

Lotu Katolik

Catholic Missions in Papua New Guinea and Oceania

VOLUME TWO

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

Published by
Lalong Enterprises, Brisbane
in association with the
Liturgical Catechetical Institute, Goroka
2024

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ISBN: 978-1-7636244-6-7

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A recent celebration of the first mass on Yule Island which took place on the 4th July 1885.

PART SEVEN Missions in Bereina and Yule Island



The chapel on Yule Island where the first Mass was celebrated on 4 July 1885

It was on 1 July 1885 that Father Henri Verius, with his companions, first landed on the shores of Yule Island a few days later, on 4 July, he said the first Mass on Yule Island and so began their missionary work there. Yule Island is in the Papuan side of New Guinea. By 1885, Papua had been annexed by Britain and called British New Guinea. The new government encouraged the London Missionary Society (LMS) to continue their work in Papua around the Port Moresby area. They even claimed Yule Island should be their territory, but the Catholic missionaries persevered.

The History of some Yule Island People.

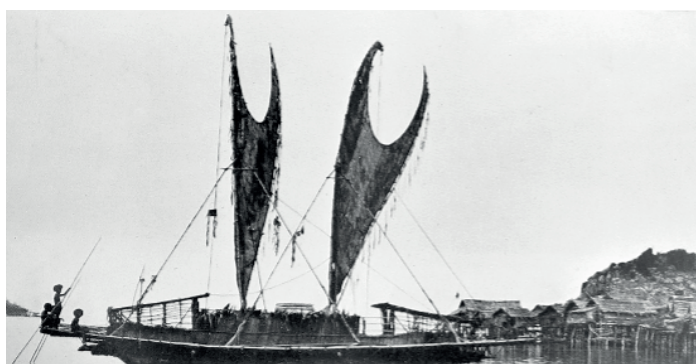
Joseph Abau, headman of Tsiria Village, an elderly man had a fund of knowledge about the old days. In 1980 Mary Mennis interviewed him about his people. They sat on the veranda of his village house, catching the cool afternoon breezes. He said that the Motu people always regarded Yule Island as a rich source of clay for their pots. Because of this, it was often the scene of fierce battles between rival clans. The Manumanu people who lived on the mainland, made pots for the *hiri* trade but had no clay deposits of their own, so, for many years, they collected clay from Yule Island.

Joseph Abia's story:

Over two hundred years ago, a group of Motuans fled from the Mekeos on the mainland and settled at the end of Yule Island in three villages one of them being Poukama. At first, the Poukama people allowed the mainland Motu to collect their precious clay, but eventually disputes arose and the Poukama people barred the Motuans including the Manumanu people from access to the clay deposits. After this, a mini clay crisis developed. Manumanu declared war against the Poukama people and sent a knotted string to mark the battle day. Both sides prepared for war.

Summoning their allies, they readied their spears and stone axes. The Poukama sought the help of the fierce Roro tribe on the mainland. On the day of the fight, the Manumanu warriors, bedecked in war paint and feathers, embarked in their long war canoes across Hall Sound. Fifteen to a canoe, they stood one behind the other pulling on the oars. With swift strokes they rowed in unison as they headed to what they thought was to be an easy victory. There were so many of them that the last of the canoes had hardly left the mainland, when the first arrived at the island. Drawing their canoes up on the beach, they set off towards Poukama. Unknown to them, the Roro warriors were creeping silently over the central hills. Coming across the unguarded Manumanu canoes they attacked them with stone axes and clubs until they were holed and useless. Then they surged along the beach on the island and surprised the Manumanu men in a rear attack. In the ensuing fight, the Roro were the victors and the few surviving Manumanu escaped across to Hall Sound on logs. So grateful were the Poukamas for the Roros help, they invited them to settle on the island. "You have fought for this land so we must share it," they said (*Interview, Mennis 1980*)¹

So the Motuan people of Poukama Village became allies with the non-Austronesian speaking Roro against another Motu group over the clay deposits for their pots. This shows the over-riding importance of the *hiri* trade. The Manumanu were prepared to fight fellow Motu over the access to clay deposits. The importance of the pottery trade over-rode their friendship with fellow Austronesian speakers. The Manumanu recovered from this battle and afterwards collected clay freely from the Lealea Village deposits on the mainland until about 1959 when the Lealea decided to charge them for it. After this they lost interest. ²



A Motu lakatoi

Speaking about the *hiri*, Joseph Abia said the Motu people often pulled into Yule Island on their *lakatoi* on their way to the Gulf where they traded their pots for sago. . He showed me a large cave where the men sheltered from stormy weather while on a *hiri* trip. The entrance to the cave is very small and we had to crawl in under a low rock but it soon opened up to a large area where dozens of people could fit comfortably. There was also a hidden tunnel from this cave to the other side of the island.

¹ *Interview Mary Mennis 1980*

² *May and Tuckson, 1982: 64*

Joseph Abia's story was verified when I spoke to Taboro Nou of Pari Village on Magnetic Island in 1995. Taboro went on a *hiri* trip in 1937 and described going ashore at Yule Island:

We left our home at 9 or 10 o'clock in two *lakatoi*. We had a good south-east wind and at sunset we anchored at Yule Island at midnight. We could not cook on board the *lagatoi* so we cooked on the beach with flour, bananas and yams. We slept on board and then in the morning at about 10 o'clock or so when the wind began to blow we took the two *lagatoi* out to sea. After Yule Island we did not put the anchor down for three days and nights. At night we used the stars - we did not sleep at night or day because, if we did, it showed we were not strong enough to be on the crew (Mennis 1995).

Percy Chatterton, a LMS missionary told me of frictions that developed between the Motu and Roro people on Yule Island. The Roro, who wanted to make pots like the Motu, plotted to kill the Motu headman and steal his wife, Kaia Mea, who would then teach them the secret of pot making. The plot was foiled and the Motu people fled back to the mainland to set up another village. Eventually they were joined by more Motu and then some Roro people. This was the beginning of Delena village and the people there mainly speak the Roro language.³

The Roro People by bishop Benedict interviews with M. Mennis "The Roro people learnt to make pots from the Motu clans who joined them. Seligmann knew the people of Delena in about 1900. By that time they were all Roro even though two clans had originally been Motu. The village at one time contained members of two tribes in no way closely related to each other. The original inhabitants of Delena were folk of the nearly related Roro speaking tribes of Roro and Paitana, but to these were added members of two *iduhu* (clans) from the Motu village of Boiera, one of which was called Marehau. It appears that this name has been extended to include both *iduhu*, and that of the Roro-speaking.

"The Roro people live in a few mainland villages as well as on Yule Island. Bishop Benedict did the groundwork of moving the High School, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, from Yule Island to Mainohana on the mainland and, together with the De La Salle High, it now forms a co-educational High School. As Benedict said, "Everything is in full swing now. We had to shift from Yule Island, as there was a transportation problem. The students used to sit and wait for the high tide for the canoes to take them over to the school."⁴ (Interview M. Mennis).

"Furthermore, the new Hiritano Highway bypasses the road to Yule Island". Another Roro Village is Agevairu on the road to Yule Island. Here Benedict built a church, store and a priest's house, and blessed the new Church. Waima, another Roro Village, is on the highway bordering the Port Moresby Diocese. Bereina, the district headquarters, is also in the Roro area. And, during the 1980s, it was also the seat of Bishop Benedict. His administrator was Fr Evan Duggan.

"The Kuni people have two main stations: Bakoiudu started in 1900 by the French MSC order. The station is one hour's drive up in the hills on an all-weather gravel road. Bishop Vangeke did a lot of work in this parish and blessed the new church in 1979. It is a beautiful church with a large stained-glass window. There is also a large rubber factory nearby. Kubuna, started in

³ Chatterton 1974: 40)

⁴ Interview with the author and Percy Chatterton.

1976 is on the way to the Highlands. It was the home place of the Handmaids of Our Lord until they shifted to Nazareth in Port Moresby in 1956. (*Bishop Benedict in an interview with M. Mennis*)

“The Mekeo people have two main Catholic centres: Inawaia was first visited by Fathers Verius and Couppé in 1886. Over the years the mission has grown with a substantial church and school; Veifa’a, the other main station, was started in 1894. It is a large station with St Gerard’s Hospital and nursing home and school. The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart have been in this parish from the beginning and Benedict carried out much renovation work here in the centennial year. Veifa’a was the parish in which he was consecrated bishop in 1980. It was also the birthplace of Bishop Vangeke, the first local priest and bishop in Papua. (Ibid)



“The Fudge people have four main stations: Fane, Ononge, Woitape and Yongai. Bishop Benedict was of the opinion that these mountain people of the Goilala area do not value education. If there is a feast with pigs and dancing, the parents would take their children out of school for days to go to the feasts. The people here are well known artists and musicians. They love singing and talking more than working. Bishop Benedict poured money into projects into this area to encourage the people to live a better life. The Ononge Parish of St Joan of Arc was started 1913 and is famous for its large cross, the highest in the southern hemisphere. The weather is always raining and misty. It is a very difficult place to fly into with updrafts and down drafts and planes veer one way or another. Previously, the Ononge people went to the Woitape health centre and mission school. The road was muddy and slippery and it took ages to travel along it. Bishop Benedict organised a bulldozer to be brought into the mountains by Caribou. “We bulldozed the road and another airstrip. But it is still very dangerous.” The Parish of Our Lady of Fatima, Woitape, is a big Centre and the government put in an airstrip in 1956. The school is run by the mission and was improved. Yongai opened in 1947 is on the border with the Northern Province and is very cold. When Benedict went there, he experienced a nosebleed. The airstrip is near the mountain and the cliff and the pilots have to be careful again because of the winds. (*Interview Mary Mennis*)

“The Tauade people also have four main stations: Kerau, Tapini, Kosipe, and Kamulai. Kerau is on the border with Morobe and has a dangerous airstrip and sometimes Bishop Benedict could not get out for weeks when he called in for a visit. French missionaries, Fr Francis Guivarch and Andre Wendling established the station in September 1938. They worked on translating the Bible into the local language, set up schools and wrote hymns: the sort of work that was carried on in all the mission stations. Tapini, started in 1967, has a large High School. The standards were low, in fact the lowest in Papua New Guinea, before Benedict invited the Brigidine Sisters to come and they are upgrading the standards. He said, “Sister Morris and other Sisters came so the people could learn English. Brother Philip and another Pallotine brother came in as well and now the standards are improving. The priest there is doing fine work”. As it is a major government centre, Tapini has an airstrip, but, as in many other places in PNG, it is dangerous to use. Earlier, an Australian pilot crashed a Caribou into the mountain during army operations. At Kosipe, in the Goilala area, is the Parish of St Martin de Porres, opened in 1958, and Benedict upgraded many of its buildings during his tenure in Bereina. Kamulai is also in the Goilala area. The airstrip, built into a cliff, was very dangerous, so Benedict organized another one near the government station so that third level airlines can land. (*Above interviews all with M. Mennis*) .



The Goilala area

The people of the Goilala area were once all Catholics, but now other denominations are starting to encroach, disturbing the previous harmony. Bishop Benedict was most concerned about the Goilala people who rarely finished school. When they get a bit of education, they leave school and become *raskels*. The Nuncio often went up there and told them: “No one else has given the Goilala a bad name – it is you and you alone.”

Benedict said the same thing to them. “We are pouring money into roads and schools for you and it is up to you to get a better name.” I tried to help them; I stayed in their homes and ate with them and chewed betelnut just like at home. During my time four Tolai priests lived there. The Sisters from Rabaul were teaching and nursing as well. I was able to ordain two Goilala men. One was Fr Thaddeus, a bright lad who studied in Fiji. He was the first to be ordained from the Kuni tribe but he has died already. A pity. The Goilala people are really from a small area around Tapini but the term Goilala now covers the whole area. (*Interview with the author*)

In the 1980s, the Bereina Diocese had a population of 80,000 people of whom 62,000 were Catholics. The remainder consisted of adherents of other missions; on the other side of the ridge up in the bush there are Methodists on the border between the Central and Morobe Provinces

Bereina Catholic Mission History

While the MSC missionaries were settling in on Yule Island in July 1885, they began to compete directly with the LMS who considered Yule Island to be in its ecclesiastical territory. There were many arguments about this. In Rabaul it was the Catholic MSC Order versus the Wesleyan/Methodists; in Madang it was the SVD Catholic missionaries versus the Lutherans and now in the Bereina area it was the Catholic MSC Order versus the LMS Missionaries who were already firmly established in Port Moresby⁵.



1. Bishop Navarre MSC was the first Bishop. He was born at Auxerre in France in 1836 but only began to practise his religion seriously after the age of 24. He was ordained in 1872 being older than his confreres in the seminary. Later he was the leader of the first group of missionaries to New Britain in 1882. Strange that Bishop Benedict's ancestor had helped Navarre when he arrived in Volavolo in 1883 and here was his descendant in Navarre's old diocese. Navarre was consecrated Bishop in 1887. He died in 1912 when he was 76 years old and was buried on Yule Island.

2. Bishop Stanislaus Henry Verius MSC was born in 1860 in Italy. From an early age he dreamed of being a missionary in faraway Papua. Like Benedict, he had had trouble with his studies in the seminary but was ordained in 1883. Arriving before Navarre who was on Thursday Island, Verius said the first Mass on Yule Island on 4 July 1885. In Papua, he was a great explorer and together with Fr Couppé explored many mountains and rivers opposite Yule Island. In 1889, they founded their first mission on the mainland at Mou Village where, struggling with hunger and deprivation, they built the first tabernacle on the mainland ⁶(Verges, 1993: 122). Verius became Coadjutor Bishop to Archbishop Navarre in Papua and was consecrated in Rome in 1891. He was described by Pope Leo XIII as "a Bishop who is truly a saint". Returning ill to Europe, he died in 1892, worn out with fever. Only thirty-two years old, he was buried in Oleggio in Italy. (Interview with Bishop Benedict).



The life of the Servant of God Henri Stanislas Verius was marked by a great selflessness, total commitment and a constant solidarity with the people he evangelized. He was a man of faith, mild and humble in word and deed; a religious who was poor, obedient, chaste, faithful to the rule, available and filled with an ardent love for his Congregation and for the mission. He was also a prayerful and humble priest; a missionary and a pastor filled with zeal for the salvation of people and the glory of God. His name was put forward for canonisation on February 23, 2016, to the ordinary meeting of the Cardinals and Bishops of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. After giving their positive response, the matter was referred to the Holy Father who alone has the authority to order the promulgation of the Decree *super virtutibus*.⁷

⁵ From the web.

⁶ (Verges, 1993 : 122)

⁷ <https://misacor.org.au/item/1829-news-of-bishop-henri-verjus-msc-declared-venerable>

3. Bishop Alain de Boismenu MSC was born in 1870 in France and came to Papua in January 1898 and became coadjutor Bishop in 1900. He was very outspoken against the spheres of influence introduced by the government in Port Moresby. Catholic missionaries could only work in certain areas and the Protestant missions had their own areas. Under this policy, the Catholics were squeezed into a 23 kilometre stretch of coast, although they were able to extend inland. De Boismenu was cautious in his mission work and did not want mass baptisms as had happened in some areas. By 1908, Navarre had handed powers over to de Boismenu. During de Boismenu's long time in office he gave the mission the guidelines that still apply today and is rightly named "the Father of the Papuan Church". In his time, the Yule Island Mission developed gradually and spread to the mainland and the mountains, but the advent of World War II put a stop to active mission work. He died in 1953 at 83 years old and was buried at Kubuna.



De Boismenu is in the centre of the photograph

De Boismenu's good friend Poet James McAuley visited Yule Island and Bereina several times and wrote the following poem about his experiences in the "Land of Apocalypse" in his encounter with the French Catholic Missions of the Sacred Heart, at Kubuna and Yule Island.⁸

My New Guinea, 1953, (James McAuley, Collected Poems)

Bird-shaped Island with secretive bird-voices,
Land of apocalypse, where the earth dances,
The mountains speak, the doors of the spirit open,
And men are shaken by obscure trances.

The forest-odours, insects, clouds and fountains
Are like the figures of my inmost dream,
Vibrant with untellable recognition;
A wordless revelation is their theme.

The stranger is engulfed in those high valleys,
Where mists of morning linger like the breath
Of Wisdom moving on our specular darkness.
Regions of prayer, of solitude, and death.

Life holds its shape in the modes of dance and music,
The hands of craftsmen trace its patternings;
But stains of blood, and evil spirits, lurk
Like cockroaches, in the interstices of things.

We that in the land begin our rule in courage,
The seal of peace gives warrant to intrusion;
But then our grin of emptiness breaks the skin,
Formless dishonour spreads its proud confusion.

Whence that deep longing for an exorcizer,
For Christ descending as a thaumaturge

⁸ Jean Page *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 37-1 2016, 18-31

Into his saints, as formerly in the desert,
Warring with demons on the outer verge.

Only by this can life become authentic,
Configured henceforth in eternal mode:
Splendour, simplicity, joy—such as were seen
In one who now rests by his mountain road.

Jean Page wrote: “The implicit author McAuley, thus describes a fertile land of the imaginary. The poem’s scenario reflects the heroic missionary encounter with a rich and strange otherworld of “specular darkness” where the witnessing of “evil spirits, [...] lurk in the interstices of things.” The poem also foreshadows the sterilising impact of secular influences, “the grin of emptiness” of the West of which, both the Australian administration, colonists and the missionaries (though perhaps less) in the northern island, McAuley would maintain his strong interest in New Guinea and the work of the missions but, as a Catholic convert by the mid-1950s, 10 years after his first visit to New Guinea, would become involved in and occupied with Catholic politics in Australia.⁹

4. **Bishop Andre Sorin MSC** was born in France in 1903. He joined the missionaries of the Sacred Heart and was ordained in 1929. When he was consecrated De Boismenu’s successor in 1946 he was keen to open the Goilala area in the mountains behind Bereina. Being very musical, he encouraged the people to bring their music and art into the church services. This attitude was before its time and appealed greatly to Bishop Benedict who encouraged the people to bring their culture into the services and rituals. Bishop Sorin died in 1959 and is buried on Yule Island. He tried to set up a “pilot” village for the whole mission in Tsiria Village on Yule Island just as Verius had tried but, as Verges said, he did not have much success in this either. He died in 1959 at 56 years old and is buried on Yule Island¹⁰(Waldersee, 1993: 74).

Andre Sorin was consecrated a bishop in 1946 and continued the expansion programme towards the Chirima and Kunimaipa Valleys, beyond the Vailala River, reaching Orokol, and in the territory of the Kamea (or Kukukuku) people. At the same time, substantial parts of old British New Guinea went over into other hands. Samarai, an Apostolic Prefecture since 1946, got its own Vicar Apostolic in 1951; Mendi became independent in 1958; and Daru in 1959. Straight after the death of Bishop Sorin, Rome separated the historical centre of Yule Island from what, meanwhile, had grown into the natural centre of the country, Port Moresby (1959). In 1976, a last separation was made, the diocese of Kerema to be headed by Sir Virgil Copas, one time, the Archbishop of Port Moresby, and Administrator of Bereina. Among the new initiatives of Bishop Sorin, one should note the employment, in 1974, of the first lay missionaries (the Mouvement Laic Missionarie), the more-professional organisation of health services (1948), and the upgrading of the school system to secondary level (1957). Being himself a fine musician, and an artist, the Bishop also fostered native Christian art, and introduced it to the liturgy (1948). His successor, in 1960, was Bishop Klein, who continued, as already indicated, the expansion policy of Sorin, and Sorin’s particular concern with education, especially important in a country heading for political self-government and independence.¹¹

5. **Bishop Eugene Klein MSC** was born in 1916 in France and was ordained in 1943. He first came to Papua in 1947 and was consecrated Bishop of Bereina in 1960. Bishop

⁹ Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society 37-1 2016, 18-31

¹⁰ (Waldersee, 1993: 74)

¹¹ Melanesian Journal of Theology 8-2 (1992) Theo Aerts.



Klein had to face the prospect of setting up secondary schools and providing teachers for the new National System of Education. He was a fine organiser and businessman and began a better financial system for the mission on its path to self-support. He was a realist and had a sense of humour. After becoming Bishop in Bereina in 1960 he wrote:

Here I am back in the Papuan work place. The mission dressed itself up to welcome me, but the celebrations are over and now I am sitting alone thinking in my grand white-ant-eaten Episcopal palace. Dear God, how empty this house is! And how much work awaits me outside! The priests in the mountains ask for teachers and catechists. Where am I to get them? There are churches to build, a large hospital to be established – so much work for such a minor bishop, just consecrated and without any money. And then there is the old mission boat. I can see it out there in the bay, waiting so like a

stricken deer for someone to put it out of its misery¹²

Bishop Benedict would have identified with Bishop Klein's sentiments about settling into the presbytery and the amount of work waiting to be done in the Diocese. In 1971, Bishop Klein became the Archbishop of Noumea

6. Bishop Louis Vangeke became Bishop of Bereina after a break of five years with no bishop being appointed.

He was the first local priest in Papua New Guinea and was now the first local Bishop. Born in Veifa'a on 25th June 1904, he was not accepted by his family and brought up by the Sisters. Vangeke, trained in Madagascar, was a cultured, pious man. Ordained in 1937, he was a priest for 46 years and spent many years with the people of Ona-Ona in the Bereina diocese. A humble man, he had the interests of his people at heart. In 1970, he was consecrated Bishop by Pope Paul VI in Sydney during a Eucharistic Congress. He became auxiliary Bishop of Port Moresby 1970 – 1976. Bishop of Bereina 1976 - 1979. He was the first indigenous priest and Bishop of Papua New Guinea. While in office, he invited the Missionaries of Charity to the Bereina Diocese. He died 15 December 1982.



Apparently, his mother died in childbirth and his father, believing that he was too weak to survive, handed him over to the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Yule Island. They baptised him 'Louis'. He went to school on Yule Island. Because of Louis's exemplary conduct, he was invited in 1925 to train for the priesthood. Sister Marie Thérèse Noblet encouraged him and chaperoned him through his first visit to Port Moresby. As a priest, despite opposition from some people, Louis was borne in triumph around Mekeo, Roro and Kuni country on a makeshift throne. He was invited to join the MSC Order in 1941. He encouraged the people to keep their culture and was even tolerant towards cargo cultists who believed he could walk on water. In Sydney on 3 December 1970, he became the first Papua New Guinean Catholic bishop when Pope Paul VI consecrated him titular bishop of Culusi, but he was made only auxiliary bishop of Port Moresby.

¹² *Waldersee 1995: 343*).

At Beipa'a he was installed as a chief; thousands of people witnessed a syncretic ceremony in a temporary ufu (ceremonial hall). Vangeke said he was now 'a sorcerer for God' while his nephew, who inherited Louis's father's 'sorcerer's box', was there as his ungaunga (protector) to ward off Satan. , Bishop Klein had been bishop of Bereina since 1960 until 1971 when he became the Archbishop of Noumea. There was speculation as to who would succeed him. Fr Vangeke MSC was the top favourite as it was the lead up to Independence in Papua New Guinea and localisation was the order of the day. In January 1973, Fr Virgil Copas was nominated as Administrator of Bereina, but not the Bishop and Vangeke was nominated the Vicar General of Port Moresby. So there was a gap between Bishops.¹³

In 1976 Vangeke was promoted as bishop of Bereina, where he spent the rest of his life. Although he had spoken against early independence for Papua New Guinea, he was given an OBE in 1974 and KBE in 1980. In 1976 the University of Papua New Guinea conferred on him an honorary LL.D and, that year, five ministers offered to nominate him to be governor-general. He declined because, of ecclesiastical duties but really because, temperamentally, he was neither ambitious nor attracted by secular ostentation. Sir Louis died on 15 December 1982 at Beipa'a and was buried there. A Church spokesman stressed his deep humility and said he was 'a great man and a great inspiration to Papua New Guinea'.¹⁴



Bishop Louis Vangeke
in his old age.

Bishop Benedict To Varpin said, "Bishop Vangeke was happy that I was succeeding him because of my attitude to ecumenism." After Benedict's consecration, Bishop Vangeke left for Kubuna by truck. He kept his little car in the Kubuna mission station where there was also a school and convent. Benedict kept the airstrip open there so that Bishop Vangeke could come and go at leisure. Vangeke died on 12 December 1982 and was buried in his village of Veifa'a. He was 78 years old.

Photograph: Bishop Louis Vangeke in his old age with some parishioners

7. Bishop Benedict To Varpin, 1979 to 1987

In 1979 Fr Benedict To Varpin, Bishop-elect of Bereina, felt a little overwhelmed when he arrived at the Bishop's residence in Bereina. The mission workers helped him carry his bags and get settled. Entering the main room, however, he was faced with the framed portraits of his predecessors staring down at him from the wall: Bishop Navarre, Bishop Verius, Bishop De Boismenu, Bishop Sorin, Bishop Klein and Bishop Louis Vangeke. Were they summing him up from the wall? Most of them were French Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and most lived to a good age. (*Interview M. Mennis*)

¹³ James Griffin, 'Vangeke, Sir Louis (1904–1982)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/vangeke-sir-louis-15893/text27094>, published first in hardcopy 2012, accessed line 18 July 2020.

¹⁴ James Griffin, 'Vangeke, Sir Louis (1904–1982)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/vangeke-sir-louis-15893/text27094>, published first in hardcopy 2012, accessed line 18 July 2020.

Benedict To Varpin was the seventh Bishop of Bereina. The invitation to the ceremony came from the diocese of Bereina, “for the Episcopal Ordination of bishop-elect Benedict To Varpin.” The Principal Consecrator was Bishop Louis Vangeke MSC assisted by Bishop George To Bata and Bishop F. Schmidt OFM Cap. Archbishop Andrea di Montezemolo, Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to PNG and Solomon Islands, presided at the concelebrated Mass of Ordination, held on Wednesday 19 March 1980 at 10am in St Paul’s Church at Veifa’a.



Photograph of consecration of Bishop Benedict To Varpin in 1980. [Brian Mennis]

Mary and Brian Mennis travelled down with daughter, Joanna and friend Maria Von Trapp. They all enjoyed the day. Veifa’a was the parish in which he was consecrated bishop in 1980. It was also the birthplace of Bishop Vangeke, the first local priest and bishop in Papua. Furthermore, Bishop Vangeke concelebrated the Mass during the ceremony when Benedict became Bishop.

The Mekeo people put on a wonderful reception for Bishop Benedict with dancing and singing. They probably have the most colourful headdress of Papua New Guinea. The Papuans surely know how to celebrate.

Benedict and family at his inauguration as Bishop of Bereina.



As not many of his own Tolai people could be present at his Episcopal ceremony, big celebrations were organised in Rabaul on his return there. The work of Archbishop To Paivu and Benedict had paid off and *tubuan* were now allowed. It was worth the discussions and heated arguments. They knew what it meant to their people. It did not mean that the *tubuan* became part of the liturgy in the church. No! But they were now accepted and even encouraged

in village and school celebrations whereas before they were banned from appearing at all. The initiation ceremonies leading up to joining the *tubuan* were now seen as a chance to instil some social training and ethics into young men, something that had been missing since traditional times.

Benedict said:

After I was consecrated bishop at Bereina and returned to Rabaul, there were lots of *tubuan* and *dukduk* gathered from Malmal and Matupit. Dozens of them, including a *dukduk* called *Tor*. In Vunakorkor and nearby at Toliap we held a celebration. Mostly they had the shell money hanging on big bamboo. It was organised by my uncles, the brothers of my mother.



Later when Benedict returned to Bereina, he threw his soul into his work. He began improvements around the presbytery. Donning his old clothes he cut the grass and dug in the garden. Doing this he was making the area into his place, from the grassroots of his lawn upwards. One day he emerged from the garden all scruffy with a bush-knife in hand to be asked by officials where the bishop might be. Now he did not hurry off to get cleaned up. He stood his ground in his dirty clothes and said, "Hello! I'm the Bishop". The officials were amazed but pleased. The people in Bereina looked after him and accepted him as their Bishop. The Mekeo and Roro make a lot of money from fishing and betel nuts and when Benedict was on patrol to the many parishes, the people contributed a lot of money. They earned enough from their crops to build permanent houses. A lot of the Priests and Sisters were Tolais trained in Rabaul and so were very friendly. Following his practice from West New Britain, he again travelled to outstations up steep mountain tracks or along crocodile infested rivers where he lost his first Bishop's ring. (Tubuan and Tabernacle)

Soon after I had been consecrated bishop there was a Bishops' conference in Sydney and I was tossed in with them and unsure of myself. I met bishops from many places but I knew some of them already from PNG. I stayed in the Kensington Seminary as the students were on holiday. Later when I preached in the Lutheran Church in Lae, I was announced as the Bishop of Bereina and they were happy because I could relate to the people of different churches.

As Bishop, I was sent to various meetings for church leaders. There was a meeting in Sogeri of the Anglican and Catholic Bishops and Bishop Meredith greeted me warmly and congratulated me. He told his friends, "This man, Benedict, helped me when my money got lost on the road. He is the right person to work with us as he knows us. If you get lost in the bush, Bishop Benedict is there. He is your brother". During the eruption of the volcano in 1994, Bishop Meredith worked with Bishop Hesse to help the people. There was Fr Isaac, an Anglican priest I had known in Kimbe. Afterwards he went overseas for many years. On his return, he was nominated Bishop, based in Port Moresby. By this time I was already Bishop. So when I was asked to go and meet him, I dressed up in full Episcopal dress and went to the Anglican presbytery with the Papal Nuncio. Isaac too was dressed as a

Bishop and when he saw me his eyes lit up. “Man! Oh man! I didn’t know you were a Bishop.

I said, “Yes I’ve been a Bishop for five years now.” We laughed and hugged each other, and the Nuncio was amazed that we knew each other so well. Later on, I had to work with them in the Melanesian Council of Churches. The Lutheran, Methodists and Catholics put me as their chairman of the world Council of Churches. The Nuncio was happy because he could see we would work together to serve the people of God. Fr Isaacs was from Popondetta and a lot of the Anglicans in West New Britain were from Popondetta. They really seemed to like me and I worked with them like Christians. In the bush I helped them get their foodstuffs with my boat or truck. In town I helped them too. Bishop Isaac was a top man and is now retired. They don’t have to do all the study that we have to do. (i Benedict remembered: *Interviews with Mary Mennis*).

In speaking about his Bereina Diocese, Bishop Benedict often gave credit to the French Priests many of whom toiled for years in difficult circumstances, but they were dying out now and being replaced by local priests.

Fr Leon Bourjade, MSC



A famous French priest who only spent two years on the Yule Island mission was Fr Leon Bourjade, MSC. According to his tombstone on Yule Island, he was born in France on 25 May 1889. He was a student with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Switzerland when the First World War broke out. Even though he was in a seminary, he had to return to France for military training.

During the war, he made a name for himself as an ace pilot shooting down 4 enemy aircraft and 24 observation balloons between December 1917 and November 1918.

Photograph: Fr Leon Bourjade, MSC

He was awarded many honours including the D’ Officer de La Legion of Honour, the Croix de Guerre with 14 palms and the Grand Gold medal of the Aero Club of France. When flying into battle he carried a Sacred Heart pennant. He had a correspondence with St Therese of Lisieux declaring his desire to follow the sanctity of “littleness” by being a missionary. He died on Yule Island 22 October 1924. After his death, more than one French warship came to Yule Island to pay their respects and add a plaque in his memory.¹⁵

While he was on the mission station Bourjade dreamt that one day planes would be used to transport people between stations. He for one would have been a flying missionary but it was not to be in his lifetime. By the 1960s, plane travel in the Bereina diocese was commonplace. The diocese incorporates Yule Island and spreads up into the mountains as far the border with the Northern Province.

¹⁵ (Waldersee 1995: 272).

Economic development encouraged by the mission

The water wheel at Ononge in the mountains.

Theo Aerts:

“The initiative of the Catholic mission was subsequently encouraged by the Native Plantation Ordinance of 1918, which aimed at making the territory self-supporting, as regards rice. In 1921, the Administration attracted the services of a Filipino agriculturist, Anastasio Buonsuccesso, and in 1931-1932, patrol officer, A. A. Williams was charged with supervising the Mekeo rice growing industry. In this way, every able-bodied man was obliged to plant half-an-acre of rice. The result was that, in 1931-1932, 94 tons of rice were processed at the government rice mill in Port Moresby, and 112 tons in the following year.

“The Mekeos discovered that, working in a family group for only a few months, yielded as much cash as one year of work on a faraway plantation. In the years before the Second World War, the yield went up to 300-400 tons, but, during the hostilities, things became disorganised. The mission stepped in, once again, and bought, from the people, all the surplus rice, with which it supplied its several boarding schools. The people appreciated, very much that prompt payments were made for their goods, but, the intricacies of a cash economy, they found very mysterious.



A view of the Yule Island mission station



It once happened in Mekeo, says Brother John Delabarre, the longtime storekeeper of Yule Island, the Major, the government officer of Kairuku, collected the school fees at the same time that he paid off the rice farmers. And when “the mission” ran out of cash, the paymaster borrowed from ‘the government’, later to be repaid by cheque. A rather confusing situation for people, who inquired from the brother: “How come? You give us the money. We give it to the government, and the government gives it back to you. And we keep planting rice.”¹⁶

¹⁶ *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 8-2 (1992)

EDUCATION AND THE MISSION



Sisters and pupils on Yule Island

Yule Island is a large station with St Gerard's Hospital and nursing home and school. The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart have been in this parish from the beginning. The school was started in 1894. Some of the Sisters went to Rabaul which was then a German Province. To facilitate their entry there Fr. Hubert Linckens formed the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart in 1900 in Hiltrup in Germany. After this the German Province of the MSC oversaw the MSC missions in German New Guinea. Some of the Sisters were still trained in Issoudun in France. They could easily go to Yule Island which was part of the British New Guinea at the time. The MSC founder Fr. Chevalier partnered with Marie Louise Hartzler to form a dependent sister organisation, the Filles de Sacre Coeur de Notre Dame (Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart) in 1882 preparing to send out Sisters to the missions.

The education of girls was a particular focus for the sisters, both on the mainland and in the mission areas. They pioneered secondary education for girls in the Northern Territory, PNG and Kiribati.¹⁴ In the mission areas, in addition to mainstream secondary education, the sisters offered vocational training to the girls, covering cooking, cleaning, and sewing as well as English and Arithmetic. Sr Patricia Clarke told of setting up a Vocational Centre at Sideia when the high school moved to the mainland and, after retiring from there, she set up another at Yule Island. As happened in the primary schools, local lay teachers gradually took over more roles, and eventually the sisters remained in the schools mainly in support roles (welfare, remedial education, library) rather than as classroom teachers and administrators.





Pupils and Sisters at the Yule Island School

In his Review of the Australian Administration of 1920 Murray admitted that the government had done very little for the education of the people of Papua, but he was able to announce that a new scheme was being introduced: the missions were to be subsidised from the Native Taxation Fund. In 1929 the Government Secretary.

H. W. Champion described the progress made in education by the government and the missions. The Roman Catholic Mission, whose headquarters are at Yule Island, are also paid a subsidy of £1,000 per annum, in addition to the per capita grant. It is, however, a condition of the payment that the Mission shall give special attention to industrial training. Schools for primary education, which are all conducted by European Sisters, exist in the Mekeo District, and one at Port Moresby and one at Yule Island.¹⁷



Photograph. A.D. Sisters Handmaids of the Lord surround Sister Solange Bazin de Jesse in the centre. They worked in the Diocese of Bereina. (Sr Solange was a niece of Bishop de Boismenu and was the second superior 1932 – 1942 after Sister Marie Therese Noblet)

¹⁷ From: J. H. P. Murray, *Native Administration in Papua, Port Moresby, 1929, Appendix B, p. 46-50.*

Designing the flag for Papua New Guinea.

Although the High School moved to the mainland near Bereina, there is still a Community school. The headmistress sometimes invited Bishop Benedict across to see the projects of the students. He was interested to know about the design of the Papua New Guinea flag, which was created in Sister Joseph Mary's art class there.

In the early 1970s, Sister Joseph Mary of the Yule Island Convent saw the various possible designs for the new flag and thought them a bit insipid in green, white and gold. She copied them and gave them to the girls in her art class. Sister Joseph described how the PNG flag came to be:

"We discussed what the girls considered to be Papua New Guinea's national colours and came up with yellow, red and black. And so the girls went to work on the designs they had been given in the three stripes. One of the students was Susan Karike. I said to her. "Susan, I'm tired of seeing stripes, draw a line across it diagonally, from corner to corner, and fill it in." Susan got her ruler and said, 'I can't do it from corner to corner as I'll cut part of the stars or the bird off'. I said, "Well put it along a little bit so it can be exactly diagonal". The students coloured their designs and we showed them to the school. They liked Susan's best. I had taught Susan to sign everything she did, so she signed this design of the flag and when the Constitutional Committee came to Yule Island, the design was presented to them. Within a few days it was accepted by the Parliament. Apparently there was a very hot debate on it. I understand that when the votes were counted, the House was divided with exactly the same number on either side of the House. Sir John Guise had the casting vote and he voted in favour of accepting this design for the flag. Some of the French Sisters pointed out that the diagonal stripe from top left to bottom right was not seen as appropriate. In Europe it is seen as a bit sinister. They wrote to the government with their concerns but Sir John Guise said, "Well we're not in Europe so it doesn't matter!" *(Interview Mary Mennis)*



During Independence Day celebrations in 1975 when Susan Karike raised the new flag, Sister Joseph Mary proudly looked on. Each morning, when the flag was raised on the flagpole she remembered the other occasion in the art class and the part her Yule Island School took in it.

Susan Karike Huhume (1956 to April 2017 was a Papua New Guinean housewife, who, as a schoolgirl, designed the colours of her country's national flag. She married Nanny Huhume and they had four children and twelve grandchildren. She died in 2017 after suffering a stroke and was buried on 28 July 2017.

Archbishop To Paivu and Bishop Benedict.

The Bereina Parish was under the jurisdiction of Port Moresby so Archbishop To Paivu had every reason to visit the new bishop there and Bishop Benedict was happy to accommodate him; two old friends who had the interests of the people and the culture at heart; two Tolai Bigmen who now held two top jobs in the Catholic Church.

Together, they allowed the Tolai to have their *tubuan* figureheads back again. Neither of them could see any objections to having them at feasts so long as the bad connotations were eradicated. They were figures that were characteristic of the Tolai culture and good for dances. The initiation ceremony and training could also incorporate rules for living in society, a thing that was sadly missing in modern society.

Benedict teased To Paivu about getting him to become Bishop of Bereina. "You were the trouble maker. You wanted to get me into Bereina, so you could come down and get all your betelnut and *daka* from here." To Paivu just laughed. "*Maski!* We Tolais must stick together". However, neither of them realised that within the year To Paivu would be dead. Sorely missed by all his friends, particularly Benedict To Varpin Archbishop To Paivu died on 12 February 1981 while recuperating from flu in Rabaul. He had had a heart attack.

His death was a great shock to his many friends. Messages of condolence were sent from Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan and Opposition leader Mr Somare. They saw To Paivu as an inspiring, ecumenical and pastoral worker who would ride PMV's around Moresby to get near his flock. It was a great loss for the nation. Tarcissius Bola wrote that, "the church has been left the poorer with the death of Archbishop To Paivu for though he was deeply spiritual and ready for death at any time; he was one of the church community's valuable ecumenical leaders with many years of invaluable experience as a pastoral worker". (Post Courier 17 February 1981). He also promoted the local culture into the local church. "He suffused the church with Papua New Guinean culture in the five years of his pontificate (sic) which began in January 1976."

The man who helped To Paivu was his friend and fellow Bishop, Benedict To Varpin. Together they insisted that decisions on the Church way of life should come from the people instead of being imposed by the church. To Paivu was an initiated member of the secret *Tubuan* Society of his Tolai heritage and he introduced the local culture into the liturgy of the church.

In the week before his death To Paivu re-visited the place where he had attended the seminary from 1947 to 1953. This was in Torokina in the Bougainville area, now overgrown with thick jungle. It brought back many memories and the blessings he had received and his achievements as Archbishop of Port Moresby, the highest position of a prelate in the land. Not bad for a man whom the Bishop hesitated to ordain in 1953 because he was too old. Realising the Bishop was hesitating, he begged, "My Lord if I can say but one Mass after my ordination it would have been worth it." When he died on 12 February 1981, To Paivu had been a priest for 27 years and a bishop for over six years. During the years of service he gave to the Church, he said many thousands of Masses, not just the one promised to the Bishop.

Travelling by plane on the mission.

Bishop Benedict travelled by plane to mission stations everywhere. While he was Bishop, the mission lost two planes. In the first crash, some lay missionaries got badly burnt but fortunately there were no deaths. When a Brother pilot died in a further crash Bishop Benedict stopped the mission planes. "The Brother pilot was supposed to take me but I missed the plane, otherwise I would be dead too. Later a government pilot flew in to get the body. After that I bought no more planes. There were many third level airlines so we used them. But the airstrips were maintained and new ones built to be used by the third level airlines. (Interview) with author.

The Pope visits Papua New Guinea, 1984

Pope John Paul II visited Seoul on 3 to 6 May 1984 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the introduction of Christianity into Korea. A million people welcomed the Pope who canonized 103 martyrs. In this long list there were priests, missionaries and lay people who died in persecutions in 1839, 1846 and 1867. On Monday 7 May 1984, the Alitalia DC-10 arrived in Port Moresby from Korea with the Pope on board. Pope John Paul II descended from the plane and knelt and kissed the tarmac. He was officially greeted by the Governor General, Sir Kingsford Dibela, and the Prime Minister, Mr Michael Somare, who knelt for the Pope's blessing. The Pope was then driven to the Sir Hubert Murray Stadium for an open-air Mass. The Mekeo people from Bishop Benedict's area were all dressed splendidly in their bird of paradise feathers. The Pope had learnt some Motu phrases and addressed them in their language so they were delighted. The case containing the Pope's vestments had been mistakenly left on the plane so he used Archbishop To Paivu's vestments. The Carmelite Sisters at Bomana were particularly thrilled at this, as they had made these vestments for To Paivu some years earlier. During his address, it started to rain heavily but many remained including the hundreds of Mekeo dancers with their colourful headdresses, some ruined in the rain. The Pope thanked them for staying on.

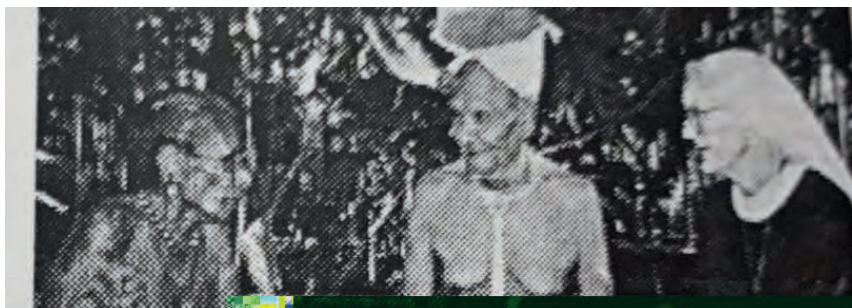
Benedict To Varpin remembers the Pope's visit:

"I was in Bereina when the Pope visited Papua New Guinea in 1984. There was a lot of work to prepare for the visit and we all contributed to the project. Bishop Moore and I met the youth. I had to rehearse with them and pretend I was the Pope so they knew what to do. I could not go to Mt Hagen as I was preparing the youth to meet him on his return. The Pope went to Mt Hagen and it was a time of great celebration. We met the Pope in Port Moresby and we were asked to bring along any gifts for His Holiness so I came along with that famous book, *Hagen Saga*. I said: "Here is a book for your Holiness." The Pope liked *Hagen Saga* about the first missionaries into the Highlands. It was the only thing I gave him. Others brought *bilums* and carvings but the book I thought it was more important because it was the story of those early years of the church in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea."

The next morning, the Pope left for Mt Hagen where a crowd estimated at 250,000 people gathered, dressed in their long swaying fibre skirts and feathered headdress of every colour. Many groups came from distant villages carrying crosses. The Pope specially blessed a large cross, which the Chimbu people had carried from their area. It was a symbol of peace, being carried by previously warring tribes. The open-air Mass began at 10am in the hot sun. The Pope concelebrated flanked by Bishop George Bernarding of Mt Hagen and Bishop Raymond Caesar of Goroka. The ceremony was conducted in *Tok Pisin* which the Pope spoke fluently. On his return to Port Moresby, the Pope had a ceremony of the Blessing of the Sick in the Boroko Church and then later he addressed a gathering in the Cathedral, walking up the hill so he could meet as many people as possible.

According to the Carmelite Sisters who were there: There was loud clapping, and in he came right down. In his address he spoke to each of the three groups, giving each of them their distinctive share in the mission of the Church and especially urging the priests never to create division through their activities which some understood as a recommendation to abstain from active involvement in the political sphere. At the end of his talk he smiled and started to chat with the group of nuns, but he was running well beyond time and was due at the Governor General's residence, so the aides once again gently urged him on to the next task – the presentation of his gift of Chalice and Paten to the Archbishop of Port Moresby, Sir Peter Kurongku.

Bishop Benedict met the Pope two years later in Australia during his visit to Brisbane. This time he was not involved with the preparations and was able to enjoy the prospect of concelebrating Mass with Pope John Paul II on the QE II Stadium on Tuesday 25 November 1986. He was asked to bring his own alb, cincture and white mitre to the Stadium. Following this celebration, he had been invited to join the Pope on 29 November in his trip to Alice Springs where the pontiff was due to address the Aboriginal people. It was all very exciting and he was really looking forward to it until disaster struck, back in his parish of Bereina. On the previous Sunday, Benedict concelebrated Mass at St Dymphna's Church Aspley, in Brisbane with Fr Peter Luton. Afterwards one of the parishioners greeted him with the news just announced that Sr Perpetua had been killed in Bereina on the previous Friday.



Benedict was understandably upset, as he knew Sr Perpetua well. She had been his secretary for many years and was a gentle soul but also vibrant and enthusiastic.

Sr Perpetua and a Waima Chief

Suddenly there was a change of plan. He decided to attend the Mass at the QEII Stadium and meet the Pope there but he would have to explain that he must go back immediately afterwards to Bereina for the funeral of Sr Perpetua. There were several frantic phone calls to have the funeral delayed. His trip to Alice Springs had to be cancelled and the reason explained to the Pope. Sadly, Bishop Benedict took his place on the large altar at the QEII Stadium in front of a full congregation of hundreds of thousands of people. Benedict put on a happy face for the day and took his place with the rows of bishops and priests with the Pope leading the celebration. There was a procession of gifts brought by members of various communities.

Funeral of Sister Perpetua

But right now he must hurry back to Papua for the funeral of his dear friend. Sister Perpetua Allchin joined the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Bowral as a young girl and was anxious to be a missionary in Papua New Guinea. This she did 1945 just after the war and she had spent most of her life in the Bereina Diocese where she was well known in education circles.

The day she was killed she had spent time in the Education Office and then went to the markets to sell second-hand clothes. She earned a little money and was returning to the mission station at Waima. Apparently some *raskels*, knowing about the money, threw rocks at the car and one of them hit Sister Perpetua. She fell over the steering wheel and collapsed, never regaining consciousness. Her companion, Imelda, a young local girl bravely stayed in the car with her. In the end she went for help and Sister was transferred to the hospital in Bereina where Father Evan Duggan gave her the last rites. Unfortunately she died before the end of the day. Back at Waima, the people were so distressed and angry at what had happened that they threatened to kill the perpetrators. The two *raskels* had to be placed under police guard for protection.

Back at Bereina, Bishop Benedict found that the people had prepared a beautiful bier for Sr Perpetua, decorated with flowers and rich bird of paradise feathers. The men, dressed in traditional costume, drummed the coffin into the church where Bishop Benedict was waiting but he was too distraught to carry out the ceremony. Instead Fr Peter Miria of Waima said the

Mass in the Waima language and the children sang their traditional songs and also hymns for the lovely Sister Perpetua who had helped their families so much.

One of the Waima chiefs then stood up and begged the sisters to stay in Waima and promised to protect them from further harm. The women then wailed in the traditional deep sobbing. Later her coffin was transferred to a large canoe and carried over to Yule Island where the whole population was waiting on the pier to accompany her body to the church. Bishop Benedict officiated in another liturgy to farewell her with the Yule Island community. She was buried in the Yule Island Cemetery alongside many other missionaries who had given their lives to God.

