for the mission:

“The Catholic mission of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus has 28 main stations and ninety outstations. At the present time it numbers twenty-seven priests, thirty-five brothers, thirty-one sisters and 120 catechists under the direction of a bishop. New head stations were established at Tapapal on New Ireland, at Mope in the Sulka reserve on St George’s Channel and at Vunadadir in the vicinity of Mt. Varzin. Of the 23,000 natives baptised since the mission was founded, about 17,000 are still living. The people are becoming steadily more receptive to Christianity. The mission maintains 107 primary schools with a total enrolment of 4,197 pupils and also seventeen orphanages.”²³ (*German Report 1909 – 1910*)”

The Wesley mission had been active on the Gazelle Peninsula since 1875 but had only a small number of European personnel. It had initially three and later up to eight missionaries, most of them Samoan evangelists. Rev. R. Heath Rickard pleaded, therefore, for the reservation of the Gazelle Peninsula for the Wesleyans only and for the transfer of the Catholic mission to New Ireland (Neu-Mecklenburg). The state government gave Couppé the alternative of either agreeing to divide the Gazelle Peninsula into two separate mission districts, one for the Methodists and one for the Catholics, or to restart from scratch in New Ireland.

During his discussions with the head of the Colonial Department in Berlin, Couppé agreed to a temporary territorial restriction for his mission. As a result, on 10 January 1891, the German Chancellor von Caprivi ordered the division of the Gazelle Peninsula into a Wesleyan and a Catholic mission area. The Catholic mission was assigned the southern part with the exception that it was allowed to continue its already established mission stations at Volavolo and Malaguna in the Wesleyan area. The Wesleyan mission was also granted the right to continue three stations located in the southern part and assigned to the Catholic mission.²⁴ Bishop Couppé’s position received overwhelming support from the locals; the number of converts to Catholicism grew and after 1895, he was accepted as the spokesman for the local people. He

²² Michael, 1957: 34).

²³ Sack, 1979: 1

²⁴ Steffen p 15

successfully secured the abandonment of the policy of “spheres of influence” on the part of the German colonial government.²⁵ The spheres of influence which had been introduced by the German Administration were being ignored and by the late 1890s were no longer strictly enforced. Fr Couppé was able to argue that the Volavolo Mission had been going since 1883 (mainly through the efforts of Fr Cramaille). While these stations could continue, they were not allowed to operate outside their stations.

Progress on Matupit Island

All ideas of establishing a subsidiary mission on Matupit Island were thwarted because of the *Spheres of Influence* policy of the German Government. The only possibility of extending mission influence was to train catechists and send them out to the villages. The catechist sent to Matupit was To Minis, the adopted son of one of the big men of the village. Later a larger Church was built on Matupit Island.

To Minis had trained at Malaguna and stayed on Matupit from about 1893 until 1910. During this time, he helped Fr Fromm, Fr Baumann and Fr Boegershausen. He was respected by the people and was a tireless worker for the Church. A bush material church was initially erected on Matupit Island down on the beach near where the first missionaries arrive. Fr Fromm paddled over from Malaguna in a canoe to celebrate Mass each Sunday. In June 1889, Fr Baumann, the first priest to live on the island, built a house, store and a new Church near the present Church. Being resident, he now had more time for his parishioners on Matupit Island.

One of his parishioners was Paulina Ia Dok who brought her uncle, To Mulue, the old *lualua*, along to the church. Although he had been a sorcerer, he began to listen to the new teaching and was baptised by Fr Baumann on the 1 December, 1899. According to the Church record, he took the name of Joseph and was number 255 in the Register. However, one wonders just how much To Mulue adapted to the new ideas. He liked his big man, *lualua*, image until he was very old. He was nearly blind and often Ia Dok led him about with a stick - she holding one end and he the other. In this way they walked to their gardens across the small bridge joining Matupit Island to the mainland. Although it would have been faster to go by canoe, To Mulue preferred to walk over the bridge as he was friendly with many of the Germans who invited him into the nearby tavern for a drink. They treated him specially because of his status.

He retained his shell money to be divided up after his death. Ia Dok, still a young girl at the time, remembered To Mulue saying, “I had a dream last night. An angel came to tell me I was going to die soon and that he would come to take me to heaven. It wasn’t any angel, it was Michael the *lualua* of the angels. You see because I am the *lualua* of my people

I must be taken to heaven by the *lualua* of the Angels.”. Ia Dok’s husband was To Paivu a famous catechist and Archbishop To Paivu was named after him.

²⁵ Archbishop Rochus Więcej: <https://www.voiceofrot.com/news/the-catholic-church-in-papua-new-guinea/>

At the Jubilee celebrations for the Matupit Church in 1932: Fr Madigan at the rear, Fr George Boegershausen on right and Fr Franke on left. Fr Franke was just on a visit at this time



Catechists by Archbishop Rochus

“Great emphasis was given to the formation of indigenous lay catechists who later became an important component and forerunners in the task of evangelization. Considering the small number of the missionaries, as well as the long time required to train many indigenous clergymen it was necessary and important in the mission field that there was ready help from a large army of catechists. There can be no doubt about the great importance of the local catechist in the mission field. At home in firmly established parishes pastoral care is dependent on the co-operation the priests received from the teachers and other lay people. The catechists, trained in their own schools, headed the different Basic Christian Communities. The catechist is a true missionary in his own sphere, the explorer, and the personnel on the outstation, teacher, and the guardian. Due to their vast experience and local knowledge of the people and the context, catechists were able to achieve more ground in the field of pastoral care.

“In the field of activity entrusted to the catechists, they call together the newly converted Christians for morning and evening prayer, teach them their domestic and religious duties, and warn them when they do an injustice. They instruct the children in the faith, teach the elementary subjects and promote general good conduct. In the absence of the priest they assisted the dying, pray with them and prepare them for a holy death. They bury the dead by performing the final rites and support the grieving families and relatives. On occasion of conflicts and fights in the community, they use their influence and authority to achieve peace and ring about reconciliation”.

²⁶



Peter To Rot who was martyred in 1945 served as a well-noted and beloved catechist in his village and was entrusted with the local parish during World War II when the Japanese occupied the region.^[2] He stood up for religious values in the face of Japanese oppression and continued to hold secret services when the Japanese restricted him from active pastoral service. To Rot valued. (Wikipedia).

²⁶Więcej: <https://www.voiceofrotor.com/news/the-catholic-church-in-papua-new-guinea/>

The Chinese Catholics in New Britain

Governor Hahl early decided that labour would need to be brought in from overseas to help develop the colony. This would include traders and artisans as well as cooks. In Rabaul, the Chinese quarter housed about one-third of the total Chinese populations of the colony, the skilled workers, small traders, cooks and laundrymen of the capital (Ryan, 1972: 497). Madang was also a centre for Chinese workers recruited to work on the plantations. Peter Lawrence wrote, "By 1900, 122 Chinese and 184 Javanese were employed at Madang, and 13 Chinese and 54 Javanese in the Bogia area. In the same year another 190 Chinese came to Madang and, in 1901, another 270". Very few present-day Chinese in Papua New Guinea are descended from the coolie labourers who were brought in by the German Neu Guinea Kompagnie. The Chinese who continued to be residents of PNG were probably descended from the artisans, the cooks, fishermen and traders who were also brought out by the German Colonial Government. In the 1908 Annual German Report, Ah Tam, Ah Lok, Lsu Lung and two others were listed as Chinese planters mostly on New Ireland where Governor Hahl encouraged them to work their own plantations.



Photograph Mr John Achai with his son Fr Albert Chan in 1962. Mr archai was a daily communicant in Rabaul and a good friend of Fr Franke. Brother of Ah Lok

Ah Lok came to Rabaul in 1899, initially as a cook for the Acting Administrator, Dr Roce. With Governor Hahl's encouragement, he became an independent trader in the Duke of York Islands. He brought his brothers, Akun and Achai out from China. Akun went to the boarding school at Vunapope and was baptised a Catholic in 1902, being the first Chinese Catholic in New Britain. Ah Lok, now a planter on New

Ireland, used to visit his brother at Vunapope. Although not a Christian, he asked to go to Mass. While there he had a vision of the Child Jesus on the altar, but his Chinese friends would not believe him. Ah Lok was determined to take instruction at Vunapope. By the end of his service Bishop Couppé had converted all the Chinese in Rabaul to the Catholic faith.



The CYO group in later years with Fr Franke and Fr Brown.

The extended Chow family outside St Francis Xaviers Church in Rabaul



The First World War 1914

After the outbreak of war, five allied ships entered Blanche Bay on 11 August 1914. They were battle-cruiser HMAS Australia, light cruiser HMAS Sydney, and destroyers HMAS Warrego, Parramatta, and Yarra under the command of Rear-Admiral George Patey. The troops took over Herbertshohe and then HMAS Australia and two other vessels headed for Madang.



Photograph HMAS Australia

Over the following days in Rabaul, the troops looked for the German radio station which turned out to be at Bitapaka. On the 15th September

Lieutenant Read noted in his diary, “The brigadier has taken possession of Government House [Hahl’s previous residence on Namanula Hill] and is erecting a wireless station there. This place is about two miles from the town and is admirably situated for this purpose being on the heights.” (ed Brian Mennis 2015: 26).

The German Authorities had prepared defences with trenches, several land mines and a tree-top observation post. By 7 pm the Australians had occupied the wireless station after the loss of 2 officers and 4 men and also one officer and 3 men wounded. On 14 September, the Australians shelled the Toma Ridge and the German Governor, seeing the impossibility of the situation, ²⁷surrendered ²⁸.

As a result, the first Australians to die in World War I died near Bitapaka following the call to arms in that telegram. Then Colonel Holmes, received a message from the Naval Board ordering him to send troops to Madang and particularly to seize the mission boats which could be used for spying.

Bishop Couppé cautioned the sisters and boarders in the school to stay quietly in their houses and not venture out. After the German Governor had surrendered, the fathers and brothers were taken to Kokopo to swear they would not do anything against the Australian Government. They had to take an oath of neutrality. Under the Australian Military Administration, “the German native Development Programme was scrapped and European commerce was once more allowed to dominate policy” (Lawrence, 1964: 36). German planters were allowed to stay on their plantations if they took an oath to remain neutral ²⁹.

The Australians took over the administration from the Germans. Only the villages along the coastal strip and on the rivers had been pacified and many labourers recruited from these villages deserted when they heard of the Germans defeat. The terms *luluai* and *tultul* were retained and continued in use for many years. The new Administration, while appreciating the work of both the Catholic and Wesleyan Missions because they brought a message of peace and helped in the pacification of tribal enemies, was not sure if they could rely on their loyalty.

²⁷ Michael, 1957: 36-37).

²⁸ Michael *ibid*

²⁹ Rowley, 1958: 46).

The Treaty of Versailles 1921

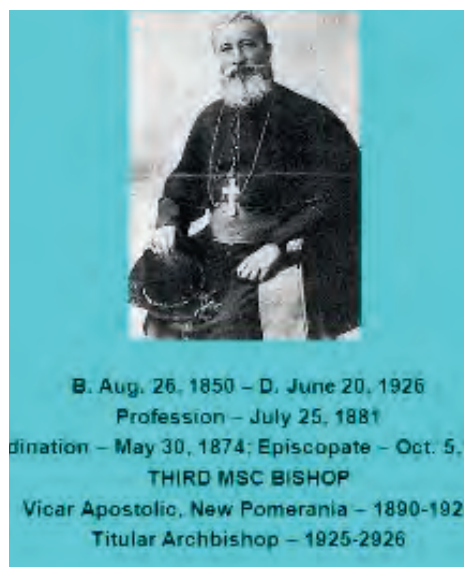
“The Treaty of Versailles affected both the Wesleyan and Catholic Missions. Paragraph 122 of the Treaty gave the Australians legal right to expel all German-born missionaries.”

“The German-born Missionaries, both Catholic and Wesleyans alike, were expecting to be expelled and the call had gone out both to America and Australia for missionaries from those countries to take their places. Eventually, the Australian government realised the worth of the German missionaries and the ban was lifted but many Americans and Australians had already resolved to go to New Guinea.”

“The New Guinea Act was passed by the Australian Parliament and came into force in May 1921. The Military Administration was replaced by a civilian government. The Territory of New Guinea was to be administered separately from Papua, under the Australian flag.”³⁰

Bishop Couppé .

This article by Hugh Laracy was published in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 8, (MUP), 1981. Not quoted in full.



“Louppé (1850-1926), missionary archbishop, was born on 26 August 1850 in France, joining in 1880 the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, recently expelled from France by the anti-clerical decrees. Arriving in Sydney in January 1885 with three brothers of his Order and five nuns of the related Order of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Couppé was appointed by Fr Navarre to establish a house of the Order. After 1897 his jurisdiction was restricted to New Britain, New Ireland, Manus and the Marshall Islands. The latter group was withdrawn in 1905.”

“Nor was the government always helpful. In 1889 mission work was banned because of the anti-Jesuit laws

then in force in Germany and the missionaries were threatened with expulsion from New Guinea. As soon as these impediments were removed in 1890 it was ordered that the Methodist and Sacred Heart missions should occupy separate districts to avoid tensions. When Couppé appealed, the German Foreign Office agreed that each mission should retain its existing stations whether or not they were in the territory of the other.”

“The 'spheres of interest' policy was abandoned as impractical in 1899. There were problems, too, over land. To provide for the future growth and financing of the mission, Couppé travelled widely and bought large areas, particularly those with good anchorages. Bitter wrangles with competing claimants such as 'Queen' Emma Coe and the New Guinea Co. ensued, but these became fewer after the German government assumed direct control of New Guinea in 1899. . His mission nevertheless became largely self-sufficient and its headquarters at Vunapope near

³⁰ *Ibid*

Kokopo was almost a town, with schools, workshops, a hospital, an orphanage, a printing shop, a church and various religious houses.”

“When Couppé retired in 1923 he was administering thirty-four mission stations, a school for catechists and an indigenous order of nuns, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. He had also converted most of the Rabaul Chinese community. He retired to St Mary's Towers at Douglas Park near Sydney, and died there on 20 July 1926, six months after being named titular archbishop. He was buried at Vunapope. Couppé was 'a very tall, strong, portly, energetic man with a long black beard and, though French, has little of that nationality about him'. His energy, determination, foresight and business acumen gave the Church in the islands a good start”.³¹

When Bishop Couppé retired to Douglas Park his last wish was to open up a station at Talasea but the timber for the buildings it did not arrive until 1920 after he had already left the mission. When Couppé retired in 1923 he was administering thirty-four mission stations, a school for catechists and an indigenous order of nuns, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.



The first mission house at Nodup in 1883

Bishop Vesters – the second Bishop

Bishop Vesters took over from Couppé in 1926 and remained bishop until just before the Second World War. He was born in the Netherlands in 1876 and became Bishop of Rabaul 1926 – 1939. B

Bishop Vesters received an award in the New Years honours list by the Commonwealth Government on 1st of January he received the award at the most excellent O during order of the British Empire for services rendered during the recent violent volcanic eruption in Rabaul. Bishop Vesters has won the respect of all creeds and classes by his unfailing devotion to the spiritual and mental of the 90,000 native adherence of the Catholic faith in his province which includes New Britain new island and the

Photograph Bishop Vesters



³¹ *Hugh Laracy Volume 8, (MUP), 1981*

adjacent islands Bishop Vestors was on I see vicar Apostolic over bow in August 1923 Bishop Vestors is a benevolent and accomplished scanner addition to his own language he speaks English French German Spanish Italian and Latin and a number of native dialects He became the second bishop of Rabaul after Couppé. He has proved to be an able administrator and leader in verna pipi the Sacred Heart mission headquarters 20 miles from rabaul crazy is a self supporting communities and a very fine cathedral long years of travelling mostly by sea have given his lordship are commonplace after an adventure voyages of hundreds of miles in 30 years have cease to mean danger to this mild honest missionary whose heart and soul I wrapped up in the stupendous job of caring for his flock³².

The 1937 Eruption

On 29 May 1937, Tavurvur erupted, and clouds of ash rose above the town and then settled on village houses causing many to collapse. On Matupit Island long cracks appeared, the longest being 15 metres long and a several centre-metres wide. It was thought the Kaia spirit who lived inside *Tavurvur* was angry with the people and this was their punishment. There were mini tsunamis following the eruptions and the waves crashed against the coast all around the Peninsula. People gathered at Nodup and were taken on board the *Montoro* to Kokopo. Brett Hilder recalled, "The ship's decks were crowded with a crowd of 6,000 people including 250 Europeans. The lifeboats were lowered to take more people. They were certified to carry 50 people but were carrying 110." Bishop Vesters and the mission at Vunapope cared for these traumatised people when they arrived in Kokopo.



Tavurvur Erupting in 1937.

On Matupit Island there was widespread panic. People fled over the causeway as Vulcan and then Tavurvur continued to erupt. Many of them still believed it was the work of the *Kaia*, To Lagulagu, who lived in the volcano, and they regarded it as a punishment. Matupit causeway was flooded though it was possible to wade across at low tide. They spent the night huddled and praying in the darkness. They were very frightened of the large fiery rocks which continued to be spewed out of Tavurvur.

"The two active eruption* are from Vulcan Island in Blanche Bay, the outer section of Rabaul Harbour, and Tavurvur Crater on the northern side of the harbour. Vulcan Island was thrown up out of the sea in one night about 60 years ago by a subterranean volcanic disturbance. Beginning: with earth tremors and land slides, the present disturbance assumed alarming intensity early on Saturday morning. Vulcan Island began to smoke about 4 a.m. and by about 4 p.m. the island burst forth in flaming eruption and threw up smoke and ashes It was regarded as one of the most severe volcanic disturbances in the history of New Guinea." TROVE

Story of Archbishop Benedict To Varpin and the 1937 eruption. The ash fell on Volavolo Village where he was a one-year-old small boy crawling around in the house. His parents thought he was with the grandmother and they rushed to the church to pray. "Where's Benedict?" they were asked "Oh dear", they rushed home just in time as the house was about

³² Trove article and difficult to transpose.

to collapse and picked the crying baby up. Benedict often told this story. He would laugh and say, "My father was more worried about his shell money being lost."

After the eruption and the cleaning up, In the villages, life continued as normal although changes were beginning to happen. The local Tolai people still made their *vup* traps suspended from the *babau* floats, the *Tubuan* society continued and boys were initiated as before. The *tabu* shell money was still in operation. The people were becoming aware of a far wider world. It was up to them how they met the challenges. Economically, technically, spiritually and politically the people's lives were gradually changing. As one writer said, "it was ten thousand years in a lifetime."

1918 – Mission Education at St Paul's College Taliligap.

In an earlier German Report it was reported that the mission maintains 107 primary schools with a total enrolment of 4,197 pupils and also seventeen orphanages. Education was seen as



the best way to introduce the people to Christianity. Once the children were educated they would bring their parents to church. Furthermore, through education catechists were trained to set up out-stations as mission centres that the priest could visit on a regular basis.

Schools were established at many outstations like this one at Vaisisi, an outstation of Valoka, in West New Britain 1929. The children have just left class here.³³

Fr Franke in West New Britain:

I must introduce our wonderful catechists who ran the small school teaching the children to read and count as well as teaching the adults about the Catholic religion. During the years at Valoka, I sent some Nakanai boys to be trained as catechists and in the end we had catechists working in 25 villages.

Their work was remarkable. Catechists were devout people who gave a good message. Their wages were low but they made their own gardens in the villages. The catechists did a marvellous job and made great sacrifices. Often they did not know the languages of their new villages but they were quick at learning them.

Along the West New Britain Coast, it was often the catechists who began the mission-stations. When Fr Stamm came to Valoka the catechists had worked there already and this made it easier for him. When I got there it was even a little bit easier again. We were recognised and welcomed in many places because of the catechists. The good news went around and the people wanted get in touch with the Catholic priests.



³³ See *Tubuan and Tabernacle Mennis* 2007: 57

Christmas, 1930 at Valoka in West New Britain by Fr Franks



As time went by, Vunapope sent missionaries out to many outstations. Fr Franke of Germany arrived in Rabaul in the 1920s and described Christmas at his station at Valoka.

Here Christmas coincides with the great wet and is therefore easily spoilt by the deluge. However, if it does not rain, Christmas in the tropics has a charm of its very own. I made a habit of inviting the Catholics from most outstations to Valoka, some of them five, six, seven hours' walk away. Two days before Christmas sees the setting up of the nativity scene completed and the church and station decorated; the Catholics who live close by have been to confession. What a hustle and bustle! All the houses are packed. Boys and men are jammed tight on my veranda, over 40 of them, sleeping away the remaining hours until the start of midnight Mass. At about 11 p.m., the conch shells sounded; the resin torches flickered and

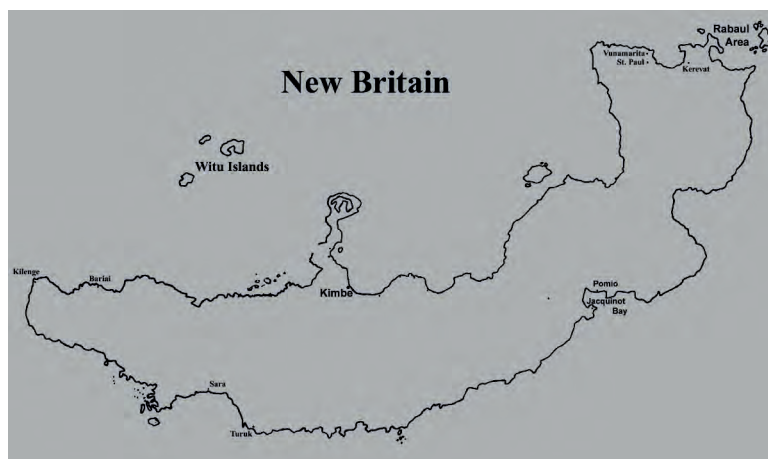
danced, the bell, sent from Rome, is tolling; the red lanterns are glowing; in church the candles are being lit and the people from the neighbouring villages are starting to arrive. The small church cannot hold all of them. The altar is ablaze; it is crowded with altar boys. The record player is playing, *Silent Night, Holy Night*, and soon everyone joins in their own language. A festive sermon, Holy Communion, happy Christmas carols: this holy night must leave a lasting impression on the people! ³⁴



Church at Valoka

After the celebration things slowly settle down again and everyone stretches out where he can find space. In the morning the small church overflows again with people wishing to attend the last Mass. In the beginning I was able to

distribute small presents amongst the school children on Christmas Day. [Fr Franke remembered the festive season back home in Germany when presents are given. The people of New Britain would find this an alien concept, but they enjoyed it when *one-year*, local Valoka children received a gift of dolls from Fr Franke. ³⁵



³⁴ Interviews M. Mennis

³⁵ *Tubuan and tabernacle: 2007: 67*

Second World War

1942 The Missionaries in Vunapope

“In the 1940s there were rumours of an advance by Japanese across the Pacific and New Guinea again became one of the first areas of operation. At 10.30 on 4 January 1942, sixteen bombers made a high-level attack over Lakuna airfield, damaging one end of the runway killing 15 New Guineans but no Australians so in New Britain these New Guineans were the first casualties.”³⁶

Early on the morning of the 23 January 1942, the missionaries at Vunapope woke to find the sea in front of them full of warships exchanging light signals. Sometime before, Bishop Scharmach had previously asked each of the missionaries if they wanted to be evacuated to Australia. All decided to remain with their people.

However, they sometimes doubted if it was the right decision as they were unable to do mission work at this time. Through the war they had to contend with continual bombing from the allied planes; near starvation on a meagre diet, and tropical diseases which they contracted in the tough conditions. Many days were spent huddled in long tunnels dug to protect themselves from the bombing raids. They faced it all with a sense of resignation to the will of the Lord. Fortunately, many survived. Food was brought by the local people: fresh vegetables and coconuts once the drought had broken.

Some of the Brothers were allowed to keep the gardens going. Bishop Scharmach was a tower of strength. Those around him felt secure and consoled because their chief led all the conversations with the Japanese, saying he was a representative of the Vatican Embassy. People had absolute trust in him. Colonel Satoru Kikuchi asked him about the future of the mission. Bishop Scharmach replied: Some question that, but you will have my answer. Colonel, here you see us missionaries sat the lowest stage of misery; frightened, pale and haggard; debilitated by malaria to remove us to a place of safety. We feel safe enough here and we refuse to be removed from here except on our own conditions — when hostilities will cease, and our freedom will be restored. Then, you will see these emaciated bodies regain strength and health by decent food and medical attention. You will see them setting out to work and rebuild all these destroyed mission stations and out of the ashes will rise something stronger and bigger than there was ever before. Colonel, it takes more than Japanese forces and American bombers to destroy our faith and our spirit.³⁷



During this Pacific war, Rabaul became Japan's main base of military and naval activity in the South Pacific. It is estimated that more than 90,000 Japanese soldiers encamped there. The offensives in Papua and New Guinea of 1943–44 were the single largest series of connected operations ever mounted by the Australian armed forces. Major battles included the Battle of Kokoda Trail, Battle of Buna-Gona and Battle of Milne Bay. Around the country brave Coast-watchers kept a vigil on the movement of the Japanese forces and reported them by radio contact. Through this information important victories were made.

The Tolai people stayed in their villages afraid of the future. They were forced to help the Japanese soldiers. They had to climb the coconuts, grow food and catch fish. Finding the

³⁶ *Threlfall 2012: 297*)

³⁷ *Scharmach, 1960: 167*

villagers reluctant to accept payment in *Kumpio*, the Japanese occupation money was called; so the Japanese turned to direct barter and traded rice, cigarettes or tinned food for garden produce or wages.³⁸

Kenneth Burridge interviewed a man on Manam Island who said:

You see, we do not understand. We are just in the middle. First the Germans came, and the Australians pushed them out. Then the Japanese pushed out the Australians. Later, the Australians and the Americans forced the Japanese to go. It is beyond us. We can do nothing. When a kiap tells us to carry his baggage, we have to do it. When a German told us to carry his baggage, we had to do it. If we did not we might be killed. All right, there it is. Take it or leave it. *Nogat tok*, I didn't say anything, that's just how it is. That's life.³⁹

After the Japanese landings, and realizing that resistance was futile, the Australian commander, Lieutenant Colonel J.J. Scanlan, ordered his troops to withdraw with the statement, "every man for himself". Hopelessly outnumbered they had surrendered the town to the Japanese after less than one day. The Japanese captured many of the Australian troops as they retreated to West New Britain. Some were executed at Tol Plantation. Left behind were many European civilians, six army nurses and some wounded soldiers in and around Rabaul who were imprisoned. Additionally, 350 missionaries, priests and nuns were interned in Vunapope.

Some Matupit people were ordered by the Kempitai to live at Malaguna, on the other side of the harbour. Among these were Paulina Ia Dok and Stephen To Paivu, the catechist, and their sons Alois, Michael, Louis and To Keta. Before they left Matupit, To Paivu gathered all the Church missals and registers, put them in a wooden box and buried them in the cemetery. As a result, the Church Register, opened in 1896, survived the war and its battered, yellowing pages bear witness to the fact. To Paivu's son, To Keta, buried the Monstrance in the village, but forgot to tell anyone where it was buried!



Ia Dok of Matupit Island remembered the first missionaries

Paulina Ia Dok 1962 on Matupit Island

To Paivu and his family lived at Malaguna for the rest of the war. During the bombing they hid in a tunnel with two entrances, one entrance for them and the other for the Malaguna people. As the bombers did not work at night and it was stifling hot in the tunnel, they usually slept outside. During the day, they only ran into the tunnels if they heard the sirens going. The rest of the time they would be busy working in small gardens nearby or building little houses which they camouflaged with banana plants.

Each Sunday, Stephen To Paivu continued his visits to his people on Mount Kombiu. Before dawn, he would take his fishing gear down to his canoe and paddle off shore. He would throw his line in the water and pretend to be fishing. Gradually he would move across the Bay stopping to fish if any canoe approached. He paddled around Matupit Island now a flattened mess, and on to a secret landing place. He could no longer land at the hot springs as the Japanese

³⁸Threlfall p 332

³⁹Burridge, 1960: 12

used these to cook their rice. He would quickly clamber up to the shelter of the trees and make his way to the tunnels where he hid. (*Interview M. Mennis 1965*).

Usually the tunnels were nearly empty when he arrived because, even on Sundays, the people were forced to work hard for the Japanese. They couldn't all congregate at once for the Church Services so a few of them at a time would stop working and go off to the tunnel for a brief service and return to work before they were missed. Others would then take their place in the tunnel where Stephen would repeat the service. In this way Sunday services continued - babies were baptised and marriages celebrated. All at a time when the Japanese thought they had stamped out all practice of religion. On Monday morning, To Paivu would paddle back to Malaguna. The people were always careful to cover his tracks and the Japanese never learnt of his frequent visits to Kombiu. They thought he was a catechist who had given up his religion and was now spending his Sundays fishing! (*Interview M. Mennis*)

Before the war, the F.M.I. Sisters lived and worked alongside the Sacred Heart Missionaries and the (OLSH) Sisters. The FMI order was founded by Bishop Couppé to enable local sisters to follow their vocations. When Japan invaded Rabaul in 1942, Vunapope became a place of refuge for the Australian and European population. All catholic missionaries were held captive at Vunapope, except for the F.M.I. Sisters. They went to villages and used shell money to buy food. When the missionaries were moved into the Ramale camp, the Sisters moved to an area outside the perimeter and were occasionally able to attend Mass if it was celebrated in the open. Usually however it was celebrated in the tunnels. (*Interview M. Mennis*)

They wrote a letter to the Bishop saying they wanted to receive Communion at Christmas and they asked the bishop to help them. Bishop Scharmach asked the Japanese to allow the Sisters into the compound for Mass. This was out of the question but they agreed to allow him to give them medical attention.



*Bishop Scharmach and Sisters during the war.*⁴⁰

Bishop Scharmach said to the Japanese Colonel:

“You will see them [the missionaries] setting out to work and rebuild all these destroyed

mission stations and out of the ashes will rise something stronger and bigger than there was ever before. Colonel, it takes more than Japanese forces and American bombers to destroy our faith and our spirit”⁴¹

Outside the Vunapope Compound was a group of FMI Sisters, whose Order was founded by Bishop Couppé to enable local sisters to follow their vocations. The Sisters went to villages and used shell money to buy food. They lived at their Takabur Convent and soon eleven Sisters arrived from Tapo to join them, but Japanese soldiers soon invaded their church and convent. The church with its tabernacle was taken over by “a den of thieves”. When the missionaries were moved into the Ramale camp, the Sisters moved to an area outside the perimeter and were occasionally able to attend Mass if it was celebrated in the open. Usually, however it was

⁴⁰ Bishop Scharmach, 1960

⁴¹Scharmach, 1960: 167)

celebrated in the tunnels. They wrote a letter to the Bishop saying they wanted to receive Communion at Christmas and they asked the bishop to help them. Bishop Scharmach asked the Japanese to allow the Sisters into the compound for Mass. This was out of the question but they agreed to allow him to go out to the fence and give them Communion.

Fr Franke and the War

When the Japanese landed at Rabaul, the Australian troops, heavily outnumbered, were no longer under orders to continue fighting and were told to get out as best they could. Escaping the scene, they made their way overland, climbing steep rugged mountains and exposed to the heavy rains as they sheltered under vine clad jungle trees. The paths were slippery but they clambered up and down on their way to West New Britain and then hopefully to escape from New Britain to Australia. They were still hoping to engage in further campaigns but right now the position in New Britain was hopeless. For weeks they trekked across the forbidding jungle. All along the coast of West New Britain there were mission stations of the Sacred Heart Mission. On the north coast Fr Franke, among other missionaries, cared them for them. On the south coast of New Britain, it was Fr Culhane and Fr Harris who gave the most help. Fr Harris was at the Malmal mission, overlooking Jacquinot Bay, with a clear view of the open sea. He had set up his station with chickens, pigs and a vegetable garden so that he would be as self-sufficient as possible. (*Interview with author*)

He was happy in the work: keeping in touch with the outstations; helping the children at the school; marrying couples; baptising babies; and attending to the sick and the dying. When the retreating Australian soldiers travelling along the south coast came to his mission, they were ragged and weary from days in the jungle. Fr Harris fed them from his gardens and his mission supplies. When they had recuperated enough he even handed over his small mission boat so they could escape to Port Moresby and then Australia. Fr Harris helped many Australians evacuate from his place. In the end a large ship arrived to evacuate them.

Again and again they said to Fr Harris, "Come on, come on! You will be safe with us. If you stay you will be killed by the Japanese". He had only one answer, "If I deserted the people when they were in trouble how would I ever return to preach Christianity to them"? He was killed by the Japanese as was his friend Fr Culhane who was four hours walk away at Uvol Mission. Fr Culhane had once given a lecture to young seminarians in Ireland. At that time he told them New Guinea would be safe from any World War, but he was not to know of the designs of the Japanese Imperial system.

Fr Franke remembered what happened next:

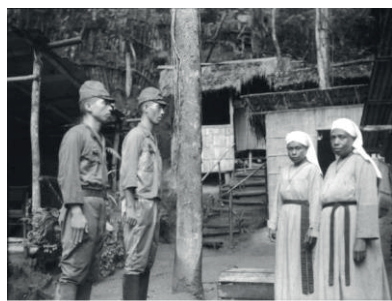
About a month after Blue Harris and his party had left, the Japanese arrived in a barge, to put up a supply depot in Talasea. I went down to the wharf and presented myself as a Catholic missionary to the officer in charge! It happened that there was an interpreter on board, a doctor whose German was worse than my English. Anyway he explained to the Officer in charge that I was a missionary and would not cause any harm. The Officer in charge was an educated man too. He had been a professor before the war so he was happy to let me stay on the station. We did not feel safe any more in the big Church because of all the strafing so I held services in the middle of the village. About eight hundred people would gather from the surrounding villages. We kept the schools going too for the first few months with the help of local teachers and catechists. There were about twenty small schools in different villages.

Then about May 1943, this all changed. For one and a half years, Fr Franke had been on his own living under terrific tension, expecting to be shot any day. If the Japanese secret police, the Kempitai, held the court martial and interviewed the village people about what he had done, they would not be as understanding as the Japanese doctor had been.

Furthermore, if the Japanese had heard him telling the local people in their vernacular that the Americans would win the war he would have been killed on the spot Bishop Leo Scharmach, who had been appointed Bishop just before the war, had had experience in the First World War. He foresaw that Vunapope might be cut off from certain things and so he prepared for that eventuality: he stored things up; cultivated crops on the land like stick tobacco, which he was keen on and he could make soap from coconut oil. He was terrific in this respect. During the war he kept a cool head when the bombing started in Vunapope and he had a special way of dealing with the Japanese. He played the strong man as “Deputy of the Vatican” and saved the missionaries from being deported to Japan. Bishop Scharmach was fearless.

The supplies of rice lasted a long time. One or two of the brothers were still left in the nearby plantation and they were allowed to send food by cart so they had coconuts, *kaukau*, *taro* and bananas and no one starved to death. Many got malaria and at first they had no quinine to fight it. In the end Colonel Satoru Kikuchi gave the Bishop a personal gift of a box of quinine,

One morning in June 1944 every one trudged to the Ramale Camp located in a deep valley where nobody had ever lived before. “Descend!” The order was given at the butt of the



was declared.

Japanese rifles. Old and young climbed down into the ravine, which was dark and cool but damp and unhealthy. The one thing that saved them during this time was the underground water which they accessed through a well. They were not able to use the beautiful creek which ran into the valley because it was for the Japanese further down-stream. (*Interview M. Mennis*)

FMI Sisters confront two Japanese prisoners of war after peace

Fr Franke:

Ramale was well chosen really, and we were never bombed in that place. From the sky no one could see there was anyone living there. But we had other problems: starvation was coming very near; it was really tough going sometimes. In the morning, we had hot water instead of tea and coffee with maybe two bananas, maybe a cob of corn. We started straight away to make a garden, and, under guard, we went out of the camp each day to the gardens. When peace was declared, the allies moved into Rabaul rounding up thousands of Japanese soldiers. They found that the Japanese had dug many large tunnels including a hospital, bunkers and the Japanese Headquarters. In total 70 km was dug for the navy and 80km for the army. One former Japanese officer, Captain Enari, was interviewed in the 1960s when he returned to retrieve the bones of dead Japanese soldiers. He said that during the war he read books to overcome the boredom in the tunnels but many ordinary soldiers could not read and they had little to do, crouching there hiding from the bombers (*Interview M. Mennis*)



The missionary sisters show the entrance to one of the Tunnels where they survived the war.

In 1945 the people and children of Ramale were liberated by Australian Soldiers of the 11th Division aided by the Red Cross.



The war ended in 1945 and the Japanese surrendered. General Adachi was taken to Rabaul to stand trial and charged with the responsibility for crimes done during the war in Rabaul. But before the trial date he committed suicide (Trelfall: 371). After the war, many Japanese war criminals were brought to trial, including those who had killed the Australian soldiers at Tol Plantation.

The Cathedral at Vunapope was destroyed

Colonel Satoru Kikuchi, who had been in charge of the missionaries, was facing the death sentence. When Bishop Scharmach heard from the colonel's defence team, he provided a list of facts in his favour. Apart from the fact that he was polite and gave them a fair deal, the Colonel did not commit any atrocities against the missionaries and was considerate about their transfer to Ramale prison camp. He provided them with medicine including quinine. He was lucky to have this statement from Bishop Scharmach. Many were not so lucky.⁴²



Bishop Scharmach and Fr Franke on a visit home after the war.

Fr Franke said: After a few days in Rome, we went by train through Italy and the Alps, my first view of these majestic mountains. Then we travelled through Austria, Tyrol and Bavaria, where we visited our many Monasteries, and at last we arrived at our Mother House in Hilstrup where I had started my High School studies. Everywhere we were welcomed as returning missionaries after so many years

*Village near Malmal in
West New Britain.
Fr Franke was
stationed near here.*



⁴² Scharmach *This Crowd Beats us all*

After the war

War damages payments were made to villages after the war. Patrol officers visited villages that had been affected and assessed the claims and damages. Apparently these claims were still being registered for villages on the Gazelle Peninsula and Duke of York Islands five or six years after the war. Claims were made for houses, boats, trucks, copra driers and shell money. On Matupit Island the Japanese had broken down the *tabu* houses and stolen the money to use to trade for food from the villagers according to Jacob Simet. After the war the Matupit Islanders wanted compensation. Often the Chinese stores benefited best as the villagers spent their damages money on food, tools and materials at these stores. It took many years for the people to re-build their villages and re-connect with their communities.

Bishop Scharmach was the third Bishop

The Sisters started new primary schools while Bishop Scharmach started a teachers' training college. Previously the catechists would do all the primary school teaching but their training was not sufficient. Bishop Scharmach then invited the Christian Brothers to assist in the field of education. They arrived in 1950 and began to teach at St. Mary's High School Vuvu. Teacher training for the men began in 1958 at St. Paul's Training College. It began in Vuvu and in 1972 transferred to Ruhakana. Teacher Training for the women was started by the OLSH Sisters at Vunapope in 1955 then later was transferred to a newly built college at Kabaleo in 1965.

For the training of local priests, the Bishops of Papua New Guinea started a Minor Seminary, St. Peter Chanel College, Ulapia, Vunapope in 1955. Some young men decided to become Religious and joined the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, so the MSC novitiate was opened at Vunapau in 1964. The diocese of Rabaul was divided in the year 1957. New Ireland and Manus became a diocese of its own under Bishop Alfred Stemper MSC.

John Hoehne MSC became the Fourth bishop of Rabaul Then Archbishop of Rabaul 1963 – 1978



In 1963, John Hoehne MSC became Bishop of Rabaul. German by birth he had the task of re-building churches, convents and presbyteries all around the province.

Most work had been done on the coast so attention was focused on the people living inland of New Britain. Concerns were on building up the local church, encouraging the role of the laity, and pastoral work. Parish Pastoral Council was introduced, and ecclesial movement was encouraged e.g. Legion of Mary. Rabaul was made an Archdiocese on November 15, 1966. Bishop John Hoehne became the first Archbishop

of Rabaul.⁴³

Hoehne built his Bishop's Palace on Namanula Hill within the town of Rabaul and drove around in a large car donated by his brother. He had bad legs and needed the bigger car. He had cancer of one leg and it was partly amputated. He encouraged the younger local priests

⁴³ Więcej: <https://www.voiceoflorot.com/news/archdiocese-of-rabaul-faith-history/>

including Fr Benedict to Varpin and told him “Benedict keep the flag flying for the church and for New Britain”.

Archbishop John Hoehne lay dying of cancer. Father Benedict to Varpin visited him often. He regarded Hoehne as his spiritual father who sponsored him at the seminary. Hoehne was only 68 years old but had suffered cancer in the leg for a long time and had even lost part of his leg to it. He had been Archbishop of Rabaul since 1966 and during this time he had encouraged the local people to take a stronger position in the church. He started the parish councils and encouraged the Church people to have many meetings. ⁴⁴

Archbishop Albert-Leo Bundervoet, M.S.C.1980 – 1989

Archbishop Albert-Leo Bundervoet, M.S.C was born in 1917 in Belgium and ordained in 1942 as a member of the Sacred Heart Order. MSC

After the death of John Hoehne in 1979, people were wondering who would be the next Archbishop of Rabaul. Then Bishop Benedict of Bernina found out in a strange way that it was Archbishop Albert Bundervoet a Belgian, consecrated in Rome. He had been appointed from Rome and given a three-month visa to enter PNG. Bishop Benedict happened to be visiting an office in Port Moresby and heard someone having trouble over a visa further along the corridor. Here is his story of events.

Bishop Benedict:

I met Bishop Albert at Waigani in Port Moresby in a round about way when he first arrived. I was in Waigani to see the Commissioner about putting in a protest over the opening of a club. I was sitting there waiting for him when I saw some people having trouble over a visa. They asked for my help. I found out that the person without the proper visa was Bishop Albert Bundervoet, the new Archbishop of Rabaul! He had arrived on a three-month visa and when they asked him how long he would be staying in Papua New Guinea, he answered, “Forever” which had not gone down too well with the Immigration Officer. There was an ex-seminarian in the Waigani office so I spoke *pidgin* to him and asked him if he remembered me. “Yes! You are Bishop of Bereina”

“Well let me tell you. This man here does not just need a three-month visa. He has come here for life as the new Archbishop of Rabaul!”

“OK, Bishop” he said to me. “We’ll fix it for him.”

They stamped all the right forms and Bishop Albert was really amazed, as they had been struggling for a few days to get the visa fixed. The people in Rome were wrong because they put him on a three-month visa only. Bishop Albert was appointed to Rabaul on 6 March 1980 and consecrated 11 May the same year. He lived in the palace on Namanula Hill and used the big Mercedes that had formerly belonged to John Hoehne. Bishop Albert died 29 March 1989 just after he had been to the Baining for the anniversary of the martyrdom of the missionaries there.

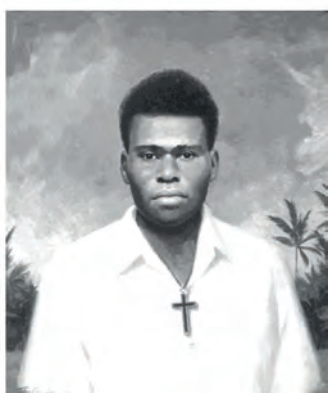
⁴⁴ See *Tubuan and Tabernacle* by the author

Blessed Peter To Rot, Martyr of the war

No history of the New Britain Mission is complete without mentioning the story of Peter To Rot, the Martyr of the war. Of course there were many martyrs both Catholic and Protestant at this time. Many people died for their faith like Fr Harris MSC and Fr Culhane MSC in West New Britain and the many who died in the bombing at Vunapope and the Catholic and Lutherans missionaries killed on the Dorish Maru near Madang. Here we have the story of Peter To Rot who stood up to the Japanese and was ready to die for his beliefs. The Tolai people are very proud of Peter To Rot who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1995. It shows how deeply the Faith was understood. Many other catechists like Stephen To Paivu ignored the Japanese decrees, but he survived. Archbishop To Paivu was named after him.

In 1996, Archbishop Benedict To Varpin said:

“The church is strong now and there has been an awakening of the faith since Peter To Rot was beatified. The Catholics are strong and there are many local nuns and priests and Christian Brothers. The Pope saw Peter To Rot as an example for young people who must be taught to live truly Christian lives: of grace and holiness in their relationship with God, and of truth and love in all human relationships. This was clearly shown by the figure of Blessed Peter To Rot who gave up his life to preserve the sanctity of marriage. Also young people should be taught to pray in a way that enables them to place their hope in God within their particular Peter was born in 1912 in Rakunai village. He was the third of six children of Angelo To Puia, a Tolai *lualua*, and his wife Maria Ia Tumul, both of



whom had been received into the Catholic Church in 1898 by the early missionaries of Vunapope. To Puia was a leader and highly respected in the Tolai tribe. He was initiated into the *Tubuan* Society and learnt something of the magic associated with the *Iniet* Society long before the missionaries came to the village. When To Puia was converted, he turned his back on these traditional beliefs and brought his children up to be devout Catholics. His son, Peter, was annoyed when some of the Christians in his village brought *Iniet* magic material to the village. He persuaded them to get rid of it.”⁴⁵ (*Interview Mary Mennis*)

Peter To Rot had the usual childhood in the village: playing marbles in the hard ground between the houses; climbing coconuts to get the fresh *kulaus* to drink; accompanying his parents to the garden to weed and harvest and later taking the goods to market where shell money, *tabu*, was the going currency. Being from an inland village, his family bought fish, freshly caught in the bamboo fish traps by the coastal people. These could be purchased at the market with a length of shell money equal to the length of the fish.

Peter trained as a catechist and helped the parish priest with church duties. When Fr Laufer had been arrested by the Japanese, he asked Peter to look after the parishioners in Rakunai. Over the following years, he kept the people united in the faith: he instructed the children, baptised the babies; officiated at weddings and kept the parish register up to date. When the

⁴⁵ *Mennis Tubuan and Tabernacle*

Japanese banned the Catholic religion, Peter refused to stop his work. For his views, he was taken to court several times.

During his first trial, To Rot was defended by To Keta, Paulina Ia Dok and Stephen To Paivu's son. Because he had learnt some basic Japanese, To Keta was the chief interpreter and man-in-the middle in transactions between the Japanese and the Tolais. He instructed his people what to say and often succeeded in having them released or receiving only a light sentence. At this stage, the edict banning all religious services had not been made and To Rot was allowed to go back to his place. [To Rot's people all agreed To Keta did a lot of good work helping To Rot and many others in Court.] Later To Rot was to return to Court but he was not so fortunate that time.

Although he exercised prudence, Peter refused to cease doing what he regarded as his duty. He built an underground shelter on his property at Taogo and continued to bring people there for prayer and the Sacraments. They met each Sunday and said the Mass prayers. To Rot continued



to witness marriages, taught the children and baptised the babies. To ensure all their orders were enforced, the Japanese employed local people as police boys. Meshida, the Japanese officer in charge of Vunaiaara, had a platoon of local men under him.

The author inside Peter To Rot's tunnel 2019

Under orders from the Kempitai to find evidence against Peter, Meshida organised his police boys to spy on them. When To Rot criticised a police boy for taking a second wife, he reported Peter for officiating at the marriage of two Catholic couples. Arrested in April or May 1945, Peter To Rot was sentenced to two months detention. At first, his two brothers were imprisoned with him. His sister, Ia Varpilak, remembered visiting them and sitting next to a fire where they had been cooking. When she began to cry, To Rot told her he was in jail for a good cause. "My two brothers are here for owning Australian money and will soon be out of here. I, on the other hand, am here for a matter of religion which is a much more serious crime." Many of the villagers tried to give presents of eggs and food to Meshida to buy To Rot's freedom but to no avail.

When the *luluai*, Tata, visited him, he told Peter they should try again for his release. Peter answered "Forget it. I have already been sentenced to death". He was prepared to take responsibility for the religious ceremonies held in the cave on his property. "Tell the Japanese it was me who held the prayer services." He wanted to protect anyone else from being prosecuted. His wife, Ia Paula, brought him food and clothes. Like St Thomas More's wife, Ia Paula tried to persuade her husband to bend to the authorities so that his life would be spared, but like St Thomas More he refused. "It is my task to die for my people, for the Lord's name, for the Father and for the Holy Spirit." It was a sentiment that has reverberated down the centuries – the voice of many martyrs before their death. He was told a doctor was coming to give him an injection.

As he was not ill, he knew this would be their manner of killing him. Looking around at the palm trees and the beautiful sky and listening to the birds, he calmly said his last prayers. Then he shaved and dressed carefully in this white laplap and shirt and put his catechist's cross

around his neck. Next he tidied his house and holding his Rosary waited. Two Japanese soldiers accompanied the doctor who gave To Rot a lethal injection. The next morning, the family were told Peter had been sick and had died. The people knew that this was a lie because To Rot had not been ill and a white frothy substance coming from his ears and his nose smelt like poison. The people of Rakunai buried him in the mission cemetery, near the church.⁴⁶ It was about this time that the missionaries in the prison camps were told that outside the camp their religion was dead. This was far from the truth and To Rot's people continued to meet for prayers and were justly proud of their martyr.

After the war, moves were made by the Catholic Hierarchy in Rabaul to have Peter To Rot declared a saint and martyr. Fr Dempsey MSC spent many years of his retirement in Rome and in Rabaul undertaking research promoting To Rot's cause. His research proved valuable and on 2 April 1993 in Rome, in the presence of Pope John Paul II, a decree was promulgated by Archbishop Hesse of Rabaul regarding the martyrdom of Peter To Rot, killed *in odium fidei*. Each year since his death 50 years ago, the people have venerated To Rot's grave and now their belief in his sainthood has been recognised by the church.

In 1995, Pope John Paul came to Port Moresby for the beatification ceremony. The celebrations were to have taken place in Rabaul but once again the volcanoes had erupted with fire and brimstone as in earlier times. From the point of safety and organisation, the ceremony was transferred to the Nation's Capital. Unlike many beatifications, which occur hundreds of years after the death of the person, this ceremony was attended by To Rot's daughter and his nephews and nieces.