The Centenary of the Church in Papua celebrated in Bereina

While Benedict was in Bereina, the Church celebrated the centenary of the MSC's presence in Papua from 1885 to 1985. There was a great celebration on Yule Island on 4 July 1985. A new statue of Bishop Verius adorned the hill-top overlooking the Bay. Bishop Verius was seen as the hero of the day. Thousands of Christian Papuans attended as well as visitors from overseas. A stream of colourfully decorated people from Mekeo and Roro meandered in procession ahead of the Bishop towards the hill-top chapel where open air Mass was celebrated in honour of Fr Verius and his companions a hundred years ago. Afterwards there were singsings and feasts. *(Interview with Bishop Benedict with M. Mennis)*

Bishop Benedict wrote the forward note for the memorial volume. In part, it said:

My dear people, this is a golden opportunity for me to talk about something, which at this time is very important and very dear or precious to each and everyone of us. That is, our Centenary of the continual presence of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea. It was on 1 July 1885 that Father Henri Verius, with his companions, first landed on the shores of Yule Island about 100 kilometres from the present Capital City of Papua New Guinea. A few days later, on 4 July, the first Mass was said and so began their missionary work. We may wonder and ask many questions such as, "who was the first Bishop of this area now known as Bereina, or for that matter for the whole country known as Papua New Guinea?" The first Bishop was Father André Navarre who became Vicar Apostolic of British New Guinea in 1887, while Father Louis Couppé became Bishop of German New Guinea in 1889. — While we look back to the goodness and mercy of our God in sending those missionaries to our country, we must look forward and face the challenge of making our Church – the Catholic Church – a true part of our lives. To do this there must be a change in our lives.

First of all, we must show our thanks and appreciation. "Thank you Lord for making us your people, your sons and daughters by Baptism." But we don't stop there. No! We must carry on by reminding ourselves of our Baptismal Promises. The best way to put the fire of the love of God in our hearts is to ask ourselves these questions: What is the place of Jesus in our lives after one hundred years of Christian Mission? What is the place of God's Word? Do we have a Bible or at least a New Testament in our home? Do we read it? Are we aware that the Lord is still speaking to us because He still loves us? Finally, may I exhort each and every one of you to move forward with gladness, joy and appreciation in celebrating the first Centenary of the Catholic Church in Papua. While we remember our pioneers

and courageous missionaries, let us move forward to understand the words of the Holy Father, which were chosen as the theme of our celebration – “the family is the Church at home”. May the Church of Bereina be enlightened by the faith of the families who make up the Church. And may the Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you all. Yours sincerely in Christ. Bishop Benedict to Varpin.¹⁸

In 1979, people were wondering who the next Archbishop of Rabaul would be. Then Benedict found out it was Archbishop Albert Bundervoet from Belgium:

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 Bainings for the anniversary of the martyrdom of the missionaries there.¹⁹

Benedict had to return to Waigani about the club licence. He saw the Commissioner and had the licence refused. The Bereina people did not want it because they were afraid the men would get drunk and kill people on the road. Fr Vangeke was still alive and he advised Benedict to oppose it. “I worked for all the people not just for one or two. I would have allowed the club if it was well run but not if the people opposed it. In Kokopo, I have been to the club to have a drink. That is OK.”

The Bereina Parish badly needed funds and one of Benedict’s financial initiatives was to build a block of units in Port Moresby in three stages. Many opposed the idea and thought the money should be directly spent on projects within Bereina. While still Bishop of Bereina, Benedict had organised the first two stages, but he needed more finance for the third stage.

While on a visit to Rome after he became Archbishop of Madang, Bishop Benedict put a proposal to the Pontifical Mission Society for funds for the third stage. A loan of three million was given for this project, enabling final completion. His long-term vision meant that the apartments built in Port Moresby bring in a continual flow of money for Bereina. Furthermore the loan has been paid off.

¹⁸ This was on a pamphlet and distributed.

¹⁹ Interview with Mary Mennis.

Bishop Benedict said: “Many were against me over the matter of building Real Estate in Port Moresby but I told them, “build now because inflation will go up”. Bishop Lucas was happy to have this money after I left. I did not have any money, initially, but I got some from overseas and used it for these buildings.”²⁰

After Bishop Benedict, the next Bishop of Bereina was Lucas Paul Matlatarea MSC who was Bishop from 1988 to 1998. He was from Pomio and had been Ben’s classmate in the Seminary. They were ordained together in 1971. Lucas was very pleased with all the money from the units that flowed into Bereina. When Lucas died of a heart attack, Gerard-Joseph Deschamps SMM, a French Canadian, held the post from 1999 to 2002. He was followed by Benedict’s cousin, Bishop John To Ribat MSC in 2002. Now Cardinal Ribat.

Yule Island became a stronghold of Catholic influence, facilitated by fourteen Filipino catechists who arrived with the MSC missionaries from Queensland and married into the local population. Yule Island became the MSC headquarters when the Melanesian and Micronesian vicariate was divided into three in 1889. Louis-André Navarre (1836-1912) became Bishop of



British New Guinea stationed at Yule Island (until Port Moresby became the MSC headquarters). By 1889 the MLC had 47 missionaries in New Guinea. A photograph dated 1892 shows nearly twenty missionaries on Yule Island, where the entire population was baptised in 1891. In 1912 Yule Island housed 25 missionaries, 21 lay brothers and 38 nuns¹² and regularly serviced 78 villages with visits. This successful Catholic penetration of the villages was in no small part due to the assistance of the Filipino lay helpers, who gained a very positive reputation in Papua. This, too, mirrored the strategy of the LMS who brought Pacific Islanders to their new island stations.

Celebration of Mass on Mt Albert Edward by Fr Dubuy for the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Ononge mission station²¹

French pioneer priests remembered:²²

Governor John Douglas, in 1887, congratulated the French missionaries, because their explorations. They were “the most important ones ever done in New Guinea” (cf. Dupeyrat). He probably referred to H. Verjus’s expeditions into the Roro and Mekeo areas, during the two preceding years. Fathers de Rijcke and Jullien followed his example in 1896-1898, in reaching out to Kuni land and many others are still remembered for their feats in the Papuan mountains, e.g., Fr. J. Dubuy, for his 1926 hikes out of Ononge, A. Maye, for going to the Yarima people around 1947, and the exploration of Delabarre-Michellod, and of Taphanel, in the early 1950s, to the then as-yet restricted Southern Highlands – not forgetting the two months’ long trek of J. Besson, and his horses, into the Kamea country, which some even compared with Hannibal crossing the Alps.²³

²⁰ Interview with the author.

²¹ From a booklet named *Missionaries*.

²² Ibid

²³ Więcej: <https://www.voiceoforot.pl/news/diocese-of-bereina/>

The missionaries were appointed and took the country by storm. Regardless of fatigue and privations of all kinds. They visited the whole area, climbing up and down from village to village, exhorting the people to change their life and to accept Christianity. Among them was Fraters Clauser, Dontenwill, Norin, Bacheller, Sicard, Brother Camille, and Mam Simona.

In Ononge An invitation to a "sing-sing" was the good pretext for Father Alphonse Clauser to visit the Upper Vanapa Valley in April 1909, and to mark the site for Ononge mission. In 1912 Bishop de Boismenu and Father Fast're visited the area and helped to pacify the fighting clans. Father Dubuy was appointed first parish priest with Father Norin and Brother Paul Studier to help him. the first Mass was said on February 11, 1913.²⁴

In many cases, these trips brought the first white men into the New Guinea hinterland, and there is more than one instance, where the intruders were not well received, as happened in 1904, with Bishop de Boismenu, who went into the domain of one Baiva. This Fuyuge chief had sworn to revenge the death of his brother, fallen under British bullets, but he was impressed by the courage of the missionary, and accepted him in peace.²⁵

Father Dubuy, with the reinforcement of Brother Camille Fridez (1916), Father Jan Cortebec from Belgium (1921), Father Charles Garreau (1927) and later on Sister Rosa, contacted and evangelized all the villages of their vast parish, and even contacting the Chirima Valley. Father Dubuy died in 1952 but his successors continue the work with the same spirit in this beautiful parish, full of promise.²⁶ Many of these French priests came out to Australia to train in the novitiate there.

*Photograph Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Yule Island in the 1930s
Front row from the left Fr Alphonse Bonn with Fr Jules Dubuy in the middle.²⁷*



²⁴ *Voice of To Rot.*

²⁵ *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 8-2 (1992)

²⁶ *Voice of To Rot*

²⁷ *From photographic paper called missionaries.*

In the early days, the MSC began recruiting locally by opening a training college in Kensington (Sydney) in December 1897. The college commenced with staff and students brought from France, including Fr. Jules Vandel as novice master, Fr. Fr Gsell as teacher, François-Régis Courbon and at least one other French novice, and it is likely that they all arrived in Australia together on 20 October 1897.



Fr. Courbon was ordained in Manly in December 1902, presumably the first graduate of the Kensington College. A separate Australian province was erected in Sydney in 1905, so from that date the activities of the MSC in Australia could no longer be considered foreign. ²⁸

July 2010 the 125th Anniversary of the MSC ststo YULE Island

In July 2010 the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first MSC missionaries in Yule Island was celebrated in Port Moresby. The French flag flew on July 4th to commemorate the celebration. People from every diocese were there to celebrate the occasion dressed in their colourful sing-sing attire. They came in their undreds from parishes along the coast to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first MSC priests on Yule Islands. They came in their hundreds, from parishes on the coast and in the mountains, some walking for five days to share in the great celebration of the 125th anniversary of the arrival of three Missionaries of the Sacred Heart on Yule Island. It was on July 2nd that Fr Henry Verius and Brothers Salvatore Gasbara and Nicola Marconi landed on the small island only a few minutes by boat from the great island of Papua New Guinea, which was the goal of their mission. Three years earlier, Msgr Louis Andre Navarre, Fr Theophile Cramaille and Brother Mesmin Fromm arrived in New Britain on the small island of Matupi (Rabaul). It was with verve that the Church of south-west Papua New Guinea celebrated this anniversary marking the beginnings of evangelisation in the area. The French flag flew in the Port Moresby sports ground on July 4th to commemorate the celebration of the first mass celebrated by Mgr Verjus on Yule Island two days after their arrival. All the dioceses were represented, the laity in their colourful clothes and with dance, religious, priests and bishops.

This was recognition of the mother Church, that of France, through Jules Chevalier who had sent missionaries in 1881 for the great work of evangelising Melanesia and Micronesia. Through this symbol of France, so far away from where Jules Chevalier lived, there was recognition of the great work of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart throughout Europe, Canada, the US, and the Pacific. Their work and the history of PNG, as Bishop Rochus Tatamai likes to say, is bound up with the history of the MSCs, a common history.

²⁸ Więcej: <https://www.voiceofrotorot.pl/news/diocese-of-bereina/>

The work of past generations of missionaries can be measured by the life, joy and involvement of the Church of PNG today, a Church which is searching for the way ahead. The missionary era is now part of the larger history. There are only two French missionaries left but the PNG MSCs number more than 120. We see the fruit of the work and lives of so many missionaries, priests, brothers, sisters, lay people. They have given their lives to contribute to this development. In celebrating the 125 years since the arrival of the missionaries on Yule Island, we can say that the mission has been accomplished as well as saying that it continues.

The Yule Island Cathedral built early in the century and enlarged by Bishop Benedict in 1985 for the centenary celebrations



Bishops of Bereina/ Yule Island

1. Bishop Navarre MSC	1887 – 1891
2. Bishop Verius MSC	1891 – 1892
3. Bishop de Boismenu MSC	1900 – 1945
4. Bishop Sorin MSC	1946 – 1960
5. Bishop Eugène Klein, M.S.C.	1960 – 1971 (6 Year Gap)
6. Bishop Louis Vangeke, M.S.C.	1976–1979
7. Bishop Benedict To Varpin	1979–1987
8. Bishop Lukas Matlatarea, M.S.C.	1988–1998
9. Bishop Deschamps, S.M.M.	1999–2002
10. Bishop John Ribat MSC	2002 – 2007
11. Bishop Rochus Tatamai MSC	2007 – 2018
12. Bishop Otto Separy	2019 to present

Bishops of Bereina since 1988

8. Bishop Lukas Paul Matlatarea, M.S.C. bishop 1988–1998. Lucas was born in 1938 in Malmal Village in Papua New Guinea. He was at the seminary with Bishop Benedict To Varpin who was the bishop of Bereina before him. Benedict had built Real Estate units in Port Moresby

to secure funding for the Bereina Mission. As mentioned, Lucas was very happy with the steady income from the units built the hill. He was bishop of Bereina from 1988 to 1998. He was from Pomio and had been Ben's classmate in the Seminary. They were ordained together in 1971. Lucas was very pleased with all the money from the units that flowed into Bereina. When Lucas died of a heart attack, Gerard-Joseph Deschamps SMM, a French Canadian, held the post from 1999 to 2002. He was followed by Benedict's cousin, Bishop John To Ribat MSC in 2002. Now Cardinal Ribat.

9. Bishop Gerard – Joseph Deschamps, S.M.M. He was Bishop of Bereina 1999–2002. Previously he was bishop of Daru between 1966 until 1987. He was President of the Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. **Gérard-Joseph Deschamps** (4 July 1929 – 25 February 2022) was a Canadian Roman Catholic prelate. Deschamps was born in Eastview, Frontenac County, Ontario on 4 July 1929 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1954. He was Bishop of Daru in Papua New Guinea from 1966 until 1999, when he became bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bereina. He resigned in 2002, and died on 25 February 2022, at the age of 92.²⁹

10. Bishop John Ribat MSC

Cardinal Ribat was born in Volavolo, Papua New Guinea. He was professed as a member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in February 1979. He was ordained a priest on 1 December 1985. On 30 October 2000, Pope John Paul II named him auxiliary bishop of Bereina. He was consecrated bishop on 11 February 2001 and named Bishop of Bereina on 12 February 2002. He held this position until he became archbishop of Port Moresby in 2007, then Cardinal. (See Chapter on {Port Moresby})



11. Bishop Rochus Josef TATAMAI, M.S.C. Born in Rabaul in 1962. Ordained 1989. Auxiliary Bishop of Kerema (2005.07.08 – 2007.11.29).

He was President of Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (2017.05.03 – 2020.07.02). He became Bishop of Bereina 2007 – 2018

12. Bishop Otto Separy 2019 to present

Bp Otto is the former Bishop Ordinary of Aitape after being appointed by Pope Benedict XVI on June 9th, 2009. He was announced as the new Bishop of Bereina by the Apostolic Nunciature on 16th July 2019 in Port Moresby.

The new Bishop of Bereina, Otto Separy had an installation Mass at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Bereina. The celebration was attended by Archbishop Kurian Matthew Vayalunkal the Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, Cardinal Sir John Ribat MSC, Archbishop Douglas Young SVD, Bishop Anton Bal, Bishop Gilles Cote SMM, Bishop Rochus Tatamai MSC, Bishop Rozario Menezes SMM, Bishop Jozef Roszenski SVD, Bishop Pedro Baquero SDB, priests and nuns, staff of the Catholic Bishops' Conference

²⁹ Wikipedia.



of PNGSI, officials from the church's institutions and departments, family and friends from the diocesan community.³⁰

(Photograph Bishop Separy (used for educational purposes)

In his homily, Otto highlighted the crucial role of laity and appealed for their constant cooperation in carrying out the word of God and helping the works of the Church. "This year

is the 'Year of the Laity' because the Church recognises the significant efforts the laity makes," Separy said. "I am your new bishop but I cannot do it alone. "I implore you to work and support my leadership in promoting the faith and evangelisation, so we can make a big difference in the Diocese of Bereina. I believe in collective ideas and collaborative efforts when working because that is what the church is all about," Separy said. Cardinal Ribat urged the people to work together and journey with their new bishop, to continue building the church in the diocese.

³¹

VERIUS CATHOLIC COUNCIL

On September 7, 1974, Father Peter Miria, a young priest from Waima called a meeting of representatives of all the Roro-Waima villages at Rapa. In line with Vatican II and the 1971 - 1973 Self Study of the Catholic Church in PNG, the formation of a lay council seemed to be an interesting idea. Its aim was not only to make up for the shortage of priests, but also to encourage the work of the faithful, in a Church which now was "passing from adolescence to maturity".

On that day the Verius Catholic Council (VCC) was formed. It consists mainly of lay people, with a representation of priests to act as advisers or spiritual directors. The constitution says that the name of the Association is chosen to honour the first Apostle of Papua, Bishop Henry Verius", and that its aim is "to involve the lay people in the Church-work according to the spirit of Vatican II, - to integrate the lay people in some of the activities of the priests, - and to help the priest in many ways in him ministry". Meetings are held every two months in the villages by turn. The items on the agenda concern different subjects from money, sacraments to traditional customs. In addition to these meetings, the V.C.C organizes an annual Retreat for its members and pilgrimages for the major feasts of Our Lady.

The Council commenced in the Roro tribe, then in the Mekeo and the Kuni tribes and is to be extended further to our mountain districts in time. Each council is independent from the others, so as to be more adaptable to the needs of its own people. The members of the V.C.C who have taken part in most of the meetings understand indeed the meaning of the sentence repeated during the "Self-study" - "We are the Church", by showing "unity of mind and heart" among themselves the great potential of this lay council will bear many fruits. ³²

³⁰ Article Views:789/26/2019, 12:40:20 PM

³¹ Więcej <https://www.voiceofrot.com/news/bp-otto-separy-installed-as-8th-bishop-of-bereina/>

³² Voice of Peter To Rot

125th anniversary of the Sisters' arrival on Yule Island in 2012

On 20 July 2012 there was a big celebration on Yule Island of the 125th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart here at Yule Island on the 1st of August 1887. 'Our fondest memories go to Sisters Liguori, Clare, Madeline and Martha, courageous heroines, brave women, daring girls, faithful Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart who left the comfort and securities of their homes and families in Europe and followed the call of the Lord, echoing in the bright twilight of the Southern Cross calling them to "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men and women, teachers and formators of the little and simple ones, healers of the wounded and the weak, inspiration and motivation for the youth, women and girls, evangelisers of all generations in all ages."³³

At the celebrations.

How else could we introduce this great day of celebration of the 125 Anniversary of the arrival of the Daughters of OLSH to Yule Island other than allow St Paul's greetings in his first letter to the Corinthians be a reality and profound experience for each and everyone of us here present and those whose concerns and intentions we bear in our minds and hearts today." May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace. Each one of us can say in assurance to each other that *"I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank God that each of you have been enriched in so many ways,"* especially over the last 125 years since your first arrival and continual presence till today, and you are still here and going strong. We'll never stop thanking God for the beautiful gift of Mary, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and her Daughters for their missionary witness among us throughout these 125 years.



In welcoming you all I also on our behalf as a diocese would like to express our hearty congratulation to you all our Dear Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart on the occasion of the 125th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart here at Yule Island on the 1st of August 1887. Our fondest memories go to Sisters Liguori, Clare, Madeline and Martha, courageous heroines, brave women, daring girls, faithful Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart who left the comfort and securities of their homes and families in Europe and followed the call of the Lord, echoing in the bright twilight of the Southern Cross calling them to "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men and women, teachers and formators of the little and simple ones, healers of the wounded and the weak, inspiration and motivation for the youth, women and girls, evangelisers of all generations in all ages."

The Gospel text of St. Luke 10: 17 – 21, captures the spirit and sentiments of our gathering in this celebration today in the present. We are here in the presence of the Lord 125 years on

³³Więcej: <https://www.voiceofrot.com/news/a125th-anniversary-of-the-arrival-of-daughters-of-olsh-sisters-on-yule-island/>

with excitement and sense of wonder and awe, overflowing with the spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving, like the seventy, or in another reference, the seventy-two who returned with joy, saying, “*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!*” In other words, we are invited to “*Remember, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the great things the Lord had done for you,*” the Lord had done in and through you. Lord, even the cultures had been evangelized in your name, the people been taught and enlightened by your truth, baptized into your mystical body, healed and redeemed in your paschal mystery, reconciled by your blood, united as one in your name.”

Earlier in this Gospel text (Lk 10:1-12) the seven two were appointed by the Lord and send on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where Jesus himself was to go. Jesus the first Missionary of his own Sacred Heart, made no secret about the acute and urgent need for more disciples and missionaries in addition to and even beyond the twelve apostles. “*The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.*” The harvest is the Lord’s and we are mere labourers, thus *we have no mission as such rather we are only sharing in His mission.*



Students celebrating

The commissioning of the disciples by Jesus was oriented towards an *opened-broad ended and far-reaching mission field* that evokes a deep sense and reference to missionary activity that is here in Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia of Oceania, over there in Europe, Africa, America, Australia, Pacific, Asia, everywhere, anytime, in every age. Such open ended, far reaching and inclusive mission approach highlights the New Evangelisation with the missionary impetus as understood by the Venerable Father Founder, Fr Jules Chevalier who best sums it up with our beautiful

motto “*May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere – forever,*” a mission which is inclusive, meaning; reaching back into the past with the source and Origin in Jesus Christ and his missionary command, being relevant and grounded in the present daily realities through us the modern day disciples and open and forward-looking into the future as regards the transmission of this faith and missionary vision – as it was in the beginning, now and for eternity!

Such an authoritative assertion had prompted men and women in every age and generation to leave their familiar shores and launched out into the deep, in many cases, launching out into far and foreign lands and different cultures and other worldviews, with many risks and uncertainties, yet trusting in his loving divine heart.³⁴

³⁴ Więcej: <https://www.voiceoflorot.com/news/a125th-anniversary-of-the-arrival-of-daughters-of-olsh-sisters-on-yule-island/>

PART EIGHT. Port Moresby, the Western Province and the Gulf



Pari lagatoi with its spyman on the mast, the two sails joined at the top
Photograph M.Mennis

The Motu people live in many villages scattered along the coastal zone on each side of the present Port Moresby, now the capital of Papua New Guinea.

Motu villages and their neighbours

The Motu are Austronesian Speakers and are also divided into eastern and western villages, more by location than by language differences. The ten western villages are: Pari, Hanuabada, Porepore, Tanabada, Elevala, Porebada, Lealea, Manumanu, Vabukori and Tatana. The eastern villages are: Tubusereia, Barakau, Gaire and Kapa Kapa.¹



In modern times the Motu and Koita people are seen as one people: the Motu/Koita people because of their long association and friendship.

Traditionally, the Motu people had a maritime culture. They arrived over 2,000 years ago and ruins of ancient village sites show that they had shifted to various locations over time. When they first arrived, all the best places were already occupied, leaving them only infertile land. Fortunately, for the Motu, the Koita people ceded some of their coastal land to them and they have

lived beside each other ever since.²

Over the following centuries, the western Motu produced pots and built the large sea-going *lagatoi* for *hiri* voyages to exchange their pots for sago in the Gulf area. Because the Koita were hunters and gatherers while their neighbours, the Motuans, were sea-going fishermen,

¹ (Oram, 1988: 90)

² Oram, 1981: 227

each group was given the land and sea to cultivate and to take care of, in the same way they were given their own lives. We therefore coexisted with the land, forests and the sea that sustained them. They say even now, “our life’s sustainability and sustenance - our land and sea are us, and we are them. This rather unique attachment to the land is almost religious and emotional – when our trees are cut down, or big holes are dug up, and the rivers are polluted – we feel the same pain that our land feels.”³ (Gaudi, 1999)

The Western Motu villages rarely attacked each other as they were bonded by the *hiri* expeditions and their potmaking. Also the Motu and Koita appear rarely to have made war on each other. However, although they might be allies, they did not always share the same enemies or friends. Some villages who traded with the western Motu were hostile to the Koita because they thought that the Koita caused wrecks and loss of sago through sorcery -- “the western Motu waged intermittent war against the eastern Motu to the north-west and they raided as far as Yule Island.”⁴

Motu Beliefs

Like the Madang and Trobriand people, the Motu people were animists believing that every



object even stones and trees had spirits. Because of this, they would talk to the *masalai* (spirits) in the trees before they cut them down. Their magicians averted storms and calmed the seas. Magic was used to appease the spirits through the weather magicians. Captains of canoes could make magic over the water. The *Baditauna* and *Doritauna* meditated for the safety of the *lakatoi* while sailing⁵.

The Motu believed in the existence of spirits, *lauma*, which could help them in their lives. The dead were interred in a place in front of the house and the people felt the dead spirits were present in their lives. “They were in keeping with the belief that the recent dead came to visit the spirits of the living. There were two types of spirits - good and bad. Evil spirits lurked around at night and the people were frightened to go out after dark. They called in the Koita sorcerer who was supposed to have the power to chase these evil spirits away. The worst spirits were the *Vata*, invisible sorcerers who were supposed to be able to club a victim to death, restore him to life by incantation and then let him die permanently several days later. Examination would reveal that his bones were broken, and in this way the Motu would know that the dreaded *Vata* had done their work again.”⁶

³ (Gaudi, 1999)

⁴ Oram, 1994 : 7).

⁵ (Bonnemaison, 1985 : 32, 44-45)

⁶ Rosenstiel, 1953 : 21

The Gulf

Barton:

Every year, at the end of September or the beginning of October, the season of the south-east trade wind being then near its close, a fleet of *lakatoi* leaves Port Moresby and the neighbouring Motu villages, on a voyage to the mouths of the rivers of the Papuan Gulf. They carry earthenware pots and ornaments and, of late, foreign-made articles to barter for sago and the right to make *asi* [hulls]. The origin of these trading expeditions, the *hiri*, is veiled in obscurity.⁷

The *lakatoi* was once an important part of the material culture in the Motu villages and the *hiri* trading voyages. The Motu people bartered their pots, dishes and bowls, shell ornaments and betel nut for sago and for extra canoe hulls. The *lakatoi* needed to be low and wide on the water to carry the heavy loads of sago and were designed for this function with many extra hulls added in the Gulf to distribute the weight and provide the extra space for the sago parcels to be stored. The Motu sailed in fleets of *lakatoi* but they could not all head for the same village. They would each have their favourite trading village and would stay there for the duration. The logistics of catering for the crews of a whole fleet of *lakatoi* in one place would have been difficult over a period of two or three months even though there was an abundant supply of sago.

A Gulf Beviai ready to sink as it was badly built



The Gulf people attempted to copy, the Motuan *lakatoi* in the minutest detail; but their inexperience is shown. Time and again, the *bevaia*, as it is called, overloaded and grossly overmanned with would-be travellers to the Papuan metropolis, sinks almost before the journey has begun, and this despite a great deal of magical top telling him,

The first official European to come into the area was Captain John Moresby who arrived 20 February 1873 on board the *Basilisk*. Moresby explored the

south coast and spent time trading with villagers at Hanuabada and along the coast. One day, he was absent for so long the captain of the *Basilisk* became alarmed and sailed into Caution Bay, named because of the many shoals in the area. Moresby was found near Lealea Village and boarded the *Basilisk* which then sailed through a gap in the reef which he named Basilisk Passage. That same day they sailed into the harbour, which he named Port Moresby after his father⁸ (Ian Stuart, 1970: 14). When Admiral Erskine arrived to make a proclamation of sovereignty over Papua, he knew that with the missionaries' help, a peaceful take-over was possible.

⁷ Barton, 1910)

⁸ (Ian Stuart, 1970 :14)

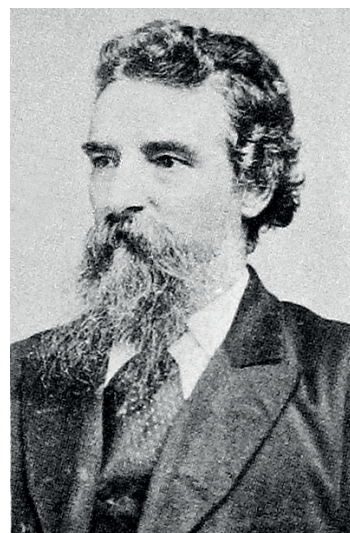
The Annexation of British New Guinea took place on 6 November 1884. For the occasion, fifty chiefs were brought on board the Commodore's ship, the Nelson, by the Rev. W. G. Lawes. One of the most prominent chiefs was Boevagi, the chief of the Port Moresby tribe, Mr Lawes



presented Boevagi with an ebony stick, with a florin (two shillings) with the Queen's head embedded who was entrusted with the "responsibility of upholding the authority and dignity of England in the island." telling him, "this stick represents the Queen England. and is 'an emblem of the authority' over the tribes and their chiefs."⁹ (It was a tough assignment for Boevagi with all the warring tribes along the coast and inland.

Photograph Boevagi

Five warships were present for the ceremony and there was much pageantry and noise from booming cannon and fog sirens. Lawes and Chalmers were both called on to explain to the local people what was happening and what a Protectorate was. At several places along the coast, chiefs were taken on board the flag-ship, "where the proclamation was read, translated, and explained to them; with the hoisting of the Union Jack and the exchange of presents. Tamate (Chalmers) accompanied the Commodore on this cruise of proclamation. It lasted for three weeks." (Lennox, 1902: 125). Chalmers welcomed the Protectorate as he was hoping it would put an end to the Kanaka traffic. Their presence and the help they gave the newcomers ensured the LMS Missionaries of support by the new British New Guinea officials.



Photograph James Chalmers



The London Missionary Society appealed to the British New Guinea Government and were given sole rights to the area. The Catholic missionaries were not welcome and had to find another area for their missionary work. The LMS spread the Good News along the trade routes to the Gulf and even took part the hiri trade on board the lagatoi. Sadly, Chalmers met his death on 8 April 1901 on a trading trip to the Gulf; He is remembered to this day as a great missionary by the London Missionary Society [now the United Church in PNG.

⁹ Chalmers, ⁹1885: 19 -20).

As mentioned earlier, wherever the Catholic missionaries went in the Pacific and later in Papua New Guinea, they found that missionaries of other faiths were there 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 so long.

Firstly the decline of Spain as an imperial power during the seventeenth century meant their missionary movement, which brought Catholicism to the Pacific, was hampered.

Secondly in France the Catholics struggled for survival from the late eighteenth century with the suppression of the Jesuits. The French Revolution and the conflict with Napoleon largely destroyed the Church's capacity for missionary work.¹⁰ 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 Issoudon. We have already studied the Marist missions in earlier chapters and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart so it is interesting to see the situation in Port Moresby and the Gulf areas of Papua New Guinea.

The London Missionary Society brought many missionaries and catechists from Samoa and Fiji. They came and settled along the route of the hiri trade and introduced the people to the Good News wherever they settled. Their descendants live there until today. Although he died in 1940, Governor Hubert Murray's policies continued in the government. He had encouraged the London Missionary Society and he often stated "There will be no other head-hunters here" when addressing newly arrived Catholic priests in Port Moresby meaning the Catholics should stay OUT.

This attitude dated back to the beginning of the British New Guinea when both Kerema and Daru were the strongholds of the LMS missionaries. The headquarters of the LMS was on Daru Island. Many of the early LMS missionaries were from Samoa and their descendants live there still. There is a mixture of nationalities on the island.



There was another side to Sir Hubert Murray which should be noted. Overall he liked the work the missionaries did. It seems appropriate, when documenting the present stage of the National Catholic Health Service, to go back 100 to 150 years, and look at the Colonial Powers and their attitudes and their allegiance to Christianity. Sir Hubert Murray, Lieutenant Governor, of British New Guinea in 1912 wrote of the missionaries in these words:

"The civilizing influence which the mere presence of a missionary has upon the native population, and the fact that all the schools in Papua are conducted by missionaries, together with the devoted assistance which the missions have given in combating the epidemics constitute, in my opinion, a sufficient answer to the contention that the missionaries have done no good. I think not only that the missions do good, but that they are absolutely necessary to the development of backward races." With this positive encouragement and support from the colonial powers, the Christian Missions spread rapidly across the country bringing the Good News of the Gospel to the

¹⁰ Laracy, *Hugh Marists and Melanesians; A History of the Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands*

The Catholic Church in Port Moresby.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN PORT MORESBY

“The Vicariate Apostolic of Melanesia was established by Pope Gregory XVI on 16th July, 1844. The Vicariate was first entrusted to the Society of May (Marists) and then to the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions (P.I.M.E.). For a number of reasons both groups withdrew from Melanesia and from 1855 there was no mission activity in the area. It is most likely that any of these early missionaries visited the place now called Port Moresby.”

“In July 1885 three Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) visited Yule Island and on 4th July 1885 Father Henri Verjus MCS celebrated Mass for the first time in Papua. It was the beginning of a permanent Catholic presence. In 1887 Father Andre Navarre MSC was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Melanesia. He had his headquarters in Yule Island. In 1889 the Vicariate of Melanesia was split up. Bishop Navarre became Vicar Apostolic of British New Guinea (raised to the dignity of Archbishop) and Father Verjus was named Vicar Apostolic of New Britain responsible for all of the colonial German New Guinea). After a few months it was decided that Bishop Verjus would remain at Yule Island as assistant bishop to Archbishop Navarre.”

“The Church began to grow, mainly into the Mekeo-Roro area and into the Goilala area. But the French Missionaries often visited Port Moresby. The first baptism in Port Moresby was performed by Father Verjus shortly before he became a Bishop in September 1889. Bishop Verjus died in 1892 and in 1899 Archbishop Navarre got a new assistant, Bishop Alain de Boismenu.”¹²



Early Photograph of Port Moresby with Hanuabada in the foreground

Father Denis Elliot

The first resident priest in Port Moresby was Father Denis Elliot. He was ordained for the Vicariate by Archbishop de Boismenu in March 1914, and appointed Parish Priest in August 1914, he died of blackwater fever on 11 September 1914.

After Father Elliott's death, several Australian and French priests worked

in Port Moresby. On 7th October 1923, the Parish Church of Our Lady of the Rosary was dedicated by Archbishop de Boismenu, on the site of the present Cathedral. A convent was built in 1925, adjacent to the church.

St. Michael's School Hanuabada was opened on 25 May 1926. At Koki (in the area now called Badili), a convent and school for boarders was built. Bishop de Boismenu celebrated the first Mass in the Sister's chapel there on 29th January 1928. At that time Koki was considered to be in the bush! The present church land at Bomana was bought in 1929 to provide food gardens

¹² *The voice of Peter To Rot 2000*

for the Koki boarders. In 1922 the name of the Vicariate was changed from “British New Guinea” to “Papua” and in 1946 changed, again, to “Port Moresby”. But the headquarters of the Vicariate remained at Yule Island. By 1960 the Port Moresby area and the Daru area were considered important enough to be separated from Yule Island.¹³

Bishop Virgil Copas MSC the first Bishop to reside in Port Moresby.

Bishop Virgil Copas MSC was appointed to take charge of the new Vicariate and became the first bishop to reside in Port Moresby. During the 1960’s the city began to grow rapidly, due mainly to a large influx of migrants from all parts of PNG and from overseas, many of the newcomers being Catholic. Until then,

there were only 3 Mass centres in Port Moresby: Town, Koki and Hanuabada. After the arrival of Bishop Copas, St. Joseph’s Hall in Boroko came to be used as a Mass Centre and a school. The Hohola Parish began in 1962, Boregaina in 1962, Six Mile in 1967, Cape Rodney in 1967,

Erima, Waigani and Tokarara in the early 1970s, Gerehu in 1973, Sogeri in 1978, Kuriva in 1979, 9 Mile/Brown River in 1989.



*Girls in Port Moresby.
Photo by Brian Mennis.*

Popondetta in Oro Province has a fair number of Catholics in the town. A parish to cater for these people was established in the 1960s.

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 country became independent on 15 September 1975 and in January 1976, Archbishop Copas resigned to allow the appointment of a Papua New Guinean as Archbishop. Most Rev. Herman To Paivu was appointed Archbishop and installed on Easter Sunday, 25 April 1976. Archbishop To Paivu died on 12 February 1981.

In October 1981 Most Rev. Peter Kurongku was appointed, and he was installed as the Archbishop of Port Moresby on 7 November 1981. It is estimated that there are about 70,000 Catholics in the Archdiocese. There are 17 parishes, 6 Chaplaincies, 16 community schools, 1 International Primary School, 3 Youth Development Centres, 1 Vocational School, 2 Provincial High Schools, 1 Pastoral Centre, 1 Technical School.¹⁴

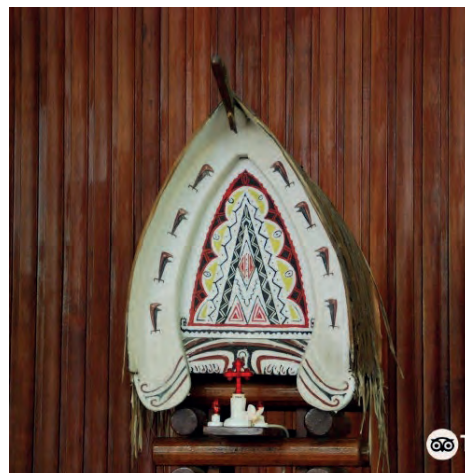
¹³ *The voice of Peter To rot*

¹⁴ *Więcej: <https://www.voiceofrot.com/news/brief-history-of-the-catholic-church-in-port-moresby/>*

St. Mary's Cathedral

St. Mary's Cathedral is the headquarters of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Port Moresby in the National Capital District. It follows the Roman or Latin rite and was visited by John Paul II in May 1984. It is dedicated as its name indicates to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The exterior is decorated with light blue and white and a tower stands on one side of the main entrance.

In 1915 the church established its headquarters in Port Moresby. Before that Yule Island/ Bereina was the main station in that area. The first bishop on Yule Island was Louis-André Navarre, (1889.05.10 – 1908.01), He died 1912.01.16. He was followed in Yule Island by Alain-Marie de Boismenu, M.S.C. (1908.01 – 1922.11.14 who transferred to Port Moresby in 1915.



St Mary's Cathedral

Port Moresby



Apostolic Vicars of Port Moresby

Alain de Boismenu, M.S.C. † (1908 Succeeded - 1945 Retired)

André Sorin, M.S.C. (13 Jun 1946 Appointed - 19 Apr 1959 Died)

Virgil Copas, M.S.C. (19 Dec 1959 Appointed - 1975 Resigned)

Herman To Paivu † (19 Dec 1975 Appointed - 12 Feb 1981 Died)

Peter Kurongku † (3 Oct 1981 Appointed - 11 Jun 1996 Died)

Brian Barnes, O.F.M. † (14 Jun 1997 Appointed - Mar 2008 Retired)

John Ribat, M.S.C. (26 Mar 2008 Succeeded -)

Suffragan Dioceses of the Port Moresby area are Alotau-Sideia, Bereina- Yule Island, Daru-Kiunga and Kerema.

Archbishops of Port Moresby

Archbishop Virgil Copas, M.S.C

Copas was born in Toowoomba, Queensland, and was educated at St. Mary's College and Downlands College. On 23 July 1944, aged 29, he was ordained as Priest of the Order of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus by Archbishop Daniel Mannix. Copas studied anthropology and tropical medicine at Sydney University in preparation for missionary work in Papua New Guinea, where he was based at Vunapope, from 1946 to 1951. He also served as a military chaplain from 1945 -48.



From 1952 to 1954 he was based at Samarai, and then was superior of the Sacred Heart missionaries in the Northern Territory from 1953 to 1960, also serving as a Naval Reserve chaplain, and as chaplain to the leprosarium.

On 19 December 1959 he was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and on 15 November 1966 he was appointed Archbishop of Port Moresby. On 19 December 1975, aged 60, he resigned as Archbishop of Port Moresby, but was appointed Archbishop (Personal Title) of Kerema, Papua New Guinea six months later. He resigned as Bishop of Kerema on 6 December 1988, and died in

1993, aged 78. He was a priest for 49 years and a bishop for 33 years.

In his twilight years, Archbishop Copas continued to help the PNG people by bringing them to Queensland, Australia for life-changing surgeries. These were people that had touched his heart and who could never hope to get the medical assistance in their home country. These genuinely needy people would arrive on the Gold Coast and see truly amazing sights. His softly-spoken and gentle nature was revered by those that knew him. He was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) in 1982.^[(Web)]

May 5 1988 Copas House was officially opened by His Grace Archbishop Sir Virgil Copas. The Copas family had long been associated with Downlands, and Sir Virgil himself was a Past Student of the College.



Copas was the first residential house to be situated away from the day school, in an area which was to be further developed as the residential precinct. It was also the first College House to have a purpose-built facility for the Houseparent's family.

Archbishop Herman To Paivu MSC,

To Paivu was born in 1912 in Rabaul and ordained a priest in 1953. In 1974 he became the auxiliary Bishop of Port Moresby. In 1975 he became Archbishop of Port Moresby until 12 February 1981).

A cousin of my father came and named me To Paivu (giant) after a famous catechist from Matupit Island. My father was a full member of the *Iniet* Secret Society and I was initiated into the secret *Tubuan* society. It happened when I was still a child at the time of the full moon. My father carried me to the *taraiu*, the secret place of the *Tubuan* Society and paid for my initiation with many lengths of shell money. As part of the ceremony, I was beaten lightly with a stick. When I was older I learnt the secrets of my tribe and the rules of their society. (Interview Mary Mennis)



Photograph Herman To Paivu on the left and George Bata on the right with Bishop Wade at the time of their ordination, officiated by Archbishop John Hoehne and Bishop Vesters

To Paivu was ordained in 1954 in Vunapope and was the Parish Priest at Volavolo. To Paivu was a Tolai and knew the mentality of the people. He built schools and got money from outside but he told the people they should try to be self-reliant.

To Paivu was consecrated auxiliary Bishop by Archbishop John Hoehne in 1974. Then, in 1975, he was appointed Archbishop of Port Moresby. He remembered attending Archbishop Coupé's funeral in 1923. Coupé had died in Australia but his body was returned to Rabaul for burial. It was during the Archbishop's requiem Mass that To Paivu decided to become a priest. He first rained as a catechist and then the Priest at Tapo helped him with the Latin which was the beginning of his long road to the priesthood.

When war interrupted their lives, the 24 seminarians were imprisoned along with the missionaries at Vunapope and so their studies continued behind the barbed wire. Inside, they built a Tolai style house for a classroom learning from the few books they had with them.

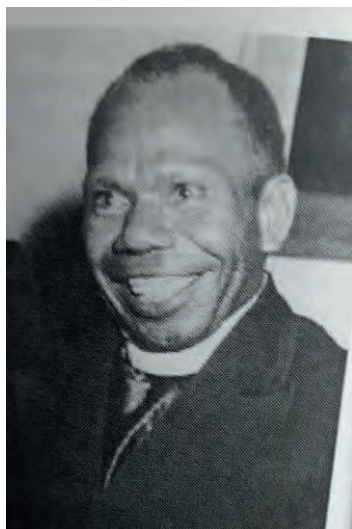
After the war, a new seminary was set up at Vunapope. To Paivu and three others, George To Bata, Paul Noga and Peter Tatamas were the first to be fully trained in

Papua New Guinea. Because To Paivu was nearly forty years of age, the bishop hesitated to ordain him but he begged, "My Lord if I can say but one Mass after my ordination it would have been worth it".

Old Bishop Vesters came again for the ordination of the two Tolai priests. He ordained Fr To Bata at Vuvu, assisted by half the clergy of Rabaul, while the other half were at Vunapope for my own ordination. I remember one of the older priests called me forward, and the Bishop asked the people if they agreed that he should ordain me. I lay prostrate before the altar for a long time. Then I felt the hands of the Bishop and other priests, one by one, on my head. The bishop then put on me the official robes of my new office. He anointed my hands and gave me

the chalice (cup) and paten (plate). Then we said Mass together. After Mass he gave me the power to forgive sins. At the end I promised to obey him¹⁵. (Interview Mary Mennis).

To Paivu was ordained 15 November 1953 and was Parish Priest of Volavolo for a long time. Then in 1974, he was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Port Moresby and appointed Archbishop in 1975.



Photograph: Archbishop To Paivu

Benedict To Varpin, his long-time friend and fellow Tolai helped him on the subject of culture. Even though he no longer fully believed in the secret societies, To Paivu said the *tubuan* figures had an important place in the Tolai culture and should be retained as figureheads even when the old beliefs and secret society was finished.

He wrote, "Every *tubuan* is supposed to have a stone, called *palavat*, which is to enrich the clan. Every altar is supposed to have an altar stone on which the sacrifice of the Holy Mass is offered for the salvation of mankind". (ibid: 153)

Tarcissius Bola said:

To Paivu was one of the church community's valuable ecumenical leaders with many years of yet more invaluable experience as a pastoral worker. - Long before the period of ecumenical openness advanced he was practising it as, when he was a Monsignor working in Rabaul, he blessed his Tolai compatriots from the United Church. Special mention was made about his promotion of the local culture into the local church.

He suffused the church with Papua New Guinean culture in the five years of his pontificate (sic) which began in January 1976. He insisted that decisions on the Church way of life should come from the people instead of being imposed by the church. And though the Council of Bishops had not always encouraged the Papua New Guineanisation of the Church, he was a proud believer in old Melanesian religions and an initiated member of the secret *Tubuan* society of his Tolai heritage. He introduced Papua New Guinea culture into the liturgy of the Church"

¹⁶



Archbishop Herman To Paivu dates born 1911 died 1981.

Archbishop of Port Moresby Port Moresby 1975 - 12 Feb 1981

¹⁵ (Steinbauer, 1974: 152)

¹⁶ *Post Courier*, 17 February 1981)

Most Reverend Sir Peter Kurongku, KBE (1930 – 11 June 1996)

Born in 1930 at Tonnui, Bougainville. he was ordained a priest on 21 December 1966 by Archbishop Daniel Stuyvenberg. On 15 November 1978 he was named Auxiliary Bishop of Honiara, Solomon Islands and as Titular Bishop of Sinnuara on 25 March 1979. He was consecrated bishop of Honiara, Solomon Islands, where he served as auxiliary to the Marist bishop, Adrian Smith.

On 3 October 1981, he was appointed as Archbishop of Port Moresby and installed the following month. He was created a Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire “for public and community services”, dated 14 June 1986. He died on 11 June 1996. He had been a priest for 29 years and a bishop for 17 years. Archbishop Sir Peter Kurongku delivered an address to the media freedom seminar on the subject of accountability. In his address, he emphasised that the media had a responsibility to find and publish the truth. This, he said, was a responsibility placed upon media owners, managers and staff to carry out their duties ‘in the service of the community’. Speaking to the media, he said: ‘The truth is the truth, simple and straight. No twist, no manipulation, no concealment, no unanswered innuendo. Yet, there is something even more important which at times may be difficult for the “street wise” media person to accommodate. The Church maintains that the truth must be spoken, written, presented in love. This is the Christian dimension.’ Sir Peter was concerned that the people should know the truth about what is happening in Papua New Guinea at this time.

‘We see money being spent all around the place, on all kinds of things. But the people living in the settlements, the unemployed, those socially deprived, see nothing of this money. The principle “user pays” now applies to health, education and other principles. I believe this principle really discriminates against the poor, for those unable to pay are also unable to find the means of even getting the necessary payment. The cost of living has risen dramatically, here again, those who can least afford it are in fact the hardest hit. Yet they are offered no logical explanation.’

While archbishop he introduced many changes, some which shocked many Catholics, both lay and clergy in the archdiocese of Port Moresby. (For example, he invited Filipino priests to come to the archdiocese of Port Moresby from where they spread to other parts of Papua New Guinea.) He, too, was not afraid to speak out on justice issues. When, during the crisis, the national army blindly landed on Bougainville and began to ‘shoot and kill’ and to commit other atrocities, Archbishop Kurongku spoke up against such actions. He condemned both the Papua New Guinea army and the self-styled Bougainvillean Revolutionary Army (BRA). He also provided homeless Bougainvilleans with accommodation during the critical period of the conflict, something that annoyed some clergy. The archbishop continued to voice his views until he died in 1999.

Sir Peter, who died early on 11 June 1996, has left behind a legacy for all Papua New Guineans who believe that their people deserve better. Editorial in the Post-Courier, 13 June 1996. It was while Archbishop Peter was in residence that Pope John Paul II came twice to Port Moresby, in 1984 and 1995.¹⁷

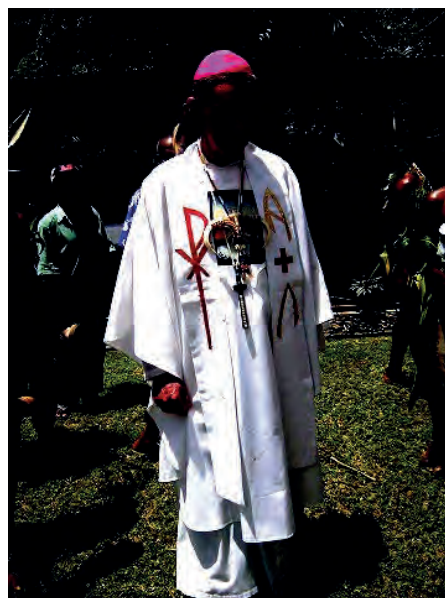
¹⁷ An editorial in the Post Courier 1999

Archbishop Sir Brian Barnes ofm 1933-2017 - obituary¹⁸

It is with great sadness that the Franciscan Friars of the Province of the Holy Spirit announce the death of Emeritus Archbishop Sir Brian Barnes OFM.