Archbishop Rochus, great-nephew of blessed Peter To Rot wrote:

"The success of missionary work would have been impossible without the generous assistance and labour of the religious brothers and sisters, together with that of the indigenous lay Christian leaders. The important role of the laity in the development of the PNG Church needs to be clearly acknowledged. Peter To Rot is a symbol of their fidelity and hard work in deepening the faith life in their people and proclaiming the Gospel. Więcej:⁴⁷

On 17 January 1995, the people mixed their own cultural celebrations with Catholic ritual. Hundreds of people in feathered headdress, tattooed faces and swirling skirts danced their way along the road beside the Pope in his Popemobile. Just like Australia, Port Moresby had been experiencing a long drought before the beatification. When the Pope arrived, the skies opened and down came the rain.

Some might view this as a jinx on the ceremony, and there were a few rain dancers who would like to take the credit; but the people themselves said the rain was a miracle from Peter To Rot who continues to look after their needs. He is the patron saint of happy marriages. Port Moresby was overwhelmed by the celebration of his beatification. The Mass was held at the Sir Hubert Murray Stadium, which was full of chanting praying people. Tolai warriors carrying ceremonial weapons entered first followed by the bones of Peter To Rot, which were placed near the altar, then his daughter, 49-year-old Rufina Ia Mama, took part in the procession. Her

⁴⁶ <https://www.voiceofrot.com/news/the-catholic-church-in-papua-new-guinea/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.voiceofrot.com/news/the-catholic-church-in-papua-new-guinea/>

powdered white face showed she was mourning for her long-dead father in the Tolai tradition. Then the Pope arrived in a special shaded truck and circled the stadium where dancers of various parts of Papua New Guinea were stationed. The Pope told the crowds, "Martyrdom has always been a part of the pilgrimage of the people of God."

The Parish Church at Rakunai Peter To Rot's Parish The chapel is called after Blessed Peter To Rot



Rome 1992. Archbishop Hesse is seen presenting Pope John Paul II with a request to celebrate the Beatification of Peter To Rot

Relations between the Churches

Fr Franke, talking about the relations between the churches, noted what a difference has occurred in the years since the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries. When they first landed on Matupit in 1882, the Methodists (later the United church) had already been established for seven years. Their leader, Reverend George Brown, brought trained Fijian teachers or catechists with him. The whole of New Britain was open to them and they had the opportunity to choose the best, most populated places.

When the German colony was established, most of the staff came from Prussia and were Protestants/Lutherans. They made the decision to divide the whole Tolai area into spheres of influence. The Methodists were given the most populated areas and the Catholics the least populated ones. The German Administration insisted that these boundaries should be kept.

This of course, created terrific tension, a kind of warfare between them. Bishop Couppé went to Germany, stood up in the German Parliament and fought this unbearable system. From then on, the MSC missionaries settled down and made contact with the people everywhere. When I came at the end of 1928 there was a kind of living together but still certain tensions existed. I remember the two words marking the different religions: Catholics were called *Popies* and Methodists, *Kutkuts*, because of their special haircuts, probably following the haircut of the Fijian teachers.

Later, when I got my first appointment at Cape Hoskins, I found only a small settlement of Methodists. I do not remember any unpleasant happenings; only once when the Methodists attempted to establish themselves in an entirely Catholic village near our main station, Valoka

and I recall how worried and unhappy I, and all the people, were. However, it was soon settled and the attempt was given up. Thanks be to God.

One evening when I was invited by a Methodist Minister to give a talk in their church, I told them: "It was the most touching moment in Pope John XXIII's life and in the history of our church, when he, the Pope, humbly and sincerely confessed before the whole world that we Catholics had failed and sinned through pride and arrogance, non-understanding and lack of charity in our relations with our separated brethren."

It seemed as if the people in the pews before me had never heard this and I am sure it did no harm but a lot of good. (*Interview with Fr Franke. M. Mennis*).

Rise of the Mataungans - Brian Mennis surveyor of Vunapalading wrote:

One of the first disputes between the Mataungans and the Government forces was at Vunapalading in July/August 1970. This became well known to the Australian public because of political conflicts that were occurring around Rabaul at that time. Our camp site became the site of a major confrontation between 800 riot police and a somewhat greater number of Tolais. I had to be there to support the reading of the legal document and support the police. The opposition were some kilometres away having speeches, etc and while they were at it, we were patiently waiting. There was a rush to get a police baton to protect ourselves. While waiting, it got hotter and hotter and we heard the sound of Greensleeves, the signature tune of Mr. Whippy, the ice-cream van coming up the road. Sure enough there was Mr. Whippy coming into our area. There was an immediate stampede to get an ice-cream. However, he was not popular as he had sold most of them to the Mataungans! Mr. Whippy made the front pages of many of the next day's Australian newspapers. In the event, there was no riot or disturbance. Maybe Mr. Whippy calmed all the tempers. (*Brian Mennis*)

Benedict To Varpin (later Archbishop) also heard about the Mataungan Association. He knew two of the leaders, John Kaputin and Oscar Tammur. The latter had been in the Ulapia Seminary with him. The multi-racial council was strong and the Tolais wanted it to consist only of Tolais and proposed radical changes. John Kaputin, Melchior Tomat and Oscar Tammur started the movement. The Mataungans wanted to get independence and to block the road near the Mobil gas station in Rabaul.

Benedict approached Monsignor To Paivu for his opinion about the group. Together they went to Nodup to bless the people who had been beaten up. Ben remembered: "We were just at Malaguna and the police stopped us. To Paivu said to me "Don't talk. I'm the only one to say anything." I was not a priest yet, but he told the police, "We are priests here. We are going to see if anyone has been hurt". The police said, "OK, you pass by" and we went down to Nodup. (Interview by author)

Fr. Franke, out at Matupit Island, lived in the thick of the trouble, as the island was the stronghold of the Mataungan Association. He was very distressed by it particularly when he found some of his workers were involved. Sometimes, the adherents got violent and threatened to close the airstrip; coconut trees were cut and fences pulled across the runway. All he could do was keep quiet and continue his work. Meanwhile in the town itself, it was difficult for the residents. A sequel to these problems in 1971 was the murder of Jack Emmanuel, a highly respected District Commissioner. (Interview by the author).

Visit of Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh in 1974.



The Queen, accompanied by members of the Royal family visited Rabaul on Saturday 23rd January which was the second day of their tour to Papua New Guinea.

the Queen Elizabeth II, her husband Prince Philip, Princess Anne and her husband, Mark Phillips and Lord Louis Mountbatten visited Rabaul in Princess the lead up to Independence.

There was great excitement as this was the first time a reigning monarch had visited the Province. The Tolais traditional decorations of leaves, feathers and

flowers wherever the Queen went. The union Jack and the new Papua New Guinea flag flew side by side down Mango avenues. ⁴⁸

Photo of Queen and Prince Philip on tour

Rabaul Harbour and town. Queen accompanied by her husband the Duke arrived at the Queen Elizabeth Park and were seated on a dais. The local dancers entertained them and they were welcomed by an enthusiastic crowd.



Students and Nurses like to dress up in national costume on special days.



⁴⁸ Threlfall page 507

Independence 1975

On 16 September 1975, Rabaul celebrated Independence Day in great style. The evening before was a day of prayer and the lowering of the Australian flag for the last time. It was sixty years since Colonel Holmes had raised the white ensign flag at the beginning of the First World War. It was an emotional time for ex-pats as well as the Nationals of Papua New Guinea who had grown up with the Australian flag. Sailors on board the HMAS Torrens took part in the ceremony.



There were great celebrations on Independence Day 16 September 1975. That morning there were processions of floats, bands playing and choirs performing and sing-sing groups dancing at the Queen Elizabeth Park in the centre of Rabaul. Then the flag was blessed and raised amid much rejoicing. This was followed by speeches by politicians and Prime Minister Somare's speech was played over the loudspeakers. It was a day to remember. That evening in the cool of the day the Bainings fire-dancers put on a wonderful performance in the park watched by an enthusiastic crowd of spectators.⁴⁹ (*Threlfall 2016: 511*).

Rabaul town was at its best with lovely gardens and the mango, frangipani and hibiscus trees blossoming. There were many new businesses in the town and the Tolai took a growing part in business enterprises in Rabaul.

Photographs above Raising the Papua New Guinea flag in Madang (Brian Mennis)

Right Independence Day Celebrations Vunapope 2019. (Mary Mennis)



⁴⁹ (*Threlfall 2016: 511*)

Archbishop Karl Hesse MSC

Hesse was born in 1936 in the Sauerland, Germany where he also attended elementary school. In 1948 he moved to the boarding school of the Sacred Heart Missionaries in Hilstrup. In 1957

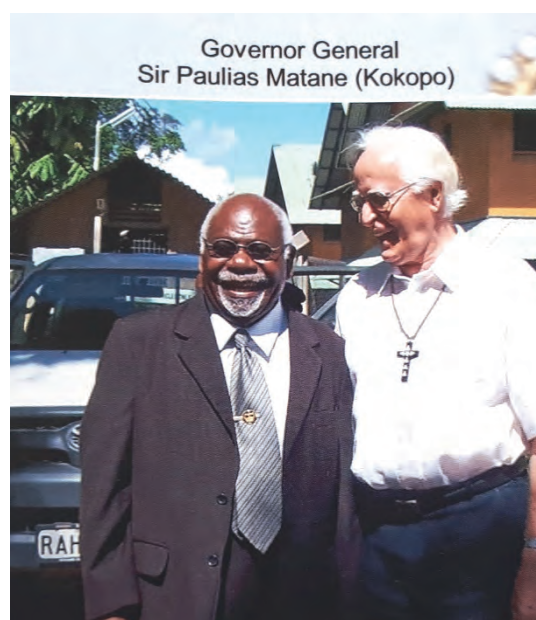


he entered the novitiate of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Vussem in the Eifel and was ordained a priest. In 1966, Hesse travelled to Papua New Guinea with three other MSC missionaries. On January 15, 1967, he took over the parish Raunsepna and in May 1974 also the parish Vunamarita in the coastal area of the Baining Mountains. On May 27, 1978 Hesse was appointed by Paul VI as Bishop in the Archdiocese of Rabaul. He was ordained bishop on August 15, 1978 in Vunapope by the Nuncio for Papua New Guinea.

At the beginning of November 1980 he became bishop of the diocese of Kavieng, consisting of the provinces of New Ireland and Manus, which

he took over on January 14, 1981. On July 7, 1990, he was appointed Archbishop of Rabaul; he took office on September 16, 1991. After he had also administered large parts of the Bougainville diocese since November 1993, he was officially appointed Apostolic Administrator of the diocese in 1995. He held this office until the appointment of his own bishop for Bougainville, Henk Kronenberg SM, in 1999.

On his 52nd birthday in 1988, on the occasion of his silver jubilee as a priest and the tenth



anniversary of his episcopal ordination, Hesse received the Federal Cross of Merit. On January 1, 2002, he was made Member of the British Empire (MBE) by Queen Elizabeth II (See also Chapter on his work in Bougainville)



MSC missionaries in front of the new presbytery

The Church since Independence by Archbishop Rochus

“Archbishop Hesse did a lot of the organising of the beatification of Peter To Rot. The process of localization continues today. With many local Church workers both lay and religious who play Church's mission. Indigenous superiors now lead a number of the international, as well as local religious orders.

Today more than 150 local priests work with expatriate missionaries in the pastoral care of their people. Of these local priests, 7 are bishops. The Church in PNG faces great challenges at the present time especially in view of the rapidly changing face of society and the many social problems that currently confront the developing nation.

“The Church, especially in such areas as education, health and human development, works closely with authorities at the National and Provincial levels. One example is the role the local church authorities played in the response to the recent volcanic eruptions in Rabaul. The Church is also deeply involved in ecumenical cooperation and is a full-time member of the Melanesian Council of Churches. In so many ways contributes in a spirit of cooperation and generosity, to the development of the material, intellectual, cultural and spiritual life of the people of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

‘In May 1984, Pope John Paul II visited PNG in tribute to the 100 years life of the Church. In his homily in Port Moresby he praised the growth of the Church and those who had contributed to this, not only the early missionaries but the increasing numbers of indigenous fellow-workers who had joined them in pastoral ministry.

“Much has happened in both Church and nation since that visit. The challenge of establishing a truly national and local Church is also the challenge connected with the struggle of the various regions of the nation to forge a sense of national identity and working together in the face of the profound social and political changes this country is currently experiencing. The Catholic Church is still a major participant in the provision of education and health care to the people, especially in the rural areas, and in the journey towards national identity and integrity.

“One very important recent development within life has been the promotion of basic Christian communities in the various dioceses through such movements as Lumko and the New Image of the Parish. These movements have given the people a lively and greater sense of their responsibility for the Church. Throughout the country various types of prayer and study groups have been formed, often at the initiative of the grassroots people themselves.

“There is a growing sense amongst the faithful of being the church, the People of God, and so simply dependent on expatriate missionaries whose numbers are steadily declining as Papua New Guineans accept more and more responsibility for the leadership and development of their Church. What was 100 years ago a mission Church is not only in the process of becoming a mature local Church, a vital part of the universal Catholic Church, but also a Church in mission.

Indigenous religious are not only serving their own Church but also starting to go out as missionaries to others”⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Więcej: <https://www.voiceofrot.com/news/the-catholic-church-in-papua-new-guinea/>

The 1994 eruption

During the eruption, ash was sent thousands of metres into the air and the subsequent rain of ash caused devastation to the Rabaul town. Houses, shops, businesses, Churches and schools were destroyed. After the eruption the capital was moved to Kokopo, about 20 kilometres away and many coastal people were re-settled in the Warangoi area and others returned home after a long absence.



At the time of the eruption on Monday, 19 September 1994, Tiolam Wawaga, felt the series of earthquakes which warned of the forthcoming eruption. He was running a fuel station in Rabaul, next to the Rabaul Hotel and rushed back to the business in his small Suzuki to retrieve papers and cash. When the eruption became serious he turned back home hastily. Here he found his family already in his truck ready to flee. They drove towards Kokopo and later moved to the Mope Primary School near Pomio where the Catholic Church provided accommodation and food

to the many hundreds of people fleeing from the volcano. At Vunapope Archbishop Hesse found accommodation for the escapees from the eruption. He opened classrooms for them and provided food and clothing.

Francesco Panfilo, Salesians (S.D.B.) (8/ 11/ 2011 – 19/06/ 2020), previously Bishop of Alotau – Sideia (Papua New Guinea) (2001.06.25 – 2010.03.18), President of Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (2008.04 – 2011.05), Coadjutor Archbishop of Rabaul (2010.03.18 – 2011.08.11). *(See also Chapter 2 on Sideia).*

Emotional Farewell when Bishop Panfilo left office

Archbishop Francesco Panfilo, SDB, was given an emotional farewell by the people of the three deaneries of the Archdiocese of Rabaul. The celebration was held at Vunapope on 28 September 2020.

Over the past few weeks, the people have expressed their gratitude and thanks to their shepherd



Archbishop Panfilo. During his years as archbishop, he has travelled the length and breadth of the diocese, waded through fast-flowing streams, climbed steep mountains and sailed rough waters to reach his flock in the remote parts of the diocese. He was with his people to celebrate the sacraments with them, listen to their struggles and respond to their pains both spiritual and material. Over the last few weeks, he celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation in several parishes and ordained men to the priesthood.

Amidst expressions of gratitude at Vunapope were tears of appreciation for the much-loved shepherd for the past ten years. “Our thanks are not only in words, but it is expressed in our deeds and through the expression of our gifts”, were constant refrains as shell money and customary gifts of pigs and food were presented to the archbishop. Archbishop Panfilo took as his theme: *Duc in altum*– an ‘invitation to remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm and look forward to the future with confidence’ (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 1).



Right: St Francis Xavier Church in Rabaul. It survived the 1994 eruption as the steep roof shed the ash



Fr Benedict, Fr Vogt, Fr Franke in 1977 in front of the Rabaul Presbytery (M. Mennis)

Fr Franke said about Rabaul in the 1950s

At this stage, Rabaul had about 3,000 Chinese, 1,000 Europeans including English, Dutch, Germans, French as well as Americans and many Australians. In addition to these there were a few hundred Malays and Mixed Race people; and many thousands of workers from everywhere in Papua New Guinea who spoke about 30 to 40 different languages. The common language for all was Pidgin English. Fr Franke was fluent in Pidgin English, which is now known as *Tok Pisin*.



The cathedral is called the Sacred Heart Cathedral. The co-cathedral is St Francis Xavier and is in Rabaul town.

Inside the cathedral in Rabaul in 2019 (M. Mennis)

Below: A View of the new cathedral showing the shape based on a shell.



The architect of the Cathedral was Ildiko von Ketteler-Boeselager.

Archbishop Hesse was instrumental in finding the architect and oversaw every part of the building.

The Architect
Ildiko von Ketteler-Boeselager is standing
in front of the consecrated Cathedral.

Education and Nursing

OLSH Vunapope is a school for girls in Rabaul. Sixty percent of the students are boarders. The school population is grade 8 to 12 and numbers. The school motto is May Christ Reign.

Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) at the Rabaul Convent in 1977. (Photo M. Mennis)



Below: Students at the Teachers College Vunapope Ulapia. 2019. (M. Mennis)



Left: School children in 2019



Photos M. Mennis

These lovely MSC Sisters live at their Vunapope convent and work in the Vunapope Hosptial, at the catechist school and various others work in the Diocese.

(Photo M. Mennis 2019)



National Youth Convention (NYC) 2018

Archbishop Francesco Panfilo



The participants of the National Youth Convention (NYC) 2018 went on a pilgrimage to Rakunai, the home of Blessed Peter To Rot on Monday, 10th December 2018. The pilgrimage saw 260 plus young men and ladies visit Bl. Peter Torot's (1912-1945) birthplace, his burial site and the basilica that is dedicated to him. Journeying with the young people were John Cardinal Ribat MSC, Archbishop of Port Moresby; Bp Rochus Tatamai MSC, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands; Bp Rolando Santos CM, Bishop of Alotau and Bp Pedro Baquero SDB, Bishop of Kerema.



Pope appoints new Archbishop for Rabaul, Papua New Guinea

19 June 2020, Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Archbishop Francesco Panfilo S.D.B. and appoints Bishop Rochus Josef Tatamai as the new Archbishop of Rabaul in Papua New Guinea. Pope Francis on Friday appointed Bishop Rochus Josef Tatamai, M.S.C. as the new Archbishop of Rabaul, Papua New Guinea. Bishop Tatamai has been serving as the Bishop of Kavieng since 2018. He succeeds Archbishop Francesco Panfilo S.D.B., whose resignation from the pastoral care of the Archdiocese was accepted by the Pope.

Date	Age	Event	Title
24 Sep 1962	55.75	Born	
2 Feb 1983	20.3	Professed	Member of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
2 Feb 1989	26.3	Solemn Vows	Member of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
26 Nov 1989	27.1	Ordained Priest	Priest of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
8 Jul 2005	42.7	Appointed	Auxiliary Bishop of Kerema, Papua New Guinea
8 Jul 2005	42.7	Appointed	Titular Bishop of Accia
29 Sep 2005	43.0	Ordained Bishop	Titular Bishop of Accia
29 Nov 2007	45.1	Appointed	Bishop of Bereina, Papua New Guinea
22 Jun 2018	55.7	Appointed	Bishop of Kavieng, Papua New Guinea



Bishop Tatamai, M.S.C. was born on 24 September 1962 in Rabaul and was ordained a priest on 26 November 1989. He attended the Minor Seminary of Ulapia (1978 – 1981) before entering the Novitiate of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Vunapau. He made his first profession on 2 February 1983. He studied philosophy and theology in Bomana. On 2 February 1989, he made perpetual vows and was ordained a priest in November, the same year. He was director of Vocations of the M.S.C. (1990-1997); Provincial Secretary (1992-1995) and Assistant to the Post-Novitiate Director (1995-1996). Bishop Tatamai has been Chaplain at the Sacred Heart Basilica in Issoudun, France since 2003. On 8 July 2005, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him as Auxiliary Bishop of Kerema. Two years later, he was appointed Bishop of Bereina. Pope Francis subsequently appointed him as the Bishop of Kavieng, Papua New Guinea on 22 June 2018. *(from the web)*

Rochus Tatamai MSC, Installation, Rabaul – report, homily The ceremony of Installation of the 8th Archbishop of Rabaul, Abp Rochus Josef Tatamai MSC, was a great



gathering of well over hundreds of priests, nuns, the Apostolic Nuncio, Sir John Cardinal Ribat, 15 archbishops and bishops, as well as many, many parishioners. The date was set for 29th of September 2020 the Patron Saint of PNG, Archangel Michael. More importantly, it was also the date when, 138 years ago, the first three MSC missionaries arrived on Matupit Island. The

celebration featured a glorious liturgy, angelic singing, inspiring speeches and testimonies expressing appreciation for the work of the missionaries. Many praises were spoken about the work of the outgoing Abp. Francesco Panfilo SDB and we thanked him deeply for his work among us. Pope Francis and the Nuncio were thanked and blessed for appointing a true son of this land to the new role of Archbishop of Rabaul.

The Installation had as its theme: “God Wantaim Yumi”. Archbishop Rochus Tatamai was the main celebrant. Concelebrating with him were 14 bishops. Amongst them were the Apostolic Nuncio to PNGSI, Archbishop Kurian Mathew Vayalunkal; Sir John Cardinal Ribat MSC; Archbishop Emeritus, Francesco Panfilo SDB; and a large number of priests. Also present were religious, seminarians, family and friends and the people of the Archdiocese of Rabaul and the other dioceses. Abp Tatamai served the Diocese of Bereina for eleven years since 2007, the diocese of Kavieng for two years since 2018, before his appointment as the Archbishop of Rabaul. He is a direct descendant of Blessed Peter To Rot. In his homily Abp Rochus gave thanks to God for the years *and* experience as Bishop of the dioceses of Bereina and Kavieng. He compared his return to Rabaul similar to that of Jesus’ return to Nazareth. “Jesus returned to Nazareth and was judged by the people for what he did. There will be those who will judge and question my decisions, but all I ask for is your cooperation and patience as you allow me to lead as your new Shepherd,” he said.

Apostolic Vicars of Rabaul

1. Louis Couppé, M.S.C. was born in 1850 and ordained in 1881 Appointed Vicar Apostolic of New Pomerania, Papua New Guinea 28 Dec 1889.
2. Gerard Vesters (Gerardo Vesters), M.S.C. (1923.02.16 – 1938), 30); previously Prefect Apostolic of Celebes (Indonesia)
3. Leo Isidore Scharmach, M.S.C. (1939.06.13 – 1963), Titular Bishop of Mostene (1939.06.13 – 1964.11.26)
4. Johannes Höhne, M.S.C. (1963.03.01 – 1966.11.15 *see below*), Titular Bishop of Urima (1963.03.01 – 1966.11.15)

Metropolitan Archbishops of Rabaul

1. Johannes Höhne, M.S.C. (1966.11.15 – death 1978.05.27)
2. Albert-Leo Bundervoet, M.S.C. (1980.03.06 – 1989.03.29)
3. Karl Hesse, M.S.C. (1990.07.07 – 2011.08.11), also President of Bishops’ Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (1994 – 1996), Apostolic Administrator *sede plena* of Bougainville (Papua New Guinea) (1995 – 1996.09.12), again Apostolic Administrator of Bougainville (1996.09.12 – 1999.04.19).
4. Francesco Panfilo, Salesians (S.D.B.) (2011.08.11 – 2020.06.19), previously Bishop of Alotau–Sideia (Papua New Guinea) (2001.06.25 – 2010.03.18), President of Bishops’ Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (2008.04 – 2011.05), Coadjutor Archbishop of Rabaul (2010.03.18 – 2011.08.11).
5. Bishop Tatamai, M.S.C Bishop Tatamai has been Chaplain at the Sacred Heart Basilica in Issoudun, France since 2003. On 8 July 2005, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him as Auxiliary Bishop of Kerema. Two years later, he was appointed Bishop of Bereina. Pope Francis subsequently appointed him as the Bishop of Kavieng, Papua New Guinea on 22 June 2018. (*from the web*)

Cardinal John Ribat returned to Rabaul on a visit after he was installed as Cardinal.

At the airport he was greeted by the Deputy Prime Minister and former archbishop Hesse and the current archbishop Panfilo. Crowds of people welcomed him back to his home province of East New Britain.



Cardinal Ribat is visiting an island off the coast of East New Britain.

He was elevated to be Cardinal by Pope Francis at a special Conclave in Rome next month, on 19 November 2016. The other new cardinals come from Italy, the Central African Republic, Spain, the United States, Brazil, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Belgium, Mauritius and Mexico. Cardinal John Ribat is one of the youngest cardinals, at only 59.

“His brief visit to his home province of East New Britain in May 2022 showed his dedication and love towards the people. The way he delivered his message at every gathering he attended showed his humility. Despite his reputation as a cardinal he went down to the level of the faithful to mingle with them and accept their congratulatory messages. He gathered the children and spoke to them, he shook hands with the elderly and blessed those present at every gathering that he attended. His eminence cardinal John is a testimony to all believers throughout the Catholic Church. He came from a humble family of nine who were nurtured by devout Christian parents under strict Christian principles back in the 1950s in East New Britain. John made his first profession with the MSC missionaries in 1979 an undertaking he held onto for the next six years until 1985 when he was ordained as a priest.”⁵¹



The Cardinal said:

“I am happy with this new appointment and so should all people of this country, and take it as a blessing for all,” the cardinal elect said. Archbishop Ribat hails from Volavolo village in the East New Britain province. He was born on February 9, 1957 and attended schools in East New Britain before proceeding into the seminary at Bomana outside of Port Moresby.

⁵¹ Article in the post career by Sharon Laurel N.W.A May 24 2022

Roman Catholic Diocese of Kavieng



*Photograph: Bishop Stemper
(Wikipedia)*

Bishops of Kavieng

Alfred Matthew Stemper MSC 1966- 1980

Karl Hesse MSC 1980 - 1990, (then Rabaul)

Ambrose Kiapseni MSC 1991 – 2018

Rochus Tatamai MSC 2018 until 2020 appt Rabaul

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Kavieng is a suffragan diocese of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Rabaul. It was erected Vicariate Apostolic in 1957 and elevated to a diocese in 1966. Bishops Alfred Matthew Stemper, M.S.C. (1957 - 1980) Karl Hesse, M.S.C. (24 October 1980 - 7 July 1990) Ambrose Kiapseni, M.S.C. (21 January 1991 - present) Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni retired from Kavieng in 1991 and presided over the ceremonies for the installation of Rochus as his successor. There was also a ceremonial farewell for Rochus Tatamai from Bereina. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Kavieng is a suffragan diocese of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Rabaul. It was erected Vicariate Apostolic in 1957 and elevated to a diocese in 1966.

Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni laid to rest-by Bp Rochus Tatamai

Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni MSC, Bishop Emeritus of Kavieng, the longest serving Papua New Guinean Roman Catholic bishop was laid to rest on Saturday 28th December 2019.

Cardinal Sir John Ribat MSC, Archbishop of Port Moresby presided at the Requiem mass. Archbishop Francesco Panfilo sdb of the Archdiocese of Rabaul and Bishop Rochus Josef Tatamai MSC, Bishop of Kavieng Diocese were concelebrants together with Fr Siby and Gianni OFM, Vicar Generals of Vanimo and Aitape Dioceses and several other priests from the three deaneries of Manus, Kavieng and Namatanai.

Hon Sir Julius Chan, Governor of New Ireland Province, a long-time friend and colleague in the leadership of Bp Ambrose represented the Government together with several others. Mr

Robin Brown, First Secretary delivered the Governor's condolence message marking their long years and terms of collaboration throughout the State Church Partnership program in New Ireland Province. Despite the rain on the previous day, the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Kavieng was packed to capacity. Bp Rochus Josef Tatamai MSC delivered the homily and conducted the burial rites at Kopkop the MSC centre cemetery while Abp Francesco Panfilo SDB did the final commendation at the cathedral. Fr Clement Taulam, Dean of Manus delivered the Eulogy that was prepared by Fr Gerard Savian MSC. The Vicar General Fr Vincent Takin delivered the condolences messages from Cardinal Pietro Parolin on behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis and from Archbishop Kurian Mathew Vayalunkal, Apostolic Nuncio PNGSI

The Diocesan Choir led the solemn liturgy and sang Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni's favourite Latin Mass, liturgical and eucharistic hymns. The entire eucharistic celebration captured the joyful Christmas as well as the Easter joy that Christ has Risen and lives forever. For us Christians, life is changed, not ended but transformed into Christ's Risen and Glorified body. Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni MSC was born on the 16th October 1945. He was ordained a priest of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the 7th January 1975. On 12th May 1991, he was ordained Bishop of Kavieng and resigned on the 22nd June 2018, making him the longest serving Papua New Guinean Roman Catholic bishop. He passed away on the 20th December 2019. (29/12/2019 13:15 *Voice of To Rot.*)

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PART FOUR. Morobe, Vanim, Wabag



Photograph: The Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Kurian incensing the cross at the ordination of the new Bishop of Lae - Rozairo Menezes 2018

Morobe Province 50-year celebration 1959 - - 2009

As it celebrated 50 years, the Diocese of Lae looked forward to new approaches of evangelising, proclaiming, sanctifying and serving the Melanesian Missionary Church in Oceania. The Catholic Diocese of Lae in Morobe, celebrated its golden anniversary at St. Mary's Primary School grounds. The joyful milestone was punctuated by various cultural representations and was witnessed by thousands of faithful from the diocese, well-wishers from the region as well as visitors from outside PNG. The Apostolic Nuncio of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, Archbishop Kurian was there, Matthew Vayalunkal was the main celebrant, and several PNG Bishops and priests concelebrated the Holy Eucharist.

The Nuncio solemnly blessed the diocese and its people and paid special gratitude to missionaries of the past and present for the fruit of their labour visible in Morobe Province.¹

During the 50-year celebrations the Apostolic Nuncio said:

We are gathered here to remember the 50th anniversary of our Diocese of Lae. This is the right occasion to remember the history of the Church in our country, PNG. We rejoice, we give praise, and we go forth.

Bishop Christian Blouin of the Diocese of Lae also gave thanks to the pioneers of the diocese saying, "four pioneers must be acknowledged at this occasion." Fr. Anthony Mulderink, one of the four pioneers who was there present to witness the occasion was thanked along with his pioneer-brothers of Mariannahill for their work. He also extended this gratitude to the people of

¹ <http://www.heraldmalaysia.com/news/diocese-of-lae-in-papua-new-guinea-celebrates-50-years/33447/2>

PNG for their good will; friends of the diocese overseas, for being helpful to the diocese and all people who have contributed in making the Diocese of Lae become what it is to this day.

The existence of the Catholic Church in Morobe Province goes back to the time of the gold rush in Wau and Bulolo in 1927. However, the existence of the Diocese of Lae began with the mandate of Pope John XXIII on 18 June 1959 when the newly erected Vicariate of Lae was entrusted to the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill (CMM). The number of diocesan inhabitants was about 187,000. Of these, approximately 1,750 were Catholics. In a nutshell, the Diocese of Lae has grown from modest beginnings with less than 2,000 Catholics to more than 30, 000 at present.

Initially there had been a quandary as to which missionary order would take on the Morobe Province. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were in Yule Island and Bereina as well as New Britain. They did not have the personnel to cover Morobe as well. Bishop Noser SVD of Alexishafen was trying to persuade the Australian Passionist provincial to take on the Southern Highlands but they decided to stay on in Lae and eventually moved to Vanimo which was part of the Franciscans' Aitape mission. This left the Diocese of Lae needing an order.

How did the Mariannhillers come to Papua New Guinea?

Fr Lenssen (CMM)

“When in the late fifties, the number of young priests in the Dutch Province [of Mariannhill] was growing and several of them were assigned to South Africa, it became particularly difficult for Dutch priests to obtain a work permit because of the strong anti-apartheid stand of the Dutch government. The generalate decided to ask the Vatican in Rome for a new mission field without specifying a particular country but focusing on Indonesia which had become independent from the Netherlands. The initial option of the Propaganda Fide was Taiwan. However, when the SVD missionaries in Papua New Guinea asked for new missionaries to take over a part of the Vicariate of Madang that was to be divided into new ecclesiastical territories, the new apostolic vicariate of Lae was assigned to the Missionaries of Mariannhill. The papal decree was signed by Pope John XXIII on 18 June 1959. The first Mariannhillers arrived in Lae in February 1960. The Catholic population was a minority, about 1750. Forty years later the diocese can look-back at a steady growth of the number of the faithful up to over 25,000 and at the many schools and institutions erected during this period. ‘The Lord your God has blessed you in all the works of your hand. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you.’ (Deut 2:7).²

Fr Frans Lenssen CMM commented: “The Vicar General of the Diocese, Fr. Arnold Schmitt observed that the main work of the early missionaries was education and the formation of Catholic Christian families, and they have continued to do that by reading the signs of the time.”^{3 4 5}

²Fr Frans Lenssen. Review. <http://www.academia.edu> *From a Mission to a Chu*

³ *The Vatican Radio*

⁴ *Vatican Radio*

⁵ *Fr Frans Lenssen*

The sisters who came - Fr Frans Lenssen CMM wrote ⁶

“The first Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood arrived in June 1962 and later other international congregations arrived and served in the field of pastoral, social work and education. The Sisters of the Precious Blood have been living in Bulolo since 1962. The first Sisters who came were Sr. Clemence and Sr. Margaret. They have been working in primary and secondary education, in religious formation of children and adults, in human development of women, and in various sectors of the pastoral field. Their presence in Bulolo has so much been taken for granted that it will be difficult to imagine that it is ending. Sr. Paul-Marie who had also worked in Bulolo especially with young people for many years, died suddenly in Lae in 1993. Sr. Anno joined the team in 1993 after having worked for many years in West Papua.”

Photograph: Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood from around the world



“On 25 July 1999, the Holy Family Parish celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving for the work the CPS Sisters have done in Bulolo and farewelled them. It is impossible to sum up all the benefits of the presence of the CPS Sisters the parish has enjoyed over the past 30 years. Their absence will surely be felt very much.

The sister wrote: “Our legacy received from Abbot Francis Pfanner is imbued with the Benedictine spirit. This contemplative-missionary heritage of our Founder inspires us CPS worldwide to commit ourselves to fulfill our religious and missionary calling of *ora et labora*, pray and work. From simple beginnings in South Africa over 130 years ago, our Congregation grew and expanded to other countries”.

Our Life - which is mission itself - gives glory to God

From the web site of the Sisters of the Precious Blood

“Papua New Guinea is one of the most heterogeneous nations in the world with a small population of approx. 8 million people, yet with no less than 820 different languages spoken. The primary language of the country is Tok Pisin (Pidgin) but English is the language in the government and education system.”

“We CPS came to East Asia already in 1932 where we worked on the island of Madura up to 1960. From 1948–1992 we were also in Irian-Jaya which formed at that time the country of PNG but later, juridically, it went under Indonesia. Since 1962 we have been engaged in health care, pastoral and social ministries in Lae, which is the 2nd largest city, main industrial centre and capital of Morobe, one of the 22 provinces of PNG. The present Bishop of the Diocese of Lae is Rev. Fr. Rozario Menezes, SMM (Montfort Missionary) who was installed on 15 December 2018. He succeeded Bishop Christian Blouin CMM who was Bishop since May 2007. Fr. Henry van Lieshout CMM was the first Bishop of Lae in 1967.”

⁶ Review Fr Frans Lenssen

“Our CPS community in PNG is very small but very international, with Sisters from DR Congo, Korea, Mozambique, the Netherlands and Zimbabwe. In October 2018, Sr. Monica Mary Ncube, Sr. Caroline Mjomba, and Sr. Franziscus Maria Moeller visited our Sisters in Eriku, Lae. They expressed their gratitude for the time well spent together and were convinced that that was God’s time. We pray and hope that more of our Sisters will continue to be open to engage in mission for the glory of God and proclamation of the Good News!”⁷



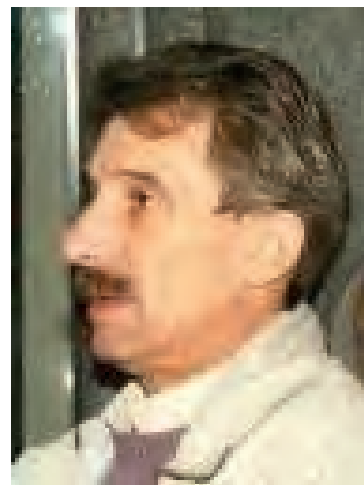
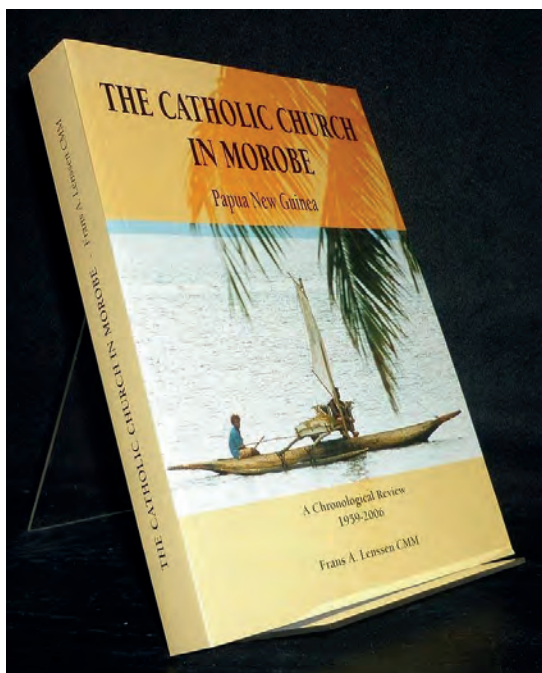
Photograph: Sr. Pauline Mpongo, Sr. Caroline Mjomba, Sr. Monica Mary Ncube, Sr. Clemence Klever and Sr. Franziscus-Maria Moeller Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood worked at the Diocese of Lae



Three of the FMI Sisters from Vunapope had already been working in Lae for two years when the Sisters of the Precious Blood left

⁷ <https://www.missionarysisterspreciousblood.org/karte/papua-new-guinea>

The Catholic Church in Morobe by Fr Frans Lenssen CMM



*MARIANHILL IN
PAPUA NEW GUINEA 1999 2014 A REVIEW
is another book by him.*

About this Review Frans A. Lenssen CMM wrote:

The purpose of this collection of news items compiled from the quarterly newsletter PNG TANGET 1999-2014 is to store the records of some data of the Mariannhill presence in Papua New Guinea in that particular period. In the past, people in Papua New Guinea often used tree leaves to pass on certain messages to others. 'Tanget' means 'leaf' .in *tok pisin* so PNG TANGET is a CMM leaflet to communicate news between the Mariannhillers in Papua New Guinea and the other CMM provinces. The CMM in the Morobe Province rarely reaches the headlines or the world press. There are hardly ever news items that would draw the attention beyond the local or national boundaries. Many even do not know where to find this country on the globe. That is why this newsletter will try to fill a communication gap within the Congregation by sharing our joys, hopes, plans, and our worries with our confreres elsewhere. CMM in PNG is a tiny group. However, in fact, this team of ten confreres will soon get some fresh blood coming from other provinces. This means that we will become a multi-national group consisting of six nationalities. This surely will make the home-provinces of these confreres more interested in what is going on in this corner of the world. We hope that Tanget will strengthen the fraternal union between the provinces.

On 1 January 1999, a new provincial administration began its term of office. Members of the team are Fr. Frans Lenssen, Fr. Sido van der Werf, Br. Werner Hupperich, and Fr. Hubert Hofmans. After having terminated his second term of office as provincial, Fr. Chris Blouin was not available for a further term because he is going to Spokane USA, for a Sabbatical Year. For the time being the new provincial, Fr. Frans Lenssen will continue to stay in Bulolo as pastor of the Holy Family Parish.

Fr. Henk Janssen has been pastor at the Siassi Islands for more than ten years. He has just completed an important project, the extension of the Primary School of Mandok with grade 7 and 8. Those new 'top-up' classes have been built not in Mandok, but on the nearby large island Umboi, where the Mandok people have their food gardens. This is a very important move for the island people. Their children will be away from Mandok during the school terms.

They are accommodated in new dormitories. The parish priest has also a house at the new school area.⁸

At the Diocesan Pastoral Conference on September 6, it was agreed that a new Church would be built at Eleven Mile, on the road to Nadzab Airport. This area is being developed for housing and it is expected that many people will move to newly erected residences. Fr. Hubert Hofmans is the promoter of the new church project. In Wauwoka, a Catholic community in a remote area of the Menyamya District will also get a new permanent church building. The project will be



realized in the beginning of 2000. Mrs. Ann Barnabas was appointed the new Catholic Education Secretary, succeeding Mr. Paul Namuru, who will take over the Justice and Peace affairs. A new Coordinator for Religious Education has also been appointed.

The diocesan offices are now accommodated in the new Catholic Diocesan Centre. The spacious

building is the former Free Mason Hall, purchased by the Diocese from the Free Masons. Because of its unusual construction (e.g., a windowless meeting room according to Free Masons rules), the whole interior of the building had to be remodelled. The bishop has his own office in the building. The new diocesan office building is a real improvement and above all a relief for the overpopulated St. Mary's station

Bishops of Lae

1. Henry van Lieshour CMM bishop 1966 - 2007

Henry was born in 1932 in the Netherlands. He was ordained in 1959. Along with three other Marianhill missionaries he arrived in Lae in 1960. There were only 1,750 Catholics in the area.



It was a Lutheran stronghold, and they were ensconced even in the remoter villages. The Marianhill Fathers saw that education was the key to conversions and they set about setting up schools in Bulolo, Wau and the Siassi Islands as well as in Lae. By 2011 there were over 30,000 Catholics in the diocese and many of the Lutherans attended the Catholic schools. There was growing harmony between the churches.

Life of Bishop Henry Lieshour – Encyclopedia

Henry van Lieshout joined the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill. He made his first profession on September 8, 1954, received on 12 July 1959, the ordination. Pope John XXIII. in 1959 by decree entrusted the vicariate of Lae to the Missionaries of Mariannhill. Henry van Lieshout was in the first group of Mariann Hillers who settled in the province of Morobe in 1959. Pope Paul VI. appointed him on 15 November 1966 the first bishop of the Diocese of Lae. He founded the “Centre of Mercy”, which takes care of

⁸ Frans A. Lenssen CMM Mariannhill/NL 2014

people who are infected with AIDS or suffering from malaria, tuberculosis, asthma and the like. He also initiated a Catholic radio station to the religious, social and cultural education. Henry van Lieshout was named “Chief”, equipped with the insignia of the “Grand Companions of the Order of Logohu” (Bird of Paradise) (“GCL “).⁹ He retired on 15 January 2007. Benedict XVI accepted the age-related resignation and appointed Father Christian Blouin CMM as his successor. He retired in 2007. and died on Christmas Eve 2009.

2. Christian Conrad Blouin CMM. He was Bishop from 2007 until 2018



Fr Lessen wrote about Fr Chris before he became bishop:

Fr. Chris Blouin, parish priest of St. Patrick’s in Tent City could finally start the construction of a new church. Tent City is a large settlement where people from another area have been resettled after a devastating flood that destroyed their former housing area in the Bumbu compound in Lae in the early eighties. A parish centre is under construction in the Holy Family Parish in Bulolo. The project could be started, thanks to generous contributions from the generalate and some province. PNG current affairs Politically and economically, Papua New Guinea is not doing well at present. On 12 June, the new church of St. Patrick’s parish in Tent City will be blessed. Vibrant singing groups in traditional colorful dress gave a special festive touch to the celebration. The next opening ceremony will take place in Bulolo, Holy Family Parish, on September 4. A spacious parish centre will be opened, which has been erected on the edge of the land of St. Peter’s Primary School. This building will provide facilities for pastoral activities in the region. Already before the opening, the hall is being used. Lately the Antioch Youth Movement with participants from Bulolo, Wau, Menyamya, and Lae were accommodated in the building for three days gathering. He worked as a parish priest in Lae before becoming Bishop in 2007. He retired in 2018.

3. The third bishop of Lae was Rozario Menezes, M from 2018–to present¹⁰

Pope Francis has appointed Fr Rozario Menezes, the third Bishop of the Diocese of Lae. Fr Rozario is an Indian Montfort Missionary. He was born at Virajpet, Coorg district of the diocese of Mysore on August 30, 1969, and was ordained a priest on November 04, 1999. He had been serving the Church in PNG since May 2000. Since his arrival in the Daru-Kiunga Diocese, Western Province, he served the church in different capacities for eight years. He was the parish priest of St Brigid’s parish in Kiunga and at the same time caretaker of St Paul’s parish in Nomad. He also worked as a youth chaplain and project officer in Daru-Kiunga Diocese before going to Montreal, Canada, for his studies in formative psychology and counselling. After returning from his studies, he formed the programmes for Montfort Missionaries in Papua New Guinea.

He moved to the Archdiocese of Port Moresby and served as parish priest of St Martin De Porres Parish, in Morata, Morata is a suburb with lots of settlements and a high crime rate. It’s a no-go zone for many people. Fr Rozario was instrumental in transforming the community and bringing positive changes to the area and the lives of many people. The church, which was attended by very few in the beginning, started to attract more people and was soon overflowing with faithfuls from all walks of life.

⁹<https://memim.com/henry-van-lieshout.html>

¹⁰October 12, 2018 *The National Main Stories*



Rozario Menezes, SMM was consecrated on 10 Oct 2018

2021. World Vision, and a church partners to implement child well-being project in Lae settlements

World Vision PNG and the Missionaries of Marrianhill Catholic Church in Lae Morobe province sign a three-year MoA to undertake 'Child Well Being Project' in Lae settlements. Over 3000 individuals, including women and children in settlements will benefit. In a first for the Congregation of the Missionaries of Marrianhill Catholic Church in Lae Morobe Province, Father Brian Nonde and Pastor Andrew Kalai of World Vision Papua New Guinea (WVPNG) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on Sunday 31st January 2021.

The MoA is aimed at delivering the 'Child Well Being Project' through improved parenting and caregiving practices in the targeted Lae communities of Bumbu, Kamkumung, and 2 – 7-mile settlements in Lae city. The project is a three-year program funded by World Vision United States (WVUS) and will benefit more than 3000 individuals, including women and children in the selected communities and settlements.

During the program, there will be training extended to faith leaders, parents, children, and youths to better achieve the program outcome of increasing Church and Interfaith engagement for child wellbeing to create a loving and caring environment for children and youth to grow up in..¹¹

World Vision PNG Faith & Development Coordinator Andrew Kalai and Father Brian Nonde, CMM Parish priest of Saint Steven's Catholic Church signing the Memorandum of Agreement for the Missionaries of Marianhill to undertake the community intervention in the three settlement communities of Lae city.



16 August 2019

Youth Weekend inspired Young people. Eugenia Wochem and Winifred Worealevi-Catholic FM Volunteer Lae: An empowering Youth Weekend from 09th to 11th August 2019, was held at St. Joseph's Pastoral Center, Lae, Morobe Province. The weekend was attended by 108 young people and leaders from St Mary's parish, St Martins parish and St. Michael's parish. The facilitator was Youth and Social Communications Secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference, Fr Ambrose Pereira SDB.

¹¹ <https://www.wvi.org/newsroom/papua-new-guinea/world-vision-church-partners-implement-child-well-being-project>

OCEANIA/PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Bishop Rozario visits the remote district of Menyamya: Thursday, 18 July 2019

“Every baptized person is a missionary”



Lae (Agenzia Fides) – To show attention, care, love and solidarity towards the indigenous families and communities that live their faith in the remote Menyamyan district; to reflect on the meaning of baptism and the mission of every Christian: in this spirit, Bishop Rozario Menezes SMM (of the Company of Mary of Monfort), at the head of the diocese of Lae, visited the small Catholic communities residing in Menyamya district which is located in Papua New Guinea, belonging to the Morobe Province, where about 85,000 people live.

In that remote district the presence of the Catholic Church is visible through an elementary school and a Caritas center of help and solidarity. As by Agenzia Fides learns, the Montfortan Bishop visited the small local Catholic communities in recent days exhorting them to “pray and prepare to celebrate World Mission Sunday and the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019” and to “always help those who are in need.”

Bishop Rozario noted that, in remote districts such as Menyamyan, there are often difficulties in “understanding and living the essence of Christian baptism” and invited the faithful to “not lose sight of the purpose of their life and their mission”: “The danger is to subtly begin to live according to religious practices, rather than to be like Jesus. Let us not forget that God adopts us as his children through baptism, rather than remaining firm in the comfort of our Christian life, let us remember that we should become like Christ “Christian baptism is a starting point, not a point of arrival, and it is the source of the mission”, he underlined.

The Bishop’s visit was an opportunity for the people of Menyamyan to reflect on some points highlighted by the theme of the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019, that is “Baptized and sent: the Church of Christ on mission in the world”. “Mission is not the work of the Christian but is the work of Christ himself. If our Christian mission does not flow to and from the adoration of the Incarnate Word, we are only running aimlessly, trusting in the human work that is always limited and weak”.

The Bishop concluded: “Jesus Christ lived a full life, involving and giving all of himself. His mission was completely incarnated in the world. Becoming the Word Incarnate, he wanted to teach men by approaching them, becoming one of them, sharing their environment and their problems. Thus he made men like Him and gave us the way of imitating Christ as a way of holiness. This real life, this divine life we communicate and give to the world. This is the sense of mission”.¹²

Conclusion about Lae by Fr Frans in 2014

¹³ A new millennium and the Church in PNG has to look once more at herself. Which shape is she going to take? In an assessment of the current missionary situation, William Longar, a pastor of the United Church writes in CATALYST 29, 1999/1:

‘There is a growing awareness of the inadequacy of Western theologies and church structures to really address the cultural and spiritual needs of national Christians. There is a growing desire for national Christians to participate adequately in the growth and ministry of the local churches in their respective contexts. There is a need to see the Church having a powerful impact on society. The church must be the voice of the voiceless in society and participate in the struggles and sufferings of the powerless society.