Brian James Patrick Barnes was born at Wingham in New South Wales on 23rd March 1933 to Arthur Keith Barnes (28/05/1986) and Eileen Barnes (nee Whereat, 9/02/1988). He joined the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans) in 1951 and was first professed on 18th February 1952. He was ordained a priest on 12th July 1958.

As Father Brian Barnes, he was appointed to the mission of Papua New Guinea (PNG) in October 1959. He served as Assistant Priest in Aitape when he first arrived in the PNG Missions. He then served as Headmaster at Sele Island and as a parish priest in Monandin, Nuku, Wati, Ningil and Lumi from 1960 until 1968.



In 1968 he was appointed as chaplain to the police of the Royal PNG Constabulary. He was based in Port Moresby but travelled extensively throughout Papua New Guinea. He served as the police chaplain from 1968 until 1988 when he took up his appointment as a bishop of the diocese of Aitape. Father Brian was appointed as the Bishop of Aitape (PNG) on 3rd October 1987 and ordained bishop of that diocese 10th February 1988. He served in Aitape from 1988 until his appointment as Archbishop of Port Moresby.

Bishop Brian was appointed as the 7th Ordinary and the 4th Archbishop of Port Moresby on 14th June 1997. He retired as the Archbishop of Port Moresby on 26th March 2008. Archbishop Barnes was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 1982 and a Knight of the British Empire (KBE) in 2003. Perhaps his highest civil honour was bestowed on him in 2011 when he was made Grand Chief Commander of the Order of Logohu (GCL) in a ceremony which took place at Star of the Sea Friary in Waverley (NSW).

Archbishop Brian Barnes was a man totally dedicated to the people and the church in Papua New Guinea. He became a citizen of Papua New Guinea in 1976 and fought long and hard for the integrity and stability of his adopted homeland. He took on the cares and concerns of his people, spoke against corruption within the PNG government of his time, using his weekly radio address to reach his people, encourage goodness and challenge those who sought to do harm to his country.

His courageous stance came at a cost to his personal health and safety. Archbishop Brian returned to Australia as a consequence of health concerns and lived for a number of years at Star of the Sea Friary in Waverley. In his last years, he was a resident of Our Lady of Consolation Nursing Home at Rooty Hill. Archbishop Brian is survived by his two brothers, Michael Barnes and Denis Barnes, and his sister, Maureen Dingelstad. He was cremated and his ashes were interred at St Didacus Friary Cemetery, Aitape, Papua New Guinea.

¹⁸ Obituary of the OFM

Archbishop Sir John Ribat, M.S.C.

Born at Volavolo in 1957, John Ribat made his first profession with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in February 1979. He was ordained a priest in December 1985 and worked in parishes in Bereina Diocese. After studies in Manila, Philippines, he served as master of novices for the order at Suva, Fiji. He was appointed auxiliary bishop of Bereina in October 2000 and then bishop in February 2002.

He became archbishop of Port Moresby in March 2008, a year after Pope Benedict XVI appointed him coadjutor archbishop. After heading the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands from 2011 to 2014, he was elected president of the Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania in 2014. In November 2016 he was elevated to Cardinal.

Archbishop John Ribat, M.S.C. (26 Mar 2008 Succeeded -) In 2008, Bishop John Ribat, KBE, M.S.C. became the archbishop of Port Moresby. He had been the President of Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands from 2011 to 2014 and the President of Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania and Bishop of Bereina from 2002 until 2007 then Coadjutor Archbishop of Port Moresby in 2007. Then in 2016 he was appointed Cardinal.



Archbishop Ribat named Papua New Guinea's first cardinal

Posted on 10 October 2016

An historic moment for the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea, Pope Francis has named the Archbishop of Port Moresby as the nation's first locally born cardinal and the first cardinal from the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. The Most Reverend Archbishop John Ribat MSC was one of 17 new cardinals named by Pope Francis this month, which also included archbishops from Bangladesh, the Central African Republic and Mauritius.

Born at Volavolo in East New Britain Province in 1957, Archbishop Ribat has held his current role in Port Moresby since 2007 and prior to that time, he was the Bishop of Bereina and also worked for a time as a Novice Master in Rabaul and in Fiji.

Archbishop Ribat has a special affection for the people of PNG and recently celebrated a Mass in Bomana to mark 70 years of continuous Lasallian education in the country.



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Archbishop Ribat has a special affection for the Lasallians of PNG and recently celebrated a Mass in Bomana to mark 70 years of continuous Lasallian education in the country. The Bishop of Bereina, the Most Reverend Bishop Rochus Tatamai said the Pope's decision to promote a Papua New Guinean to the position of cardinal was a great step forward for the local Catholic Church on the global stage.

Bishop Rochus said he hoped the move would help encourage more young Papua New Guineans to consider a

religious vocation.

"We need many more young men and women to answer and respond positively to God's invitation as a wonderful blessing and call to priesthood and religious life", Bishop Rochus said.

"Let us pray for more vocations to all states of life that from committed faith-filled families will come forth committed single people as well as committed consecrated men and women to God and his mystical body, His Church in the world today and into the future".



Cardinal Ribat said a great strength in PNG can be seen when Catholic and Protestant churches work closely together, to "journey with the people" and help the government solve national crises. "We always want the message for all the churches to be united," he said. "(In the past) one of the issues that brought us together was the HIV/AIDS. I was there when we launched an ecumenical movement to address AIDS. "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," he said.

The Golden Jubilee of the Catholic Church in Port Moresby. 2016

The Jack Pidik Park celebration was attended by close to 1000 Catholic faithfuls including those from other mainline churches. Government and diplomatic heads and friends from the Diocese of Townsville, Australia also at the event. Cardinal Ribat's message was on oneness. "It is the faith that has united us, all the Christians in Papua New Guinea," Ribat said.

This day as part of the Golden Jubilee Port Moresby welcomed its first ever Cardinal Papua New Guinea's first ever Roman Catholic Cardinal, Sir John Ribat made his first public appearance on Sunday November 27 at the Jack Pidik Park, during the 50th anniversary ceremonies of the Port Moresby Catholic Archdiocese. Crowds of people lined the streets to have a glimpse of the Cardinal Governor General, Sir Michael Ogio thanked the new cardinal for his working relationship with the Government. "I admire the work of this new cardinal. He has been vocal on issues and we will work alongside him," Ogio.¹⁹

"The archdiocese was originally formed about 70 miles (112km) to the West of Port Moresby in what is now called Yule Island when the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Father Henry Verius and Brothers Nicola Marconi and Salvatore Gasbarra arrived in 1885," The cardinal said. "One of the activities in preparation for the celebration of our golden jubilee, we encouraged parishes to take a trip to Yule Island and visit our roots."

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Townsville Catholics attend Mass celebrating Port Moresby archdiocese's 50th November 30, 2016



¹⁹ EMTV 02 December 2016

Cardinal Ribat's appointment was seen as an example of Pope Francis reaching out to include leadership voices far from Rome. In the same year, Cardinal Ribat was honoured with a knighthood, named in the Queen's Birthday honour list. President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania. Cardinal Sir John Ribat has publicly focused much of his ministry on addressing climate change, drawing on Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si'* to advocate for urgent global action to address rising sea levels and predictions of hotter days and more volatile rainy days in PNG and Pacific islands.

50th year Golden Celebration by Louise Mary Kodor CBC

The Port Moresby Archdiocese will hold a double celebration on November 27th for the 50 years on the establishment of the archdiocese and as well, the welcoming of the new cardinal after his investiture at the Vatican on November 19th along with his other 16 comrades. Archbishop John Ribat, msc, to become the first Cardinal. (Catholic Reporter November 2016 Port Moresby" Archdiocese to celebrate Golden Jubilee THE Catholic Archdiocese of Port Moresby will celebrate its Golden Jubilee of the Foundation Anniversary as well as the welcoming of the new Cardinal, Sir John Ribat msc, on Sunday, November 27th, 2016, at 9:00 o'clock in the morning with a Holy Mass. The date has been moved from Sunday November 13th to the 27th in order to have a joint jubilee and welcome celebration after the new Cardinal's installation in Rome on November 19th, and his subsequent return to the country on November 23rd. The venue for the celebration is "Jack Pidik Park," 5 Mile Hubert Murray Highway, Boroko, NCD, where Catholics from the 17 parishes in the Archdiocese will congregate to celebrate the event. His Grace, Archbishop Sir John Ribat, MSC,DD,KBE will be the main celebrant.

Port Moresby became a diocese of its own in 1966. The Theme of the celebration a brief history of the Catholic Church in Port Moresby The Vicariate of Melanesia was established by Pope Gregory XVI on 16th July, 1844. The Vicariate was first entrusted to the Society of Mary (Marists) and then to Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions (P.I.M.E). For a number of reasons both groups withdrew from Melanesia and from 1855 there was no mission activity in the area. It is most likely that any of these early missionaries visited the place now called Port Moresby. In July 1885, three Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) visited Yule Island and on 4th July 1885 Father Henri Verjus MCS celebrated Mass for the first time in Papua. It was the beginning of a permanent Catholic presence. In 1887, Father Andre Navarre MSC was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Melanesia. He had his headquarters in Yule Island. In 1889, the Vicariate of Melanesia was split up. ²⁰

Cardinal Ribat spoke of climate change:

The rising sea level across the Pacific we are all affected by this,. In Europe and in Australia you don't see this affecting the lives of the people. But for us coming from many islands – Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu – we are seeing what the sea is doing ... washing away good parts of our islands already. The first island that has to be evacuated ... Carteret Island in Bougainville has been broken into three parts and is really disappearing. By 2050 most of the islands will be gone, and that is a great threat to us. The work of the Church is to make governments aware that we are responsible for our nation and the common good of our people.

Another issue the Cardinal mentioned was the plight of refugees. How can we help them (refugees) so they are not affected psychologically? It is really an issue that challenges our nation and our people. We have our own refugees coming across

²⁰ *Administrative Associate of CBC*

(the border) from West Papua. We realise it is not an issue just for us but for the whole world where people are moving, and their movement is because of something that has happened in their country and has caused them to move out. 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 came for me’. And it is a message we cannot just forget, pretend it is not there.²¹

Climate Change a big Issue in the Pacific-Cardinal Ribat

By: Louise Mary Kodor CBC Administrative Associate. November 2016 ISSUE

“CLIMATE change is not a new topic. Every day, we hear of how icebergs in the Northern and Southern hemispheres are melting, the unusual change in our weather pattern and the many tiny islands in our Pacific region facing the threat of completely disappearing under the ever rising sea. The Encyclical letter of Pope Francis *Laudato Si’* which was launched last year is based on this issue as well. It expresses the concerns of the environment and the consequences of our actions.

“Sharing the same sentiments was Cardinal John Ribat. Speaking as the President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) at the recent media conference on Climate Change, he said it is really a big issue for the Pacific Region.

“The results are the sinking of our islands the obvious ones being the remote Carteret Islands in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Other island nations facing the same dilemma are Tuvalu and Kiribati. “Here in Papua New Guinea we have the Carteret Islands that is being washed away by the sea. Some people are still living on the island while others have left for the mainland,” he said. One of the other effect of climate change as highlighted by the Cardinal is the migration of people. He said as a result of climate change, people are forced to leave their homes and move to higher grounds. It is difficult as these people are not seen as refugees. “Those forced out of their homes are not recognised as refugees”, he said. He urged the United Nation to look into this and recognise them as lawful refugees as they face difficulties settling down in new places with the locals.

Meanwhile, the FCBCO which is made up of representatives of the Catholic Bishops Conferences of Australia, CEPAC (the Pacific Island Nations), New Zealand, PNG and Solomon Islands will have a meeting in 2018 in Port Moresby where 85 Bishops from Oceania will attend to discuss the challenges of climate change in the region and look for solutions to better tackle this issue.²²

²¹ Cardinal Ribat’s speech.

²² : *Catholic Bishops’ Conference of PNG & SI - Commission on Social Communications*,. *The Catholic Reporter*

Catholic Seminaries in PNG.

Training of Papua New Guineans for the priesthood began in earnest only after World War II. Prior to that students had to study overseas in Australia and Madagascar. Several seminaries were established for pre-theology studies. Then, in 1963, Holy Spirit Regional Seminary was erected in a merger of two pre-existing institutions.



Shaping Leadership through Bougainville indigenous values and Catholic seminary training a Personal Journey by John Lawrence Momis²³

Most of the pre-war English-speaking missionaries were employed at various times in teaching catechists, or local teachers. Four of their proteges were in 1937 selected to begin seminary studies at Vunapope. They were Anton Kieri, Paul Lapun, Aloysius Noga Tamuka and Peter Tatamus. Of these Lapun later became a noted politician, while Tamuka and Tatamus, after a disjointed course of studies, which they completed at Torokina, were eventually ordained in 1953. Their successors followed a more orderly route: from Chanel College (founded in 1955) at Ulapia, near Rabaul, to Holy Spirit seminary, which was opened at Madang in 1963 and was transferred to Bomana near Port Moresby in 1968.

Among the first graduates of this course were Peter Kurongku (later archbishop of Port Moresby), Gregory Singkai (later bishop of Bougainville) and Alexis Holyweek Sarei (later premier of Bougainville, and holder of a Roman degree in theology). All three were ordained in 1966 [Aerts 1994; Sarei 1974]. Numerous others followed them, some to ordination, some dropping out en route and some leaving the priesthood after ordination, but all had been introduced to the intellectual discipline of abstract thinking and the rigour of Scholastic philosophy and to the ways of the clerical gentleman. Accordingly, in 1970 Wally Fingleton, an Australian who had joined the mission in

²³ *Bougainville before the conflict* edited by A Regan p 300

1948, could write that ‘Bougainvilleans, including Leo Hannett, Daniel Tsibin ... Leo Morgan, Joseph Auna, Joseph Tonnaku, Aloysius Noga and others of the “Bougainville Club” in Moresby, along with our three Members, Donatus Mola, Paul Lapun and Joseph Lue, form a group which is more literate and articulate than any other like group in New Guinea’²⁴

The minds of the 1960s seminarians had, however, been shaped by more than just the traditional curriculum. They were stimulated also by the liberal, inclusive, adaptive, up-dating, diversity-endorsing, particularity-respecting and decolonising principles embedded in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65).

They were thus equipped — and disposed — to be formidable critics of established structures and assumptions in both church and state. This was reflected in much of the writing in *Dialogue*, a broadsheet published at the Madang seminary. Yet while nationalistic demands for indigenous self-determination earned certain writers such as John Momis and Leo Hannett a reputation in some circles as ‘radicals’, that opinion was far from universal. Nor was it necessarily pejorative. Not only were the kind of sentiments they expressed finding increasing currency in the world at large beyond Papua New Guinea but, more pertinently, they were accepted by Bishop Leo Lemay, who had succeeded Wade as bishop of Bougainville in 1960.²⁵

Gradually the seminary system has expanded, so that now there are three seminaries teaching theology with a total of 170 students, four seminaries teaching pre-theological studies, with a total of 301 students, and one high-school seminary with 100 students, preparing candidates for the grade 12 exam so that they can qualify for seminary training. Studies for ordination to the priesthood in PNG usually take between seven- and nine-years following grade 12. Up to the end of 2003 there have been 297 Papua New Guineans ordained as priests in the Catholic Church, Not all [conflict e continued in the active ministry.

“Attending the seminary at a time when our people were searching for a new national idy in the face of the many challenging issues of colonialism and liberation, inevitably we chose to identify with our Papua New Guinea people as they grappled with these issues. We opted to take a plunge into the abyss of human affairs and, guided by Christian principles, tried to find feasible solutions to human problems. We could not be indifferent in the face of the challenges. We believed that we could ultimately influence and forge a new socio-economic-political order based on universal principles of justice and peace. In 1964, when the United Nations mission came to assess how Australia was.

“We had good lecturers at Holy Spirit Seminary who were not only highly qualified in their various disciplines but also determined to enable the future priests to learn about important issues affecting the lives of the people. One was a black American priest who took us for philosophy, at the same time sharing with us his experiences as a black man living in a predominantly white society. We also learned about the great black American freedom fighter, Martin Luther King.

“From our study of Catholic social teaching we became more and more convinced that the kingdom of God that Christ came to establish has its beginnings in the existential historical world and culminates in its eschatological dimension in heaven. In other words, Christ’s mission encompasses humanity’s temporal as well as eternal needs, and in a holistic way.

²⁴ Fingleton 1970: 13–14] *BOUGAINVILLE before the Conflict*

²⁵ Boyle 1989: 183–4]

While we appreciated the importance of drawing the distinction between church and state, and the fact that they are independent of each other, we nevertheless maintained that they should work together in an interdependent way. After all, human life is holistic, and both state and church are morally bound to cooperate to serve the best interests of humanity. So there should not be any dichotomy between the spiritual and material, and between the sacred and the profane. Human beings have an inalienable right to actively participate in the process of liberation and development, which includes self-determination.

“We felt that as Christian leaders we were called to make a difference, to change the structures that disempowered the people, and so to transform the world. We adopted a new vision, mission and strategy that would promote equitable distribution of power and benefits in society. We advocated ‘conscientisation’ — the raising of consciousness — of the people so that they could become active agents of change and development and not mere passive recipients of goods and services.

‘When Christ was inaugurating His mission to build God’s kingdom in the world He went back to His hometown of Nazareth. There He stood in the temple in the midst of the people and announced, ‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and new sight to the blind; to free the oppressed and the Lord’s year of favour’ [Luke 4: 18–19]. Discerning the signs of the times, we responded to the challenge of building the kingdom of God in our midst both by preaching Good News of Jesus Christ and by promoting justice and freedom in the world. Catholic social teaching enlightened and encouraged us to be proactively involved in trying to mould a new society out of a fluid and tractable situation”.²⁶

Prayer of Relationships

Loving Father, you created us in your image and likeness, and your desire for us is not to live alone, but in community of relationship through love, mercy and compassion. Lord Jesus, you teach us that you are the vine and we are the branches. Being in you and you in us, we bear much fruit, but apart from you, we can do nothing. You are our sole Master and Head, in which we live, move and have our being. You have made us male and female, so unique and diverse in talents, gifts, race, cultures, languages, skin colour. Yet we are one in you. You made us as social beings with dignity to relate to one another in relationships, with mutual and strong relationships and concern for the wellbeing of others. May the poor, neglected and the marginalised find a place in our hearts, and share in the goodness of every relationship as witnesses of our obligatory corporal works of mercy.

Blessed Trinity model of the perfect relationship, lead us to live our vocation of holiness, witnessing the church of communion, through Christ our Lord. Amen.²⁷

²⁶ *Bougainville before the Conflict* ed A. Regan **John Lawrence Momis**

²⁷ By: Louise Mary Kodor CBC Administrative Associate. November 2016 ISSUE

Bomana Seminary 2020



February 2020 opening of the academic year with Cardinal Ribat



18 March 2020 – meeting of the Episcopal board – Governing Council of the Holy Spirit Seminary. The members are from the left. Bp Roland Santos CM (Alotau) The chair Sir John Cardinal Ribat MSC Port Moresby, BP Donald Lippert OFM cap Mendi, Fr Martin vice-Rector and Fr Jacek Tendej Rector, taking the photo, the board listened to the members of the staff of the seminary presenting their reports, discussing them and made decisions concerning the formation life of the seminary.

13th May The academic year was a little disturbed this year because of the changes made at the Catholic theological Institute that were caused by the state of emergency and lockdown connected with the pandemic of Covid 19. We had only three days of term break. On the first day we went to a splendid place – Manubada Island located on the Papuan Bay, not far from the downtown of Port Moresby. We extremely enjoyed the tie swimming, walking around the island, admiring the view.



New seating arrangement because of the covid epidemic.

Saturday, 13th November 2020 saw twenty-eight students graduate from CTI, in our first graduation ceremony since achieving registration and accreditation of our courses with DHERST, the Department Of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology.

A Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio to PNG, His Excellency Fermín Emilio Sosa Rodríguez. Here we see the Nuncio with concelebrating priests and servers:



Due to Covid-19 regulations, permission was obtained for the Mass and graduation, with two separate graduation ceremonies (Philosophy and Theology), all in the open air and with attendees being arranged in groups of no more than 20. Masks were obligatory (*being momentarily removed for photographs.*)

The guest speaker was renowned PNG educator and former Vice-Chancellor of Divine Word University, Dr Cecilia Nambou. Below we see the Philosophy graduates immediately after their ceremony.



And here are our Theology graduates:



The ceremony was also notable as a farewell to the out-going President of CTI, Fr Joseph Vnuk, O.P., and a welcome to the newly appointed President, Fr Martin Wallace, O.P.

Here is part of Fr Martin's inaugural President's Address, delivered at the Philosophy graduation:

Today marks an important moment in the history of *Catholic Theological Institute*, because we confer our academic awards for the first time as a registered tertiary institution registered with our courses fully accredited. This is not to say that our awards in the past lacked value – they were accepted by institutions in Australia when granting credit for prior learning, for example – but it does place them on a firm footing, and, importantly, provides a framework for constant improvement and review.

CTI owes a great debt of gratitude to my predecessor, Fr Joseph Vnuk, for driving this process forward – with, as he is always quick to point out, the support of the staff, and particularly the Dean, Mr Zimmerman. The students, too, have been supportive, as we see by the presence of those students who, close to the end of their theological studies, returned to Philosophy to complete the number of units necessary to qualify for the updated degree. I say both thank you and congratulations!

But there are others. On the academic front, finding suitable staff – preferably local, permanent staff – is a constant preoccupation. Assisting our students in English language proficiency is another. Our studies are necessarily in English. Almost all our resources are in English. But we do have students – keen, intelligent students – whose poor grasp of written English in particular presents an obstacle to academic excellence. We have undertaken an number of initiatives in recent years to address this problem; I am determined to continue and develop this as a priority.

The Handmaids of Our Lord Order in Port Moresby



HANDMAIDS of Our Lord Sister Mary Garnier celebrated her golden jubilee of religious profession not long ago but sees no reason to slow down.

Sr Mary joined the order – founded in Papua New Guinea in 1918 – in 1960 and was professed three years later in 1963. “My golden jubilee is from the time I was first professed so that’s almost 53 years,” she said.

Sr Mary has notched up a couple of significant milestones in those 53 years. She was general of the order for two terms, she is credited as the first Torres Strait Islander to receive a university degree and she was awarded an Order of the British Empire for her work in Papua New Guinea.

Mary was born on Poruma (Coconut) Island in the Torres Strait and moved to Thursday Island for a couple of years, and then to Hammond Island where she grew up. Her grandfather was Catholic and her parents Anglicans, with Mary choosing to be baptised into the Catholic Church when she was “about eight years old.”

“My grandfather was French, he was a pearl diver and decided to settle on Coconut Island and that’s where he brought up his family but my mother’s family are from Iama (Yam) Island,” she said.

Mary’s early education had a hand in her choosing her faith. “My parents put me to school with the Catholic sisters (Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart) on Thursday Island and I just felt strongly that I wanted to be a Catholic,” she said. Her education with the sisters continued at St Joseph’s school on Hammond Island before she moved to mainland Australia for secondary studies.

“For me there was no high school on Thursday Island and I wanted to go to what you call secondary school, and the priest and the sisters helped me to go to Charters Towers to St Mary’s as a boarder,” she said. While at boarding school Mary enjoyed languages, but was to later study maths and science at university.

“I had an aunt who joined the order,” she said. “My parents found out when I was a child that my aunt was still alive in Papua New Guinea and she had gone across to join the Handmaids, and four of them returned to visit us in 1953 and ‘54 and that was the first time I saw the Handmaids and I thought about being like them.”

Mary was still a teenager when she moved to Papua New Guinea and entered the order. Her first ministry was teaching primary school. She returned to Hammond Island for a year after her profession and taught with the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart before heading back to PNG to continue her teaching ministry. It was several years later that she headed back to her own studies and became the first Torres Strait Islander to receive a degree.

Her message to today’s young Torres Strait Islanders is not to just settle for the way of life they have. “Don’t just settle for that. Go for something that you can do, that you can contribute to society in using your skills,” she said. “Your skills are given not only for yourself; it’s for everybody too, to use for other people. I think if you can develop whatever talents you have then you can use it to help other people and also to better yourself.”²⁸

²⁸ Condensed from an article by Robin Williams in the Leader.

Fr Philip Gibbs on the Church in Papua New Guinea



As of 2003 there were 544 priests serving in PNG, approximately one third of these being national priests. Also in 2003 there were 305 brothers, of whom a majority are national, and 962 sisters, 63 per cent of whom are national.

As of 2004 there were 63 national Papua New Guinean priests, brothers and sisters either studying or on mission assignments in various parts of the world. In 1973-74 the Catholic Church in PNG conducted a self-study, involving the whole church from bishops to church members in parishes and parish communities. The self study was not only a fact-finding exercise, but also helped develop a sense of identity “We are church” a year before the nation gained independence. Thirty years later, as a follow up to the self-study, and motivated by the 1998 Synod for Oceania in Rome, the Catholic Church in PNG has begun a General Assembly. The intention is to involve all the Catholic people of PNG in a year long process of planning for the new millennium.

The opening gathering of the General Assembly was held at Good Shepherd College, Banz, in January 2003, with 91 participants. Since then all sectors and levels of the church have been invited to participate in discussion of issues affecting the church that require planned responses for the new millennium. The fruits of this discussion were presented at the closing gathering in Rabaul in July 2004. The primary expectation of the General Assembly was that it should generate renewal in the church through a celebration of the unity and identity of the Catholic Church of PNG. Having established a national vision, mission and priorities, church leaders are now working towards a national pastoral plan.

The Stations of the Cross procession in Port Moresby



The Catholic Church in PNG is facing many issues at the present time. Pastoral and social issues include ecumenism, the dignity and status of women, the pastoral care of those facing difficulties in marriage, tribal and ethnic related violence, polygamy and other aspects of marriage, and land compensation claims.

Related issues are greater national and lay Papua New Guinean participation in decision making and leadership, and collaborative ministry at the community level. There are many ‘movements’ within the church offering charismatic expression and various forms of piety. Consequently, there is a need for ministers of unity to ensure that these movements and all the other ministries and gifts in the community co-operate in a harmonious and integrated way. (Gibbs).²⁹

Another article by Philip Gibbs

In Papua New Guinea, attempts to keep religion and politics separate often meet with incomprehension and resistance on the part of the general populace, for in traditional Melanesian terms, religion has a political function, seen in the power to avert misfortune and

²⁹ [cholar.google.com/citations?user=lrLMzoAAAAJ&hl=en](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=lrLMzoAAAAJ&hl=en)

ways to ensure prosperity and wellbeing. This paper looks at how religious narrative plays a part in contemporary political discourse in Papua New Guinea. It will look first at the links between socio-political and religious institutions, and then will consider some of the ways religious values and symbols are used and exploited to legitimise political aspirations.



Fr Boland and fellow priests in Port Moresby

In contemporary Papua New Guinea some leaders attempt to use Christian rhetoric and symbols to appeal to people's religious sentiments and to promote nationalism, however, sometimes symbols apparently achieve the agent's goal and at other times the symbol backfires on the user. How can we account for the selection, uses and effects of religious symbols in political discourse? The churches and Christian groups seeking not so much to gain political power as to control it, appear to be divided as to whether it is better to respond with a progressive social agenda or to control political power by means of spiritual power.

Specific cases from contemporary national and local politics will be examined in detail, including events such as "operation brukim skru (operation bend the knee)," Archbishop Brian Barnes criticism of the government, and the debate over the cross on the top of the Parliament House. The goal of the paper is to provide an anthropological perspective on religion.³⁰

Pope John Paul II visits Port Moresby in 1984

In 1984 the Pope came to celebrate the arrival of the first MSC missionaries on Matupit Island in 1882 which we have already studied in the Rabaul/Vunapope section of this course. In 1995 Pope John came to beatify Blessed Peter To Rot

At the airport, where he was welcomed with a 21-gun salute, each round was greeted by the welcoming crowd with squeals of delight. A strong wind blew the smoke from each round back on the papal party and the welcomers led by the Governor General, Sir Kingsford Dibela, and Prime Minister Michael Somare, causing much laughter. The onlookers were surprised, then responded with laughter and applause when the Pope in his arrival remarks switched from English to Motu and then to pidgin, the two principal vernaculars. Apostolic Journey to Korea, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Island and Thailand.

³⁰ Article by Philip gibbs 2005



Address of Pope John Paul II at Jackson's Airport in May 1984.

"Your Excellency the Governor-General, Mr Prime Minister, Dear People of Papua New Guinea,

With great joy in my heart, I accept your *warm welcome* to Papua New Guinea. I am happy to have come to this young and vigorously developing nation, and I am grateful to God for the opportunity of spending these next days among the beloved people of this country. As you know, this is not the first time that I have set foot on your land. Over ten years ago, when I was still Archbishop of Krakow, I already had the pleasure of being in your midst. I still remember well the beauty of the landscape and the warmth of your hospitality. I recall, too, the rich diversity of your citizens, how you are composed of many different tribes, each with its own history and traditions.

'It is in friendship and brotherhood that I come to you today, desiring to strengthen *the respect and love that unites us*. But I come especially as 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...". The zealous efforts and personal sacrifices of those missionaries are well known throughout the world, as is the vitality and fervour of the Church here which they have helped to form. During the time of my pastoral visit, I shall have the joy of seeing and meeting this young and thriving Church. I shall be able to observe at first hand how its members are making important contributions to the well-being and development of your society. I hope to encourage and strengthen my brothers and sisters in the practice of the faith. I likewise look forward to meeting many of my other Christian brethren, especially those of the Anglican Communion who are so numerous in this land. Upon all I invoke the grace and peace of Jesus Christ. With deep respect I also wish to greet all men and women of good will who long for peace and harmony in the world.

"May God bless Papua New Guinea. May his peace descend on your beautiful islands, your great rivers, high mountains and deep valleys; may it rest on your volcanoes and fill your blue seas. And may *the love of Christ* abide in your hearts and your homes, today and for ever. ³¹

³¹ 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Pope St John Paul II's homily at Mass for the Beatification of Peter To Rot. Sir John Guise Stadium, Port Moresby, on Tuesday 17th January 1995 -

“Ol brata na susa bilong mi, Tenkyu tru long bikpela welkam yupela I givim long mi hastede long ples balus. Mi lukim bilas bilong ol manmeri ol I welkamim mi, na bel bilong mi I kirap tru. Bilas bilong yupela ol pipel bilong Papua Niugini I nais moa moa yet.

“Dear Brothers and Sisters, “Rejoice... insofar as you share Christ's sufferings.” .

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

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

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

“Likewise in the New Covenant. Beginning with the deacon Stephen (*cf Acts 7, 54-60*) and the Apostle James, the New Testament records that a “great cloud of witnesses” gave their lives in order to profess their faith in Christ and their uncompromising love for him. And down the centuries, glorious pages of the Church's Martyrology have been written in every generation. The sons and daughters of many Churches in Asia are inscribed in “the archives of truth written in letters of blood” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 2474). I myself have had the grace of canonizing the Korean and Vietnamese Martyrs. We can also recall Saint Paul Miki and his Companions, martyred in Japan; Lorenzo Ruiz, the first saint of the Philippines; and Saint Peter Chanel who suffered a martyr's death in the Pacific.

“Throughout this century the ‘faithful witnesses’ have been present in great numbers. The wars, concentration camps and intolerance of our own time have yielded a rich harvest of martyrs in many parts of the world! Also in Papua New Guinea where there were many Christians belonging to the various Churches and ecclesial communities who gave the supreme witness. Today your fellow countryman, Peter To Rot, an honoured son of the Tolai people, a catechist from New Britain, has been listed among them. The Church everywhere sings praise to God for this new gift.

“The sufferings caused by the recent tragic eruption have drawn the Christian community of New Britain closer to the Martyr Peter To Rot. In God's saving plan, “suffering, more than

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes, the wisdom of the Gospel tells us that eternal life comes through death, and true joy through suffering. These words apply to Peter To Rot. They describe the particular ‘blessedness’ of those “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (*Rev 5*, 9) who suffer martyrdom in every age of the Church. In God’s eyes, those persecuted for their fidelity to the Gospel are truly blessed, for their “reward is great in heaven” (*Mt 5*, 12). I am particularly happy that there are many catechists here from all over Papua New Guinea. You, dear catechists, are “direct witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers... the basic strength of Christian communities” (*JP II, Redemptoris Missio*, 73). From the beginning, the work of lay catechists in Papua New Guinea has made “an outstanding and indispensable contribution to the spread of the faith and of the Church” (*Ad Gentes*, 17). In the name of the whole Church I thank you for the sacred work which you are doing. May God reward and bless each of you.

The Martyr's example speaks also to married couples. Blessed Peter To Rot had the highest esteem for marriage and, even in the face of great personal danger and opposition, he defended the Church's teaching on the unity of marriage and the need for mutual fidelity. He treated his wife Paula with deep respect and prayed with her morning and evening. For his children he had the utmost affection and spent as much time with them as he could. If families are good, your villages will be peaceful and good. Hold on to the traditions that defend and strengthen family life!

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

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.



"To the intercession of the new Blessed I wish to commend with special affection the people of Bougainville, who for six years have been suffering the tragic consequences of violence, war and destruction. I extend a special word of encouragement to Bishop Gregory Singkai and the Church in Bougainville, who are bearing a heavy physical and spiritual burden. I earnestly appeal to all sides in this dispute to negotiate a settlement in a spirit of goodwill and constructive openness. May reconciliation and harmony once more prevail, so that the reconstruction which all yearn for can begin. To the people of New Britain, the fellow countrymen of Blessed Peter To Rot, Martyr-catechist of

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

Tok Pisin: "Mi laik bai yupela i tingim Peter To Rot oltaim. Yupela i mas tingting oltaim long bilip bilong em; yupela i mas tingting oltaim long famili laif bilong em; yupela i mas tingting oltaim long wok bilong em. Bikos Peter To Rot I soim rot long yumi. Em I soim rot long yumi olgeta, tasol moa yet long ol famili bilong PAPUA NIUGINI na long ol yut na long ol manmeri ol I autim tok bilong God long ol pipel. Yupela amamas! Olgeta wari bilong yupela i ken tanim i go kamap amamas gen".

My brothers and sisters from Papua New Guinea, from the Solomon Islands, I share deeply with you in this beatification. The first Beatus from your country, from your people, from your Church. My congratulations to each and everyone of you, to the Bishops, to the priests,

missionaries, catechists, to all the catechists, a great feast of all the catechists everywhere in the world – your families... And God bless you and your families and your catechists and all of you, everyone of you, the Church and the society. Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ! [*End of Pope's Orations*] ³²

BISHOP ROCHUS TATAMAI recalled John Paul II's visit³³ 9 The National, January 15th, 2015.

I have fond memories of the first pastoral visit of Pope John Paul II to Papua New Guinea in May 1984. His visit was during the centenary celebrations of the foundation of the Catholic Church in PNG when the first Missionaries of the Sacred Heart arrived in Rabaul and Yule Island in the late 1800. The visit was a spiritual preparation for a more significant event which was to happen 11 years later – the beautification of catechist and martyr Blessed Peter To Rot.



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

The reliquary containing the remains of Blessed Peter to Rot is carried up to the Pope to receive his blessing.

It was held in 1995 at the Sir John Guise Stadium in Port Moresby. It introduced a new dimension of excitement to the life, contribution and presence of the Catholic Church in PNG.

The beautification was the result of the work of evangelisation, which began with the first unsuccessful attempt by the French Marists and the Foreign Missions of Milan, Italy in 1947 to 1955.

This was later followed by the

arrival of the missionaries and the Society of Divine Word. Since then these religious congregations have made a significant contribution to the evangelisation and integral human development of the people of PNG and Melanesia.

The beatification ceremony was a confirmation of the mutual collaboration between the missionaries and the new indigenous leadership. In his message to everyone, the Holy Father made a continual reference to Blessed Peter To Rot as a model for family life and as an outstanding witness in difficult circumstances for God and neighbours.

And I can still remember the following words of Pope St. John Paul II: "As you are aware, the central event of my visit is the beatification of Peter ToRot, Catechist and Martyr. "You can be truly proud of your Melanesian brother. He has brought distinction and honor to your people.

"Peter ToRot is an outstanding example of family man, a church leader, the person who is prepared to lay down his life for God and neighbour."



³² 1984 -Libreria Editrice Vaticana

³³ The National, January 15th, 2015

The Chapel at Marian Valley for Blessed Peter To Rot

The celebrations for the opening and blessing of the Chapel to Blessed Peter To Rot were held at Marian Valley on Sunday 19 January 2020.

About 800 people gathered for the celebrations at the beautiful Marian valley. Many Papua New Guineans came from Brisbane, Port Moresby, Rabaul and the Sepik and there was a great feeling of fervour and expectation. The PNG people were so happy that it had rained the day before and saw it as an answer to prayer from Blessed Peter To Rot.

They remembered that when he was being beatified by Pope John Paul II, 25 years ago in Port Moresby, it rained on the ceremony after a long drought and this was seen as a gift from Blessed Peter To Rot. So the deluge experienced the previous day in Brisbane was seen as another gift from the Blessed. Amazingly it was fine for the celebrations at Marian Valley.



*Brisbane Auxiliary Bishop Ken Howell (left) and PNG Cardinal John Ribat
Photo: Alan Edgecomb*

Colourful singing groups decked in feathers and decorations gathered outside the church and led the procession down the main aisle. They were followed by a bier carrying the statue of Blessed Peter To Rot and then altar boys, priests and brothers. Bishop Ken Howell representing Archbishop Mark Coleridge, accompanied, Cardinal Sir To Ribat from Port Moresby who was the honoured guest to celebrate the Mass.

During his homily, Cardinal To Ribat told of the life of Blessed Peter To Rot and the sacrifice he had made for his faith in July 1945. He was an example of a life well-lived as a catechist, family man and Tolai leader. He bravely faced death at the hands of the Japanese defending his faith.

Looking ahead: Carmelite Father Paul Sireh (right) hopes the opening of a Blessed Peter To Rot chapel at Marian Valley, Canungra, recently could help speed up Blessed Peter's canonisation. Fr Sireh is pictured at the blessing of the chapel with

PAPUA New Guinean priest Carmelite Father Paul Sireh hopes the first chapel built in honour of Blessed Peter To Rot outside of PNG could speed up his canonisation. process.

The Apostolic Nunciature to Papua New Guinea

The **nuncio** is an ecclesiastical office of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea. It is a diplomatic post of the Holy See, whose representative is called the Apostolic Nuncio with the rank of an ambassador. The nuncio resides in Port Moresby.

New Apostolic Nuncio appointed in 2021.

The Holy Father Pope Francis, has appointed His Excellency Most Reverend Fermín Emilio Sosa Rodríguez, as the new Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea.



The appointment was announced by the Apostolic Nunciature in Papua New Guinea in a press statement released on Wednesday 31st March 2021, at midday in the Vatican. His appointment is also at the same time an elevation for him to the titular see of Viruno, with the dignity of Archbishop. Reverend Fermin was ordained a priest on 12th July 1998, and graduated in Canon Law, entering the Holy See Diplomatic Service on 1st January 2003, and served in the pontifical representations in Papua New Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, the United States of America, Canada, and Serbia.

List of papal representatives to Papua New Guinea since 1993.

Apostolic Nuncio

Ramiro Moliner Inglés (2 January 1993 – 10 May 1997)

Hans Schwemmer (9 July 1997 – 1 October 2001)

Adolfo Tito Yllana (13 December 2001 – 31 March 2006)

Francisco Montecillo Padilla (1 April 2006 – 10 November 2011)

Santo Rocco Gangemi (24 March 2012 – 16 April 2013)^[8]

Michael Banach (16 April 2013^[8] – 19 March 2016)^[9]

Kurian Mathew Vayalunkal (3 May 2016^[10] – 1 January 2021)^[11]

Fermín Emilio Sosa Rodríguez (31 March 2021^[12] – present)³⁴

³⁴ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis (PDF)*. Vol. LXI. 1969. p 35

Port Moresby archdiocese opens its new office complex December 2015.



By Veronica Hatutasi:

CATHOLIC Church members of the Archdiocese of Port Moresby can now be proud to have a central office, following the recent opening and blessing of its new Chancery headquarters building complex at Boroko. About 400 Catholic faithful from the 14 parishes in the archdiocese gathered at 4 Mile, Loretto on December 5, to witness the opening of the new two-story office building.

The building houses various offices including the Archbishop's office, Education, Health, Youth, Marriage & Family Life, Caritas PNG, the Catholic Bookshop, Pastoral, Mothers Group, Legion of Mary, Conference rooms and more. Archbishop John Ribat who opened the new Chancery, built at a cost of about K4 million.

He said

It is the first such building which brings together almost all of the Archdiocese's offices which were previously located at various places in the city. When I took over the post in 2008, I saw a great need to have a central place for the purpose of administering the affairs of the archdiocese.

A central place to be found easily which will bring us together as a result of all offices now concentrated in one place, will save time and also, work will be done efficiently," the successful completion of the Chancery project was a great effort, but at the same time, it was not an easy task, however, with concerted efforts from the faithful, overseas donors, the local parishes and friends, the project came into fruition. Each parish contributed K5,000 while donations came from Germany, devout Catholic friends.

The new Chancery is not only a place which promotes religious, social, ethical and human integral values, but it also fosters cultural values as indicated by the 20 posts depicting the unique cultures of the 20 provinces of PNG. A brief history of the Archdiocese saw it being established in 1966, when previously it was part of the Bereina Diocese. Up until now, the Archdiocese has been operating from the Dove Travel building in Boroko with some of its offices located in various parts of the city.

Dialogue between Catholics and Muslims By Bishop Bill Fey ofm Cap

The ongoing dialogue between Catholics and Muslims began when Bp Desmond Moore, then the bishop delegate for ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, became friends with Sadiq Sandbach, a British convert to Islam. The dialogue continued with a meeting held in Port Moresby. Sunday afternoon 25 October 2015 once again saw Muslims and Catholics gathered, this time at the Capuchin College at Bomana, to continue an interfaith dialogue that had begun in February 2002.

For the first time His Excellency, Michael Banach, the Apostolic Nuncio to PNG and Solomon Islands joined the group. He brought Fr Nicolas Guidi, his new secretary, with him. The occasion was the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II document on dialogue with other religions. Bp Bill Fey OFM Cap, the bishop deputy for ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, chaired the meeting. Also present on the Catholic side were Fr Kevin Dance CP, secretary for ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, and Fr Modest Eligi OFM Cap, Bill Fey ofm Cap, Deputy Ecumenism & Interfaith Dialogue. The Muslims were represented by the Imam, Mikail Abdul Aziz and two other members of the PNG Muslim Community also by Yaqub Amaki, a long time participant in the dialogue, and Chowdry, a visiting Muslim from the UK.



Bishop Bill Fey, ofm outlined the number of initiatives by the Vatican over the past 50 years to promote dialogue with Islam.

The Nuncio summarized the sections of *Nostra Aetate* dealing with Hinduism and Buddhism and other ancient world religions. He reflected in detail on the section treating Islam. He also quoted more recent statements such as Pope Benedict XVI promoting dialogue with our common values and that we should work together for peace and the end of violence that claims to have a basis in religion.

Issues discussed ranged from the equality of men and women and the purpose of punishment to religious freedom and the relationship between religion and the state. Over the years attempts were made to explain a Christian belief in the Trinity and the Incarnation as well as a balanced Muslim understanding of Sharia law and Jihad. Current issues such as the rise of ISIS have also been discussed. As friendships have deepened, the possibility of honest and respectful sharing deepened. It has also become possible to disagree while remaining friends committed to working together for a world of justice and peace and to reaching together toward the fullness of revealed truth.³⁵

³⁵ *Catholic Reporter* 2015)

The Mission in Kerema in the Gulf



In traditional times, every year the Motu people from Port Moresby used to sail their *lakatoi* to the Gulf where they exchanged their pots for the sago which grew in abundance in the forests near Kerema. Some of the villages contacted are on the map

Lindt described the arrival of a *lakatoi* in the Gulf:



When the port is reached, they are received with great delight, pigs and dogs are killed for the reception feast, after which they distribute their pottery, to be paid for when ready to take their return journey. They sleep on the *lakatoi*, the shore people cooking them food and taking it to them. They ascend the rivers, cut down large trees, and make canoes of them to take home laden with sago. On the return trip, they will have as many as fourteen and fifteen canoes for one *lakatoi*. Now they go to the Gulf [loaded with European goods] wealthier than formerly, taking with them tomahawks, knives, beads, looking glasses and red cloth. They return with many tons of sago, which they dispose of. During the time they have it the whole settlement smells of nasty sour sago, as they like it best when it ferments, so keep it dampened in large pots, the *tohe*³⁶

An Eravo at Orokolo. (Williams, 1940)

³⁶ Lindt 1887: 123)

The Vailala madness cargo cult (*see map*)

Along the coast from Kerema is the village of Vailala famous for being the centre of the Vailala madness cargo cult. Article by Trompf. Despite the term ‘new’ often applied to religious movements in PNG, scholars claim that there were religious movements in the traditional culture, prior to Western contact Berndt 1952-3; Salisbury 1958. Colonial times saw the ‘Vailala Madness’, the name given 132 Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands to an early millenarian movement beginning at Orokolo Station in 1917 and spreading throughout the Toaripi region of the Papuan Gulf.

During collective trance states people destroyed traditional ceremonial items. The leader, Evara, claimed to be contacting the dead through an artificial wireless antenna, with hopes that a ship crewed by the ancestors would come over the horizon. Many agree that the movement arose in response to the collision between traditional cultures and the colonial order.³⁷

Movements of this type have been called ‘cargo cults’ because of the people’s expectation of the arrival of large quantities of European items, from food to firearms to fridges. The term ‘cargo cult’ is unfortunate as it tends to reduce a complex matter to just one exotic dimension. From a rational, secular viewpoint such movements appear to be examples of delusion and aberrant behaviour. However, from the perspective of indigenous hermeneutics they may be perceived as the work of visionaries trying to make sense of a changing world in religious terms.

In the 21st century, such movements are still alive in PNG. The Pomio Kivung Association in West New Britain, originally promoted by some politicians, includes offerings to the spirits of the dead, paying a tax for any infringement of the Ten Commandments, and expectation of the arrival of a Black Jesus. Millenariari beliefs continue to animate some religious movements in the form of Holy Spirit and Christian revival and apocalyptic movements.

Scholars debate the degree to which Christian revival movements include ‘cargo thinking’ and whether they build on indigenous forms or the rejection of those forms. In the revival movements people seek to purify their Christian lives by setting aside inherited traditions and earlier religious practices. Yet at a deeper level traditional understandings often continue to provide the structure by which a new syncretism of Christian beliefs is organized.

Catholic Bishops in Kerema

Virgil Patrick Copas, M.S.C. (1976–1988),

Paul John Marx, M.S.C. (1988–2010)

Patrick Taval, M.S.C. (2010-2013)

Pedro Centeno Baquero, S.D.B. (2017-)

³⁷ Trompf 1991: 191.

1. Virgil Patrick Copas, M.S.C. First Bishop, of Kerema 1976–1988)

In 1966 Copas was appointed Archbishop of Port Moresby and resigned in 1975, aged 60. He was then appointed Archbishop (Personal Title) of Kerema, six months later. He resigned as Bishop of Kerema on 6 December 1988, and died in 1993, aged 78. Alastair McIntosh, who was a Scottish VSO volunteer (1977–80) in St Peter's Extension School which Bishop Copas established at Kerema, records this memory of him:



“My boss while I was in Kerema was Archbishop Virgil Copas. He'd retired from the capital city where he had been in charge of the Church for the whole of Papua New Guinea. He was proud to hand over to the first black archbishop. But instead of going back to Australia he chose to take up an unpopular posting in Gulf Province, one of the poorest parts of the country – a vast malaria swamp fringed with densely forested mountains to the north. He was known as the White Ghost as his lavish crop of white hair and his tall stature was well known.

In Kerema his so-called “archiepiscopal palace” was a house made of asbestos-cement boarding. He simply lived for and with the poor. When people stole from him, as they sometimes did, he'd say, “I hope they needed it more than we did.” I saw some people despise him for that kind of attitude. They thought him politically naïve and a bit of an impractical joke. I just saw love, and from time to time I still feel that love as a mentoring hand, even years after his passing.”