There is a desire to embrace Christianity and Christ not as foreign imports, but as their own, Christianity and a Christ who relates to them within their cultural context.’ Something to think about also in the Catholic Church in PNG, which is still the least localized of all churches. The author, however, sees not a solution in sending the foreign missionaries home and putting an end to their missionary activities. He sees the missionaries as co-workers and as support staff of the national churches.

They are in PNG as servants to serve God’s people. As such, they must be sensitive to the needs of their hosts; after all, every missionary is a guest in this culture. They are not to impose their ideas but to facilitate, to educate, guide and encourage their national colleagues, wherever possible to take more of leading roles in the life and the affairs of the church. They should be free from preconceived ideas, prejudices, and personal agendas. This will do for a start into the new millennium. Mariannahill in the Diocese of Lae.



St Mary's Cathedral in Lae

¹² (Agenzia Fides, 18/7/2019)

¹³ MARIANHILL IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA 1999-2014 A REVIEW By Frans A. Lenssen CMM
Mariannahill/NL 2014 The Mariannahill Orde in Morobe. CMM in the Morobe Province

Vanimo: Capital of the Sundaun Province



2018 Photograph: Bishop Francis Melip is consecrated in Vanimo

In the Beginning in 1937

Three SVD missionaries arrived at Vanimo in 1937 -

1. Fr Rupert Hittenberger SVD from Austria (1907–1940),
2. Brother Michael Wieskamp SVD from Holland (1907–1982)
3. Fr Gerhard Prinz SVD from Germany. 1908 – 1943. He died during the war on board the Japanese Akikaze destroyer.

Together they had to lay the foundation of the church in a not yet explored environment, especially in the hinterland of Vanimo. Fr Michael Clerkin (1911–1983) came in August 1940 to Vanimo station and worked there until the Japanese invasion of New Guinea.¹⁴

Before the war came

Fr Michael Clerkin SVD wrote in 1942:

“It has been my privilege to lead into the Catholic Church the first group of converts in this distant outpost. In 1937, a very inauspicious beginning was made here. Some thirty years before, a fine tract of land had been bought but was not occupied by the mission till 1937. Being a fine piece of land, it was being used by the natives for their gardens during all that time and therefore they had forgotten that it no longer belonged to them.”

“When the bishop arrived with the first priest and Brother Michael Wieskamp SVD, there was considerable opposition, which expressed itself in words and deeds. They were not interested in the Catholic Church and its teachings; they would not come to church or send their children to school. Indeed, they planted sharp spears along the roads that our barefoot native helpers had to travel, hoping to impale a few. However, our boys were careful, and none was injured.”

¹⁴ Paul Steffen p 259 *Sios bilong yumi long Niugini*

“The spears remained planted until one day a Vanimo native — and he was one of those who most vigorously opposed the mission — walked into the trap himself and had to come to us to have his feet treated.”

“Medical care of the sick and a lot of patience finally won us some tolerance. A few, not more than half a dozen, were quite interested from the very beginning and would come each day and sit on the veranda and watch the white men eat, integrating comments on the appetite of each, their size, etc., and always requesting a portion of the meal as their reward. School had begun with a few pupils, but attendance was not too regular and not too good either. It was being treated as a novelty, more or less — interesting and amusing but when the amusement ceased, the interest did too. ---- A few months later, a brother carpenter arrived to do the heavy work of erecting the structure and then Brother Michael set his hand to complete the church, while I tried to get acquainted with the natives and start a little school. Christmas came and went without any baptisms.”

“After Christmas Fr Michael began catechism classes and by Easter 125 people were ready to be baptised. He estimated it would take five hours to baptise that many and decided to begin before dawn on Easter morning. The children were woken by the priest’s alarm clock placed strategically in the village.”

“By four o’clock we had perfect attendance. I then gave each one a piece of paper on which was printed his native name and his new Christian name and informed him this must be shown during the baptism. The ceremonies began at 4 am sharp and the first part was performed by the light of the Easter moon setting brilliantly over the western hills.”

“One hundred and twenty-five times I repeated these questions, and one hundred and twenty-five pairs of lips expressed their desire to acquire the true faith and attain to life everlasting. Satan and all his works and pomps [empty promises] were also renounced one hundred and twenty-five times, and it is hard to realise with what fervour and faith these former children of Satan renounced him. That Satan is often worshipped is a fact, but as soon as the natives learn that God is stronger than Satan and that with God’s help Satan can cause us no harm, they quickly turn to God and His goodness.” (LM 1942, 148–149, 167) ¹⁵

With these baptisms at Easter 1941, the foundation of the first local Christian community at Vanimo was laid by the Divine Word missionaries of the Vicariate of Central New Guinea.

Between 1942 and 1945, the Japanese forces invaded PNG

During the war Fr Gerhard Prinz SVD of Vanimo died in 1943. on board the Japanese Akikaze destroyer. Many missionaries were forced on board and shot one at a time and thrown overboard. (*See Chapter on Wewak*)



¹⁵ Quoted from Fr Paul Steffen Sios bilong yumi long Niugini on the mission in Vanimo.

The Battle of Hollandia (code-named Operation Reckless) was an engagement between the Allies and Japanese forces during World War II. The majority of the Allied force was provided by the United States, with the bulk of two United States Army infantry divisions being committed on the ground. Air and naval support consisted largely of U.S. assets, although Australia also provided air support during preliminary operations and a naval bombardment force.

The battle took place between 22 April and 6 June 1944 and formed part of the New Guinea campaign. The operation consisted of two landings, one at Tanahmerah Bay and the other at Humboldt Bay, near Hollandia. The landings were undertaken simultaneously with the amphibious invasion of Aitape (“Operation Persecution”) to the east. The battle was an unqualified success for the Allied forces, resulting in a withdrawal by the Japanese to a new strategic defence line in the west of New Guinea and the abandonment of all positions in the east of the island.¹⁶



This map shows that the allies initially bypassed Vanimo in the war and landed at Hollandia

Three hundred Japanese were stranded at Vanimo and were later attacked by the allies in a mopping-up exercise hence all the bones of dead Japanese that were found when the SFO missionaries landed there in 1946.

After the war, the Franciscan friars went to Vanimo

Fr Raymond Quirk ofm described the first days in 1946:

“Two weeks of waiting in Aitape and then the mission ship arrived from Alexishafen with our supplies. We went aboard and at dawn the next day, we sailed for our first station at Malol and off-loaded cargo and then on to Sissano where we said goodbye to Father Michael and Fr Ferdinand. Ten o’clock at night we sailed for Vanimo. We sailed along the coast all night and at day-break next morning we sighted the two small islands which mark the entrance to Vanimo Harbour. It was the Feast of Corpus Christi and the sun was shining as we nosed our into the harbour. The water was beautiful and still as glass. We scanned the palm-tree lined shore and

¹⁶*The web site*

there before us was our mission site, an area of newly grown bush in stark comparison to the heavily forested mountains that encircled and embraced it. Once it had been a beautiful Mission Station. Now not a house or a remnant of one was to be seen. The bush had overgrown the ruins of the mission wrecked buildings and only the embers remained after the tide of war had swept through Hollandia and its surrounding area.”

“However there was no time for memories or musings. The anchor of the ship clattered down, the hatches were off and it was time for work. The tent was the first thing to go ashore. This was to be our abode for four very unpleasant weeks. The local boys soon had a likely spot for us cleared. The pegs were hammered in and, in a very short time, behold our mission was born. The ship’s dingy wended its way back and forth from the ship to the beach, loaded down to the water with cargo. On shore it was received by eager boys from the village who had flocked to the beach when they saw the mission ship coming through the heads. They soon had it packed and stored in the tent. Work went on through the afternoon and it was with a sigh of relief that we heard the cry “Cargo i pinis nau” (That is the end of the cargo) hailed to us from the ship.”

“Dusk was approaching and it looked very much like rain. We examined the tent ropes and made them more secure. We were not very happy about the whole situation. A good storm and I could imagine our humble abode rising aloft over the mountains and two friars and their cargo left homeless. It was not a very pleasant thought. but still ... we were home on our station and nothing else really mattered. It was not long before we unearthed our camp stretchers, set them upright, rigged our mosquito-nets put everything in strategic positions so that with the minimum of rain and things blown our tent would not trouble us.”

“Everything secure, we sat down on the beach and watched our ship up-anchor and sail away. Everything was very still - the quietness of the night was broken by the discordant notes of a bugler from the ship. He certainly must have looked very forlorn for he was playing the “Last Post”. So the ship said ‘farewell’. We waved it into the darkness.”

“The next morning we offered Holy Mass our first time on the shores of Vanimo. Again we asked the Lord to help us in the task that lay before us to bring the light of faith to the people of that area and to make our mission a success. Our mission life had really begun now, knowing as we did that the Masses we had offered that morning had already begun the work of salvation of the souls of our people.”

“It was a very sad picture that presented itself to our eyes that morning when we set off on a tour of inspection. We cut ourselves a track through high kunai grass and close to our tent we found the cement blocks of what had once have been the church. All that remained of the building was one charred twisted candlestick. So it was with the other buildings nothing but charred embers.”

“Here and there was evidence of the tragedy that had swept down the on the latter part of 1944: the blackened bones of Japanese soldiers. For many months the Japanese had occupied Vanimo three hundred strong. At the time I speak of the Americans had already landed at Hollandia.”¹⁷

¹⁷(*Franciscan Missions Newsletter* (Vol 10 no 2.)



In 2022 The Roman Catholic Diocese of Vanimo is a suffragan diocese in the Latin rite ecclesiastical province of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Madang in Papua New Guinea, yet depends on the Roman Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Its cathedral episcopal see is the Holy Cross Pro-cathedral, in Vanimo in the province of West Sepik (Sandaun).

The Passionists have a presence in Vanimo in the northwest of PNG where Fr Valensius is the Parish Priest in Lido and Fr Petrus Wake is the Parish Priest in Ossima.

Posted by Dee



These little children in famous blue and white are students at St Theresa Community School just next door to the church. They are waiting patiently to welcome the Prime Minister to Lido village to open the PNG National Surf titles had in November 2007

Fr Valensius also keeps a watchful eye over the Senta Bilong Helpim which is a care centre for disabled children.

The Passionist Fathers developed a facility called Senta Bilong Helpim (SBH) in the village of Vanimo, Sandaun Province, Papua New Guinea in the 1980s to provide relief for vulnerable children with physical and mental disabilities. Prior to SBH being established children with significant disabilities would be ostracised by their communities and not receive medical treatment or even basic human compassion. Through the care and compassion offered at SBH hundreds of children have experienced a significantly improved quality of life and dignity. Some, who in the past would have been excluded from their communities, have gone on to lead fulfilling and productive lives. In addition to providing care at SBH there have been occasions where pro bono surgery has been organised through Australian surgeons to assist saving and improving the lives of some of the worst affected children.



The demand on the services offered by SBH continues to grow and there is a need to provide additional and improved facilities to meet this demand and provide the level of care the people with disabilities require and deserve. SBH is managed by a Passionist Father and a Passionist Sister who supervise many volunteers providing care to the children.

Without access to SBH the disabled children of the Sandaun Province of Papua New Guinea would be greatly disadvantaged and marginalised. In addition to managing SBH in Vanimo, fundraising activities in Australia have provided much needed financial support.

Through the development of close relationships with local landholders a parcel of land has been secured on which it is intended to develop an accommodation building to enable children with disabilities to remain on site for treatment rather than having to endure long uncomfortable daily bus rides from their village.



Vanimo is close to the border with West Irian Photo Britannica

There are cheap flights from PNG to Jayapura and the Highlanders particularly enjoy visiting Jayapura which is quite a developed place. People in Vanimo can travel there easily for shopping or relaxation.

The PNG-Indonesian border is open every day from 9 am to 4 pm. The best days to travel across the border are when the Batas border market is open (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) as there are plenty of buses travelling from the border to Vanimo on these days.

It is usually very quick to cross the border but delays can occur, usually approximately 15 mins. A bus from the border to Vanimo costs K10 kina per person. If you have lots of luggage, expect to pay an extra K10-20. If travelling to Jayapura from Vanimo, a bus costs K10 to the border, and then a taxi to Jayapura costs K120.

Vanimo, Papua New Guinea by Sr Laraine Crowe rsj

“In 1965 four Sisters of St Joseph from Goulburn, New South Wales set out to undertake missionary work in the far northwest of Papua New Guinea. In 1960 the Franciscan bishop of Aitape asked the Passionist Fathers to take responsibility for missionary work in the northwestern part of his vast tropical diocese. Vanimo was the main centre in this region. Four Passionist priests and a brother arrived there on 10 March 1961 to commence ministry among the 45,000 people scattered throughout the region.”

“In 1962 the Australian Passionist Provincial, Father Charles Corbett, commenced negotiations with the Sisters of St Joseph of Goulburn to send a community of Sisters to staff the newly opened primary school in Vanimo and to work alongside the priests in the mission field. On Sunday 28 February 1965, four sisters – Sisters M Annette O’Loughlin, Andre Guthrie, Charles (Patricia) Ryan and Julian Hunter left Sydney for Vanimo. Four days after their arrival and welcome to the Mission the Sisters took over the running of St Therese’s School, which in 1965 had 200 students enrolled including 35 boy boarders, aged between 6 and 16, from outlying districts too distant for them to attend school daily.”

Convent in Vanimo PNG



“As well as teaching in the school, the Sisters visited families in the villages, assisted in the medical clinic and trekked through jungle and across rivers to visit the mission outstations for catechetics and pastoral visitation. They organised classes for women and girls to encourage good nutrition and hygiene and set up opportunities for the women to attend dressmaking and cooking classes.”

“The Sisters of St Joseph of Perthville opened a mission in Suain in the Aitape Diocese in 1967. Following the formation of the Australian New Zealand Federation of Sisters of St Joseph each member Congregation agreed to try to have representation in these mission stations. From 1969 Tasmania provided Sisters to work in Vanimo, in 1977 Lochinvar made Sisters available for both Vanimo and Suain. From 1978 Wanganui made Sisters available to work in the missions. In 1980 the Federation Council took over responsibility for the missions in Papua New Guinea. Sisters of St Joseph remained in ministry in Vanimo until the end of 1996. In total 23 Josephite Sisters lived and worked in Vanimo and surrounding areas and had their hearts captivated by its people. They had shared their simple life and faith, been challenged by climate, terrain and the vagaries of remote tropical living, and remained steadfast in imparting God’s Love within the developing Church of this missionary outpost in Papua New Guinea.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Laraine Crowe rsj Article written in February 28, 2020

Roman Catholic Diocese of Vanimo¹⁹

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Vanimo is a suffragan diocese in the Latin rite ecclesiastical province of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Madang in Papua New Guinea, yet depends on the Roman Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Its cathedral episcopal see is the Holy Cross Pro-cathedral, in Vanimo in the province of West Sepik (Sandaun).

Statistics As per 2015, it pastorally served 37,765 Catholics (34.0% of 111,000 total population) on 26,000 km² in 13 parishes and 96 missions with 26 priests (8 diocesan, 18 religious), 43 lay religious (20 brothers, 23 sisters) and 14 seminarians.

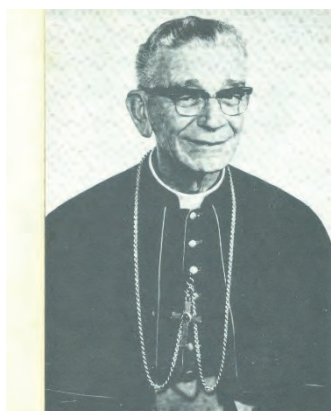
History It was erected in 1963.09.13 as Apostolic Vicariate of Vanimo Unimitanus (Latin adjective), on territory split off from the then Apostolic Vicariate of Aitape (now a diocese) Promoted on 1966.11.15 as Diocese of Vanimo Unimitan(us) (Latin).



Bishops of Vanimo

1. Paschal Sweeney, C.P. Passionist (born in Australia) bishop (1963.–1979.), died 1981
2. John Etheridge, C.P. Passionist (born Australia) (Bishop 1980.04.24 – retired 1989.02.07), died 2002
3. Apostolic Administrator Father David Wilkie, C.P. (1989 – 1991.no other prelature. Never a bishop
4. Cesare Bonivento (born in Italy) (1991. 2018.02.05) 3rd Bishop
5. Francis Meli (first local incumbent) Bishop 2018.02.05 4th Bishop

1. Bishop Paschal Sweeney, C.P. first Bishop of Vanimo



Pascal Sweeney was born in Woodville South Australia in 1912 and was educated by the Dominican Sisters in Adelaide. In 1929 he entered the Passionist Seminary and was ordained on 11 July 1935 in Goulburn.



He worked in many capacities after he was ordained including being Parish Priest in St Brigid's in Marrickville. He was also Provincial Consultor and then Provincial of the Passionists. As Provincial he visited Rome. India and New Guinea. In 1955 he began negotiations towards opening a Passionist Mission in Lae New Guinea. They were only temporally stationed there before the Holy Father designated Vanimo as to be the more permanent home, in the West Sepik Province.

¹⁹ From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

He was appointed Religious superior of the mission in Vanimo in 1963 when the mission was raised to the status of Prefecture he was appointed Prefect Apostolic. In December 1966 when the Hierarchy was established in Papua New Guinea he was named the first residential bishop of Vanimo. He retired in 1979 and died in 198.

The Vanimo Diocese borders on West Irian and is rightly called "Australia's Frontier Mission. "There are about 45.00 inhabitants in the Province scattered over about 15,000 square miles."

2. Bishop John Etheridge, C.P. Passionist The second Bishop

Born 1915, Ordained 1971,

Ordained bishop of Vanimo 1980

Retired 1989 - Died in 2002

Bishop John Etheridge C.P.



6/The National

Friday August 16 2002

NEWS

Top bishop dies

A STRONG advocate of the rights of the West Papuan refugees, Bishop John Etheridge CP, emeritus of Vanimo, passed away at St Vincent's Private Hospital in Sydney on Wednesday after a short illness.

Bishop Etheridge was appointed as the second Bishop of Vanimo in 1980, but was forced to retire in 1988 as a result of ill health. He returned to Australia because of the need to be closer to specialist medical treatment.

Bishop Etheridge became well known in PNG and abroad in the 1980s for his strong defence of the rights of refugees who were fleeing across the border from West Papua into PNG in order to escape the fighting and atrocities that resulted from the war between the OPM rebels and the Indonesian military.

His strong stance to provide care to these almost 10,000 "border crossers"

led to the UNHCR decision to grant them refugee status. To supplement the help and aid provided by UNHCR, Bishop Etheridge worked to make known the plight of the refugees around the world in order to secure funds to provide food and shelter for them over many years.

Bishop Etheridge was a compassionate man and spent his life offering pastoral care and spiritual guidance, not only to the flock of his vast diocese, but also to the refugees. He was generous and sympathetic to all, regardless of their denomination or creed.

The enormous political pressure and tension took its toll on Bishop Etheridge's health. Nevertheless, he chose to stand by the refugees and be their voice, calling for a fair hearing and just treatment.

He became a true friend of the

West Papuan people, who saw him as a "father" who really cared. They referred to him as "bisop bilong mipela" (our bishop).

Bishop Etheridge was born in Adelaide, South Australia on October 2, 1935. After having worked as an electrician for some years, he felt the call to the religious life and priesthood. He joined the Passionist Congregation and was professed in 1965. Following his ordination in January 1971, Father Etheridge volunteered to go to the Passionist Mission in Vanimo. He worked in many parts of the diocese and related well to the people who were delighted when he was chosen to be their Chief Shepherd in 1980.

Bishop Etheridge will be laid to rest in the Passionist cemetery in Glen Osmond (Adelaide), following a Funeral Mass next Tuesday.

3. Third Bishop was Cesare Bonivento, P.I.M in 1991

Bishop Bonivento's service to the country recognised with national award

PIME missionary priest worked in Milne Bay and Sandaun provinces for over 30 years. Appointed bishop of Vanimo in 1991, Mgr Bonivento focused his pastoral activity on training the local clergy. He also criticised government AIDS policy.

Port Moresby (AsiaNews) - Bishop Cesare Bonivento, DD, PIME, was awarded the Grand Companion of the Order of Logohu (GCL), a recognition granted to no more than 50 living persons, for his services to the nation and the Catholic Church.

The honour confers him the titled of 'Chief' in acknowledgement for his contribution to the life of the nation over the past two decades. More specifically, in Mgr Bonivento's case, it refers to the PIME missionary's service as a priest to the people of Milne Bay and Sandaun provinces for more than 30 years. As part of his pastoral work, the prelate has always stressed the importance of training the local clergy. As part of this, he was instrumental in endowing his diocese with a minor and a major seminary.

However, Bishop Cesare Bonivento has spoken out critically on some developmental issues in Papua New Guinea. One was the decision by the PNG on Department to implement a new

HIV/AIDS policy that included providing condoms to fight a high rate of infection among students.

As the secretary for Education of the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG and the Solomon Islands, Bishop Cesare Bonivento slammed the move, saying the new requirement contradicted Catholic teaching on sexuality, noting that the Church would not obey it. In his view, the use of condoms is like "a gun that instead of killing the enemy, very often exploded in the hands of the one who wanted to use it for personal defence". In fact, he said that the condom was not protection but a killer. The 74-year-old Mgr Bonivento Caesar was born in Chioggia, Italy, 30 September 1949. Ordained as a priest in 1965, he has faithfully served the Catholic Church for



almost 50 years, 33 of which in Papua New Guinea. He was bishop of the Vanimo 1991 - 2018.

The St Theresa Catholic Church Lido Vanimo was established in 1936, initially at Lote but in the 1970s a new church was built at Lido village, Papua New Guinea's (PNG) "surfers paradise."



4. The fourth Bishop was Francis Meli in 2018



Francis Meli JCL was born on July 21, 1962, in Kimbe West New Britain, Papua New Guinea to his parents Anthon Wale and Anna Aisiga. His early education started in 1972 on Poi Island at St. Leo Primary School Sasavoru. In 1978, Francis Meli attended Kimbe Provincial High School and in 1981 he went on to the St. Peter Channel College, East New Britain. From 1985 to 1990 he attended the Holy Spirit Seminary at Bomana. Education has brought Francis Meli to various parts of the world

including Saint Paul University in Canada. On November 24, 1991, Francis Meli entered priesthood and has served mostly in East New Britain Province.

Bishop Francis Meli was consecrated Bishop of Vanimo on the feast day of St. Mark, the Evangelist, 25th April 2018 at Vanimo Town Oval, Sandaun Province. Bishop Francis Meli has chosen *Justitia et Veritas* – Justice and Truth as his Episcopal motto. His Excellency, Archbishop Kurian Mathew Vayalunkal, Apostolic Nuncio Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, was the Principal Ordaining Bishop.

The Assisting Bishops were Archbishop Francisco Panfilo, SDB and Bishop Cesare Bonivento, PIME. Cardinal John Ribat, Archbishop of Port Moresby, 15 bishops of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, priests, religious and faithful were part of the celebrations. In his homily, Archbishop Kurian invited the Bp Francis to reflect on the highest call to the fullness of the priesthood. In the words of Pope Francis to consecrated persons in Chile in January 2018, he reminded Bp Francis that he needs to show the face of God's mercy to his people. The archbishop reminded him of three important responsibilities - to teach, to sanctify and to govern the people of God. "You welcome, you walk and you stay with your flock," he emphasised.

As a Good Shepherd, he also reminded him to care spiritually for his priests, especially the ones who suffer from isolation due to difficulties in communication and transport. He invited the congregation to pray through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Anthony of Padua, Patron of the Diocese, for the protection, blessings and grace on its beloved local Shepherd.

Sisters and congregation at the ceremony in Vanimo

The well prepared and beautiful liturgical celebration which lasted around four hours was coordinated by Fr. Peter Artiken. It was attended by about 3,000 faithful from different corners of the Diocese of Vanimo, including priests and visitors from abroad. Many from the Diocese of Rabaul and other parts of Papua New Guinea joined in the celebrations. The Holy Trinity Baro parish



choir that sang for the celebration was led by Brian Essi. The St. Joseph parish led the entrance procession with a New Guinea Islands dance. The offertory dancers were from St. Theresa of the Child Jesus parish, while the Mary Help of Christians parish danced at the conclusion of



The road to Lido village

the celebrations. At the end of the celebration there were words of thanks by Cardinal John Ribat MSC and Bp Rochus Tatamai MSC. Governor of Vanimo, Tony Wouwou, expressed his thanks for the educational institutions of the Catholic Church

Archbishop Panfilo SDB spoke of a church that is catholic and apostolic and of his appreciation for the zealous man of prayer that Bp Francis Meli is.

A grateful Bp Francis Meli thanked God, the Holy Father, the Apostolic Nuncio and all present. He thanked Bishop Cesare Bonivento, PIME for his leadership and commitment to the Diocese of Vanimo. "You have handed over the Diocese of Vanimo in an excellent state. You have left a legacy and a challenge for me to continue," he said. He appreciated greatly Archbishop Panfilo for the years of inspirational life of prayer and leadership in service of the poor.

Mother and child at Vanimo

He then spoke of his principle in life: "God is number one in my life, people are second and I am third". Beautifully woven *bilums* were presented to the visiting bishops by school children. The feasting continued while the visiting bishops and guests departed. The atmosphere was filled with gratefulness as all are happy to work closely with Bishop Francis Meli as Bishop of Vanimo. On his part, Bp Francis Meli looks forward as Shepherd of Vanimo to know and care for the spiritual and social needs of his flock of Vanimo. The priests and religious have done an excellent job in preparing and organizing the Episcopal Ordination.²⁰



²⁰ David M. "Father Francis Meli [Catholic-Hierarchy]".

Wabag Diocese in the Enga Province



Photograph: In 2021, the episcopal ordination of Bp Justin Ain Soongie, was witnessed by nearly five thousand Catholic faithful and friends at the Sangurap parish. Held on Thursday, 2nd September 2021

Wabag today is the capital of Enga Province, Papua New Guinea. It is the least populous provincial capital in the country. It is on the Lai River; the Highlands Highway passes through the town, between **Mount Hagen** and Porgera. Europeans first visited the site in 1938-39. A radio camp and airstrip were established in 1938-39 but restrictions on transportation and the surrounding land's infertility long inhibited Wabag's development. (Web)



When white men came to Wabag

By **DANIEL KUMBON** (*parts of the article quoted for educational purposes only*)

WABAG – “Thadius Kaka Menge is one of the few surviving local leaders in Wabag who assisted the colonial administration pacify warring tribesmen and bring change and development to their communities. The kiaps, or patrol officers, effectively used local leaders to partner with the police to establish Wabag town and build roads and bridges.”

“Thadius is now a very old man approaching 100 years. His body is weak and eyesight poor but his mind is still clear. He sits comfortably in a chair at Kopen village near the secondary school and recounts how it was like during contact with outsiders. News of strange people.”



Thadius with his children and grandchildren

“When he was a teenager, he received news that strange people – described as Keoakali – who were reputed to eat human beings – had walked up the Lai Valley and camped at Tole. The people warned each other to be vigilant lest they be caught and eaten by these strange beings. Then one of Thadius’s relatives, Pupukain by name, arrived with some shells the strange people had given him in exchange for firewood. He promised to take Thadius with him to Tole next morning and perhaps barter for salt and other attractive items these people carried in their large boxes. Thadius quickly crossed the Lai River and went up the hill to Kopen and rested. The next instant, he heard gunshots and yelling and screaming emanating from Tole on the hill opposite.”

“I heard bang, bang, bang, bang, which never seemed to stop. I heard the sound of confusion up there. Whatever was happening was serious. “Later I learned that people involved in that skirmish at Tole were the Leahy brothers – Michael and Daniel. The year was June 1934. The brothers had come from Mt Hagen to prospect for gold. They had to turn back from Tole village due to sickness and the attack. They left behind nine dead villagers, including a woman. “We had to shoot to save our lives and the 90 carriers,” Mick Leahy says in the video. “It would have been a mass slaughter otherwise.” [Later on, a patrol] Jim Taylor wrote “Today’s was one of the most beautiful journeys in my experiences. Travelling on a central ridge, with the valley on either side, the Lai as it is known and the Ambum. The colour and the beauty of the interior of New Guinea must be seen to be believed – a garden land.”

From Wabag, more and more frequent patrols penetrated deeper into the territory of the 'Wabagas' and adventurous young Engans travelled into the patrol post to see the foreigners and share in some of the wealth of tools, shells, crops and pigs by working for the government. Thadius said the Kii fought the Kala and there was tribal warfare in many parts of Wabag but when the kiaps told them to stop fighting, they stopped. "We destroyed our shields, bows and arrows and lived in relative peace," he said. The kiaps, or patrol officers, effectively used local leaders to partner with the police to establish Wabag town and built roads and bridges. Thadius was used by the colonial administration to help with its work.

The story how "gavman" Came to Wabag" by Daniel Kumbon



At first the Wabag people didn't want the 'government' to settle in their areas. One reason for this was to avoid the uneven fights they had witnessed at Wakumale and Kopen in which their young men were killed by police rifle fire against which their wooden shields, spears and bows and arrows were ineffectual. And they still remembered the 1934 massacre at Tole village, a one-sided affair in which 15 people were killed and This had occurred four years before James Taylor and John Black built a base camp and an airstrip in Wabag in March 1938. The colonial government directed Ian Downs and other kiaps to investigate the police shootings, maintain regular patrols, pay compensation, maintain peace and gain the confidence of the people of Wabag.

Captain Clarke worked to develop the town. A new government station was erected. Most of the buildings, all made from bush materials, were built. The construction of the Wabag aerodrome was started but, although not fully complete, it was able to serve as an emergency landing strip for allied aircraft during the war.²¹

Beginning of the Wabag Mission in the 1940s

When in 1941 John Clarke established a government patrol post at Wabag which closed in 1942 when war came. It re-opened in 1946. That was about all the outside contact the people of Wabag had until 1948 when missionaries including Fr Jerry Bus Fr Gerry Bus, a Dutch national, arrived in New Guinea on 17 September 1947. The ban on missionaries moving into new areas had been lifted in July 1947 and Fr Ross was keen to open up new stations. Fr Ross had already ventured into Kumdi, Kuruk, Kuli and Wurup which had not appeared on his travel permit previously but was keen to go further. Fr Ross had the policy of baptising all the babies that were brought into the Rebiatul mission. He had the feeling that they would be enough missionaries later to look after them while they were growing up.

²¹ The National 6 December 2018.

Fr Gerry Bus moves to Wabag 1947

Fr Gerry Bus, a Dutch national arrived in New Guinea 17th September 1947. The ban on missionaries moving into new areas had been lifted in July 1947 and Fr Ross was keen to open up new stations. Fr Ross had already ventured into Kumdi, Kuruk, Kuli and Wurup which had not appeared on his travel permit previously but was keen to go further. Fr Ross had the policy of baptising all the babies that were brought into the Rebiamul mission. He had the feeling that they would be enough missionaries later to look after them while they were growing up (Mennis Interview of Fr Bus).

Fr Bus:

“I met Fr Ross the first time late in September 1947 at Nondugl. I think it was in the afternoon the mission boys told me a missionary was approaching the station so I went out to meet him and there was little Fr Ross with a pipe in his mouth. He was on one of his patrols in the Middle Wahgi and he had decided to continue his walk to see us at Nondugl where Fr Walachy was in charge. Fr Bernarding was in Minj and at first I was supposed to go to Banz.”

“My appointment was to the Wabag area. Fr Ross had made one or two reconnaissance trips to the Wabag area and I was to go there under his direction. That sounded all right, but in practice the distance between Hagen and the Wabag area was three days walking via Tomba. Fr Ross knew about my appointment to the Wabag area so when he met me he told me there in Nondugl he told me that he planned to make a trip to Wabag in the second half of October and I asked if I could go with him. He said, “Of course you must come too”.

Around the beginning of October 1947, Fr Bus walked from Nondugl via Minj and Kuli to Mt Hagen where Fr Ross and he got ready for a longer trip into the Wabag area. Fr Bus was amazed at the cargo the carriers had of bedding, camping requirements and food.

Fr Bus remembered:

“We left on 16 October walking via Tomba, Wailya and into the Cha valley. Here we stayed a couple of nights as we thought we might make a station there. After this we crossed the range to the River Lai. On that trip Fr Ross actually surveyed the site at Yaibos to see if it was suitable for an airstrip. From Yaibos we went to Birip where we stayed and then we went to Wabag and met the Patrol Officer Mr Macilwain who was quite helpful. He went with us further west to the border of the uncontrolled territory near Sopas and then he returned to Wabag.”

“We walked as far as Kopen and from there looked down on the uncontrolled area. Then we returned to Wabag and spent the weekend with Mr Macilwain. On Monday we walked back down the Lai Valley again towards Wapenamanda. Fr Ross advised me to build the first mission station at Pompobus not too far from Wapenamanda as the government was planning to build an airstrip at Wapenamanda and perhaps shift the whole government station from Wabag there. We slept there and then went around the north side of the Hagen range. It took us two days to get into the Baiyer River and from there we made our way to Hagen” (Interview M. Mennis).

Q. What food did you take?

“It was a long time ago that we made that trip but I wouldn’t be surprised if we took plenty of boiled eggs wrapped in paper to prevent breakages. We always took enough tinned food, bread and honey hoping it would last a number of days. We carried a few American army canvas chairs and army cots to sleep in. I learnt from Fr Ross to take enough care of myself on these bush trips and walk enough carriers and supplies and also to start early in the morning.”

Fr Ross wrote a letter to the Apostolic Administer Fr Willem van Baar:

“Fr Bus ought to be free at once to go to Wabag by plane with supplies, tools and a few boys. I can meet him there from time to time, either at Pompabus or Wapenamanda or Wabag itself. He is full of enthusiasm for the new work and is willing to start as soon as you give the word ... Bob Macilwain is very friendly and helpful to us ... Fr Bus could remain at Wabag until he has sufficient supplies to start at Pompabus or Wapenamanda He has seen both places and cannot go wrong in his choices.”



In February 1948, Fr Bus and Fr Tony Cruysberg flew into Wabag by a Dragon plane piloted by Fr John Glover with supplies from Banz to Wabag. Here at Pompabus Fr Gerry set about building bush material houses and a church. When Fr Tony went on home leave Fr Bus was alone until Fr Bernie Fisher arrived in October 1949.

Warriors in Mt Hagen

“When I was on my own, I visited Fr Ross several times. I used to stay over-night in Wailya six hours from Pompobus and from Wailya to Tomba another 6 hours hard walking up the Hagen Range and then down to Mt Hagen. Fr Ross was my nearest

neighbour. He was a very good host and always made sure you had everything you needed. I talked my problems over with him and the work I was trying to do. It is hard to remember now but he was the man who gave me advice. I would stay over-night in the priests’ house which had been built pre-war. Fr Ross’s room was the second from the end ever since I remember. There was the old bush church there when I first went there. It had timber walls and *kunai* roof. There were four small storage buildings. There were two classrooms. Fr Ross’s office and the little room next to it were the kitchen and dining room – so tiny.”

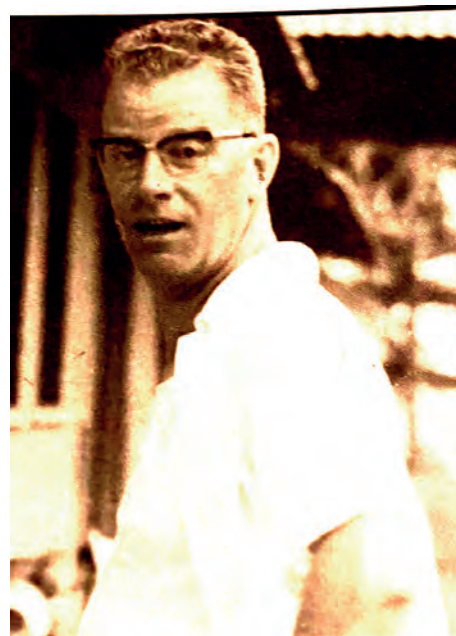
Q. How many people might there be for a meeting in Hagen?

“There might be five or six of us but no more. It was not big enough for that. Two of these buildings have been moved to the coffee plot. In the pre-war days it was rather a wild place and then after the war so many had been killed – up to 60 Sisters died in the war. There were only a few places on the coast that had Sisters. It took years to start again. There was no sisters’ convent in Hagen as they didn’t come until much later after George Bernarding was appointed Bishop.”

At that stage Wabag was the administrative centre of the Enga District but it only consisted of, “a cluster of bush buildings squatting alongside a long, soggy, downhill airstrip capable of taking DC3 aircraft” (Mihalic 1999: 113). At the end of 1954, Fr Bus invited the Lutheran missionaries, Revd. Otto Hintze and Revd. Willard Burce to the mission to discuss the Wabag language. He said, “We learnt from each other and came up with a phonemic alphabet. This was the first time there they had tried to help each other. Bill Burce was friendly on a personal level with some of the Catholic missionaries and they got to know each other” (Interview M. Mennis).

Fr Bus continued:

“The deaths of Bishop Wolf on the *Dorish Maru* and Bishop Loerks on the *Akikaze* meant that the Madang and Wewak mission centres had lost both their bishops. There was one administrator, Fr Willem Van Baar, for all of the SVD missions from Lae to the Dutch border so he was the man in charge of everything. In June 1948 two new Bishops were appointed: Bishop Apelhans for Alexishafen and Bishop Arkfeld for Wewak which covered Mt Hagen and Wabag. The contact between them was by plane as Bishop Arkfeld was a pilot and would fly in regularly in his little Austin. So after 1948 Wabag belonged to the Wewak Diocese because from Mt Hagen westwards the dioceses were under the Wewak Diocese 1957 the SSpS sisters arrived in Enga to teach at the Catholic school. Later other arrived to take over the leprosarium in 1958 at nearby Yampu. Sister Ewaldine spent nine years helping the lepers and administering the life-saving drug *dapsone* which cured patients after several months enabling them to return home.”



Photograph Fr Bus SVD

Fr Bus noted Father Ross's daily activities:

“Fr Ross would get up early and was a good example for the young missionaries. He was very faithful to his duties as a member of the Society of the Divine Word. He would do his meditation early and say his prayers before Mass by about 6.30. The rest of the day would be instructions, sick calls and office work.”

“Later on when there were many Catholics, he was often called away to the villages to visit the sick. He never said no to a sick call. In the evening we would sit around and smoke in the little recreation room. That was the fifth in the wooden house. He was always quite pleasant. He would tell of his experiences etc and then after an hour or so he would retire. Most of the time he would go to the church and make a visit, then he would go back to his room and do quite a bit of reading. He retired quite late. He always kept up with the baseball matches with a good radio with a big battery. He used a pipe and in the evening and also he used to make his own cigars.”

“When I made that first trip with Father Ross it was twenty-seven years ago. He must have been about fifty by then he said to me, “Jerry if I can keep this up for another ten years I will be quite happy” He said that quite often. At that stage he out-walked me – he out-walked most people. In fact he kept it up much longer than the ten years much, much longer. It was only in the last five years that he slowed down as far as the long distance-walking goes. He was agile and was called a mountain goat as he was light and quick.”

“On the trip back to Hagen we returned around the north side of the Hagen range. It was pretty rough going. – it has all deep gullies you have to cross before going down to the Baiyer River. I had had it. I was extremely tired I was sitting down waiting for the rest of the group to catch up – because I was leading the group. When Fr Ross came up I said “I’ve had it. I can’t move.”

He said, “Don’t feel so bad because even now I am really tired. This is the roughest country I have seen.” This gave me little bit of encouragement. As far as the missionary priests went, we got a big group of Americans after the war and then another big group of Americans later on. A new group of German missionaries came in 1951 -53. Most of them were sent up into the

Highlands. So the priests' numbers were built up much faster than the sisters. As most of the highlands had been opened to missionaries in 1947, the administrator at that time was Fr Willem van Baar sent a lot of new missionaries up to the highlands.

DANIEL KUMBON takes up the story of Fr Bus.

"In 1948, there was a sudden rush by Christian denominations to establish mission stations after the colonial Administration lifted restrictions of movement to unpacified areas of what is now Enga Province. Prior to that there had already been rivalry between Lutheran and Catholic missionaries to win new converts around Mt Hagen. Into this situation came newly ordained Dutch priest Fr Jerry Bus SVD, who had left Antwerp harbour aboard the '*Grootekerk*' on 30 April 1947 bound for New Guinea. The services of Fr Bus and other missionaries were urgently needed to bring Christianity to places like Enga."

"As he was inexperienced, he asked and got a Dutch '*wantok*' to help him, a veteran missionary Fr Tony Cruysberg who agreed even though he was about to go on home leave, which for missionaries was a rare occurrence. Tony spent three months with Jerry to give him a good introduction. The two men headed first for Pombopus in Wapenamanda. Thereafter, Jerry trekked west, searching for land to establish a mission station in his assigned area in Wabag."

"In one of his first letters home Fr Bus wrote: "Don't think that people were waiting for my arrival. Or that they were yearning to hear the Good News from my mouth." The people preferred axes. When he asked the people for a piece of land to build one or two houses, there was no response. Even if it were for a little school for the children to learn to read and write. We will pay the workmen. Negotiation and waiting, but no result. Jerry didn't give up. With the help of an interpreter, he learned the language. And he bought timber and sawed planks to build a small church and a little house for himself. He translated into the local language the catechism he had brought. But even as late as 1950, he sighed: "Few children come to school; maybe 10 people come to church on a Sunday. After two years there is little result from our efforts, and workers are hard to find to do the necessary work around the place." Was he tempted to go to another area and try there? "These moods are passing and can make you down for a while; but a missionary must carry on and not give up. "So Jerry persevered. He was still there in 1967, having extended his area of operation from Pompabus to Wanepap and Sari."

"In Sari he experienced his best years in the Highlands.²² He was appointed regional superior of the SVD in PNG with 180 confreres in four dioceses. He remained in this position for three terms, until 1976. It was the time for big changes and important decisions: In 1977 Jerry entered the third phase of his mission in PNG: working with the Movement for a Better World. He managed this with a small group of dedicated religious and lay people, first from Madang and later from Kerowagi in Simbu. In 1996, the SVD celebrated 100 years of work in Papua New Guinea. Fr Bus had spent 50 of those years in Enga Province. He was touched when crowds of people came to celebrate with him and receive communion. His work and zeal had borne much fruit."

"When Jerry was 74 it seemed best that he should leave PNG. He was respected and admired, and he saw that others needed to come forward. On 6 January 2007, Fr Jerry Bus fell and was badly hurt. He prayed his favorite Psalm 63 that he learned by heart: "You have always been my help...my heart clings to you." He died on 8 January 2007."

"When the news of the death of their beloved pioneer priest reached the congregation of Sari Catholic Mission in Wabag PNG there was great sadness." A full and good life this missionary

²² Posted in Churches & religion, History & colonialism, People|Permalink|Comments (2)

has had,” wrote Fr Antoon Vedrschuur SVD. “We lost a precious confrere and a pleasant companion. We thank God for him.” He hoped that back home in Holland he has time for rest, contemplation and prayer.”²³



BISHOP Arnold Orowae of Wabag was born in 1955 in PNG

After having completed his postulancy (1993-1994) and novitiate (1995-1996). In 2014 he obtained a Licentiate in Moral Theology at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome. He was previously a lecturer in the Seminary of Banz in the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen. ¹(SL)

He delivered a homily at a service during the Catholic Bishops Synod in Rome. In his remarks, Bishop Orowae focused on the family as the place where most people come to know Christ and learn to be members of His Church.

We encourage our families to search for the joy that comes from meeting Christ in the Gospel. It is there they will find this happiness,” Bishop Orowae said. “Families should be encouraged to rediscover the Gospel, read the Good News with children in the home, and in the basic Christian communities... “Today, many families are struggling with challenges and distractions. These have to be faced and overcome to build healthy families. The families are at their best when it comes to discussing and tackling problems and conflicting issues. “The Church is grateful for the many Catholic families who believe in the gospel values, follow them in family life, teach the faith to the children, and set examples that other families can see and imitate.”



Wabag ²⁴ FR GIORGIO LICINI

²³ *From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository*

²⁴ <https://asop>



In 2014, Arnold Orowae of Wabag became the new President of the Bishops' Conference.

At their annual general meeting last week, the Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands elected Bishop Arnold Orowae of Wabag (right) as their new president and Archbishop Steve Reichert (left) of Madang as deputy president.

The two men serve through the Central Committee, which is elected every three years, and whose other members are Bishop Rochus Tatamai of Bereina, Bishop Gilles Cote' of Daru-Kiunga and Archbishop Douglas Young (Finance). The bishops discussed other issues including education, health and the conference pastoral plan.²⁵

Two Highland women. The plight of women in the Wabag area was discussed and their need for help. One of these women had lost her house in a fire and was getting support.



Sr Mathilda made her vows with the Mercy sisters in Wabag

A "singsing" dance group from St Clement's parish set a very joyous atmosphere to the whole celebration as they headed the entrance and gospel processions. The strong faith of the people was very evident in the strong volume of the singing capably led by the choir.

Mathilda chose the gospel of Luke 9: 57 – 62 (The Cost of Following Jesus) to illustrate her theme of "Follow Me". Maryanne Kolkia rsm gave an excellent explanation of the vows before Mathilda recited them and then signed in the presence of Sisters Berneice Loch, Institute Leader, Theresia Tina, Institute Councillor and Bishop Arnold. After Mass the celebrations continued at McAuley House over a light lunch.²⁶

²⁵ Arnold Orowae, the new president of Catholic bishops. PNG Attitude 11 May 2014

²⁶ <https://institute.mercy.org.au/a-joyous-occasion-in-png/>

Maryanne Kolkia Now that Mercy Works has started to move into Simbu Province, Maryanne is working tirelessly to make connections with local leaders and identify the needs of the community. Simbu province is a rugged mountainous area located in the central highlands.



Although the smallest province in the country in land area, it is the most densely populated. A large part of the focus in Simbu will be the SME Training model that was very successful in Goroka and Mt. Hagen. 'Thinking Big, Starting Small' is the statement that will underpin this program. Maryanne's drive and determination to bring about meaningful change within the community provides the foundations for the goals of the program through job creation and up-skilling vulnerable women and men.

Sr Maryanne Kolkia has done marvelous work with Mercy Works in several provinces in Papua New Guinea. (See the chapter on Simbu)

Sister Clare de Paul Gilchrist worked in the Enga Province

On Sunday 17th March 2024, I met my friend Diana Jago and over lunch we discussed the tragedy of events in the Wabag area of Papua New Guinea. News of a massacre of 53 men was hitting the headlines around the world and it was very concerning news of the breakdown of law and order in the Enga Province.

Then Diana told me about her aunt, Sister Clare de Paul Gilchrist, who had worked for years at Pumakos near Wabag. Sister Clare was a Mercy nun. One of 178 Mercy Sisters who had helped in PNG for over fifty years. I decided to follow up on Sister Clare. There was an article on her in the Sydney Morning Herald.



Sr Francis Hacombe, (superior), Sr Clare de Paul Gilchrist, Sr Helen McDonald, Sr Margaret Shokeshalt. Mercy Sisters who went to Pumakos in 1965

Sister Clare was born in 1923 and had had many years' experience in the Sydney Mater Hospital. She was chosen to go to PNG along with three other Sisters of Mercy. They arrived in PNG in 1965 and were posted to Pumakos, near Wabag, to begin school and medical centre. Sister Clare set up a hospital in a small native material building which had been prepared for her by the local people - the walls were made of 'pit-pit' blinds (plaited reed) and the traditional roof was thatched with kunai grass - and she got to work.²⁷

²⁷ Sydney Morning Herald 2 December 2009

The Sydney Mater Hospital sent the necessary supplies and medical equipment for the new hospital, but there was no humidi-crib for newborns with breathing difficulties. So, Sister Clare improvised. She set up a kerosene-powered primus stove to boil kettles of water for steam, which was then fed into the baby's plastic-covered cot, helping to relieve respiratory troubles.

According to the article in the SMH. Sister Clare also “went to outstations at Kwia, Imankabus and other distant places to treat the sick who could not travel. She kept records in the early days, and over two years (1966-7) she attended to 8787 patients with the help of Mareo, her “dokta-boi” (semi-trained nurse). Patients sometimes walked over the surrounding mountains for days to get treatment because there was no other available.”

The Pumakos people appreciated her work and as more people heard of the medical services available, the demand for treatment increased. Sister Clare and the other missionaries decided to build a bigger and more permanent building and volunteers with building skills came from Sydney to construct it.

For twenty years Clare was in charge of health care at c, and during that time, she was on the Catholic Health Board and the Provincial Health Board as representative of the churches with the Provincial Government. The various church health bodies in the region worked well together as nearly all the staff were mission trained. Eventually, the Mater Hospital at Pumakos, which started humbly as a bush structure, grew in size and number of staff. For its constant training of indigenous staff and reliable health services for a large number of patients, the government recognised it as the health centre for the district. There were two 15 bed wards, a 10-bed obstetric ward and general wards of 50 beds.²⁸

The other Sisters in the convent set up the school for boarders. they built o big boarding dormitory for girls, not for the boys. Sister Clore commented on the spiritual resolve and power of prayer at work: There was great conversion of heart enabling the Catholic Church at Pumokos to carry out renewal programs throughout the valley. During this time, the people broke spears and promised not to fight and maintain peace.²⁹



²⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald* September 2009

²⁹ *Crossings in Mercy* Chapter 7 by Sr Teresa Flaherty

But the peace did not last - There was tribal war again in 1991

The Sisters often heard gunfire but thought the mission personnel would be safe, although there was no guarantee of this happening. Sister Clare bravely questioned the warring clan leaders and the people about their intentions towards the mission. In response, they insisted that they wished no harm to come to the missionaries; With intermittent fighting going on around them in the form of bullets and flying arrows, and warriors advancing across the property; it was a terrifying time for the sisters.³⁰



They still decided to stay on so they could help the village women. They had been there in the peaceful times so decided to stay on for the time being. to carry on with the health services and the CTC. They depended on each other's support. survived this ordeal without each other's support. Sometimes the bullets would be flying over our house and one afternoon the only place where they could sit was the foundry, because the kitchen was in the crossfire and it would be dangerous to stay there.