Copas founded and was head of St Peter's Extension School.. He had an immense compassion and total dedication to the poor. It was difficult to walk through his “Archebishopal Palace” at night because the floor would be covered with schoolkids, homeless people and travellers sleeping on it. I would sit with him and drink tea mostly in silence in afternoons after teaching, and his presence had a big influence on me. Through his pastoral insight, he taught me to understand the despair that led young men to crime and violence.”

The “Bishop's” Catholic Church at Kerema showing Christian motifs set in traditional mythological context. Many of the priests and nuns were phenomenal people, and in our area they had a strong ecumenical spirit.



Missionaries of Charity (Mother Theresa) Sisters - left to right either Sister Maurice or Joseph Sr. Leah from Australia, and Sr. Magdelene, the Mother Superior, from India. They'd jump out of bed every morning at 4.30 am, and during my first year I was sleeping downstairs right underneath them. They were very devout but could be impractical about some things. (Comment and photo by Alastair McIntosh who was at Kerema between 1977 and 1979 was a teacher.)

Photos by Alastair McIntosh used for educational purposes of the Bomana Seminary.



Above students at the Kerema school. Top photo, with Alastair



2. The second bishop of Kerema was Bishop Paul John Marx, M.S.C. (1988–2010)

Bishop Paul John Marx, MSC (born 12 March 1935 Mutzig, France) has been bishop of Kerema, Papua New Guinea since 29 June 1963. He was ordained by Archbishop Peter Kurongku as Priest of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Kerema on 13 December 1985, aged 50, and as Bishop of Kerema on 6 December 1988, aged 53. He retired in March 2010.

Obituary Note: It is with deep sorrow that I am announcing: our beloved Bp. John Paul Marx passed away yesterday, at 6:00am (French time). He is truly a great and zealous missionary, a holy man. Let us not just pray for his soul...let us put into our lives his great example of love and care for God's flock.



Photograph of the Kerema area.

Bishop Jean Paul Marx MSC was the 2nd Bishop of Kerema. His motto was "Heart of Christ, Heart of Paul" May the angels and saints receive his soul and present to God most High. Bishop Marx was a French missionary in PNG - and after completing his service, he returned to France.

19 JUN 2018: Paul John Marx MSC, bishop emeritus of Kerema (Papua New Guinea), died aged 83. He was ordained bishop on 13 DEC 1985.

3. Third Bishop of Kerema Patrick Taval, M.S.C. (2010-2013) Patrick was born in Papua New Guinea in 1956. He was ordained in 1984. He was auxiliary bishop in Rabaul 1999 2007. He became Coadjutor Bishop of Kerema (Papua New Guinea) (2007).

In 2012 Bishop Patrick Taval msc was the main celebrant at the BOISMENU COLLEGE GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS Patrick was a graduating student in the 1980s. Some forty and more concelebrating priests assisted, with an attendant crowd in the vicinity of five hundred. And as might be expected, the various contributions of musicians, singers, and dancers both religious and lay, of young and older, was a joy to share. Special guests were considerable, from the deputy prime minister of PNG, Leo Dion, Mark McDonald, msc, Superior General, Chris McPhee, msc, General Councillor, Sam Kaipu, senior lecturer in law at the UPNG, Dominic Tomar, an ex-MSM and now senior administrator with the Police Department in PNG, along with many other well known figures, e.g. George Tami msc, PNG Provincial, Martin Wilson msc (a retired lecturer from DBC), Adrian Meaney msc and Frank Dineen, msc, a past rector.

If there is one thing that Papua New Guineans love to do it is surely to celebrate. The staff, associates and students of De Boismenu College had planned for many months to fittingly remember the fact that the College had been in existence for fifty years. The day arrived on 6 October 2012 with fine and sunny weather, albeit it with some humidity that we southerners remembered with some discomfort.

A covered stage had been especially erected adjacent to the dining and community areas of the college. Thus the clergy were well catered for, under cover.



In Rome with Swiss Guards MSC Bishops with Swiss Papal Guards at St Peter's Rome. (L - R) Bishop Patrick Taval MSC, Auxiliary Bishop of Rabaul — originally a Tolai from PNG; Archbishop Karl Hesse MSC, Archbishop of Rabaul — originally from Germany; Bishop Ambrose Kapiseni MSC, Bishop of New Ireland — originally from Kavieng

4. Fourth Bishop Pedro Centeno Baquero, S.D.B.

(20 Jan 2017) appointed - the new archbishop of Kerema (web note).



Peter Baquero was born in Manila (Philippines) on September 15, 1970, and made perpetual profession in 1998 and was ordained in 1999 in Parañaque. From the period of his practical training in PNG he followed the missionary vocation *ad gentes*. After his ordination spent most of the time in the front-line mission in the Gulf Province of PNG – Kerema diocese (Araimiri and Lariau – 10 years), in the capital of Port Moresby (Gabutu Don Bosco Technical School), from 2014 to 2016 as the Superior Delegate (PNG-SI) and since July 9, 2016 as the first Superior of the newly established Vice-province of PNG – Solomon Islands (PGS) of Blessed Philip Rinaldi.

Catholic Diocese of Kerema is located in the Gulf Province, near to the capital city of Port Moresby and was established in 1971. Comprises the territory of 34.000 square kilometer, total population of 128.300, with 25.200 Catholics (20%), 10 parishes, five diocesan priests with seven religious priests (including our SDB community in Araimiri) and 14 religious sisters.

Bishop elect Peter Baquero will succeed Bishop Virgil Patrick Copas, MSC (1976-1988), Paul John Marx, MSC (1988-2010) and Patrick Taval, MSC (2010-April 9, 2013). For last three years Kerema diocese was vacant. The first mission entrusted to the SDB in PNG (1980) was in Kerema diocese with the Araimiri MHC Parish and Don Bosco Technical School. At present there are already two other SDB bishops in the PGS vice-province countries – Mons. Francesco Panfilo (Archbishop of Rabaul, PNG) and Mons. Luciano Capelli (Bishop of Gizo, Solomon Islands).

It is the first episcopal consecration of a bishop in the hard-to-reach town of Kerema. Despite the distance and the difficulties, 15 bishops, including 4 archbishops, among whom was ordaining prelate His Eminence John Cardinal Ribat, and around 40 priests concelebrated in this historic event for a diocese that waited 4 years before having again a local ordinary. The parents, 2 siblings and some friends of the new bishop were also there for the occasion. The new Bishop of Kerema adopted the motto, “*Caritate et Misericordia*,” which can be variously translated as “from, with, by, in Charity and Mercy,” referring to the Salesian bishop’s desire to continue to be a sign and bearer of God’s love and mercy for his people. It was great blessing with the presence of Bishop Pedro’s mum and dad and a sister and brother of the 11 siblings. The Salesians of Don Bosco were in attendance with their full support and commitment to their confere as well as to the Diocese of Kerema and the Church in PNGSI. With the presence and

co-celebration of 13 Bishops, the Apostolic Nuncio, Cardinal, Archbishops the Diocese of Kerema finally received a chief Shepherd after waiting for almost four long years.

Congratulations to the people of Kerema with the priests and Religious for at last you're all grace with a new Bishop who had taught many of your children who were students at Don Bosco Araimiri. Congratulations Bishop Peter Baquero sdb after the day's significant occasion for the good of the Diocese of Kerema. Notably is the overwhelming joy of so many to know at last Kerema now has shepherd. Thanks to Bishop Peter Baquero sdb for the souvenirs a worthy gift for the Bishops the specially made stoles and vestments for the occasion that every bishop in attendance took back to their various dioceses a fitting souvenir to always be united and pray for the people and leadership of Kerema.³⁸



Missionaries celebrate Golden Jubilee

February 4, 2021 The National

The Catholic congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny (SJC) marked 50 years of mission service in Papua New Guinea with a thanksgiving mass recently. The group of sisters who started their work in 1971 comprising of members from Australia, India, Philippines and PNG, continue to serve the people of Kamina, Kotidanga and Kaintiba local level government in the remote highlands of the Gulf. The golden jubilee celebration under the theme “Missionary disciples for a new world” was held at the St Joseph’s Parish in Boroko, Port Moresby with cardinal Sir John Ribat as the main celebrant.

Cardinal Sir John spoke of the Cluny Sisters’ mission as teachers in the field and their commitment to their missionary call despite many challenges in the remote areas of Gulf. “The areas you are sent to as missionaries are challenging and difficult places,” he said. “Although the mission was not easy, you continued to live and commit yourself to your missionary work. “As we celebrate this day, we are here to thank God for his blessings, love and care over the past 50 years.” He encouraged the sisters to “let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts and that whatever they do, whether in word or deed, they do in the name of the Lord Jesus.”.

³⁸ Web page.

Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny have worked in PNG for many years in the remote areas of Kerema and the Gulf. The Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny are called to announce the Good News, to liberate, empower and promote the dignity of the entire human person, as did women of hope foundress, Anne Marie Javouhey. In this spirit of being followers of the God of all Creation, we are committed to safeguarding the dignity and fundamental rights of all people in our care especially children and vulnerable adults. In the same way, we are committed to protecting the dignity and fundamental rights of all our members, especially the sisters in formation and the older sisters, as our relationships, one with another, reflect our call to follow Jesus.³⁹



*Sisters working in
the United States.
of America*



*Sisters of
St Joseph of
Cluny in PNG*



³⁹ General Chapter St Joseph Cluny Paris 2018

The Daru-Kiunga Province



Daru Island is an island in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea. It is one of the Torres Strait Islands. The town on the island is the capital of the province and houses the vast majority of the island's population of 20,524 (2009). Daru Island is elliptical in shape, with dimensions of 5.0 by 3.7 kilometers, an area of 14.7 km², and an elevation of up to 27 m. The island is separated from the mainland in the north, specifically the mouth of Oriomo River, by the 3.5 km wide Daru Roads. Daru Island is one of the few Torres Strait Islands that do not belong to Australia but to Papua New Guinea. It is also the most highly populated of the Torres Strait Islands, although scarcely any original Torres Strait Islanders live on the island.



Photographs Brian Mennis in the 1970s.

The headquarters of the London Missionary society was on Daru Island. Many of the descendants of the first Samoan missionaries live there still.



The main industry on the island is fishing although few fisheries are locally owned. The island has an international airport which is mainly used by Australian aircraft chartered by mining companies for customs clearance or to pick up jet fuel. Commercial flights service Daru Airport four days per week.

(Wikipedia)

1. Bishop Gerard Deschamps 1967 – 1999

Gerard Deschamps was born in 1929. He was ordained a priest of the Missionaries of the Company of Mary in 1954. In 1961 he was appointed prefect of Daru Papua New Guinea, In 1967 he was appointed Bishop of Daru and left in 1999 when he was appointed Bishop of Bereina.

Sister Rachelle noted:

January 1967 Father Gerard Deschamps has been the Apostolic Prefect of the Prefecture of Daru, Western District for seven years. During this time, MCM has opened a number of new outstations and other missionary Priests, Sisters and Brothers have arrived in the Western District of Papua New Guinea; the population of those adhering to the Catholic faith has also increased. The District now becomes the Daru Diocese with the Cathedral situated in Daru town and Father Deschamps is named the first Bishop of the new Diocese; in later years the diocese is renamed the Daru-Kiunga Diocese. Bishop Deschamps is ordained Bishop of the Daru Diocese at the Cathedral in Ottawa Canada, his native city. Sister Regina, Bishop's sister travels to Canada to attend this special ceremony with her parents and family.⁴⁰



Cathedral in Daru from the air

⁴⁰ Sister Rachelle Leblane *Journey of Blessings in Papua New Guinea*. 2015: 45

2. Gilles Côté, S.M.M., Bishop Emeritus

Bp Joseph and Bp Giles Côté SMM 1999 - 2021



Gilles Côté, was born in 1945 and ordained in 1970 as a priest of the Missionaries of the Company of Mary. In 1999 he was appointed bishop of Daru-Kiunga and retired in May 2021. Côté of the Missionaries of the Company of Mary and served the diocese for 22 years.

Kiunga, Western Province: The Diocese of Daru-Kiunga has a lot to be grateful for over the past 50-years, thanks to the committed and instrumental effort of Bishop Emeritus of Daru-Kiunga, Gilles Côté SMM.

These were the overall thoughts and sentiments expressed about Bp Gilles, by members of Daru-Kiunga's Diocesan Team Pastoral Animation, after a detailed chat on Thursday 9th September 2021.

Vicar General Fr Andrew Moses recalled how many of the deserved achievements and celebrations said that Bp Gilles definitely was a key player for the Diocese. "He has set the foundation for the Diocese's Pastoral Planning and Formation by promoting it and living it, bringing it this far particularly to this transition where we now have Bp Joseph Durero SVD," he said.

Fr Andrew said that although Bp Gilles was leaving, he remained optimistic and said he was prepared to collaborate closely with Bp Joseph to carry the Diocese forward. "We are glad to have Bp Joseph as our new Bishop and I believe he will do great in continuing with the people on their Journey of Faith, and the works of Bp Gilles. Judging from the way he has taken on board the introduction and involvement in the assembly, it has given us a sense of him taking on the responsibilities as the Bishop," he explained.

Parishioner of St Gerard's and Diocesan Women Coordinator, Mrs Joyce Hubert, thanked Bp Gilles for the inclusiveness of the Diocese's Pastoral Plan over the years that showed an extra care toward many who were disregarded by society. "In all our Pastoral Plans, Bp Gilles always emphasizes the need to always be 'Inclusiveness'. Many of which have been able to cater for our young people across the 13 different parishes where the majority of our Diocese is composed of. These are the people to continue with the program for the next change who will go on teaching the Diocesan programs in the Diocese," she stressed.

3. Joseph Tarife Durero, S.V.D., (53.59)

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - On May 23 2021, the Holy Father accepted the resignation from the pastoral care of the Diocese of Daru-Kiunga, presented by His Exc. Mgr. Gilles Côté, S.M.M. On the same date, the Holy Father appointed Fr. Joseph Tarife Durero, S.V.D., currently Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Madang, as bishop of the same diocese.

His Exc. Mgr. Joseph Tarife Durero, S.V.D., was born on April 13, 1969, in Dapa, Surigao, in the Philippines. He was ordained a priest on December 12, 1995. He belongs to the Society of the Divine Word. He completed his studies in Philosophy and Theology in the Philippines.



Since his ordination he has held the following positions: Assistant Parish priest of Holy Trinity Parish, Bogia (1996-1997) and of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Megiar (1997-1998); Parish priest of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish, Ulingan (1999-2000); Parish priest of St. Paul Parish, Mirap (2002-2009); Superior of the S.V.D. district in Madang (2008-2013) (2017-2019); Vocation promoter of the S.V.D. in Papua New Guinea (2009-

2010); Parish priest of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Yomba (2010-2017). Since 2017 he has been a member of the Board of the S.V.D. for Papua New Guinea; since 2013 Vicar General of the Archdiocese and since 2018 until now Administrator of the Cathedral of Madang. (SL) (Agenzia Fides, 24/5/2021)



CBCP News said Bishop Joseph Durero is the third Filipino bishop in Papua New Guinea. He joins Vincentian Bishop Rolando Santos of Alotau-Sideia and Salesian Bishop Pedro Baquero of Kerema. Held at the St. Gerard Cathedral, the episcopal ordination was presided over by

Cardinal Sir John Ribat of Port Moresby, with Archbishop Fermin Emilio Sosa as co-consecrators.

Born in Surigao del Norte province's Dapa town, the 53-year-old has been a missionary of the Society of the Divine Word in Papua New Guinea for more than 20 years. Pope Francis on May 23 appointed Durero as bishop of Daru-Kiunga, a suffragan of the Port Moresby archdiocese. At the time of his appointment, he was the vicar general of the Archdiocese of Madang.





Photograph Bishop Giles SMM., with Cardinal Ribat MSC and Joseph Tarife Durero, S.V.D.⁴¹ Bp Joseph Tribal Papua New Guineans of Melanesian race came in contact with the external world when Montfort Missionaries from Canada arrived in the late 1950's. Since then the church in this remote and undeveloped part of the world has brought faith, health and education to the people. Today the Catholic population is around 40,000 and makes up approximately 42% of the total population of the state.

The Church began its work in the remote villages by establishing schools and primary health clinics which have brought considerable improvement in the quality of life of the people. To this day the government of PNG works with the diocese to provide for the basic health and educational needs of the people. The area has few transportation facilities and depends on small planes to transport essential medical supplies and other necessities. In the absence of telephones, electricity and roads our only means of communication between parishes and the diocesan headquarters is two-way radio.

A very vibrant and energetic Church has emerged here over the past 40 years due to the hard work of the innumerable missionaries, some of whom have given all their working years in the service of these simple, yet happy and welcoming people. Having emerged in the post Vatican period the diocese promotes the Spirituality of Communion among all its faithful thus involving them in the decision making from the grass roots level.

One of the main challenges before the diocese is to raise enough funds to continue all these services in the formation of faith as well as other humanitarian and developmental activities. It is with the help of Catholics from Canada, the United States and Germany that the diocese has been able to accomplish so much over these years.

Photographs of Bishop Joseph's ordination and information used with his permission.

⁴¹ Photographs courtesy Cardinal Ribat.



In 1996 the people of the diocese were asked to share what they saw that was good and what help was needed while they were “on the journey.” The statement below is their dream for the the Daru-Kiunga diocese. Id like our Church to be a true picture of the Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about, where all people love one another like God: Father, Son and Spirit love each other. With the bishop as our leader, working

with the priests and their helpers, all of us would share our talents to make our Church strong and walk together as one people of God. The Diocese of Daru-Kiunga is a part of all the People of God. It is a Melanesian community that is alive and made of many different people who want to be one.”



Daru Island from the air

Description of Daru Island and the schools by Sr Rachelle.

“On February 9th, 1970, at Montfort Primary School, a group of 37 boys and girls of Standard IV anxiously wait for the coming of their teacher. At the General Assembly, Brother Charles Gareau, the headmaster and a Saint Gabriel Brother, introduces me to the school staff and to the pupils. Being the only female on the teaching staff, the girls’ face light up on seeing a Sister; she will certainly be a special helper in the organisation of their different school activities.”

“The Standards One to Six students of Montfort Primary School come from the Daru Catholic Corners and a number of pupils are from other religious denominations. On this overpopulated small island, bubbling with life exists also a government primary school. During the school year, sport competitions are regularly organised between the two schools and the teachers of both primary schools often share meetings to reflect on the contents of the different programmes.”



Children on Daru at a sports day.

“The Provincial Education Office, based on Daru Island is not far from Montfort School. In the bush stations we rarely receive visitors but in Daru I find that the inspector and other education officers often appear at the school. My students are proud to show off their accomplishments. I realize by his friendly inquiries that his aim is to learn more about the good functioning of the different learning groups of my students and the method of giving special care and encouragement to the pupils with learning difficulties.”⁴²

“Every morning for a number of years, a Daughter of Wisdom is seen leaving Sisters’ house riding a motorcycle to Bamu Corner. Sister Annette St Pierre then Sister Imelda Benoit and after Sister Desneiges Giroux dedicate days to the teaching of these far-away Bamu students. Sports and extra-curriculum activities keep our students busy after school. The Altar Boys Club is organized by Brother Charles and popular with the older School and Corner boys.”

“As a renowned educator, Brother encourages good behaviour and good manners from all the members. I animate a special gathering for the girls, known as Mary’s Club. The girls in the higher standards who are interested in joining the group attend weekly meetings after school hours. It is a venue to share events and behaviour in the family and school life. I also acquire knowledge on their culture. I visit their homes and become more attentive to their immediate needs.”

“During sewing activities, each girl learns to sew a blouse and a skirt; she proudly wears this distinct sign of the Girls Club membership. Missionaries of the Catholic Church on the teaching staff at the Daru Government High School are greatly appreciated not only by the headmaster, the teachers and the students but also by the Provincial Authority. These missionaries and educators help with vitality and understanding all the students in the secondary education classes. As mistress of girls, the Sisters have a noticeable influence on the girl students especially on those who are boarders and are from other parts of the Western Province.”

“Mr. Peter Baki, headmaster writes to Sister Bertha Tanguay; your outstanding contributions to the well being of the students and staff and the people of the Western Province marks you a true Missionary to Papua New Guinea whose prime concern is the development of PNG.”

⁴² Rachelle Leblanc 2015 : 68

“Daughters of Wisdom in the nursing profession are at different times on the medical staff of the Daru Government Hospital. The establishment constructed during the Second World War, cares for patients from all parts of the District. Expatriate doctors and nurses work alongside the local medical staff. Sister Aline Charbonneau is the first Canadian Daughter of Wisdom to work at the hospital.”

“During meetings with Bishop Deschamps and the parish priest the missionaries reflect and discuss on the contents of the themes presented to the Corner. At times the content is in preparation for the reception of a sacrament, at other times it is on the celebration of an important occasion. One Corner is assigned to a missionary. The presentations are given in the evenings twice a week under a house in each Corner.”

*Sisters doing a village visit on Daru Island
(Web)*



“The missionaries teach in English, it is then translated in the Kiwai language by a High School student. A kerosene lantern gives barely enough light to discern the faces of the adults who attend the session. A few Corner teenagers accompany each missionary to and from our residence. All the Daru Station missionaries are thus united in bringing the Good News to our Papuan people.”

“The Daughters of Wisdom are attentive to the needs of women prisoners incarcerated in the Provincial Government jail. The women prisoners, confined to a small room with the bare necessities are under the supervision of the warden’s wife. There are no organised programmes to help these women so the jail’s managers are happy to allow our weekly visits. Some prisoners accused of petty crimes are imprisoned for a short time, others for more serious crimes remain in jail for longer periods. The inmates appreciate receiving assistance and guidance during their time in jail and at the time of their dismissal from jail. We also reach out to their children and families.”⁴³

John Joseph Murphy District Commissioner of Daru and Kerema

Murphy was a defender of the Church in Daru and Kerema in the 1950s - 1960s

John Joseph Murphy was the oldest of 11 children. He was educated at Christian Brothers’ College, Maryborough, and St Joseph’s College, Nudgee. He became a patrol officer in New Guinea in about 1935 in Salamaua, Lae and Kundiawa. In 1941 in Rabaul, he married a Melbourne-born secretary, Marjorie Ward. At this same time, he was compiling the first dictionary of Pidgin English. In 1943 he was in Rabaul when the Japanese invaded and became a prisoner of war.

As with all POWs of the Japanese, John Murphy and his fellow prisoners endured random atrocities, overcrowding, appalling insanitary conditions, hard work in the hot sun, malaria and dysentery, with no medical supplies or attention. Most died. At night, Murphy stole food and anti-malarial drugs from the Japanese stores. He was tortured but still intervened to prevent others being beaten. He taught himself to read and speak Japanese, both to win concessions from the camp commander and to glean valuable information about their activities, some of

⁴³ *Rachelle Leblane 2015 : 68*

which he was able to get back to HQ through the local people. He kept prisoners' depression at bay through a tricky blend of badgering, humour, religion and the making of playing cards and cigarette-rolling machines.

Murphy believed he survived the prison partly because he was lucky, but his survival depended also on his being fit and strong when captured, on his knowledge of the jungle, his unshakable Catholic faith, and his determination to try anything, eat anything and stay positive. Murphy had been one of 63 prisoners in the Tunnel Hill camp only seven survived. He was the only Australian to survive.

He might have expected to receive a medal for his bravery and resourcefulness in keeping even these few soldiers alive. Instead, he was served with four serious charges, including treachery. Two of the charges carried the death penalty. The court-martial arose from information Murphy allegedly gave the Japanese when he was captured in October 1943. At the court martial the defence argued that Japanese documents had been incorrectly translated and that others had given this information to the Japanese under torture. The charges were based on a captured document purportedly a record of Murphy's interrogation when captured and statements taken by the Allies from Japanese soldiers at the end of the War. Defended by his cousin, the Sydney QC Eric Miller, Murphy was honourably acquitted of all charges.

After the war and the acquittal, John Murphy returned to PNG where he progressed to be District Commissioner of two of the largest districts of the Territory: Western and Gulf districts. These two districts were regarded as punitive and difficult. In 1969, with Marjorie and his son Kerry and daughter Dale, John Murphy returned to Australia, an intensely practical man... He bore no grudges and got on with life.... John Murphy had a sharp, irreverent, risqué wit, a superior intellect, a stubborn streak, inventiveness, charisma, amazing courage, a palpable love for his family and a level of optimism that defied reason. Murphy was a brave man, a hero still unsung. John Murphy died on 5 March 1997, aged 82.⁴⁴

John Murphy, a devout Catholic gave the Catholic Church full encouragement when he was District Commissioner in Daru in the 1950s and in Kerema in the 1960s. Electrical engineer, Mr Peter Metzdorf met John Murphy in Kerema in the 1960s when he was there for a few weeks' work. According to Peter, John Murphy should have a place in the mission history of PNG. He was unfailing in his encouragement of the Catholic Missions in both Daru and Kerema where Peter Metzdorf stayed several times on work assignments.

Until John Murphy arrived at Daru there was little involvement of the Catholic Church as the island was the headquarters of the LMS Mission. Through church channels Murphy encouraged missionaries of the Louis de Montfort Order in Canada to come to Daru and Kerema Districts and the Kiunga area and establish churches, schools and mission centres. Seventy years later there are now 40,000 Catholics in these two areas with the work of the three orders of the De Montfort in Canada including the Daughters of Wisdom,

When Peter Metzdorf was in Daru on another occasion in 1969, he noticed that a large cathedral was being built probably with John Murphy's support. The builders were Jimmy Earl and John Stubbs. John Murphy in conversation with Peter frequently mentioned the de Montfort Order with great enthusiasm. A Catholic primary school was begun, and new mission centres set up. All this happened in John Murphy's time according to Peter Metzdorf. (Interview with M. Mennis 2021).

⁴⁴ Condensed from Susan Kelly's obituary in *The Sydney morning Herald*,

Bishop Gilles SMM spoke at the Golden Anniversary of the Montfort missionaries in the Gulf and Kiunga.

Dear Friends and Benefactors, October 2018,

The journey of fifty years that the Brothers of St. Gabriel have walked with the Daughters of Wisdom and the Montfort Missionaries has been an on-going source of rich blessings for themselves, for the other Montfortian Families and for all our people. To decide to do mission work in such a remote and under developed place as the Western Province in Papua New Guinea is an act of faith and trust in God. To decide to come and contribute to establish the Catholic Church in so big a territory and without roads is a daring move.

Members of our three Montfortian Congregations always gave strength to one another. We never gave up on the life-giving presence of God. With the grace of God, we never gave up on the good people of the Western Province. Our motto was like the one of St. Gabriel Technical Secondary School: we can and we will. God is really good. The first Brothers came from Canada. Then some Brothers came from Singapore and Malaysia and finally they came from India. Altogether 38 Brothers of St. Gabriel came to work in our Diocese. The Brothers have been involved first of all in the education of our children.

Many of our adults are grateful that at a time during their life as students they were educated by one brother or by many Brothers. One aspect that has marked them for life is that the Brothers were trying their very best not only to give them good knowledge but also to build them up as mature persons, persons able to take on responsibility and bring growth to the Church and development to their people.

Besides education work the Brothers were involved in many other ministries and services. One was a pilot and electrician; one was captain on our boats for many years; one was responsible for the school of catechists and later became a priest; one was a jack of all trade, a good mechanic and able to construct our first bore wells; one was an excellent music teacher; one was a locksmith and good at directing the singing in the church; one was looking after the youth for many years; one upgraded Boys' Town to a High School; one was parish priest at Iowara for two years; one was in charge of our border students in Daru; and it goes on and on...

For me what is more important is that they were here in the name of Jesus and always tried to be good followers of Montfort their founder. And above all they were not here to gain anything for themselves but at the service of the people and of Jesus living in the people. Dear Brothers of St. Gabriel, thank you for that beautiful journey of fifty years with us and our people.

Thank you for still being with us today. Myself, bishop Gilles and my people, we hope and pray that more Brothers will come to our diocese because the needs are so many and various, and we badly need good laborers to make the values of God's Kingdom always take deeper roots in the hearts of our people. I know that you love Mother Mary. This is shown in so many ways. She also has been walking with you on that journey, as well as Montfort.

They cannot but be pleased with all your achievements for the people and with the people. May the good Lord be very generous to you all with his blessings especially with the blessing of local vocations! And may your exciting and gratifying journey with the people of the Western Province in the diocese of Daru-Kiunga continue for many years!⁴⁵

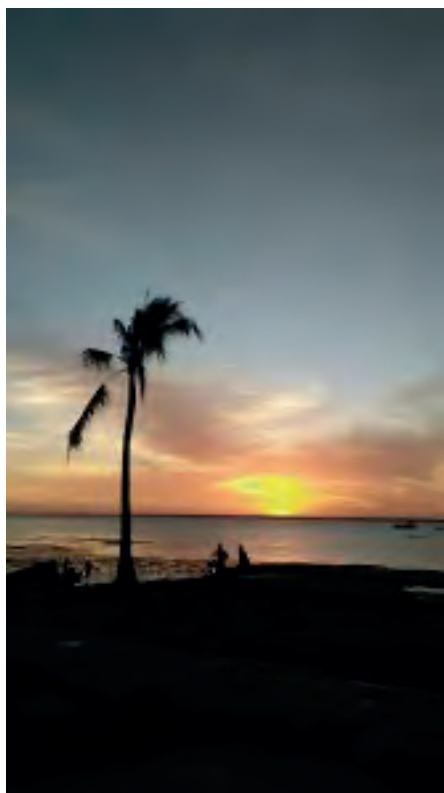
⁴⁵ Bishop Gilles, *s.m.m.*

Importance of the Jubilee.

The focus of the Jubilee was to reflect, appreciate and celebrate the arrival of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel in the Western Province and their tremendous involvement and contributions in education since 1968. The celebrations officially commenced on Sunday with a thanksgiving Mass attended by thousands of people followed by presentation of gifts, speeches, dances and culminating with a fellowship meal. It was evident that the education in Western Province since the beginning was accredited and acknowledged by all to the Brothers of St. Gabriel who dedicated their efforts in educating many people.

Their mission started in Daru Island with Brothers from Canada and gradually moved to Kiunga. The Brothers from Malaysia Singapore pioneered the mission in Kiunga and then relayed it over to the Brothers from India. Their mission included running of Boys' Town for disadvantaged boys, managing CODE for school leavers, running community schools and are currently managing St. Gabriel Technical Secondary School in Kiunga and St Charles Lwanga secondary School in Port Moresby. A cash donation was received from the Fly River Provincial Administration on behalf of the people of Western Province. The Brothers affectionately accepted the gifts and expressed their on-going mission in providing quality and excellent education service to the people of Papua New Guinea. Thank you, Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, for your great contributions.

Note: This brings us back to the story of John Murphy imprisoned in the war and sent to Daru and Kerema: both outposts afterwards. He became the District Commissioner in each place and being a devout Catholic encouraged missionaries to come in the 1950's and 60's. People who knew him recall his special request for the Montfort Missionaries to come to his areas. God Bless John Murphy.



PART NINE: AITAPE



A Village scene on Ali Island near Aitape

Diocese of Aitape web site:

October 28, 1896, the Society of the Divine Word established the Prefecture Apostolic of Wilhelmsland on Tumleo Island, Aitape. Fr. Eberhard Limbrock was Prefect Apostolic.

8th September 1906 - First report of St. Anna, Aitape, appears in SVD records. 280 hectares planted with coconuts and rubber trees, 100 head of cattle and 20 horses are introduced.

1914 - 1918 - First World War forces mission to close schools established in Aitape and other areas. Australian government takes control of New Guinea.

1942 - Japanese invade Rabaul and the North Coast.

1946. The First Franciscan Friars at the Aitape Mission in P N G.

15th May 1952 - Prefecture Apostolic of Aitape officially instituted under Monsignor Ignatius Doggett.

11th November 1956 – Aitape designated as a Vicariate Apostolic.

15th November 1966 - Diocese of Aitape set up along with all other missions.

In 1881, Pope Leo XIII entrusted the entire New Guinea mission to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, MSC, of France. They arrived on the island of Matupit, in East New Britain Province on 29th September 1882. They established another mission on Yule Island, in Papua, three years later. The Society of the Divine Word, SVD, were offered the missions of Eastern and Central New Guinea. The SVD missionaries arrived in Madang in August 1896 to establish

the Prefecture Apostolic, but could not stay as the ten hectares of land promised them were not available, they were stricken almost immediately with malaria and the resident Lutherans were not pleased to have Catholics moving in. A German plantation manager from Aitape chanced to be in Madang at the time and suggested the new mission start in Tumleo Island, next to his plantation, where the climate was healthier and the nearest Lutherans were 450 km away in Madang. It took six weeks to move men and material to Tumleo.

The efficient German missionaries had brought with them prefabricated buildings and 50 tonnes of cargo, but even so, there remained the daunting tasks of learning a new language, establishing relationships with the people and discovering their customs and beliefs. By 1914 there were 68 missionaries and 6 new stations established along the coast.

The Holy Spirit Sisters arrived in 1899, setting up schools, clinics and a printing press. Tropical plants, cattle and horses were brought in from Java and catechetical training centers sent pastoral assistants to new areas with spiritual and developmental change as their goal. Tumleo was too small and isolated to remain the center of an expanding enterprise and Alexishafen, near Madang, became the Headquarter with better communications and many facilities and training establishments.



SSpS Convent at Malol

The SVD missionaries established coconut plantations to help them be independent. St Anna was started at Aitape. Steffen: “In 1908, new mission stations were established on Yuo (Juo), a small island near Boikin. The missionaries on Yuo Island had to take care of many offshore islands, such as Karsau, Vokeo, Kairiru, Mushu, Walis and Tarawai, in the whole region

including the Schouten Islands. Further mission stations were established at Boikin, Matukar and Malol. In 1910, Yakamul and Ulau and, in 1911, Arop, between Malol and Aissano (Sissano) received a permanent mission station”¹.

In March 1901, another mission station was built on Ali Island, one of the three islands neighbouring Tumleo, and at the beginning of 1906, a community of sisters settled there. According to Wiesenthal By 1921 almost all inhabitants of Ali were Catholic. There are two venerable sisters working on Ali. The people of Seleu and Angel, the two little neighbouring islands, continue to shun the mission. (Wiesenthal 1921) quoted Steffen p 7. In 1910, missionaries settled among the Yakamul (Jakamul) people 15 hours’ walk eastward from Aitape, making Yakamul (founded by the Dutch priest Heinrich Wortel) one of the oldest Catholic mission stations in mainland New Guinea. Before 1910, the Yakamul people were taken care of by the missionaries of Ali.²

Fr Austin Crapp OFM wrote about the Corpus Christi procession on Ali

“Ali is a small island off the coast of Papua New Guinea, near the coastal town of Aitape in the northeast. About 400 people live there. Between 1896 and 1939, Steyl missionaries and

¹ Steffen p50

² Steffen p84

missionary sisters did missionary work on Ali. During the years of their activity, they established a very distinctive tradition in the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Obviously, the SVD missionaries of that time made a lasting impression on the people of the islands through a deep and pronounced Eucharistic devotion, because the Feast of Corpus Christi has survived unchanged to our time as the “Day of Ali”. Many Corpus Christi customs and forms of piety of the European Church were integrated into the feast on Ali, such as the “little angels” who scatter flowers in front of the Blessed Sacrament, so popular in Germany, or the decorated paths and the magnificent altars in the individual villages, etc. Over the years, however, these customs gradually took on a typically Melanesian coloration. The flowers used are frangipani and hibiscus, and the European songs have been replaced by native melodies. Every year, a small novelty typical of the country was integrated into the rite. Gunshots and the burning of firecrackers accompany the sacramental blessing at the processional altars, a “devil”, gesticulating wildly on huts or trees, follows the procession, a group of living dolls greets the passing procession. Numerous people of Ali origin who live in other parts of the

country regularly return to their home island for “Ali Day” or at least send gifts”.

Photograph-girls from Ali Island



“Corpus Christi thus became a day for the Ali people to show that they are special Christians with a deep Catholic faith. A development that led to a profound embedding of Corpus Christi devotion in the life routines of the islanders, a phenomenon that could perhaps be called a “reverse cultural exchange.”³

World War I

The Group photograph of Australian Navy and Military expeditionary force officers at German New Guinea in 1941. Lieutenant Read wearing white helmet on the back row. (AWM 02241), used with permission

Below; Officers' mess in Aitape with the welcome flag flying on the flagpole in 1914. (AWM 303342) used with permission.



“The First World War put an end to further expansion of the mission for a while but the missionaries used this time to consolidate their work.

After the First World War the two mission territories of Eastern and Central New Guinea

were formally divided and Fr. Joseph Loerks was appointed Prefect Apostolic of Central New Guinea. More missionaries arrived from Europe and the expansion continued along the coast and inland. Catechist schools were seen as an important tool of evangelization and contact and the sisters were invaluable in teaching the young men. The Prefecture became a Vicariate and Mgr. Loerks was ordained bishop in Germany.

³ Quoted by Steffen (SK May1991) p 79.



Convent with schoolchildren at Ali, 1920s

There were now two bishops in New Guinea heading a staff of over 200 male and female missionaries and the future looked bright. Over the years, Alexishafen flourished and became the centre of the S.V.D. mission stations in P.N.G. The Society of Divine Word spread to many areas along the coast establishing new mission stations and copra plantations, so that they could be independent. Alexishafen flourished under Bishop Wolf and a large cathedral was built there. It was surrounded by convents, schools, brothers' residence and the priests' house. It was from here that mission stations were opened in the highlands. Fr Blaes noted: "On Ali, the natural year is divided into two parts: on the one hand, a "good" and a "bad" time; on the other hand, 13 lunar months of 28 days each. The "bad" time (lalal) is the time of the rain and the northwest storms, The "good" time (nyenut) is the dry season with gentle south-easterly winds that make canoeing across to the mainland a pleasure and is therefore the time of travel for the Ali population (trading trips to the mainland, visiting trips to friendly tribes). During this time the island often seems to be deserted⁴."

The SSps Sisters did a lot of work in Aitape before the WWII war.



⁴ Blaes, 121, 123–124, 125)

Aitape between the wars.

“The missionaries who lived for decades in New Guinea had a deep insight into the culture and language of their people than ethnologists who came to New Guinea only for short research trips. As early as 1905, Fr Johann Klaffl had published his linguistic re⁵search on the Ali language⁶ In the Ali parish with its three islands, Ali, Seleu and Angel, the missionaries were eventually successful only on Ali. The inhabitants of the other two islands resisted evangelisation for four decades⁷ Writing from the Convent of the Immaculate, Ali, on 23 June 1952, Sr Sauermilch reports that the Seleu and Angel people had changed during the absence of the missionaries during the war: “We had still another big joy – Angel and Seleu, the two neighbouring pagan islands, became Catholic. We have been hoping and waiting for this for a long, long time, with the missionaries trying again and again, but to no avail because of their stubbornness. But at last grace has conquered”.⁸

World War II – Japanese Occupation.

The Japanese invaded in 1942, occupied Rabaul and went on to establish themselves on the mainland of New Guinea and the north coast of Papua. All European civilians except the missionaries, who chose to remain, were evacuated. Many missionaries were either killed or imprisoned by the Japanese forces and most of the facilities were destroyed.

The Japanese troops in Aitape consisted of approximately 30,000 to 35,000 men from the Japanese 18th Army. This force had suffered heavily during the Salamaua–Lae campaign in 1943–1944, as well as its failed attack on the American garrison at Aitape in July 1944. As a result, the Australian planning staff believed they faced three Japanese divisions—the 20th, 41st and 51st Divisions—all of which had been reduced to brigade-strength. The Japanese lacked air and naval support, and many troops were sick and short of food, with resupply efforts being limited to occasional deliveries by aircraft or submarines.^[8]

The Australian portion of the Aitape–Wewak campaign took place in northern New Guinea between November 1944 and August 1945. Aitape had been occupied by the Japanese in 1942. Recaptured by an American landing on 22 April 1944, it was developed as a base area to support the continuing drive towards the Philippines. In order to free American troops for the Philippine operations, defence of the area was passed to Australian forces. Troops of the 3rd Base Sub Area and the 6th Division began progressively relieving the Americans from early October 1944. Although their primary role was the defence of the base facilities at Aitape, Australian commanders opted to advance to the east of Aitape, towards Wewak, to destroy the remnants of the Japanese 18th Army⁹

Before the war, more and more mission stations had been opened along the coast, at Aitape and behind it in the Torricelli Mountains by the SVD missionaries. By December the same year the Japanese occupied Alexishafen. They had not bombed Alexishafen as it had a good harbour. The damage done to the mission station was mainly by the allied forces against the Japanese. The missionaries hid in the hills behind and watched their beautiful Cathedral being bombed.

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⁶ Page 79 Steffen

⁷ P 71. *ibid.*

⁸ Steffen

⁹ <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/E84658>

Later, many of the missionaries lost their lives on board the Dorish Maru, a Japanese boat when it was strafed by the American bombers after another Allied plane had been shot down. The SVD Order of priests and the SSPS sisters suffered in the war with a great loss of missionaries. To take their place, twenty Divine Word Missionary Priests from the States arrived in Brisbane aboard the S.S. Monterey in October 1944 to work in Madang and the highlands.

In 1952, Central New Guinea was divided and the Prefecture of Aitape established and entrusted to the Franciscans from Australia.

Segretaria Generale per le Missioni dei frati minori, Collegio S'Antonio Protocello 253/46	Solanus McNamara Minister Provincial, Australia
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Very Reverend Father,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 12th May, 1946. As the civil authorities have now permitted the German fathers of the Divine Word to remain in the Vicariate of Central New Guinea, there is no more question of taking over this mission, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide informed me on March 26th. However, the same Congregation proposes that the Australian Province sends missionaries to Central New Guinea with a view of taking over part of the Vicariate, division which could take place as soon as the new missionaries are sufficiently in possession of the language to take over the care of the Christians. For the arrangement of this affair it will be necessary that you put yourself in communication with Rev. Mgr. Van Baar, Apostolic Administrator of that Vicariate. In the meantime the fathers would work under the jurisdiction of the Ordinary of the Vicariate.

Hoping to hear from you again, I bestow on you and your Province the Seraphic blessing.

Yours sincerely, Valentine Schaaf, Minister General.



During 1946 some 18 priests and 14 SVD brothers who had survived the war arrived back in the Sepik District from Australia and were joined by 6 Franciscans who moved to the Aitape and Vanimo Districts, manning some SVD stations and moving inland over the Torricelli Mountains. The friars quickly consolidated and expanded their mission, which grew into the Vicariate and then the Diocese of Aitape.

Six of the seven original Franciscan missionaries to Aitape in Sydney Front row Michael Bevin, Ignatius Doggett, Matthew Darby, back row Raymond Quirk, Martin Schumack, James O'Meara. Missing Fr Ferdinand Parer who joined the group in Brisbane.

In 1946 the Franciscans were invited to take over the Aitape Province which had previously been manned by the Divine Word Missionaries. They had lost so many missionaries during the war, they could no longer staff the missions in the Aitape area,

Bishop Doggett wrote about their trip to New Guinea.¹⁰

Friday 15th November 1946 saw Frs Ignatius Doggett Michael Bevin, Matthew Darby, Raymond Quirk, Martin Schumack, James O'Meara. On the *S.S. Montoro* bound for Madang New Guinea Fr Ferdinand Parer was to come on board in Brisbane thus making a band of seven Australian friars leaving for their first foreign mission to be called the mission of St Francis Solanus Central New Guinea. The name of course was chosen to honour and perpetuate in the province of New Guinea of a great and exemplary Friar our then Provincial, Fr Solanus McNamara who was a calm and mighty figure in the earlier days of the Province in Australia. There was also possibly a personal element of respect and gratitude for everything Fr McNamara did for me as a young boy.

On the wharf to see us all off were parents and relatives of the Friars, friends and benefactors and I say, nearly every friar in New South Wales. The ship was overcrowded – people were sleeping in corridors or wherever they could find a little space. We had been allotted one cabin with four berths but we moved up onto the deck and slept there every night. The catering was also chaotic and we were a hungry crowd. When we arrived in Brisbane at 10.00 pm on Sunday 17th November 1946, Fr Aquinas Howell met us and took us to Kedron where he and Fr Fidelis organised a substantial meal for us [by now it would have been midnight at least] Fr Fidelis was genuinely delighted that we were going off on our own mission: it was God's will, he said, that it was to be New Guinea and not the Philippines. He considered it the crowning work of his own early labours from 1928 when he arrived in Australia with a commission to set up a Province, he gave us one hundred pounds to help us on our way. The following Monday we had tea at the Friary and left almost immediately for the ship which was due to sail at 10 pm. We had rather a rough trip to Moresby and arrived safely on 25th November. Fr Taylor MSC came aboard and invited us to the presbytery.

Fr Doggett did not arrive in Aitape until 22 March 1947 after many delays and he quipped "Four and a half months from Sydney to Aitape."

The seven Franciscan Friars Right: Back row Frs Martin Schumach, Denis Dobson, Ferdy Parer, James O'Meara. Front row Frs Michael Bevan, Ignatius Doggett, and Raymond Quirk.



In Aitape the SVD's had a large plantation at St Annas' and the problem was what would happen to the plantation once the Franciscans took over. They were anti-plantation for several reasons whereas the SVD had used the plantations both here and at Alexishafen for a means of supporting the mission.

¹⁰ Doggett: 57. *In Sequence In Time*

Doggett wrote about his view, stating that his mission had other means of support from Australia and the U.S.¹¹

I was certainly anti-plantation and so were all our fathers, I think, and this should be noted that it was not until after World War II that America and Australia took up the cause of manpower and money for Papua New Guinea which brought a new phase of mission activity in its course. In my view the biggest single objection to plantations was not the plantations themselves but owing to the price fluctuations of copra on the international market there had to be a certain amount of constant work and discipline to keep the plantations viable. The native population was in love with neither work nor discipline and when missionaries needed to enforce this, resentment often reflected back on the mission to the detriment of their otherwise excellent work in the spiritual field.

For this reason we never grew plantations ourselves but sometime later we accepted the St Anna Plantation as a gift from Bishop Arkfeld when he gave us Placet and Aitape as a headquarters for our own mission. We left the use and income of those plantations to the Bishop for the time being. Later we bought them from Bishop Arkfeld. We also bought two other plantations from him Tadjji and Tepir as an investment for the upkeep of our secondary schools but we never worked them so we leased them on a 75/25 basis to Mr Robert Parer and they remain so at the time of writing (November 1991).

Photograph Rob and Meg Parer and family in Aitape



Bob Parer and his son Rob formed an excellent team, setting up stores in Aitape and Vanimo. Their business was called W & R Parer Pty Ltd. Rob worked alongside his Dad for many years on the Aitape plantations Rob lived in Aitape for over 50 years, most of them shared with his wife Meg and their children, Anna Marie (RIP), Emma, Genevieve, Rebecca and Michael. During all this time he was a wonderful support to the Franciscans and kept an eye on cousin Fr Ferdy while he worked as a missionary in Aitape.¹²

¹¹ Doggett p 60.

¹² *The Parers of Aitape M. Mennis 24 April 2014.*

Bishop Doggett on the Aitape missions and missionaries

“The pre-war mission of St Anna in Aitape had been bombed out of existence. Fr Donkers SVD and Bro. Isidore SVD were living in little huts on the banks of the Raihu River. The welcome I received from these good men was tremendous and the same held when our other fathers when they arrived in Aitape.

Fr Donkers had spent several years at Malo, and Aitape pre-war and had also made two or three trips to the Lumi area over the Torricelli Mountains. Thus, he had most of the local knowledge at his fingertips and for the first couple of days we just talked and talked. On March 25, 1947, Fr Fastaenrath arrived from Sissano where he had been pre-war. He spoke Sissano and Warapu fluently.

“The Franciscans fathers then left St Anna and moved to Malol which was over four hours walk from Aitape, including two wide rivers that had to be negotiated. Here they found nearly everything had been destroyed including the pre-war church and the father’s house. The Sisters convent had only been strafed so they moved in there. For a while they continued to use Malol as their headquarters. St Anna at Aitape was still being used by the SVD missionaries as the headquarters for their plantations. This situation remained so for some time but then the Franciscans were able to set up their headquarters in Aitape. Bishop Doggett mentioned the six fellow missionaries who accompanied him on the first trip to New Guinea. and how he chose them.



Consecration of Bishop Doggett in the Mary Immaculate Church, Waverley (1956).

“None of our developments could have taken place had it not been for the wonderful body of missionaries I had with me and the backing of the Province in Australia.

The Province had agreed that seven fathers would go to New Guinea to found their mission and as I had been appointed the Superior I was, more or less, given a free hand in choosing the men from the list of volunteers who were to go with me. I picked young men in good health whom I judged could rough it in the conditions we anticipated.

And it was tough - the food was native – kaukau, taro and green leaves and meat came from what we shot in the bush. To get to some mission stations might take days of walking. For example, to go to the Wape area, it meant we had to climb over Mt Somoro (4,800 feet) to get there.

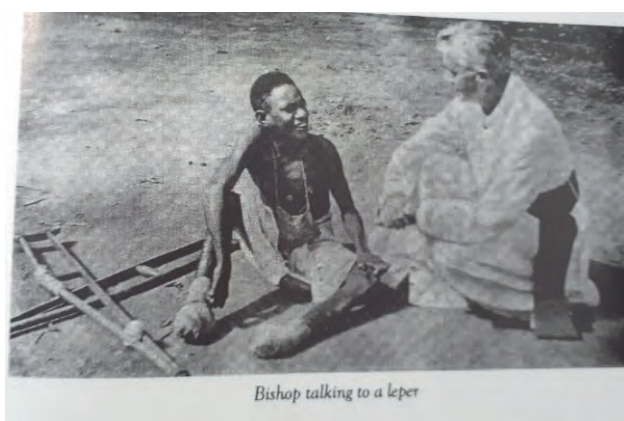
Fr Doggett became a Monsignor and then was consecrated Bishop in 1956

Under this photograph in his book Bishop Doggett proudly wrote "After Fifty Years" He noted that now there were friars amongst the national men

Looking back on all those years Bishop Doggett noted that it was not easy. They faced many problems:¹³

Our two most persistent problems were malaria and ulcers caused by infected leech bites. Malaria could strike very suddenly and within a couple of hours one could have a raging temperature and it would take anything from three days to a week to get rid of it. All we had was Atebrin tablets discovered during World War II. These turned our skin yellow but if persisted with they helped a little.

The ulcers were another matter. The leeches and mochas were in the jungle through which we had to walk especially on the bush trips. We stopped about every hour to de-leech and de-mocha with kerosene. Doing this hourly generally got rid of them and stopped the development of ulcers. On one occasion Fr Michael Bevan was bitten so badly by leeches that he could not walk and had to be carried out. We eventually healed the ulcers but his legs were scarred for life.



As time progressed the missionaries set up large mission stations and then began to map the roads between them. This was particularly so in the Lumi and Nuku areas and to peg out these roads was an arduous task. With the advent of the roads the problems of the leeches tended to dissipate. Similarly the new malaria drugs like Chloroquine malaria was brought under control.

The bishop added: We rejoice in these advances and progress and I mention them

solely so we may salute the first fine and wonderful body of men who pioneered the New Guinea mission without the benefits that came later.

Excerpts of "Ferdie: the story of Fr Ferdinand Parer" OFM

Fr Ferdie was a Franciscan missionary in Aitape after the war. He was one of those men mentioned by Doggett above.¹⁴ When the call had gone out for volunteers, Father Ferdie was happy to apply. He had heard so much about the country: it was the place where many of the Parer family had gone in the pre-war years in search of adventure and gold; his cousin Ray Parer had been one of the early aviators there; it was the place where his brother, Damien, had filmed the Australians at war and it was the place where his cousin Kevin Parer had been killed by Japanese fire as he was

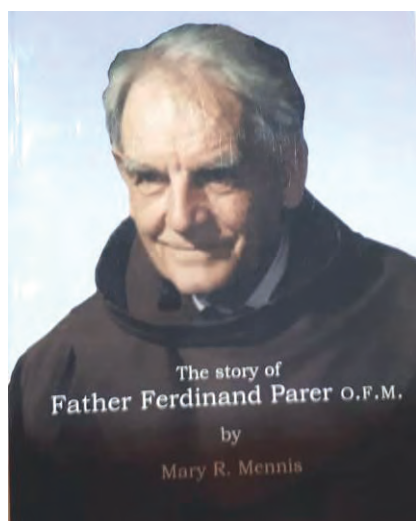
¹³ *Sequence in Time* by Doggett p 79.

¹⁴ *Ferdie: the story of Fr Ferdinand Parer* by Mary Mennis

rescuing evacuees. Australia resumed control after the war until 16th September 1975, when Papua New Guinea became an independent country with a parliamentary system of government.

Fr Ferdinand Parer was one of the first seven Franciscan friars in Aitape. Between 1946 and 1967, he was a missionary in Papua New Guinea: years full of adventure and fulfilment. He came to love the coastal people around Sissano and the inland people beyond the Torricelli Mountains - an uncontrolled or newly patrolled area. Ferdy revelled in the life. He became one with the people, living in their houses and sharing their food. Some have thought he was socially isolated because of the weeks he spent in the bush, but he was rarely on his own. The villagers he met became his friends and accepted him as they accepted few other Europeans.

Father Ferdy explained that there were two main ways of establishing mission areas: one was by intense work in one station, building schools and hospitals; the other was to work extensively covering as much area as possible, placing catechists in remote stations. Father Ferdy used the second system, claiming people for God in as wide an area as he could. Children under ten could be baptised unconditionally and this he did many times. Those over ten needed instruction before baptism. His focus at this time was on saving as many souls as possible.



Fr. Ferdy studied the maps to find the place of his new appointment - near the border with Dutch New Guinea. He learned that the coastal region of Aitape was flat with some swampy areas but the lagoons and offshore islands made it sound very tropical. The rugged terrain of the Torricelli Mountains rose steeply behind the mountain plain. He heard stories of the many different groups of people who lived in the

mountain ranges which were still labelled uncontrolled. Coastal people had been contacted in the German colonial times late last century but there were still stories of attacks on government patrol parties.

Fr. Ferdy sought out some of the S.V.D. missionaries who had been evacuated in the war and learned all he could about the history of the Society of the Divine Word Mission. Their missionaries had first gone to Aitape in 1886 when it was under the German Colonial Government. The first group of five missionaries, led by Fr Limbrock, bought land on Tumleo Island opposite the coast of Aitape. Later they bought land at Lemieng on the mainland and at Sissano. However, it was not until September 1906 that Fr Limbrock was able to buy land at Alexishafen, near Madang even though it had been their first port of call on 13 August 1896. The squabbles that Fr Limbrock had to endure with the German Government were legendary. The New Guinea Company wanted all the land for itself for plantations. In 1934 the SVD missionaries advanced into the Western Highlands as far as Mt Hagen. Fr Ferdy read about Fr Ross and his explorations in the highlands and he hoped to emulate him one day.¹⁵

¹⁵ *These interviews with Fr Ferdy are interesting. Fr Ferdy kept a diary for a few years but when he came back from leave he found they had all been thrown out so he never kept a diary again. These interviews cover detailed memories of his time there.*

The Friars knew they would need to have strong physique to survive in a place like New Guinea; a strong physique and a commitment to the task which lay ahead, establishing missions in the area. They all fitted this category and looked forward eagerly to their new field of endeavour.

The Friars were on the first boat back after the war in 1946. Six of them boarded the Montoro in Sydney and Fr. Ferdy joined them in Brisbane. As he was leaving, his cousin presented him with a little dog which he called Bozo. He thought he would be able to keep it with him in his cabin on board the boat but the cabins had all been taken by women and children and company personnel. He was given a deck chair and a bit of deck space. Bozo out of sight, with only the little head peeping out of his bag, whimpered.

“What have you got there?” demanded the steward.

“It’s my dog, Bozo.”

“You can’t have that here. He’ll have to go in a cargo hold with the other animals.”

So Bozo spent the trip crated with the cattle and horses and other dogs and Ferdy paid 35 shillings for his ticket. This Bozo dog of his was a worry for Fr Doggett at the time as it got him into trouble with the authorities, but he could see it meant a lot for Fr Ferdy.

Like all those travelling to New Guinea, Ferdy had to get used to the heat and humidity. In his cramped quarters on the boat his tension increased and he had a few nights of sleep walking much to the consternation of his fellow friars - they kept thinking he would jump overboard in his sleep.

After the first glimpse of the rows of coconut palms, the bright blue water and the colourful people, he was hooked. Here was a place he could carry out much work for God. He travelled with the other Friars on the M.V. Montoro as far as Lae, where he left them to visit his brother, Ben. Lae had seen some very heavy action during the war.

It was near here at Salamaua, that his cousin Kevin had been killed by the Japanese in 1941 while courageously returning to evacuate more civilians. The area was in ruins: kunai grass covered the remains of the town; a few Australian ANGAU officers were living in tents. Amongst them were cousins Ray and Ben Parer. Father Ferdy was worried about Ben who was an alcoholic and in poor health.

Bishop Doggett (speaking in 1997), takes up the story:

That dog of Fr Ferdy was a nuisance. It got me into a bit of trouble with the authorities as we should not have had a dog with us. Ferdy got off the boat at Lae because of illness and to meet his brother, Ben. Later he went to the airstrip and when a pilot turned up to fly a plane he asked him which way he was flying. That was the usual way it was done in those days. There were no such things as tickets. Eventually he found one that was going to Madang. (*Interview M. Mennis*)

Meanwhile on 5th December 1946, the rest of the Friars travelled on to Madang with its waterways and lagoons. The once beautiful town was no more. All had been bombed. There was hardly a building left standing and the old colonial houses dating from German times had been destroyed. ANGAU - the Australian Army Unit had put up a few tents and some native style huts. From there, the Friars caught a boat to Alexishafen which was the centre of the Divine Word Mission. The devastation in Alexishafen was just as bad. The once fine cathedral which had dominated the mission was now a heap of rubble. Mission houses - hospital,



convents and priests' quarters had been flattened. Everywhere there was evidence of the war - wrecks of planes and boats were stark reminders of the destruction and bombing that must have occurred.

The Friars were welcomed by a group of German S.V.D. Missionaries at Alexishafen, with the singing of the Te Deum and other hymns of praise. Monsignor Van Baar SVD was in charge. As he was a German national, he was suffering from the strong anti-German feeling amongst the Australian soldiers in the ANGAU army unit in Madang, with whom he had to deal. Father Doggett finding it easier to communicate with his fellow Australians acted as Father Van Baar's secretary during the waiting time. The Friars knew it might be weeks before a boat could take them to Aitape so they busied themselves around the mission stations and learned some Pidgin English.

Meanwhile, Fr Ferdy had flown into Madang and made his way to Alexishafen. There he met up with an SVD missionary returning to his station up the Ramu River. When he invited Ferdy to join him, he eagerly accepted. They took a boat to the mouth of the Ramu River and had to walk 50 miles inland. Fr Ferdy was strong and anxious to see the Ramu station. He hoped to learn a lot from the SVD missionary.

However, the missionary took advantage of his presence to go off on a circuit of his other stations. It was Ferdy's first night alone on a bush station. He crouched in the house with only Bozo for company and listened to the sounds of the night. The village on one side was holding a wake and on the other side there was a singsing! All night long the people wailed and thumped their drums. He wondered when they were going to come and get him. He prayed that night as he had never prayed before. But the dawn came and he had survived. He spent 21 years on the missions, but of all the nights, that first night was the most memorable. He had heard tell of head-hunters and for all he knew this was in store for him too!

As soon as he could, Ferdy returned to the coast and caught a small boat to Aitape where he waited for Fr Doggett and the other Friars. Some of the missionaries believe that he walked the whole way from Wewak to Sissano - a distance of 100 miles across very rough terrain and swift flowing rivers, but he denies this.¹⁶

The hundred miles he walked were up the Ramu River to the mission station and back to the coast. This independent spirit he showed was to be an advantage on his long, lonely patrols in uncontrolled areas where he could not rely on his fellow Friars. Nevertheless, he was glad to see them when they arrived at Aitape and they exchanged stories of their first impressions of the country and the people.

Sissano/ Warapu

In 1949, Father Ferdy was appointed to Warapu, near Sissano on the coast. It was a beautiful place near a lagoon of the same name. The lagoon was about six feet deep and two miles across. Canoes were paddled across the lagoon as the only form of transport between the lagoon and the sea. There were a quite a few villages nestling under the coconuts. There was Sissano, Malol, Warapu.

The houses were kept neat and clean and the kunai grass was cleared to give access to the water. The villages were large, holding several thousand people. A wide track ran along the two mile strip between the lagoon and the sea. Each village consisted of many groups of houses and then a track led to the next village.

¹⁶ Mary Mennis interviews with Fr Ferdy.

From the morata roofed houses the children would emerge to swim and dive into the lagoon from overhanging trees. Crocodile alerts were sometimes given and everyone would clear out of the water.

Fishing from canoes on the lagoon took up a lot of their time. At certain times of the year they would poison the fish in the lagoon at the turn of the tide and then everyone would be out in their canoes jabbing at the fish with their spears. The women jumped into the water and netted them one after the other and threw them in the bottom of the canoe - the outlet from the lagoon to the sea would be blocked off to stop the fish from escaping.

There was always a large feast afterwards and Fr Ferdy and the other friars would have plenty of fish for the following days.



Father Ferdy's jovial character endeared him to the children. Wherever he went, they would come out to greet him and shake his hand. He joked with them in pidgin English or their own language which he eventually mastered. In the villages he sat and chatted in the villages to the men and sometimes shared a meal of fish and yams but he was too busy to go fishing himself. His work took him out to other villages as well.

Children in Sissano village

Old Warapu Village before the tsunami



Before the war, the Sissano Mission near Aitape had been run by Fr Fastenrath, an SVD missionary. He had a great name among the people and had prepared them well for baptism. Because he had been in Australia when war broke out, he had survived and was able to give the Franciscans some useful advice. He travelled to Sissano and introduced the Friars to the local people. Fr. Fastenrath spoke very highly of the Warapu people and particularly recommended

their catechist, Joseph Abebe, whom he regarded as the one good friend he had made amongst the local people.

Joseph was an unassuming man and was delighted to meet the Friars and know that once again his people would have a missionary. During the war he had buried the chalices and parish books. When the Friars arrived, he produced these chalices and books and handed them over. Warapu Village, which was part of the Sissano area, was Father Ferdy's first appointment and he remembered his first meeting with Joseph:

'When I went to Warapu, Joseph said to me, "We've got to build a church."

I answered "I haven't got any money, but I have cartridges and a gun".

Joseph said "Well, OK appoint 20 young men to build a church out of bush material and we will get three men to go out and shoot pigs and give them meat. What meat we don't eat we will exchange for sago from saksak".

The roof was made of morata and pungal from the sago palm. Bow saws were used to cut the timber and the adze to shape it. We had the altar and at the back of the altar was this screen and that was where I slept and had my meals outside. Joseph Abebe would spend up to three hours before the Blessed Sacrament. He was a very religious local man. I thought this man must be a saint." Once the church was finished there was a grand opening. Monsignor Doggett went hunting with the Warapu men for pigs and the men speared three of them for the feast

Doggett wrote:

We had a solemn opening of the church, and it was disclosed that the Warapu church was twenty feet longer than the Sissano church. One up on Sissano! The Warapu were and remain a very good people. After Fr Ferdy and catechist Joseph instructed them for two years, they were baptised in a group with four fathers helping in the work. There were ninety-nine for baptism but try as we might we could not find one more person to make it up to one hundred. At Easter we had over 700 communions at Sissano and 400 at Warapu. Fr Fastenrath SVD was of tremendous assistance and the more I lived and spoke with the man the more I admired his dedication and priestly life.¹⁷

Fr Ferdy might praise Joseph the catechist at Warapu, but he did not mention all the work he did himself and the prayers he said. He studied the Bible continually and said his office faithfully. He lived roughly and slept behind the screen in the church and would have eaten local taro and yams and greens with coconut milk outside beside a fire. At least the smoke from the fire kept some of the mosquitoes at bay. If the mosquitoes were too fierce, he would hasten to his bed and tuck the mosquito net under the mattress on the floor. The ever-faithful Bozo was never far away. However, sometimes when the mosquitoes were not too bad and they had both said their prayers, he and Joseph would chat about the Warapu people.

The Warapu people in the time of pre-history had come over from the Dutch side of Papua New Guinea and did not get on too well with the neighbouring Sissano people. This was because in German times, the Government allocated some of the Sissano land to the Warapu: a coastal section and also an inland area for their gardens. The Sissano always resented this and the bad feeling remained for a long time.

At first the Warapu had settled on the inland side of the lagoon where they had their gardens. Fr Fastenrath was with them and trained catechists, including Joseph. They built a church there from bush materials. Then one of the catechists living near the church was unfaithful. His wife was really upset and set fire to their house. The wind blew the flames towards the church, and it was

¹⁷ Doggett (nd) p 68

burnt down. Several people were killed in the fire and the people decided to move from the garden site as they thought it was haunted and was associated with death and destruction. That was when they decided to move to the beach side of the lagoon while still retaining their garden sites. But the new site was far from stable. The area had been swamped by tidal waves that had spilled over into the lagoon several times. The old people could point out where several islands once stood in the lagoons and where more land was rising from the sea. Their environment was ever-changing. [This decision to move to the beach site made them vulnerable when the big tsunami came in 1989 and Warapu Village was wiped out and many perished].

on the lagoon

Sr Agnella p77

There were some negative aspects to Ferdy's life: he was always on demand; the heat and humidity were enervating; the mosquitoes brought fevers; rats lived and multiplied in the ceiling of his house and were noisy at night when the snakes chased them. Of all the people he ministered to in P.N.G. the Warapu were his favourites. Later when he went inland, he took some of the Warapu catechists with him to the new areas and they proved to be wonderful at the job Ferdy found Joseph was a kind, gentle soul. He was a widower and after some time decided to marry again. He asked Ferdy for 'clothes meri' to give the new wife. One thing for sure she would not have been a Sissano woman. There were very few inter marriages between the Warapu and the Sissano people.



on the lagoon at Sissano

The Assistant District Officer at the time was Bill Brown and he did excellent work building bridges and fixing roads. When it looked as if he was being transferred Monsignor Doggett protested, in a letter to Aitchison:

"True it is that over the past four or five years Aitape has been singularly blessed with excellent officers of your department, but Mr Brown has been the 'Daddy' of them all. I would like to mention in a special manner the work he has done on the Raihu Bridge and which is only half completed. He has developed this work into a community effort and both the mission and business interests of Aitape have made manpower, material, equipment and money for the project. I feel that if Mr. Brown is taken away suddenly this whole effort will lapse."



Bill Brown's map of his patrol posts in the 1950s when he was the Assistant District Commissioner in Aitape¹⁸

Robert Parer;

As we employed over 150 workers on the plantation, we were not allowed to send our staff to the Aitape Health Centre. We had a small clinic at each of Tadj, Tepier & St Anna. As there was no Health Centre in the Nuku area, Bert would accompany the Patrol Officer & treat villagers on the way. When the patrol came back, there would be many bad cases carried. Also I would see walking through Tadj Plantation, a long line of villagers who would take the opportunity to come to the coast to sell their tobacco leaves & purchase salt.

When I got there in 1954, at St Anna Plantation just near the present Catholic Mission office, there was a heap of large beer bottles left over from the war. It was about 50 metres long and 3 metres high by 3 metres. The bottles were a treasure for the Nuku people to fill with salt & take back home.

Of course the bottles could also be broken to use for shaving. The massive heap didn't last long! We would buy the tobacco as it was good quality. We would put it in a 44 gallon drum & press it down with a timber jack between the floor beams of our house. This way it would last up to 6 months. By the Territory of PNG workers' law, we had to provide stick tobacco or tobacco leaves every week with newspaper for rolling it. The crazy rules made by bureaucrats in Canberra! The blankets we had to provide were wool & a Labour Inspector would check the weight of them.¹⁹

Although the SVD's had moved out of Aitape, they still controlled the Aitape copra plantations which the Franciscans were not interested in. When Bishop Arkfeld was appointed Bishop of

¹⁸ *Kiap's chronicle 20 October 1955 Keith Jackson site April 2014. used for educational purposes*

¹⁹ *Posted by: Rob Parer / 23 October 2016*

Wewak in 1949, he assigned Brother Isadore SVD. to manage these plantations. When the Bishop flew in to see Brother Isadore, Fr. Shelley SVD went along and met Father Ferdy. They became firm friends over the years.

Meanwhile Father Ferdy continued his work in the Warapu Parish. About half the people were already Catholics from the missionary effort of Father Fastenrath. With Joseph's help, the rest were taught by Father Ferdy. Many times Monsignor Doggett remembered, the big baptismal ceremony when they could not make the number up to 100. Monsignor was invited to help at the ceremony and because of the numbers involved, he had asked Rome to see if they could shorten the baptismal formula and put it in the plural but was unsuccessful.

The Warapu Church was a long building at the edge of the village which was built between the lagoon and the sea. Some of the houses were built over the water, while coconut trees grew everywhere. The influence of the mission was strong. Each Sunday the villagers crowded into the Church and heard Father Ferdy preach. He was easy to listen to as he liked to teach through story telling, an age-old art in New Guinea. They could apply the moral of each story to their everyday life. Traditionally their world had been peopled by the spirits of their ancestors whom they had to appease. They believed in an after-life where they would join their ancestors so it was easy to teach them about a happier life in the here-after.

Monsignor Doggett had wanted the Franciscan Sisters of Mary in the Aitape Mission for quite a while and he got his wish in 1949 when four of them left Australia for their new work.

Arrival of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary at Aitape

30th August 1949 ²⁰

A journey to an unknown land called "The Land of the Unexpected"



The sisters stood on the deck and waved as the boat sailed down the Brisbane River in the dusk – bound for Sissano, Papua New Guinea, the first mission from Australia to be opened.

The first stop was Samarai (called *Alotau today*) on Saturday 3rd September. They spent the night on the boat. On Sunday 4th September Br. Kinnane, MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart) went to the boat from the Sacred Heart Mission

On Wednesday 30th August 1949 four Sisters, Mother M. Agnella O'Callaghan, Sisters, M. Rose Wooden, M. Leo Dywer and M. Agnes Lola Jordan, prepared themselves for a long trip to an unknown land, "*Papua New Guinea, the land of the Unexpected.*"

His Grace Archbishop Duhig came to see the sisters off and gave them his blessing. They boarded the MV Malaita and set out for Madang, in PNG. There were friars, sisters, friends and St Anthony's school children present to bid farewell the sisters.



²⁰ (Published: 11 November 2019) used with permission

on Sideia Island and took the sisters to spend the night in the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The sisters attended Benediction in the mission church and attended Mass the following morning.

Fr. Errol, MSC showed the sisters around the mission and took them back to the MV Malaita. When they returned to the boat, they received a radio message of welcome from Fr. Ignatius Doggett OFM, the friar who invited our sisters to work with women, girls and children in Sissano, Aitape.

On Wednesday 7th September, the MV Malaita left Samarai heading for Rabaul. After two days the sisters arrived in Rabaul. Shortly after they arrived, a boy from the Catholic Mission went on board and took them to the sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. They stayed with the sisters all day and returned to the boat to sleep. On Wednesday 14th September, the Malaita arrived in Madang around 7:00pm. Shortly after the boat arrived, Bishop Leo Arkfeld, SVD (Society of the Divine Word) and another priest went on board to welcome the Sisters.

On Thursday 15th September the Sisters went to Alexishafen and met Bishop Appelhans, SVD. On Friday 16th September, they boarded the little plane (called Dragon) piloted by Fr. Hoff. They set off for Sissano, the place they had been missioned to. The plane arrived at Sissano around noon.

At the airstrip waiting were Fr. Michael OFM, and a crowd of people. Fr. Michael gave the sisters a hearty welcome. All went to the church where Fr. Michael welcomed the Sisters in Pidgin, and the children prayed and sang. They all continued to the convent which was well decorated with natural coconut palm leaves and flowers and a big "Welcome" sign hung from a coconut tree to the convent. The sisters were now at their new home after the long journey. Fr. Ignatius, OFM and Fr. Anslem, OFM arrived soon after the sisters arrived.



The Sissano Church

For the Sisters this was a long journey to an unknown land. Their YES to go to this foreign mission was one of faith, trust and confidence in God's love.

Sister Agnella described their new abode:

The Convent was built from wood from the bush, unplanned, unpainted, unvarnished. The walls did not reach the roof; they came up about five feet and then nothing. The posts were small trees. The roof was of morata, a kind of thatch woven from the leaves of the sago palm. There was no ceiling. There were no doors or windows, only the spaces for them.



Photograph: the new convent

The roof soon became the home of rats, lizards and centipedes. One night we were sitting around the table in the big open room when Sister Rose was reading to us. It was dark outside; the sea

was thundering in our ears. Plop! On the table near our lamp fell a baby rat. Soon another one, but this one hit Sister's head. Sister Rose went on reading. I waited for the next rat to fall. We could hear squeals and rustling overhead. My umbrella was beside my chair, and I quietly opened it up. That would save me from the next baby rat. Sr Rose glanced up. She burst out laughing, and so finished the night's spiritual reading.²¹

Sister Agnella remembered her first Sunday Mass at Sissano:

Mass in the crowded Church, children up the front, women on one side and the men on the other, all kneeling on the sand or sitting on the six-inch high wooden platforms .. Sisters on the home-made, rickety kneeler inside the front door. Every woman has a baby ... some have two or three. I can't watch anything but the mothers and children. Where's the priest? Up the front somewhere! I can't see or hear him.²²

Father Ferdy rode his light Honda bike from Warapu Village each morning to say Mass for the Sisters during the week. He had learnt Pidgin English and helped the Sisters to communicate with the local people until they also learnt Pidgin.

²¹ pps 60-61 Sister Agnella's book

²² *ibid*



Sr Francois Wridgeway was with the pioneer Franciscan Sisters who first came to Aitape in 1949, being based at Sissano where they had a clinic. The only doctor in the large Sepik District, the popular Dr John McInerney, was based at Wewak and owned a small Auster plane. He would call at Sissano occasionally to give a helping hand.

Some of the people saw the importance of education for their children who attended the mission school during the week people. There were two schools. One at Sissano and one at Warapu.

Each morning, two of the sisters rode their bicycles to Warapu to teach in the school with “Murphy” the mission dog leading them down the track. There were nearly four hundred children in the school but on wet days, attendance was down. The sisters were amazed at the state of the classrooms and had to be careful where they walked as the termites were eating the floorboards. They cheerfully made do with the few books they had.²³

In the beginning it was not easy to live in this part of Papua New Guinea. The Sisters had to adapt to a new environment, with its own culture, language, food, etc. Their bondedness in community through prayer, Eucharist, community life, sharing in ministry, helped them to settle in this foreign land. They were grateful that they had the Franciscan friars who were a great support to them.

Miwautei/ Fatima/ Lumi

Before the war, several SVD missionaries had climbed the Torricelli Mountains but had not set up any stations. Soon after the Franciscans arrived Fr James O’Meara OFM had climbed the Torricelli Mountains and had set up a station there.

Bishop Doggett remembered this trip by Fr James:

The missionaries walked in there. Climbed to 4,800 feet climbed over Mount Somoro walking up and down the peaks. Father James stayed at Lumi for a month and cleared an airstrip for Bishop Arkfeld. In those days the expeditions could not be very long because the missionaries ran out of food. It was impossible to climb up and down the mountains with a lot of food.

Monsignor Doggett planned a bigger excursion of the Franciscans.

In 1949, a group of Franciscan missionaries set off for the Torricelli ranges - few Europeans had been there before but Father Ferdinand felt strong and eager for the task. The line of boys stretched out carrying the cargo. First, they followed the rivers along the slippery track. For many miles they walked on the gradually sloping track and came to the foot of the Torricelli Mountains. They made an over-night camp there and prepared for the climb. The next day the mountain track began to rise steeply. They climbed a peak only to find a valley and another peak ahead.

Rests were called beside rushing creeks tumbling downwards towards the river. Ferdy looked up at the mountains ahead and knew that his future work lay in those mountains. His health was good;

²³ *Agnella: 64*

he was stoic and could survive on very little; besides it was a great adventure to be far from civilisation and bring the word of God to so many. He worked his legs overtime even when they were ready to drop. If he were to conquer these mountains then his legs must be strong and sturdy like the carrier line men who could carry heavy loads while pumping their leg muscles up the mountain tracks. Effortlessly they crossed the log bridges and climbed the muddy slopes with bare feet oozing mud.

They walked three quarters of the way up the mountain the next day. It was cold that night and they had a fire to warm themselves. Early the next morning they climbed to the top and down to a place called Miwauti (now called Fatima). It was near Lumi.

Fr. Ferdy talked about this trip:²⁴

In PNG 14 of us missionaries set out on a journey - it was supposed to take only one day but it took two and half days and we had to live on 1/2 kilo of meat bamboo shoots and edible leaves of trees - it gave us a tremendous freedom of spirit and I realised then that the fewer my needs are the freer I am. I can see God's people and his creatures in a new light and it made me realise that in poverty there is richness and in weakness, strength.

The first village they came to was in an uncontrolled area, but they did not carry arms. An old SVD priest had advised them never to enter a village unless they had permission. They always followed this advice and they took some ex-mission boys or a plantation worker with them. Monsignor Doggett would ask them to go into a village and get permission to visit the next village. They did this and the missionaries were able to advance easily and followed this policy in future.

In 1949 Fr Ferdy was posted to Lumi behind the Torricelli Mountains. The people had built a native style house for him which he shared with the newly cookboy. What worried him were the mosquitoes and centipedes but he took some practical measures:

Bozo, my dog, was on the Mission Stations with me and was a good protection. He slept under the bed and growled if any strangers came near. He chased the snakes which came in after the rats. One night the cat was hissing at a large snake which was eyeing it as his next meal. I was terrified. I managed to kill it and Bozo barked like mad.²⁵

During all his time as a missionary, Fr Ferdy got great support from his family in Australia and from Bob Parer and his family in Aitape. He was very fortunate to have family members so close to him. His family paid his yearly stipend to the Order. They also sent him food parcels for himself and clothes from St Vincent de Paul for the people.

Monsignor Doggett valued Father Ferdy's ability. He had first met him in 1937 when he was the Superior of the Franciscans at Campbelltown in N.S.W.

Ferdy showed himself to be a contemplative man of prayer. In Papua New Guinea he lived a contemplative style of life like his brother, Damien. He had a deep faith and lived it no matter who was there. Ferdy was unpredictable - he would get things done his own way. He was accepted by the people he met and he was like one of them. After Father Ferdy had been at a station for some time, his spirituality made an impression on the area and his personality would spread in that area. Ferdy would give an orthodox teaching - but a bit too deep for the people to grasp. His was more a prayer life for the catechists and they took him as their model.

Lumi, in the mountains, was cooler than the coast, but Fr. Ferdy had to trek up and down mountains. He would arrive home exhausted but not too tired to appreciate the beauty of nature

²⁴ *Interview M. Mennis*

²⁵ *Excerpts continue from Ferdy and interviews by M. Mennis*

all around him. The mountain range lay dark beside him as the clouds begin to fill the valleys below. Gradually the little clusters of village houses were covered from sight in the enveloping dusk. Then the beautiful sunset would redden the sky before it too faded into night.

Goldminers had been in Lumi before the arrival of the missionaries and had made a small airstrip. This was now developed, so small planes could be flown in from the coast. However, all local work around the mission stations was done on foot. The central station at Miwarti was not a good site, being in the middle of a village, so they shifted the mission to a nearby area and called it Fatima.

While he was stationed there Fr. Ferdy learnt the local language well enough to compile a lexicon and partial grammar of the Somoro dialect. He also translated the catechism, hymns and Bible stories in the same language and had them mimeographed for the people. It was a lasting gift he gave to those people because it gave them a deeper insight into the Christian beliefs.

He could preach quite fluently in their language and the people flocked to hear him. It was a pity that he did not stay at Lumi and consolidate this work. However his talents were needed elsewhere. Fr. Ferdy made many patrols out from Fatima down the valleys and up the steep hills. Sometimes if he was out on patrol, he would write messages to Monsignor Doggett on a banana leaf to show he was still alive and send it with local people going to the coast. It was all taken with humour in those times when there were few resources.

Monsignor Doggett was stationed at Malol on the coast for the first five years and used to keep in touch with the missionaries in the stations with the daily skeds on the radio. Ferdy was out of touch of radio contact most of the time.

A situation he probably appreciated. Ferdy's zeal kept him on the move most of the time. Bozo, the dog went with him and slept near his bed every night. Some of the catechists from Warapu came with him to Lumi and they were very valuable to him on his new work.

Before long, Monsignor Doggett wanted the mission area of influence to advance further afield. Just before the war a patrol officer had been killed at Wassissi in the Lumi area. A punitive patrol had been sent out and three men were caught and hung from a tree near the village.

The villagers wouldn't stay there, so Mons. Doggett asked if they could have the site for a mission station. The Wassissi mission site is now on that spot. But Monsignor Doggett had a wider vision beyond Wassissi and had a certain procedure in mind. It was to Father Ferdy, among others, he turned when he thought of missionaries who was capable of carrying out the next difficult task:

Lumi was at the top of the Valley, and I wanted the mission to advance in a line down to Nuku.



Different missionaries could follow the valleys down contacting villages as they went. Rivers ran down the valleys with one river connecting to another.

The missionaries kept following them to find Nuku, but often took the wrong turns. It took three years to do this, setting up stations as they went and eventually they set up a mission station at Nuku. (*Interview M. Mennis*).

Lumi men (Photo: Solomon Momiya Aplas) (Used for educational purposes)

Now Fr Ferdy began patrolling further afield towards Nuku, working his way down steadily down the valley but returning to his base at Fatima. He was fearless and could walk anywhere alone with Bozo. He baptised children wherever he went. He added a bit to the ceremony that the child

if a girl would only marry a single man and not be a number one or two wives. He could see that one custom they were up against was the fact that young girls were taken as 3rd or 4th wives so he tried to ensure this did not happen. This backfired because people took their girls from school and the numbers dropped - later the ceremony was changed and that bit was left out.

Ferdy had more immediate problems too. Other denominations were trying to set up in the Catholic areas of influence and turn the people against the Church. Father Ferdy remembered:

In a village near Fatima, a protestant missionary came in and told the people that he and I were going to shake hands and we were going to share the territory. (laughs) So anyway I said "That won't happen". I got the people of Airotone, a village between Lumi to Mawarti, to build me a church. I used to visit there and I had a big chart with letters on it to teach the children. This man turned up and said, "This is my church."

I said, "No this is my church, I got the people to build it." He stayed there and I stayed there. It got dark. He got a hurricane lamp and held it in my eyes. We stared at each other, and I prayed there with my rosary beads (The rosary and the stations of the cross are my big devotions.) I don't know how long we stayed there - hours and he gave up and went out. The people were terribly afraid as to what might happen. Two white men disagreeing like this.

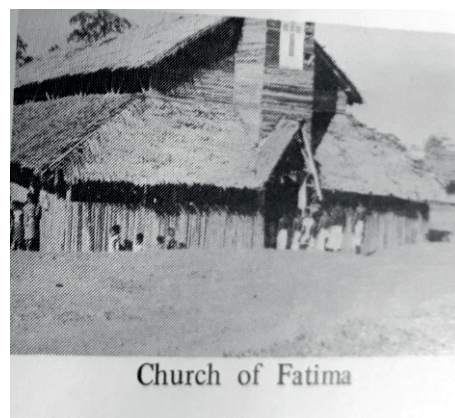
Because Monsignor Doggett was anxious for the Sisters to set up a school in Fatima, Father Ferdy helped Father Denis build a convent before he was transferred to Nuku/Wati in 1953.

He always seemed to be one step ahead of the Sisters and prepared the people for their arrival. Sister Agnella was one of the Sisters to take up residence in that convent and her descriptions of the mountain mission give a deeper perspective to Ferdy's own memories.

The Sisters arrive at Fatima in 1953

Photograph from Sister Agnella p 89

The Sisters flew into Lumi and landed on the new airstrip. By now there was a government station there and a small hospital. They were met by Father James and began to climb down and up the many hills between Lumi and Fatima. It took them nine hours according to Sister Agnella and they were exhausted (*Agnella: 80*). Sometimes they managed to walk and other times they were carried in chairs aloft by the carriers. They were hampered by their long white habits on the muddy track whereas Father James was wearing his climbing outfit.



Then they saw their new convent built by Frs. Denis and Ferdinand. Maybe they drew a plan or maybe it just "grew up" like Topsy. It was a huge house. That they built such a place, with so much bush material, it is a credit to their enthusiasm and love of hard labour. It reflects also the energy and enthusiasm of the local Wapei tribe. The kwila hardwood posts used were real trees. The house was 100ft long so there were many trees.

One side was blind, not a window in sight. That was a straight defiance of the wind and rain. The great windows on the other side were made of woven leaves. - large and floppy and held open by sticks, they kept out the rain, but not the mist or the wind. There was a forest of limbum in that house, acres of floors and walls. The long corridor from the back to the front door had a dip in the

middle. Everything sagged and swayed in the semi-darkness of the narrow one-way traffic laneway. Chapel, bedrooms, dining room Community were all in a straight line which meant a lot of walking (Agnella:81).

One can only imagine how much effort Fr. Ferdy and Fr Denis had spent building this edifice. The local people in their eagerness to have the Sisters probably had the idea that the bigger the building the better. There were shelves everywhere which the white ants slowly devoured. The ants devoured their books and the cockroaches appeared for their meals at the smell of baking.



However, the view from the convent was breathtaking, the landscape stretched to the Papuan border -jungle creepers, large forest trees and tiny villages dotted the view. "Some mornings our mountain top was clear while the world around us was covered in thick white fleecy clouds which would gradually break apart and drift away." (*Ibid*: 82)

Wati/ Nuku

The first missionary into the Wati/Nuku area had been Fr. Tony Krajci who arrived in New Guinea in 1947 and had been sent to Aitape. At this stage there was area near the Sepik beyond what had been allotted to the Franciscans that was still in the S.V.D. area. Fr. Shelly wrote: In 1947, Bishop Leo Arkfeld SVD had asked Fr Tony Krajci to choose a place and build an airstrip at Nuku so he could land his plane. It took a week for Fr. Tony to walk to Nuku, and then he prepared the site for the airstrip. He would stay there for a week with the people, helping them with their work, then walk back to Aitape. When all was ready, Bishop Arkfeld flew into Nuku. The site chosen for the mission house was nearby at Wati. Fr Tony was under the impression that this area would remain under the S.V.D's. Later, however, when the mission areas were more accurately marked off, Nuku/Wati was allotted to the Franciscans, which caused some disappointment to Father Tony.

Bishop Doggett praised Fr. Krajci, as "a wonderful S.V.D. missionary from Wewak. He had built a hut at Nuku and a small airstrip. Although he had laid a good foundation for a mission and had had a wide influence, no missionary had been there since". Knowing the area would not be so dangerous because of Fr Krajci's influence, the Monsignor was anxious to re-start the mission. Eventually he arrived at Nuku in about 1952. The area was heavily populated but he stood his ground.

While Monsignor Doggett was there, a punitive patrol had come in from Aitape and another from Maprik to investigate the murder of a Patrol Officer. The expedition had instructions to burn Nuku Village down and cut down all the coconut palms. Doggett persuaded them to only burn down a few old huts and a few coconuts. The people showed their gratitude by inviting him to stay. Later when the punitive expedition had left, Mons. Doggett asked the people why they had killed the patrol officer. They said, "because he had red hair and it made him strong. We wanted to get his blood and be strong too."

It was here with these people of Nuku that Fr. Ferdy began his new posting in 1953 – he told everyone "at least I don't have red hair!" He was fearless in his dealings with the local people and they felt he was one of them. He certainly dressed like one of them and ate their food quite happily.

The only thing he carried with him on patrol was the powdered milk which he used for himself and as a trade item for food.

Before he was posted there, he had been getting closer to the Nuku area from Lumi by patrolling down various valleys of the Torricelli Mountains. It had taken four years of patrolling down the wrong valleys. Ferdy would not have seen them as 'wrong' because wherever he went he would have made contacts with the people, and he baptised many children and claimed the areas for the church. One of Fr. Ferdy's first tasks at Nuku was to re-build the old airstrip put in by Father Fr. Krajci SVD. The first planes into Nuku were the old Norseman and then the Dornier flown by the Catholic Mission and the Government Piaggio.

The Nuku airstrip was hazardous; the one at Fatima was safer.



The airstrip was hazardous to use. It ran down the top of a mountain range and just at the end curved off sharply. The pilots needed to turn the planes sharply at the end of the strip to avoid hitting the cliff. Once airborne they would fly over the Gap beside the Wati mission. Fr. Ferdy built a toilet at Wati overlooking the cliff. Closed-in on three sides, the other side was

open. Most times there was absolute privacy when anyone was using it. The only view was an expanse of sky but a plane clearing the Gap, flew straight past at a low altitude. Many a visitor was lucky not to fall over the cliff in their haste to leave the scene. The pilots would skim over the Gap and take off for the coast to Aitape or Wewak over quite high mountains. One time when Ferdy wanted to be flown out but no planes could fly in:

We built up the little airstrip at Nuku. Bishop Arkfeld used to land the planes there. When he went to America he said "No planes are to land at Nuku while I am away". So when I fell on the mountain and hurt my leg, Fr Dennis, our superior said 'no plane can go in. If you want to go out – walk'. Well, every step was agony so I just stayed there and they sent in Brother Stanislaus. (*Interview M. Mennis*)



Sr. M. Magdalen and her Lumi Pupils

The Poor Clares in Aitape

Published July 25, 2021

In 1971 the Poor Clares in Ennis Ireland sent four sisters, along with four Australian sisters, to Aitape, Papua New Guinea, to establish a new foundation. On 26th July 1971 they celebrated 50 years in the Country. Only four sisters are left of the original group, Clare sisters Regina Lewis from O'Brien's Bridge and Clare Hanrahan from Crusheen, as well as 2 of the Australian sisters. We wish them every blessing as they continue their good work.

The Franciscan brothers in PNG felt that the presence of the Poor Clares in PNG was important, so they arranged for them to come and made available their house of St. Paschal meant really for the Formation of the brothers. Before starting their contemplative life in St. Paschal Convent, the sisters went around Nuku and Lumi area to see the reality of the Diocese and touch with their hands the situation of the people there, before dedicating themselves to pray for the Diocese. Like real sisters of St. Clare they work with their hands for their living. The first project started was a poultry where they supplied eggs for the people of Aitape for all those years. Now, for many reasons, their project is switching towards the production of Altar Bread, a nobler work and in theme with the Eucharistic devotion that Clare and the Poor Clares have for this Sacrament. Their silent prayer for all Aitape people and not only is a blessing for all of us. Many people go to them asking for prayers and seeking counselling. Their Convent is situated next to St. Ignatius Secondary School and the relationship between students, teachers, and sisters persist until today through mutual support. The sisters pray for them during exams, the students help them by cleaning the surroundings. Every year the sisters prepare cakes for the Graduation meal and the students feel strengthened by their kindness. During their study time, they can hear them praying and they know that their prayer helps them in many ways.

AITAPE POOR CLARES CELEBRATE 50 GOLDEN YEARS

By Sister Rose Balal o.s.c. and Sisters and Brother Walter SFO

“As the time drew near to celebrate our 50th anniversary of coming to Aitape, we had some discussions and more or less decided we would like to have a quiet Mass of Thanksgiving as our life is a hidden one anyway. However, as friends and neighbours got to hear about it, various people wanted to be part of it, some offering to come and help with the liturgical music, which involved several singing practices to which they were very faithful. Others came to clean our area, bring round stones from the river-bed to make “mumu” (that’s the traditional style of cooking in P.N.G.), give gifts of food, money and many other items to help out. Some groups volunteered to do “Singsings” (dancing with the singing) during the processions at Mass, and we were delighted about this. When the time arrived, many volunteered their services to help with the cooking which involved one whole day and two nights in pouring rain, working side by side with our younger sisters as the oldies slept peacefully in their beds! A little while before that, the staff and students of nearby St Ignatius Secondary School who had been an important part of our life from Day 1 – and a great support to us all through the years, got wind of a celebration coming up, and immediately volunteered their basketball court for the Mass. In addition to that, they volunteered students to beautify our grounds on the morning of the celebration, and many groups wanted to do Singsings so we created more processions in addition to those we had already marked for them, knowing they would want to fill those areas. When the time came, they welcomed us to their grounds where they hosted our special liturgy of the day, with *three* Banners, *two* “singsings, the Brass Band and a Guard of Honour by students and staff. How amazing, because when Bishop and the Friars drove the sisters out to

their new home on the day they first arrived in Aitape 50 years earlier, St Ignatius High School took over as soon as they reached the school! Bro. Charles Barry f.s.p. was Headmaster at the time, and arranged for all the students to make a Guard of Honour all the way from the corner, and when they arrived at St Paschal's which was to become their new home, they were very surprised to see a large banner over the door wishing them in Irish Tokples (language) "a hundred thousand welcomes" so beginning an association which has grown with the years right up to this day.



Photo of the last 4 pioneer Poor Clare's Sisters. From left to right: Sr. Angelica Dickson (Australian) Sr. Regina Lewis (Irish), Sr. Clare Hanrahan (Irish). Sr. Therese Stick (Australian)

"We give thanks to God for all the blessings of the past 50 years, and we also give him thanks that two of our Sisters from the Par community in Wabag were able to join us for the occasion, even though they had to cope with the experience of flooded rivers, but also the hospitality of our Sandaun people, in order to reach us just in time for the event. We give thanks for our two sisters who have already completed their life's journey and have gone home to God, Ebelina in 2012 and Jo in 2017. Their bodies await the resurrection in the burial plot near St Didacus friary, and we know they are watching over us all here in P.N.G. and helping us in many ways. We also give thanks that our friends and neighbours wanted to celebrate this milestone with us because we are working together for the Lord, and they too see it as a gift for which it is fitting to rejoice and give thanks and praise to him who, in his great love and generosity has always provided for all of us.

"And as he always took care of us in the past, we trust him to continue to do so each day as he promised. So, let us all face the challenge and the gift of the next 50 years with courage and hope! May we all continue to grow in God's love each day, in each of our particular vocations, strengthened by the lives, example and intercession of Saints Francis and Clare, who loved God and his people each day until the very end. Their arrival was supported by the Franciscan Brothers of the Province of Australia (1st Order) who arrived in PNG in 1946. The Poor Clares are the 2nd Order of the Franciscan family and were founded by St. Clare of Assist young Clare, touched by the preaching of St. Francis of Assisi, decided to leave her wealthy family to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis. But, being a woman, in the 13th Century was not safe, so after praying and talking with Francis, she then started a new way of life, living inside the cloister,

in union with God, praying day and night for the brothers and for the whole world, trusting in the Providence of God and working with their hands. Francis placed them in a church that he himself had repaired and where the Cross spoke to him while he was asking for the will of God.

The Poor Clares don't go out for pastoral work, but the whole world enters into their Convent and their little Cloister become their world, and through the power of the Spirit, they can reach many more people than you can reach if you walk around the world on foot. Their sisters today continue to place themselves in silence in front of the Tabernacle and there they can see, feel and care for what is happening around the Diocese of Aitape and around the world. The friars say about the Poor Clares: They are the heart of our Diocese and of the all Church in PNG, I should say; they strengthen our missionary work, they are always there, ready to listen to you with the heart of Jesus; they have chosen to be poor to make us rich; they have chosen silence to shout to the Lord on our behalf; they have chosen the Cloister, so like Mary, who made of her womb a Cloister for Jesus, they can generate to the world the love of Jesus, through their prayers and constant contemplation of Him, "so that you too may feel what His friends feel", Clare says to Sr. Agnes, "as they taste the *hidden sweetness* which God Himself has reserved from the beginning for those who love Him".²⁶²⁷



Celebrating 50 years of presence in Aitape, the Poor Clares Sisters.

²⁶ Web file on the Poor Clares

²⁷ The photograph was supplied by Brother Walter SFO

Hansen Hospital for lepers at Aitape

Brother Stanislaus was a nurse and gave medical treatment to the sick who came into the mission. He knew more about leprosy than anyone else. He had worked at a leprosarium in Tibet then came to Australia and volunteered to go to Aitape. After his time with Father Ferdy, he was transferred to the new Hansen Hospital at Aitape.