Helen who was the inspector of schools at Pumakos

'A time to leave Inevitably, the sisters reached the conclusion that they would have to go, and if they did, perhaps the fighting would cease. Some of the trouble was stirred up due to political rivalry among the clans in a provincial government by-election, and from April to August 1991 there was no effort by the government to work to bring peace to the people.

On Friday September 27, 1991, the priests' house, store, garages and some parts of the Catechist Training Centre were destroyed by fire. The same night, the sisters' convent was burnt down. Within a week, the church was destroyed. Sometime later, some of the classrooms were burnt down. Almost everything was destroyed - the rest of the Catechist Centre, staff houses, school buildings and the health centre. There were only seven buildings left standing, mainly school buildings and staff houses. The following night the remaining buildings were burnt down. The entire station of ninety buildings was burnt to the ground! A time to mourn. Can words on paper convey the destruction and loss? Who can describe the horror of the all-consuming fires rising to the skies or the finality of charred metal, darkened concrete foundations and scarred patches of earth left.³¹

Later peace was declared and the mission buildings were erected again. Mass was celebrated outdoors with the altar near the priests' former presbytery. Church representatives, many of them women, stood in line with blue, red and white uniform clothing and decoration, to form an enclosure. When questioned about this, they explained the symbolism: "A church has walls, but as ours as yet, has none; we have made the wall ourselves."

³⁰ *Crossings in Mercy Chapter 7 by Sr Teresa Flaherty*

³¹ Ibid

Sister Clare returned to Pumakos, when peace was declared to take part in the celebrations. It was a time to remember absent friends and co-workers, such as the Sisters of St Therese who had been with the Mercy Sisters in community and ministry at Pumakos and later at Wanepop - Sisters Laurentia, Leonie, Heriberta, Bernadette, Petro and Maria Goretti. Helen Kiponge, who had received her qualifications as a registered nurse with the sisters, now saw herself as carrying on the work of Sister Clare in the Pumakos area. "After the communal worship in the liturgical celebration, in true England style, lavish hospitality and exuberance were expressed through sharing the mumu feast, speeches of welcome, presenting of gifts and joyous clan singsings and feasts.³² After attending the celebrations of peace, Sister Clare returned to Sydney. She always spoke of her time in Papua New Guinea with love and affection in spite of the hardships. She died in 2009. She was regarded as a Holy Woman.



3rd Auxiliary Bishop Bp Justin Ain Soongie, by Abigail Seta

"The Diocese of Wabag officially welcomed its third Auxiliary Bishop, Bp Justin Ain Soongie, in an episcopal ordination witnessed by nearly five thousand Catholic faithful and friends at the Sangurap parish. Held on Thursday, 2nd September 2021, the celebration had as its theme 'Yumi stap laip long Kraiis.'"



Bp. Arnold Arowae was the main celebrant and consecrator at the Episcopal Ordination. Abp. Douglas Young from the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen and Bp Donald Lippert of Mendi were the co-consecrators. Present to witness this momentous occasion was His Excellency Archbishop Fermin Emilio Sosa Rodriguez, Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea. Eight other bishops and priests concelebrated at the event.

³² *Crossings in Mercy Chapter 7 by Sr Teresa Flaherty*

“In his homily, Bp Arnold Arowae spoke on the power to make a choice. “If our focus is Jesus the Way and the Life, then we will choose Jesus. Once the choice is made, we go out to speak and proclaim Christ”, he said, as he encouraged the new bishop. Bp Justin Ain was escorted in by the youths of Sangurap parish. The Apostolic Nuncio read and displayed the bull prior to the Episcopal Ordination rites. The Rite of Ordination then followed, with the anointing of oil, the bishop’s ring, mitre and the crosier.

The celebration concluded with speeches by the Apostolic Nuncio, Abp. Douglas Young, Paul Kurai, a faithful catholic and owner of Ribito Hotel, Margaret Kameso and Bp Justin.

“In his address to the new bishop, the Apostolic Nuncio encouraged him to consider as the key of his identity the mystery of Christ and the attributes willed by the Lord Jesus Christ for his Church, a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. “As Vicar of the great shepherd of the sheep, you must manifest through your life and episcopal ministry the fatherhood of God.

“In your life you have to show to the People of God, the goodness, the loving care, the mercy, the gentleness and the authority of Christ, who came to give his life and to gather all people into one family, reconciling them in the love of the Father,” he stated.

“The celebration was colourful as different groups attired in their custom bilas filled the congregation. The faith filled congregation responded to the celebrant exhibiting the vibrancy of the church in the highlands. The laity team and youths of Sangurap and Sari parishes led the choir of the entire congregation in praise and song while the different groups led the different processions. Several songs were composed for the occasion. A festive meal was held for the visitors and invited guests, while the parishes shared food and drink. The first mass of Bp Justin Ain Soongie was held the next day.³³



Family group at the ceremony above

³³ /www.thenational.com.pg/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/27abKurai2_cmyknew.jpg?ssl=1

Wabag has its problems

There is a dense rural population and coffee and pyrethrum are widely grown in food gardens as cash crops though depredations during tribal fights and difficulties in marketing have inhibited the development of a significant commercial agriculture sector considerable violent crime and chronic house break-ins have continue to compromise the amenity of town life. A fine public library established by the Australian administration immediately before Independence in 1975 is long since dispersed, book pages being desirable for rolling cigarettes and reading books not having taken hold.

Three young men from East Sepik, Enga and Madang respectively, made their final commitments to becoming SVD priests at the St Peter Channel Church (Erima) in Port Moresby last Saturday. Witnessed by several hundred Catholic faithful and members of a number of Catholic religious orders, Jeremiah Kaumbal, Jerry Kurai and Herman Kunow were ordained as deacons by the Archbishop of Port Moresby Cardinal Sir John Ribat. The trio will now work in parishes for the next six months before they are finally ordained as priests. Kaumbal will be posted to the Pombapus Parish in Wabag Diocese, Kurai to Boikin Parish in Wewak and Kunow will be at the Jomba Parish in Madang. The rector of the SVD College at

the Bomana Catholic Theological Institute Fr Joseph Mesa said the three young men would be working under SVD priests in those parishes until they are ordained in August 2021. The ordinations will follow the celebrations of the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first SVD missionaries at Rempy on the north coast of Madang. The ordination was a significant accomplishment for the three young men and their families. For the Kurai family, it was another exciting chapter to their family



history, started by their patriarch Kurai Tapus who was a forerunner in the faith. Through his initial contact with both the colonial administrators and pioneer missionaries he has carved a clear pathway for his posterity.

Kurai, the influential Kamainwan leader became one of the most famous early converts to the Catholic faith in what is now the Wabag Diocese. Canisius Kaut, an uncle of Herman Kunow, spoke on behalf of the three families who had given their sons to the service of God: "As parents we want to thank the most blessed Trinity for giving us these wonderful boys and for guiding and protecting them through a very difficult and lonely life of a Catholic SVD seminarian formation programme." Addressing the deacons directly, Kaut said: "We want to congratulate you for making it this far. We all can only support you but it is you who will really decide if you would like to be a priest of God. Please always pray. Your success is our success, your failure is our failure."

Wabag Province and violence

Physical violence against those accused of sorcery is widespread in the country. People have been tortured and murdered because of unfounded beliefs. Committed to helping the victims, the local Church has included it as a priority in its Pastoral Plan. This is a widespread problem in Papua New Guinea, especially in Enga province, where the Catholic Diocese of Wabag is

located. Popular beliefs about such practices remain entrenched in the country. It is not uncommon for an entire community to attack individuals accused of engaging in the occult (rituals and spells), going so far in some cases as to torture and kill the victims.

When medical knowledge cannot explain certain deaths, many people believe that the death is a result of sanguma, sorcery or black magic, this is according to a report by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands (CBCPNGSI) and its Migrants & Refugees Desk. In some cases, "such as in HIV deaths, family members are blaming it on sorcery in order to avoid the stigma and shame attached with HIV," says the report. This can lead to allegations, "normally after a glasman (diviner) is engaged to find out the cause of death." Then, "Once the name of a person comes up, it leads to accusations and eventually torture and death. "In light of the situation, the Diocese of Wabag is strongly committed to the fight against SARV, so much so that it is a priority in its 2021- 2025 Pastoral Plan.

In 2014 Bishop Arnold Orowae of Wabag: said "enough is enough! The Catholic Church will hunt the witch hunters."



Above meeting to discuss the problem in Wabag. A Catholic Bishop in Papua New Guinea has announced that the diabolical Papua New Guinean tendency to hunt and slay persons alleged to be witches shall be combated in the coming year.

Diocese of Wabag stands by victims of witchcraft accusations

09/29/2021, 18.03

Physical violence against those accused of sorcery is widespread in the country. People have been tortured and murdered because of unfounded beliefs. Committed to helping the victims, the local Church has included it as a priority in its Pastoral Plan. Port Moresby (AsiaNews) – Sorcery Accusation-related Violence (SARV) refers to physical violence against people accused of practising witchcraft, sorcery or black magic. This is a widespread problem in Papua New Guinea, especially in Enga province, where the Catholic Diocese of Wabag is located. Popular beliefs about such practices remain entrenched in the country. It is not uncommon for an entire community to attack individuals accused of engaging in the occult (rituals and spells), going so far in some cases as to torture and kill the victims.

In some cases, “such as in HIV deaths, family members are blaming it on sorcery in order to avoid the stigma and shame attached with HIV,” says the report. In light of the situation, the Diocese of Wabag is strongly committed to the fight against SARV, so much so that it is a priority in its 2021-2025 Pastoral Plan. “Peter Pumbu, Diocesan Caritas Coordinator, with the support of Bp Arnold Orowae and some priests” are on the “frontline of saving SARV



victims and combating this belief”. The effort requires not only extreme and often dangerous attempts to save the victims, but also in working on prevention and raising awareness.

Currently, 14 SARV victims are under the care of the Diocese of Wabag, including three children. In its findings, the 2020 study mentions nine deaths from torture and beatings alone. The latest case occurred on 8 September 2021 – a woman sheltering in a diocesan safe house in Lae died from the beatings and torture she suffered.

Thanks to careful analysis, including visiting the homes of volunteers who take care of the victims, the diocesan report identifies five central points to help SARV victims. Rescue (1) and safety (2) are the first decisive steps. Often victims have suffered serious trauma from beatings and burns to the body with hot metal bars, which require hospitalisation. After they are discharged, the victims need a safe house (3), far from the community and the accusers. Finally, the diocese engages in a mediation process (4), a “conference” involving the victim’s community, followed by reintegration (5) into the community in the safest way possible. For SARV victims, their experience can result more than six months under the care of the diocesan team.

In Pina parish, the local priest made a house available to three women accused of witchcraft, and two children whose parents were killed in October 2020 after they were accused of sorcery. The diocese has recently organised a five-day workshop to raise awareness among the population and provide suitable tools to fight this problem. As the report indicates, “Hearing from the health professionals enabled the participants to understand that most deaths have medical explanations, including HIV, TB, heart attack etc.,” and that sorcery had nothing to do with the sudden deaths.

Bringing Peace to Wabag. PNG women accused of witchcraft freed



The province police deputy commander Epenes Nili addressing the villagers at Fiyawena after police and missionaries intervened to save four women accused of witchcraft from being killed (*Anton Lutz*)

“The women were accused of practising sorcery (or ‘sanguma’), after a measles epidemic killed several people in Enga province last year. They and their children were in danger of being murdered, but an expedition into a remote area of the province by missionaries and police has led to local people formally renouncing such violence. Enga province’s police deputy commander Epenes Nili said a so-called “witch-finder”, who had made the allegations against the women, publicly withdrew them. “She was hired [by locals] with 6,000 kina (approximately \$2,800),” he said.” The people from that area gathered around and forced her to tell them that the four women [had] ‘sanguma’.” Because of the money and gifts and all that, she lied to the people of Fiyawena that the four women were possessed with this ‘sanguma’ spirit.” They kept the women and their children in a guarded area, ready to be murdered, he added. Commander Nili also said the local people released the women and formally renounced such violence in a stone-turning ceremony. “We witnessed a ceremony there ... then they get a stone and [they] have to turn over that stone - that is an indication or sign that you will never repeat, or you will never be involved in such activity,” She turned a stone around, informing the authorities, the church, every one of us that she will not [get] involved in that thing again and she accepted the word of God,” commander Nili said. Church leaders in PNG have been fighting against sorcery for years.”

“Arnold Orowae, the Catholic bishop of Wabag, went so far as to threaten any Catholic involved in violence against accused witches with excommunication. This shouldn’t happen — we’re not in the times before ... we shouldn’t be accusing and torturing or even killing people. “I’m not happy hearing about this torturing of innocent, defenceless [people], especially women.” Local and overseas media coverage of the plight of them”³⁴

³⁴ By Bruce Hill, staff Posted Tue 20 Jan 2015 at 6:16pm Tuesday 20 Jan 2015 at 6:16pm, updated Wed 21 Jan 2015 at 9:59pm

Massacre in Enga February 2024

The headlines splashed around the world of the massacre in February 2024. It would have included the mission station at Pumakos which is in the Enga province.

George Kakas (pictured) said “officers who responded to the Enga massacre were “devastated.” (*ABC News: Natalie Whiting*)

Acting Superintendent Kakas said one of the tribes, along with their allies and mercenaries, were on their way to attack a neighbouring tribe when they were ambushed. There are bodies all over the bush areas.³⁵



Summary by Ground News March 2024

Tribes at war with each other in Papua New Guinea's [Enga Province](#) have agreed to cease hostilities for a period of at least three months. However, the factions have not reached an agreement to surrender their weapons. The fighting has left hundreds dead, thousands injured, or homeless, with several hundred properties destroyed.³⁶

Summary by Ground News

The leaders of both warring factions are speaking with the State Conflict Resolution team in Port Moresby. The negotiations were brought to the capital because a ceasefire agreement and subsequent Preventive Order issued in September last year failed. The government's intervention came in following the latest casualties, including 50 men from the Palinau allies.

³⁵ *ABC News*

³⁶ Ground zero News



PART FIVE Madang – Alexishafen Mission History



Archbishop Benedict to Varpin with fellow priests and altar boys 1994

“In 1896, when the first Divine Word missionaries arrived, New Guinea was a German Colony. Previously, the Catholic Missions throughout German New Guinea were all under the Rabaul Vicariate of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart at Vunapope. However, they lacked personnel to evangelize the mainland. The Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, in Rome, Cardinal Ledochowski, wanted to separate the mainland of New Guinea from the Vicariate of Rabaul. On 28 May 1895, he asked Father Arnold Janssen if he were prepared to send missionaries to the new independent mission. He accepted at once, and on 10 February 1896, the ‘Prefecture of Wilhelmsland’ was canonically erected (Broderick, 1947)”.

St Arnold Janssen SVD, founder of the Society of the Divine Word

Arnold Janssen was second of eight children of a farming family at Goch in north-west Germany. His father, Gerard, and mother, Anna, were very devout and each night their family faithfully said long family prayers. His father was particularly devoted to the Holy Spirit and loved the prayer, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” He would say this often even when out ploughing in the fields frightening the crows with his loud appealing voice. It was this particular prayer that stayed with the young Arnold Janssen as he was growing up. That and a great devotion to the Holy Spirit passed on from his parents. Despite his farming background, Arnold received a good education studying science and mathematics and could have had a brilliant academic career. He took his degree in the year when Darwin published *The Origin of Species* and witnessed the beginning of a decline in faith in Europe. He was offered a post at a university but declined and decided to become a priest. Arnold Janssen was ordained as a diocesan priest in the seminary at Munster in 1862 on the Feast of the Assumption. For the next twelve years, he taught mathematics at a local Catholic college.

During all this time, he dreamt of being a missionary in foreign lands. After many setbacks, he bought a run-down inn in Steyl, Holland, to begin his order in 1875. With his father's prayers still ringing in his ears, he called it The Society of the Divine Word, SVD for short, *Societas Verbi Divini*, for the *Verbum Divinum* (Divine Word) stands for Jesus Christ our Lord, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Fr Janssen became the Superior-General of the Society of the Divine Word. Now the order has grown to thousands of priests, brothers and sisters in many countries around the world. Arnold Janssen was canonized in 2003.¹

Fr Eberhard Limbrock SVD

Because Fr Janssen had studied science and mathematics at University in Germany and was aware of Darwin's new book on evolution, he counteracted this theory by encouraging his missionaries to study ethnology and anthropology as part of their vocation. From their earliest years in New Guinea, the SVD fathers produced some renowned scholars like Frs Kirschbaum, Tschauder and Nilles.



In 1896, Fr Limbrock SVD, who had been a missionary in China for thirteen years, was appointed the first Prefect Apostolic in New Guinea. He was a blacksmith by trade before becoming a seminarian and had a practical turn of mind. He knew Fr Janssen personally as he had trained with him at Steyl in Holland. Fr Mihalic described Limbrock as “a wiry Westphalian farmer, by nature practical and not easily discouraged. The years in China made him a well-balanced judge of men, not afraid to call a spade a spade²”

Fr Limbrock, 1858-1931

Fr Limbrock's companions were Fr F. Vormann, SVD, Fr J. Erdweg, SVD, and three Brothers: Canisius, Eustachius and Theodulphus. It took three months for them to reach New Guinea. They went first to Rabaul where the MSC missionaries helped them and lent them 10 native labourers. They arrived at Madang on board the *Stettin* on 18 August 1896.

The only trouble was the Lutheran mission had established mission centres on the coast near Madang and they did not want the Catholics missionaries to come. They had the ear of the German District Officer, von Hagen, who advised Limbrock to explore the coast to the north-west. “Something might be found up there which would be suitable for a mission station and headquarters.” Von Hagen agreed to sell a small block of land to them in Madang so long as it was only used to store cargo. “Von Hagen said he was making this request on behalf of the Rhenish Mission Society, a Lutheran mission group who had begun work there nine years earlier --- fearing they might be pushed out by the Catholic mission.”³

So Father Vormann set out on a reconnaissance trip by boat to the north-west of Madang with Fr Erdweg and Brother Canisius. They stopped at Seleu where a plantation owner helped them. He advised them to try Tumleo Island (He advised them to try Tumleo Island (off Aitape). The Superior and other Missionaries were unable to make the trip, as they were in the grip of malaria, but they soon joined them on Tumleo Island where they established a station.

¹ (Broderick, 1947)

² (Mihalic, 1971)

³ (Wiltgen, 1971: 331)

Later more stations were built all along the coast with churches and schools. Fr Kirschbaum went up the Sepik River and found Marienberg meaning the “Mount of Mary”. He was a famed explorer of the Sepik River and wrote about the people and their customs.

Photograph: The four pioneer sisters at Steyl preparing to go to New Guinea. Sister Martha, Sister Fridolina, Sister Valeria, Sister Ursula



Children at Tumleo doing the fish dance



The first of the Holy Spirit Sisters arrived

at Tumleo Island in 1899 and took over the school enabling the SVD fathers to do more missionary work on the outstations. By 1907, the sisters also ran the printing press providing hymns sheets and prayer books (Brumm, 1995). In 1901, Limbrock bought land at Bogia for a plantation and mission centre. But he was also searching for land closer to Madang as the shipping companies had decided not to go to Aitape any more forcing the missionaries to go to

Madang to get supplies and mail. It was not until September 1906 that Limbrock was able to buy land at Alexishafen, near Madang.

Fr Noss had the story of the start of Alexishafen on good authority:

Fr Limbrock went around the villages [near Madang] seeing where he could settle. He gave goods to the local villagers but the Lutherans from Nobanob came and told the villagers to return the goods. They all did this except those at Sek and this is how the mission began at Alexishafen. A local man, Thomos Kui, who was a policeman, was hiding from the Lutherans. They were against him as he was supposed to have stolen a woman from Kananam near Alexishafen. He said, “I don’t need Lutherans. I’ll invite the Catholics in”. That’s how it started. He got his clan on Sek Island to become Catholic. The Lutherans had been the first mission in the Madang area and they regarded the Sek area as part of their area as their language was the same as that at Kranket Island (Interview by the author).

A similar account of how Alexishafen was started was given by Fr J. Tschauder:

Father Limbrock did not have far to go. Ten miles from Madang, he came upon one of the best harbours in New Guinea, a natural area of water, swamp and jungle, but sheltered from both the north-west and the south-east monsoons. The long narrow Sek Island almost closed the entrance to the harbour. The island was populated whereas there were few signs of human life around the harbour on the mainland, except a few gardens belonging to the Sek Islanders, who were the owners of that land. The Sek people readily ceded all the land around the harbour to the mission. They were paid with trade goods as was customary. Axes, jungle-knives, loin cloths, saucepans, beads and other useful articles were given in compensation.

Sek Village near Alexishafen in the 1920s

Soon, however, fierce opposition arose against the Catholic Mission. The Sek people, instigated by a group of white residents, [Lutherans and government officials] all but cancelled their contract and were ready to hand back the articles they had received in payment for their land.

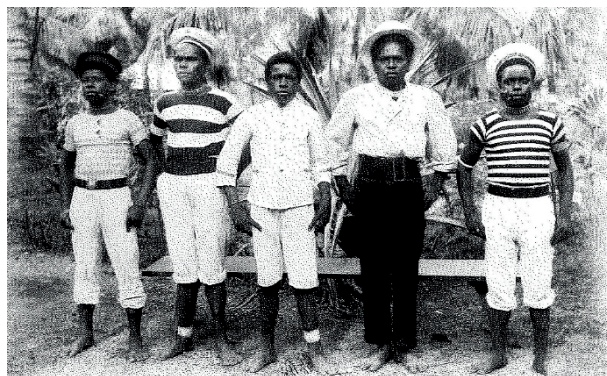
Alexishafen, as it is known to-day, would never have become the headquarters of the Catholic Mission and Seat of a Bishop, had it not been for one native of Sek Island. That native was Futol, whose name could be translated into "Hard Hitting Talk" or "Three Strokes." Be that as it may, Futol's talk to the assembled natives must have hit their heads extremely hard, for it was he who succeeded in making the natives stand by their contract. (interview with Fr Noss by the author).



The first shelter in Alexishafen, 1906 (M Kastner)

Fr Eberhard Limbrock together with Brother Canisius Hautkappe and Brother Sylvester occupied this shelter for about ten weeks. They used a crate as an altar, but the same crate was also used for meals and as an office table. A more substantial house was built and they moved in on 3 July 1905. Soon the Divine Word Missionaries established their headquarters at Alexishafen with a church and accommodation for the priests and brothers as well as a convent for the Sisters. A sawmill and plantation were set up to provide needed materials for the many mission stations. The centre became larger than Madang in size.

Local village children near Alexishafen in European dress



Fr Limbrock brought in new seeds of all kinds and set about making the mission self-sufficient. He also collected horses, buffalo, goats, and chickens. The coconut plantations provided financial support as the ships bringing goods to Madang could leave with copra in their holds. The sawmill provided materials for more buildings in out-stations. Through administering to the workers on the plantations, the Word of God was spread to their villages in the bush when they returned home and, when missionaries turned up at their inland villages, they were welcomed. Fr Heinrich Buschoff SVD taught a group of schoolchildren on Sek Island in 1907.



Monumbo men preparing for a sing-sing

The Mission at Monumbo between Tumleo and Madang

Father Wilhelm Ricken's letter 1907:

After the Mass, we arranged for the procession. And how fine they all stood in line, and at attention: there was perfect order, no talking or laughing; it seemed that they had all been changed, suddenly. When everything was in readiness, Father Schebesta appeared, carrying the Blessed Sacrament. He walked near to the middle section of the procession, surrounded by the altar boys. I followed in the company of those men and women who had good voices. I only needed to intone a song and then they joined in with goodwill. While the procession moved along, a man up in the tower struck the bell with a hammer. Many pagan men and women accompanied the pretty procession, following their beloved Master whom they did not yet know. Oh, how I hope and pray that they may soon have the great gift of Faith. The procession ended in the church. The faces, of the young and old alike, all radiated the happiness and joy that they had sought and found that day. They talked of this procession and the services for many weeks to come; and so, the Corpus Christi celebration is a lasting power for good. (OM 1924, 250–251)



Father Wilhelm Ricken's description shows that after almost a quarter of a century of missionary work among them, the Monumbo people had found a positive approach to the Christian faith.

*Fr Frans Vormann
with young men at
Monumbo 1907.*

It had become their faith before the missionaries moved to Manam in 1925 and Monumbo became the outstation of Bogia. Starting out from Monumbo, the priest in charge made contacts with the people of Manam, a volcanic island just opposite Monumbo. In 1925, the Sacred Heart Mission station in Monumbo was given up in favour of a new St Mary's station at Bieng on Manam Island. Beginning in 1917, the priest of Monumbo regularly undertook journeys to Manam. Monumbo could easily be looked after as an outstation of the nearby Bogia.⁴ At the end of 1901, Fr Franz Padberg (1873–1903), together with Br Ferdinand Nienhaus (1868–1927), began to build another station in Bogia, only about two hours' walk west of Monumbo. On 6 June 1901, the missionaries could move into the house. Some 40 to 50 men were employed to build the houses and for the work on the plantation.

The SVD missionaries were also interested in learning about the culture and beliefs of the people so they could try to understand the people's spiritual position. They were following the instruction from their founder Fr Arnold Janssen. However, this was where the problem lay. While the missionaries of both faiths tried to bring Christianity to the village people, there was mutual misunderstanding in many cases as to what was being taught and what was being heard.⁵



Am Tage der ewigen Profeß in Neuguinea: Von links nach rechts: Sr. Iduberga, Sr. Zeta, Sr. Criszentia; sitzend: Sr. Heldemara, Arnaldina. Die 5 Erstgenannten wurden auf der Akisaki erschossen u. ins M

The people often misinterpreted the new messages and cargo cults developed. Catechists were often the backbone of the missions as they could live on distant stations and provide instruction for newly visited villagers. They held positions of authority but, if they had not been instructed properly, they preached quite unorthodox teachings and this complicated many issues.

SSpS sisters at Alexishafen

⁴100 Sios bilong yumi long Niugini *Catholic Mission History in Mainland New Guinea 1896–1945* Paul B. Steffen 2021

⁵ Bid

Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea –

Lutheran missions started evangelization in Papua New Guinea in 1886 on the Huon Peninsula. Pioneer missionary Johannes Flierl from the Neuendettelsau Mission Society preferred to stay at Simbang some distance away from Finschhafen, the colonial headquarters. Flierl baptized the first two Lutheran converts in 1899, 13 years after his arrival. The first Roman Catholic SVD missionaries arrived. As already mentioned, the Lutherans had the ear of the German officials and were told there was no room for them in Madang. They were given a small area near the wharf in which to store materials. They then travelled to Tumble Island.

Christian Keysser, arrived in 1899. He learned the Kate language and decided that the best way to convert the people was in whole village baptism which became the policy of the Lutheran church. This way their numbers grew. Catechists were then sent out from these villages to other areas. By 1930 over half of the Morobe Province's population had become Christian. Lutheran missionaries from the Rhenish Mission Society came to the Madang area in 1887.

The Lutheran Missionaries' effect on the beliefs of the Bel people

By the mid-1880s, the Rhenish Lutheran Mission was well established in Madang. The Lutheran missionaries taught the local children, took care of their health and learnt their languages. E. Hannemann, Lutheran Pastor and ethnographer, arrived in Madang in 1923 and studied the Kranket language (Graged), which was later used throughout Madang in Bibles and readers. During his time in New Guinea, Hannemann wrote extensively. Among his articles were *Village Life and Social Change* 1944 and *Papuan Dancers and Dancing* published in 1935. Another work, *Keys to the Papuan's Soul*, described rituals and legends of the Madang people. Hannemann wanted to analyse these to determine if any dances were compatible with Lutheran teachings. Sadly, he concluded that even the most harmless dances had an element of ancestor worship in them and so had to be discouraged. This had an impact on the culture of the people; all dancing was banned for a time and the people had few ways to celebrate in their lives.

In the 1970s, I (the author), interviewed many villagers in the Madang area. Pall Tagari was a Lutheran catechist and a good friend. He gave the Lutheran perspective. The people believed in Anut, the creator god.

Pall Tagari, 27th February (1981b:60) (Pall was a Lutheran catechist)



The mission came in 1886 and saw all the things in the *hausboi* and found out there was a big *tambu* on the women going inside the *hausboi*. There were always big celebrations going on in the *hausboi*. The men had big feasts and ate pigs. If the women went inside the men would kill them. The women could not look at the secret wooden statues and other secret things. The mission thought that these wooden statues were like the golden idol in the Old Testament. When Moses went up the mountain the people made a golden cow and worshipped it. The mission heard that the men had special magic in the *hausboi* to give them strength. They would ask the wooden statue to give them strength before they went out to fight. The missionaries heard all this and told the men that these were wrong beliefs *giaman tok* and told the men that if they stopped these practices then they would be happier. Now there is lots of talk about the missionaries coming and banning our culture, but the missionaries did not *raus* the culture. The missionaries said we should keep all the good things in our culture and only discard the bad ways. We should not bow down to wooden statues and ask them to give us power nor should we fight our enemies.

The missionaries wanted us to find the good road first. When the missionaries came the people kept the *tambaran* and refused to listen to the missionaries. They thought if they did, they would not be able to eat pig, or make a singsing or carve statues. Los of Bilbil went to the school at Graged and heard the talk of the missions. He went back to Bilbil and saw the way his people lived. He told the people that their ways were wrong and that wooden statues would not help them fight. Before the men used to pray to Anut, but these wooden statues that the men prayed to and offered fruit to, were the things that the mission objected to. They said this was wrong - *giaman pasin*. The *likon* men prayed or made magic and all the good things were supposed to happen the rain would come or the right wind would blow. The men who did these things were called *likon*.

Cargo cultists accused the missionaries of hiding something from the people for example the way to get money or the cargo. Plenty of cargo cultists have died and others have turned back to Christianity. The people did not burn cultural things when they had the fires before baptism. The people threw in the vine with the strong smell and purpur and wood too that had a strong smell.

The missionaries told the people to put these wooden men on a table and they took them back to Germany. Before the people believed that Anut made the sun and the rain and the wind and they believed this before the missionaries came. They believed that Anut had power to *raus* everything or keep everything in order. The men made statues of Anut and put them in the *haus tambaran*. If Anut got cross he might send a big rain and wash the place out or a send a long dry season when everything would die. Anut was the traditional boss he was a god. (Interview M. Mennis 1978).

Kaltem of Hudini Village - The Lutheran Missionaries (1981b: 78 – 79)

An Amele man introduced the first missionary here. The missionaries who baptised me were Mr. Welsch and Mr. Wullenkord. All the people who wanted to hear the Christian message went to Amele and later they were baptised. The missionaries said that the magic for making gardens or for bringing the fish were Satan's works and all the materials for this magic should go into the fire. We did this for God and Welsch. One or two men stood out against this. They also burnt their bamboo pipes etc. the missionaries told us if we did the devil we would die. Everyone heard this and became Christians, they finished everything. The old people died, and the knowledge died with them. Now we stap nating [we are empty handed] (Interview author: M. Mennis.)

World War I in Madang and Alexishafen.

After war was declared in 1914, naval ships headed from Australia to Rabaul and then Madang to take over the German colony. Interesting details of this time are found in the diary of Lieutenant Clarence Read, RANR, who arrived in Madang on board the HMS *Berrima* on Thursday 24 September 1914.

Lieutenant Read wrote:

At 8 o'clock in the morning I was notified that I was to land at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang) in charge of the Naval Guard. About three hours later the *Berrima* dropped anchor off Madang and here I am --- Under gentle persuasion of the Encounter's guns, the town surrendered and the troops took possession. The Naval Guard consists of 32 all told and our duty is to take charge of all boats and regulate all shipping trading to the port⁶.

The Germans surrendered peacefully on orders from the German officials in Rabaul and met the Australians hat in hand on the wharf. On paper, this appeared to be a very significant date in the history of the town but, in many ways, life continued normally. However, one of the Australian sergeants decided to put the telephone exchange out of action to ensure there were

⁶ Read, 2016: 33, 43 and 48) Published by Brian Mennis

no hidden spies. Later, when they followed the line, they found it connected Madang with various houses and the mission at Alexishafen ⁷



Raising the Australian flag in Madang 1914

Lieutenant Clarence Read

In 1914 Lieutenant Clarence Hansby Read RANR visited Ali Island during the takeover by the Australians of German New Guinea. His description of Ali Island is worth reading. He kept a diary of his visit to Alexishafen and Ali Island.

I have read many accounts of mission endeavours in the Pacific both for and against. Without touching on the religious aspect, I would like to say one thing and that is the native communities under mission influence are a thousand times (this is no exaggeration) cleaner and healthier than those who continue to live under the old conditions. This island once the abode of filth and crime, is a picture. Running around the island are pathways where the undergrowth has been cleared away, and sand and white coral laid making progress cool and pleasant. ⁸

The German missionaries were obliged to take an oath of neutrality so they could continue working on their mission stations in all areas that had been under German control.



The mission boat "The Gabriel" was commandeered by Lieutenant Read to transport his troops around

⁷ Townsend, 1968: 80)

⁸ Brian Mennis *The New Guinea Diary* p 75

Read wrote **Saturday, 10 October 1914:** Today I took an armed party up to Alexishafen which is the next harbour of any size north of Madang. It is one of the ports of call for the steamers of the N.D.L. who visit there after leaving Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. The party, consisting of myself, one P.O. and 8 men, went up in the *Lili*. On approaching the harbour, we hoisted the white flag, being desirous of making a peaceful entry. We found that news of the occupation of Madang by the Expedition had reached the inhabitants by native runners, consequently we encountered no opposition.

Almost the whole of this district is controlled by the Catholic Mission who have a very fine machinery plant established. It is the Central Mission Station of German New Guinea, and there is a small army of boat builders, mechanics, engineers, etc, besides innumerable Malay, Chinese, and Kanakas engaged in almost every conceivable occupation. We took possession of about 30 rifles and shotguns and also the motorboat *Ramu*, and the island schooner *Penguin*. Instead of proving hostile, the Fathers of the Mission treated us with the greatest hospitality and showed us all over the immense plant and storerooms. After some little trouble, our engineering staff got the *Ramu* into working order and we returned to our depot quite satisfied with the results of the trip. We are thinking seriously, however, of transferring the engine of the *Ramu* to another of our prizes as she leaks rather badly (Read, 2016: 43).

Wednesday, 21 October 1914: Today I went with the Major and his interpreter, Sergt Munro, to Alexishafen where the Mission Father and his associates took the oath of neutrality. At the same time the Major made enquiries into the case of a native who had been well nigh hacked to pieces by savages at Dampier Island, (Karkar) which place is about 40 miles north of Madang and about 10 miles from the coast. The man had eight wounds, any one of which would have killed a white man instantly.

Marvellous to relate, however, he still lives though it is probable that he cannot last long. It is quite likely we will dispatch a punitive expedition, as having taken over the Government of Deutsch New Guinea, it becomes our duty to look after all classes and to punish evil doers ⁹

After 1921, the German colony was placed under the trusteeship of the League of Nations and became the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. As a result, the Expropriation Board was set up to oversee the confiscation of German plantations; the German planters lost their plantations in the 1920s. We see what happened through the story of Caroline Swartz. She was not a German national although married to a German planter who had several plantations on Karkar Island. A couple of officials of the Expropriation Board approached Caroline with the idea that if her husband, Otto Schwartz, signed over the two plantations on Karkar Island to her, she could keep one of them, but Schwartz refused. Caroline could see all her work being wasted, all those years of planting and managing the labour lines on Karkar Island. She was close to despair.

Where would they go? At that time, the Catholic Mission at Alexishafen had established a small school for mixed race children. The mission agreed to accommodate the family in a house near the school where her sons were enrolled. The community at Alexishafen welcomed Caroline and gave her a job teaching the schoolgirls sewing and cooking. She also got a permit for fishing with dynamite in Sek Harbour and was so successful she provided fish for the missionaries and workers. At one stage, Otto Schwartz tried to take the children off her, but the Administration supported her. (Interview with Caroline's son Franz Moeder).

⁹ Read's Diary (published by Brian Mennis in 2016: 48)



SSpS sister and domestic girls

Caroline's story illustrates what life was like after the First World War for the German planters. Their plantations were expropriated as part of the War Damages Act at the Treaty of Versailles. It was a sad time for the German planters; many suffered the same fate as Caroline, going from being successful plantation owners to a life of relative poverty. Many of them returned to Germany.

In 1921, the Australian Government ordered that all German missionaries were to leave the country within two years. However, three years later they were allowed to stay until 1928 but by then it was never enforced, and they were allowed to stay permanently.

Because they brought a message of peace, the missionaries helped in the pacification of tribal enemies. They also set up the first schools and hospitals for the people. With their dedication and caring they helped the village people to adapt to the new changes that were being introduced. Generally, the missionaries had a profound affect on the people's lives. Their lack of materialism, as opposed to the goods owned by Government officers, was seen as a common ground for the villagers who for centuries had survived in a subsistence economy. Furthermore, the missionaries were prepared to take the people's side against the government if there was a case of gross injustice like when they lost large parts of their land to plantations as had happened in the 1880s in the coastal Madang villages.

Missionaries of both denominations, Catholic and Lutheran, soon found themselves with a heavy workload of learning the new languages, preparing translations of hymns and the gospels and establishing schools for the children. There were new buildings to be organised, and local builders needed to be taught the necessary skills, church services had to be prepared and catechists to be trained.

In *Readings in PNG Mission History*, Mihalic had a definition of a cargo cult:

Basically a cargo cult is a belief in a period of heaven on earth. People expect their ancestors to shower them with all kinds of goodies sent from the heaven that the ancestors now occupy. The term, cargo, implies all the foods, tools, luxuries, equipment, furniture and means of transport which Europeans have - these will all come for free – though only to members of the cargo cult" (1999: 19). There were many cult leaders in different areas: Mambu held sway in the Bogia area; Kamdong was a cargo cult leader between the Sepik and Ramu Rivers; on the Rai Coast, Yali held sway in the 1960s. The authority of these cargo cult leaders was unquestionable. Most people, Catholics included, flocked after these prophets and followed them blindly. Cemeteries were kept spotlessly clean and decorated, for that was where the ancestors had left this earth, and where they would presumably return with the cargo. Sometimes followers were asked to renounce their Catholicism and get back to ancestral ways. Sometimes schools were outlawed – or again encouraged.

People would stop planting gardens or harvesting sago and starve while waiting for their ship, or plane, to come in. Piers were built as well as airstrips. But nothing ever came. The fact that prominent catechists succumbed to cargo cult charms crippled the growth of the Church for half a dozen years in large coastal areas and

on the offshore islands. With the demise or the jailing of the cult leaders, the movements slowly subsided and went underground, where they still smoulder¹⁰

Fr Limbrock just wanted to develop mission stations to make them independent. In letters, Fr Janssen upbraided him for this and asked him how many converts he had made. To this he replied, "Of course only a few, but then I am not interested in pushing anyone into the pool of Bethsaida. I am sure that when the hour of grace comes, and the missionaries have done enough spadework, the Lord will take care of the statistics." He did. In Limbrock's time the number of converts rose to 20,000¹¹.



Sisters on patrol of the villages

Fr Limbrock remained Prefect Apostolic of New Guinea until the German Colony surrendered. After this, Fr Blum became the new Father Superior and Fr Limbrock became a pastor at Boikin near Wewak. Here he carried on as a simple missionary administering to the people there until the Australians removed German missionaries to Australia as enemy aliens.

Father Limbrock then lived in Sydney where he died on 31 May 1931. He is buried at a cemetery near the Divine Word Seminary at Marsfield-Epping. He was the founding father of the Divine Word Mission in New Guinea and is well remembered (Mihalic, 1971b).

In 1922, Bishop Wolf, a German, was appointed to New Guinea and took up residence in Alexishafen, which became the Vicariate Apostolic of East New Guinea. It was not long before he saw the necessity of having an English-speaking priest as his secretary to act as liaison officer between the mission and the Australian officials. Bishop Wolf could not speak English, so he wrote to the American branch of the Divine Word Mission and Fr William Ross of Techny was sent out to New Guinea in 1926. With him were three sisters of the Holy Spirit – Sister Alexis, Sister Antonia and Sister Ehrintrudis.

Fr Ross and the Sisters were given a great reception at Alexishafen when they arrived. Bishop Wolf and many missionaries gathered on the pier to meet them. Fr Ross was happy to meet everyone but had difficulty communicating with them. He knew no German and the missionaries knew little English. He began to learn German but sometimes made mistakes and just laughed. During the 1920s, Fr Ross was the Bishop Wolf's secretary only for the English correspondence and Brother Gerhoch or Fr Hirsch did the German correspondence. Fr Ross never made a fuss about being secretary to the bishop.

¹⁰ Mihalic, 1999: 20)

¹¹ Mihalic, 1971b)



SVD Brother on his daily ride through the Mission plantation

Brother Gerhoch knew Bishop Wolf well:

Bishop Wolf had a very good character. If he was cross with some one, in five minutes time it was all forgotten. He never brought it up again. He used to be friendly with everyone outside the mission no matter who they were. "We are a mission and we must do everything to promote friendship with others." Everyone was invited to sleep and eat here and he was always anxious to make people feel at home. If we had a birthday, he was always anxious to get beer or wine etc. when we had a family feast he would join us and watch the festivities.

He was very sorry for sick people and always gave them what they needed. Once they recovered, he made sure they got food and drink. In times of retreat, he gathered everyone from the mountains and everywhere. We made retreats twice a year. The bishop was always down on the wharf to welcome every missionary. The same thing happened when we had to do a trip in the bush or somewhere else. He was always there to meet us and anxious to get reports from anyone about their trip.

When Fr Ross and I went off on their trip inland, the bishop was there on our return waiting for a report. He could get angry if people came into the mission without his permission. There was the case of one priest who came in and the bishop saw him and sent him back to his parish as soon as he had had some breakfast. Bishop Wolf was thoughtful with the village people and was ready to hear their complaints and wishes. He tried to visit all the stations once a year to administer confirmations. He was not very strong and had to be careful because of his heart.¹²(Interview by the author).

When Bishop Wolf wanted to build the new cathedral, he went to Germany where his nephews were builders and contractors and they made plans which he brought back for everyone's approval. The corner stone was laid on Easter Monday 1932. However, some of the missionaries felt that Bishop Wolf spent too much time organising the cathedral's progress and did not visit the outstations enough. When the Bishop asked one priest how his mission was going, he replied that it would be going much better if the Bishop managed to come and do the confirmations! (Nilles, 1989: 69).

Bishop Wolf, 1876-1942.

Fr Nilles described how Bishop Wolf's attitude towards the Lutherans played against him. "The bishop always advised against bringing quarrels and troubles between the two mission bodies, Catholic and Lutheran, to the government officers or magistrates for settlement". He wanted to have friendly relations with them and would never accuse them of wrongdoing to the government officials. But then there was the time when Fr Ladener arrived at a certain village. The Lutheran teachers "turned very nasty and pushed him down the slope of the hill - despite the contempt



¹² Interview by the author

shown and the gross humiliation of the Father, our mission did not appeal to the government” (Nilles, 1989: 76). However, when a situation developed in Guyebi against Fr Cranssen in 1935, the Lutherans appealed at once to the government. It was a case that ended up in the High Court of Australia as we shall see.

Usually, the two missions weren’t such bitter enemies as Dr Braun, a Lutheran doctor, said: The people in the headquarters of the Lutheran and Catholic missions got on well. For example, they exchanged cattle. Also, if one or other mission bought copper sheeting the other put in an indent too. They agreed on a line of demarcation - but on the outreaches at the back of Madang these were not kept so well. Nobanob, Halopa would get into arguments. They might both sit in one village and the people would play one side against the other especially when building a horse track.

One side might decide on a road and get permission from the District Office to have a road cut through. The other side would say “look at that mission making you do all that work.” Sometimes there were personal friendships though (Interview by the author).



Brother Gerhoch on his fiftieth Anniversary as an SVD Brother

The Lutheran hospital was at Amele near Madang in 1935. They had x-ray equipment and an airstrip. When Bishop Wolf got sick, he was taken there to see Dr Braun. Bishop Wolf and Dr Braun were good friends and sometimes met socially at Alexishafen. Once Bishop Wolf invited the Brauns to Alexishafen for a holiday. He promised that there would be no work. It was OK for the first 5 days, but Dr Braun worked for the last two days. The hospital at Alexishafen did not hold many patients. Brother Gerhoch had been a medical assistant and he helped Sister Barbara besides doing his work of being secretary to Bishop.¹³ (Interview of Brother Gerhoch by the author).

In 1932, Jock McKay came to Alexishafen and told the Bishop that the village people down at the Rai Coast wanted the Catholics to take over some of the mission stations. The bishop said, “we’ll have to think carefully about this”. [It was in the Lutheran area]. He asked Fr Aufinger and Brother Gerhoch to go down there and see. They got a very great welcome from the villagers. When they came back from the Rai Coast the Bishop was there to meet them to get a report on the trip (Gerhoch, interview by author).

Brother Gerhoch Eder SVD arrived in Alexishafen on 6 March 1928, and everybody was on the wharf to meet the new missionaries - the Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and the Bishop himself. The Bishop was very pleased to welcome them. He remembered that at Alexishafen there was just a chapel which was falling into disrepair. No cars, only buffaloes and donkeys. The house of the priests was on the same foundations as now. The store was not very big. In 1926, Alexishafen was bigger than Madang with plantations and a coconut factory. The Sisters’ building was on one level. In 1926 an earthquake hit it and knocked it off its posts so it just sat on the ground. The sisters lived like this until 1934, when the new convent was built. It was two-storeys high and was finished by the time of the war. Among the sisters were Sister Alexis, Sister Eurista, Sr Mathilda. There was a school for the boys and Fr Hesse was the school master.

¹³ Interviews by the author



Sister Barnabas was the matron of the hospital. I was lucky as I was always satisfied with mission life, especially in the first years when Bishop Wolf was here and many German nationals and Fr Ross
(Interview by author)

First Communion Class in 1922 at Alexishafen

The Rempi Mission

Fr Ross was at Alexishafen for a while and then he went to live at Rempi in the late 1920's. Sometimes he would come into Alexishafen for a few days and return home.

The Rempi Church in the 1970s (M. Mennis)



Fr Ross looked after the whole Rempi area including Baiteta, Balbe and Badimok. He asked the bishop to get someone to help with the religious instructions. Bishop Wolf asked Brother Gerhoch, "Do you think you can do this?" He agreed and went to Rempi and got on very well with Fr Ross. They would speak German together so Ross could learn that language.

However, when Fr Weyer and Fr Hirsch came they wanted to practise their English. It was necessary for Brother Gerhoch to learn English for correspondence and contact with government officials. In 1932, when the Bishop sent him into Madang to pay the labourers etc,

he really felt the lack of English. In the Madang office there was Alf Hunter, Jock McKay, and Ward Oakley. Fr Ross liked Jock Mackay in Madang but he didn't like the town much.
(Interview with Jock McKay)



Fr Ross with Rempi school children in the 1920s



Br Lucidius and Br Gerhoch on horseback near Rempi in the 1930s

Brother Gerhoch would bring the workers into Madang and sign them on and later when they had finished their contract, he would take them in and sign them off and pay them. Fr Ross helped him with his English just by talking and the Administration Officers were surprised at how good his English was. These work boys were from Bogia, the Sepik, and

the bush and up and down the coast. Brother Gerhoch would have to go to town once or twice a week with different labourers.

Brother Gerhoch went with Fr Ross in 1929 on a baptismal trip. They went to Badimok and Baiteta and Sigu and baptised 80 to 100 people. Each day they baptised ten people. It was a very good trip and Fr Ross was good company.

Brother Gerhoch said:

“The people in the bush really liked Father Ross. They were rather unhealthy and full of sores and he and I organised medicine for them and looked after their sores. The bush people were always ready to carry for us and always helpful. There were no roads there in those days only small bush tracks so we had to carry the cargo. When we went up to the bush we got many carriers from Rempi. Some of the Rempi people moved down from the mountains behind, but others had always been there. The position of the villages changed from time to time and sometimes villages became completely deserted”. (*Author interview*)

A rest house gave respite during a patrol

The Rempi Church was built in 1932 and there was a small house for the priest, enough for two or three people. If I stayed overnight with Fr Ross, there was usually just the two of us. Rempi had a school run by catechists who had been trained by Fr Hesse in Alexishafen. Some of them were sent to Sigu and Badimok. Saimon at Sigu was a good catechist. I went twice a week to Rempi to take catechists' lessons at the school. While at Rempi, Fr Ross still had a room in the Priest's house at Alexishafen and often used to come back and stay for a few days. (*Interview*)



After Fr Ross was stationed at Rempi, Brother Gerhoch became the Bishop's secretary and Fr Ross was only called on if an English speaker was needed. Brother Gerhoch also helped Sister Barnabas at the hospital, did the accounts, looked after the labourers and accompanied the bishop on his travels.

According to Brother Gerhoch, Fr Ross mainly wore long white trousers and a white coat the same as the other missionaries but when he went bush, he wore khaki. Sometimes he used a

stick when he went tramping through the bush. He only carried his breviary. He would say, “you put your things in sacks and let the boys carry them. They can do it far better than us.” It was too hard to carry the stuff, particularly if you began at Baiteta and then you had to go down the valley to the river then cross it several times and then the track starts to go up to the high mountains. From there you go down again to Sigu and Badimok.

Trips to Sigu by Fr Ross and Brother Gerhoch

They would leave Alexishafen at 7 o'clock in the morning and arrive at Sigu at three in the afternoon after eight hours of hard walking from Vidar Plantation. Next day from Sigu to Badimok was three more hours and then Balbe was four more hours walking. Mostly they walked only from one place to another in one day as they wanted to stay in each station for a while. At Sigu there was a church built in 1931 or 32 - a wooden church with good timber. It is still there (1970s) as it was not destroyed in the war. They rarely rode horses to these places.

The tracks just followed around the edges of the mountains. Once Brother Gerhoch had an accident with a horse when it fell 50 metres down a ravine. They almost had it up again but the ground gave way and it fell again. Using horses had its advantages and disadvantages. Between Rempi and Alexishafen, they often walked rather than take horses because, even though the road was flat, they had to climb over trees that had fallen across the road particularly in bad wet seasons. It would be too difficult if they were on horseback.