A New bush house was built at the Leprosarium



Fr Antonine Magnani began to work at the leprosarium in 1957 when he succeeded his confrere Br Stanislaus Rossato who had established the hospital two years earlier. "It is here that he gave rise to that revolution with the lepers which made him a figure adored and regarded as a kind of St Francis of Assisi of the jungle. He organised the building of houses in a charitable village now called Fr Antonine Village where semi-healed lepers were gathered together and guided socially and into work. They still needed caring. Those who left the hospital and returned home were given instruments for their trade so they could take up work again at home. At the hospital a band was formed among the lepers and they entertained the patients on many occasions."²⁸

Fr Antonine addressing the patients during Mass at the leprosarium



The band that was formed

²⁸ *The Saints Walk Among the People* by Pasquali

Ann Hoy

Ann Hoy went to Papua New Guinea in August 1962, to work as a Physiotherapist at the Leprosarium on the Raihu River not far from Aitape. The Leprosarium's name was Raihu Hansenide Colony. Many of the people had deformities caused by paralysis of the peripheral nerves. The loss of sensation in their feet led to burns and ulcers. Ann worked to give their limbs more function. Some of the long-term patients had a sheltered workshop so they had little occupations. They could sew meri blouses and make a little money. They had one sewing machine and Antonin organised more machines. Some made sandals and special shoes for dropped feet from the ulcerated sores. They also made belts and wood carvings for the little village stores. Fr Antonine Magnani O.F.M. one of the Italian friars who had come from the Chinese Mission in the 1950's. So holy was he that the friars in his hometown of Bologna, Italy are gathering material for his cause. Ann can remember Fr Ferdy when he was stationed at Lemieng. Most of the missionaries had motor bikes, but Ferdy had a push bike and used to ride into Aitape. He would often visit the leprosarium and Ann can remember him coming in to buy some things for his trade store at Lemieng. There were hundreds of these little trade stores in the villages all over the province.

Aerial view of the leprosarium Hospital in Aitape 1961 by Kathleen Vellacot-Jones. (Copyright expired)



Ann: I always remember Fr Ferdy's attitude in New Guinea. I used to think I was doing a good job teaching the people exercises and being a physio but he turned it all around and told me that it was a privilege to be there. We missionaries were only there because of the people's courtesy and that they allowed us to be there and teach them about Christianity. Lay missionaries were also privileged to come and teach or do some medical work. It was up to them whether they accepted it. I suddenly realised that they were

very wise and that we were very ignorant in lots of fields.

A group of ex-New Guinea friends from left, Fr Norbert Pittorino, Mary Mennis. Ann Hoy and Trish and Graham Hardy



Nuku.

Fr Ferdy was never frightened, even though he was one against thousands and yet he never felt in danger. Word of him soon spread across the ridges via the garamut drums in the Nuku area. Dressed simply and travelling light, he walked into villages to buy food with salt and stayed in their 'haus kiap'²⁹ if there was one. He identified with them and he was one with them.

Nuku houses made from pungal and morata on the ground and they had fires inside. The pigs did not come in but wandered around the village with the chooks and dogs. There was smoke in the

²⁹. Once government patrols had been made villagers were required to build a 'haus kiap' for the patrol officer or kiap

houses all night long because of the mosquitoes at night. The men had their own houses and we were put in with the young men. They sometimes had houses for visitors - haus kiap with floors in them.

From Nuku to Wati was a road you could drive up on motorbikes. Wherever he was he would greet the people as they returned from their gardens: the women laden down with bilums full of vegetables and firewood stacked on top; the men full of their importance and discussing trade and exchange feasts; the children running around the smoky fires waiting for the food to cook, the pigs snorting at their heels. Ferdy would chat with the children and entertain them with games. They spoke a simple form of the language making it easier to learn. Ferdy learned quite a bit of the Wati language in his term there. There were 7 distinct languages in the Torricelli Mountains on the Sepik side.

Most of the villages, in the Wati area, were along the top of the ridges for protection. There was a deep ravine with a stream, the Water Moon rushing through it. The women had to scramble down the mountain sides each day carrying long bamboo poles to get water from the stream. While there they would wash their tradestore clothes and beat them on the large rocks beside the rushing stream. One of the first things the patrol officers did was to build a bridge over the stream. This had a thatched roof to stop it rotting in the tropical rain and heat, and a planked base so it could be negotiated by motorbikes. However, when one plank or another split or twisted it often proved hazardous.

Traditionally the people built suspension bridges made of vines. Ferdy had crossed many of these in his patrols. Perched high above the cascading water, they swung precariously in the wind. Often he feared for his life when he missed a footing but his catechists would negotiate them sure-footedly hardly changing pace from the ordinary mountain tracks.

Once the bridge was built over the Water Moon Bridge, the trip between Nuku and Wati, was a lot faster - and safer. The mission at Wati was perched on a steep cliff.

Each village had a square around which the houses were built. One village chief whom I befriended was Tama Samba. He had four wives and so he had to make a garden for each of them and build each of them a house. If he had fallen out with one of his wives he would go to the another one. I remember this day. The four wives got upset with him and they were all screaming at him and he didn't know what to do or where to go. He sat in the middle of the village square feeling very sorry for himself. He never became a Christian because he would have to let some of his wives go but he was friendly and never opposed me. To be a Christian you've got to have one wife which was pretty hard for them.

Ferdy wore short trousers and a shirt while out on patrol up and down the steep mountain sides. He had tried the long trousers but they got muddy and wet and heavy and made it too difficult to walk. Monsignor Doggett too tried wearing the long trousers to keep out the mosquitoes but after two years he too wore short sleeves and short trousers.

After a few years at Wati, the number of Catholics increased from zero to many thousands. It was initially Father Ferdy's untiring work that was the basis for this. He brought many of his catechists from Warapu with him and organised sub-stations in many areas with a catechist in charge of each station. Towards the end of his stay at Wati he began a boarding school for one hundred children and taught them each morning. His simple and devout nature was reflected by the catechists and the Gospel message spread quickly. His spirituality made an impression on the area. Bishop Doggett when doing his round found the area had taken the spirituality of the person there. Give an orthodox teaching - but a bit too deep for the people to grasp. His was more a prayer life for the catechists and they took him as their model.

Fr. Ferdy continued his work of translating works into the local language. In 1954-58, he made up a partial Grammar and Lexicon of the Makru dialect. In 1959 he translated Bible stories in the Makru dialect and then in 1960-61 he translated the Catechism into Makru. These were the same things he had previously translated into the Somoro Dialect. It shows that he was earnest in his mission work and determined to bring the knowledge of the Gospels to a wide an audience as possible. But these Bible messages were often in conflict with the new messianic beliefs of the people.

Cargo cultists believed that one day their ancestors would return bringing all kinds of goods to them. If many people in a village became cargo cultists, the men would cease work and wait for the cargo to arrive. The women would continue with their gardening and cutting wood and caring for the children. Often times it was the women who kept the village going in times of crisis like this. Fr. Ferdy appreciated their stamina.

Belief in sorcery was still very strong also. If someone was dying, the people would pay the sorcerer to heal the sick person and they would dance around with small branches invoking the spirits of the dead to help. A story about the Wati people comes from Fr Emilio about Leo whose death was attributed to sorcery. Leo was a well known alcoholic with liver problems. After an exploratory operation, he was brought home to Wati and died shortly afterwards.

The villagers mourned his death and brought in the sorcerers to determine the cause. The corpse, bound to a pole and carried by four men was held up outside his former house:

And as it was now getting dark, torches were lit. They called out to the victim to speak the name of the man who killed him. -- But no reply or sign came -- the calling of names began. Was it Ferdinand, Mantiba, Tamasombo? Who made the poison against you?"

Then they named a relative, Arnold. The corpse shook and the carriers swayed. This was the end of the ritual, and the beginning of the rumour that Arnold was the man.

Arnold, a qualified teacher, protested his innocence. He knew he was being framed and was strong-minded enough to claim his innocence. He made a counterclaim against those who tried to charge him. "So the situation was reversed, and now some were prepared to pay Arnold if he did not accuse them to the kiap. In the middle of the row it became clear that Leo had drunk a glass of raw alcohol which Arnold used for a pressure lamp".³⁰ This case typifies the clash of cultures. The introduction of alcohol and the new legal system versus the old tribal system when the sorcerers held sway.

Even his catechists were not immune to trouble from evil spirits. One of Ferdy's catechists fell into a trance and began racing for the cliff edge. Father Ferdy stopped him and tried to bring him around by pressing his ear lobes with his fingernails. This worked. He woke up and told the story:

I was up in a tree getting some edible fruit which was being eaten by flying foxes. I was eating some of the fruit when this being suddenly appeared and said to me "You come wantaim me long big fire." (Hell.) I said, "I don't want to go to hell."

The catechist was so frightened, he fell into a trance and was heading for the cliff edge. He was all right after that.

Another problem faced by the mission was the protestant presence in the area. Fr. Ferdy was an energetic man who would not accept intrusion. In those pre-Vatican II days there was no salvation outside the Church and he was determined to prevent the 'Tulatula' from proselytising his parishioners. Although he eventually mellowed and learned to appreciate their work in those days

³⁰ Fr Emilio Lattenero in his book *"New Guinea the Unforgettable."*

it was a different story. Tim Carter, a teacher at Nuku, met Father Ferdy a few times. He was taken by this energetic missionary, who rarely had time to talk as he was busy on his missionary work and pre-occupied with chasing the Tulatula out of the area.³¹ This protestant man, was a thorn in Ferdy's side. He would go into the Catholic villages, give the people clothes and tell them the 'Popies,' (Catholics) were no good. Gradually a bit of a feud developed between the two sides. If the Tulatula was coming a message would be thumped on the garamut drums from village to village and Fr. Ferdy would hear it up at Wati and come hurrying down to the village with his catechists. This happened many times.

Tim Carter remembers one instance particularly:



It was 10 o'clock in the morning and the Tulatula came past my house in Nuku. He went on to the village and set up camp in the Patrol Officer's house. Then he sat in the village and addressed them about Protestantism. Before long I saw Fr. Ferdy rushing along with the catechists. He had got word that the tulatula was there from the drumming of the garamut. That evening when the

Tulatula had retired Ferdy called the people to say the rosary outside his house. They kept it up for hours and challenged the Tulatula about his beliefs until he could stand it no longer. He came rushing out and came to my house about midnight asking for a bed. (*Interview M.Mennis*)

That Tulatula, however, was enough to try anyone's patience. He later converted one of Fr. Austen's catechists who brought the whole village with him.

Ferdy at this stage was in his 50's and quite agile. He could walk up and down the mountains easily. As he walked through the village they would thump a message out and they would say "Father's coming." These garamuts were wooden drums which they would thump with a big stick. This way messages were carried from one mountain top to the other. Sometimes the tribesmen would yodel from ridge to ridge and others would pass on the message. The noise of the garamut carried far. After a hard days patrolling around the sub-stations in Wati, Ferdy was anxious for a meal and a wash. He would climb the last ridge and see the mission station on the next ridge. He was in earshot of the cookboy even though he had another hour of walking to reach home.

At Wati I would have to go down the valley and up the hill on the other side. I remember them singing out ---- and the sound would carry up the valley and my cookboy would have the meal ready when I got there. Taro, tu-lip and a tin of fish. The cookboy would get the fire going, boil the water and have the meal ready. What a meagre meal it would be and yet anything would be appreciated after a hard day's work. Fr. Ferdy would squat at the fire with the men discussing the day's events. When he was with them he acted like them. It helped him to get into their shoes and view life as they saw it. He could tell stories or joke with the best of them, particularly any who had been to the coast and knew Pidgin English.

³¹ A tulatula is name for any protestant missionary



Then he would retire for the night and read his Bible and Office by the hurricane lamp. He had many books and a wide range of interests - History, Anthropology, Religion, Linguistics. In spite of his statements to the contrary he was an academic and kept copious notes on the people and their customs. As he wrote the ever-faithful Bozo, the dog, lay at his side. He was a companion as well as being a good watchdog.

Ferdy could handle any hardship and any food. There was the time Bishop Doggett was patrolling in

an area towards the Sepik River with a line of carriers. As it was very isolated area and only recently visited by patrol officers, he thought he might have been the first white man the people had seen. Then he saw a figure coming towards him. It was Father Ferdy doing a patrol on his own. The Bishop expressed his surprise at seeing him in such an isolated area and then asked him to share a meal with him.

“What have you got in the way of provisions?” he asked.

“Oh a little cheese, I think,” answered Ferdy cheerfully. By this stage he had learnt to live off the land and carried cheese and dried milk powder as trade items of food. Ferdy started a boarding school at Wati. He taught the children pidgin and look after 100 children with the help of his catechists. The children had school until midday on Friday and then he did a bush trip from Friday afternoon until Saturday afternoon. The story of how he went in there and began the school is part of the Wati history now.

Robert Parer reported: “The Wati people tell and retell all the stories about how Fr Ferdy went in there and started the school. One thing Father Ferdy wanted was cod liver oil. No-one gets cod liver oil but I had to get twenty litres of cod liver oil. Ferdy made sure the school kids had to have some every day to supplement their diet. Rabaul didn’t have it. No-one had it but we had to keep trying until he gets some. “Ferdy like most of the missionaries had to run the mission on very few funds. He had a trade store and some of the profits went in buying more items which Bishop Arkfeld sent in. Some benefactors, including his family members, gave him money but the Government didn’t give money for schools in those days. “³²

Fr Ferdy: ‘According to Sister Agnella the Sisters had to walk up the mountain from Lumi to Fatima after being there for a retreat.³³ Three of them: Sisters Agnells, Francois, and Fidelis negotiated wide streams getting their white habits encased in mud. After walking for hours in the hot sun, they rested on the bank of a river. ‘Look Sisters there is Fatima! Jacobus, the guide called pointing out across the hills in the distance,” Sr Fidelis went ahead and had the water boiling for a cup of tea “

³²*Doggett endpaper*

³³*Agnella page 88*

Helen Dennett: Volunteer Teacher with the Catholic Mission, Malol:



I grew up in Tasmania. In the 1950's I met my father's boyhood friend, Fr Anselm Stoner OFM, known as Fr Dom who told me of life in New Guinea. Years later when I had finished a teaching course at the University of Tasmania, I wrote and asked about the possibility of volunteering as a teacher in Aitape. Independently of me, three other Australian women—Anne Hodgens (physiotherapist Later Ann Hoy), Pat Erickson, and Margaret Collis (teachers) had also asked if they could volunteer as

Crossing the Yalingi river with Benignus Taiko

teachers with the Franciscan Mission. They were subsequently accepted by Bishop Doggett. We were the first Australian women who were not nuns to be recruited by the friars. Anne was working with lepers at the Raihu leprosarium which was managed by Brother Jerry and Brother Stan. Father Antonine Magnani was the chaplain. Brother Stan and Father Antonine and some other friars had been expelled from Tibet in 1949, so made their way to PNG. As there was no dedicated accommodation for women volunteers, we slept on the floor of one of the leprosarium administration block rooms. It was close to the sewing room Father Antonine had set up with sewing machines for the lepers so that they could make their own clothes.

Helen's classroom at Malol. 1962 - 1963



It was decided that I would help Brother Didacus Leigh teach his large class in Aitape's one-room mission primary school – St Anna's. After a few months, Father James O'Meara returned from leave and we three new volunteer teachers, Margaret, Patricia and I, joined him at Malol mission station, 15 km or so along the coast from Aitape at St Gabriel's School which it had been closed and it was our job to reopen the school. We were given a Honda 50 motorbike and very occasionally we got local people to help us carry it across the Yalingi River and then rode it over the very rough road into Aitape.

At first we lived in the sturdy old mission house which had been built by German SVD missionaries before WW1. Soon afterwards a new modern house was built for us by Arnold Von Brunschot another volunteer. Our classrooms at St Gabriel's were built of local materials, as were the desks. The thatched roofs kept teacher and pupils comfortably cool. We worked to supplement the meagre education materials supplied by the Department with the production of appropriate teaching aids. It was all hard work but provided us all with a lot of fun - teachers and children. At some point during my two years at Malol, Father James was transferred to another station and Father Tim Elliot took his place. After spending two years there in the Aitape mission as I'd planned, I returned to Australia at the end of 1964. HELEN DENNETT



Robert Parer speaking in 1997

In 1954, I was in Aitape living on a plantation at Tadjji and Ferdy was at Wati. When he came into town he would have many people with him. When they had seen him leaving Wati they would accompany him. Some sick people might come down to go to the Hospital and he used to get some medical things as there was no hospital out at Wati. He was the only priest in the Nuku area in 1954.

Amongst them would be 30-40 people with their brus tobacco. We used to buy the brus and give it to our plantation workers. They were on contracts and we had to provide food and tobacco once a week. It was very handy, we would get this tobacco in 44 gallon drums and press it down with a jack and we could keep it 5 or 6 months. It would all come at the one time so it was very handy. So long as it wasn't too old. The tobacco from Nuku was always considered the best by the plantation workers.

We were 5 or 6 kilometres out of town . He would stay with us and then we would drive the old army jeep and take him to the river. There was no bridge across the river so we would cross in the canoe. Then we had another jeep on the other side and we would take him to the mission. They were on the other side at Sinana Plantation, at Aitape where we live now.

The Wati area now has 6 different mission stations. I remember talking to an old brother Stan (Italian from China) who had been staying with Ferdy helping him. When I asked him about Ferdy he said, "Oh I see him now and then". He had hardly seen him. Only at the mission centre for 30 days in the year. The rest of the time he was on the move from village to village. All he took with him was powdered milk and wandered around. He used it to trade with food.

If he ran out of sunshine milk he would continue around the villages without supplies. Nothing worried him. He would baptise people. He took Warapu catechists with him and they were dedicated, a great help. He found places for them to stay.

Of all the missionaries he didn't worry about supplies. For month after month he went from village to village to set up catechists. They would be paid so much a month to live and set up a outstation and he would visit them as often as he could. The catechists did the ground-work really. There are not many of them left now. Everyone was amazed at how he could survive. He sometimes got trade goods from us and the Bishop from Aitape would pick them up and fly them in but not many times a year. He was at Wati for years.³⁴

The extent to which Father Ferdy travelled into the Sepik area is vouched by a story of Tony White who went into an area south of Nuku twenty years after Father Ferdy had been there. One of these villages was in the swamps and the mosquitoes were terrible.

The people pointed to some coconut trees and said, "you can have any of those coconuts. They belong to Fr Ferdy - he had planted them in the 1950's". The villagers apparently saved these coconuts for any visitors. Geographically the area between the Torricelli Mountains and the Sepik were steep undulating hills The Torricelli Mountains were 4,000 ft high and the ridges beyond gradually got lower until the marshes of the Sepik which were at sea level. It would have taken Ferdy a week to walk to that part of the Sepik from Wati. There were no roads in those days, just tracks linking up villages at different angles.

³⁴ Bishop Doggett brought in more Friars and opened up a few proper stations until now there are 6 more stations are in that area of Wati/Nuku.

Looking back Fr. Ferdy said:

When they began work in the Torricelli Mountains there were no Catholics there - now 50 years later there are 70,000 Catholics. There are more native priests than in other area. We were young and we could get around. When the government discovered we were in there they asked us to leave, as it was an unpatrolled area but we didn't. Nine years after we began work there the government went in.

Lemieng

In the 1960's Fr Ferdy went to Lemieng on the coast. It hadn't had a priest since the war. Ferdy was not very thrilled about it because he preferred the bush places but he attacked it with his usual tunnel vision. With his intensity he got stuck into the work.

In 1957 the Sisters' Convent in Sissano needed urgent repairs. In one day the roof was repaired with Father Ferdy's help:

One hundred men with loud shouting and laughter and noise, stripped off the old roof. We stood guard over our possessions in our house, without a roof, while the black dust from the old *morata* covered everything, us included, in a thick film. In a matter of hours the new roof was on, tied firmly with vines. - - We were glad that Fr Ferdinand had stayed for the entire performance.

Fr Ferdy - at Lemieng, near Tadjai airport, he had a bicycle whereas in other places would have walked. He would stay in the villages and eat with the people. He could handle any hardship and any food. He would have eaten a bad variety of food. He started a boarding school at Wati. He taught the children pidgin and look after 100 children.

Early in his year's leave of absence. Ferdy read a book *Prison to Praise* and couldn't put it down. The ironical thing was it came from a protestant who had learned to praise God in all things. A Protestant! A *tulatula*! Just like one of those missionaries that he, Ferdy Parer, had chased out of the villages in New Guinea! He learned that he should thank God for everything that happened whether good or bad. In 1996 Fr Ferdy returned for the centennial celebrations of the SVD Order on Tumleo Island and enjoyed the event. He died the following year.

Bishop Doggett. OFM - the first bishop of Aitape - obituary



Most Reverend John Ignatius OFM. D.D. - Emeritus Bishop of Aitape, PNG died in September 2004. Aged 96 years. He was a much loved member of his large extended family especially his many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. He was sadly missed by his fellow Franciscan Friars, at Star of the Sea Friary, Waverley.

Photograph Pope John XXIII with Bishop Doggett

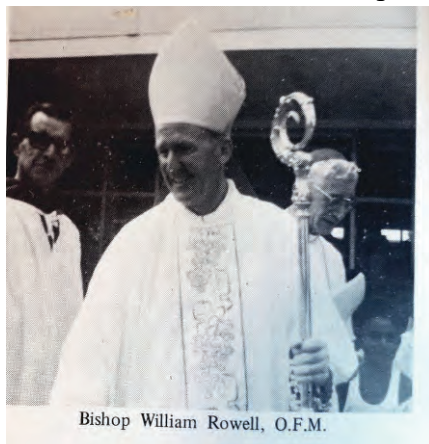
He was in his 77th year of his religious profession, 71st year of his ordination to the priesthood, and 47th year of his Episcopal Consecration.

His requiem Mass was at the Mary Immaculate Church, Victoria Street, Waverley. He was buried at the Poor Clare's Bethlehem Monastery Cemetery, Narrellan Road, Campbelltown. As a

monsignor Doggett was stationed at Malol on the coast for the first five years and used to keep in touch with the missionaries in the stations with the daily skeds on the radio.

In 1949 he became Monsignor and in 1956 Bishop of Aitape. He knew that the Friars would need to have strong physique to survive in a place like New Guinea; strong physique and a commitment to the task which lay ahead, establishing missions in the area.

They all fitted this category and looked forward eagerly to their new field of endeavour. In 1946 the life in Aitape was very strenuous for them in the Torricelli Mountains and along the coast. Archbishop Doggett was devoted to the people of Aitape and understood: a man dedicated to the church in Papua New Guinea.



Bishop William Rowell, O.F.M.

Bishop William Rowell OFM 2nd Bishop of Aitape 1970 – 1986

Bishop Rowell took over from Bishop Doggett when he resigned in 1969. He was bishop from 1970 until 1986. During his tenure Fr. Crapp was gaining responsibility when he was appointed Vicar General under Bishop Kevin Rowell. In October 1986. Upon the death of Bishop Rowell, Fr. Crapp became Diocesan Administrator until the appointment of Bishop Brian Barnes just less than 12 months later.

Brian Barnes OFM. 3rd Bishop of Aitape 1987 – 1997 - obituary

Brian Barnes OFM, former Archbishop of Port Moresby, "It is with great sadness that the Franciscan Friars of the Province of the Holy Spirit announce the death of Emeritus Archbishop Sir Brian Barnes OFM. Brian James Patrick Barnes was born at Wingham in New South Wales on 23rd March 1933 to Arthur Keith Barnes (28/05/1986) and Eileen Barnes (nee Whereat, 9/02/1988). He joined the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans) in 1951 and was first professed on 18th February 1952. He was ordained a priest on 12th July 1958. (*Franciscan web page*)



As Father Brian Barnes, he was appointed to the mission of Papua New Guinea (PNG) in October 1959. He served as Assistant Priest in Aitape when he first arrived in the PNG Missions.

He then served as Headmaster at Seleo Island and as a parish priest in Monandin, Nuku, Wati, Ningil and Lumi from 1960 until 1968. In 1968 he was appointed as chaplain to the police of the Royal PNG Constabulary. He was based in Port Moresby but travelled extensively throughout Papua New Guinea. He served as the police chaplain from 1968 until 1988 when he took up his appointment as a bishop of the diocese of Aitape.

He was appointed as the Bishop of Aitape (PNG) on 3rd October 1987 and ordained bishop of that diocese 10th February 1988. He served in Aitape from 1988 until 1997. On 14th June 1997, Bishop Brian was appointed as the 7th Ordinary and the 4th Archbishop of Port Moresby. He became a citizen of Papua New Guinea. He retired as the Archbishop of Port Moresby on 26th March 2008. Archbishop Barnes was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 1982 and a Knight of the British Empire (KBE) in 2003. Perhaps his highest civil honour was bestowed on him in 2011 when he was made Grand Chief Commander of the Order of Logohu (GCL) in a ceremony which took place at Star of the Sea Friary in Waverley (NSW).

Born in Sydney, Australia in 1934, Bishop Crapp was educated by the Christian Brothers of Ireland at Tamworth in rural New South Wales. At the age of 18, the young Austen Crapp began his novitiate with the Order of Friars Minor, Franciscans. He made his final religious profession on May 3rd, 1956. Austen studied Philosophy for three years before moving across town to St. Paschal's College, Box Hill for a further three years studying Theology. On 21st July 1959, in Armidale New South Wales, Austen Crapp was ordained a priest.

The fourth bishop, Austen Crapp, ofm, headed a team of 124 mission workers: priests, brothers, sisters and lay volunteers. The diocese operates through three deaneries, with twenty-four parish centres serving 64,500 Catholics in an area of 12,000 km.

The ordination of the Most Reverend Austen Crapp ofm, as Bishop was the culmination of a very active and dedicated life in several roles in ministry to the Diocese of Aitape. He set up a mission station arrived at Mukili, near Nuku, to set up a mission station in May 1962. Mukili was a new parish and the young Fr. Crapp was the first resident missionary. His first priority was to know the culture and to establish a Christian community. He oversaw the construction of the church, clinic and school. Fr. Crapp served at Mukili until October 1966 when he was appointed Army Chaplain, posted first to Moem Barracks, Wewak for 11 years then in 1977, three years at Igam Barracks, Lae. In May 1980, he was recalled to Townsville, Australia to serve at Lavarak Barracks.

In 1982 Fr. Crapp resigned from the army and returned to pastoral work and served as Dean at Lumi Parish, Aitape. After being overseas, Fr. Crapp returned to Aitape in 1996 and set up an inter-diocesan tribunal to deal with marriage annulments, and he also arbitrated all land disputes. All this while serving as parish priest at Pes, a position he occupied right up to his Episcopal election to the See of Aitape in April 1999.

In 1997, when Bishop Barnes was transferred to Port Moresby, Fr. Crapp again found himself serving as Diocesan Administrator. It was during his time as Diocesan Administrator that Fr. Austen Crapp distinguished himself through his decisive and pro-active handling of rescue and relief services following the July 17th 1998 Tsunami tragedy. In April 1999 he was appointed Bishop of Aitape and ordained in the presence of family and friends from Australia and Papua New Guinea. Bishop Austen immediately set about organising the diocese in pastoral ministry, administration and development projects in such a way that a local Melanesian bishop could succeed him in the See.

He attended Divine Word University in Madang to gain a Diploma in Business Administration to better understand the process of management. He invited the national team of the Better World Movement to come to Aitape to initiate a common pastoral plan for all parishes, with the aim of empowering the laity to be a Church fully Alive in Christ. When the diocese was incorporated as a legal entity in PNG, Bishop Austen established a management system by committee and put in place a corporate plan for the diocese which included both pastoral ministry and community services, such as health, education, youth, parole of offenders, women's affairs.

For development towards a better quality of life for the people, a company known as the Aitape Foundation Service was established as the business arm of the diocese which encompasses eco-



forestry sawmill, mechanical workshop, cattle farm, concrete manufactures, construction and rental of houses. Bishop Austen returned to Australia on 23rd April 2009, after his decade of Episcopal ministry in Aitape. (*from the Franciscan archives*) It was during his time as Diocesan Administrator that Fr. Austen Crapp distinguished himself through his decisive and pro-active handling of rescue and relief services following the July 17th, 1998, Tsunami tragedy.

Fr Greg Bourke recorded how Bishop Austen did a long confirmation walk in June 2001. 'It was from Suain to Wampsist was the first time a bishop had done it. The bishop arrived in Yilui on 16 May 2001 and was greeted with great delight. There were 94 lined up for the confirmation ceremony and later blessed the church as well. He enjoyed being back with the bush people.

The fifth Bishop of Aitape Bishop Otto Separy 2009.

After the retirement of Bishop Austen Crapp ofm on 5th March 2009, Aitape Diocese was operating under the apostolic administration of Bishop Otto Separy the Auxillary Bishop. However, on 9th June it had been officially announced that Bishop Otto Separy has now been



appointed Bishop of Aitape Diocese. At the age of 57 years, Bishop Otto is happy with this new journey in life as he prepares himself for this important role as head of a Diocese.

Bishop Otto said in an interview earlier today that he was aware of the challenges in terms of pastoral and administrative responsibilities, especially with the transition of the church from a missionary one previously administered by an international Bishop to a local one by a national Bishop.

Bishop Otto originally from Tangori One Village in the Kubalia District, East Sepik Province, said that he is quite happy to be the Bishop of Aitape as the place in terms of culture is no difference of that in Wewak Diocese where he previously served as priest for 16 years.

He added that he knows his role as Bishop will not be easy especially administratively however, he believes that if everyone (priests, religious, diocesan service providers, and people in general) work together, a lot will be achieved. He also acknowledged Bishop Austen's previous role and efforts as Bishop of the Diocese, together with the Franciscan community in preparing the Diocese through the years for this transitional change, making the task of a local Bishop much easier with the existence of the Pastoral and Cooperate Plans established. Bishop Otto Separy is the first local Bishop for the Diocese of Aitape and also the first in the Momase Region. (*web*)

Bishops of Aitape

- Bishop Ignatius John Doggett ofm - Resigned 1969
- Bishop William Kevin Rowell ofm - 1970 - 1986
- Bishop Brian James Barnes ofm - 1988 – 1997
- Bishop Austen Robin Crapp ofm – 1999 –2009
- Bishop Otto Separy 2009

Fr Gerald Walsh OFM

Fr Gerald Walsh OFM became the chaplain of St Ignatius School which began as a primary school with the Sisters teaching children in Grades 3 and 4 brought in from the village schools. Each year the school grew until it became a High School. In 1968 Bishop Doggett invited the Patrician Brothers to teach at the High School. Two Brothers were sent with one of them, Brother Charles Barry, becoming the principal. Fr Gerry had a great rapport with the students who regarded him as a man of wisdom and for this they respected him.



He has been described as a dynamo. He began the Raihu farm attached to St Ignatius school. He had a farming background and could see the potential of a farm to provide food and meat for the students and the town itself. According to one priest “This reputed ‘dynamo’ had established hospitals, and farms, an airline and a teachers’ college and one particularly significant High School.”

Fr Walsh made sure a visiting government official learnt that the roads, between the mission stations bad as they were, were all made by the village people using pick and shovel and not with the graders and bulldozers used to make the Highlands Highway. And for good measure he told the official that 90% of the children gathered to greet him were educated by the Catholic mission. Another well-known priest was Fr Fabian Thom OFM who worked as a missionary in Aitape between 1963 and 2001. He was killed tragically when rascals broke into the Franciscan Friary in Port Moresby. Unable to steal the car, they shot him as he lay asleep. He was sadly missed by the Aitape people.³⁵



³⁵ (Bulletin vol 18 No 4 June 2001)

Improving the status of women in Aitape

The Friars, under the above Bishops of the Diocese have identified raising the status of women as one of their main objectives along with improving the spiritual life of everyone. As Fr Greg Bourke ofm wrote: “improving the status of the local women is one of our primary works. Some ways we are trying to do this are:

- To develop our own personal maturity as adult male Religious, comfortable in our position as men in PNG society. To grow as men who appreciate the who enter our lives as one of God’s greatest gifts to us.
- To give respect and reverence to all women we meet in everyday life. We must not exploit or abuse the innate trust they give us. We must not belittle them in actions or words and encourage them to use their talents and leadership qualities wherever it is possible.
- To be conscious that both men and women watch us to see how we treat our own Religious Sisters – to use the example of Saint Francis and the early friars in their relationship with St. Clare and her Sisters as our role model.
- To encourage the family life apostolates and those who direct them as well as all those directly engaged in the care of women and children. To encourage all forms of women’s groups. To promote in men a strong devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. A devotion to Mary should overflow to all women.
- To tackle the increasing incidence of rape and violence to women in a forthright manner by our preaching and teaching. To instruct young men in what it means to be a Christian man and that the violation of any woman in our community is not only a catastrophe for her but an indictment of all the men of her community.
- To make use of the information available to us about women’s issues in PNG. There is no shortage” (Bourke 1994, p.7).³⁶



Aitape people are united in remembering the tsunami after 20 years

³⁶ Bourke, Fr. Greg ofm 1994, ‘Women in Papua New Guinea’, *Bulletin, Vice-Province of Saint Francis, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands*. quoted by John Donnelly

Great advances for women in Aitape (written in 2009)

Article by Francisca Oneke *Diocesan Women's Services Coordinator*

The Women's Services Program has changed throughout the years to becoming a bonding bridge for the women folk, regardless of race, religion and culture, in all walks of life. The main objective of this program is to provide, facilitate, foster and co-ordinate the spiritual, social and economic activities, affairs, needs and interests of women at all levels of the Women's Association in the Diocese of Aitape.

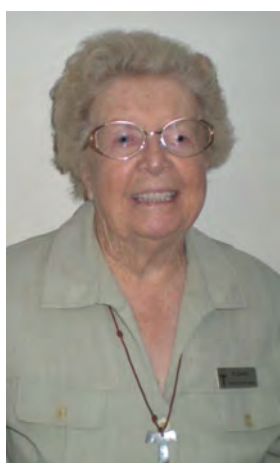


The initial Diocesan Women's Association was first established in 1984 by a keen young Franciscan Missionary Priest, Fr. Salvator Dougherty OFM, a New Zealander who played a vital role by providing educational and pastoral services for the people of Aitape Diocese since the early sixties.

In 2006, recognising the women's needs, the Women's Coordinator immediately made a move to re-activate the associations by conducting conferences, workshops, meetings, visits and seminars to unite, promote, educate and urge women to take correct actions in improving their difficult life situations and issues which challenge them as women. This Association comprises of three (3) Deanery Associations, 24 Parish Associations, 100 Sub-Parish Associations and over 500 Community Clubs. All working in and among 40, 000 Catholic Women in the Diocese.

The majority of these associations and clubs (about 90%) are operating in the remote areas, actively responding to the Pastoral Renewal of the Catholic Church despite the difficult geographical features of this area of Sandaun Province in Papua New Guinea. After having realised these vital needs in the lives of the women, the coordinator then chose creative alternatives by providing an opportunity for the multitude to participate and converse, share ideas and experiences, gain knowledge and form newfound relationships with one another. This being purposely to enable the full participation of the majority of women in each area of the Diocese.³⁷

The Franciscan Sisters in Aitape – looking back



Sr. M. Quentin Kirwan MFIC was born in England of Irish parents. As a young girl she felt she had a missionary vocation and always wanted to work in the foreign missions. She entered with our Sisters in Ireland with this in mind and was sent to Australia in 1946 with two other Sisters. In 1949 our Sisters went to PNG to work with the Franciscan Friars in the Aitape Diocese. They worked mainly in the fields of health and education with a strong leaning towards helping the women. Sr. Quentin longed to join them but had to wait twelve years before she finally did so. She joyfully packed her bags and left the familiar surroundings of Brisbane to follow her call to the foreign missions at last.

In 1958, Quentin arrived over the mountains to Fatima, her first teaching position with our Sisters in PNG. For the next few years she spent time between Fatima in the mountains and Sissano on the coast, teaching children and

³⁷ Francisca Oneke *Diocesan Women's Services Coordinator*

visiting the villages which she loved doing. During her years in Fatima she walked to Karate village each weekend to spend time with the people there, sharing stories and listening to theirs, patiently sitting by the fire each evening, giving of her time and of herself to these people week after week. In 1969, Quentin was asked to be part of the Pastoral outreach that visited our Mission on the Sepik River. Faithfully every month Quentin would journey with the priest to spend time with the catechist, to help with instructions in the Faith, especially in the school. She wrote "The Ride of My Life" first published in March 2007.

At this time Quentin was living and working at St. Martin's Pastoral Centre in Aitape with Sr. Therese Magee, and was managing two separate apostolates. She did this with her usual gentleness and her sense of humour which was always so much a part of her and a source of strength in whatever she accepted.

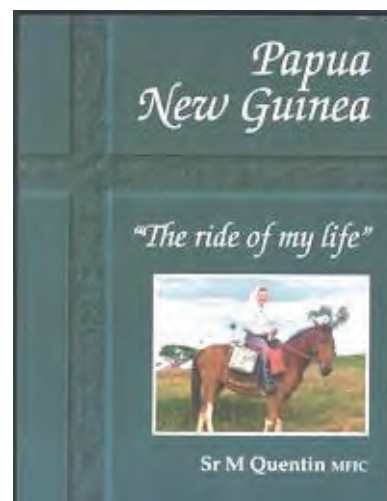
Quentin left PNG in 1992 and returned to Australia. She continued her generous apostolate in such places as Rockhampton, Fitzroy Crossing, Pottsville, and Kedron.³⁸ Sr Quentin Kirwin died 06/09/2021, aged 99 years. Much loved member of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters, Kedron.

Sr. M. Francois Wridgway MFIC My mother's sister and brother were among the original Columbans and their letters home from their mission in China had a big influence on my own Missionary desires. I grew up wanting nothing else but to go to the foreign missions. It was when I was doing Mothercraft training at Broadmeadows, that a Sister of St Joseph told me about the Franciscans in Aitape to whom she regularly sent food parcels. Our sisters had only just begun their mission and I was very interested in being part of this mission.

The Franciscan Sisters from Kedron had just sponsored a group of four sisters to open a Mission in Sissano on the north coast of PNG. They had been invited by the Friars especially to care for the women and children in that area. The original group included Srs Agnella, Rose, Leo and Agnes who arrived at their Mission in September 1949.

Now at last I felt that this was just right for me too so I made arrangements to go to Kedron for my Novitiate. In 1954, after I had finished my Novitiate I was one of the lucky ones to find myself on my way to Sissano and Fatima, the two areas where our sisters worked with the women and children. We were seven Franciscan Sisters at that time, four in Sissano and three in Fatima. Our sisters had large schools there not only for the local children, but for boarders from every parish able to send them. We taught huge classes because there were no other schools available for the children to attend.³⁹

I spent 10 great years doing Maternal Health Patrols full time, by motorbike, horseback, by foot and four wheel drive vehicles while Sr Camillus kept the home fires burning in the Home Clinic. These were particularly happy years and full of adventures and precious time with the village women. I ministered in many places, Sissano, Ulau, Aitape, Lemieng and Lumi teaching, nursing, Family Life Co-ordinator and Diocesan Health Secretary.



³⁸ Editor. Dec 2014 Quentin Liz Fran Paulette Vol. 4 No. 3 Dec. 2014 5

³⁹ Vol. 4 No. 3 7

In Sissano a hospital was built where all the women were able to come and deliver their babies as the death rate of newborn babies and of mothers in labour was very high. Both Sissano and Fatima are very isolated and the sisters had to act as doctors and give of their skills at all times. The sisters also gave themselves generously to the education of the children and to the care of the boarders.

Later a feeder school was opened in Aitape where children from all parishes were given a chance to further their education. This later became St Ignatius Secondary School. In addition to their ministries in Education and Health, the sisters spent a lot of time running girls' clubs and doing general visitation in the villages, later moving into pastoral work, marriage enrichment, youth ministry and other fields.

Francois Wridgway

National Sisters at Aitape

*The profession day of the first group of PNG novices
Sr Elaine Morzone was Novice Directress at the time*



Sr Elaine Morzone with two of the novices – Theresia Salatum and Rosella Lasi. Rosella Lasi has just been elected the assistant to the General Minister of our international Congregation



National girls began joining the Fransican Sisters in the 1970s. Sister Elaine and Sister Jo trained them together. Now there are 20 professed Sisters.

Rosella Lasi has just been elected the assistant to the General Minister of the International Congregation of the order which is a great honour.



After Mass on Sunday at St. Anna's parish church (the mfc sisters visible are Sr Elaine, Jo Scanlan in brown, and Camillus Cagney)

Sister Jo Scanlan MFIC,

(Missionary Franciscan of the Immaculate Conception)

Now ninety years old Sister Jo first went to New Guinea in 1962 and initially worked in Sissano.

Fr Gerald Walsh. chose two boys from each village and brought them to Aitape to be educated at the school. Gradually the grades increased each year to Grade 5 and 6 Then the Patrician Brothers arrived and set up the High School.

Over the years Sister Jo wondered what the local people thought of the Sisters when they arrived wearing long white habits with only their faces showing. Did they think we were their ancestors returned from the dead as it was believed that their ancestors were white figures.



Sister Jo in her habit



*Sister Jo at work in a classroom
in Papua New Guinea*

Sister Jo also taught at Fatima which is a beautiful place up in the mountains and sometimes covered in fog. Lumi was 1000 ft below Fatima and it took hours to make the trip between them. Fr Ferdy was at Carmel which was halfway between Lumi and Fatima. He used to say Mass at Carmel and then climb up the steep hill to Fatima to say Mass for the sisters which may not be until midday. He had been fasting since the night before.

There were some new volunteers who wanted to learn Tok Pisin. One of them called was taught to introduce herself. "Name belong me, Mary". This could be complicated as the name for woman in Pidgin is meri. Anyway she went up to a villager and said "Me Mary" so he answered "Me Man" This was a joke told many times.

Cargo Cult in Fatima

While Sister Jo was in Fatima there was a strong cargo cult. The leader was called Yenapi. He looked at all the things that the Europeans had – their houses, clothes, planes etc and wondered why his people hadn't developed the same things. At first Yenapi decided that if men wore trousers, they would get the cargo so there was a rush on the mission to have trousers sewn. When this did not work Yenapi decided that education must be the key to the cargo. So there was a rush of children wanting to be educated. Sister Jo was overwhelmed. 'No More,



No more?" The girls did not get much education as it was thought they should be home with their mothers learning to garden and cook. Fr Gerald wrote to the mission in Rabaul and asked for some Tolai girls to come over to show what educated girls could do. This gave an example to the parents that their daughters could be educated as well as the boys.

Sister Jo Scanlan on Tumleo Island

Sister Jo Scanlan spent the last few years of her New Guinea time at Tumleo Island. She loved the people there but found they were a bit disillusioned and bitter. They had been very important in the time that the SVD missionaries had first arrived and set up a big mission station there with a printing press as well. However once Alexishafen was opened up everything was shifted there and Tumleo was left with very little. Did they not help the SVD missionaries to make contacts with people all along the coast who were their trade friends? They had helped to open up many places with a friendly introduction of the missionaries. Although they feature in the history books about the early missions they feel they have since been neglected. Even the bones of their ‘saints’ the missionaries who had died on Tumleo were dug up and moved to Alexishafen. (Interview M. Mennis 2021)

Return in 2019

In 2019 Sr Jo and Sr Elaine returned on a visit to Aitape to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Sisters first going to Papua New Guinea in 1949.

They flew up with wheelchair assistance all the way. The celebration Mass was done by the Bishop of Vanimo. Their visit coincided with Independence Day so there were singsings and many feasts and crowds of people waving flags. Many came for the reunion as well. They came from Lumi, Fatima, Sissano and Aitape. Sr Jo and Sr Elaine were asked to go on stage and say a few words which they did with great joy.

It was wonderful for Sr Jo to sit with some of the older men whom she had taught in 1963 and 1964 in Aitape.



Children once at work in Sister Jo's class

One older man greeted her, “Oh Sister remember me? You taught me in Grade four in 1964? You saved my life. I was covered in scabies and every afternoon you took me to the convent and rubbed my arms with soap and water until the scabies disappeared. I was going to run away I looked so horrible and some of friends did run away from the village. But you saved me and I went on to High School and got a job in the Agricultural Office and I have been there ever since. Thank you, Sister Jo!”

Sr Jo noticed that many things had changed in Aitape. There was no airstrip as no one was looking after it. They had to fly into Wewak and drove to Aitape over many hours. The roads were bad and bumpy and several rivers had to be crossed without bridges.

There used to be a ship coming into Aitape every few weeks but now the pier is in disrepair so only the canoes can unload from the ships at sea and not many ships come now.

Previously the Franciscan Sisters encouraged the women in the villages and the town to better themselves. Sister Jo worked in Wewak with a group called ESCAVAW which stands for East Sepik Council against violence against women.

They established a house called Stella Maris for any women experiencing violence or who needed help in a difficult situation. In Aitape, the Sisters were called first to come in 1949 to help the women in the Province as the friars saw a great need there. Three of them came as we have discussed in this chapter and then others followed as teachers, nurses and social workers.

In 2019 Sr Jo and Sr Elaine both MFIC attended the celebrations held in Aitape at St Clare's



*Left to right; Sr Roslyn Tumana Sr Maria Awa, Jo Scanlan, Sr Elaine Morzone
Sr Rosella Lasi, Sr Helena Neimi*

The Presentations Sisters in PNG

The first Presentation Sisters arrived in Papua New Guinea in 1966, a hundred years after the first group of Presentation Sisters arrived in Australia at Richmond, Tasmania. The first five Sisters went to the village of Ningil in the Torricelli Mountains in the Saundau Province to teach in the village school. Since then the Sisters established communities at Malol and Aitape. In 1998 the Sisters at Malol were among the first people to alert the world to the disaster caused by the tsunami.



The Presentation Sisters of Papua New Guinea gather in Aitape January 2013 for retreat, community meetings and holidays. The Sisters are in Aitape, Ningil, Wewak and five other remote villages.

Following the tsunami, the Sisters moved to be with the people as they were resettled in new villages. During 2003 three Sisters visited several remote villages in the Torricelli Mountains with the prospect of establishing a new community to work with the local people. Cons Nagle

House and the Novitiate house are in Aitape. Aitape is inland from the coastal village of Arop. Arop was directly in the path of the 1998 tsunami and was worst hit of all the coastal villages.

Many lives were lost in the war and the area was devastated. Arop has since been rebuilt further away from the coast. Ningil and Yimut are in very rough and rugged terrain. There is no road into Yimut. The truck can only go as far as Nuku. There it is unloaded and the Sisters and the Nationals continue their journey on foot. They have to carry their cargo on their backs for the eight hours walk to Yimut.

In Ningil and Yimut the Sisters are engaged in education and pastoral work. Ningil also has a Health Clinic run by the Sisters. On 11 November 2007 the first national bishop of the Aitape diocese blessed the priest's house, sisters' convent and church there. Community Health Worker training is conducted at Raihu School of Nursing attached to Raihu Hospital in Aitape and at Lemacot School of Nursing in New Ireland Province. This training gives those Sisters who attend qualifications in Community Health with a Double Certificate. They are trained in obstetrics and general nursing. Teacher training is held in Wewak at Kaindi Teachers College attached to Madang University. Pastoral Studies are available at Divine Word University, Madang, Xavier Institute Port Moresby and at St Martin's Pastoral Centre Aitape. Ongoing Formation / Spirituality in Leadership, Scripture etc is provided at Xavier Institute Port Moresby and also at Madang University. The ongoing education of the Sisters is important as they are instrumental in contributing to the immediate development of the local area in Health and Education and in turn to the future development of the country.⁴⁰

Over the next thirty years they were joined by

- Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (1965)
- Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (1965 - 1977)
- the St. Joseph Sisters (1965)
- the Presentation Sisters (1966)
- Patrician Brothers (1968)
- the Poor Clares (1970)
- the Handmaids of the Lord (1976)
- the Mercy Sisters (1977)
- the Assistenti Laici Internazionali (1980)
- the Holy Rosary Sisters (1980)
- the Sisters of St. Therese (1980)
- the Spiritans (1981)
- the Sarto Brothers (1988)
- the St. John of God Brothers (1988)
- the Marianitas Sisters (1996)
- Volunteer missionaries from PALMS played a big role.

⁴⁰ <http://presentationsociety.org.au/congregations/papua-new-guinea/>

Each congregation adds its own charism to the pastoral effort of the church in Aitape. They all have national members from several provinces of PNG or are wholly indigenous in membership. This means that they are intending to remain in the Diocese for a long time and become a feature of the local church, giving witness in a variety of ways to living Gospel for the welfare of others. In 2021 Palms celebrated 60 years since it first began in Papua New Guinea in 1961. It is an international group who have sent volunteers to many provinces in Papua New Guinea, and they have done a great job supporting the church over the years.

In a thesis John Donnelly noted the following in 2004

In the Diocese of Aitape, the numbers of the Franciscans are diminishing. Of the original expatriate Franciscan Friars (priests and brothers) who have been responsible for the Diocese, those who remain are ageing. Some locally ordained Papua New Guinea nationals have joined the remaining expatriate Franciscans in Aitape. However, the vast majority of new priests within the Diocese are Papua New Guinean nationals who have been ordained as Diocesan priests and do not belong to a religious order. Most of the new Diocesan priests live in the parishes of the Diocese in the priest houses and are generally the sole, official occupant of the house.⁴¹

Some of the Sisters also helped the women set up Legion of Mary groups. The Legion of Mary is a world-wide organisation begun only in 1921 in Ireland. It is supposed to cater for both men and women. The Legion of Mary has over 3 million active members in almost every country of the world. The main purpose of the Legion of Mary is to give glory to God through the sanctification of its members. Both men and women. (web) John Donnelly portrays the Legion of Mary in Aitape as a women's group for women only and it seems to be so in Aitape, though it is often open to men as well.

Women within the Diocese (of Aitape) are also the most organized demographic within the laity. There are numerous women's groups such as parish groups and the Legion of Mary Groups. These groups have been organized by women for women. The Legion of Mary within the diocese of Aitape is effectively a prayer group for women but is also a reason for women to get together as a group with a common interest.⁴² Special dramas, and services are organised to celebrate particular occasions and to get certain messages across to the broader community. Issues of violence, respect for others, affection and caring are often acted out in a drama within a church service (Lotu) to reinforce the main message of the scripture readings for that day or to highlight the reason for the special day itself. The women's groups, often supported by the nuns, are very often the force behind what are very powerful forms of communication and education.⁴³

Donnelly concludes on a positive note:

The two main religious orders with the novitiates for the training of new nuns, of which there seems to be no shortage, are being run and organised by Papua New Guineans. The Franciscan Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception have an occasional newsletter, which they began in their very early days in the Diocese of Aitape, called 'The Seed Grows'; the nuns who were members of the first group of expatriate nuns to arrive in the Diocese in 1949 would say that it certainly has.⁴⁴

⁴¹ John Connolly P188

⁴² *Does the Diocese of Aitape provide empowerment opportunities for women? An assessment based upon the views of women of the Diocese John Donnelly School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning RMIT University November 2007:160*

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ *Ibid* 154

The Minister General visited the friars of Papua New Guinea



In 2016, the Minister General, Br. Michael Perry, OFM together with the Definitor General for Asia, Australia and Oceania, Br. Greg Redoblado, OFM, visited the friars of the Custody of St Francis of Assisi in Papua New Guinea (PNG) from Feb 5-14, 2016.

They were welcomed with a traditional indigenous music and dance by the Secular Franciscans (OFS) and the friars of PNG led by the Custos, Br. Gianni Gattei, OFM.

The highlight of the visit was a two-day encounter of prayer, reflection and dialogue with all the friars of the Custody in preparation for their Custodial Chapter on Feb 15-19. A total of 35 friars including the novices came for the said encounter. Also present during the Visit were the Delegate General for the Custody, Br. Bobby Vadakkal, OFM and the Custos of the Custody of the Herald of Peace, West Papua, Br. Gonsa Saur, OFM. The Minister General also met Bishop Otto Separy of Aitape, the Papal Nuntio, Archbishop Michael Balacz, the Poor Clares and other members of the Franciscan family. The friars of Papua New Guinea were last visited by a Minister General 14 years ago in 2002 by the late +Br. Giacomo Bini, OFM.

Note by Fr Greg Bourke: The Franciscans came to Papua New Guinea from Australia in 1946. Eventually, they were given the pastoral care of the Aitape Diocese. Now they have the local diocesan clergy and three Spiritain priests working with them. Franciscans live in communities as brothers, all equal, whether priests or brothers. All ministries are available according to the talents of the brothers and the needs of the Church.

All are asked to be simple Gospel men. In Papua New Guinea Franciscans work as pastors, tradesman, teachers, chaplains, medical, mechanical and agricultural workers. At present they have communities in the Aitape Diocese in West New Britain and in Port Moresby. At present there are 35 Franciscans in Papua New Guinea. They come from PNG, Australia, Poland, America and the Philippines. On the world scene the Franciscans are the second largest Catholic Order of men in the world with about 16,000 members. The Franciscan Minister General is Fr. Jose Rodriguez Carballo, a Spaniard Papua New Guinea is a Custody. The local leader is Fr Eduardo amenta who lives at St Anna in Aitape.

The Secular Franciscan Order in PNG:

The eight local Fraternities in Papua New Guinea (Aitape, Fatima, Lae, Lumi, Port Moresby, Wabag, Wassisi, Wati) responded to the census that the National Promotion Committee conducted in 2002. At that time, there were 112 professed members and 88 candidates, amounting to 200 Secular Franciscans. The political situation in PNG is fragile. Conditions for travelling are very difficult and communication is unreliable. It is practically impossible for the local Fraternities to relate to one another. The structure of a Regional Fraternity would be ineffectual.

The Friars Minor and the Capuchins provide spiritual assistance to the eight local Fraternities. In spite of all difficulties, the OFM friars are responsible for seven Fraternities, one on the south coast, in Port Moresby, and the rest on the north coast, at Aitape, and inland from there. The Capuchins assist one Fraternity at Wabag, in the central Highlands. Fr Jonathan Williams, OFM Cap. He is the only Capuchin Assistant in PNG. Fr Tom Ritchie OFM, Provincial Minister in PNG at the time, invited me to conduct a seminar in May, 2003, for all spiritual Assistants and for all the OFM professed friars and friars in formation. One spiritual Assistant, Sr Jeannette Gaudet MFIC, is a Franciscan Sister. Some of the Sisters and some Secular Franciscan leaders also attended this seminar. The seminar was held first in Aitape, for three days, then in Port Moresby, for two days. Fr Geoffrey Lee, secular priests and spiritual Assistant to Lae Fraternity, attended the seminar in Port Moresby⁴⁵. There is a growing interest in the secular Franciscan Order at Alexishafen. Sister Maria Awa, mfic, Franciscan missionary since 2011, 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.

photograph: St Francis High School Walamu in 1985. A jewel



⁴⁵ <http://angelfire.com/oz/franciscans/sfo/carlschafer.htm>

Papua New Guinean Patrician History at Aitape (web)

In 1968 Bishop Doggett of Aitape invited the brothers to take over the administration of a secondary school in his diocese. Two Brothers were sent with one of these Brothers, Brother Charles Barry, becoming the principal of St Ignatius High School in Aitape. In 1978 Brother Charles was asked to carve a school out of the jungles of the Nuku district on the other side of the mountain range from Aitape. The transformation was miraculous as he and Brother Michael Vella worked with the local people to create very fine school and campus.

Brother Charles then became principal of Lumi High School and then Aitape High School (also a government school) so that he might be able to lift them out of the difficulties they were experiencing. He did. Since 1968 the twenty-seven Australian, Irish, and Indian Patrician Brothers who spent time in Papua New Guinea made a significant contribution to education in Papua New Guinea, with roles in teaching, school administration, school and National curriculum.



In 1987 the Brothers were able to accept the first group of Papua New Guineans for training and formation as Patrician Brothers. Brothers Michael Vella and Philip Turner took on the daunting task of religious formation in a foreign culture.

The formation centres were at first at the Nuku school and then expanded to Laingim. But eventually through the great dedication of these Brothers, especially Philip Turner, Aitape became the Patrician formation centre. In

December 2010, eight Papua New Guinean men made their First Professions as Patrician Brothers.



Over the years so far the Brothers have been involved the several ministries: teaching at Aitape, Nuku, Lumi, and Wewak; health workers in Aitape; mission maintenance; brick and tank manufacturing; and in Wewak with Callan Services for persons with a disability.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ archives@patricianbrothers.com

THE SPIRITANS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Photograph: The view from the Spiritans House in Aitape Tumleo Island in the distance

The first Spiritans to arrive in Papua New Guinea in 1971 were members of the Irish Province who had, like their many confreres, laboured long and hard in Nigeria, and found themselves missionaries without a mission after their mass expulsion from the country in the aftermath of the Biafran War.

At the request of the Propagation of the Faith in 1969, Fathers Billy Butler and John Daly surveyed the country and in 1971, 30 Irish ex-Nigerian Spiritans volunteered to serve in Papua New Guinea. Only 7 were sent. Originally they opted for the Gulf Province (the toughest mission area in the world according to Mother Teresa of Calcutta who should know, having personally visited her 235 foundations in 67 countries). As Mother Teresa put it to one of the first Spiritans, Father Tom Cunningham: “the Gulf is the most difficult mission in the world” but added with a smile “also the most challenging.”

However, because Father Billy Butler had already started teaching in a Mt Hagen high school, the first group of the Irish Spiritans, at the invitation of Archbishop George Bernarding of Mt Hagen, went to the Highlands. Their numbers were reinforced from the Province of Trans-Canada which sent three of its members to the **diocese of Aitape**. Further support came from an unexpected quarter. The Indian Ocean Islands of Madagascar, Mauritius and Reunion were once a large mission area for the Holy Ghost Fathers. Now they have become a recruiting ground for the Congregation. Members of the Indian Ocean Foundation now number 20. For



the Spiritans, twin foundations in Australia and Papua New Guinea mark a fresh stage in their history, an outreach to the southern hemisphere. While contributing to the growth of a church in a region that had to wait many years for the Gospel,⁴⁷

Photograph: Fr Michael Doyle at Malol, Aitape

⁴⁷ *file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/spiritan-tc_752%20(4).pdf*

SVD Centennial held in 1996 on Tumleo Island

In 1996, the Divine Word Missionaries celebrated 100 years in Papua New Guinea with a range of celebrations, including a special Mass on Tumleo Island. Tumleo was getting the acknowledgment it deserved in being the cradle mission of the society of the Divine Word in Papua New Guinea. During the service on the crowded island the missionaries gave thanks to God for all the blessings bestowed on the mission, the people, and the missionaries themselves and the Divine Word Missionaries' presence in PNG. The Society of the Divine Word, SVD, were offered the missions of Eastern and Central New Guinea, which were first established on Tumleo Island in what would become the Diocese of Aitape.



Photograph: the first SVD priest on Tumleo 1906

The SVD missionaries arrived in Madang in August 1896 to establish the Prefecture Apostolic, but could not stay as the ten hectares of land promised them were not available, so they travelled to Tumleo Is.

SVD Brothers and Nationals on Tumleo Island 1890s

The founder of the SVD Order was Fr Arnold Janssen who guided the mission faithfully until his death on January 15, 1909. He was beatified in 1975 by Pope Paul VI and then canonized a saint in the Roman Catholic Church on October 5, 2003, by Pope John Paul II. Arnold's devotion to service and his dream of bringing the Gospel to places where it has never been preached continues today.

More than 6,000 Divine Word Missionaries are active in over 80 countries, as are more than 3,800 Missionary Sisters Servants of the



Holy Spirit and more than 400 Sister-Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration. St. Arnold liked to say that "Proclamation of the Good News is the first and most significant expression of love for one's neighbour."



Fr Franz Vormann with the first Christians on Tumleo Island 1899

125th SVD Celebrations -

On Tuesday 31 August 2021 there were celebration and thanksgiving in PNG for 125th Jubilee of the SVD on Tumleo Island. The Divine Word Missionaries celebrated 125 years in Papua New Guinea with a range of celebrations,



The Aitape Tsunami 1998

On 17th July 1998, the area surrounding the town suffered from a destructive tsunami that killed 1,600 people. A magnitude 7.0 earthquake occurred offshore and triggered a large undersea landslide that generated the tsunami. The area worst hit was Warapu village about 8 km west of Aitape. The village was situated on a narrow spit between the coast and a large lagoon. It is estimated that waves with an average height of 10.5 metres passed over the spit into the lagoon. Warapu was the village where Fr Ferdy worked as a missionary.



Photograph: The Aitape coast (web. For educational purposes only)

On the evening of 17 July 1998, on the Aitape coast of Papua New Guinea, a strongly felt earthquake was followed some 10-25 minutes later by a destructive tsunami. The tsunami comprised three waves, each estimated to be about 4 m high. The second of the three waves rose to a

height of 10-15 m above sea level after it had crossed the shoreline and caused most damage. Maximum wave heights and greatest damage were recorded along a 14-km sector of coast centred on Sissano Lagoon.

More than 1,600 people are known to have died, with some estimates as high as 2200; 1000 were seriously injured, and 10,000 survivors were displaced. Information presented in this paper was gathered in the course of a public awareness campaign in 1998-2002, from interviews with eye-witnesses and from mapping of damage and inundation. These sources provided new information on the height, shape and timing of the waves; on the possible escape of petroleum and other gases from beneath the sea floor before and during the tsunami; on unusual sound effects that preceded the waves, and lighting effects that followed; on possible deep circulation (to 250 m) of sea water in the waves. We also recorded 50-70 cm of subsidence of the coastal sand barrier in the sector of most destruction and noted the resilience and potential protective capacity of certain species of trees. Eye-witness accounts indicate that the tsunami reached the shore at between 09:00 and 09:08 UT, which is earlier than is permitted by published models of the timing and location of the source of the tsunami.⁴⁸

Mr Robert Parer at the time said. "People were crying everywhere. It's very, very sad indeed, and of course no-one really knows how many people had perished. They won't put a figure for days. There were bodies in the lagoon which is 20km long and 2km wide. It was clogged with bodies, building materials, trees and vegetation that was swept from the surrounding area. One of the first people to visit the devastated area was then Prime Minister, Bill Skate, on Sunday July 19, 1998.

Fr Norbert Pittorino OFM was at the Aitape Friary and here are his diary notes on the catastrophe. (The vulcanologists used his diary as primary source material. The author typed it up and posted it to Dr Davies).

⁴⁸ H.L. Davies, J.M. Davies, R.C.B. Perembo and W.Y. Lus. University of Papua New Guinea: Abstract

Fr Norbert:

It all began on Friday night 17 July, 1998, while we at St Didicas having our evening meal. There was a strong earth tremor that shook the whole area. There was a lot of noise like a great wind at the time. I thought it was the kind of noise that accompanies tremors. We found out later that the noise was the sound of an enormous tidal wave that struck the coast. Houses along the beach were either completely destroyed or badly damaged – depending on the protection gained by distance or hills. Taro Point was badly hit. Some people were missing but no one realized the extent of the tragedy until later when reports began to trickle in via the radio.

The morning sked on Saturday was dominated by news from Malol telling us of the tragedy around that area and especially around Arop. The Presentation Sisters in Malol worked tirelessly all night and throughout the next day giving reports of the situation as it came to hand. Many, many people were injured especially suffering from cuts and broken bones: the news of more deaths increased and also the call for immediate emergency assistance from outside. The visit of the Prime Minister, Bill Skates, and Archbishop Brian Barnes from Moresby highlighted the enormity of the disaster. I believe this will set us back almost 100 years of mission work as Warapu-Sissano-Arop made up the cream of Catholic life in the entire mission. It will certainly challenge their faith and ours!

23-7-98 - This is the 6th day since the disaster. Reporters from all over the world have come to Aitape to witness the results of last Friday's tsunami. The picture is quite grim. Bodies are still floating around in the lagoon rotting away so much that it is impossible to recognise their sex or facial features. Some of the Brothers went to Sissano-Warapu to assist in burying the bodies. Yesterday they went to one of their relief camps where the survivors had fled so that Mass could be celebrated for them and then they could sit with them to comfort them in the traumatic realisation of their plight.

They told many stories that papers would not print – probably because they were “faith” stories. Today the Prime Minister, Bill Skate, declared a State of Emergency and the Sissano-Warapu-Arop are restricted. No one may go there because of the extreme health hazard. With so many decaying bodies, it is suggested that whole region be evacuated and let nature take its course. After some years the matter could be reconsidered. This seems to spell out the end of the Arop-Sissano-Warapu parishes. No settlement will be allowed there.

Photograph; Tsunami in Aitape from the web



I went with the Friar candidates to visit the disaster area to see for myself the results

of the catastrophe. It was a very calm sea so there were no problems. The water was very shallow near the entrance so we had to take a different route to that which I knew before. What did I see? A devastated landscape: Arop was completely wiped out leaving only a few coconut palms standing. All the undergrowth had disappeared including any houses that were there before. When I landed at Warapu I could smell decaying bodies, which had been buried in

shallow graves. Ignis Wablu told me that when he and the Brothers went on the Sunday after the tsunami they had spades but had to use whatever they could find to bury the dead.

I could see the enormous power of the wave which had carried houses, animals, people and everything in its wake into the lagoon. The roof of the church was sticking out of the lagoon and looked as though it was still in good condition. There were sheets of roofing wrapped around trees from the enormous power of the wave. Scattered around the sandy village were many broken cups, pieces of clothing, children's toys, bits and pieces of houses etc.

Fr Norbert continues : It was hard to believe that there had ever been a village there at Warapu. The stone foundations of the church and school stood bare. There was no trace of the cement tank that had just been completed last year. It was a really horrifying sight. I can imagine the terror that must have filled the poor people who had escaped that evening. The entire village of Warapu was wiped out and nothing was left standing. It remained just desolate strip of land separating the sea from the lagoon. There were no living witnesses to describe the disaster there. The only witnesses were the many dead bodies that lay floating in the lagoon. From the descriptions of the survivors, I can well imagine the terror and panic that must have driven them to run away as far as possible as quickly as possible.

The damage was enormous. Both Churches in the Sissano - Warapu parishes were destroyed as well as Sissano parish house and the schools. The devastation was worse in the Warapu-Arop area. It seems more than anywhere else. The loss of life goes into the thousands.

The church and 'haus pater' at Sissano were completely demolished. Even the remains of the old Sisters' convent and burnt down the postulancy house had disappeared. The only part left intact was the water well which had clean water in it – but the lid had gone. The pump had disappeared as well as the stumps of the house and all the surrounding buildings. I could only thank God that we were not there when this tragedy took place. We would most certainly would have perished!

The poor village people had been counselled and were determined to rebuild and recover from the tragedy and were full of energy to re-build the house and their lives. I'm sure this was because of the prompt action of the counsellors and teams that had visited and cared for them right from the start. They knew they were not alone and that they had world-wide support. This was encouraging but they realized that this was only the beginning and there was still a long way to go before all things returned to "normal". It was also clear that they still felt very deeply about their beloved ones who died in the disaster and they were still coming to terms with the situations.

Fr Norbert continued: I said Mass for the people and mainly for the school children who had started school in a temporary classroom that had been put up. They were still suffering from the shock. It will take many years before they overcome their sad experience. Some still awaken at night screaming ... I felt sad that I had not gone with the Brothers to the care centres to assist the people from the start. I just did not have the chance.

In Sissano, Fr Otton was the only priest on the station when the tragedy occurred. At the first tremor, he raced out of the house. When he sighted the wave coming, he raced at all speed for safety. He was very fortunate to escape. Others who were with him weren't so fortunate. He managed to get a boat back to Aitape to report on the situation.

Today he went back again to assist in getting the injured ... My grateful thanks go to Fr Gianni who quickly went to the area to assess the spiritual needs of the people. It was such a rapid response that I also felt surprised at the speed that everything was done. The continuation of training of counsellors and having so many experts come voluntarily to give a hand has been overwhelming. (*Fr Norbert Pittorino 1998 diary*)

Aitape marks the 20th Anniversary of the tsunami ⁴⁹

Villagers along the Aitape west coast observed the 20th anniversary of the 1998 tsunami disaster recently. The villages of Malol, Arop, Sissano observed a combined commemoration service organised by the Warapu village community.

The day started with an eighteen-boat convoy down the Aroporo waterway and around Sissano lagoon through to the shores of Warapu village. Everyone walked in a procession from the water's edge to the main grandstand next to the makeshift ruins of the Catholic Church.

Local priests celebrated a moving Eucharistic ceremony complete with traditional dance demonstrations. Highlights included a poignant moment during the service as family members and relatives came forward to place the names of loved one lost in the disaster. A lot of the villagers and friends laid wreaths at the crumbling monument. There were tears and anguish as memories of that fateful evening came crashing like the 15-metre-high wave that destroyed everything in its path taking over 2200 lives along with it. Mr Frank Evans a long-time teacher and principal of St Ignatius Secondary school who was a guest of honour during the day said "I remember standing on the beach of your villages two days after the disaster and there was nothing left standing." He encouraged those who gathered to work together for the betterment of their villages. Memorials markers dotted the church grounds as well as provincial flags of those who assisted in donations during the relief period. The site of more than a dozen mass graves was also decorated to mark the day.

A candle lit Virgil brought the event to a close as brightly painted replicas of fishing canoes were laden with candles and floated out on the lagoon while prayers were offered for the souls of the victims. Families gathered quietly in their respective clans and at the site of their former dwellings. Wailing could be heard amidst the splashing of water in the lagoon as grieving relatives mourn for their loved ones. Though twenty years on, the ditch created when the initial waves crashed onto the village of Warapu is still visible as it runs parallel to the main foot track.

The pieces of the concrete pillars of the local church at Warapu still lie where the waves left them as a half complete replacement stands over it. Most people have settled further inland, for twenty years now.

Another consequence of the tsunami was the establishment of the "Wok Sambai" Centre at St Martin's There were so many people in need of personal counselling that the "Counselling Centre" was established in the grounds of St Martin's Pastoral Centre where I had been in charge. The idea was to train local men and women in counselling so they could go back amongst their people to do this work themselves. It was a very successful project and was still in operation in 2005.



⁴⁹ *Post Courier* July 31, 2018

Ordination of Fr Joe Amanos - the first priest from Sissano – 2001

The ordination was held just a few years after the 1998 devastating tsunami had hit the area decimating Sissano and other villages along the coast.

Nothing was left of the Sissano Church but the ordination ceremony was held there in an outside ceremony with a new altar built over the old one of the original German Church.

A flotilla of banana boats brought visitors from Aitape. The sea journey there was smooth but the sea got quite choppy by the afternoon.

Fr Joe was led up to the altar by his immediate family and a singsing group Joe's father had lost many relatives in the tsunami including two grandchildren so it was also a sad occasion. Joe's father presented him to Bishop Austen who spoke well. He acknowledged "the deep suffering of the people but also their courage in rehabilitating their lives. Now it was time for some joy". He noted that the people had planted flowers – things of no material use but symbols of joy and peace. "Those flowers say a lot of about suffering giving way to joy."

The new Fr Joe spoke about his own difficulties along the way to his ordination. He had worked for some years at BP's so he was an older student at the seminary having to get used to study again. Then the tsunami struck and he returned to Sissano to help in the rehabilitation particularly of the orphaned children who needed support for their education. Overall, it was a moving ceremony bringing some needed joy to the people of Sissano. Fr Greg Bourke noted: "I thought of the many missionaries men and women who had served the Sissano and Warapu people: the SVD Germans before the war and then the Friars like Fr Ferdy, Urban, Giles and Eugene and Sisters like Rumold and Francois. How they would have loved to witness the first Sissano ordination." Bulletin Vol 18 June 2001

This year 2021 is the 75th Anniversary of the Friars going to Papua New Guinea in 1946. They have done a wonderful job over all these years. I first became interested in Aitape when doing Fr Ferdy Parer's story – he was one of the first group of Friars who went to Aitape in 1946. I also interviewed Bishop Doggett who was the leader of the group. (*Mary Mennis, author*)



TAKING vows... Fr Joe Amanos being ordained by Bishop Austen with Deacon Terence Assisting.

Welcome to the Franciscan Friars of PNG

The Order was founded by St. Francis of Assisi (1181 – 1226). He was the son of a rich Italian businessman and a French mother. As young man he led a hectic and joyful social life with a burning ambition to become a great soldier. During his first battle he was captured and spent two years as a prisoner. On his return to Assisi he again renewed his romantic lifestyle and was soon off on a second attempt to win fame. Shortly after leaving Assisi he again renewed his romantic lifestyle and was soon off on a second attempt to win fame. Shortly after leaving Assisi he had a vision which questioned his life values. He returned home in disgrace and withdrew to the countryside to ponder his future. While praying in a small chapel he heard a voice calling him to "rebuild my church". The voice came from a painting of the crucified Christ. Shortly after this Francis met a leper and, instead of turning away from him, Francis warmly embraced him. Francis came to appreciate that Christ is present in all people, especially the poor. Soon young men came to join Francis and they became known as the 'Brothers of

Penance', little brothers to all, men of peace, with a special love of all creation. St. Francis was named the patron of the environment by the present Pope.

The Order grew very rapidly and is still one of the largest Orders in the Church. The Franciscans came to Papua New Guinea from Australia in 1946. Eventually, they were given the pastoral care of the Aitape Diocese. Now they have the local diocesan clergy and three Spiritain priests working with them. Franciscans live in communities as brothers, all equal, whether priests or brothers. All ministries are available according to the talents of the brothers and the needs of the Church. All are asked to be simple Gospel men. In Papua New Guinea Franciscans work as pastors, tradesman, teachers, chaplains, medical, mechanical and agricultural workers. At present they have communities in the Aitape Diocese in West New Britain and in Port Moresby.

At present there are 35 Franciscans Friars in Papua New Guinea. They are mainly Papua New Guineans, and some are from Australia, Poland, Italy and the Philippines. On the world scene the Franciscans are the second largest Catholic Order of men in the world after the Jesuits with about 16,000 members. The Franciscan Friars Minister General is Fr. Jose Rodriguez Carballo, a Spaniard who is in his second term as Minister General.⁵⁰

1946 – 2021

75th Anniversary of the OFM Friars going to Aitape in Papua New Guinea in 1946



⁵⁰ <https://ofmpng.wordpress.com/>

PART TEN History of the Wewak Catholic Mission



2016 Bishop Jozef in the Wirui Christ the King Parish Church

With Bible Sunday celebrations Bishop Jozef launched Bible Month during outdoor Mass. The Word of God nourishes, nurtures, and gives life like rain giving life to the earth. We want to dedicate ourselves to reading the Bible and meditate on the Word of God during August. Parish Priest Fr Bernard Burite and his PPK are going to have many more activities during the Bible Month.



SVD MISSION TO TUMLEO AND WEWAK – from 1896

In the 1880s the Lutheran mission had established mission centres on the coast near Madang and they did not want the Catholic 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.”¹

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 (off Aitape). Aitape was one area where the Catholics were first in the area. They were able to use the traditional trade routes of the Tumleo people to spread the Good News.

In Port Moresby the London Missionary Society used the traditional trading routes to spread the word along with the pots on the *lakatoi* canoes. Rev Chalmers of the LMS even travelled on the *lakatoi* and took Samoan catechists with him setting up in villages along the coast wherever the Motu traders had contacts thus claiming the area for the LMS mission; in Madang the Lutheran missionaries did the same with the traditional trade routes of the Bel people which extended right along the coast this enabled the Lutherans to get a toe-hold in many of the villages. The only place where the Catholic missionaries were able to do this was in Tumleo where they set up their first mission on the advice of a friendly plantation owner and contacted other villages along the trade routes.



Father ven den Hemel, a chartered surveyor, made the first map of the coast from Aitape to Turubu, it was still used in World War II. He also grew some swamp rice and introduced some tropical fruit from East Asia

¹ (Wiltgen, 1971: 331).



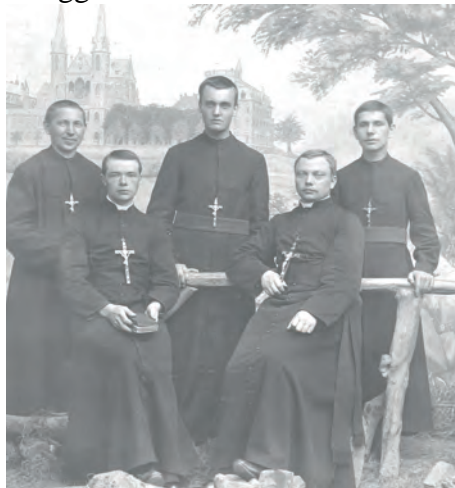
A Tumleo canoe and a Tumleo woman beating a clay pot into shape



Tumleo Island is a small island off the coast. It is about two kilometres long and one kilometre wide. Traditionally the women made pots and the men traded them in their canoes along the coast for sago, an important food source particularly in the period of the north-west winds - November to May when it was unsafe to travel by canoe. These pots found their way by further trade up to the Torricelli Mountains where they were exchanged for pigs and tobacco. (May and Tuckson: 308)

The Catholic missionaries were the first to arrive at Tumleo and were able to use the traditional trade routes of the Tumleo people to make contact with their trade friends along the coast or when they visited the island for the pots.

By a happy coincidence there was a rich clay deposit in the center of Tumleo used by Tumleo women for making highly desirable clay pots. This meant that Tumleo had friendly trade relations with numerous villages and tribes up and down the coast and its men who did the trading knew the languages of these villages and tribes. Tumleo traders carried word of the missionaries and of their teachings to coastal villages while on trading expeditions with their outrigger canoes. And men from those same villages out of curiosity visited Tumleo to meet



the missionaries and see the church and school that they had built. Tumleo trade contacts became Catholic mission contacts and soon children from these various linguistic and tribal areas were attending the central school at Tumleo. This makes it clear that the Tumleo people had, since the very first beginnings a very important role to play in the commencement of Catholic mission work in north-east New Guinea. It was of mutual interest for both sides to become allies. Beside the tremendous role Tumleo people played as promoters of the Catholic mission it should not be forgotten that it was Tumleo men and Tumleo catechists who helped to found and evangelize many communities along the coast.²

The first five SVD Missionaries from Steyl arrived in Tumleo Island in 1896

² R. Wiltgen (380-397)

Below: This photograph from 1907 was taken on Tumleo Island. Here Sister Cherubina SSpS in the first printery in New Guinea.



In the 1920's the Wirui mission had new mission buildings on Mission Hill. When Brother Joe Szubeck, the future builder of the Wewak Cathedral arrived in 1934 the mission had a parish house, church, convent and school all well established.

Until 1933 Wewak had only a few buildings, built of bush materials. Kassa Townsend was determined to move the District headquarters from Aitape to Wewak which had the better harbour.

Between the years 1934 – 1937 many more buildings were constructed. At this time Bishop Loerks was 'keen to move his mission headquarters from Tumleo to Kairuru Island, close to Wewak'³



The Church at Aresili. The façade copies⁴ the style of the tambaran or spirit haus of the area.

The Maprik area of the Wewak diocese is famous for the spirit

houses with their highly ornate facades and the artistic talent of the people who specialise in making carvings. The SVD Fathers appreciated the Sepik Art and encouraged the people to hold on to their culture where possible.



³ (Fleetwood: 1984:19)

⁴ (Bus: 75 years)



*1897 Fr Francis Vormann with
Tumleo children JPG.*

*First Communion class
1905 Tumleo*



1904 Kindergarten children Tumleo JPG

Sago was a very important trade item and the Tumleo people depended on it for their sustenance. The sago palms did not grow on Tumleo in any great amount so their pots were traded for sago along the coast. This meant that they had good relationships with their neighbours who were keen to buy the pots.



1907 Village scene preparing sago

Eventually Father Limbrock managed to buy land at Alexishafen ten miles from Madang. 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, loincloths, saucepans, beads and other useful articles were given in compensation. Soon, however, fierce opposition arose against the Catholic Mission. The Sek people, instigated by a group of white residents, hand back the



articles they had received in payment for their land. Even there they had opposition from various quarters but they went ahead and Alexishafen rivalled early Madang with its schools, convents, houses and a beautiful cathedral. (Part Five.)

Traders in their canoe at Sek Village near Alexishafen

The following information comes from an article on the Keith Jackson's site:

Based at Wewak in New Guinea, the Vicariate of Central New Guinea was led by Bishop Joseph Loerks, the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries [Societas Verbi Divini] had been quietly carrying out their work since their arrival in 1892 to convert the local tribal peoples to Christianity when the Japanese invaded. Bishop Loerks territory included the Wewak hinterland and remote Sepik River areas.

Both Catholic and Protestant Germans had worked hard not only to convert the locals to Christianity but had endeavoured to improve healthcare facilities. The construction of small cottage hospitals and educating local women in child-birthing methods and other health related issues were run by the Holy Spirit sisters.



1. First Bishop - ***Joseph Loerks.***

Photograph: Bishop Joseph Loerks.

⁵The Germans had been in the region before the World War I when New Guinea had been a German colony. The German capitulation ending World War I and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles forced the handing over of the former German colony to Australia.

It was Australian-controlled territory when the Japanese invaded. Both faiths had maintained good relations with the local indigenous people, but with the arrival of the Japanese in mid January 1943, all that was about to change. Soon after the Japanese occupation of Wewak, because the clergymen were German civilians, the Japanese, seemingly unable or possibly unwilling, to differentiate between civilians of friendly and neutral nations and the civilians of

⁵ "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me": Part One, 1943 30 July 2015

enemy powers, ordered Bishop Loerks and his missionaries to be sent to Kairuru Island off Wewak. They were free to move around the island but, over time, the Japanese began to perceive these neutral clergy as a possible threat. It was thought the Allies were receiving military information from the missionaries regarding ship movements which resulted in air raids.

Second World War

During the war, the Japanese soldiers in Wewak wondered why so many German missionaries were working freely in an Australian town when Germany was at war with Australia. They concluded that they must be spies for the Australians. They became even more suspicious when Japanese forces were attacked by allied planes at certain times. Who had notified them? Unbeknown to them there were Coast-watchers in the hills behind giving out the evidence to the allies.

It was probably the assumption that the missionaries were somehow to blame for so many Japanese deaths that led to the execution of Fr William Jakob and Brother Emmanuel Wagner at the But Catholic mission on 25 February 1943. They were told that the Commanding officer wanted to see them and they were shot on the spot.”⁶

Before the disastrous Battle of the Bismarck Sea, Coast-watchers near Rabaul had alerted the allies of a contingent of Japanese vessels leaving Rabaul: eight Japanese transports and eight escorting Destroyers. During the attack by the allies, all transports were sunk and four destroyers out of the eight were sunk. When the small Japanese ship Akikaze came to Wewak it brought news of the disaster. The Japanese higher authority wanted to build a sea-plane base on Kairuru Island away from Rabaul. For this to happen the missionaries had to be moved in case they were spies. On 18 March 1943 the missionaries on Kairuru Island were taken on board the Akikaze including Bishop Joseph Loerks, 38 missionaries (31 of whom were German nationals) including 18 nuns, one New Guinea girl, and two Chinese infants. Akikaze then called into Manus picking up twenty more people mostly Germans, including six Lutheran missionaries, three other nuns and three other priests, and other people as well. The captain was told initially they were for internment in Rabaul. But at sea he got the message from Rabaul that he should kill them all. He did not want to do this but it was a command from on high. After the war it was not known who sent the message. As a result between Manus and Rabaul each of the adults was strung up by the hands on a gallows in the stern of the vessel, shot dead by rifle or machine-gun fire, and thrown overboard. The two Chinese infants and the European baby were thrown over alive. As there were U.S. nationals among the victims, the Australian War Crimes Section in Tokyo, having completed its investigation, on 18 July 1947 handed the matter over to the American authorities, who appear to have taken no further action.



The Japanese Akikaze ship. In the end this ship was destroyed by the Americans and all on board perished

Following their defeat on the Driniumor River in July, the Japanese commander, General Hatazo Adachi, withdrew his forces from their forward positions and in the lull that followed, Adachi's forces focused upon foraging operations into the Torricelli Mountains and Wewak as hunger and disease began to take its toll on the Japanese force. The Japanese, lacking significant air and naval assets, and low on ammunition and other supplies, had sought to avoid engagement. Upon the arrival of the

⁶ (*a Short History of Wewak by Lorna Fleetwood 1984:35*)

Australians, however, the 6th Division's commander, Major General Jack Stevens, decided to begin offensive operations, albeit on a limited scale, to clear the Japanese forces from the coastal areas. (web note).⁷

The surrender September 1945 the Japanese surrendered. On September 11 General Adachi arrived near Maprik for the surrender ceremony. He was carried in a sedan chair because he was a sick man. He was ordered by an Australian Officer to get out of his chair and he and his party were put in a temporary prison and were flown into Wewak the following morning. The



surrender of General Adachi took place at Wom. On either side of the airstrip Australian soldiers were lined up and Adachi and his men had to walk down between these soldiers. Then Adachi met Major Robertson and saluted before signing the documents. Next he handed over his sword and was escorted back to a waiting jeep. It was a moment of great excitement for the soldiers who witnessed the event ⁸

After The War.

When the Australian soldiers returned to Wewak town there was destruction everywhere. A few cement slabs were all that was left of most of the buildings. Wewak hill and china town were flattened. Coconut trees were destroyed and there was wreckage of planes everywhere. (Fleetwood 1948)

The Catholic mission had to re-establish itself. It had lost most of its missionaries on board the Akikaze ship during the war. With Bishop Loerks dead there was now need for a new bishop. By the time Fr Arkfeld arrived in 1949, work had already started on re-building the mission: a small church and living quarters for the Sisters. Arkfeld immediately began organising a school for the children who lived near the mission. Fr Mihalic was recruited in August 1948 to run the St Xavier's school.

The newly arrived Fr Arkfeld in Alexishafen



⁷ Web note

⁸ Fleetwood 1984

In 1958 a New Church replaces a shed of scrap



Divine Word Missionaries returning to New Guinea after World War II found that the Wewak Mission had been completely destroyed during the conflict. The Brothers built a temporary church initially from scrap metal left over from the conflict. This church looked more like a tin shed but it served its purpose for ten years. Then it was discovered to be full of white ants and ready to fall and had to be demolished. The new cathedral was then built. At the time it was one of the largest churches ever attempted in Papua New Guinea. Called the Christ the King Cathedral it was dedicated in Wewak on 26 October 1958 in the presence of high civil and Ecclesiastical dignitaries. Included amongst the guests were the Administrator Brigadier D.M. Cleland, the Sepik District Commissioner Mr R. Cole and his wife Mrs Cole. Many guests arrived by plane from Port Moresby, Lae, Rabaul, Kavieng, Alexishafen and Aitape. The Superior General of the Divine Word missionaries who staff the vicariate the Rev John Schuette SVD also attended.



Nearly 500 Europeans and 3,000 New Guineans heard the bells peel for the first time at 7 am in the morning. These bells were cast in steel in Germany and had been lifted into the 60-foot tower. The new Cathedral is the seat of 46-year-old Bishop Leo Arkfeld SVD from Iowa USA and

he presided at the High Mass.⁹

⁹ *Pacific Island Monthly* November 1958

2. Bishop Arkfeld, Bishop of Wewak,

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, he worked with Archbishop Duhig in Brisbane. He and Duhig became good friends.

After being in Wewak for some time Arkfeld was transferred to Lae and was busy there 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.

Rev. Leo Arkfeld, 87, who spent 10 years of religious study at the Divine Word Missionaries in Northbrook before becoming the "Flying Bishop of Papua New Guinea," died Saturday in the town of Wewak in Papua New Guinea. Not long after his ordination as a Roman Catholic priest 51 years ago, Archbishop Arkfeld faced a challenge even the hardest of missionaries would find daunting. After a short stint in Australia near the end of World War II, he was assigned to the remote coastal villages of Papua New Guinea, a region that had been destroyed during the war. Archbishop Arkfeld's new responsibilities covered tough terrain, with its people spread across jungles and mountains, many of them reachable only by days on foot. But Archbishop Arkfeld was undaunted. An energetic and resourceful man, he adjusted to the challenge by becoming a pilot. "He was a very practical missionary," said his friend, Bishop Raymond Kalisz, who now oversees the Diocese of Wewak. "He was from Iowa originally, and he was very down to earth."

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."¹⁰

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.

¹⁰ By Chicago Tribune published: August 25, 1999 at 1:00 a.m. / UPDATED: August 10, 2021 at 10:12 p.m.



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 his missionary work because it signified that the church was beginning to take root. Rev. Leo Arkfeld, 87, who spent 10 years of religious study at the Divine Word Missionaries in Northbrook before becoming the “Flying Bishop of Papua New Guinea,” died Saturday in the town of Wewak in Papua New Guinea.

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A Meeting of bishops in Wewak



Bishop

Leo Arkfeld and Sister Eurista SSps with the first seven novices of the Sisters of the Rosary on the day of their founding in October 1952. These same seven Sisters took their first vows two years later and their perpetual vows in 1963.

Their Order was founded by Bishop Arkfeld and it was his first step towards localisation. The Sisters were invested with the blue habit in the Parish Church at Wirui; Sr Maria Goretti, Sr Josepha; Sr Teresia; Sr Columba; Sr Eursists; Sr Salvatore, and Sr Regis. They teach, nurse and run clinics.

Wewak Notes from Sheila Hawthorne



In 1957 with Pat Noonan from Mackay I became a Lay Missionary to the Catholic Vicariate of Wewak. This was as the result of a request from Bishop Leo Arkfeld SVD to the Grail in Australia for women to assist with the education of women and girls from the Sepik area for whom he had a deep commitment. He quickly saw the need when taking up his position in Wewak. He saw many local boys had opportunities for formal education well before the 2nd World War

In 1957 there were approximately 40 - 50 missionaries on the main station known as Wirui. They were Society of Divine Word (SVD) members including the Bishop, Priests and Brothers from Europe and the U.S. Holy Spirit Sisters from Europe, about 20 local Sisters of the Rosary (professed and novices) and four lay missionaries (3 Australian and one from America). The major building works were underway throughout the 1950s. These included Christ the King Cathedral, extensions to St Mary's Primary School, a new convent for the SSps sisters; a large kitchen block, a dormitory to accommodate 100 local domestic workers, and girls considering a religious vocation and boarders attending the Holy Rosary Girls School where I was Head teacher for 15 years until it was amalgamated with a boy's school to become a Vocational and Trade School. I continued that role for five years until I returned to Australia. Three years later Pat Noonan returned to Mackay.

In all those building projects, the qualified SVD brothers were the main artisans assisted by a large team of local male workers. Bishop Arkfeld put a lot of energy and conviction into the farm project so fresh meat and eggs were produced at the Wirui station

As the years went by, most of these projects were organised and run by lay missionaries from different parts of the world. This included the Wirui Press established in the 1970s. At first it mainly produced the 'Wan tok' newspaper which was later moved to Port Moresby.

Photograph: Pilot Father Joseph Walachy refuels a post-war Tiger Moth. Sitting in the cockpit is Bishop Arkfeld also a pilot. Mission flying began in 1937. Fr Walachy crashed to his death on 28 June 1965 (Photograph from 75 Years in New Guinea)



Sheila Hawthorne continues:

I still remember the day one of the pilots announced that they had done more than 60 flights to the outstations including more than half to Yangoru which was a government as well as a mission outstation. W.A.S continued from the Wirui facility until the 1970s when, with very reduced resources, it was moved to Boram the official airport for the Sepik region. Road development had also happened which improved communication. The Church's active missionaries in East Sepik began to change very noticeably from the 1960s with the arrival of the Marist Brothers for St Xavier's Boys school on Kairuru Island, Mercy Sisters for education and Health services and diocesan priests especially from Rockhampton. Qld Diocese.

Probably the largest influx of new personnel was the numbers of lay missionaries. These came from Australia with the Palms movement and the Austrian Rural Movement, as well as organisations in England, Canada, and the USA. The expansion included the Catholic Church's large health programmes requiring nurses and other qualified personnel. Much of this work is now done with a large number of well qualified local staff.

Many years later in 1980 while I was back in Australia, the Wewak Diocese Catholic Education secretary approached the Australian Grail for assistance in running a Christian Urban Awareness programme for adults many of whom at that time were High school leavers in years 9 and 10 and beyond and other Christian urban dwellers.

In 1981 three of us went to Wewak and formed a team of six to run practical courses in four local communities. The course included scripture studies, English, home economics, business management, small-scale food production especially vegetables and fruit. This project in three of the centres included the practical management of planting nurturing of green vegetables and sweet potatoes, some taro, the harvesting of them, cooking and marketing of the surplus.

With the expansion of the Education departments external learning programme a local MP Bernard Narokobi opened a correspondence school where the curriculum covered all high school levels in language and mathematics. That is where young unemployed school leavers in the Wewak area preferred to go.

The Grail women from Australia continued in that Diocese until the end of 1983. By that time five local women had become very interested in the Grail and one had come to live in a house on the mission property, which to this day is known as the Grail House. The house has continually provided accommodation for women needing medical attention at the local hospital, nurses who choose to live away from the hospital, female students and needy women from adverse domestic situations.

Grail formation which was offered from the International Grail from 1984 and mostly Australian women have gone to assist in the many programmes ever since. Twelve Wewak women made a commitment to the Grail and in 1990 PNG applied for and received formal acceptance into the International Grail. Women from Wewak and Port Moresby. Grail groups are now flourishing in Rabaul and Manus Island and there are approximately 40 committed

Grail women in PNG with several projects to local needs. For example, when the HIV/Aids crisis was really severe and many people were dying in Port Moresby hospital ignored by families, Grail women in Moresby inspired and led by nurse (late) Elizabeth Waken made burial shrouds for all those victims. "Literacy courses, setting up early childhood education in centres, running a church bookshop, a sewing project, making school uniforms and learning to bake with a drum oven in a small village project were among the many Grail projects in PNG maintaining and running the Grail House always with helpful support from the Bishop of the time in Wirui for more than 30 years has kept the Grail well-known in that diocese."



In January 2016 Sheila was very pleasantly surprised to meet up with Sr Angie RSM from Papua New Guinea who is a relative of Elizabeth Waken from the beautiful island of Kairiru. She and I shared many memories of their school days decades ago when I was teaching at the Holy Rosary school in Wewak. Elizabeth and Angie are outstanding examples of the large number of deeply committed, strongly ethical and highly professional women working in health, education, social welfare, women's issues and concerns and community development in Papua New Guinea. It is humbling to hear many of them express their pride in being ex-students of Holy Rosary and/or Mercy College, Yarpas. (Sheila Hawthorn 2020).

Maggie wife of Reto Jenatsch was a Grail girl in Wewak and now lives in Brisbane. Her family is from Saure village at the edge of Wewak town. The village suffered greatly during the war. Not only from the Japanese invasion but from strafing by the allied bombing. Her older brother was killed in one of these raids. The family fled to the bush area but it was a difficult time and many were starving. After the war they returned and re-built the village. This was when Maggie was born. She worked with the Grail in Wewak and, now living in Brisbane is a member of the Brisbane Grail. Many of her family have

become religious including her niece photographed here.

Sr. M. Francois Wridgway moved to the Wewak Diocese, from Aitape and with other sisters opened a house of refuge for deserted and battered women and children, victims of domestic violence in so many forms – a haven of peace for women in need away from the safety and support of their villages. The Sisters have a Ministry here to women who have been victims of Domestic Violence. They have a secure section under the Convent. For this ministry they have to raise money. If anyone would like to donate or do a fund-raising activity it would really be a great help. Dulcie at the moment is making ice blocks and our next door neighbours are selling them for her since she is at College studying to be a teacher. Millie is also a student, finishing her high school education so that she can go on for further studies.



Reto Jenatsch, lay missionary in Wewak between 1979 and 1983 and is married to Maggie'. Reto knew Brother Ben Salvius SVD well. Ben worked for Bishop Arkfeld in the Wirui hanger as a pilot. He was also a mechanic and could fix anything including sewing machines and cars as well as the planes. Ben was friendly with the village people. He would stay and eat with them particularly at Saure village up on the hill near Wewak which is where Maggie hails from.

There was a look-out there built by the Japanese during the war. Ben died in a plane crash when he was still young in 1981. He was not the pilot on this occasion.



Photograph of Wewak used for educational purposes

Wewak Mission Timeline.

1913.07.25: Established as Apostolic Prefecture of Western Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land (from Apostolic Prefecture of Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land)

1922.11.14: Renamed as Apostolic Prefecture of Central New Guinea/Novæ Guineæ Centralis (Latin)

1931.08.22: Promoted as Apostolic Vicariate of Central New Guinea / Novæ Guineæ Centralis (Latin)

1952.05.15: Renamed as Apostolic Vicariate of Wewak) / (lost territory to establish Apostolic Prefecture of Aitape)

1959.06.18: Lost territory to establish Apostolic Vicariate of Mount Hagen

1966.11.15: Promoted as Diocese of Wewak

Bishops of Wewak

1. Bishop Joseph Lörks, SVD (Bishop from 1931 - 1945). He was born in 1876 and was ordained in 1910. He became a bishop in 1933. He died during the war in 1945, killed by the Japanese. On 18 March 1943 the missionaries on Kairuru Island were taken on board the Akikaze including Bishop Joseph Lörks, 38 missionaries (31 of whom were German nationals) including 18 nuns, one New Guinea girl, and two Chinese infants. They were shot and thrown overboard.

2. Bishop Leo Arkfeld was born in Butte, Nebraska, USA on 4 February 1912. He was Bishop of Wewak, 1966 to 1975. 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. Later Arkfeld became archbishop of Madang.