Fr Aufinger on the Rai Coast



Yabob/ Bilbil pots that were traded to the Rai coast. (Brian Mennis)

Some plantation workers who returned home from Rabaul wanted to join the Catholic Church so Bishop Wolf sent Br Gerhoch and Fr Aufinger down to the Rai Coast to visit the villagers which were actually in a Lutheran area. With Fr Albert Aufinger, settling on the Rai Coast, the Catholic mission expanded further eastwards into an area that was already partly occupied by the Protestant mission.

In a letter written by Fr Albert Aufinger, 2 July 1935, he describes the early settlement:

I was personally given the task to start Catholic missionary work on the Rai Coast. And I have already bought about 13 hectares of land, which I have partly begun to cultivate. A bush house for me and a house for my boys have been built already. Soon we will also get a little church and a school building. Although the other mission on the coast is working with two missionaries, already more than a thousand people from the bush have asked for the Catholic religion.

It is my task to look after these people. I have two natives as teachers and eight catechists to assist me in that. But since they themselves received baptism not long ago, I really must do most of the work myself and this work is rather difficult because of the opposing activities from the other mission. But with the help of God, it will go well. For the time being I still live on the main station, St Michael in Alexishafen. But during this year I will probably move to the Rai Coast for good.¹⁴



Village at Bongu on the Rai Coast (M.Mennis)

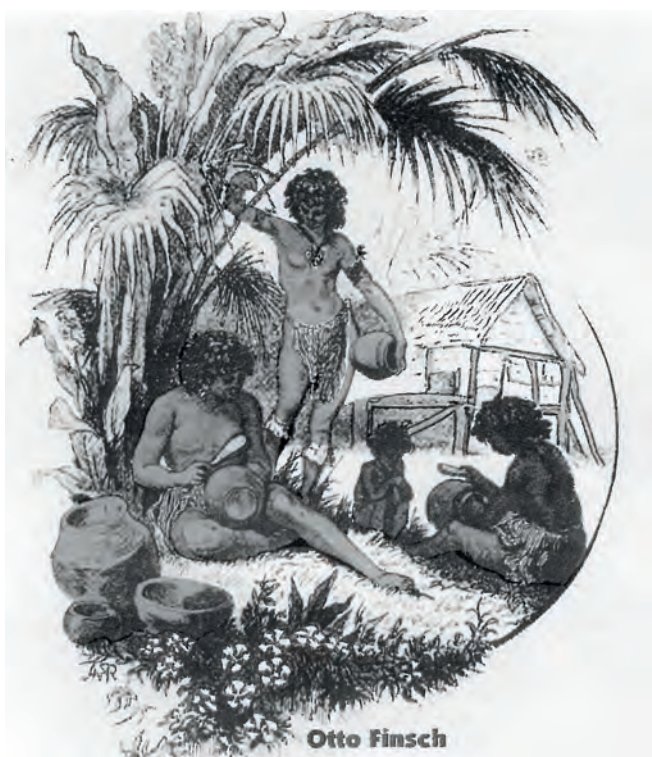
The people had not told the bishop the main reason why they wanted the Catholic mission to come. They had trade interests in mind. And it came about this way. The people of that part of the Rai Coast had always maintained friendly relations with the Yabob Island people, and Yabob, like Tumleo in 1896, was the centre of a flourishing native pottery industry. But from the Rai Coast to Yabob was a three-day journey by canoe. The missionaries had better transport and would then bring them the famous Yabob pottery. Therefore ... But Fr Albert Aufinger saw the advantages.

Father Aufinger wrote:

Illustration of pot-making on Bilbil Island 1883, by Otto Finsch

I have been convinced from the beginning that the best and surest and probably the shortest way to convert New Guinea is through a thorough knowledge of its languages, religious ideas, social habits, and customs. If a missionary follows this path, he will be more quickly understood, more sincerely received, and more deeply loved. His influence will be greater and more thorough because he will reach people's innermost thoughts and feelings; he will be able to draw forth images and ideas in church and school that will resonate with his hearers.

The advantage Aufinger had over his Lutheran counterparts was that he loved the local Yabob culture, their songs and dances where were banned by the Lutherans. They traditionally summoned the spirits t Kilibob and Manup to help them when at sea and had many poetic



¹⁴ A.Aufinger-112

rituals which the Lutherans banned as satanic. Aufinger on the other hand collected them and published them. If he had not done this they would have been lost forever.¹⁵



A Yabob / Bilbil trading canoe¹⁶ Fr Aufinger described the magic the likon magician made magic over the wind spirits to bring a good wind for the men sailing the canoes. The Yabob people needed a good south-east breeze to visit their friends on the Rai Coast. This trip would only take about a day but they could see the mission boats would be much speedier. Their canoes were triple deck and took a long time to build and maintain. (M. Mennis Potted History of Madang). Aufinger noted; In this case the sea magic is adapted for favourable winds and special spells are said, moving his head to the beat of his hand drum the magician addresses the good spirit:

Oh Namungo, Blow a southeast breeze,
From your mouth In your hand I place a drum
I put flowers in your hand Band your arm, Nod your head
The southeast breeze will come From your mouth
Keep standing still, Lest the sea get rough again (Aufinger, 1939: 290-1). 9¹⁷

The fact that the Yabobs and the rai Coast people wanted help transporting their pots was seen as an advantage to Aufinger. The pots were used as trade items for food, for bride price and for general cooking. the advantage of this for the mission, so he established a trading post for Yabob pottery. This enabled him to make closer contacts with the people. Soon he had his first chapel, and then a school. This was the beginning of the Rai Coast mission. The first station was called Lalo. (*Word PNG* 119, June 1988, 6)

Aufinger wrote about the *Geheimprachen* secret language, or *tok bokis*, of the islands near Madang. The first is poetic language of metaphors and pictorial phrases, which everyone understands immediately. So a twig becomes the hand of a tree. He then refers to another type of language by which the speaker hides the true meaning of the sentence. Only those who have been taught know the real meaning. It can be used to exclude outsiders, women and children and even the demons and spirits. Aufinger divides this type of secret language into two types. In the first picture language, expressions from the local language are used but they have secondary meaning quite different from their apparent meaning. Here are a few words listed for the picture language on Panutibun Island in Madang Harbour. A sail, instead of being referred to as normal *lai*, is now called *banid*, which means the wings of a bird. A man becomes

¹⁵ Mary Mennis Potted History of Madang.

¹⁶ I helped the men build this canoe and wrote a manual about it. 1978.

¹⁷ M. Mennis Potted History p 42)

a male pig; betel nut is now referred to as “something for our mouth”; the float of a canoe is now “for the soles of our feet” (Aufinger, 1942: 634-6

In a further letter written by Fr Albert Aufinger, 2 July 1935, he described the early settlement:

I was personally given the task to start Catholic missionary work on the Rai Coast. And I have already bought about 13 hectares of land, which I have partly begun to cultivate. A bush house for me and a house for my boys have been built already.



Soon we will also get a little church and a school building. Although the other mission on the coast is working with two missionaries, already more than a thousand people from the bush have asked for the Catholic religion. And it is my task to look after these people. I have two natives as teachers and eight catechists to assist me in that.

But since they themselves received baptism not long ago, I really must do most of the work myself and this work is rather difficult because of the opposing activities from the other mission.

But with the help of God, it will go well. For the time being I still live on the main station, St Michael in Alexishafen. But during this year I will probably move to the Rai Coast for good ... (A. Aufinger,

112)¹⁸ *Illustration by R Christensen*

Several tribes from the hinterland, which had not followed the other tribes in joining the Lutheran mission, invited the Catholic mission to come into their area.

Sadly, Aufinger lost much of his anthropological work during the war but several short articles described both the use of magical verses to the spirits and the use of a secret language so that the angry se spirits did not attack the canoe which being a bush object was protected by the bush spirits.

¹⁸ *Sios bilong yumi long Niugini Catholic Mission History in Mainland New Guinea 1896–1945*
Paul B. Steffen 2021

Madang Town in the 1930s by Jock McKay: government patrol officer in Madang

Jock: "I arrived in Madang in September 1930. There were three main stores – Burns Philip, Carpenters and a Melanesian Company which was the Expropriation Board. Along the main streets, on either side there were deep drains to take away the water. They were six feet deep and two or three feet wide. One night, a man left a house and fell into a drain and broke his neck. They buried him up in the cemetery. There were probably a dozen or more Chinese stores in those days and maybe 7 or 8 *kiaps*. There were very few white women – the *kiap*'s wife, chief clerk's wife. Alf Hunter was the DO at that time and lived on the point. Jack Reid [later a famous Coastwatcher] was up in the Sepik and was then transferred to Madang when he fell ill from Blackwater fever." (Interview M. Mennis)



Former German house in Madang in the 1930s

The old German houses were still going in Madang. Later the Australian Administration built some more houses and a hospital down near the wharf. Some of the old German houses were owned by BPs, Carpenters and the Administration. The army took over the German houses in 1914 at the time of the First World War.

The ships came in every three to six weeks – there were mainly BP's ships in those days: the *Malaita*, the *Matuka* and the *Macdui*. When a ship came in we would all go on board and the passengers would come ashore. We would go to the bar on the ship where the beer was cheap at sixpence a glass and of course men would come in from the plantations from Matupi, Siar etc. We would all go aboard the boat and have a few beers and a meal,

The ships would bring freezer and other goods for the town and would leave at about four to six in the afternoon. Rarely did they stay overnight. The people would go to the ship to collect their freezer order – legs of mutton, chops etc and we would get no more for another three or four weeks. Copra boats or Bank boats came from London for the copra although BP's boats did this as well.

Then the boat would go up to Sek (Alexishafen). They would unload the cargo and load mail there, come back down to Madang and then leave. It was a great day when the BP boat arrived – you couldn't get the near the Post Office that day.

In the 1930s, the lighthouse was just a kerosene lamp lit at five or six o'clock. It was 20 or 30 feet high and was visible for four or five miles from sea. Later on, I built a cement base for an automatic light. It had a big cylinder of gas and the light came on automatically at sundown. The gas lasted six months. At the beginning of WWII, the Japs probably dismantled it. There was also a light on Kerosene Island and Kranket Island. They were rather primitive but did the work.

In 1927, Jock McKay was planning to carry out a patrol into the mountains behind Rempi and Fr Ross obtained permission to accompany him. In the mountains at Saruga, they were attacked by a tribe firing arrows at them. McKay retaliated by firing over their heads with his rifle and



was able to make contact with them. Fr Ross saw that the people's health was in a pitiful state and planned to return with Br Gerhoch, who was an expert on tropical medicines.

Meanwhile more and more SSpS sisters arrived. As mentioned, three sisters had come with Fr Ross in 1926 – Sister Alexis, Sister Antonia and Sister Ehrintrudis. Each time a new group arrived they would be welcomed by Bishop Wolf, priests, brothers and sisters as well as crowds

of school children wearing red laplaps. The new missionaries would then process to the timber church where everyone sang the *Magnificat*.

Sister Arsenia remembered when she arrived in 15 January 1929 on board the *Heidelberg*. When the ship docked in the afternoon, Bishop Wolf stood in front of many missionaries on the wharf wearing his tropical helmet, his long beard and dressed in a soutane with his Episcopal cross. He approached them and extended his hand in welcome. He said in German,

Bishop Wolf addressed the new missionaries:

Most welcome to all of you new missionaries from Germany to our New Guinea mission. This is the chief station, Alexishafen. Today the 15 January 1929 is the twentieth anniversary of the death of our founder, Father Arnold Janssen. Now let us all go into the chapel and sing a *Magnificat* to Our Lord and our Blessed Lady Mary in thanksgiving for your safe journey from Europe to our New Guinea mission.

Ramu River expedition in November – December 1931

Bishop Wolf was anxious to open up mission stations on the Ramu River which snaked around the foothills of the Bismarck coastal plains behind Alexishafen. In November 1931, a group of missionaries investigated the area including Fr Ross, Fr Shebesta and Brothers Symphorian and Bernardine. They set off up the coast to the mouth of the Ramu River where the engine broke down. After engine troubles were fixed, they continued 180 kilometres up the river and camped with the Atemble people who were quite friendly. The return trip down river was much easier (Mennis, 2016: 34–36).

Fr Ross wrote: "I remember when we got back to Alexishafen at the end of 1931, a big typhoid fever epidemic had its grip on the mission. Some 30 people died including Br. Bernadine, 19 January 1932 and Br. Hyginus, 28 January 1932, some sisters including Sr. Eurasians and some of the local people. I was laid up for two months with typhoid.



Mittelneuguinea, Südsee: P. Kirchbaum (Mitte) mit P. Nowak (vornan) und P. Roh am Sepik

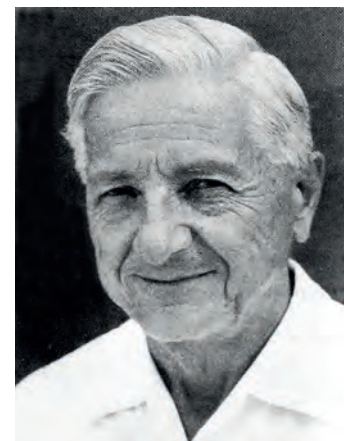
Photograph: Fr Ross, Fr Kirchbaum, and Fr Novak on board the Joseph on the Sepik.

In the early 1930's, when Bishop Wolf returned from Europe, he called a meeting in Alexishafen of all the missionaries from different stations. He told them of his meeting with the Pope who had advised him against building up the main station but rather put efforts into extending into other areas. Bishop Wolf was then supportive of any exploration of the Highlands when it was discovered (Nilles, 1991: 32). And so the mission advance to the Highlands began. (See Mt Hagen Part Six).



Two priests who worked in the Halopa mission in the hills above Alexishafen.

Fr Peter Ladener on the left and Fr Noss below



In the Name of the King in 1938 by Fr William Ross



Lord Gowrie, Governor General of Australia received a warm welcome at the Catholic Mission at Alexishafen on Sunday 8th August 1938. He was accompanied by the Administrator of the Territory of New Guinea on the destroyer **HMAS Swan U74**. Brother Symphorian gave the royal salute of twenty- one cannons, dynamite plugs upon a heavy steel plate as base, the echoes resounding over the harbour as each point of land caught the blast in succession. At the wharf the Sisters, Servants of the Holy Ghost, had prepared a beautiful arch of welcome, surmounted by two large Australian flags.

He was welcomed by Bishop Wolf and the missionaries of the central station, the Brothers and natives the Mission boasts the only brass band in the New Guinea struck up "God Save the King." A group of ten little four-year-olds sang a song of welcome in Pidgin English asking God to bless "the big fellow man belong King." Then each little brown cherub presented Lady Gowrie with a bouquet. Who can resist a chubby brown piccaninny when they smile?

The party passed through a long double line of schoolboys as well as working boys and villagers in town for the Sunday. The line extended a hundred yards from the wharf to the cathedral. The party was impressed with a tour of the Mission station and plantation had been planned but intermittent showers spoiled the programme. However, the visitors were able to see the workshops where native boys are trained in sawing timber, welding, mechanica work, carpenter work, building and other trades in using boat making tailoring, shoe making and saddlery. His Excellency, the Governor General, admired the Sisters' new convent the desiccated coconut plant and the general layout of the station.



*Welcome of guests on 8 August 1937at Alexishafen
Left: Fathers Puff and Hoersch, Bishop Wolf,
Australian Official, Governor-General of Australia,
Lord Gowrie with wife Lady Gowrie, and Holy Spirit
missionary sisters¹⁹*

At noon luncheon was served at the Mission House on the spacious verandah overlooking the harbour. The band furnished music during the repast. At the conclusion of the luncheon Bishop Wolf rose and thanked the Governor General for his kind visit to the mission. He pointed out to the visitors how the work of the mission has grown in the forty years of its existence and how God had blessed the work with 50,000 converts and another 40,000 prospective converts. This numerical growth had coincided with an actual growth in the population on the part of the natives a happy improvement made

¹⁹ Steffen 123

possible by the co-operation of the Administrator with the Mission, a union of effort most important for the future. The Governor General responded that he was deeply impressed with everything he had seen at Alexishafen and grateful for the warm welcome given him in the name of the King whom he represented in that part of the world. He thanked the mission for what it had done for the natives in the Territory; he felt sure our Administrator must be grateful for the good work of the missionaries. A work carried out at a cost of immense personal sacrifices. We were happy to hear this praise from the government at a time when other governments were murdering and butchering those who carry out God's work. If the British Government continues its policy of cooperation with a support of the mission work it cannot fail to secure God's blessing upon the Empire.

1939 The Opening of the Cathedral and Bishop Wolf's jubilee

When Bishop Wolf wanted to build the new cathedral, he went to Germany where his nephews



were builders and contractors and they made plans which he brought back for everyone's approval. The corner stone was laid on Easter Monday 1932. However, some of the missionaries felt that Bishop Wolf spent too much time organising the cathedral's progress and did not visit the outstations enough. When the Bishop asked one priest how his mission was going, he replied that it would be going much better if the Bishop managed to come and do the confirmations! ²⁰

In 1939, when the Bishop had his jubilee, he was very anxious for all the missionaries to come in from the outstations, so he sent the *Stella Maris* out right up to Aitape and brought back as many missionaries as possible to Alexishafen. Fr Schaefer brought a lot of villagers down from the mountains and, as they walked down the tracks, they were very afraid as they had never left their mountains or seen the sea. Thousands of locals were there. The cathedral was full with 4,000 people. In June 1939, there was a big gathering of missionaries. Even the leader of the Chimbu people in the New Guinea Highlands and promoter of the Catholic mission there, Kavagl Kumugl, attended the celebration at Alexishafen with many of his tribesmen. Father [Alphonse] Schaefer walked down from Mingende with a group of Chimbu, including Kavagl. These people, hidden for so many generations in their highland valleys, saw for the first time the vast sea extending to the horizon. Ships, factories, plantations, and large buildings were all new to them, the cathedral especially when it was pointed out that the spacious structure was the entire work of the Brothers with no outside help. Two brother masons, three Brother carpenters, three Brother sawyers, a Brother tinsmith, a Brother electrician, a Brother painter, two Brother plantation managers – all helped in the great work. What could the mission do without the Brothers? (*Mennis*)

²⁰ Nilles, 1989: 69)

Sr Theophane Maier wrote in a letter to her mother, dated 29 July 1939:

We were surprised by the sound of rather unusual native singing. All locals have a monotonous sort of singing, but each tribe is different from the other. This being utterly strange, we all cocked up our ears. Lo and behold! There was our most daring Bismarck missionary, Father [Alphonse] Schaefer, with twenty of his wild men. They had come by a twelve-day journey on foot to be here for the bishop's jubilee. They were a sight to behold, men considerably stronger than our coast tribes, all smudged in black. They carried beautiful spears eight or eight and one-half feet tall. The men were decorated with shells and had headdresses of all sorts of feathers and wings of birds. They looked in great amazement at the buildings, ships, cars, church services, etc. They were pleased to see how we train and school our girls and promised that when the sisters come to their mountains, they will send all their girls. The church was never so packed before.

The whole gallery was filled, benches were in all the aisles, and many people were crowding around the sanctuary railing. The *Stella* made several trips to outstations to bring in natives, hence the unnatural good crowds. There were about two thousand Holy Communions that day. In the morning a program was given by our native schoolchildren and the SVDs. The natives came and gave donations. The catechists or native chiefs represented their villages.²¹ The next day we had another Pontifical Mass celebrated by Bishop Wade of the Solomon Islands.

Within a few years this beautiful cathedral was bombed by the allies as they had been informed that the Japanese used it as an arsenal which was not true according to Fr Noss. (*personal comm*)



²¹ Steffen 123

The War on the Madang coast 1942 to 45



A Japanese tank rests on the site of the former cathedral at Alexishafen (the author)

When the Japanese landed in the Madang Harbour on 18 December 1942, the Riwo village people were amazed at their power and the size of their cargo. A whole convoy of ships, submarines, minesweepers and troop carriers suddenly appeared. The locals tried to interpret all of this in their own belief system. When they were paid in occupation money for services, they studied it in detail. It was the first tangible evidence of the Japanese they could take away and ruminate about. The strange money was handed around a group of elders. They noted that, in one corner of the note, was a group of coconut palms depicted on a point of land like the point at Budup just near Riwo Village. "Maybe it is Kilibob and his men returning!" Kilibob and Manup were part of their basic myths.

Long, long ago these two mythical brothers had lived at Budup near Riwo and were always fighting. Kilibob took off in a large boat and promised to return bringing lots of cargo with him. The people seeing the dozens of large Japanese ships in the harbour tried to fathom how this phenomenon fitted into their belief system. Was all this cargo for them? Was Kilibob at last fulfilling his promise? This led to a cargo cult. However, the villagers soon realised that the Japanese cargo was not for them. The Japanese did not give any cargo to the people and any disobedience was punished severely. After the war, these Riwo men were described as cargo cultists and were punished for fraternising with the Japanese and for their disloyalty. But as we have seen maybe they were being loyal to a far older set of beliefs that had been passed on through the generations. Furthermore, they had little choice but to co-operate when faced with the might of the invasion force.

Male of Kranket - on the war (1980b: 36)

We Siars were living here when the Japanese came. They filled up the beaches and bush. When the bombs fell straight on us it was no good. The big bosses of the Japanese lived at Amron. The Japanese bombed Madang and some people died. We hid in caves or in the rocks.

When the allied bombers came there were two women on the beach. The bombs hit them, and they died. When the bombers left, we buried them. The planes came and dropped messages in pidgin English warning us to go to the bush. So we all left the island and fled to the bush. The Americans wanted to bomb the island.

Some of the Americans were shot down. Some died. The Japanese killed some. They dug the holes for their graves and then they cut their necks with the sword. At the end of the war we showed the graves to the Americans. The Japanese fled and left their stores - they went to Wewak. Many died but others were rounded up in the bush. The allies came and got them and took them to Rabaul.

The Japanese Occupation money issued to the people during the war



Dau of Riwo Village (1980b: 2 ff)

The Japanese were not angry with us. We ran away and then they came and got us to carry cargo. If the ships came in then we had to help unload and carry the cargo to the bush where they hid it at Amron. They dug caves there and in many other places.

The Japanese paid us in money - it was another kind of money. We could buy food and things from the Japanese, but later when the Australians and Americans came, they told us to collect the money and give it to them because it was rubbish. This money had a picture on it like New Guinea. We thought it was Kilibob's money. The picture on it we thought was at the point of Alexishafen inside the passage at Doylan near Budup. There were three coconuts at this point. We looked at the picture on the note and we thought this is the point where Kilibob built his ship and we thought now Kilibob is bringing back all the cargo, but later we thought this wasn't right. If we wanted to buy things with the Australian money the Japanese said, "No good."

I was *tultul* at this time. Kamot was the *luluai*. He was Angmai's *tumbuna*. When the Japanese were here there was a big trouble amongst us. Kamot was the big boss in the Australian time and then the Japanese made him the big boss of this area. One American came down on the island. We wanted to hide him, but the Japanese heard about him, and they came over and took that man away. Kamot went to court about this when the Americans came. So did I, but I was found not guilty. I was only a bossboi for the Japanese. Kamot took the American to the Japanese and he was courted for this. (Interview with the author)

Dr. Lucy Mair wrote in 1948,

"In the absence of the conception of a regime to which loyalty was due, there could be no question of disloyalty, or of co-operation with one side or the other" (*Mair, 1948*) [*See Mennis, 2006, for more information*].

The Japanese landed in Madang on 18 December 1942 and the following day they came to Alexishafen in the middle of the night banging on doors and ordering everyone out with their hands in the air. The missionaries were made to register their names and told to stay there, if anyone tried to escape, they would be forced to dig their own graves.

Brother Gerhoch:

The air attacks were getting worse and worse all the time. The Bishop was concerned for everyone and wanted them to stay in the shelters as much as possible. On 9 April 1943, Alexishafen was bombed and the Sisters' house was burnt down. The poor sisters had nowhere to go. After that, we got permission to go into the bush at a place we called Maria Hill and here we planted hundreds of yams. You could imagine that the Japanese wanted these yams for themselves, so they took us away over to Manam Island. In August 1943, the whole station was bombed again. They could do nothing as they were out in the bush. The Australians and Americans bombed the Alexishafen mission including the cathedral. The beautiful cathedral was no more. The bombing got worse and worse. (Interview with author)

Brother Gerhoch continues:

Up on Maria Hill we were safe in the bush. On 25 January 1943, the order came to leave our place in the bush. Soon after we were in Manam and the locals there helped us as much as they could. As we landed on Manam, the Japanese told us there was a nice hospital and everything there. Yes there was a hospital. The interpreter there was a cruel man. He came up to me and I was so weak I could not carry my rucksack. He wanted to give me a good hiding. Our previous interpreter gave him a good telling off. In Manam we could have food from the local people but we had to be careful. If the Japanese saw us, then we would be in trouble.

In November 1943, the Catholic missionaries were shifted to Manam Island where many Lutheran missionaries joined them. The old rivalries and antagonisms between the Catholic and Lutheran missionaries were broken down through suffering and sharing. Dr Braun, from the Lutheran hospital, tended to everyone aided by Brother Gerhoch and some of the Sisters. On Manam Island, Dr Braun asked the Japanese why a German Brother was being maltreated and he was told: "These Germans did not think we could read the first Chapter of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* - it was very demeaning about the Japanese race, but now we are supposed to be honorary members of the Aryan Race"?

The Japanese took watches from the German missionaries and gave them paper money. When they gave us lectures, the Germans had to sit up the front. Brother Gerhoch said that they arrived on Manam at the beginning of November 1943 and stayed until the beginning of February 1944. The Japanese would take the best parts of the food and we would cook them and give the Brauns some. On Manam, Mrs Braun lived with us, the women stayed together. At one time, they killed and ate a horse. It was very tough meat. If the natives brought us food, they must go to the Japanese first and get permission but, sometimes, they would sneak it. The Japanese fed us rice, but dry rice is not good. You had to make soup to put the rice in so it would fill your belly up (*Interview by author, 1974*)

Dr Braun, Lutheran Doctor:

It was after this, while we were being transferred to the mainland from Manam Is, that the boat the *Dorish Maru* was strafed on 6 February 1944. As we lay on the deck one beside each other the American planes strafed us. We were told to take everything white off and lie face down. They were machine gunned and there were bombs in the water. 27 sisters died right away and 7 died later on. Sister Elreda was shot through the foot. The Japanese soldiers who died were identified by the disc on their fingers which was cut off and sent back to Japan. I was shot too but was saved by a cigarette lighter in my pocket. We worked day and night to help the wounded. The Japanese made me spokesman for the group. (Interview with the author M. Mennis)

Brother Gerhoch:

The Bishop had a very big wound but he was always anxious about others and not himself. The Fathers gave the last sacrament to everyone they could. Gradually those who were still alive were taken back on the *Dorish Maru* then we went to Hollandia. On 22 February 1944, the bishop called me and said "Please Brother. I don't feel so well." I stayed for a long time and the Bishop said, "Go to bed you must be tired". So I went off and saw Fr Jischke to see if he could take over and then I would come again in the morning. Anyhow, Fr Jischke went first to a Sister who was very ill, then he went to the Bishop, but the Bishop was dead already. He passed away without any of us being there. The funeral was very poor. We had only a couple of blankets to use. We had to carry him on a stick like the locals carry their pigs. We carried him over to where we had buried the other missionaries. He offered his life completely for the mission and the missionaries. Yes, I must say we can never forget him as the great organiser, a good Father to the whole mission and everyone here would agree. As long as the Bishop was nearby, we were under the best care. (Interview by the author).

While they were there in Hollandia, the missionaries were quite miserable and useless. The nursing staff took care of the people and most of the severely wounded. Sister Kroegeer and



some Catholic sisters died one by one and were buried there. Finally, the Japanese moved them miles inland where they stayed. They got one tin of bully beef to mix with the rice and divide amongst 120 people.

Fr Hemplemann, Br Januarius, Br Aventinus at Hollandia after being rescued

Suddenly, the American bombings became more severe and they had about

given up all hope of surviving. One day there was a very severe bombardment. The Americans had landed in Hollandia at Hotagan Harbour, cutting off the Japanese from their supplies. The rocket fire was so severe that the forest looked as if a tornado had gone through it. Sister Elreda was in bed, and she noticed Dr Braun acting like a little boy throwing his hat in the air. Sister thought he had gone off his head until she heard the Americans were coming.

Dr Braun:

We could hear the American patrols throwing hand grenades around in the bush. Fr Hagen, Fr Kroeken and Brother Januarius tried to contact an American patrol. It was very dangerous as they could have been shot. They were fortunate and American troops and scouts came to the camp and rescued us. That was almost the end of the war for us. I would say that the Japanese in general were quite impressed with us. We didn't have people who went psychotic and they could see we weren't filled with hate and that was one thing they found hard to understand. (Interview by the author).



Arrival in Australia in 1944 after being rescued

The missionaries were transferred from Hollandia to Finschhafen; they were all nearly dying from exhaustion. They landed in Brisbane on 13 May 1944 and army trucks were there and reporters to take pictures. They were taken three hours drive away to an American hospital at Camp Cable, near Mt. Tamborine. American doctors cared for them until 1944. In Australia, the German missionaries were classed as enemy aliens, but since most of them were very ill they spent the first months at Camp Cable. When the Catholic missionaries recovered from their war wounds and became healthier, they were taken to Marburg where they were free to move around.

While the missionaries were at Camp Cable, Archbishop Pimico looked after them. Stationed at North Sydney, he was a Vatican diplomat and was exempt from being interned. He was able to travel and do a lot of good work, particularly for the Italian prisoners. Dr and Mrs Braun were at Camp Cable too. Men and women were separated so there was not much contact.

Bishop Bernarding:

After we were evacuated from Mt Hagen and landed in Brisbane, we went out to visit the German missionaries who had been interned before the Japanese had arrived. They told us their story of how they were evacuated. These were the ones from the Highlands: Fr Nilles, Brother Prislanus etc. The ones from Alexishafen came later when they were rescued from Hollandia. We met them eventually. Each one had their own story of what had happened. It was more a question of, 'Thank God I got out of that alive' because so many didn't rather than the question



of 'how we had escaped'. Brother Gerhoch and two other companions had been taken care of by the American Medical group and any sickness they had had been fixed up. They were screened pretty well before they left Brisbane and by the time we saw them [in Sydney], they were in pretty good shape and able to help clean corridors etc at the school. Everyone seemed happy to have them there. (Interview by the author)

Wrecks everywhere (B Mennis)

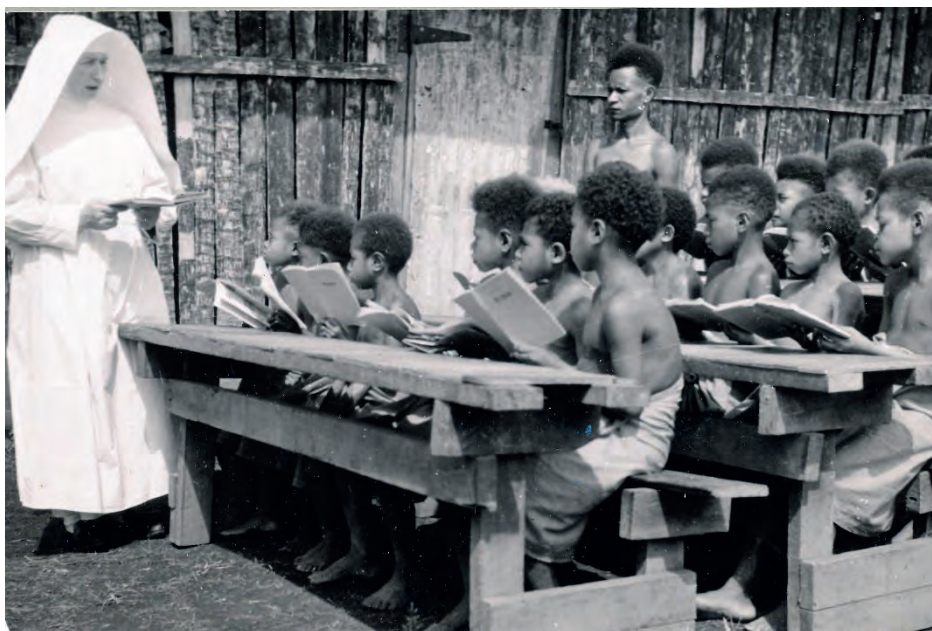


Corporal Mereire receiving the British Empire Medal for assisting the allies in the war.



Allied troops in Madang

Madang since the war



The Sisters Return to New Guinea in September 1946

The Sisters remained in Sydney until 1946. Here they gradually recovered their strength and were able to help in the SVD House. At last Sister Vinciana Engberink and Sister Antoniella Haandel were able to return to New Guinea. They sailed on the *Montoro* and arrived 22 September 1946 in Madang. They bumped their way from Madang to Alexishafen on a surplus army truck which, according to one eyewitness, had to inch its way over 22 makeshift bridges. The Alexishafen of yore was unrecognisable to the Sisters. They moved into a galvanised iron shed at the water's edge. It had been a butcher's shop in earlier days.



The former convent had been reduced to a rubble-strewn concrete slab on which an anti-aircraft gun was still pointing to the sky. Hearing of their arrival, the local people hastened to give them tearful welcomes, called them by name and wanted to know where the others were. They brought along heaps of yams, taro, bananas sweet potatoes, corn and greens as a welcome gift (Mihalic, 15).

J. K. McCarthy made one of the best judgements of the affect of war on the village people in his book *Patrol into Yesterday*:

The Madang Memorial lighthouse

Whatever the tide of war in New Guinea, whichever way it went at any particular time – it seemed to go many different ways – it was in the end the native people who were most affected. They were affected for good as well as evil, because the New Guinea war was not only the destroyer but

a great teacher. The natives had seen their invincible white masters in defeat – driven from the country by the brown men of Japan – the fact that they were beginning to return, victorious, did not alter the knowledge that they could be overthrown (McCarthy, 1963: 214)

Madang Prelates since the war

Bishop Stephen Appelhans SVD 1948 – 1951 (Alexishafen).

Bishop Adolf Noser SVD 1953 to 1966 (Alexishafen).

Archbishop Adolf Noser SVD 1966 to 1975 (Madang).

Bishop Leo Arkfeld SVD 1948 to 1975 (Bishop of Wewak).

Archbishop Leo Arkfeld SVD 1975 to 1987 (Archbishop of Madang).

Archbishop Benedict To Varpin 1987 to 2001 (Archbishop of Madang).

Archbishop William Kurtz SVD 2001 to 2010 (Archbishop of Madang).

Archbishop Stephen Reichert OFM Cap 2010 to 2020. (Archbishop of Madang).

Archbishop Anton Bal 2020 to present. (Archbishop of Madang).

Rebuilding after the war

Fr Arkfeld, was the post war Rector:

When the war ended, we hurriedly made ready to go to New Guinea. We travelled on a passenger boat from Australia. We landed in Madang but moved quickly to Meilon, about 30 miles west of Madang. A temporary camp was already there. The site was very hot and there were plenty of snakes around. That is often the case when an area of jungle is cleared. We got busy killing snakes and learning *Pidgin English*.

The Australian Army Forces were still living in our pre-war mission headquarters about fifteen miles east of us on the coast, at a place called Alexishafen which had been a great place before the war. It once had a very large and beautiful cathedral, with workshops for carpentry, mechanics, plumbing and shipbuilding. Various schools had been operating successfully. Yet almost everything in the area had been destroyed during the war. When we shifted back to Alexishafen, one large building still had a roof on it. We had a big roll of burlap which we had picked up from the American Army in Finschafen. We now strung this around everywhere and made rooms. It was pretty rough but we were happy to have a definite place to stay.

It did not take us long to get settled in Alexishafen. Only a small number of us, however, remained there. Most people in our group moved quickly to former Mission stations which had not had a priest for about three years. I remained in Alexishafen and acted as handyman in all sorts of things. I was also appointed Rector.

The town of Madang, and in particular its harbour, which is thirteen miles east along the coast, was our contact with the rest of the world. Our cargo all came to Madang by overseas boats, and we had to go there to get it by boat. There was a road, but it was crossed by a few small rivers that had no bridges, so if there was rain, the road was impassable. I took over the running of the boats and

almost every day I would go to Madang with one or more boats to get supplies or building materials and bring them back to Alexishafen. Everything in the whole diocese had to be rebuilt.

The diocese of Madang was very large at that time because it included what are now the four dioceses of Lae, Mt Hagen, Goroka and Kundiawa. The missionaries were mostly American and Dutch. The pre-war Missionaries had [as yet] no permission to return to New Guinea ²².

²² 9Arkfeld, 2015)

The young Arkfeld quickly went to work to help rebuild the war-torn coastal region. With the help of fellow missionaries, he built houses using palm leaves for walls and palm bark for flooring. In the early days of rebuilding, they didn't have the luxury of nails--they simply tied things together with vines. He also led the construction of schools and clinics while setting up mission stations.

In 1946, German and Dutch missionaries who had been evacuated during the war were given permission to return. Monsignor Willem van Baar was now the highest authority amongst them as both the Bishop Loerks of Wewak and Bishop Wolf of Alexishafen had died in the war. Because of the high fatality rate of mission personnel during the war, Monsignor van Baar had only 13 priests and two brothers to cover the whole of the highlands region stretching from Goroka to Enga and Mt Hagen.

In 1946, van Baar appointed Fr Arkfeld to Lae where he had the mammoth task of re-establishing mission stations and supplying them with foodstuffs and building materials. At first, new churches and buildings were made of native materials until roofing iron, and dressed timber etc were made available. It was here Arkfeld decided that the best way for him to help the missions was to get a pilot's license which he gained in 1948.

From the moment he began his flying missions in Papua New Guinea, the people took notice. Unaccustomed to planes, they were impressed by this new priest's devotion to his work. Before long, they began calling him the "Flying Priest," and, later, the "Flying Bishop." Many people thought he resembled the legendary pilot, Charles Lindbergh.

Bishop Appelhans 1948 to 1951

Bishop Appelhans was known as the reviver of mission stations. After three years, Monsignor van Baar's term finished and he was succeeded by Stephen Appelhans as Bishop and was appointed Vicar Apostolic of East New Guinea on 16 July 1948. Appelhans began a seminary for local priests with 23 students on Pentecost Sunday at Alexishafen (Mihalic, 1999: 32). He also envisioned beginning an order for the local women and this idea was fostered after his death by Bishop Noser

Appelhans was only at his post for three years when he died in an air crash.

Bishop Appelhans and Fr William Bacchus of New York died when a plane crashed into the sea 10 miles south of Lae in heavy rain. The plane, which had been on a flight from Wau to Lae with a pilot and six passengers, has been located in six fathoms of water half a mile offshore. It is feared that there were no survivors. Among those on board were Bishop Stephen Appelhans, of Kansas, Roman Catholic Bishop of Madang, and Fr William Bachus, of New York, who was stationed at Lae. The priests had visited Wau to consecrate a new church there (News account, 16 July 1951).

Bishop Noser 1953 to 1966

Bishop Noser was known as an intellectual Bishop and educator, and founder of the Sisters of St Therese. Noser moved to New Guinea in 1953 to succeed Bishop Appelhans. He was bishop for 23 years and was particularly known for his work in education. He was appointed Archbishop of Madang in 1966 and retired in 1975.

Bishop Noser kept up the tradition of meeting new missionaries as Bishop Wolf always did. Only this time they often arrived at Alexishafen by road from Madang which was now the main port. Fr Steffen remembered arriving at the Madang wharf and being driven to Alexishafen to meet Bishop Noser. At that time, the Regional Superior, Fr George Bernarding, had only recently completed building the new Regional House and he welcomed Frs Liebert and Steffen and set them to work varnishing the floors (Steffen, 2014).

Bishop Noser, a former novice master, was a quiet, serious, deeply spiritual man of great learning. He was a Roman trained canon lawyer; legalism fitted his character. He always had a firm idea of what he wanted to do and carried it out very methodically. By nature, he was aloof and retiring and could easily have become a cloistered monk. – to him, faithfulness to duty at all costs was high virtue. He lived that conviction and expected his missionaries to do the same (*Mihalic, 1996:21*)

One of the first lay religious movements to start in the diocese after the war was the Legion of Mary, at the initiative of the Bishop. The first group of the Legion of Mary was at Alexishafen among the station workers. Both Highlands pioneers Frs Schaefer and Ross were devotees of the Blessed Virgin and by the mid-1950s, had already organised Marian processions with the Fatima statue of Madang. It spilled over to Rempi, Fr Ross's old station. By 1955, Alexishafen had a curia comprising praesidia from Rempi, Halopa, Talidig, Mugil, Megiar and Riwo. Mr Bill Morgan (later a SVD Brother) was the curia president.

During Bishop Noser's tenure, a new cathedral was built in Madang and opened on 10 September 1967. It was dedicated to the Holy Spirit. Noser wrote about the Cathedral: "While simple and functional in design, the Catholics are deservedly proud. It was solemnly consecrated in a most impressive ceremony with five bishops present."

Archbishop Noser, 1966 to 1975.

Bishop Noser became Archbishop in 1966 when Madang became an Archdiocese. "There was a simple but interesting ceremony in the new cathedral". He wrote an article entitled *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* which describes the changes that happened in his time (Ruffing, 1969: 61). The Major seminary was shifted from Madang to Port Moresby and the St Fidelis Minor Regional seminary remained at Kap. There were changes in the liturgy also with the use of the local languages instead of Latin after Vatican II. Archbishop Noser advocated the use of the culture in church services wherever possible. He appreciated the finer points of the life of the local people and encouraged them to keep their culture where possible.



Bishop Noser in Alexishafen

Noser said:

The people have their rites and ceremonies for gardening, hunting and fishing, their own music, singing and dancing; special birth, puberty, betrothal, marriage, sickness, death and funeral rituals; beliefs in their spirits in the souls of their ancestors and a host of others that are very real to them. There is much in them that is good, some that are neutral. Both of these must be studied thoroughly and Christianised so that they can be incorporated into the liturgy. Then the people will more readily understand and accept it and hold on to it" (Ruffing, 1969: 60).

The Sisters of St Therese used to look forward to his visits as he was the founder of their Order. Archbishop Noser was looking back on the history of the mission from 1969 and also looking forward when he wrote:

The history of the past ten or 15 years may be considered a prophecy of the future, for we have good reason to look forward with full confidence to what is in store for New Guinea and the Church. The future promises to be bright. Trying to read the signs of the times, to adjust ourselves to changing situations, spending ourselves in our work, we leave the results with filial trust in the hands of Divine Providence (Noser, 1969: 63). Archbishop Noser retired in 1975 and died in 1981.

Sisters of St Therese and SSPS Sisters Classens and Arsenia Wildenuns with Bp Noser



Bishop Arkfeld, Bishop of Wewak, 1966 to 1975

Leo Arkfeld was born in Butte, Nebraska, USA on 4 February 1912. After a difficult birth, his grandmother promised the Lord that if the baby survived, he would become a priest and then the pastor prophesied that the baby would become a bishop! In his childhood, the family moved to a farm in Iowa.

When Arkfeld joined the Divine Word Missionaries at the age of 20, he had to do the last three years of High School before joining the seminary. After he was ordained in 1943, he was assigned to New Guinea. Because the war was still raging there, he worked with Archbishop Duhig in Brisbane. He and Duhig became good friends.

Arkfeld was busy in Lae when he was told by the Apostolic Delegate that he had been appointed Bishop of Wewak. He was just 36 years old. It was said that he was the youngest Roman Catholic bishop in the world at that time. The young bishop quickly went to work to build up mission stations in Wewak with the help of fellow missionaries. They built houses using palm leaves for walls and palm bark for flooring. The construction of schools and clinics was another priority. In 1952, he set up St. John's Seminary on Kairiru Island to help build up a local clergy. In the early 1960s, he founded the region's first girls' high school, opening up the opportunity for hundreds of girls to go on to higher education.

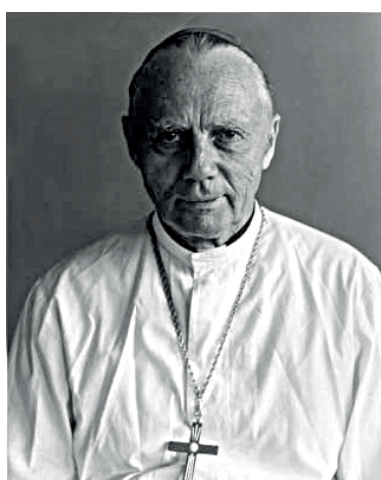


While he was bishop of Wewak, Arkfeld encouraged Fr Mihalic in his endeavour to begin a *Tok Pisin* newspaper, *Wantok*, which aimed at the grassroots level, that is people who had basic education but could not read English well enough to cope with the *National Times* or the *Post Courier*. This included villagers, young school leavers looking for work and others like drivers or *haus bois*. Arkfeld was at the launch of the first issue of *Wantok* on 5 August 1970.

Later, the Lutheran, Uniting and Anglican Churches joined forces in a joint venture with the Catholic-owned Wantok Publishing and the Times of Papua New Guinea. The Churches became shareholder in a new company called Media Holdings in which the Lutheran Church has a 20 percent holding. They acknowledged this was an important step in ecumenical movements in Papua New Guinea. In 1975, Archbishop Arkfeld oversaw the ordination of the first native priest, one of his proudest moments in missionary work because it signified that the church was beginning to take root.

Arkfeld as Archbishop of Madang 1975 to 1987

In 1975, Arkfeld became Archbishop of Madang, and succeeded Archbishop Noser. Arkfeld



founded two religious orders in Papua New Guinea - the Rosary Sisters and the Sacred Heart Brothers. He arranged for the Rosary Sisters to work sometimes with the Sisters of Mercy in their ministries of health and education. It was remarked that, “it is an inspiration to see the way the [Rosary] Sisters go about their duties” when they accompanied the Sisters of Mercy on their visitations to outstations. Sometimes they crossed raging rivers on log bridges (Flaherty, 2008: 85). The Sisters of Mercy had also responded to the call from Bishop Arkfeld to staff remote mission stations and address the needs of the village people in education and health (Ibid, 96).

In 1976, Fr Arnold Steffen, after many years in the Highlands was posted to Alexishafen as Regional Superior. Fr Bus was there also and began exploring different ways of Church

Renewal, following Vatican II. His efforts brought him in contact with the Movement for a Better World.

Church Headquarters moved to Madang from Alexishafen

Alexishafen was seen to be too far from the main centre of activity in Madang and a cluster of buildings near the cathedral now became the centre of the Archdiocese. One building was the dining and kitchen where missionaries congregated over meals. Most of the buildings consisted of units. One of these was given to Fr Bus as his living quarters and as the office for the Movement of a Better World.

When he became Archbishop, Arkfeld faced a great challenge with a vast diocese to cover and rough terrain taking days to traverse to meet the villagers in the jungle or up mountains. But he was undaunted. He began a mission air service, which used a radio network to dispatch small planes to remote areas during health emergencies. One night he was running out of daylight and had to land at the Madang airstrip in the dark. At that time there were no lights to illuminate the strip. What was he to do? He radioed a message ahead about his predicament so several people drove out to the airstrip and lit the strip with their headlights, allowing Bishop Leo to land safely.

When he retired, Archbishop Arkfeld, opted to stay in Wewak where he lived simply in a couple of small rooms. The mission compound overlooked the ocean and was backed by the jungle. He could have retired back in the States, but he took out citizenship of PNG and chose to remain in his adopted land. When Archbishop Arkfeld died in 1999, thousands of people attended the funeral service in Wewak. Bishop Kalisz said: "They loved him because he was always a very kind person. People in general looked upon the bishop as being their father." He was survived by three brothers, Clem, Vince and George Jr.; and four sisters, Sylvia Bissen, Rita Kelley, Sally Kohles and Florence Ohlinger.

Fr Vince Ohlinger, his nephew, said, "The archbishop's main thrust as a missionary priest and bishop was to build up the Catholic Church in central New Guinea. He was an ordinary farm boy who grew up in Iowa, but with faith and trust in God he responded in the best way that he could to the events in his life."

His obituary appeared in 1999 in the *Catholic Almanac Online*:

21 August 1999: Archbishop Leo Arkfeld, 87, died Wewak, New Guinea. He was a missionary and archbishop of Madang, Papua New Guinea, 1975-87. He was ordained a priest in 1943 and was assigned to New Guinea; ordained titular bishop of Bucellus and vicar apostolic of Central New Guinea, name of vicariate changed to Wewak on May 15, 1952. He was the first bishop of Wewak, Nov. 15, 1966; He spent 54 years in New Guinea and was known as the 'Flying Bishop' after gaining his pilot's license in 1948."

Archbishop Arkfeld wrote:

My happiness rests on your happiness,
 My happiness rests in God's happiness,
 It starts with God's well-being,
 And goes with God's happiness.
 As much as anyone's life can spread and focus,
 God's light and love and happiness,
 God passes on his happiness.
 I am happy to have been involved,
 in that wonderful activity of Divine Goodness.

(Archbishop Leo Arkfeld. Remembered @ Creighton)

Many people described Bishop Arkfeld as "a kind, considerate, tolerant, forgiving, patient, relaxed, gentle, generous and approachable man with a vision and boundless faith in God and

people” (Mihalic, 1999: 96). Huber compared Arkfeld’s emphasis on aircraft with Limbrock’s emphasis on boats; the changes in transport assisting in the Church’s missionary endeavours (Huber, 1988: 207)

Archbishop Benedict To Varpin 1987 to 2001

The first National Archbishop of Madang

Bishop Benedict To Varpin was appointed by Pope John Paul II as coadjutor-Archbishop of Madang in March 1987. Bishop Benedict was a Tolai from East New Britain. Born in 1936, he was educated by the Sacred Heart Sisters and later by the Christian Brothers at Vuvu.



Ordination of Benedict To Varpin as Archbishop

When he joined the seminary at Madang, the rector was Fr Caesar, an African/American who encouraged the seminarians, and another of his lecturers was Fr Meier, later Archbishop of Mt Hagen. When he made his *Ad Limina to Rome* in 1993, Benedict went with his old lecturer, now Archbishop, Michael Meier of Mt Hagen.

When I, the author, visited Madang in 1994 for four months, I stayed at the mission headquarters. Archbishop Benedict took me everywhere: up to Bundi which was now part of the Madang diocese; up the Ramu River on a double canoe; and up to Utu and to Bogia. It was wonderful to see how the Catholic missions in Madang were flourishing in all these places. Culturally, Bishop Benedict encouraged the people to include their colourful *singsing* groups in the Church liturgy. So everywhere we visited, we were greeted by large archways of flowers and singsing groups. Later the dancers led the procession into the church before the confirmation or ordination ceremonies. These were all treated as big occasions with traditional feasts and dances being held. Of course, this also attracted large crowds of people who were amazed to see a Tolai Archbishop. “He is one of us!” they said.

Archbishop Benedict with the novices of the Sisters of St Therese. 1994 (Mennis)

The 30 parishes in the Madang Province each had up to 10 outstations. Not all parishes had priests, and parishioners were being encouraged to take a more active part in the Church through the Movement for a Better World which was now run by Fr Bus. The Church has long had a stabilising effect in Papua New Guinea and proved a pivot for the lives of the people. In 1994, there were 60 community schools as well as eight health centres. There are three Congregations of Sisters: the Holy Spirit Sisters in Madang, Manam, Mugil, Megiar and Bogia to name but a few and they now have many local vocations; the Order of Sisters of St Therese, started by Bishop Noser for local girls, also has many members; and the Sisters of Charity.



On 19 September 1994, came the news that the two large volcanoes Vulcan and Tarvurur (Matupit) were erupting in Rabaul, Benedict's hometown. Over the following days, the eruptions proved so devastating they featured on the international news. Blown by the wind, the ash from Rabaul covered Madang airspace and over the following weeks, the airport was closed to small planes travelling inland as visibility everywhere was very low. The grey ash cloud over Madang town caused bright red sunsets. Although Archbishop Benedict wanted to return to Rabaul to visit his relatives, he was advised against going by his doctor because of his bad asthma.

Once he had contacted his people by phone and been reassured they were safe, he continued with his usual schedule around the mission stations. By accompanying him, I was able to get a wider glimpse of the whole province. The people in the Madang Province live in four distinct geographic areas: firstly, there are the mountainous regions in Simbai and Bundi; secondly, the coastal areas - the Rai Coast, the Bel area and north coasts; thirdly, are the people who live along the Gogol and Ramu Rivers; lastly are the people who live on the larger islands like Karkar and Manam.

Bundi: Mountain Mission:

*Bundi people with their
Archbishop (Author)*

The People of the Bundi mission crowd around Archbishop Benedict. They wanted him to pray for rain as there had been a drought.

When we went there in 1994, it was exactly sixty years since Fr Ross and his party had passed through Bundi on their way to Mt Hagen. Rudolph Gandine Katekis, who was a small boy when Fr Ross and party passed through Bundi,



was able to give some information about them. Many people thought they were spirits of dead ancestors. They were over-awed by the white missionaries and all the cargo their carriers had especially all the shells with which they used to buy food.

The Bundi Mission Station had been started in 1933 by Fr Schaefer, Fr Cranssen and Brother Anton Baar, and had now grown to a flourishing centre. Later missionaries journeyed around on horseback but, by the time Fr Anton arrived, there was only one horse left. He rode it before he got sick with epilepsy and had to return to the USA for treatment. When Fr Mike Morrison took his place, he did not ride so he shot the horse and the people had a great feast. The horse's skin was subsequently nailed to the kitchen wall in the mission house. When Fr Anton returned, his reaction to the death of his beloved horse has not been recalled, but the story was still being circulated.

Peter To Rot, nephew of Blessed Peter To Rot, told me about the Bundi people who lived on the slopes of the Bismarck Range and he mentioned two bad aircraft accidents while he was stationed there. The Bundi airstrip is one of the most dangerous in Papua New Guinea. It had been built in the 1950s using bullocks to flatten an area on the top of a ridge, but other higher

ridges surrounded it. To approach the airstrip, the pilot had to land uphill. Because it was one-way strip, the plane was then turned for take-off.

I had Peter To Rot's words about the accidents in my mind as I flew into Bundi with Archbishop Benedict who was ordaining Joseph Poga as a deacon. The airstrip was just visible through the thickening ash-clouds from the Rabaul eruption, but we managed a safe landing. A crowd of school children was at the airstrip to greet their Archbishop. We were escorted to the vehicles with children singing their rain song: "We need rain to wash ourselves. Our gardens need water to grow". The area was experiencing a long drought.



Although the ash clouds marred the view during our visit, the mountain air was fresh and invigorating. Each afternoon, mist and cloud come up the valleys silhouetting the trees starkly along the edge of the station. Everywhere, people walked about climbing down to collect water from the streams and then returning up their village tracks: their short stocky legs grew strong from the constant walking. The subsistence economy sustained them well and was supplemented with trade store food.

The ash from Rabaul extended to Bundi in 1994

In 1994, the mission centre in Bundi had a medical clinic and provided social services. The school was built of local timber. In his time, Fr Morrison had co-ordinated the various villages to come together for festivities. The mission station is well ordered with small buildings around a central oval, used for ball games and plays put on for visitors and we were no exception. Not all people stay with the church and there is growing concern about smaller denominations which have come into the area and fragment the parishes, undermining the work of the mainline churches. The nearby government station and hospital had been opened in 1956 but it was still only a small outpost. The road up to it was scary: just carved into the hillside with a complete drop off to one side. There was a small house in the sub-district, a medical clinic and a small police headquarters.

While we were in Bundi for those few days, the clouds and ash from the Rabaul volcanoes continued to billow into the sky and were carried across mainland New Guinea by the winds. By the time we were ready to leave, there was a thick build up of clouds and ash and we began to worry. The pilot flew over but could not see the airstrip and returned to Madang. Later, he tried again and managed to land. As we were taking off Bishop Benedict blessed the plane and us. There were many dangerous moments as the plane taxied down the airstrip and took off into the clouded valley: enshrouded ridges and mountains surrounded us. At any moment we could have crashed. The pilot climbed as high as possible as quickly as possible and we were able to return safely to Madang. The pilot realised how dangerous the airstrip was under the ash cloud and the Bundi airstrip was closed to further traffic for many weeks after this. If the pilot hadn't come in, we would have had to walk down to the Highlands Highway to get back to Madang.

Malala a Coastal Mission near Bogia - old photos



There was a strong mission station at Bogia before the war.

Here SSps Sisters are seen in front of their convent in the 1930s

Students at the Bogia School before the war with a SSps Sister

After the war Bogia had once been a flourishing centre for the North Coast. There had been a primary school, a church and a large presbytery where the priests had their meetings but by 1994 the *raskel* problem was so bad many businesses had closed.

In 1994, I travelled along the North Coast Road to Malala, near Bogia, with Archbishop Benedict and his secretary.

The road was good and several bridges built in the 1970s by the Public Works Department crossed the main rivers. More recently, the road has been upgraded to a highway with overseas aid. However, recent attacks on people travelling on this highway gave it the reputation of a *raskel* zone.

We drove there in the mission 4WD and Bishop Benedict pointed out the worst *raskel* areas. The Bogia bank had been closed after a number of hold-ups and the people had to go to Madang for their banking. If this was not possible, they relied on the missionaries going to Madang to do it for them. However, word was soon out and then the missionaries were attacked so they had to cease being the local bankers. There is not much community activity in the area and the stores were run down. Brother Cassius, a builder and carpenter, operated a good store at the Bogia Mission. He used to go to Madang every week to do the mission business and finances, following a very close schedule. The *raskels* knew his schedule and they waylaid him and stabbed him several times, robbing him of the mission funds. He survived the attack. Many missionaries have been attacked or their cars stolen over the last few years.



Bogia supplied meat to the outstations in those days but there is nothing there now. Times have changed; the schools have become localised and are run by boards. The VSOs (volunteers) have left and now one priest looks after three or four stations.

We were on our way for a confirmation service at Malala High School, near Bogia which was this side of Bogia, and it was there I met the famous Sister Jane Frances Millane who had done wonders at the High School for many years. It was not long after the Rabaul eruption and despite the fact that he was very upset and worried about his family, Archbishop Benedict continued his missionary duties. I was amazed at the courage of the man as I knew how devastated he was about the eruption and its effects on his people.

Sister Jane Frances Millane ²³

Sr Jane Frances Millane was born on the April 23, 1931 in Iowa, in the United States. She comes from a family of nine. It was while teaching in Illinois, USA, that she made another decision to join the Holy Spirit Sisters. She once remarked that this was a decision that she made from the heart. After three years, she made her first public promise to become a nun. Sister Jane arrived in PNG in 1961. Her mission was not only to bring Christianity to the country but to help foster formal education in the days when formal education was just starting in the country.



During the 40 years or so she spent teaching at Lourdes Catholic Secondary School, Malala she has touched the lives of thousands of students. The school in Madang was where she spent much of her life, serving as a nun, teacher and school principal.

The Ramu River Missions

The Ramu River had always sounded fascinating. The culture was similar to the Sepik River people and there were probably trading connections between them going back hundreds of years. All these river people were famous carvers and artists and often came to Madang to sell their products at the market. I was able to visit their area for the first time in October 1994. Again, I had the privilege of accompanying Archbishop Benedict and his party to a confirmation ceremony. I was to learn that the people really appreciate the church these days and used cultural items in the ceremonies. The vessels used on the altar were carved wooden chalices and *singsing* groups took part in the procession accompanied by the drumming of the *kundu*.

The day we set out for the Ramu River, we left Madang at 9.30am and finally arrived at our destination the Kayan Mission Centre at 6.00pm. We drove along the north coast road under the coconuts, past Malala and Bogia and then turned off down a very bumpy track edged with kunai grass as high as the roof of the 4WD vehicle. The people were anxiously waiting to greet their Archbishop at Damur Village and what a welcome! Garlands were put around our necks and a band welcomed us. Then it was on to Gamai Village, where the car was left. Again more garlands and decorated archways to greet the Archbishop and a feast was set out. Six of us sat around a table in the middle of the village square and ate fish with rice and gravy over the top. Of course there was the inevitable yams and *kaukau*, which were good in small quantities. I was the only European within miles but at no stage did I feel intimidated. The people were

²³ May 19, 2017 *The National Weekender* By Sophia – N'Druwin

caring and cheerful and all wanted to shake hands with us. The sights and sounds of the day were extraordinary, and the people were so excited that their Archbishop had come and he was one of them.



Kayan Villagers welcome Archbishop Benedict (Author)

We were then sung down to the Ramu River where two canoes had been tied together for stability. Planks laid across provided support for the Bishop's chair garlanded with more shredded fronds. The Ramu canoes are very swift with pointed wooden crocodile heads and no outrigger. The single canoes are paddled standing up which requires much balance and poise. We watched several young boys paddling past with strong strokes in single canoes with crocodile carved prows. We

were told that just here a canoe full of missionaries had overbalanced with nuns and priests in the water. Fortunately, they were all saved.

Our double canoe was paddled past many lagoons and inlets. We passed a wide fish trap set right across one inlet with only enough room for a canoe to get through. Later we were shown the special net placed halfway along the trap. When we arrived at the village, the choir sang its song of welcome to the Archbishop with more garlands, more speeches and more hand shaking. Then the string band played and suddenly down the track came another *singsing* group surrounding us with their swirling skirts, stomping feet and bobbing chest decorations.

The Bishop's chair was then moved to the truck and tied on the back while I sat in the front next to the driver. Bishop Benedict was feted with the *singsing* group all the way to the village. It was growing dark by now and the drumming, the dust and the darkness could have been scary, what with the tall dark village houses now appearing on either side of the truck and the



hundreds of people streaming past and peering in but it was all great fun - one to be remembered for a long time.

Kayan Villagers with a traditional pot (M.Mennis)

Next day, I attended the confirmation ceremony in the village church. I noticed how the people enjoy the pomp and ceremony of the *singsing* and the procession into church and then how Archbishop Benedict did his part with his red robes, his shepherd's crook and his red mitre which towered over the people. The ceremonies show how the church has developed since Independence. For the big services like Confirmation and Ordination, colourful

ceremonies were the order of the day. Afterwards, in the presbytery, there were serious discussions about issues in the church and problems faced. There were other religions creeping in, leading sometimes to divisions between villages. These talks are a chance to bring things

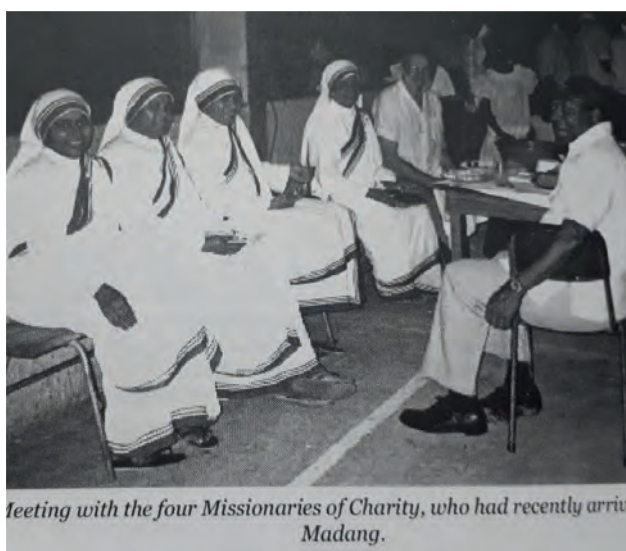
out in the open and discuss them. The results of these discussions will be mulled over in the village for weeks to come. Kayan has about 800 people in its parish and Bosman, across the river, has about 1,800.

The lower Ramu area has a lot going for it. The scenery is superb and there were endless lagoons to paddle around in. The water is clear and smooth and full of fish, makau etc. There were mangrove trees with large roots fingering into the mud. Most areas are too low and swampy for houses and gardens, so villages are few and far between. The people live by fishing, gardening and their coconut groves. They raise pigs and fowls. Stories abound of crocodiles taking dogs and other animals. mends.

As Archbishop of Madang, Benedict To Varpin, became known as a great builder. He, himself, gave much of the credit to Brother Theo Becker SVD, his manager. "He is smart man and organises things well. There is a saying, 'The Germans live to work but the Americans work to live' and that is true of Brother Theo". The two of them made a good pair of workers. The story of how they built the Holy Spirit High school at Bogia is one example. It was going to cost a lot of money and critics were asking where they were going to get the money from, but they just went ahead and began clearing the land. They asked the Premier for some money and got \$33,000.

Bishop Benedict said "I got my council together to discuss it and they said have you got two million to start this? No one believed it possible. In 1994, there are four or five hundred students there. They went to grade 10 and then either went to Malala or St Benedict's Agricultural Training Centre.

Archbishop Benedict welcomed the Missionaries of Charity to Madang



Meeting with the four Missionaries of Charity, who had recently arrived in Madang.

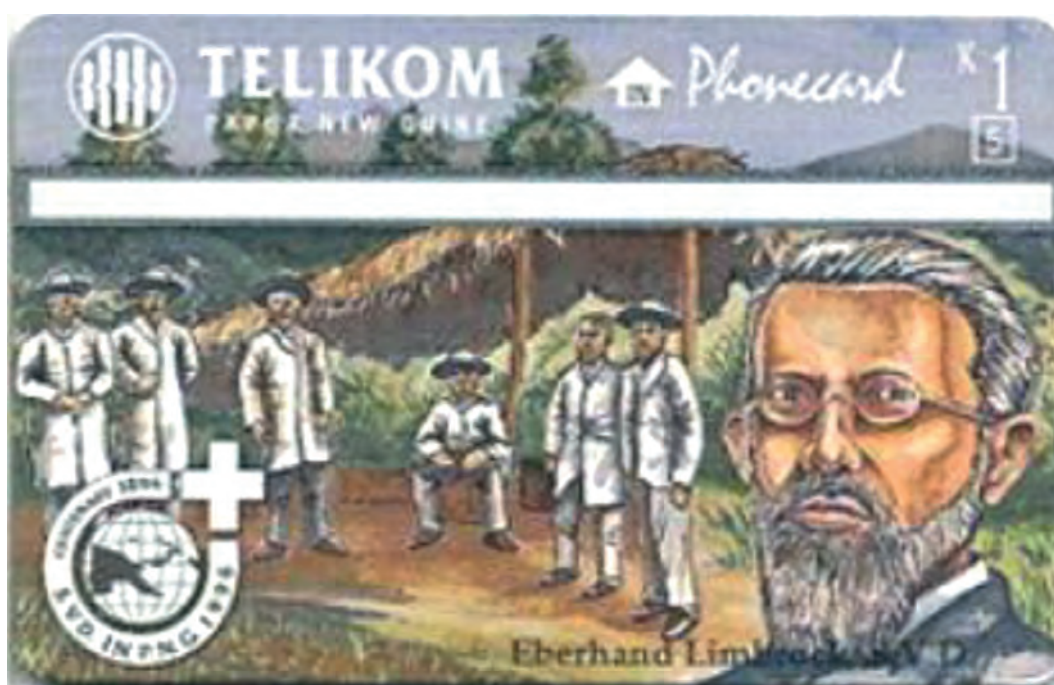
After his appointment, Archbishop Benedict got busy fixing up old Church buildings as well as setting up new parishes. Some parishes which were improved were: Gusap, near the Ramu sugar factory, which is run by a German priest, Fr Hans Dapper; Kwanga Station which has a big health centre and new buildings with a new permanent church; Megiar has quite a large station with accommodation and training for catechists run by Sr Dominique; Mugil has a big Catholic health centre and this looks after people all the way to Bogia; Saidor on the Rai Coast has a church, and four outstations which Bishop Benedict visits by car in the dry season; Ariangon has

a new health centre and house for the priest, new classrooms and new houses for the teachers and nurses; Banara has a big school; Biang, on Manam Island, has a church, health centre and school.

One of Archbishop Benedict's favourite projects was the St Benedict's Agriculture Centre in Madang. The motto is *Orare et Laborare* (to pray and to work). There the students learn pottery, piggery, coconuts and agriculture so they can learn to cultivate their land. The mission obtained a loan of 3 million kina from the bank and over the years managed to pay it back. The school is named after St Benedict, a great saint for the youth (*Mennis, 2007*)

Archbishop Benedict noted “The ecumenical movement is strong in the Madang Province and in Papua New Guinea as well, especially between the Catholics, Anglicans, United Church and Lutherans. They are working well together and this could have been a trend that started at the time of the war. I am the chairman of an Ecumenical group to work with the other churches and was also a member of the local Council of Churches. When the World Council of Churches they invited me to go. Their building is near the United Nations building and it is a big organisation. There are 1.9 billion Christians altogether in the world and, of these, 1 billion are Catholics. [Archbishop Benedict, suffering health problems, retired on 24 July 2001 and returned to New Britain.]

1886 – 1996 – The Centenary of the SVD Missionaries was held on Tumleo Island



*The missionaries' contribution to build up a local church:
their background and education, their motivation, lifestyle and work*

by Fr Paul Steffen SVD

This article seeks to acknowledge the contribution of missionaries to the development of local and indigenous churches by presenting voices about their work from outside and inside. The focus is on the missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word (Societas Verbi Divini, SVD), colloquially called SVD-missionaries and founded in 1875 in the Dutch village Steyl near Venlo, and the missionary sisters of the Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit (Servae Spiritus Sancti, SSPS), which was founded in 1899 by the same founder.

The SVD arrived in 1896 on the shores of the north-eastern part of the island of New Guinea and their female counterpart three years later in 1899. The island was from 1884 to 1914 a German protectorate called German New Guinea. Thereafter, the area was until 1921 under Australian military administration and then until independence in 1975 the mandated territory of New Guinea under Australian administration.

The work the missionaries developed eventually became the indigenous church in Papua New Guinea. In 1966 all Vicariates were made dioceses and the *ius commisionis* expired in 1969. It

is undoubtedly closely related to the protagonists of this work, the missionaries and recipients of their missionary work that means the indigenous people, without whose active participation any missionary work would have been unsuccessful.

The German missiologist Horst Rzepkowski writes something that is of great importance for this theme portrayed in this article: “In addition to depicting missionary achievement and missionary activity, it is important to capture the cultural history of the native population, the addressee of missionary work, but also to unfold the tension between cultural contact and cultural conflict, the encounter of religions.”



Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II, at Goroka with Polish priests

Archbishop William Kurtz 2001 to 2010

William Kurtz was appointed in 2001 after having previously worked in the Kundiawa Diocese. Originally from Upper Silesia which is now part of Poland, he arrived in Papua New Guinea in 1967 and was Parish Priest of Mai for thirteen years. Then he was Bishop Caesar's vicar general in the Goroka Diocese. Then, when Chimbu was split from Goroka, he became



the Bishop of Kundiawa with 90,000 Catholics was bishop there until 2001 when he became Archbishop of Madang. He was known for his relief work with the people of Manam Island. The visit to Papua New Guinea of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II, in 1972 was a great occasion for the Polish missionaries. There was a photograph of them surrounded by Highlanders in full traditional attire.

Archbishop Kurtz with newly ordained diocesan priests from Chimbu at Kundiawa

Arnold Mandua remembered Fr Kurtz:

Fr Kurtz was the parish priest of Mai Catholic Mission in the *Yongomugl* area in the 1970s and 1980s and I remember him as the priest who celebrated the final mass in Kondiu High School during my graduation in 1981. His homily to us Grade 10s that year (and I remember every word) was “Education is like climbing a mountain and when you reach the top and look back you will see wonderful scenery around you.”

Manam Island’s continual eruptions meant most of the population had to be shifted to the mainland. It was a joint effort between Caritas Australia and the Archdiocese of Madang to implement the Manam Island Relief Program. The eruption in 2004, forced the evacuation of 11,000 people. Many of these people were Catholic and it became an endeavour of the church to help them. On 28 January 2005, there was another big eruption but, because of the Boxing Day tsunami, it received little media attention. As a result of these eruptions many people were moving permanently from the island some living in care centres north of Madang town, relying on aid for food and medicine.

Archbishop Kurtz said:

“The people are used to hardship, but this is real poverty. Caritas Australia will be working alongside the Archdiocese of Madang to implement the Manam Island Relief Program, which will see assistance given in education, health and the retrieval of canoes and fishing equipment for food sustainability.”

“We are now moving into the relief work very heavily. We are about to start on building classrooms and health centres and to retrieve canoes from Manam Island. The retrieval of canoes is going to be a much bigger task than we initially thought. We are going to end up bringing back 90 canoes. However, this will greatly help with the long-term sustainability of the people because they can fish again.”

“The eruptions destroyed school classrooms, which has disrupted schooling of the local children. The program will provide education facilities so that the children will have an opportunity to resume their schooling in the centres. Medication and health centres are also badly needed.”

Justine McMahon, Caritas Australia’s Pacific Region Coordinator added:

“Through this program we are focusing on sustainability, in which we are assisting and encouraging the locals to become self-reliant again. Caritas is assisting the displaced people to build classrooms and health centres so that the Manam people can get some normality back into their lives. Caritas Australia is responsible for the monitoring of this program and has allocated \$200,000 as an initial support.”

Archbishop Kurtz retired in 2010 on reaching retirement age.

Archbishop Stephen Reichert Archbishop in 2010

The Roman Catholic archdiocese of Madang is a Metropolitan Archdiocese in Papua New Guinea with suffragan diocese of Aitape, Lae, Vanimo, and Wewak. The Metropolitan Archbishop-elect of Madang, appointed by Pope Benedict XVI on Tuesday, November 30, 2010, is the former Bishop of Mendi, Papua New Guinea, Stephen Joseph Reichert O.F.M. Cap., a native of Leoville, Kansas in the United States and a Capuchin. He succeeds Archbishop William Joseph Kurtz, S.V.D., whose resignation was accepted upon having reached the age limit.

Archbishop Reichert writes: My college and Philosophy studies were done at St. Fidelis Seminary in Herman, Pennsylvania, a very small village in a very beautiful area in the western

part of the state. Later, I did my novitiate and made my temporary vows at a Capuchin formation house near Annapolis, Maryland. I finished my final four years of priesthood training, Theology, at Capuchin College in Washington DC, near the campus of Catholic University of America. I also studied linguistics at Georgetown University and the University of Oklahoma which led to my ability to translate many liturgies into the local languages wherever I was pastor in PNG.”

“I was ordained in 1969 and the following year, I was told by my Provincial Superior that I was assigned to the Capuchin Mission in Mendi. I arrived in Port Moresby on 23 July 1970. My first nine years as a missionary were spent on the Nembi Plateau, a bush area between



Poroma and Nipa. Here I was with people who were entering the early stage of evangelization. I baptized the first group of people, 32 of them, about three years after I arrived at Pomberel. That village became the main station of St. Martin de Porres Parish a few years later. These were my favourite years as a missionary.”

“My second assignment was at the Capuchin College, a Capuchin formation house at the Bomana Regional Seminary near Port Moresby. I spent four and a half years there before being elected Capuchin Religious Superior, a ministry that took me back to Mendi for six years. In 1990, after finishing my term as Superior, I was assigned parish priest of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Tari, a wonderful five years of pastoral ministry with the Huli people.”

“In 1995, I was appointed Bishop of Mendi by Pope John Paul II, and ordained by the retiring first Bishop of Mendi, Bishop Firmin Schmidt OFM Cap. All the people who had gathered for the ordination stayed on to say their final farewells to Bishop Schmidt who then headed back to the United States to live with the Capuchins in Ellis County, Kansas where he was born and raised (Pers comm).”

“Bishop Stephen Reichert was welcomed by the friars, and the people of the Mendi diocese. One of his first tasks was to find more priests and religious for the diocese. Missionaries of the Holy Family came from Poland in 1996 to take over the Ialibu area with its three flourishing parishes. Other members of this same community worked in the Mendi district. When the Capuchins withdrew from the Kagua area, Bishop Reichert was able to get some diocesan priests from Poland to minister in that area. Bishop Reichert was the President of the Catholic Bishop’s conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands from 1996 to 2001. On 30 November 2010, Bishop Reichert was appointed Archbishop-elect of Madang by Pope Benedict XVI and then he succeeded Archbishop William Joseph Kurtz a year later, becoming Archbishop of Madang.”

“One of his major interests was the new Family Center against Domestic Violence, promoted by the government of Madang. The Church gives immediate assistance to victims in order to break the vicious circle of violence at home. A team of the police will investigate promptly and promote a strong and decisive action in order to create confidence in the population on the work of the police in protecting all citizens.”

As reported to *Fides*, Archbishop Reichert said:

“Domestic violence in the family and sexual violence are of great concern in Papua New Guinea. It is a widespread and serious problem that we have to fight and we need to work all together. For too many years, families have hidden domestic violence. Horrendous crimes, such as rape and brutal and repeated beatings of wives and children have been covered up. Punishing the perpetrators and compensating the victims are not sufficient deterrents to stop the phenomenon.”

“The Church of Madang will work to help stop violence. First of all by convincing the population of the fact that these cases cannot be considered ‘family matters’, but should be reported. A change of culture and mindset, and a change of heart is needed.”

“For this reason, all the components of the state, Churches, the government, civil society groups, are called to unite to say: “No more violence in the family! No more sexual violence crimes! No more violence against women! No more violence against children! Let us work together to stop violence”.

On 29 November 2014, Archbishop Reichert, as Chairman of the Catholic Church Health Services said that health services in Papua New Guinea were suffering because the Government was not releasing funds promptly. He expressed his disappointment that the release of salary and operational funds to the churches is frequently delayed. “We welcome the government’s commitment to health care in the latest budget. However, we urge the government to release funds on time to churches who run health facilities in partnership with the government Department of Health (Website Keith Jackson and friends).

The Catholic Archdiocese of Madang is flourishing and is responsible for many schools, clinics, community centres and churches. It extends from the coast as far as the top of the mountains near Mt Wilhelm. There are 142,000 Catholics in the area. On 10 May 2015, I went to Mass in the Cathedral and attended the ordination of two deacons by Archbishop Reichert. It was a great occasion with an overflowing church made more colourful with a local singing group and a band. Deacon Solomon Akawa from Malala near Bogia and Eugene Grengary from Taladig.

The ceremony was attended by a crowded church which gives credence to the fact that the church is alive and well in Madang. After their ordination, the Archbishop put his arms around the two new deacons and the large congregation cheered and clapped.

Later, when I met Archbishop Reichert, he repeated his views on domestic violence: “it is a widespread and serious problem that we have to fight and we need to work all together. Evangelization in and through the family is one of the primary cross-cutting themes which has come out of the recent General Assembly of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.”

Archbishop Reichert:

“I have enjoyed all my missionary years in the ‘land of the unexpected’. Through the years, the pastoral emphasis of the Catholic Church has developed to meet the challenges of a changing situation. Today Christian marriage and family life, along with the care, protection, education and catechesis of children has come to the fore. This is a pastoral emphasis not only in PNG, but worldwide. Witness to this is the recent Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis called *Amoris Laetitia* – On Love in the Family. This is my greatest pastoral interest at this time.”

The Divine Word University in Madang

The Divine Word University is a national Catholic University in Papua New Guinea. It is one of the newest tertiary institutions in the country. It was established as a university by an Act of Parliament in 1996. The university is ecumenical and co-educational and is under the leadership of the Divine word missionaries (Wikipedia).

On 3 May 2015 the Divine Word University in Madang held an Open Day when the students vied with each other to have the best display of their work with colourful balloons and posters. The University has 3,000 students and is highly regarded in Papua New Guinea and overseas. Its faculties include Arts, Business, Education, Science and Theology and as well the university offers degrees and diplomas in business management and administration to meet employers' needs and resources. All aspects of the programs stress ethical standards in business which is something unique to DWU and is very important in Papua New Guinea where corruption is a big problem.

The Divine Word Institute, later a university, was developed on a block of swampy land leased in 1964. Originally it was set up as a high school, opening in 1968 with over a hundred students in two Grade seven classes. Over the years, it developed into the Divine Word Institute (DWI). In recent years, Sir Peter Barter, proprietor of the Madang Resort Hotel and former Governor of Madang, praised the contribution that the Divine Word University made to Papua New Guinea and was particularly interested in the Tourism and Hospitality Courses offered.

Sir Peter Barter:

The Diploma course in Tourism and Hospitality has been especially welcomed by the Tourism Industry. It has used the tourism and hospitality industry in Madang as a rich resource for work experience and course design. Papua New Guinea, with its incredible diversity of cultures, seascapes and landscapes has an open-ended appeal for tourists – and an opportunity for employment for our young people. Divine Word University is making a great contribution to Papua New Guinea.



An integral part of the Divine Word University is the Noser Library which consists of over 4,000 books and manuscripts on ethnography, history, manuscripts, photographs and other important primary and secondary source material (Mihalic, 1999: 225). So the first Archbishop of Madang has a place of honour in the Divine Word University: The Noser Library.

According to the web: Divine Word University (DWU) is a National University and a leading tertiary institution in Papua New Guinea. Formerly Divine Word Institute, it was established by an Act of Parliament in 1980 and was established as a University in 1996. DWU It is ecumenical, coeducational and privately governed with government support. Our vision is to be a National University, open to all, serving society through its quality of research, teaching, learning and community service in a Christian environment. DWU offers its educational services to those interested in improving themselves intellectually and spiritually so they can become responsible citizens and is rooted in the Catholic tradition and well-articulated in the University Charter.



Diwai: a History of Divine Word University was written by James Sinclair, former kiap and a prolific writer of books on PNG. The label Diwai originated from when the university was an Institute shortened to DIWI and the students nicknamed the Institute DIWAI. Before it was an Institute it was a high school. Many well-known politicians and religious people have graduated from the University. Divine Word University is a national Catholic university in Papua New Guinea. It is one of the newest tertiary institutions in the country. It was established

as a university by an Act of Parliament in 1996. The university is ecumenical and coeducational and is under the leadership of the Divine Word Missionaries. (*Wikipedia*)

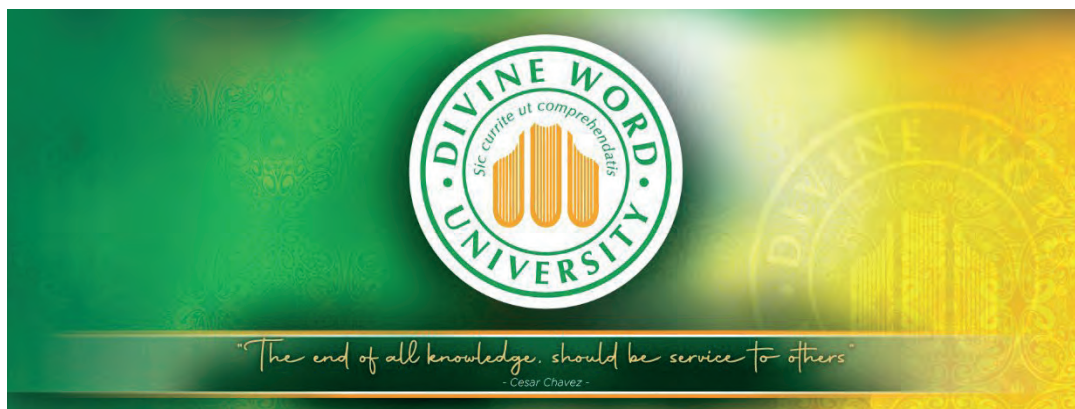


Photo by Kinsley Mau

The Secular Franciscans from Rempi in 2014

While in Madang, I, the author, also met Sister Maria Awa, mfi, a Franciscan missionary who, since 2011, has directed the House of Prayer at Alexishafen, running retreats for priests, sisters and brothers. A few years ago, she was approached by the local Rempi villagers who were anxious to join the Secular Franciscan Order. After she received permission from the Archbishop, she began a group with 29 members of whom 24 were professed in 2014. A second group of forty people will be professed in two years time.

This last group of fifty was attending a training meeting when I visited Alexishafen in 2015 and they are most enthusiastic. They were sitting in a *haus win* near Sek Harbour where once the mission boats were anchored and where Bishop Wolf had so often welcomed new missionaries to Papua New Guinea. The cement slab where the beautiful cathedral once stood is all that is left of that once proud building where the organ gave out the hymns: the *Salve Regina* or the *Te Deum* welcoming the missionaries to their life-time of work in bringing the Gospel to the people. Alexishafen has been partially rebuilt with accommodation, dining facilities and a bishop's house but it is quieter now. The main mission activity is in town now where the archbishop lives and where the Madang Holy Spirit cathedral stands.



Sister Maria and the Secular Franciscans met in the *haus win*. There were plans being made for a two-week retreat to be attended by a large group of over one hundred who will attend daily from their villages. Most of the people at this meeting were from Rempi village a few hours walk north of Alexishafen. It was the old mission of Fr William Ross before he left for Mount Hagen in 1934. Many Rempi men accompanied him on this epic journey and their descendants are still living in Mt Hagen.

The New Archbishop of Madang July 2020 ²⁴

Pope Francis has appointed his Excellency Most Reverend Anton Bal, pictured, as the new archbishop of Madang, Papua New Guinea. Bal is presently the bishop of the Kundiawa diocese. The announcement was made by the Apostolic Nunciature (Vatican Embassy) in Port Moresby last Friday. Bal will replace Archbishop Stephen Reichert, who had reached the age limit. Bal, 55, from Gumine in Chimbu (diocese of Kundiawa) completed his elementary studies at the Dirima Primary School and Kondiu High School and entered St Fidelis minor seminary in Madang. He went on to study philosophy and theology at the Holy Spirit Seminary, Bomana, in Port Moresby, and was ordained priest for the diocese of Kundiawa in 1991.

²⁴ From the National PNG July 2020

Archbishop Anton Bal The new Archbishop of Madang



His Excellency Archbishop Anton Bal, the newly Elected CBC president and current Archbishop of Madang Catholic Archdiocese. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands have elected His Excellency, Archbishop Anton Bal of the Catholic Archdiocese of Madang as the president of the Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. The election was made today during the 61st Annual General Meeting in Port Moresby. The new President of the CBC PNGSI will be in office for the next three (3) years (2020 –

2023). We would like to join the Conference in congratulating Archbishop Anton Bal and in thanking the Archbishop elect of Rabaul, +Rochus Tatamai his predecessor. The theme for the leadership of the CBC PNGSI for the next three (3) is “Our Catholic Laity: Holy, Formed and Sent to Serve in the heart of world”. Through this theme the Church in PNG and Solomon

Islands is particularly promoting the charisms and roles of majority Catholic Laity who are called to holiness, Christian formation and service in their own families and communities.



Coat of arms of Archbishop Anton Bal



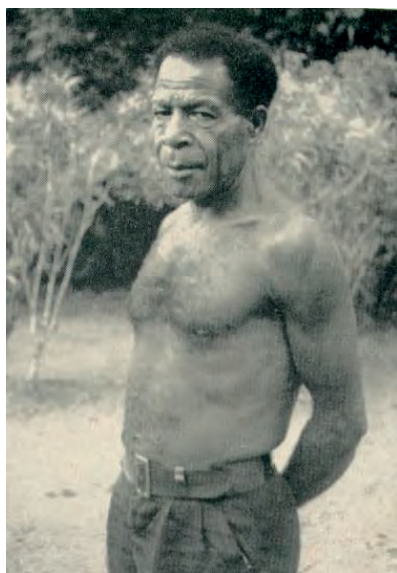
Cargo Cults in Madang after the war to the present

Western anthropologists described the concept of a cargo cult as a belief system in a relatively undeveloped society in which adherents practice superstitious rituals hoping to bring modern goods supplied by a more technologically advanced society. **Cargo cults** often develop during a combination of crises. The specific phenomenon was the belief which began among Melanesians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that various ritualistic acts such as the building of an airplane runway would result in the appearance of cargo via airplanes, even though they did not have a specific reason to believe that airplanes would land there. (*Web*)

Yali, the cargo cultist

“Yali was born in the Ngaing bush area of Sor on the Rai Coast about in 1912. As a boy, he was initiated in the Kabu Ceremony but not trained in garden magic or sorcery. While serving as a village tultul in 1931, he was instrumental in introducing the Catholic mission to the Rai Coast because the Catholics did not ban dancing unlike the Lutherans” (Lawrence, 1964: 119).

After the war, Yali of the Rai Coast addressed a large gathering of people at Saidor and promised



that, now the war was over, there would be a great increase in their standard of living once they shared the wealth with the Europeans. Later, he organised villages with houses in straight rows and bed of flowers as he had seen in Australia. By 1948, Yali had, “through entirely legal means, inaugurated a pagan revival, which had led to a general eclipse of Christianity” (Lawrence, 215)

In 1936, he was on patrol with Patrol Officer, Nurton, when the latter was attacked by villagers and almost hacked to death. This had a profound effect on Yali and it showed that even the most senior government officers were vulnerable to attack. Before the Japanese invasion ANGAU officers made great promises to the local people to keep them on side. Peter Lawrence remarked on promises made to get local men to join up.

One of the Angau Officers promised the men:

In the past, you natives have been kept backward. But now, if you help us win the war and get rid of the Japanese from New Guinea, we Europeans will help you. We will help you get houses with galvanized iron roofs, plank walls and floors, electric light, and motor vehicles, boats, good clothes and good food. Life will be very different for you after the war (1964: 124).

In 1943 Yali took all these promises seriously and enlisted with the Australian army. He took active part during the Pacific War and met up with Mo Johnson an Australian soldier. They walked as far as Aitape in company with another soldier, Buka.

Mo Johnson said:

Yali was with me throughout the whole of the combat (in Hollandia), he was very courageous and never afraid. He was trustworthy and did not know what fear was. He was straight laced and proper and I can't think too highly of him and his service. If anyone got a big decoration, it should have been him. He did more than many Europeans did. He was a good man. The missions ruined him, they said he tried to start his own private religion, but he had nothing to do with it whatsoever. He wanted self-government down where he was. Yali said, “Why not have our own place with our own people where we have our own ground”. (Taped interview with M. Mennis).

Following the Rehabilitation Scheme, after the war, the District officers in Madang, including Woodman and McCarthy, gave Yali their support as he wanted to help rehabilitate the village life. However, McCarthy expressed reservations to Yali: “Men will tempt you, they will offer you presents, but don’t take them. They will say you are a maker of magic and a prophet or a spirit” (McCarthy, 1963: 225)

Keith McCarthy wrote:

“Yali’s simple and rather naive plans were based on what he observed in Australia, to lead the people to betterment, his initial support by the Government, and the gradual and subtle infiltration of the old beliefs into his teachings. Poor Yali reluctantly he allowed himself to be become a Messiah! The power of cargo was too much for him and the height of this career he was tempted and fell. Yali’s subsequent sentence of over six year’s imprisonment was, in my opinion, harsh – but what was worse, His prosecution took no pains to understand how the innate beliefs of the people had played their part.” (Foreword note in Road belong cargo).



After the war, apart from the reconstruction of the town, one of J.K. McCarthy’s main tasks was to deal with an upsurge in cargo cultism. The farewell speeches of the Commanding Officers after the war had drawn a very rosy picture of what conditions would be like under the new Civil Administration. J. K. McCarthy wrote, “they made promises so lavish as to be impossible of redemption. The rosy future would provide schools for all, hospitals near every village and food in abundance” (McCarthy, 1963: 225). The result of these expectations not being redeemed led to great unrest and led to the rise of Yali.

Photograph: Kilibob totem pole

The cargo cult was still going when I interviewed Bek, the Chairman of the Dabsau Association, at Kauris village in November 1978 (1980b: 49)

Bek: I am the leader of all the bossmen called *lo boss* who belong to Yali. They are the leaders of Yali’s army. They won the Second World War in 1948, when my fathers were *luluais* and *tultuls*. McCarthy was here and helped Yali’s name to be well-known. They put up bogans or arches and welcomed Yali and made his name big in the territory. The army said he was the king of the territory. My fathers began these beliefs. They believed in going back to the *tumbuna* times., the *haus tambarans* the canoes and *garamut* and singsings. Yali came up in the middle of all this. McCarthy was the one who made Yali’s name big. Yali wanted to get the culture established in each place to get up businesses, schools, doctors – all these things must follow Yali’s beliefs, in this Dabsau Association. (Interview M.Mennis)

Puan of Umuin Village (1981: 85)

This cargo talk does not belong to us. It belongs to Australia or America. They put wire inside a mast and put it in the cemetery and hear the talk of these people who have died. The mission taught them how to listen to the dead. The government saw this happen and imprisoned some men who did this. Plenty of people tried this in Kranket and Bogati. Yali could make the sea

rough, or big tides come, or could make the sunshine. When he was in a fight no-one could kill him. Later he died and was buried in the cemetery at Sor. He told us before we did not know about cargo cult. It was only when the white men came. We do not understand all these things. These people go to the cemetery and hear many things. Yali asked us for money so he could help us. He was a councillor and worked for the government. (*Interview M. Mennis*)

But even after his prison term and while living quietly on the Rai Coast, the name Yali has suddenly emerged again. In 1998, an internationally known bestselling author, Jared Diamond, met Yali in 1972. Yali, at age 60, had not lost his charisma and he talked confidently about how he was helping his people prepare for self-government. Jared Diamond recounts this meeting in the prologue to his book, *Guns, Germs and Steel. A Short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years*:

Two centuries ago, all New Guineans were still living in the Stone Age. That is they still used stone tools similar to those superseded in Europe by metal tools thousands of years ago, and they dwelt in villages not organised under any centralised political authority. Whites had arrived, imposed centralized government, and brought material goods whose value New Guineans instantly recognised, ranging from steel axes, matches, and medicines to clothing, soft drinks and umbrellas. In New Guinea, all these were referred to collectively as “cargo” ----- Yali had quizzed lots of whites as he was then quizzing me, and I had quizzed lots of New Guineans. He and I both knew perfectly well that New Guineans are on the average at least as smart as Europeans. All those things must have been on Yali’s mind when, with yet another penetrating glance of his flashing eyes, he asked me, “Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own? ----- I have studied and written about other aspects of human evolution, history, and language. This book, written twenty-five years later, attempts to answer Yali. (1997: 14).

2021 Celebration of the SVD 125 Years

The Divine Word Missionaries' presence in PNG was approved by the founder of the Society, St Arnold Janssen. On May 29, 1895, Fr Janssen received an official inquiry from Cardinal M. Ledochowski. The Cardinal asked Fr Janssen whether his Society would be prepared to take on a new mission in German New Guinea. The Society of the Divine Word, founded in 1875 in Steyl/Netherlands, already had missionaries working in China/Asia (since 1879), in Argentina/Latin America (since 1889), and in Togo/Africa (since 1892). Thus, the Society had already gathered field experience on three continents.

This invitation for taking up missionary work in North-East New Guinea was a rather urgent call from Rome. It arrived in Steyl May 31, 1895. One day later, the Saturday before Pentecost, the General Assembly of the Society with Fr Janssen as chairman, decided to accept the mission. Fr Janssen gave his written consent June 5, 1895, the feast of St Boniface, the great missionary: "It is impossible for us to reject your application for in your decree we see God's will." Fr Limbrock gave his affirmative answer on November 23, 1895, writing: "Trusting completely in abundant graces from on high and in your support through prayer and good advice, etc, I consent and I am ready".

Today the SVD Missionaries are serving in seven dioceses across PNG. There are two active bishops; Archbishop Douglas Young of Mt Hagen and Bishop Jozef Roszynski of Wewak. Archbishop William Kurtz has retired in Madang. There are 68 priests, 12 religious brothers and 22 seminarians preparing for priesthood in various stages of formation in the country. The SVDs in PNG have sent 18 PNG national priests and brothers on mission to 12 different countries. The SVD are a significant presence in PNG and are involved in parish ministry, healthcare, education, communications and a range of other ministries.

A Group of SVD Missionaries celebrate after the Mass.



The celebrations of 125 years in PNG started back in January with a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Douglas Young in Mt Hagen

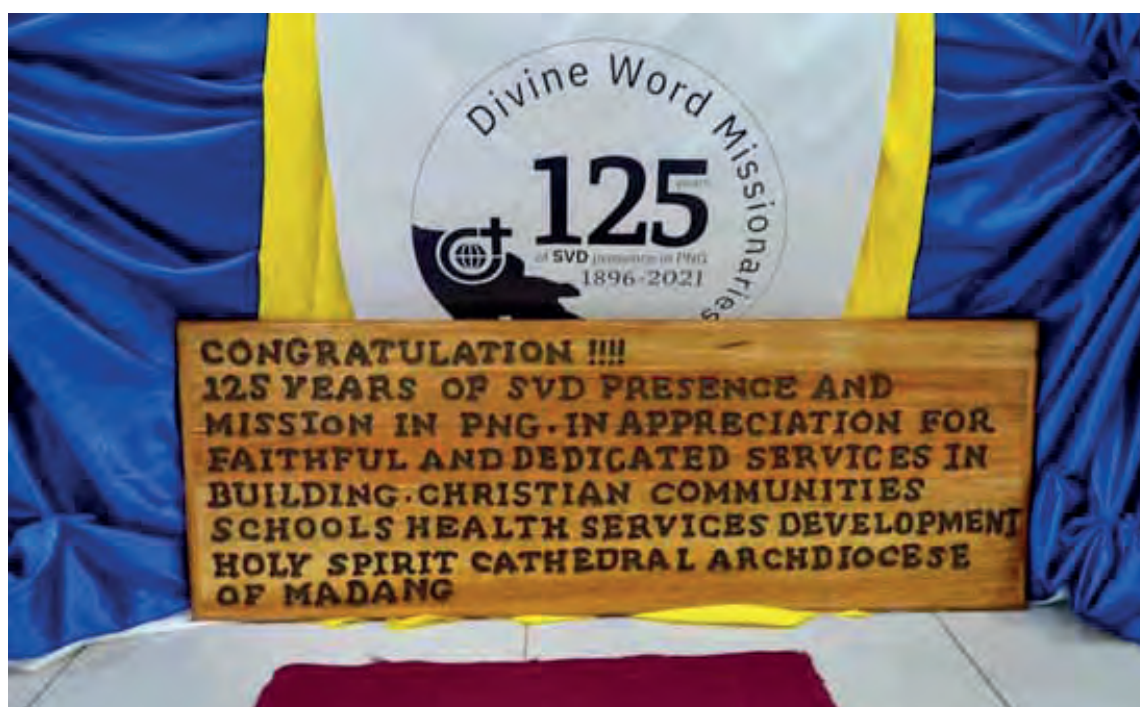
Archbishop Young described it as big day for Catholics to look back on and celebrate the church's history and origins in the country. He told *The National* newspaper that knowing the history of the Catholic church in PNG would give Catholics an appreciation for early missionaries and honour their work. Archbishop Young said the celebration was a time to thank

God for what he did to help the nation and its people through the efforts of the SVD missionaries.²⁵

Archbishop Young said: “We are here today to realise and recognise how SVD played its part to bring light, hope and life to the people.”

The SVD Superior-General, Fr Paul Budi Kleden, was special guest at the celebrations, having made it all the way from Rome, despite the COVID-related difficulties in international travel. Fr Budi Kleden was welcomed in Madang by the SVD community led by Provincial Fr Jose Orathinkal SVD. The people of Malmal Community- an outstation of Alexishafen presented a ‘singsing’.

The Jubilee Mass was held on August 6, 2021, in the Cathedral in Madang, to commemorate the first landing of the SVD in Madang in 1896, with Fr Budi presiding.



²⁵ *National Newspaper*

PART SIX. Mt Hagen and the Western Highlands



Photograph Fr William Ross, seen here with chiefs Wamp Wan and Ninji Kama in the 1930s: three of the most important people in the story of early Mt Hagen history. In Mt Hagen, the missionaries were welcomed by these two chiefs who provided food for them and helped build small houses

Fr William Ross SVD

Fr Ross was born on 25 September 1895 at Whiteport, near Kingston 100 kilometers north of New York, U.S.A. He was the sixth of ten children and was very attached his mother who sadly died when he was only seven years old. He and his brothers were sent to an orphanage run by the Franciscan Sisters. One year, the Sisters introduced the boys to Fr Conrardy who worked with the lepers at Fr Damien's colony in Hawaii. From then on young William's ambition was to be a missionary. He attended College at St Laurent's in Canada and then the Society of the Divine Word Seminary in Techny Illinois where he was ordained. He achieved his ambition of becoming a missionary when he was sent to New Guinea in 1926 to help Bishop Wolf. He wrote many articles about his time in New Guinea in those early days. In 1934, Fr Ross was keen to explore beyond the Bismarck Range and trek as far as Mt Hagen where his friends Mick and Dan Leahy had set up an alluvial gold mine. He selected over 70 able-bodied young men from Rempi and the surrounding villages as mission workers to accompany him to Mt Hagen and their descendants live there yet. Five missionaries made this original trek: Frs Ross, Schaefer, Tropper, Aufenanger and Br Eugene Frank. It took them nearly forty days travelling over the Bismarck Ranges and through country never seen before by outsiders. (Interview M. Mennis 1971).¹

¹ Interview (M. Mennis 1971)

Ninji Kama

Fr Ross and Brother Eugene contacted the local people to explain the work of the mission., He wrote “For the first six months, all we did was to help the people medically bandage their sores, take care of their sick babies and help them generally while the station was being built.”²

Fr Ross spoke about Ninji:

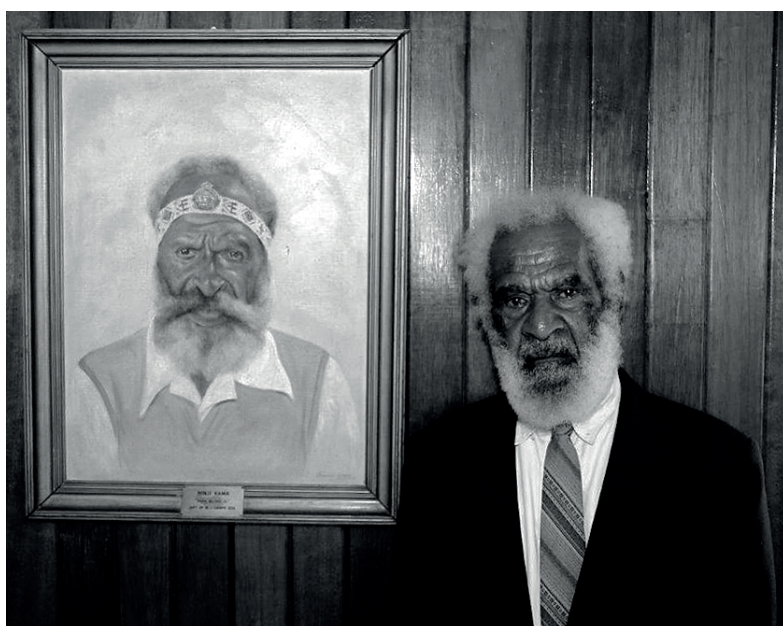
In December 1934, Ninji, the local paramount chief of the Mogeï Nampoga Clan, came and asked me: “What do you want from us; when is the pay-off? You have looked after our sick, attended to our sores, wounds and bruises, now we want to know when you are going to give us the bill, for in our way of life, nothing is given for nothing, and we presume you are the same.”

I replied to Ninji, “That is the question I have been waiting for and here is my answer. We do not want your land, your women or your pigs. We wish to open a boarding school where your boys from the ages of 10 to 16 will be taught to read and write. You have seen us looking at books and writing on paper. This art we shall teach your boys; they will live at our mission stations and go to school each day.” This was the first school in the Western Highlands

Ninji Kama, the local chief, selected village boys as applicants for Fr Ross’s first school. They were screened and the first classes opened in March 1935. The boys were taught reading and writing, Pidgin English and English and arithmetic. We had 50 boys in two classes. The training of these boys continued through 1937 and 1938.

On Christmas Day 1938, 28 boys were baptised. This was the first group in the Western

Highlands to become members of the Catholic mission. The group had been preparing from March 1935 to 25th December 1938. (Mennis Interview)



*Portrait of Ninji Kama with a direct descendent.
(Photograph by Bishop D. Young with permission of the Mt Hagen Club)*

² (Ross, 1971)

Ninji's *Kur* Ceremony, observed by Fr Bernarding in the 1930s:

There was a big *singsing* and *Kur* ceremony at Ninji's *singsing* ground at Palimp and was one of the major events of his tribe. The people brought pigs from far and wide and cooked them in pits. You could see the smoke up on the hills from these pits. The meat was brought into the *singsing* grounds eventually and carried up to the platforms which surrounded the *singsing* ground. The men would cut pieces off pork and put it on the ends of the spears of their friends. The preparation for this went on for months of course and the barricades were considered sacred and no-one could go there except the married men and some of the unmarried ones. (Interview M. Mennis).

Men receive pork at the Kur ceremony (D. Leahy) used with permission



Fr Bernarding continued:

In the months before, the men would discuss who they were going to invite to the *kur* ceremony and who would get some of the much meat. For the actual *Kur* ceremony, the spirit stones were brought in from the Kaugil area. Fr Ross said that the spirit men in this area, were the only ones allowed to conduct the ceremony, as they had a lease over it. If anyone was going to have a *Kur* ceremony, they would come in and conduct it and, in return, they would be given so many pigs or pearl shells or things of that nature and when the *singsing* was over they would go back to their place again. It was something they kept to themselves and none of the Hagen people had the right to conduct the *Kur* ceremony on their own.

Wamp Wan had many stories about the early days:

“When white men first came here, we thought they were *tambarans* and ran away to the bush. We did not stay near our houses but ran away, leaving our pigs behind. We sang out to our pigs from the bush so they would not be frightened. These new white men, the Leahy brothers, held their bellies to show us they needed food. They could only talk with their hands. They held up wood to show they needed some to cook the food with. They pointed to pigs to show they needed them to eat. They made a sign to show that they wanted to make a house. They showed

with their hands that they needed *kunai* cut for the houses and when all these materials were gathered the people helped them build their houses. The Leahy brothers brought *kina* shells, tomahawks, bush knives, and showed us that they would pay for our work with all these things”. (Interview M. Mennis)

“Afterwards, when Fr Ross came, we did not know what he came for. Only later he told us about the mission. When he came, he said to the people, “Me, Fr Ross.” We looked at him and saw his long *maus gras* (beard) and we said to each other, “He is like you and me” After five months Fr Ross began a school at Wilya at the *ples balus* (airstrip) and he picked boys for the school. They learnt to speak *Tok Pisin*. When we saw the first plane come at Wilya at the *ples balus* we were very frightened. We wouldn’t look closely at it but ran to the bush. We thought it would eat us. Brother Eugene came to build the church and the houses while Fr Ross organised the school. Karagu, Magok and Manui all came with Fr Ross. They cut the planks with their hands and carried the planks on their shoulders. They didn’t have cars or trucks to carry things.”

“When the war came, Fr Ross called us together and said, ‘In the morning, I will say Mass and after that I have to leave. He did not want to go. After Fr Ross had gone, the *kiap* was still here and many American soldiers stayed at the Lutheran station at Ogelbeng. They built a big fence there and stayed inside it. When Sister Vinciana and the other Sisters were escaping from the Sepik, we sent some of our men down there with Danny Leahy. They came back via Maramui with him.



These Missionaries stayed at Mt Hagen but Fr Ross had already left. Plenty of Europeans came to Mt Hagen from Madang, and Manus Island and they stayed there during the war, Hagen was bombed by the Japanese. We cut posts and planted them across the airstrip so the Japanese could not land. Some of the men covered the roofs of the mission houses with branches and leaves so the Japanese would not see the roofs and they were not bombed. (Interview by the author 1971).”

After I had interviewed Wamp Wan at his house, I saw this beautiful shield leaning against the wall and I asked him to pose with it. He obliged. He stood there looking like a warrior behind the shield, holding a bunch of spears. I thought it was marvellous. (author).

Wamp Wan with a war shield in 1971 (M. Mennis)

When Wamp Wan and the tribesmen saw Fr Ross again after the war, they said, “He must have cut off his beard.” Wamp remembered Fr Ross in the earl days.

“He taught our children to read and write. Fr Ross always went out in any weather to reach the sick. If it was raining or if the rivers were flooded, he would go out and wade through them even in the dark.” (Interview by the author)

Missions in Bundi and Chimbu Early Explorations – 1930s

In 1933, Mick Leahy, while prospecting for gold in the vicinity of Kainantu and Goroka, walked up the valley and climbed a hill which probably was Umbati and saw this great wide valley; beautiful country. Mick immediately went to the Wau Headquarters of the New Guinea Gold Dredging Company and put the proposal to them that it would be worthwhile for him and his brother Dan to go into this area and see what was in there. Maybe they would find gold which was worthwhile. Major Harrison, who was the head of the New Guinea Dredging Company agreed. He said, "it looks like a golden opportunity." He said, "You get your supplies together and we'll finance you and see what's in there" (*Interview by the author*)

The First flight over the Wahgi Valley, 8 March 1933

Mick Leahy wrote:

With veteran pilot Ian Grabowski at the controls, Major Harrison and I and my brothers, Jim and Dan, flew over the new valley and laid to rest for all time the theory that the centre of New Guinea is a mass of uninhabitable mountains. What we saw was a great flat valley possibly twenty miles wide and not telling how many miles long, between two high mountain ranges with a very crooked river meandering through it. Below us was evidence of a fertile soil and a teeming population – a continuous patchwork of gardens, laid off in neat squares.³



Early flight into Mt Hagen

While they were camped in Hagen, Mick Leahy wrote to Fr Ross whom he had known for several years, telling him what a marvellous country it was. "It is a tremendous population, good climate, everything in favour of Europeans settling in this area."

Fr Ross showed this letter to Bishop Wolf of Alexishafen who was very keen to send missionaries there. In fact, he asked Fr Ross to go in there. "Go down to Salamaua and fly into the area and see the possibilities of sending in an expedition from the mission there".

Fr Ross went to Salamaua in September 1933 hoping to make a quick flight into Mt Hagen to look at the area and maybe buy a block of land. At this stage, the responsibility for the exploration and development of the new inland areas lay with the District Officer in Salamaua, which was the headquarters of the Morobe District. This is why the initial treks into the Chimbu had been made from the Bena Bena. However, when Fr Ross arrived at Salamaua, the ADO [Assistant District Officer] explained that the Leahy Brothers were leaving Mt Hagen and advised him against going into the interior as he had no supplies or carriers. Fr Ross agreed that it would be impossible to go into the interior when there was no one there to meet him, so he decided to fly up to Wau and wait for the Leahy brothers to return.

Mick and Danny Leahy and party flew out from Mt Hagen. Not for them the long column of carriers they had used to get there. Now it was easy to fly over the mountains and valleys. They landed at Wau, glad they had survived the many dangers. Mick wrote: "22 October 1933: Wau

³ Leahy, 1937: 162)

was a welcome sight after being away. Fr Ross, Jim and Mick Dwyer were on the drome at Wau.”

When they arrived, Mick and Danny Leahy and Jim Taylor had plenty of stories to tell Fr Ross of their adventures in the Highlands. Mick had developed a large number of photographs of the Wahgi Valley and the people. He had done a course in photography and had been able to develop his own films even while on camp. As they had to wait for the arrival of the *Macdui* in Salamaua, Fr Ross helped mount the photographs in albums. When the *Macdui* arrived on 27 October 1933, Fr Ross went along with Mick and Danny Leahy because the ship was going via Alexishafen, where Fr Ross introduced them to Bishop Wolf who was keen to meet the now famous Leahy brothers.



Photograph: Dan Leahy is showing a young Wamp Wan, centre, a frozen fish brought in from the coast

Mick said of Bishop Wolf: 27 October 1933:

A very charming person and intensely interested in the interior country. He is going to send along a party including Fr Ross as soon as I get back. Had morning coffee with him served by a good-

natured Brother whose only purpose in life was to keep our cups full and the eats up to us. We left the Hagen boy [Rebier] and was sorry to part from him. He is such a nice little chap. The *Macdui* left about 1 pm for Kavieng ⁴(Diary).

Fr Schaefer's first trek towards the Bismarcks, June 1932 (see part Twelve)

Fr Schaefer's first plan was to make it as far as the Bismarck Range and return via Atemble. He and Brother Anton Baas set out with a lot of carriers to Sepu on the Ramu River where they had been before. Having crossed the river, they spent days climbing the side of a mountain. Late afternoon their guide, Kibur, called a break and went on by himself. Soon he returned with a local man from Ivam. It was an exciting time for the missionaries.

Fr Schaefer commented:

This was the first mountain man we had seen, and Brother Anton and I were most probably the first white men in this area of the Bismarcks to meet his people. After an introduction to the mountain men, we continued our walk until we met other

⁴ (Mick Leahy's Diary October 1933)

men making a garden. They called themselves Wakirai. Several of them approached us and welcomed us with embraces. They started yodelling excitedly and shouting the news around the mountains that spirit men had appeared in their region. Yodelling echoes came back from the mountains ⁵(1991: 33).

Two days later, they came to a place called Gonebona where hundreds of people met them. “Their wild and unrestrained behaviours kept us cautious, but nothing happened.” They camped there at an altitude of 1600 metres. Setting out early the next morning, they climbed further up the mountain and at the top were “rewarded with a wonderful view of most of the Ivam Mountains, particularly the gorges and ravines of the Umbrum River as far as Mount Otto.” Brother Anton joined him there and they were both inspired by the view and the hundreds of people they met. “We had chalked up a great achievement with our trip into the Central Highlands. We had been up to the Bismarck Mountains” (1991: 33). They had achieved what they wanted to do on this trip and turned back. Anyway their guide, Kibur, refused to go further as it would have been foreign territory to him. They returned to Alexishafen via Utu. The expedition had taken five weeks. Fr Schaefer gave his report to Bishop Wolf who listened very carefully and finally agreed that Fr Schaefer could make further explorations of the Bismarck Mountains.

Fr Schaefer’s next Advance into the Bismarcks

Fr Schaefer was probably the first European to hear of the Wahgi Valley. The people in Bundi told him –

“On the other side of this mountain (The Bismarcks) is a tremendous big valley. We know about it because we visit that area. Some of our wives come from there and some of our women are married over there. This year we will make an expedition why don’t you come with us?”



That was in 1932. Fr Schaefer was very busy building up the station, and he was very busy building up the station and he said, “It’d take a lot of time. Later on we will go but not now.” If he had gone at that time he would have beaten the Leahy brothers and would have been the first white man to go into the Wahgi valley and meet the people. The following year, he was ready for the challenge on 6 November 1933.

Above: Simbu People in 2018

Fr Schaefer and team crossed over the Bismarck Range, November 1933

The whole trip from Bundi to the Danga Mountain and back took seventeen days. Fr Schaefer wrote that his “long cherished hopes to cross the Bismarck Mountains became a reality.” Chief Kawagl was a strong, highly respected man in Bundi but he was actually from Koruguru, a place in the Chimbu Valley on the far side of the Bismarck Mountains. He lived in Bundi with several hundred of his *wantoks* but he encouraged Fr Schaefer to travel to Koruguru with him. The three missionaries, Fr Schaefer, Fr Cranssen and Brother Anton, left Bundi on 7 November 1933 and walked as far as Amekui. With them were about three hundred and fifty men from Koruguru who had been living in Bundi with Kawagl who was the main leader of the group. They camped the next day at Bononi. Then, on 9 November, they crossed the Bismarck Range

⁵ *Ibid* 1991: 33).

through the Mondia or Bundi Pass, and so became the first white men in that area ⁶(1991: 86). Later they rested for a day with the Nime people and during this time Brother Anton erected a huge wooden cross on the highest peak of the Kunabau Mountains. The following day they crossed the Kerowagi River and stayed one night with the Dagl people. In this area they found the women shy and frightened. Years later, Fr Nilles spoke about this cross which has been renewed ever since.

On 9 November, Frs Schaefer, Cranssen and Brother Anton reached the mountain pass at an altitude of 3300 m. What a magnificent aspect! They could gaze at the peaks of Mt. Wilhelm at some 5000 m, the highest mountain of New Guinea. Before them lay a narrow valley cut into the high mountains, the Chimbu Valley. Far away to the south was another mountain chain, the mountains of the Wahgi Valley, an overwhelming view.

Fr Schaefer said:

We paused for a snack and then picked our way down into the Mondia Brook Valley. Here we met the first Chimbu men, tall with birds' feathers in their hair. Brandishing their stone axes, they greeted us with strong yodelling voices, they threw their arms around our shoulders in welcome. These were the Korugurus and they accepted us as friends. We three missionaries were the first white men who had ever been seen in this area. The people looked upon us with the respect and awe they reserve for spirits. When I entered the stream for a wash in the ice-cold water, the men became very excited, because they themselves never bathe in cold water. Besides, my ability to swim caused great admiration and amusement. Meanwhile more and more people crowded up to see us. They offered food, sweet potatoes, sugarcane and bananas, and tethered pigs we could slaughter. By evening, there were a thousand people around our camping place. We paid for everything with small shells⁷ (1991: 60).

Fr Schaefer reported:

A conference was held on 17 January 1934 during which plans were discussed. The final results of the discussions were: Fr Ross should go to Arawa and start working in that area where the Chimbu River flows into the Wahgi. From there, he should extend his influence towards Mount Hagen; I was to take Ross via Bundi to the region where he was to work, and Mick Leahy was to be informed that Fr Ross could not meet him on the Purari, but rather where the Chimbu flows into the Wahgi; I was to return to Alexishafen to prepare myself for Inafu in the Goroka area (Schaefer, 1991: 62).

Fr Ross's expedition to the Highlands 1934

In January 1934, Fr Ross's expedition was ready. The three missionaries, Fr Ross, Fr Tropper and Brother Eugene Frank went by launch to Bogadjim. The track from there was over the Finisterre Range and down to the Ramu River. This was a trade route used for centuries by the coastal people to trade with inland people and in more recent times was used by government patrols. The missionaries camped on the Ioworo River and next day they were able to ford the river without incident in spite of the fact that there were crocodiles there. They walked on to

⁶ *Schaefer 1991: 86).*

⁷ *(Schaefer, 1991: 62).*

Kwato and then up the hills to Yaula where they camped. Next day, they continued the climb to Moto where they camped and the following day, they descended to the Ramu River.

Fr Ross wrote:

The last few hours before we reached the Ramu River we were travelling over a corduroy road. The banks of the river apparently had flooded and this road had been just like a swamp. Whoever had used it had put down trees from time to time and we were hopping from one log to the next for a couple of hours, until we reached the river. There were a few natives on the other side and they came over. We negotiated with them to carry us across in two dug-outs. We had seventy carriers plus cargo and it took the whole day to get across (Mennis, 2016: 44). They made camp there on the banks of the Ramu at Yolapa. They were plagued with mosquitoes and the carriers were given quinine as a precaution. Next day they walked as far as the Tauya River. It was river country and they did not meet any people. As the line of carriers stretched a long way back, one of the missionaries led the way and the other two brought up the rear in case of attack. They next came to a small place called Wau where a storm was brewing and they just managed to get camp set up before the deluge came down.

This was the last night before Bundi where they were to meet up with Fr Schaefer and Fr Aufenanger. There was another storm that night. The cold, wet night was again followed by a hot steamy day with little shade. They got sunburnt on their legs. After a stiff climb they reached the Bundi mission which was an established mission centre with a church and mission house. The mission boys hurried down the track to meet them and carried them up the hill which was tortuous on their sunburnt legs. Fr Schaefer had waited for the party to arrive but had given up and gone on a tour of the out-stations. As soon as he heard Fr Ross and the others had arrived he hurried back to Bundi.

Bishop Wolf had nominated Fr Ross as the leader but the forceful Fr Schaefer took the lead as he had already traversed part of the course and was a friend of the headman, Kawagl, who was going to take them to the Chimbu valley. After a few days rest, Fr Ross and his party were ready to go. There were five missionaries in the party: Fr Ross, Fr Schaefer, Fr Tropper, Fr Aufenanger and Brother Eugene. They crossed the Bismarck Ranges and followed the route which Fr Schaefer had followed the year before.

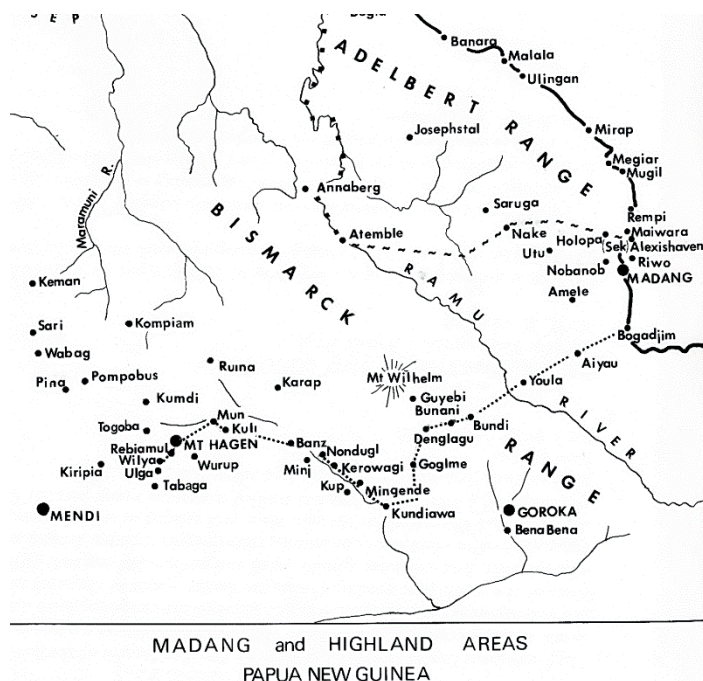
On the first day after Bundi, the track went up and down gorges and sometimes up steep cliffs or down slippery descents with Kawagl and his people leading the way. Their first stopping place was at Nambugi where it was cold and the coastal carriers shivered as they were unaccustomed to the cold. The following night at Bunoni was even colder at two thousand feet six hundred metres above sea level. Next morning, they were treated to beautiful views in all directions. Behind them, the many ridges fingered down to the mist-covered Ramu Valley and beyond were the Finisterre Ranges and in the distance was the ocean. They were on a spur of the Bismarck Range. Towering above them was Mt Wilhelm and ahead was the Chimbu Valley where tumbling rivers cut through deep gorges.⁸

That day they descended to Denglagu, the source of the Chimbu River which they crossed over on two large logs and then climbed 500 metres to Inau where they

⁸ ((*M.Mennis Hagen Saga*,)

camped. That night some Chimbu warriors appeared in the dark and the watchmen scared them off without waking the missionaries.

They were probably after the many shells which were being carried as trade items. Next they camped at Goglme and the carriers were warned to be careful as it was unfamiliar territory. This did not stop them gate-crashing a local courtship ceremony. Next morning, some of the villagers complained and Fr Schaefer dealt with the offenders in front of the villagers to their satisfaction.



*Map of Fr Ross's trek which began at Bogajim on the coast.
(Mary Mennis)*

Next stop was Kamanigl where a big *singsing* was being held. The people were all colourfully dressed in feathers and headbands made of the green scarab beetles. The drumming and dancing continued all night. Some of the people were frightened by the appearance of white men but others had seen Fr Schaefer and his party the previous year. They thought they

were spirits of the dead until they saw them eating. The last camping ground on the Chimbu River was at Merane near present day Kundiawa, being the most southerly part of the trek. From here they turned west for the final 100 kilometres to Mt Hagen. Next place was Koruguru area where Kawagl was the headman. He offered them a site at Dimbe for a mission but they preferred a site at nearby Mingende which was still in his area.

The people of Koruguru were so welcoming that both Fr Ross and Fr Schaefer decided the area would make a suitable headquarters for the whole Western Highlands. They continued on to Kerowagi, Nonugl, Banz, Kilua and then Wilya where the Leahy brothers were busy mining for gold. They reached Mt Hagen on 28 March 1934. Mick Leahy had built a small airstrip at a place called Mogei.

Mick Leahy:

"Wednesday 28 March 1934: Big excitement amongst the natives and a crowd of them on a ridge on the road along from Kaduwere. --- through the glasses we could make out a couple of white men and a long line of carriers. Went along the road to meet them having a pretty fair idea that it was the missionaries from Sek which it turned out to be - five of them altogether including Frs Ross, Schaefer, Aufenanger, Tropper, and Brother Eugene. They had had a good trip and brought back Rebier the little *monki* whom we took out with us last year and loaned to Fr Ross to learn the language. He

looks well and has grown 50% since I last saw him. All the white men of the party look well and are enthusiastic about the country” (*Diary*). ⁹

Missionaries in the Mt Hagen area



*Photograph: Fr Tropper, Brother Eugene, Fr Schaefer, Fr Aufenanger and Fr Ross
the first group to get to Hagen from the north coast*

After Fr Ross’s expedition into Mt Hagen in 1934, the five missionaries re-traced their steps. Fathers Aufenanger and Schaefer continued on to Bundi and Father Ross, Father Tropper and Brother Eugene returned to Mingende. Here Brother Eugene was soon building a station and everything began to take shape: “living house, kitchen, laundry, workers quarters, tool shed and a small church.” They had help from thousands of local people who were paid with a few small shells. Pigs could be bought with the same shells or a knife or a green snail shell. Most of the buildings at Mingende were completed by the end of May 1934 ¹⁰

That was how matters stood. The only trouble was rumours were heard that a party of Lutheran missionaries was heading to Mt Hagen. Fr Ross and the two others did not want to lose Mt Hagen particularly when the Leahy brothers had offered their station near the airstrip and the buildings there. They could visualise it falling into the hands of the opposition. Then at the end of May rumour became a reality when a group of Lutheran missionaries arrived at their doorstep. Their guides thought these two lots of white men would be happy to see each other but they were mistaken. When the Lutherans headed off towards Mt Hagen, the Catholic missionaries were very anxious. They were worried that the Lutherans may endeavour to take over their site beside the Mogei airstrip. Yet they remembered Bishop Wolf’s advice not to have too much of a distance between stations. Father Ross was in a dilemma. He didn’t want to lose the Hagen site and yet had no permission from the Bishop.

⁹ *Mick Leahy’s Diary.*

¹⁰ *Ross 1971; 322).*

Fr Ross, Father Tropper and Brother Eugene decided to return to Mt Hagen anyway. They packed in a hurry and left the Mingende mission. They passed the Lutheran party while they were resting at a river near Ogelbeng. Fr Tropper could no longer stand the suspense and took off and ran from Ogelbeng to the Leahy Brothers Wilya camp and arrived quite out of breath. Dan Leahy was delighted to see him again but could not see what the rush was about - it was not as if there was a gold rush on. They learnt that Fr Tropper was anxious to claim ownership of the area near the Wilya airstrip as it was crucial to the Catholic Mission. Interesting that Fr Schaefer describes Fr Tropper as a real red head with a fiery beard, which does not show up in the black and white photographs of the day. This fieriness may have been part of his temperament leading him to make impulsive actions like running towards the Wilya Station.



*Hagen children in their finery. Leahy brothers
Used with permission.*

It was just as well they did claim the Wilya site as it is recorded in the Lutheran Church history that this was the spot that had been chosen by the Lutherans. It was said: "Bergmann and some evangelists proceeded to set up the station at Hagen. When this group reached the spot that had been picked out on the exploratory trip, they found it was now occupied by the Roman Catholic mission. It took till the end of November before they found another place considered suitable" (1986: 197). This was at Ogelbeng and the Lutheran mission began there in 21 November 1934.

The Lutheran expedition to the Mt Hagen

The Lutherans and the Catholic missionaries hastened to this new area where there were no areas of influence or lines of demarcation.

Dr Braun was part of a Lutheran expedition in June 1934 with W. Bergmann and other Lutheran missionaries from Finschhafen. Dr Braun remembered the trek to the Highlands. (*Interview with M. Mennis in the 1970s*)

Elders from the Rai Coast, the Madang Church and two missionaries from Karkar Island decided to come along with Reverend Foege, Reverend Schoetler and me as well there about sixty New Guineans with us. We started from Bogadjim and walked inland. On the way we shot some wild cattle that had been left by Mr Peadon, a gold miner. As we went up the Bismarck Mountains, we came to the foot of Mt Helwig, a dome-shaped mountain which could be seen from Madang Harbour. We rested at Rehoma and then followed the Purantina and Bena Bena Rivers and came to Rabana where there was a Lutheran station. The people in that area had headbands of green scarab beetles and cassowary tail plumes. Some of them wore abbreviated grass skirts, but most of them had the traditional tapa cloth. They did not wear *tanget* leaves.

While we were waiting for the Finschhafen group to arrive fighting broke out between two clans at the foothills of Mount Rabana. Somehow the tribes found out that there was a doctor in the Lutheran party, a man who could fix wounds and broken bones. Years later we found out that the

people in that area often exchanged bodies so relatives could eat their own dead. This practice is said to produce the *kuru* disease or laughing sickness.

As soon as the Finschafen delegation arrived at Rabana, the party began their journey westwards. We used a small map which Bergmann and Foege had made of the area when they flew over it.

He said “We were following in the footsteps of the Leahy-Taylor expedition of the year before and most of the people had seen this expedition going through. Everywhere we went we were followed by a group of 400-500 people they bought food to trade for trinkets, small mirrors, beads, and small hand axes which we traded for sweet potatoes. Gold lip shells and axes were traded for pigs. These trade items were carried by our carriers. Each white person carried a pack of between 22 -30 lbs.

“The way we walked through the country was that a few of the New Guineans from the Finisterre Range went first to discover mantraps. These men had fought New Guinea wars in a former patrol and knew the area. They actually discovered some man traps. They were covered with leaves on the pathway with a pit stacked with spears underneath. Usually 2 or 3 Europeans walked together dispersed among the rather long line of New Guineas that we had.

“One time when we rested a pistol which Rev. Herlinger had in his pocket fell out of his pocket. When the local saw it they screamed and ran away in terror. They apparently had been acquainted with the instrument before. On another occasion when a bald missionary took off his hat they screamed with delight and pointed to the sun – apparently thought his head was like the sun.



“As we wandered westward over the hills we came to Asako Valley and tentatively decided to start a mission there at a later date. The people there were rather hostile so we kept guard at night in our temporary shelters which we made out of grass etc. We kept our Kerosene pressure lamps low at night, but early in the morning when we heard yelling in the bush, we turned them up full blast. A big mob came rushing on the camp, but when they saw we were awake they threw their arrows and spears away and mingled with us missionaries.

Photograph Dr Braun.

The next morning they carried us over the river so we wouldn't get our feet wet. Some of the women cried and thought they saw returned ancestors in the carriers. The white ones they thought had been in the spirit world rather longer. We were bleached and they did not recognise us. Then we came to the side-streams of the Chimbu River and picked out the site of the present mission station of Kundiawa and also a good site for an airstrip as the German missionaries were getting a plane at this stage. From there on we came into unknown territory with the side streams of the Chimbu River, near where Chauve is now.”

As they approached Mingende their Chimbu guides indicated by signs that the Lutheran party take a side track. They were so insistent that the Lutherans decided to investigate. Unwittingly they were being led to the Catholic missionaries who, the Chimbu reasoned, must be very close friends of theirs. After all were they not the only Europeans in the whole of the Chimbu area. (Interview M. Mennis)

Fr Ross, Fr Tropper and Brother Eugene were very surprised when they found the Lutheran party on their doorstep. But their surprise was nothing to the embarrassment of the Lutherans at having stumbled on the Catholic mission. The meeting has been described as cool. Fr Ross was the first to collect himself and he politely invited them in for a cup of tea. The Lutherans, however declined and hastily moved on up the valley.



Mt Hagen dancers (Brian Mennis)

Dr Braun continued:

“When we came to the Mt Hagen area, we lost sight of Mount Elimbari. The tracks were covered by thick matted grass and reeds with water underneath and there were many swampy rivers to cross. When we came to the area where Ogelbeng is now, we picked a site for our mission. Through signs we found out there was a Catholic missionary just south of where Mount Hagen town is now. His name was Father William Ross.”

The Lutherans were amazed as they had seen Fr Ross at Mingende not many days before. After the unexpected meeting with the Lutheran missionaries Fr Ross and Brother Eugene had packed in a hurry and left the Mingende mission in haste to get back to their mission station at Mt Hagen which they had already established in March of that year. They passed the Lutheran party while they were resting at a river near Ogelbeng. Fr Tropper could no longer stand the suspense and took off and ran from Ogelbeng to the Leahy Brothers Wilya camp and arrived quite out of breath. Dan Leahy was delighted to see him again but could not see what the rush was about - it was not as if there was a gold rush on.

Mick Leahy commented on the situation on 20th May 1934

Father Ross had packed up and came along [from Mingende] to sort of plant the flag of the Catholics in this area before the Lutherans could get going. Fr Tropper and Brother Eugene had rushed away a day or so behind the Lutherans but caught them and passed them a few hours before reaching the Mogeï drome. They were delighted to see us and were overjoyed when I told them the plane was coming back on Sunday next which will give them time to hear of the Bishop's intentions and also get their cargo in.¹¹ Father Ross had the confidence of the natives in Mingende and many of the headmen wished to go to Mount Hagen with them to buy new wives. So this was part of the reason for the visit.

Mick Leahy again asked them to take over Wilya. Father Tropper agreed to return to Mingende and live there, while Brother Eugene and Father Ross would remain at Wilya and open the first Catholic station in the present Western Highlands. Brother Eugene with 15 coastal boys, and hundreds of local volunteers, quickly built the main station at Wilya where Mick and Dan Leahy had built their Mogeï airstrip. House, church, kitchen, workers' quarters, fowl house, piggery were

¹¹ *Mick Leahy's diary.*

completed out of native material – bamboo walls and *kunai* grass roofs. There was road contact every couple of weeks with Father Tropper. The missionaries would meet in the middle of the Waghi Valley and discuss experiences in long conversations so it wasn't a case of isolation. Fr Schaefer wanted Fr Ross to return to Mingende and continue the mission there.

On 7 July 1934, Fr Schaefer received a letter from Bishop Wolf with the following message: "In God's name, leave Father Ross in Mount Hagen; let him work in that area. Brother Anton should go soon to Koruguru, Mingende."¹² And so it was that Father Ross was left in Mt Hagen and allowed to begin the great mission that it is today. Over the next months the distance between the Hagen Station and where Fr Tropper was at Korugu weighed heavily on Fr Ross. Every couple of weeks he would walk halfway to Fr Tropper's mission and meet Fr Tropper there. They would have discussions and conversations about progress in the respective mission stations. With this official documentation in June 1934, Bishop Francis Wolf sanctioned two districts: the Chimbu and Mt Hagen. The bishop stated that it was the right time to commence missionary activity in Mt Hagen, and this should go ahead in parallel with that in Chimbu. At this time, five missionaries worked in Chimbu, and only two in Mt Hagen - Fr Ross and Br Eugene Frank.

In 2016, Archbishop Douglas Young wrote:

By Easter time, 1934, Fr. Ross and Bro. Eugene had begun their mission among the Mokei, a Melpa-speaking people who live in the shadow of the towering Mount Hagen. A Melpa saying describes the people's first reaction to the partnership of the very tall Bro. Eugene and the very short Fr. Ross: "*Wu etemb e ken wu rul eken kung wantpent*," which literally means "A short man and a tall man can't work together to carry a pig tied to a pole on their shoulders."

This saying is often used to describe and even mock two people trying to do something that they cannot do together because of a physical or mental difference. It was strange for the Mokei people to see a very short and a very tall man working together to establish the first mission station in Wilya, near the present-day city of Mount Hagen. However, the two missionaries dismissed this observation of the people and worked together very well.

Father Ross and Brother Eugene contacted the local people to explain the work of the mission and this was quite a problem. So for the first six months all they did was to help the people medically, bandage their sores, take care of their sick babies and help them generally while the station was being built. It was then that headman Ninji came and asked what the tribesmen could do in return for all their help. Father Ross answered that he would like to set up a school with fifty boys and Brother Eugene was keen to build the school - the first school in the Western Highlands. *(Interview Mary Mennis)*

¹² Nilles page 19



Photograph: Cricket match, 1934. Fr Ross, Fox twin, Br Eugene, Dan Leahy, Fox twin. In front is a group of Rempi men who worked for Fr Ross

Fr Kruczek wrote about this time:

“Fr Ross and Br Eugene Frank, both from USA, understood their daily tasks very well, and supported each other in their religious-missionary vocation. Therefore, in response to the circumstances, they found themselves in three ministries – of the Word, of grace, and of charity – that were successfully exercised, and this was the form of the first evangelisation.

“In the programme of Fr Ross and Br Frank, it is easy to recognise two characteristic elements: spiritual and material. Although the spiritual dimension was not neglected, more visible were the material aspects of their missionary work.

These were: erecting the main mission centre at Wilya, with the church building in the middle, establishing other mission stations and their outstations, Samaritan assistance, organising the school, concern for the daily needs and existence, both for themselves, and their co-workers as well.

This style of the primary evangelisation that took place at the main stations, which was a way of coexistence with the locals, allowed the strange newcomers to form stronger relationships with them, be more secure and established.

“The second advantage was that the missionaries had more time to organise a proper programme for schools, which they had to establish, in order to teach children and first catechumens, the very basic parts of the Christian faith, catechism, prayers, *singsing* hymns, and reading the Bible. Fr Ross spent a lot of time translating the necessary texts into the Melpa language. At the same time (1935-1938), he deepened his knowledge of this language, studied the local culture, and learnt something more about the traditional religion of the Melpa people”.¹³

¹³ *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 23-2 (2007) 46 -47 Zdzisław Kruczek CSMA.

Brother Eugene Frank

Bro. Eugene was born in Mount Carmel, Illinois, on December 21, 1900. He joined the SVD order at Techny in 1921 where he worked at the bakery in the seminary. He also served at the Sacred Heart Mission House, Gerard, Pa. He professed first vows as a Divine Word Missionary on November 1, 1924, before coming to New Guinea.



Brother Eugene and friends at Alexishafen

Fr. Ross wrote highly of his assistant mentioning his good health; his work ethic; his building skills and his ability to put up with any hardship.

“Brother Eugene’s made an excellent helper to the lone American priest who lives with him. He was instrumental in the establishment of the first few stations in Mount Hagen. Here he devoted his life to the people of New Guinea and dwelt in isolation with no white neighbours. Brother Eugene was six feet of bone and muscle and had the distinction of being, the first New Guinea Brother of the Society of the divine Word to start work beyond the end of the world line of the distant Bismarck Mountains, no governments posts to make it safer. No white neighbours to call on in an emergency. He lives among a stone-age people earning their respect and affection”¹⁴



The first mission building In Mt Hagen. (Danny Leahy)

¹⁴ (Article in the *Guardian* Vol XXIV Little Rock Jan 26 1935)

At the end of December 1934, Brother Eugene was looking around the Wilya Station for the last time. He was about to make a fatal journey on his way to Denglagu. Meanwhile Fr Morscheurser had been killed in the Chimbu. News of his death had not reached Mt Hagen before Brother Eugene set off for Bundi on 2 January 1935 to be with Fr Aufenanger and make his retreat. Before he left, he asked Fr Ross to let him build the first school in the Mt Hagen area when he returned. The school site at Wilya had already been cleared and native material for its construction was piled up ready. Sadly, Father Ross never saw Brother Eugene again as he left his carriers.

Fr Ross described what happened:

It took Brother Eugene and carriers six days to reach Mingende. They heard that friendly natives warned the Brother not to go through the Chimbu River area, as the clans were at war. It would be dangerous entering any area where war was raging but the Brother thought he might get through safely to Bundi. He started up the Chimbu Gorge; at Goglme, the warring natives armed on the heights overlooking the Chimbu River, swarmed down on the party, surrounded them and began pulling the rucksacks and packs from the carriers; the boys all fled in panic. Savu asked Brother to give him the gun but Brother refused. He said, "I didn't come to New Guinea to kill natives¹⁵." The Brother was struck eight times with bone-tipped arrows, some of them puncturing his lungs. Weak and exhausted he was helped by a friendly group of natives [the Barengigl people] who carried him up the mountainside to a small hut, 8,000 feet above sea level. Inside a fire was burning. Days later, in the morning of January 15, 1935, yodelling was heard. "Yalomba, Yalomba" a white man was coming. Pati, and Peter Manui remained with Brother Eugene and told him a party of police led by a European officer was walking along the trail. Soon the entire police party was in the hut. The officer was Robert Melrose, D.O from Salamaua, within an hour they were at the Kundiawa airstrip. There a single-engine Junker was parked. Mr. Melrose flew Brother Eugene in the Junker to the Salamaua hospital where he died on 23 January 1935¹⁶

Fr Karl Morschheuser, the first missionary to die in the New Guinea Highlands

Karl wrote to his parents:

"My first and greatest love is for the people of New Guinea. --- I am so happy that you have a real understanding for true joy. I am convinced that you rejoice in your heart that one of your children has been called to preach the Word of God to the pagans. ---- In my thoughts I am already roaming about in the jungles of New Guinea".

Father Morschheuser had been in the mission only two years in 1934, when he was killed by the people of the Simbu Valley. It was said that the casual slaughtering of the young and gifted priest in circumstances that resembled martyrdom sent a shock wave through the whole mission. He was just thirty years old.



¹⁵ (Ross 1971: 23).

¹⁶ (Ross 1971: 24).

“After Fr Karl Morschheuser was killed in December 1934, and Br Eugene Frank in January 1935, the Administration immediately sent in patrols led by ADOs Alan Roberts and Jim Taylor accompanied by Patrol Officers John Black, George Greathead and others. Danny Leahy was sworn in as a special constable and accompanied the patrols. In the end the area was subdued, and Taylor walked some seventy odd prisoners out to Salamaua. Alan Roberts remained and established a station at Kundiawa, adjoining the Lutheran airstrip at Ega”. (*Geoff Burfoo* on web)

Newspapers in Australia were questioning the security of missionaries in New Guinea. As result the Administration in Rabaul brought in many restrictions as listed by Father Ross:

1. No new missionaries would be given a permit to the highlands before four years of experience on the coast.
- 2 No missionary would be given a permit to enter uncontrolled area unless his party had four rifles and members of the party were familiar with the rifles.
3. Restricted station residence was modified to extend to a radius of 5 miles and the native clans that could be visited were marked on the permit of the individual missionaries (Ross 1971: 323-324).

Mission stations could now be contacted by the planes so it was a blessing the Catholic mission by this time had the use of small planes and airstrips had been laid. Now that planes were introduced the distance between mission stations did not matter so much. Later roads were developed and the first cars appeared in the highlands.

The first Catholic mission plane was an open two-seater which arrived from Germany in 1935. It was donated by MIVA, the German “Organisation for aid for mission Transportation.” This one was named the Paulus and was one of the German designed Klemm Swallows. Based at Alexishafen it reduced the 14-day trek to 80-minute rides. It had two cockpits. The front one was for the passenger and the rear for the pilot. There was a window in front of each cockpit and both passenger and pilot sat in the open being protected only by a windscreen from the wind and the rain. The engine was in front of the passenger and there was a little cargo hold at the back.

Fr Ross recalled that on the flight from Hagen to the coast, ‘When the pilot saw something interesting down below he’d reach over and tap you on the shoulder and point it out. Then you would peer over the side and see a new building or perhaps a group of people.’ Fr Ross remembered his walk into Mt Hagen in March 1934. The trek took forty days as they had to cross the Bismarck Range over some very rough terrain. The little Paulus reduced this forty-day trek to less than two hours flying from Alexishafen.



Fr Ross at Wilya

After Brother Eugene died, Father Ross was left by himself for nine months in Mt Hagen without any other Missionaries to help him. The pilot on board the Paulus had flown supplies into Hagen and told Fr Ross, 'See you in two weeks.'. Unbeknown to him the plane later crashed near Alexishafen. Fr Ross waited and waited and wondered what had happened. He waited for nine months. There was no way of letting him know it had crashed on a reef near Madang. The pilot was unhurt but the plane was damaged and took a long time to be repaired. It was the only mission plane. Mick Leahy's planes arrived from Salamaua on the other side of the country.

Fr Ross was ahead of his time and encouraged the people to keep their own customs, dress and beliefs that were consistent with their Christian faith. For example, the chief of their evil spirits became the name for Satan the king of the devils. The SVD order had always emphasised the study of anthropology and a study of the local culture wherever they found themselves and Fr Ross was a foremost advocate of this practice. In 1990 Pope Paul II wrote his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* about inculturation with a sense of urgency. By this term he meant, "The intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration with Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures." In other words, the Church must use as much of the local culture as humanly and divinely possible to integrate people into the church.

The first mission school was built with the help of the catechists Fr Ross chose fifty of the bright local boys recommended by Chief Ninji. The boys were taught reading, writing, a bit of Geography, Social Science, Agriculture, reading the Bible, hymns and prayers. School was going quite well in 1935. The boys persevered although there were a few dropouts. By the end of 1938, after four years of daily instructions, these boys were considered ready to embrace Christianity. On Christmas Eve the first group who had persevered (28 out of the original 50



boys) were baptised, that was the beginning of the Catholic Mission in Mt Hagen. The group had been preparing from March 1935 to December 1938 ¹⁷(Ross 1971: 325).

Photograph: The First School in the Western Highlands

In 1936 -7 Father Meiser came in from Denglagu for a few weeks now and then so Father Ross was not quite so lonely. In about 1938 Fr Fuchs was appointed to Hagen to support Fr Ross who had been living in a native material house made of *kunai* and *pitpit*. The school itself was also a large native material building.

¹⁷ Ross 1971: 325).

The mission shifts to Rebiamul

Father Ross wanted to find a better site for the mission than Wilya. He found a better place about a mile away at Rebiamul. It was while Fr Fuchs was with Fr Ross that the new mission at Rebiamul was established. Brother Bonaventure a builder arrived to take over the project. Father Fuchs took over the pit-saw with a team of 24 boys working 6 pit-saws, while Brother Bonaventure had 24 planing boys planing edging, and tongue and grooving the planks.

We paid the owners of the land, and by their standards of values they were very well paid in axes, spades, knives, cloth and shells so that to this day there have never been any complaints or repercussions. The transfer from Wilya to Rebiamul was carried out in slow stages throughout the year 1938. At Rebiamul two timber residences were completed, a kitchen and a dining room, three timber schoolhouses and finally towards the end of the year the large timber church. This church was still standing in 1966, when with much hard labour it was torn down and the timber used to build three small outstation churches. After thirty years it was as solid as the day the church was built ¹⁸(Ross 1971: 326).

The new Church was duly opened on Christmas Day 1938 (see Hagen Saga 2015: 86). Brother Bonaventure also built the new administration office for the government officials when the patrol post was opened there in January 1938. Murray Edwards was the first government official and he was soon replaced by George Greathead.

Fr Noss was appointed to Mt Hagen in 1939 and met up with Fr Ross before he left to learn something about the language and the customs of the Hagen people. He flew up to Hagen with Fr Fuchs and Mr Greathead in the Teresa. However, Fr Fuchs and fr Noss fell out with the government official when they attended to a dying woman in an uncontrolled area and were expelled. Later they made a court case out of it down in Madang and it was decided that nobody was allowed to go back up Mt Hagen. Even when Fr Ross came back from America with Fr Bernarding and Fr Koteba, they were not allowed to return to Mt Hagen. Father Ross was understandably upset. He appealed to Mr Oakley but at first without success.

Father John Nilles arrives in the Chimbu 1936 (Papa Bilong Chimbu)

Fr Nilles was the first missionary to move into the area after the tragic death of Fr Morschheuser and the suspension of Fr Cranssen. Nilles became an authority on the culture and beliefs of the Chimbu people with whom he worked with great compassion. During World War II, Fr Nilles was interned in Australia with other German missionaries. Before the Australian soldiers took him away, he arranged with local believers to hide all his work and books in the villages. He spent four and half years in Brisbane: the first few months were behind barbed wire but later



he did pastoral work in the Australian countryside. Fr Nilles also studied through Sydney University on the culture of Simbu and earned a Diploma in Anthropology. His thesis was entitled 'The Kuman of Chimbu'. (See Chapter 12)

¹⁸ Ross 1971: 326).

The Mt Hagen Mission – 1940s - wartime

In January 1941, Fr Ross was finally allowed to return to the Mt Hagen Mission and to resume mission activities. He realised he needed more priests to come and help him and wrote to Bishop Wolf at Alexishafen.

George Bernarding remembers: Fr Ross wrote to Bishop Wolf and asked for someone to help him in Mt Hagen. The Bishop summoned me and said he had just had a letter from Fr Ross asking for someone to assist him with some baptisms of his first catechumens. I went there and found Mt Hagen was like a large garden. On December 23, 1941, I flew in the Fox Moth into the mountains. The pilot was Stan Johnson. It was a glorious day and we first landed at Mingende and then on to Hagen. From the air Mt Hagen resembled a huge flower garden. Mr Greathead had planned the layout of the station and he had also planted large numbers of cannas along the roads and in big flower beds. They were of every colour and description.

Greathead's successor, Mr Dal Chambers together with Fr Ross were on hand to greet us as we landed. After refreshments at the Kiap's house we saw Mr Johnson take off and then we walked over to the station. Hundreds and hundreds of people were on hand to welcome us. The people showed their appreciation with cries "ai ya – ai ya" and wringing their hands as was their customary gesture of welcome. They were busy decorating the church with flowers and *tanget* leaves with about ten arches or Bogans as they are known already prepared. Getting ready for Christmas there were thousands waiting and sitting around the station. The baptism ceremony at Rebiambul went well. About twenty men were baptised. (Interview).



Group of European men with a Mt Hagen man and a coastal man. From left: Dan Leahy, Rev Kuder, Dal Chalmers and Fr Bernarding (D. Leahy)

When the Japanese bombed Madang on 21 January 1942, Dan Leahy up at Kuta near Mt Hagen heard the news on his radio. He immediately relayed the news to Fr Ross and Fr Bernarding. Fr Ross sent a letter to Ed O'Brien, his old friend, inviting him and other evacuees from Madang to Mt

Hagen. "There is plenty of food for everyone", he wrote. Ed O'Brien had seen the bombed ruins of Madang: Carpenter's copra store had been set on fire by an incendiary bomb; Chinatown had been demolished and many houses flattened. The jail had received a direct hit and many of the prisoners were killed.

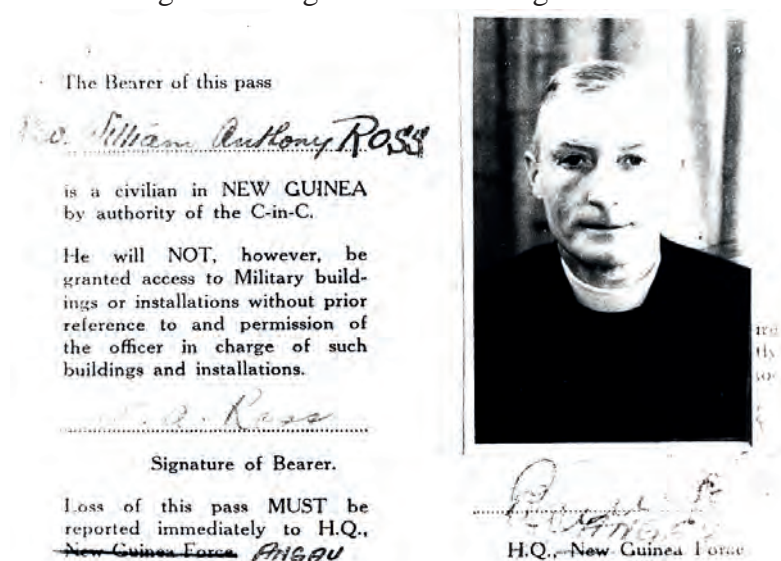
Among the evacuees was Taffy Jones, the matron of Madang Hospital. She was the only woman amongst them and often wished she had been evacuated earlier. Taffy had vivid memories of her trek from Madang to Hagen and of Fr Ross's generosity at the end of it. After she left Madang, she stayed a week with Dr and Mrs Braun at the Lutheran Hospital on Amele

Hill. At Mt Hagen, Fr Ross and Fr Bernarding made them welcome and eventually they were flown out to Australia ¹⁹

In February 1943, ANGAU, evacuated the highland missionaries. The first to leave were the German missionaries in the Chimbu area, including Fr Nilles and Rev Bergmann. German missionaries, Catholic and Lutheran, were under suspicion and were brought to Port Moresby and interned behind barbed wire there and then taken to Brisbane.

One Sunday in February, Fr Ross and Fr Bernarding and Dr Kuder from the Lutheran Mission were evacuated. They had to walk from Mt Hagen to Bena Bena. On the way they stopped at Asoroka which was the headquarters of the German Lutherans in that area. At Kundiawa they were joined by Mr Doering, a Canadian Lutheran pastor. They waited in Bena Bena for a week for a plane to take them out.

It was a time when these catholic and Lutheran missionaries got to know each other as individuals and became friends. That was one of the benefits of the crisis. In the Highlands and on the coast the missionaries were all grouped together whether it be by the Japanese on the coast or Angau in the ighlands and through this contact learnt to appreciate each other's point



of view. From their first contact Ninji Kama was a great help to the Catholic missionaries and also to the government. He rose to become a Paramount luluai. He had many wives as was the custom with tribal elders. When a new airstrip was needed to be flattened, he organised his tribesmen to have a great sing-sing and stamp the ground with their feet thus flattening the strip. (Photograph Wikipedia)

Bernarding:

In September 1944, we were given the clearance to return to New Guinea. The Apostolic delegate and Monsignor Hannon from Melbourne were in contact with the armed forces and it was felt absolutely essential that someone get back to the country. Probably because of ourselves – we had told them what was going on there and the people should be contacted again. They had had Mass from time to time from Army chaplains but it would have been better if there had been parish priest there all the time. We spoke strongly about how we had been taken out of Hagen unnecessarily. When we came back to Hagen, the people recognised Fr Ross by his stature and his voice and also by the fact that he could speak their language, but where was his beard? He had been told by Archbishop Gilroy to shave it off while in Sydney. He started to grow it again as soon as he returned to Hagen. (Interview M. Mennis)

¹⁹ Mennis, 1982: 95-97).

The Hagen women – traditional style



The traditional women's house in Mogei has two doors, the rear one is used for escape during an attack.

The women used to sleep together in the women's house and help each other out. Traditionally, the women look after the pig's, rear the children and do most of the garden work and cooking. Today many are educated and hold important jobs. (author)

Decorated Hagen woman (D. Leahy)



*Woman and child by
Taffy Jones 1942.*



An important item of a women's dress was the bilum. It was worn hanging down on the back.

Cowrie shells were a valuable item clothing particularly at feasts. and worn in strings around the neck.

Fr Arnold Steffen SVD reported on his years in the Western Highlands.

Arnold Roger Steffen was born in 1929 Iowa and was ordained 9 June 1957 Techny and arrived in PNG November 1957. He was introduced to Fr George Bernarding and Fr. William Ross, Mt. Hagen and was assigned to Rebiamul; between 1961 – 1964.

Fr Arnold wrote: “

Fr William Ross was the resident Divine Word Missionary in Mount Hagen who had pioneered there in 1934 on an epic overland trek from Alexishafen. We were delighted to live with and be enriched by him - our main task of becoming missionaries, and the short weeks passed quickly! Daily my ‘hands on’ experience was progressing.

From accompanying Fr Ross on a number of nearby sick calls and leading some of the weekday and Sunday Mass celebrations, confessions, parish registers entries, to the planning of a full bush patrol of about 3 weeks of all the outstations to the north and east of Rebiamul. Fr Ross seemed to feel no need to accompany me on this extensive bush patrol, and some later ones as well, other than to advise me on details, and have a couple trusted helpers go along.

Things were going along like this for me and already in 1959 talk of overall change and expansion was in the air. New Apostolic Vicariates were to be established in the Highlands for Mount Hagen including Enga and Goroka including Simbu. Rumour and talk soon became reality, and not very surprisingly Fr Schilling became Vicar Apostolic of Goroka and Fr Bernarding of Mount Hagen. The vast Rebiamul parish, extended from the Waghi to the Sepik and Ramu, tending roughly northward in a broad flaring corridor. The population was heaviest closer to Hagen but remained significant overall, only becoming increasingly sparse and scattered to the extreme north. Naturally Fr Ross’ initial expansion efforts had been mainly centred on the nearer area with some twenty catechists on scattered outstations as far north as the Jimi River.

The ‘expansion era’ was on! By 1964 Mission education also was being ratcheted up, and Mun was seen as a good site for an ‘area level’ primary boarding school. - - Fr Jim McDermott was appointed to Mun. --. I was asked to move on to already established Kuruk parish, 30 odd kilometres to the southwest.

Fr Tony Krol, incumbent there, then moved to the similarly expanding Wabag area across the Hagen Range further west in the vicariate. In Kuruk I retained pastoral responsibility for the bulk of the ‘original corridor to the north’. But the expansion was only just begun! In 1967 I was again asked to find a site for another ‘break off’ parish. Choice fell on a waving kunai block of land along the Baiyer River road not far from Rugli, just over the small ridge that was the Waghi-Sepik Divide. (Eventually the station was named Kumdi after the large clan group populating adjacent areas in all directions.²⁰

²⁰ *My Decades of mission by : Fr. Arnold Steffen, SVD*

Beginning of the Wabag Mission in the 1940s.

Fr Gerry Bus moves to Wabag

Fr Gerry Bus, a Dutch national, arrived in New Guinea on 17 September 1947. The ban on missionaries moving into new areas had been lifted in July 1947 and Fr Ross was keen to open up new stations. Fr Ross had already ventured into Kumdi, Kuruk, Kuli and Wurup which had not appeared on his travel permit previously but was keen to go further. Fr Ross had the policy of baptising all the babies that were brought into the Rebiamul mission. He had the feeling that they would be enough missionaries later to look after them while they were growing up.

Fr Bus:

I met Fr Ross the first time late in September 1947 at Nondugl. I think it was in the afternoon the mission boys told me a missionary was approaching the station so I went out to meet him and there was little Fr Ross with a pipe in his mouth. He was on one of his patrols in the Middle Wahgi and he had decided to continue his walk to see us at Nondugl where Fr Walachy was in charge. Fr Bernarding was in Minj. My appointment was to the Wabag area. Fr Ross had made one or two reconnaissance trips to the Wabag area and I was to go there under his direction. That sounded all right, but in practice the distance between Hagen and Wabag was three days walking via Tomba. Fr Ross knew about my appointment to the Wabag area so when he met me in Nondugl he told me that he planned to make a trip to Wabag in the second half of October. I asked if I could go with him. He said, "Of course you must come too" (Interview by the author). Around the beginning of October 1947, Fr Bus walked from Nondugl via Minj and Kuli to Mt Hagen where Fr Ross and he got ready for a longer trip into the Wabag area. Fr Bus was amazed at the cargo the carriers had of bedding, camping requirements and food.²¹(Interview with the author).

In February 1948, Fr Bus and Fr Tony Cruysberg flew into Wabag in a Dragon piloted by Fr John Glover with supplies.

Fr Bus:

When I was on my own, I visited Fr Ross several times. I used to stay overnight in Wailya six hours from Pompobus and from Wailya to Tomba another 6 hours hard walking up the Hagen Range and then down to Mt Hagen. Fr Ross was my nearest neighbour. He was a very good host and always made sure you had everything you needed.

I talked my problems over with him and the work I was trying to do. It is hard to remember now but he was the man who gave me advice. I would stay overnight in the priests' house which had been built pre-war. Fr Ross's room was the second from the end ever since I remember. There was the old bush church there when I first went there. It had timber walls and kunai roof. There were four small storage buildings and there were two classrooms. Fr Ross's office and the little room next to it were the kitchen and dining room – so tiny. In the pre-war days, it was rather a wild place and then during the war so many missionaries had been killed including 60 Sisters, after the war there were only a few places on the coast that had sisters and it took years to start again.

²¹ *Interview with the author*

There were no Sisters' convents in Hagen until much later after George Bernarding was appointed Bishop. At that stage, Wabag was the administrative centre of the Enga District consisting of, "a cluster of bush buildings squatting alongside a long, soggy, downhill airstrip capable of taking DC3 aircraft" ²²

At the end of 1954, Fr Bus invited the Lutheran missionaries, Revd. Otto Hintze and Revd. Willard Burce to the mission to discuss the Wabag language. He said, "We learnt from each other and came up with a phonemic alphabet". This was the first time they had tried to help each other. Bill Burce was friendly on a personal level with some of the Catholic missionaries and they got to know each other." (*Interview by the author*)

The deaths of Bishop Wolf on the *Dorish Maru* and Bishop Loerks on the *Akikaze* meant that the Madang and Wewak mission centres had lost both their bishops. After the war, Fr Willem Van Baar, was the administrator for all of the SVD missions from Lae to the Dutch border. He was the man in charge of everything. In June 1948, two new Bishops were appointed: Bishop Appelhans for Alexishafen and Bishop Arkfeld for Wewak which covered Mt Hagen and Wabag. The contact between the stations was by plane as Bishop Arkfeld was a pilot and would fly in regularly in his little Auster. So, after 1948, Wabag belonged to the Wewak Diocese because from Mt Hagen westwards the parishes were under that Diocese.

Many years later in 2021:

The Holy Father Francis appointed rev. Justin Ain Soongie, of the clergy of Wabag, currently Vicar General of the same see and professor at the Seminary of Banz, in the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen, as auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Wabag. His Exc. Mgr. Justin Ain Soongie was born on 2 June 1973 in Tsikiro in the Diocese of Wabag, Papua New Guinea. A native of the province of Enga, he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Wabag on May 11, 2005.

After having completed his postulancy (1993-1994) and novitiate (1995-1996). In 2014 he obtained a Licentiate in Moral Theology at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome. He was previously a lecturer in the Seminary of Banz in the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen. ²³(SL)

Bishop George Bernarding Pioneer Bishop of Mt Hagen

George Bernarding was born at Carrick, Pa., U.S.A., 15 February 1912. He entered the SVD seminary in Techy Illinois in 1926 and was ordained there on 13 August 1939. Just before Christmas 1941, he went to Rebiatul to help Fr William Ross, with the baptisms scheduled for Christmas. On 21 January 1942, Madang was bombed, and Bishop Francis Wolf told him to stay on at Mt. Hagen. This probably saved his life because many missionaries on the coast died during the war. In 1943, Fr Bernarding and Fr Ross and two Lutheran pastors were flown out of New Guinea by order of the Australian authorities. The two of them returned to Mt. Hagen on 8 September 1944. They were the first missionaries to return as the war was still raging on the coast. After this, the Western Highland's mission began to expand – old stations were built up again and new stations were started: Kumdi, Kuruk, Kuli, Wurup, Minj, Banz, Nondugul, Ulga. There was expansion into the Wabag area in 1947 and Pompabus, near Wapenamanda, was build up in 1948. (*Interview M. Mennis*)

At the end of 1945, Fr Bernarding was made rector of Mingende, then from 1947 to 1952, he was rector at Alexishafen. From 1952 to 1955, he was a parish priest in Lae and built a cathedral

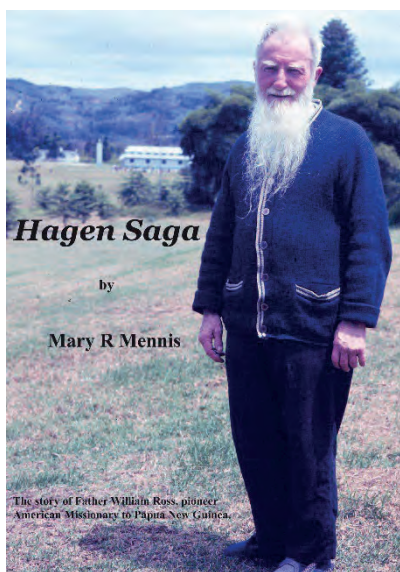
²² *Mihalic, 1999: 113*).

²³ (*Agenzia Fides 15/6/ 9/29/2021, 18.03*)

church there. In 1955, he was named the Regional Superior for New Guinea. On 19 December 1959, he was named the Bishop of the new vicariate of Mt. Hagen and ordained Bishop on 21 April 1960, in Pittsburgh, Pa., USA and celebrated with his classmates of Techny.

The construction of Rebiamul cathedral was started by me in 1962 after my consecration as Bishop because we found the former church was too small. It was built by an Australian fellow, Mike Ellwood, a volunteer carpenter who got the frames from Brisbane. Brother Bonaventure did the cement work. The new church was opened around Christmas 1962. It was a Cathedral from start to finish as I was already a Bishop and used it as such. It was not the Cathedral which we had hoped to build eventually if we ever do build it. It was very practical and suited our needs and has served our purposes for 12 years or more. The timber in the old church, known locally as *jomba*, was still good and it was used for furniture and some of the planks were used for houses.

First Communion photograph 1964, with Sr Angela on the left and Fr Ross centre



Left Fr Ross with the church in the background 1971 (Mennis)

Bishop Bernarding:

I made Fr Ross my Vicar General in the sense that if I was away or overseas, he took my place say for the dispensation of marriage especially. He also looked after the financial side of things, though this was mostly done by Fr Ed Misik from Banz who took over the business side. Fr Ross never concerned himself with that. He was more concerned with the spiritual side of things. He was the Parish Priest here and anything in regard to the running of the parish for marriages particularly he would take care of.

In 1974, the diocese took in the whole of the Western Highlands, the Enga District which used to be Wabag and as far as Kapiago – the first station here is Nondugl in the Wahgi Valley and the opposite side in Minj. Beyond Nondugl is the Chimbu which is the Goroka Diocese. The population in the area is something like 300,000 and we have a total on our books of 100,000 Catholics – roughly one third of the population. Another third is Lutheran including the Lutheran Missouri Synod in the Enga District and the American Lutherans here. The last third would be partly mixed with the Seven Days, possibly some Baptists and the rest of them would be pagan or heathen. The majority of people are connected with one or another of the missions. Furthermore, Catholics and Lutherans

have what is known as adherents – i.e. people in preparation for baptism or favourable to us. There could be 30,000 or 40,000 adherents.

When I first came here, we had a diocese formed from Alexishafen and Wewak. The Wewak diocese looked after the Wabag area with Bishop Arkfeld as their Bishop and the Hagen area with Bishop Noser of Alexishafen. When the new diocese was formed, the Wabag and Enga area was united with the Mt Hagen Diocese. Initially we had 18,000 on the books and most of the Catholics belonged to the Hagen Parish. Since 1959, when I took over, until the present day we have had an annual increase of something like 5,000 baptisms so we would be over the 100,000 mark today. That means that 80,000 Catholics have been brought into the Church here from the time I took over until now.

Mike Ellwood built the convent for the sisters in 1962. The reason we didn't have sisters until then was because of the number who died in the war. Those who survived went back to the coastal convents and re-established their schools in Wewak, Madang, Alexishafen and Mugil. The Notre Dame Sisters came here in 1964 and took over the Guardian Angel School with about 450 children in it.

There was another school connected with the Teachers' College with another 450 children. The Teachers' College is run by various groups: civilians from the VSO, and AVA from Australia; lecturers from Canada; volunteers from PALMS in Sydney; the Sisters of Mercy; and Holy Spirit Sisters. The Fatima School at Banz about three miles west of Banz town is run by the Christian Brothers with a number of outside volunteers, and the Brothers of Charity have a vocational school there. Up at Kumdi, on the road to the Baiyer Valley, there is the Notre Dame High School for 250 girls. (*Interview by the author, 1973*)

Relations between Lutherans and Catholics

One of the achievements of the post-war years was the growing friendship between the Lutherans and Catholics. This progress was noted by Bishop Bernarding:

In the old days, it was a rivalry in a sense because wherever one mission had settled down the other mission felt it was their duty to bring in their own missionaries to offset them. This accounts for why there is a cross-over in the various missions in some areas. Most of the Mogeis are Catholics whereas the Yampaga and Jigasare Lutherans because it is nearer to their headquarters at Ogelbeng. There were recriminations on both sides. It is hard to know who was to blame for it. The teachers and evangelists of the Lutheran mission would at times cause problems with the Catholic people and the Catholic catechists would say things that were pretty hard about the Lutheran people and this would be brought to the notice of the Lutherans. Without getting together these things would tend to simmer in your heart because we did not get together and find out the truth of what was going on.

If we opened up a station, we could be sure the Lutherans would come in too. The Seven-Day Adventists only came in later; the same with the Jehovah Witnesses who are making strong propaganda at the marketplace. Four Square causes more confusion. We provide schools and hospitals whereas they came just to win converts. To the Catholics and Lutherans this is an unfair thing. It is just proselytising. There is not much proselytising between Lutherans and Catholics these days because the Vatican Council set guidelines down. After Vatican Council, we got to know each other a bit better.

In the meantime, we have a policy to live and let live. The war helped in breaking down the hostilities between the Lutherans and Catholics as they began to appreciate each other more. For example, when we were on the ship heading to Australia, we shared a cabin with Rev Kuder and Rev Doering and we got to know each other very well. Kuder later became Bishop of the Lutheran church in New Guinea and we have always remained good friends over the years. (*Interview by the author, 1973*)

We were always on friendly terms with Dr Braun who worked formerly at Amele and then built the hospital at Yagaum. We got to know him well and appreciated the work that is being done by both groups – the Lutheran missionaries with their hospital work and in education and the Catholics much the same. There are more cordial relations between the two groups now and we hope one day we'll all be one.

Fr Ross's Golden Jubilee, 8 September 1972

Fr Ross's Jubilee celebration was postponed until September 1972 because of his broken hip. I was delighted to receive an invitation and flew up from Madang for the occasion. Here are my memories of the event: The men, their skins glistening with pig grease, strung new *tanget* leaves through their belts, donned their finest golden bird of paradise feathers and gathered their drums, for this was a day of celebration. It was a beautiful day with the mists rising from the green valleys and clearing above the blue-green splendour of the mountains. The mission with its setting amongst the pine trees and clumps of bamboo was a fitting place for the festivities. Around an outside altar decked with golden sunflowers and lilies, twenty priests gathered to concelebrate Mass, dressed in golden vestments. The small, bearded figure of Fr Ross was flanked by an archbishop and two bishops as he bent his snow-white head over the altar to intone the words at the beginning of Mass.



In his address, Bishop Bernarding paid tribute to Fr Ross's pioneering work. He recalled his tireless spirit and strong physique which had enabled him to tramp great distances over rough terrain to lay the foundations of the Hagen mission which was now the third largest in Oceania consisting of 24 parishes in the Hagen and Wabag areas

(Mennis, 2015: 9).

Wamp Wan and his Mogei people gave Fr Ross some money for his Golden Jubilee. They did not count how much it was but many people gave two dollars each so it would add up. They said to Fr Ross: "You are old now and we are giving you this money to buy some coffee and food. Now you can stay home and eat and drink and enjoy this food. When you die we will bury you in the cemetery at Rebiamul."

Death of Fr Ross

Fr Ross died on 20 May 1973. He was lying peacefully on his bed holding his rosary beads. Word spread and the people, faces smeared with red mud, came flocking to the space outside his room and sat under the casuarina trees mourning him with great sobbing. On the day of the funeral on 24 May thousands gathered at the open-air funeral mass and followed the coffin on its way to its last resting place.

Funeral of Fr William Ross SVD 24 May 1973 photo M.Mennis



Death of Sir Wamp Wan

In February 1973, Wamp Wan leader of the Moge people, went to see Pope Paul VI and was the first one of his line to meet him. “I told the Pope about Fr Ross who brought the talk of God

to my people and had helped our people for many years. I told the Pope that Fr Ross didn’t worry about himself but only about his people. The Pope was happy to meet me as he hadn’t met a man from my line before and he gave me his blessing and also a blessing for my family and people.”

Photo M. Mennis



On that trip overseas. Wamp Wan also got to meet the Queen in London. During this meeting he dressed in a suit. There was also a photograph in the papers of him catching a double-decker bus in London wearing his traditional Mt Hagen attire which caused quite a stir. The London people were amazed and excited to see him in his feathered headdress.

Fr Garry Roche wrote;

On 14 June 1980, Wamp Wan was knighted by the Queen on the advice of Her Majesty’s Papua New Guinea Ministers. He received the honour of Knight Bachelor for community service. In 2007, the great Chief Sir Wamp Wan died and was buried in the Rebiamul cemetery in front of Fr Ross’s grave. Sir Wamp Wan was of the Mokei Nampaga clan near Mt Hagen and was a prominent leader in the Western Highlands Province from before World War II until the 1990’s. He was a strong supporter of the Catholic Mission, although he delayed baptism until 1976 because he had several wives. Sir Wamp’s life covered the entire time of the



exploration of the highlands, the colonial era and PNG's journey to independence, and much beyond. (Fr Garry Roche)²⁴

In 1971, three of the first schoolboys from 1935.

Below: many people still wore their traditional dress in 1971 (M. Mennis)

Three Archbishops in Mt Hagen

Bishop George Bernarding, 1959 to 1982.

Archbishop George Bernarding, 1982 to 1987.

Archbishop Michael Meier, 1987 to 2006.

Bishop Douglas Young, 2001 to 2006.

Archbishop Douglas Young, 2006 to present.



Archbishop George Bernarding (1982 to 1987)

On 27 March 1982, Mt. Hagen was raised to the rank of archdiocese, and Bishop George Bernarding became the first metropolitan archbishop of the Highlands' dioceses with four suffragan dioceses: Goroka, Mendi, Wabag, and Kundiawa. The centre of the See was at Mt Hagen, with the residence at Rebiamul. He lived there as Archbishop for five years until 1987. Over the time he was Archbishop, George Bernarding established 11 new missionary parishes, and divided the whole diocese into deaneries,



“having very dedicated SVD men and SSPS women missionaries, he continued and extended activities, especially in the fields of education, health, and social development.” (Kruczek, 2007: 23)

Archbishop Bernarding tried to improve the education of young girls which lagged behind that offered to boys of the same age. The Notre Dame Sisters addressed the problem with a new school for girls. In those years, more religious communities came to the Mt Hagen diocese including the Christian Brothers, the De La Salle

²⁴ (Fr Garry Roche)

Brothers, Charity Brothers, Marist Brothers, Michaelites, Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, Franciscans of the Third Order, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and the members of the Society of Catholic Medical Mission Sisters. To cater for the growing number of Catholics in the diocese, catechumenates and catechetical groups were formed. “Archbishop Bernarding as pastor, teacher, and administrator, was assisted by his closest co-workers: general vicar, diocesan consultants, and vicars, up until 1987.” (*Kruczek, 2007: 23*)

The Pope’s Visit to Hagen in 1984

A highlight of Archbishop Bernarding’s time was the visit by Pope John Paul II to Mt Hagen on 7 and 8 May 1984. It was the first pastoral visit of any Pope to Papua New Guinea. Weeks before there was frantic preparation for the visit but also fears that it might all end in grief. There were tribal fights going on everywhere.

On 10 April 1984, Archbishop Bernarding wrote a Message to the People of the Highlands just a few weeks before the Papal visit:

On the occasion of Pope John Paul II’s visit to Mt Hagen on 7 and 8 May we, the members of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea, should acknowledge that we have been singled out for this great honour. His Holiness’s visit coincides with the fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of the church in the Highlands. Remember that Frs Alphonse Schaefer and William Ross together with several Priests and Brothers all Divine Word Missionaries arrived here in Mt Hagen in 1934. In a comparatively short time their efforts of evangelising the inhabitants grew from a few converts in the early 1960s until today in the five dioceses which make up the Archdiocese of Hagen, there are well over a quarter of a million people who are members of the Catholic Church.

We, Catholics are numbered amongst the sheep entrusted to Peter’s care. Today we are cared for by Peter’s successor, Pope John Paul II, and so we have every reason



to rejoice that he will soon be in our midst. We can express our joy and appreciation by closing ranks, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, by working together to welcome Christ’s Vicar on earth in a sincere and enthusiastic way. It may never happen again that a Vicar of Christ will journey to Mt Hagen in the centre of the Highlands. I pray that this occasion will be a happy one never to be forgotten. May it bring peace to each individual and many blessings for years to come!

For several days and nights preceding the event, various groups of Highlanders carried large pilgrim crosses from village to village, from one tribal area to another. Thousands of people were involved – and they brought peace amongst the highlanders fighting grounds. They arrived in Mt Hagen the day before, marching six abreast across the highways, singing

and dancing, with the leaders calling the chants (Mihalic, 1986: 200).

The early morning rain had cleared when the people arrived walking or in trucks singing hymns as they made their way to the golf course later renamed John Paul Park.

Archbishop Bernarding was at the forefront of organising the event. Invitations were sent out weeks in advance.

Pope John Paul II (later saint) came to Mt Hagen in 1984. 180,000 people gathered to greet him and attend the outdoor Mass. Here he is meeting a Hagen chief.

Out-door Mass during the Papal visit on 31 March 1984.

The Pope concelebrated the Mass with Archbishop Bernarding and Goroka's Bishop Raymond Caesar. The liturgy was in *Tok Pisin* which the Pope spoke fluently. Gifts were given by several local people as well as a Lutheran bishop and two Anglican priests. The Pope loved Mt Hagen and appreciated the colourful attire of the local warriors. He praised the work of the catechists and the missionaries including Fr Ross and Archbishop Bernarding who had worked so hard to lay the foundations of the mission.

Pope John Paul was overwhelmed by the spectacle of all the tribesmen wearing their bird of paradise feathers – thousands of them who had gathered from far and wide to see him.



Many whose fathers had been brought the Good News by Father William Ross and Archbishop Bernarding over years of tramping over the mountain ranges and wading streams into their remote villages never hindered by the weather on their sick calls. Yes, it was a time to gather and remember the sacrifices they had made. So memorable was his visit to Mt Hagen that any missionary from the area who visited the Vatican and met Pope John Paul only had to say they were from Mt Hagen for his face to light up with joyous recollection of his two-day visit there in May 1984.

The Melanesian Institute in Goroka

Fr Knoebel became part of the new Melanesian Institute in Goroka. This Institute began officially in June 1968, after it was found that the Marist fathers, the Sacred Heart Missionaries and the Divine Word Missionaries had “for some time nurtured the same dream of developing a pastoral institute” (Mihalic 1996; 155).

“The Institute is an ecumenical research, teaching and publishing institute. It is designed to help churches, government and other organisations speak more clearly on the needs of the people in Melanesia. MI’s research focuses on topics of pastoral and social concern to people in Melanesia.” (Web site). The first director was Fr Hermann Janssen MSC and his assistant was Fr Joe Knoebel SVD.

“They gathered around themselves some specialists in missiology, anthropology, linguistics and pastoral theology and conducted their first orientation course of ten weeks for newly arrived Catholic Missionaries at Vunapope, Rabaul, on 16 November 1968. In 1971, they extended their services to other Christian denominations. “From then on Melanesian Institute became a joint ecumenical venture especially with the Evangelical Lutherans, the Anglican and the United Churches. In years to come they would share directorships.” (*Mihalic, 1999: 156*)

Archbishop Meier, 1987 to 2006 - Archbishop for the Youth²⁵

Michael Meier was born in Wolfshausen, Germany on 19 October 1928. His parents were Michael Meier, the son of a blacksmith, and Anna, nee Biberger.

“After a few months in England, I arrived in Papua New Guinea in July 1962. The Seminary had not yet started, so I had a chance to get to know the new country and the mission work in Mt. Hagen under Bishop Bernarding and Fr Ross. I experienced the *Hagen Saga* life. Mt. Hagen had just begun to develop and mission activity was in full swing with a school and catechumenates with up to 500 or more baptisms a year. After a year in 1964 at the novitiate in Marburg, Australia, to relieve the shortage of manpower there, I returned to New Guinea”.

In 1965, Fr Meier joined the staff at the Holy Spirit Seminary at Kap, near Alexishafen. Here he taught Church History, and Fundamental Theology. He was also the Bursar of the Seminary under the Rector, Fr Patrick Murphy. On the staff was Fr Raymond Caesar who lectured in Philosophy and later became Bishop of Goroka. He remembered Benedict to Varpin from the Seminary days. He was one the pioneer students, studying very hard and was very co-operative in the development of the Seminary grounds in Kap and Bomana

In March 1987, Archbishop Bernarding retired and went back to the States and I had to follow in his footsteps. He had been leading the Mission/Church since 1959 and he could show a tremendous growth with 23 parishes, an educational entity of a Teacher College, High Schools, Primary schools, vocational institutions and a Pastoral Centre, relying on the efficient initiatives of co-workers of Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, volunteers and lay-helpers.

Archbishop Meier wrote:

“When I arrived in Mt Hagen, Bishop Bernarding asked me to develop a youth program there and he supported the building of a Social Centre in Rebiamul and



others in a number of other parishes on a smaller scale. In Rebiamul, we started with sports, Christian Fellowship (Young Christian Workers/Students: YCW, YCS), but also with courses for women in domestic science and a Kindergarten/Preschool. All these activities were supported by the Australian Development Agency. In the process of the implementation of the new

²⁵ Archbishop Michael told the author his story in numerous email exchanges.

pastoral approach, it became evident that our keyworkers, the Secretaries of our Diocesan Offices of Evangelisation, Pastoral Animation, Communication, Family & Women, Youth, Justice & Peace were to be a leading force. These men and women, Brothers and Sisters, would be key elements of the success of our program. A big thank-you to them for their dedication but they worked out of various locations, in isolation.”

Zdzislaw Kruczek spoke of further changes by 2007:

Today this cooperation [between the churches] is more open, because of the closeness brought by the ecumenical atmosphere existing among Catholics and the majority of the other confessions. The Catholics, with such attitudes, are open to share their Catholic values and faith with non-practising persons and non-Christians, because they feel that their faith in Christ Jesus, and in moral principles, fills important and unquestionable needs in the life of each human being. The local church of Mt Hagen is also tranquil in its mission, because it is able to face the material and financial demands of remuneration of the workers, running necessary institutions, keeping ancillary personnel working, and controlling the all-important petty cash.²⁶

Another aspect of implementation was communication. The activities of The Commission of Social Communication of the Bishops Conference of PNG produced half hour religious programs, which were supplied to the Provincial Radio Stations operated by the Government and were then transmitted once or twice a week. I felt that was not enough. It took a long time to achieve my dream. Finally, on 15 January 2003, the Feast Day of St. Arnold Janssen, the founder of the SVD Society and a keen communicator, the Radio Station called ‘TRINITY FM’, under the Patronage of the Archdiocese of the Holy Trinity, went on Air. It transmitted programs 24 hours seven days a week.

Archbishop Michael Meier retired on 17 July 2006 aged 78 years and celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the Priesthood in his hometown of Walkertshofen. He kept fond memories of his years spent in New Guinea and the help he received from the staff.

“It was fantastic - from the Diocesan Consultors, the Administrative Secretary and all the heads of the various offices, they all made their contribution, they were dedicated, reliable and creative. Their contribution and input to the monthly diocesan pastoral meetings widened the way to the growth of awareness in the parish communities. Sure, not all the planning bore the maximum of expected fruit, but the challenge to the people could not be denied. Thanks also to the support of an army of prayers especially the Legion of Mary”. *Archbishop Meier’s email message)*

Lay Missionaries in Hagen

Lay missionaries came from all over the world and offered short term or long-term assistance to the missions. They were welcomed everywhere and worked as teachers, nurses, mechanics and builders.

One of these, John Macarthur, and his wife, Judith, arrived in September 1961 and worked with Fr Cohill (later Bishop) in Kuli, in the Mt Hagen Diocese, for two and a half years. John built

²⁶ Kruczek, 2007: 23)

schools, outstations, cabins, medical clinics and the like, looked after the mission's coffee plantation and ran a trade store to raise working funds for the station. Judith was a teacher as well and mother. John Macarthur found Fr Ross had a great source of knowledge about the Mogei people and had a deep rapport with them as he could speak their language.

Bishop Douglas Young, 2001 to 2006.

Archbishop Douglas Young, 2006 to present.



Pontifical Act:

A message from the Vatican 2006 read:

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Douglas Young SVD, auxiliary of the archdiocese of Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea, as metropolitan archbishop of the same archdiocese (area 8,288, population 392,259, Catholics 144,745, priests 38, religious 91). The archbishop-elect was born in Brisbane, Australia in 1950.

He was ordained a priest in 1977 and ordained a bishop in 2000. He succeeds Archbishop Michael Meier S.V.D., whose resignation from the pastoral care of the same archdiocese, the

Holy Father accepted, having reached the age limit.

The newly ordained Father Douglas Young was appointed to the Mt Hagen Diocese. When he arrived, Bishop Bernarding met him at the Hagen airport and asked him to go to Kompam where the priest and a brother had left the Order and the people were confused. So, for five years the young Fr Douglas became the parish priest in Kompam in the Enga region. He also cared for the nearby bush parish of Keman for the last three years. During this period, he did extensive field research on the Enga culture and language, and new religious movements and encountered more tribal fights. It was a great opportunity to study tribal fighting and peace negotiations at the grass root level.

As a result, he returned to Wabag in 1986 as Director of the Holy Spirit Youth and Pastoral Centre, a centre for non-formal education for the diocese of Wabag in the Enga Province. He was also chairperson of the Enga Provincial Rehabilitation Committee and a member of the Governing Council of Wabag High School. During this time, he wrote more articles: *The Symbol of Jesus in Enga*. (Catalyst, 1984: 14.2) and *Pastoral Responses to Tribal Fighting in Enga* (Catalyst 1986: 16.1).

Bishop Douglas Young, 2001 to 2006

In 2000, everything changed. Fr Douglas thought and hoped he was destined for an academic future. He enjoyed the university atmosphere with the students and staff and with the possibility of attending conferences in his field of research. Then he received the news that he was appointed the new bishop of Mt Hagen.

From then on, he lived in the bishop's house with Archbishop Meier who was very kind and tolerant. He was given special responsibility for the Pastoral Planning, Education and Health Services portfolios while Bishop Meier kept the financial and personnel side of the mission. In those first years as bishop, contact with the academic world of DWU was still made possible by occasional visits. During this time, his old rector and teacher at Marburg, Fr Kevin Cantwell, his old teacher at the seminary worked in the Mt Hagen diocese in Minj, Banz, Kumdi and Mt Hagen. He and Bishop Young shared memories of the day when young Douglas made his first vows to him at Marburg, when he was the Australian Provincial of the Society of Divine Word.

Archbishop of Mt Hagen

On 17 July 2006, it was noted on the web that Pope Benedict has announced the appointment of Brisbane-born Bishop Douglas Young, auxiliary of the archdiocese of Mount Hagen in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, as metropolitan Archbishop of the same archdiocese. Bishop Young has worked for more than 30 years in the PNG highlands and has developed a deep understanding of Melanesian cultures especially in regard to their reconciliation processes. Bishop Young holds a doctorate in conflict transformation from Macquarie University for which he researched and reflected in the PNG context.

He has been Head of PNG Studies at Divine Word University, Madang, and has been involved in conflict transformation training and facilitation in many parts of PNG including Bougainville. The Mount Hagen archdiocese has a Catholic population of 145,000 from a total population of nearly 400,000 people.

Rempi to Rebiamul - Anniversary Celebrations Mt Hagen

The Hagen people wanted to do something special to remember the 75th anniversary. Why not follow the route that first group of missionaries, catechists and carriers had made? Where had they gone? What route had they followed and what difficulties had they encountered? The map in *Hagen Saga* provided the route as remembered by Peter Manui. It was decided not to follow the exact route from Bogadjim as it would be too arduous and long and there were not enough Catholics along the route to cater for the pilgrims. This time the official climb began at Brahman, after some preliminary activities at Rempi and Alexishafen.



*80 years on: 500 pilgrims follow part of Fr Ross's 1934 trek
(Photo by Paul Petrus)*

Actions speak louder than words in Papua New Guinea culture. It is customary that when a person does something good, words do not fully express their appreciation. A common practice is the idea of saying thank you with action rather than words.

Accordingly, the Catholic Archdiocese of Mt Hagen organised a pilgrimage to say thank you for the 80 years of the Gospel in the Highlands. The first missionaries' sole purpose was to evangelise the people but services like education and health seemed necessary in order to evangelise meaningfully. So, schools and health services were established and contributed a

lot to the development of the region. Today about 40% of the health and education services in the Highlands is provided by the Catholic Church.

The Catholic faithful in the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen felt it is timely to say thank you and acknowledge all the blessings from God through the missionaries. More than 500 Catholics including three local priests and nine seminarians travelled to Madang on 28 March 2014. After two days in Rempi, on the north coast of Madang, the pilgrims travelled by PMV to Yakumbu along the Ramu to Madang highway to start their two weeks pilgrimage. Sixteen young men from Rempi also joined the group, some of them the descendants of the 72 carriers of the first missionaries. They spent weeks following the steps of the first missionaries in a pilgrimage.

The Archbishop of Mt Hagen, Archbishop Douglas Young, welcoming them back, said the pilgrimage was a sign of a family walking together and sharing the Gospel, as a Church alive in Christ. Most of the pilgrims reflected that the long walk had been a perfect spiritual exercise



(Photo by Paul Petrus)

to strengthen their Catholic faith during the Lenten season. And it was a good experience to feel the similar pain and sufferings of the first missionaries, 80 years ago, as they entered the highlands region. The pilgrims reached the Rebiamul Parish, April 2014.

In doing this this, these present-day Hageners showed they appreciated the sacrifices Fr Ross and Brother Eugene made to bring them the Good News and that his spirit lives on with them today. It is over forty years since I, the author interviewed Father Ross about events that had occurred forty years earlier. These two lots of 40 years add up to the eighty years of the celebration. I feel privileged to have helped record a little of the history of the wonderful Parish of Mount Hagen and of its founder Father William Ross SVD. May the Catholic Church continue to flourish in Papua New Guinea. *(Mary Mennis)*



Archbishop Douglas Young and Pius Pi cut the cake in 2009 on the occasion of the 75-year jubilee of the Mt Hagen Mission. Pius Pi was amongst the first students of Father William Ross. Upon completion of his training at Rebiamul, he was sent to the Kuli parish in 1947 and served the church there until his death last year. Pius had many children including a priest, who was the rector of the Fatima Seminary in the Jiwaka Province (Fr Clement Papa) and is now in Australia completing his PhD. All the family members hold very senior positions in PNG. A few years earlier, Pius and three others of the first baptism received a papal medal for their services to the church.

The Divine Mercy Shrine



*The gateway to the Mercy Shrine,
near Mt Hagen* WELCOME TO MT
ANGLIMP Peace

Gate Vision 2015,

Welcome to the opening and Blessing of the Shrine
of Divine Mercy Rugis village Jiwaka Province.
22 October 2015. JESUS MI TRUSTIM YU

A group of people outside the Mercy Shrine



The Divine Mercy Shrine is thirty kilometres from Mt Hagen at Ruquis and was opened by the Apostolic Nuncio on the Feast of St John Paul II, 22 October 2015, in the presence of three bishops and two archbishops. Thousands flocked to the celebration in the church. The Divine Mercy Shrine is to be a significant place of pilgrimage not only for the Archdiocese, but also for PNG and other countries as well. Basic accommodation for pilgrims has been built.



*Bishops and
Archbishops
attended the
consecration
of the shrine*

The Blue Sisters SSps Mt Hagen



SSpS Sisters Valsi, Jeanette and Davida (Interviews by Autho in 2018)

Sr Valsi SSpS

After Sr Valsi made her final vows, she came to Papua New Guinea in 1992. In 2013, Sr Valsi was posted to Mt Hagen where she runs the health clinic at Rebiamul with thirty staff including security, cleaners and nurses. There is an outpatients' clinic, an emergency department, an anti-natal clinic, and a clinic for sexually transmitted diseases.

Sister Mary Jeanette SSpS

Sister Jeanette was born Elisa Trazo Matela in the Philippines. She is the fifth child in her family, and another was born after her. Her mother, Fortuna was a home economics teacher. Her father, Melanio, was from Leyte in the Philippines. Elisa was a blue baby and she likes to add that she went from being a blue baby to entering an order. Known as the Blue Sisters (SSpS). She celebrated her Golden Jubilee last year with Archbishop Young. She joined the sisters in 1961 and took her first vows in 1963 in the Holy Spirit Convent in Manila. Before Sister Jeanette entered, she was an accountant and received her Bachelor of Commerce.

Sister Davida SSpS

Sister Davida was born in 1964 and trained as a nurse. She studied in Poland and after three years was sent to Rome to study spirituality until 1994. She arrived in Madang in 2009 and was sent to Mount Hagen to set up a counselling centre at Rebiamul. Sister Davida said: The Catholic HIV/AIDS clinic has activities and outreach in villages and also provides courses in gender, violence, human dignity and child protection. Sometimes it is the first time the people have had advice on how to act as a family. Often the women are not educated and spend their days looking after their children, their gardens and the pigs as they did in their traditional life.

In 1957, the SSpS sisters arrived in Enga to teach at the Catholic school. Later, in 1958, others arrived to take over the leprosarium at nearby Yampu. Sister Ewaldine spent nine years helping the lepers and administering the life-saving drug, dapsone, which cured patients after several months enabling them to return home.



Three Sisters of St Therese

Holy Trinity Teachers' College

The college was established by the Divine Word Missionaries in 1957, originally located in Banz and called The Fatima Teachers' college. However, with an increase in school populations, it was decided to shift it closer to Mt Hagen. Now, the college is 5 kilometres away from Hagen town and is connected by bus from the city centre. The Sisters of Mercy arrived in 1968, in response to a request by Bishop Bernarding for qualified people to staff the fledgling College. Initially three sisters formed the founding group of the Mercy Sisters. Their original convent was a large two-storey building where many gatherings were held, the most significant of these being the Union of Women Religious Congress in 1977. Since their arrival at Holy Trinity in 1968, 39 Sisters of Mercy have lived and worked there for over 41 years. Their contribution came to an end on January 4, 2010, when Sisters Joan MacGinley and Vero Lokalyo RSM moved out (*Sister Pat Wood RSM, of Rockhampton. Web Site*)

One school connected with the Teachers' College with another 450 children. The Teachers' College is run by various groups: civilians from the VSO, and AVA from Australia; lecturers from Canada; volunteers from PALMS. in Sydney; the Sisters of Mercy; and Holy Spirit Sisters. The Fatima School at Banz about three miles west of Banz town is run by the Christian Brothers with several outside volunteers, and the Brothers of Charity have a vocational school there. Up at Kumdi, on the road to the Baiyer Valley, there is the Notre Da me High School for 250 girls. (*Interview by the author, 1973*)

Mike Ellwood built the convent for the sisters in 1962. The reason we didn't have sisters until then was because of the number who died in the war. Those who survived went back to the coastal convents and re-established their schools in Wewak, Madang, Alexishafen and Mugil. The Notre Dame Sisters came here in 1964 and took over the Guardian Angel School with about 450 children in it.



Carrying rocks to be placed at the site of the new cathedral

At the dinner held to raise funds for the cathedral. Mike Willesee front left. Governor of Mt Hagen Paias Wingti on second right





artist's impression of the finished cathedral in Mt Hagen



L to R Bishop Ken Howell Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Bishop Tim Norton and Archbishop Douglas Young. Fr Tim Norton was ordained as an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Brisbane – the first member of the Society of the Divine Word SVD religious order to become a bishop in Australia on 22.2.2022.

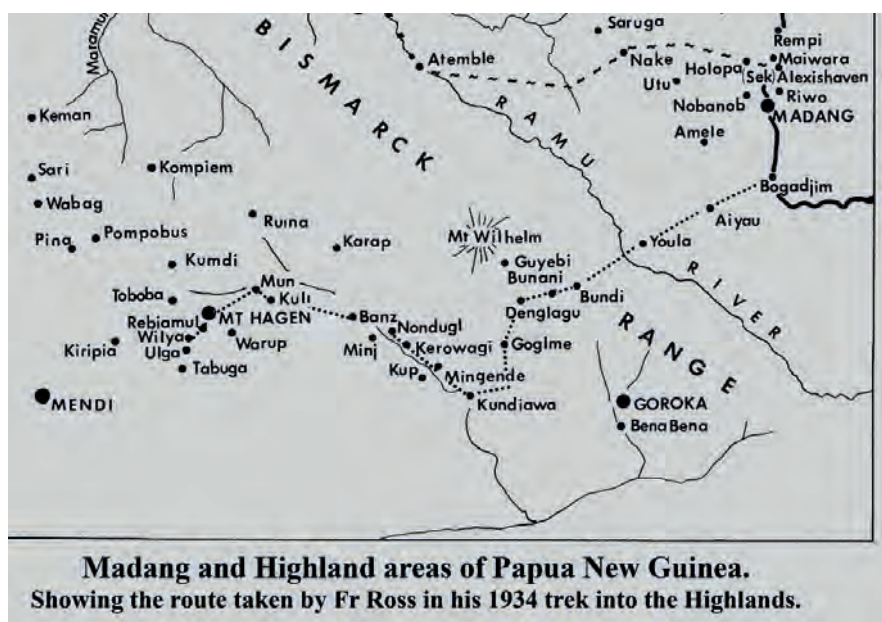
“One of the many expressions of the Church in the world is through mission,” Newly ordained Bishop Norton told a packed St Stephen’s Cathedral in Brisbane on Tuesday 22 February 2022, during a Mass that included many indigenous and multicultural elements. (Catholic Leader).



Photograph: Paul Petrus Hagen Mission

The pilgrimage of 2014 carried a statue of St. Michael, the patron of Papua New Guinea, as a mobile prayer for protection against the forces of evil that still plague Highlands and PNG societies. PNG Highlanders easily take to the idea of “pilgrimage”, since it builds very much on traditional exchange processes, journeying as a solidary group, and handing on something that is valued. The testimony of those who took part in the pilgrimage indicates its great value in enabling young people to claim their identity based on a common history and strengthening their faith by witnessing to it.

90 th Anniversary celebrations in March 2024 at Nondugl. Each village along the route had their own celebrations when the group of pilgrims reached there. It was a time of great celebrations everywhere.



1934. Mick Leahy's Diary Wednesday 28th March 1934:

Big excitement amongst the natives yesterday morning and a crowd of them on a ridge on the road along from Kaduwere --- through the glasses we could make out a couple of white men and a long line of carriers. Went along the road to meet them having a pretty fair idea that it was the missionaries from Sek (Alexishaven). which it turned out to be - five of them altogether including Fathers Ross, Schaefer Aufenanger, Tropper, and Brother Eugene. They had had a good trip and brought back Rebier the little *monki* whom we took out with us last year and loaned to Father Ross so he could learn the language. He looks well and has grown 50% since I last saw him. All the white men of the party look well and are enthusiastic about the country.

As mentioned earlier, Mick Leahy set up a Morobe tent the next morning so they could celebrate Mass "The first Mass at what was to become the thriving city of Mount Hagen and the centre of the Catholic Church for the whole Highlands region."²⁷ I rigged the Morobe tent on the drome and Father Ross celebrated Holy Mass in it using our table as an altar. There were about 40 boys, the priests, brother, Dan and I. We went to confession and communion. Father Schaefer sang the Mass with the boys in Pidgin English and the whole service was a good effort for Mount Hagen.

. That was ninety years ago. Time to celebrate the work of all the SVD priests and Bishops and sisters and Brothers and all the lay people who have worked so hard over these years so now there are over 500,000 Catholics in 90 years.



90 th Anniversary celebrations in March 2024 at Nondugl. Each village along the route had their own celebrations when the group of pilgrims reached there. It was a time of great celebrations everywhere.

"Welcome to Nondugl St Mary Parish 90 years Catholic Sios Kam Long Highlands". The sign reads. Theme 1 Samuel 17:33-37 *Photograph by Michael Anis*

²⁷ Archbishop Young described this Mass this way.



In January 2021, Catholics in Mt Hagen celebrated 125 years since the SVD Order came to Papua New Guinea in 1896.

Archbishop Young said: the celebration was a time to thank God for what He did to help the nation and the people through the efforts of the SVD missionaries who brought light, hope and life to the people."



Seminarians in 2020 of the Catholic Theological Institute, Bomana.

Basically, the book is a textbook for a Course of the Catholic Theological Institute at Bomana, Port Moresby on Melanesian church history, but beyond this purpose, the book is also of importance for all kinds of people of Papua New Guinea and especially for the members of the Catholic Church.

It is easy to read. It is the first popular written book on the history of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea and therefore fills an existing gap in the historiography of Papua New Guinea.

It is desirable that many Papua New Guineans come to know and appreciate it and thereby increase their knowledge of the history of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea.

Paul B. Steffen, SVD.

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