3. Bishop Raymond Kalisz – the third bishop of Wewak

Born in Melvindale, Mich., in 1927, Raymond Kalisz was the ninth of John and Agnes Kalisz's 11 children. He entered Divine Word Seminary in East Troy, Wis., in 1941 and became a Divine Word Missionary in 1947. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1954.



In 1955, the Society of the Divine Word assigned the young Kalisz to Indonesia, but because of unrest in that country, he and others were unable to obtain visas. Instead, the religious order's leaders sent him to his first choice of missions—Papua New Guinea, a country made up of more than 600 islands in the South Pacific. The main island lies about 100 miles (160 km) north of Australia.

Photo; Bishop Raymond Kalisz

During his first five years he worked among the people in the rainforests of the Torembi parish, where he was assigned. He once wrote: "It included all the villages within 20 miles from each bank of the Sepik River. The parish included over 50 villages each with a church, a school and a catechist. That is quite a challenge for any missionary to look after."

Since the area had no roads, the young priest had to travel by foot and canoe. For his own organizational purposes, he divided his territory into five regions and thought of each region as a circuit. "It took two weeks to make the circuit, walking about ten miles between each of the ten villages of the area," he wrote. "On arrival, I would hear confessions, say the rosary with the people, eat food that the people gave to me and talk with the men in the evening in the *haus tambaran* (spirit house)." The next day at dawn, I would again hear confessions, celebrate Mass, have breakfast, visit the local catechist and school staff, and begin that day's journey to the next village.

"It was tough going, but I loved it," wrote Bishop Kalisz, who had a gentle, ready smile and a quiet nature.

In 1958, he accepted the position of rector at St. John's Seminary on Kairiru Island in the Bismarck Sea about 12 miles (20 km) off the coast of Wewak. For 18 years, he helped to educate young Papua New Guinean men for the priesthood. In 1976, he became vicar general of the Diocese of Wewak.

In 1980, Pope John Paul II appointed him as the Bishop of Wewak. Father Weber added, "Through his leadership as a circuit priest, educator and bishop, Ray Kalisz left a legacy for the Catholics of Papua New Guinea—nurturing and training leaders from among their own sons and daughters."

4. Bishop Anthony Burgess of Wewak in 2002 until- 2013 by Fr Greg Bourke. (Obituary)

Anthony Burgess was born on 29 July 1938, the eldest of eight children, in Singleton, New South Wales, Australia. After attending the local convent school he won a scholarship to St. Stanislaus College, Bathurst (Vincentians). Having obtained his Leaving Certificate he returned home to work in his father's business.

After three years he decided to become a diocesan priest and entered the seminary. He worked as a priest in Tasmania for six years. He then heard a similar request from the Bishop of Aitape in the West Sepik province of Papua New Guinea seeking help. Tony was to remain in PNG for forty years.

Arriving in 1973 Tony was sent to Karaitem near Lumi in the Torrecelli Mountains. Lumi was a large government station and the parish was under the care of Franciscan Fr. Tom Ritchie. When Tom had to return to Australia for some months following the death of his father, Tony cared for both Lumi and Karaitem. Later on he was appointed to Wassisi in the Nuku district. Wassisi is an important station on the junction of the road between Nuku and Wewak. He received great support from the Franciscan Sisters at Wassisi and his care for the Religious would be a characteristic he would bring later to Wewak.

When Brian Barnes was Bishop of Aitape he appointed Tony to his Council with particular responsibility for Finance. He later became the Vicar General of the diocese. When the terrible tsunami hit the Aitape coast in 1998 it virtually wiped out three large villages.



The cost in lives and materials was immense. Tony was a key figure in the resettlement of survivors and the one responsible for making sure that every Kina of donated money was accounted for. At the same time, he continued to care for his large parish of Wassisi. Fr. Tony was named Auxiliary Bishop of Wewak in the year 2000 and took over the diocese two years later. We knew he had a lot of contact with Wewak from Wassisi and was well known to the Wewak priests. He was always a strong, clear speaker and couldn't stand corruption in any form.

He always worked long hours right to the end. When he got sick a couple of years ago and went to Sydney for tests he stayed with the Franciscans. Many were old friends from PNG including retired Archbishop Brian Barnes and Fr. Tom Ritchie.

Bishop Anthony Burgess

Bishop Tony became a Secular Franciscan (former Third Order) in his home parish in Australia. He received the award of "Grand Companion of the Order of Logohu" by the Governor General acknowledged as a "Chief". He died 23rd October 2013 at 7:00 am PNG time.

The Arrival of the First Mercy Sisters – 1957.¹¹



Photograph of the Mercy Sisters when they arrived in Goroka in 1956

four Union Sisters landed in Goroka, a band of seven sisters from the Brisbane Congregation headed northwards for Wewak, destined for the remote mission station of Kunjingini. A year later five sisters from Brisbane, Rockhampton, Cairns, Townsville and Grafton made a journey to Wewak.

In the stage of rebuilding the diocese, Bishop Arkfeld felt that they were entering a new period of history and the proper place for the headquarters was Wewak itself. As there were no roads, he decided to level out airstrips at the mission stations and fly by plane. Linking the stations by air would make travel much quicker than by boat and enable him to keep in frequent touch with mission personnel and parishioners. The Bishop was now ready to find some sisters trained in teaching and nursing.

His thoughts went to his Australian neighbours, the Brisbane Sisters of Mercy. He had heard from the Apostolic Delegate that, they were prepared to go on mission. the Sisters of Mercy had taken seriously the words of Pope Pius XII, that if religious congregations were not willing to expand, they would die. After arrival in PNG convents were opened at Torembi, Yarapos, Ulupu, Yangoru and Negrie where the sisters were involved in primary education, health and pastoral work.

Sister Bridie (Carthage) Fennessy was one of the first sisters from the Brisbane Mercy Congregation to go to the Papua New Guinea mission.

Sister Bride wrote,

I worked in the Kunjingini Primary School as a Teacher from 1957 until the year of independence 1975. At that time (1957), many of the people felt school should be for the young boys and not girls. It took a lot of visits to villages, a lot of talking with parents, trying to persuade them to entrust their little ones to us. So it was a significant step forward when enough children of appropriate age occupied Grades I, 2 and 3. One of the most memorable moments for me was when I attended my first Mass in the bush church with its dirt floor and kneelers that served both as kneelers and seats for men and women - the women on one side of the church and the men on the other. Then there was the day of the school sports - the 'green team refused to march because they came last! These children were remarkable in many ways, they could hear the mission plane coming long before I could and tell me whether it was the Dornier or the Cessna and whether it was coming to Kunjingini or going on to the next station, Kaugia. Then there was the afternoon when the class as one rushed out of the room and urged me to come

¹¹ Chapter 4 Crossings

too. The reason, on earth tremor, guri22 they called it. I soon realised how strong the links that were being forged between the Mercies of home in Brisbane and ourselves. We depended on them and their schools for so much. The children of Kunjingini had no conception of many things that we take so much for granted. We spent a lot of time making charts with pictures cut out from magazines.

Then there was the question of some kind of uniforms for special occasions, e.g. visits of Mother Damian and Bishop Rush of Rockhampton. Our parish priest then was Father Peter Green, on loan from the Rockhampton Diocese. Sewing circles formed among the parents of Mercy school children in Brisbane came to our rescue. Thus the Kunjingini children, boys and girls wore brightly coloured lap laps for school and special ones for other occasions. We managed to get shorts for the boys as well as the lap laps. Our first Christmas night in Kunjingini.

First Christmas for her. On 24th December 1957, people started to arrive at the mission station about 5 pm for midnight Mass. They sat around on the ground in groups, talking quietly and feeding their children. As it got dark, they lit their lamps. Lights could be seen through the trees as more people wended their way up to the station. As midnight approached, it was a wonderful sight to see hundreds of people sitting around their lighted lamps.

When Father Blasig rang the bell for Mass they all stood, gathered up their sleeping children and processed towards the church door. Father Blasig had a strong singing voice and as he intoned the Hymn 'Yumi go long Bethlehem pies nou, yumi lukim Jesus' (Let's go to Bethlehem now, to see Jesus') with one voice the crowd took it up. I thought they would raise the roof off the church. Even to this day I can feel that emotion when I think of our first Christmas night in Kunjingini. A most wonderful experience!

Under the sisters' administration, Kunjingini Primary School was eventually to become a very large central school. The number of teachers increased as more sisters, lay missionaries and notional teachers joined the stall. ¹² "When Bridie left PNG in 1975, after independence was granted and all primary schools had at to be localised, girls had reached a high level of education and were interested in becoming teachers. Teaching was not only for men! The young women went on to the Training College of Koindi, which had become co-educational under the administration of the Christian Brothers and Mercy Sisters.

2007 marked the fiftieth anniversary since the arrival of the first Sisters of Mercy in Wewak, in 1957. Seven sisters from the Brisbane Congregation came at the invitation of Bishop Arkfeld. In 2006 celebrations had been held in Goroka to mark the arrival of the Mercy Sisters there in 1956.



In 2007, for the celebrations in Wewak about forty Australian Sisters of Mercy joined with PNG Sisters of Mercy and the broader community for a week in the Wewak Diocese to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary.

¹² Crossings chapter 4 22 -23.

The Sisters of Mercy and St Benedict's Teachers College

The main celebration was on June 1-2 when the Sisters of Mercy PNG not only celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their foundation in the Wewak Diocese but also the foundation of the first Catholic Teachers Training College in PNG which was founded first in Kunjingini by the Sisters of Mercy in 1957 and which later in 1968 moved to a more central position in Kaindi. In 2003, St Benedict's Teachers College Kaindi was amalgamated into the Divine Word University as the Faculty of Education within the university. Brother Andrew Simpson, Vice President Academic of the Divine Word University, said:

“St Benedict's Teacher College has proved to be one of the prime teachers' colleges in PNG and the graduates have moved throughout the whole country. They are recognised by their professionalism as dedicated, committed and competent teachers who have been influenced by Christian principles and who are willing to work for the good of their community. They are respected for their loyalty to the St Benedict's commitment to Work, Study, and Prayer, the motto of the College.”



*St Benedict's Teacher College · celebrated the feast of St. Benedicto.
On July 14 2020 A New Staff Room blessed and opened by Bishop Jozef Roszynski*

Comments by a Palms Volunteer¹³,

Graham described his work in the Wewak Mission station in 2016. He was shown the offices/areas of business, but he found the equipment was in a poor state but still produced books for schools, plus medical record books, receipt books etc. for the diocese and various community organisations. There was also a 2-way radio for priests/church workers in remote areas in the province.

¹³ Palms Volunteer Graham

The houses that had been built when the station was built up again after the war were now old, rundown, some broken down. Bishop Józef took him to the silver jubilee of a local Rosary sister, Sophie, at St John the Baptist Church at Masoma, Mandi village. This church is a sub-parish/outstation of Boram Shalom parish and home of Sr Sophie.

On Sunday, 17th January 2016 he went with bishop Józef to a sub-parish (outstation) of a parish in the Wewak Deanery for a confirmation ceremony of 32 people who had been waiting for 2 extra years for their confirmation. The hold up was the illness and death of the previous Bishop Burgess in 2013. So they very patiently waited until now for the new Bishop. It was a great celebration. The feast afterwards was great too.

Graham's job was the "Diocesan Manager" – an administrative role. I oversee the administration staff and the various workshops and now helping to look after kitchen matters. This includes going to the Wewak town market for fresh fruit and vegies. I will be helping to look after the 2-storey diocesan house where I live (16 rooms and a common room on both floors, plus a small chapel).

Sunday, 31st January went with bishop to Passam parish, known as Emmaus. There was no parish priest there, so bishop looks after this parish.

He commented finally: "Bishop Józef has been very good to me since I arrived. I knew him (as a priest) before I came here. He is very approachable, but very busy. He is not just about giving blessings!! Cheers, Graham.¹⁴



Caritas Forum takes place every year. This year it happened from the 27th to 31st July, where delegates from most dioceses met with Caritas Director Mavis Tito and Bishop Deputy Bp Jozef Roszynski, SVD at CBC headquarters. Week-long forum gave opportunity to evaluate achievements and efforts as well as plan for the future. *(From Aitape Parish web site)*

¹⁴ *Palms Volunteer Graham*

5. Bishop Roszynski, SVD. 2015 Fifth Bishop of Wewak

By Antonio Anup Gonsalves



“In, Mar 10, 2015. a Polish missionary to Papua New Guinea continued his 23-year ministry to the Melanesian nation with the added responsibility of serving as Bishop of Wewak, on the country's northern coast. On Feb. 6, Pope Francis appointed Fr. Jozef Roszynski, S.V.D., as Bishop of Wewak; his episcopal consecration is to take place April 25.

Bishop Josef with Pope Francis

Fr. Joe is a lively man, and loved by the people, the priests and religious of the diocese,” said Fr. Victor Roche, general secretary of the Papua New Guinea bishops conference. Fr. Roszynski was born in 1962 in the Polish town of Nidzica, and at the age of 19 he joined the Society of the Divine Word. He professed religious vows in 1982, and attended seminary from then until 1989, obtaining a master's degree in theology from the Catholic University of Lublin.

In 1989 Fr. Roszynski was ordained a priest of the Society of the Divine Word, and he arrived in Papua New Guinea in October, 1992, where he has since served. He has spent all but two of the past 23 years in the Wewak diocese, serving various parishes. He began by learning the pidgin language and culture. He has been a district superior and acting provincial for the Society of the Divine Word and has been assisting at the parishes in the Wewak diocese which are without resident priests. He also spent two years in Madang, studying human resources and counselling at Divine Word University.”

Wewak parish: A brief history. ¹⁵May 27, 2021. The National Faith

“The Diocese of Wewak is the biggest in Papua New Guinea for number of parishes, a traditionally Catholic area,” Fr. Giorgio Licini, communications director for the Papuan bishop’s conference, told CNA March 7. Some 61 percent of the diocese's population is Catholic: more than double the national average of 27 percent. The diocese of more than 14,000 square miles has 45 parishes, and only 37 priests, both diocesan and religious. Fr. Licini recounted that the new bishop, who carries vast experience, has to steer through several challenges in the Wewak diocese, especially with the “financial crisis, a number of dysfunctional priests, and many parishes lacking priests.” He added that the predisposition to alcoholism common among some of the indigenous tribes along the Sepik river will also be a particular challenge for the new bishop.

In the early days, until the early 1960s, all the people who were staying in Wewak town used to go for prayer at the Wirui cathedral. An idea came to the then late bishop Leo Arkfeld to establish three other parishes; Shalom (Boram), St Francis (Kaindi) and Holy Spirit (Wewak Hill) to cater for the spiritual needs of all the faithful. This would also negate the need to travel to and from Wirui. Pursuing the idea of establishing a parish at Wewak Hill, the late bishop soon found out that there was no free land to build the church. He, therefore, had to work hand

¹⁵ May 27, 2021. *The National Faith*

in hand with the civil authorities to find a suitable area for building the church. He received a positive response from the kiap (patrol officer) at that time who was himself a Catholic. He gave him the land where the church now stands.

Prior to the construction of the church, the land was swampy and was used as a dumping ground. Nothing mattered to the visionary late bishop Arkfeld other than securing a piece of land for a new parish. As soon as the land was granted to the church, late bishop Arkfeld wasted no time. He sent workers to start building. They worked hard draining and clearing the land and building the church on a solid foundation. Br Jack SVD was in charge of the construction. The task was finally completed and the parish was opened in 1971. Today, 50 years later, it is still standing with no visible cracks! With the



Bishop Jozef Roczynski seen with traditional dancers at the Holy Spirit parish at Wewak Hill, Wewak, recently.
— Picture supplied

opening of the church, all residents of Wewak Hill started attending mass at the Holy Spirit parish rather than going to the cathedral. During those days, the residents of Wewak Hill consisted only top government employees, most of whom were expatriates and a few locals.

Fr J D Pavert OFM (Order of Franciscan Minor) was the first parish priest. He was succeeded by Fr John Egan SVD (Society of Divine Word) in 1973 who served until 1974. Generally, in those days, there were no residential priests at Wewak Hill. Most of the priests used to reside at Wirui and come back and forth to Wewak Hill. With non-resident priests, different people were chosen to look after and reside at the parish premises, for example, Mr and Mrs Dierke and others. The Holy Spirit sisters, though based in Wirui, used to take charge of liturgical music during the celebration of mass and other sacraments. Preparations for receiving sacraments and catechesis was done by Catechist Emmanuel who used to work across many parishes in the diocese. In 1974, Fr Brian Hasett took over as parish priest from Fr John Egan SVD. He served as parish priest for three years and was succeeded in 1977 by Fr Cherobim Dambui SVD (later Bishop). Fr Cherobim was, at this time, also the premier of East Sepik. He was staying at the premiere's residence, Wewak Hill.

In 1980, Fr William Liebert SVD took over as parish priest. He was, at the same time, in charge of the Boys Town (juvenile) and was consequently operating from Boys Town. Fr Albert Olah SVD took over from Fr Liebert SVD as the next parish priest in 1983. He carried out his responsibilities until 1991. Fr Olah is fondly remembered by some parishioners for his devotion to the rosary and his passion for looking after flowers.

As time passed, when the parish was well established, the Holy Spirit sisters stopped coming to take the lead during liturgical celebrations. In 1992, Fr Patrick J Doran became the parish priest. His first act was to divide the parish into four sections or communities: Blessed Peter Torot (area 1), St Gabriel (area 2), St Anna (area 3) and St Peter (area 4). He also introduced the vigil mass (on Saturday evenings) mainly for the Filipino community which is the fifth community of the parish. From then until now, these communities take turns to look after the church, parish grounds and to take charge of singing and dancing during liturgical celebrations. Fr Pat (as he is affectionately known) also introduced the Charismatic group, the Legion of Mary, Antioch group and made sure that all the communities pray the rosary during the month of October.

In 1998, Fr David Ify Atuanya CSSp became the next parish priest from 1998 until 2001. He was succeeded by Fr Donatus Onyeke CSSp in 2002. Fr Donatus also used to lecture at the

university (DWU-Kaindi campus). In 2003, Fr Daniel Manique CSSp became the next parish priest. He looked after the parish until 2008. During his tenure, some maintenance work was done to the Church building. Fr Manique also served Moem Barracks parish since they had no priest during that time.

In 2010, Fr Steve Duggan became the next parish priest. He was also vice-president of Divine Word University, St Benedict Campus. He was residing at Kaindi and came on Sundays for mass. He did this for three years until 2013. In 2014, Fr Xavier Razzafimanjay CSSp became parish priest. He stayed on until 2016. That year, Fr Erico Todivelou CSSp became the next parish priest. He was replaced by the current parish priest Fr Edward Tembo CSSp in 2017. thers.”¹⁶

The Stella Maris Community in Wewak

The Stella Maris community of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, which is located within the parish, is also another source of charisma of the Holy Spirit. For many years now, different sisters have settled amongst the parishioners. Their witness, teaching and way of life have inspired and enriched the life of the parish.

Sister Jo Scanlan reported on Stella Maris:

Our house Stella Maris is a Franciscan Convent, that is the community and home of the Franciscan Sisters. We live there and have decided to share the house and the property with the women of the area, especially those in need. We aim to seek the marginalised and rejected women and offer them friendship and if necessary professional help.

We aim to work side-by-side with the ESCAVAW committee away from the institutional side. We see Stella Maris as wider, than an emergency shelter. We are open to see the needs arising from the contacts that the crisis centre has with women of this area.

We also have offered our garden space for any women, recommended from the centre to make gardens to help support their families. Our outdoor cooking area is also used for this purpose – helping women help themselves.

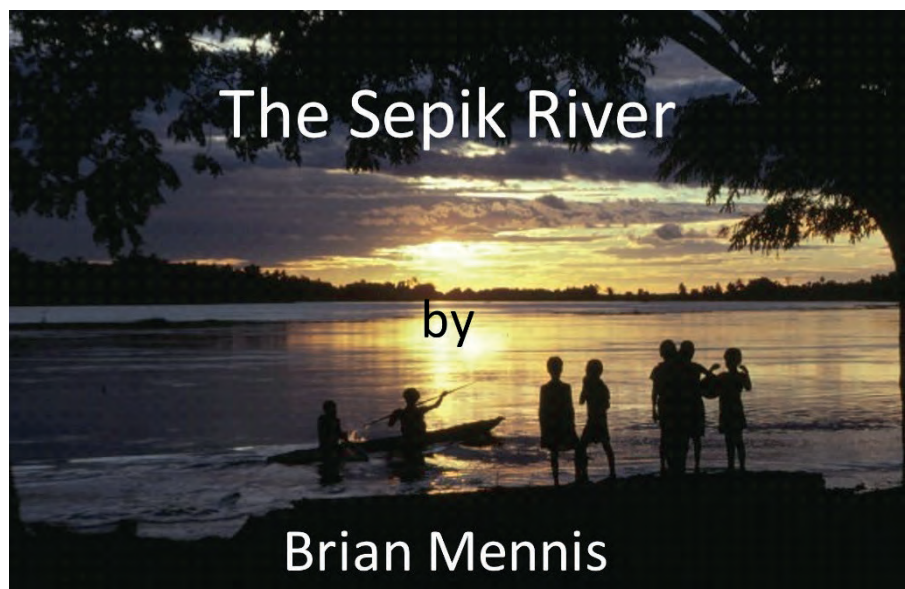
Elizabeth’s story:

‘I am from the Gulf and sometimes my family goes to Port Moresby to the markets. One day while there a Sepik man ‘put his eye on me’, I left my family to live with him. His work sent him to Lae, so I went with him. I was pregnant but I lost that first baby. He was angry and beat me. Then he took me back to his place on the big Sepik River. Everything was strange – the language, the way of life, the houses were in the swamp. They did not want me and I was pregnant again. One day we visited his brother’s house in the town. I was seven months pregnant. One stormy night I ran away and hid up a tree until all was quiet. I made my way to the Crisis Centre and they took me to this house of the Sisters. It was quiet and peaceful. I settled down. I could think again. I knew I wanted to go home to my people. The Sisters helped me to do this secretly.’



¹⁶ May 27, 2021. *The National Faith*

The Sepik River missions



Once out of the mountains, the Sepik is very slow moving and it meanders in and out and cuts across itself to make oxbows. This results in swampy areas and gives rise to thousands of mosquitoes.



A Sepik Spirit house and village. A Sepik carver at work, A mosquito net bag (Photographs by Brian Mennis)



In the Iatmul myth, the beginning of the world was aquatic.¹⁷ Wind stirred the primal water, and land surfaced amid the waves. A ‘totemic pit’ (Tsagiwangu) cleaved the ground—just north of the middle reach of the river, near the Sawos village of Gaikarobi—and the ancestors emerged from it. Te pushed up the sky and set out to create the ‘paths’ of the world. Ground materialised beneath their footsteps. Their descendants continued on these mythic journeys, often paddling canoes and they named the features of the world as they came into existence.

Each tale of creation forms a travelogue of land and water, the grand plot of which is the genesis of terrestrial differences from the original aquatic void. The ancestors of the Shui Aimasa (Pig) clan created the land that spreads north of the river. Te Mboey Nagusamay (Sago) clan claims the world that lies to the south. Te Mogua (Fish) clan oversees the eastern world of the Lower Sepik, the ocean and everything overseas. And the riverbed—but not the water—is the totemic realm of a minor group called Wyngwenjap, whose ancestral eel and snake formed the riverbanks. Members of this clan are said to have filled the Sepik by pouring water from a magical bamboo container, given to them by a lineage of the Sago clan affiliated with the nearby Karawari River. Te heads of the totemic eel and snake glower at each other, as if in a staring contest, at a narrow stretch of the upper river near Yambon village, featuring dangerous rapids and whirlpools. This was formerly the western limit of Eastern Iatmul knowledge. Te tails extend beyond the mouth of the river to Manam a volcanic island in the Bismarck Sea (Lutkehaus 1995). When the tails periodically touch, the Manam volcano erupts. The Sepik, then, served as a sort of axis mundi in Iatmul cosmology. Not surprisingly, the history of European contact with the Iatmul is a tale of the river.

In 1884, Germany asserted colonial control over New Guinea. The colony was initially managed by the New Guinea Company, a commercial enterprise, which christened the territory Kaiser Wilhelmsland.

The first European ship to enter the river’s estuary was the Samoa in May 1885. The ‘mighty’ river, as it was described in the company’s annual report for 1886–87 (Sack and Clark 1979: 15), was termed Kaiserin Augusta Fluss. The company and government officials returned some months later on a steamship to assess the economic potential of the river. Thereafter, German interest in the Sepik focused on collecting artefacts and native labourers, the latter being put to work on coastal copra plantations (Buschmann 2009: 105).

In *Island Rivers* Silverman described how the first missionaries travelled up the Sepik “to stake claims over native souls”. In June 1887, the Samoa came with members of the Rhenish Missionary Society. They were not welcomed and on 30 June, as the ship neared Tambunum, one of the missionaries wrote that ‘everybody [in the village] ran back and forth shouting and grabbed for the spears’ (Claas and Roscoe 2009: 340). “further upriver, local people fired arrows at the expedition, and the Europeans discharged their firearms in response.”

Following this expedition, the annual German reports have nothing to say about the river for the next two decades. But the Sepik was hardly forgotten, especially by the missionaries. The Societas Verbi Divini (SVD), or Society of the Divine Word, started to proselytise along the river in the 1890s (Huber 1988). Evangelists deliberately uprooted local cosmological, ritual and social tenets, and especially targeted the male initiation cult. Today, Tambunum is served by a small cement church located across the river from the main village, adjacent to the primary school. Interestingly, Eastern Iatmul do not practice riverine baptism, despite their use of the Sepik for both everyday and ritual bathing. It is as if the ‘natural’ watercourse is thought to be unsuitable for the ‘civilising’ project of Christianity.

¹⁷ Eric K. Silverman: *Island Rivers Fresh water and place. Oceania* 2018 187 – 221)



The Sepik by Brian Mennis 1971.

The next mention of the Sepik in the annual reports of the New Guinea Company occurs in 1907–08. The river's 'powerful tribes' are reported to have resisted recruiters, missionaries and government agents (Sack and Clark 1979: 277). But Indigenous 'power' was undoubtedly weakened by ship-borne diseases such as smallpox and influenza (Crosby 1997). At the same time, there was a growing European presence along the river.¹⁸

Early Catholic Missions on the Sepik

Steffen wrote:

The first Sepik River mission received the German name Marienberg in 1913. The second mission on the Ramu River was called Annaberg in 1934, and the new station in the hinterland of the Eastern Vicariate in the flat country between the river landscapes of the Sepik and Ramu was given the German name *Josephsthal* in 1934, later spelled *Josephstal*. Normally, all stations were called after the locality or the people living in the place.¹⁹

Br Lucidius Zimmer was sent in 1937 by Bishop Wolf to Josephsthal to open a cattle farm. Br Lucidius reports in detail about his work in a letter from Alexishafen, dated 12 March 1938, to his confreres in the Philippines, where he had recently taken a holiday. The letter shows the life of a multifaceted brother missionary who was quickly taken into the hearts of the local people and whose commitment to the good of the people had made him one of the most popular missionaries in the eyes of the local population; a brother everyone would have liked to have in their community.²⁰

Later more stations were built all along the coast with churches and schools. Fr Kirschbaum went up the Sepik River and found Marienberg. He was a famed explorer of the Sepik River and wrote about the people and their customs. He himself was written about in the newspaper.

One of the best-known missionaries on the New Guinea mainland, Father Kirschbaum has figured for 25 years in mission and exploratory work.

He made scores of journeys into unexplored parts of the wild, mountainous country of Central New Guinea. He has travelled hundreds of miles up the Sepik River by launch and canoe, collecting scientific information on the habits of the various tribes and races. Both in his missionary work and through his firsthand and scientific knowledge of New Guinea, Father Kirschbaum has been of great



FATHER KIRSCHBAUM, THE GERMAN MISSIONARY WHO FACILITATED OUR TRIP UP THE SEPIK RIVER, NEW GUINEA

¹⁸ (Bragge, 2006: 102–3).¹⁸

¹⁹ Steffen 198.

²⁰ Steffen 201.

assistance to the New Guinea administration. He has been able to guide scientific parties up the Sepik River and has been a force in the suppression of head hunting in the hinterland. He was always unarmed. In 1936 after four years furlough in Germany Fr Kirschbaum has returned on the Montoro to continue his mission work.²¹

Below, traditional canoe builder.



*Right: Catholic Couple in Tumleo.
1905*



Mihalic wrote:

“Conrad a mission worker and three classmates from Karasau Island accompanied Fr Andreas Puff to evangelise the area around newly founded Marui on the middle Sepik. In 1938, Conrad moved down river to Marienberg to catechise the Bien area. But he made a teaching trip he disliked and transferred to captain the mission work boat *Pius*. The *Pius* was in the 1930s the mission boat of Central New Guinea. It was during the next years at Marienberg that he met his future wife, Salome Moimbul. She was attending the SSpS vocational school. They were married in 1941 by the pastor, Fr Gerhard de Bruyn SVD”.

Men in front of their home on the Ramu River (Steffen: 199).



²¹ (TROVE article Vol vi No 11 June 17, 1936)



Holy Spirit Sisters with domestic students at Marienberg, Sepik River

JOSEPHSTHAL (1934)

The inland station Josephsthal was between the Ramu and Sepik rivers, Bogia the next coastal station and Annaberg the next inland station to Josephsthal. As the land between the two mighty rivers floods the Japanese and the war reached Marienberg in December 1942. Conrad left the *Pius* sometime later and, along with Salome and their infant son Jerry Wiap, walked home. Soon after their arrival, the Japanese rounded up all able-bodied men and sent them off to forced labour. Conrad ended up in Hollandia (Jayapura), but by the time the year was over, he was back. He and some companions had escaped and hiked home through coastal mountains. As soon as the war was over, Conrad was back on the *Pius*, which had remained on the Sepik all that time. During this period, he also ran the *Gabriel* with Br Januarius Sliviak SVD. In 1950, Conrad was off the water and back on land as a carpenter's assistant to Br Patroclus Appeldorn SVD at St Xavier's.

Conrad was on a building team which left memorials at the Wewak diocese such as Wirui Press, St Mary's School, Kaindi Teacher Training College, and Kaindi parish church. Then came the period of erecting permanent buildings at But, Dagua, Turubu, Roma, Kaugia, Kunjingini and Dato. The unforgettable days of Conrad's life were the ordination of his son Michael to the priesthood in 1976 and Michael being named bishop of Goroka in 1989. regularly, all transport during this time was only possible by canoes or boats.²²

The Japanese war comes to the Sepik River. SSpS Sisters on the Sepik evade them.

Before the Japanese came, the SSpS Sisters at Marienberg, Sr Helena, Sr Antionella Haandel [the oldest], Sr Vinciana Engberink, Sr Arnoldine, [the youngest], and Sr Auxilia thought they would be safe on their mission station on the Sepik River. Their gardens of bananas, yams and corn made them self-sufficient for a long time. There was enough food for the house girls and mission workers as well. The Japanese arrived on 20 January 1943 and warned them that they

²² *Ibid* Steffen quoting Mihalic.

would return with a large army. The sisters decided to leave, packed what they could, collected vegetables from the garden and piled them on a pinnacle.

They left Marienberg on 31 January 1943 and headed off up the Sepik as far as Timbunke where they were welcomed by a brother and Fr Laumann who had always wanted sisters on his station and gave them his house to live in. The sisters thought they would be safe there and began to teach and garden. There were so many mosquitoes they could not work outside without a fire going. Some local girls were being trained in the house, but soon their parents came and took them away. One wrote a letter, "We will see your faces again in Heaven."

After two weeks the missionaries ran out of food, so they returned to Marienberg to get more food from the gardens. They killed a cow and cooked it in the kitchen. On the way back the pinnacle broke down and they were late back to Timbunke

Sister Vinciana told Mary Mennis:

"We could no longer carry out mission work because of an edict issued in Rabaul which forbade baptism and stated that the Japanese religion had to be taught in schools. We had always hoped we could carry on our missionary work but now there was no hope. We packed our things together in cases. We had the pinnacle back so we packed that. I grabbed a calendar before we left and this enabled us to keep track of time and the saint's days. After two days we came to Kaningra where we met Mr Searson who told us that Mr Danny Leahy was on his way to meet us but he said we had to start out because the Japanese were too close behind.



*The five SSpS Sisters who made the trek to Mt Hagen from the Sepik
Left to right: Sisters auxilium, Alena, Antonietta, Vinciana and, Arnaldina*

A plane parachuted supplies for us. Fr Laumann and three of the sisters went on to the next camp, but Sister Helena became sick and Fr Laumann and I lagged behind with her. When we were still far from the camp, we heard Br Tiberius playing, "Holy God we praise Thy name" on his flute. This sounded like beautiful music to our ears. In this camp someone had left tea

We used the bark of a tree for our mattress and we had to wait in this place for Danny Leahy. He arrived on 6 July and when he saw us he wondered how we would survive the long trek up to Mt Hagen. From then on, our journey changed somewhat. We rose at 4 am and had Mass and then breakfast which was very rich from Danny Leahy's supplies (Interview by the author).¹⁰⁴ The first day after that Sr Helena and another Sister were carried in litters but Sr Vinciana preferred to walk.

We came to small rivers and many trees that had been blown across the track. We walked on until we came to a large river with no bridge and had to jump from rock to rock and it was very

dangerous. All the Sisters made it across. We came to a camp where there had been gold diggers. That night it rained and rained. Mr Leahy lined up all the boys and assigned them our baggage. We Sisters were not to carry anything. The boys just had to get us through safely. Mr Leahy told us the first five days would be easy walking, with a good track but I did not understand what he meant by a good track (M. Mennis 1973).

After it rained the track got very slippery, the way led up to the top of ridges and down the other side, on and on. We came to rivers without bridges and I was glad to have the help of Danny Leahy's boys. The second night had some huts at 1,130 feet above sea level. Our nun's habits were covered in mud and Danny radioed for more suitable clothing which was air-dropped to them; army trousers and heavy boots. At first the sisters were appalled. Nuns wearing soldier's trousers! However, they were more suitable for walking on the slippery tracks and crossing the rivers but they changed back into their habits in the evening.

They came to a river with a hanging bridge on 11 July 1943. They crossed one at a time and watched carefully where they put their feet. Sister Helena missed her footing, dislodged some of the wooden supports and half fell through. She was stuck there halfway across with the rushing water beneath. Danny Leahy encouraged her to pull herself up and get going. They had to hurry as the Japanese soldiers were closing in behind. Later, they found out that the Japanese



followed them to this bridge and cut it down so no-one else could escape this way.

*The group that escaped from the Japanese with Dan Leahy, Fr Laumann
and Br Tiberius and the sisters already named*

Sister Vinciana:

"19th July 1943: Now our five days of easy walking were over and we were 3,500 feet above sea level. I had two boys to help me get across deep rivers. I sat on their shoulders and another two had to support my carriers. Most of the time we managed quite well and I got new strength. Our camp was at 5,110 feet and we could buy food with shells. The local people we met had never seen white people before and they thought we were ghosts. They were very friendly and brought us food.

1 August: 6,600 our camp the locals burnt our huts. We were now four months in the bush when we could have flown out to Port Moresby before.

“ 2 August: We were stepping across large tree roots and came to a mountain which was all stones. One native pulled each of us up and another pushed from behind and then we were there. We crossed two big rivers but there were bridges. Now we did not use tents as there were *kiap*'s houses all the way. 7 August: We came near Wabag where we saw a plane but not knowing if it was an enemy plane or not we hid, then continued on our way. The track from Wabag to Mt Hagen was in a terrible state.

11 August: 6,000 feet up Danny Leahy went ahead and made soup for all of us which he sent back with the carriers to give us strength. Sister Helena collapsed by the roadside and the men made a stretcher for her. We arrived five hours later at the camp.

16 August: We came to Mt Hagen but Fr Ross had already left - only soldiers were there and they put us in the Father's house where we stayed for ten days. Danny Leahy organised the clearing of the airstrip but it was too dangerous. Enemy planes flew over and bombed the area but no buildings were destroyed. Some of the Mt Hagen people came in secret to hear Mass but meetings were forbidden as being too dangerous (*Interview Sr Vinciana, by M. Mennis 1973*)

“ On 30 August, they had to move on to Bena Bena. The sisters said they were too exhausted so Danny organised sedan chairs to carry them. Danny and Mr Searson went with them but they were very tired. When they came to Bena Bena, a plane was waiting to take them to Port



Moresby. Because they had to get on board quickly, they did not have time to thank Danny Leahy and Mr Searson for all their help and guidance. As they flew on their way to Moresby Sister Vinciana looked down on all the mountains and was very glad she didn't have to walk over them as well. Fighter planes accompanied them: one in front; two at the sides; and another behind. In one and a half hours they arrived in Port Moresby and were surrounded by journalists wanting to hear their story.'

Photograph From left in 1971: Sr Vinciana, Dan Leahy and Fr Laumann who made the escape from the Sepik. Fr Bus is looking on behind (M. Mennis)

Sister Vinciana said:

'The people took us to a house where a soldier was like a father to us. We could eat as much as we liked. They took photos of us which were in the papers. We stayed in Port Moresby for one week and then flew down to Brisbane. After two or three days there we went by train to Sydney and then Epping. (Vinciana, 1973). In September 1943, Fr Ross came to visit them at the Mother house of the SVD priests at Epping and they told him their story. Later, Danny Leahy came with his sisters, mother and brothers to visit them and talked about the journey. Mr Searson's mother also came to hear about her son Sister Vinciana, 1973.'²³

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

²³ *Interview by the author in 1973*

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.

24

The Sepik River Catholic missions since the war.

One priest who returned to the Sepik after the war was Fr Schwab. He had worked there pre-war and managed to escape from the Japanese. After the war he spent two years recovering in Tasmania and returned early in 1947 on board the "Stella Maris" to Alexishafen. From there



he returned to his mission stations on the Sepik. Here he was greeted by the people with great gusto as they regarded him as their spiritual father. Sadly after working the rest of that year, he contracted malaria and was rushed to Madang where he died. He was greatly missed.

*Timbunke Mission on the Sepik River in the 1950s.
The First Communion Class with SSPS Sisters*

In 1966 Mary Taylor Huber presented a thesis on the SVD missionaries working in the Sepik area since the war. The title of her thesis was *The Ecclesiological Frontier: An Ethno-historical study of the Catholic Missions in the Sepik Region of Papua New Guinea*.

Huber wrote:

This dissertation is about the Catholic missionaries in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea, about some of the directions its work has taken and about some of the images in which its work has been represented over a period of eighty years. I focus in particular on aspects of mission

²⁴ *Mihalic, 1999: 15)*

practice that have arranged in response to the locale and on images that have articulated locally effective practice with the missionaries' ecclesiological ideals.²⁵

While academics theorise about the missionaries and their work using long terms in their endeavour to come to conclusions on the effect of the missions on the people's lives whether positively or negatively, the daily work of the missionary can be a matter of survival and obtaining the food needed for survival.



Such is the story written by Fr Ivo Ruiter SVD when he had to do a sago run in the Sepik River. Supplies of sago were needed for the three schools for boys and another three schools for girls. In their villages the students were used to eating sago and they were a hungry lot. How was the mission to supply their needs? There were various ways of letting the villages along the river know the quantity of sago needed.

(Illustrations by Fr Emilio Lattenero OFM page 25)

In September 1935 Fr Ivo SVD a mission pilot left Wewak and flew across to the Sepik. He was about to do a fly over of eight villages along the river to give them notice that a large supply of sago was needed. This gave them time to cut the sago palms down and scrape the pithy trunk. It was his task to fly over these eight villages and leave a note to let them know the quantity needed for the hungry students. Later when the sago was ready a small ship would call in to pick it up. In the vast stretches of the Sepik River there are thousands of sago trees. The villages are nestled on bends in the river and spent their lives fishing or collecting the sago from the sago palms.²⁶

Fr Ivo wrote:

We must send our ship, the Marova under Captain Father Jilek and because it takes quite a while to prepare a worthwhile quantity of the sago the people must be forewarned by my plane. First, I flew to an airstrip on the Sepik where I picked up the father over whose territory, we were to drop the messages. After taking off we headed straight out over the swamp with the only possible landing site falling farther behind with every turn of the propeller.

Below us was the main river and tributaries twisted through water laden swamp grass and around frequent sago forests. My eyes roved over the terrain ever alert for emergency landing places, just in case. There were none. Villages were perched on the little mud bands formed on the inside bends of the big river and the houses took up all the available space. It was to eight of these villages that our flight carried us. Father pointed out the first village we were to "bomb" with our weighted message and the plan was to buzz the village at about fifty metres to let the people know we were going to drop a message wrapped a rolled-up magazine. The people are used to this and gathered immediately.

²⁵ Huber: *Introduction* 1966.

²⁶ Fr Emilio Lattenero OFM page 25

Then after a complete circle we came in still lower over the roof tops and made the actual drop. Then to do a “steep turn” so that we could see where the message had gone and whether the people had seen it and were recovering it! We made the first turn and it worked. A direct hit! And so on for the next five villages which were all over the flat country of the river valley. But by the time we had come to the last two, we had moved up into the hills. The terrain was uneven and the wind was beginning to gust. But I had only an hour’s fuel supply left and time was running out. After buzzing at a bit of altitude we came on the next village which was nestled against a hill; that meant a steep turn and a pull-up. Fr did the throwing away at my signal. The message hit the village and we pulled away and missed the hill.

The last village was set deep between the high hills and presented a problem. Then I saw that by swinging out – over the lake and coming in low over the water I could access the village. It worked. Thanks be to God and we made a bee-line for Father’s home airstrip on the bank of the Sepik River, then home to Wewak for me. I had completed my first sago run, but there will be more. Kids never seem to tire of eating!



Illustration by Fr Emilio Lattenero OFM

The September 1954 Retreat. Every year the SVD missionaries from 40 mission stations in the Wewak and Sepik areas congregated at Wewak for the annual retreat. Fr Ivo and Bishop Arkfeld flew to the many outstations where precarious small airstrips gave access to the small mission planes to bring them in. ‘So when the six days are over there is a spontaneous explosion

of delight. Happy that they have accomplished a worthwhile spiritual renewal, happy too that a difficult time is passed, happy to be able to get back to their people and their work where they can try the new resolutions and plans which they have made under God’s intimate guidance.



A recent gathering of SVD Missionaries in Papua New Guinea

The Italian Friars who came to the Aitape/Sepik areas

It is worthwhile mentioning here the group of Italian Franciscans who made their way to Papua New Guinea from China. They had been driven out of China during the Cultural Revolution and were in Kowloon, Hong Kong wondering where they would be sent next. While there they received a letter from Rev A. Schnusenbergh OFM Delegate General of the Franciscan Order to the Far East. Father wrote from Australia where he was visiting the Franciscan Province and he said, "This is an invitation to any friar willing to come to the aid of Australian friars in opening a mission in Papua New Guinea permission is given to any volunteer and the necessary obedience".

There were six in the group willing to go to this new mission: Fathers Florian Roncari, Emilio Lattenero and Brother Stanislaus Rossato of the Venetian Franciscan Province; Fathers Antonine Magnana, Egidio Catellani, Leo Leonie of the Bolognese Franciscan Province. Fr



of the haus tabaran by Brian Mennis.

Emilio wrote: "The valley of the Sepik is one of the noteworthy places in Papua New Guinea for artwork. This mighty river flows for more than 1,000 kilometres. And so here we have known days of splendour, days of exhaustion, days of trial by malarial fever in the swamps and clouds of mosquitoes, some obscure days of dejection, then days of recovery and hope and of superb joy."²⁷

Fr Emilio wrote: "the women are the carriers: of fire-wood, banana branches laden with fruit and bundles of the other vegetables such as kaukau and taro. The shoulders do the carrying as there are no beasts of burden. The man comes jauntily alone except when a son is carried on his shoulder – However one great advantage these people have is an absence of class struggle or individual ownership of large areas of land."²⁸

Photograph



²⁷ Emilio Lattenero OFM Introduction

²⁸ Emilio Lattenero Illustrations used for educational purposes. 1987:9

Franciscans in the Sepik

*A Spiritual Conquest or a Quest for Acceptance?**

STEPHEN DUGGAN

IN 1944, THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF THE FRANCISCAN PROVINCE OF THE Holy Spirit, Australia-New Zealand, resolved to send a number of its Franciscan friars to a foreign mission. In November 1946, the first group of friars left Australia for the Sepik District of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. This study is concerned with how the friars conceived their role in the Sepik and their attempts to make sense of their involvement in a dependent country during what people have understood as a modernisation era. In this sense, it is not a history of the Franciscan mission as such, nor a history of the church in the Sepik, but rather an account of mission-village relationships.

The Franciscan involvement in the Sepik was a continuous struggle on the part of the Franciscans to reconcile the conflicting demands of their religious order, the physical limitations of the mission frontier, and what they perceived as the expectations of the Sepik people.

The physical world of the Sepik is divided by the Torricelli Mountains with Mount Somoro, the major mountain peak, separating the Sepik coast from the Sepik Fall. The headquarters of the order, St Anna, was built on the coastal side of Somoro. In the Friary the friars lived the Franciscan life they had known in Australia, the 'common life' with structured days punctuated by prayer and meditation. It stood in stark contrast to life on the bush mission stations south of the divide where friars lived alone and arranged their day according to the needs they perceived for the parish and the Sepik region. Until the mid-1960s the friars met but once a year at St Anna. For the rest of the time they worked within the shadow of the peaks of the Torricellis. Somoro was symbolic for the Franciscans. Those friars who worked on the coast looked towards Somoro as being the gateway to the true Franciscan missionary experience. Bishop Ignatius Doggett, the first religious superior of the mission and the first Bishop of Aitape, considered south of the Torricellis as the 'real mission'. Friars determined to be both effective evangelisers and competent Franciscans were required to cross those peaks and negotiate the razor sharp spurs that separated mission stations and villages.

Sir Michael Somare - a Sepik man

Photographs used for educational purposes

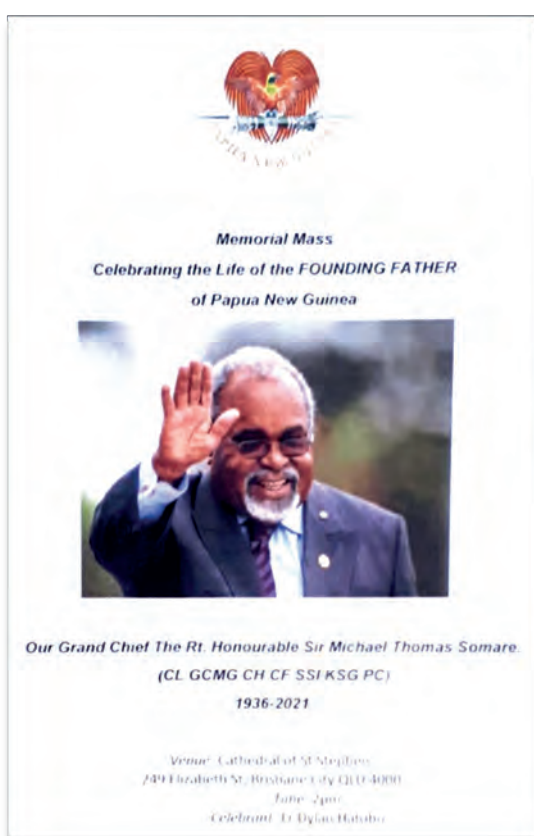
He was born in Rabaul in 1936, in a village called Rapindik, where his father was then stationed. When he was still young the family moved back to their village called Karau in the Murik Lakes district of East Sepik Province. Somare's earliest education was in a Japanese-run primary school at Karau during World War II where he learned to read, write and count in Japanese. He remembers the Japanese with affection. Somare's earliest overseas trips, first as a parliamentarian and then as Prime Minister, were to Japan. He wrote about this in his book SANA.

He was educated at Boram Primary School, then Dregerhafen Education Centre and Sogeri high School, where he did the Leaving Certificate which counted as a



teaching and he then taught at several primary and secondary schools, returning to Sogeri High School for further training from 1962 to 1963.

He liked to stress his Sepik identity and portrayed his time as a child in Sepik villages as decisive in forming his personality. Somare claimed the honorific title of Sana in his father's line. This title asserts descent from the founder of the clan and is a designation as peacemaker. In order to obtain the title, he was approved for admission to the elders of the clan before he had reached the required minimum age.



Somare was called the “father of the nation”. he was the first Prime Minister after independence. He served in a variety of positions. His base was not primarily in political parties but in East Sepik Province, the area that elected him. During his political career he was a member of the House of Assembly and after independence in 1975 the National parliament for the East Sepik Provincial – later open – seat.

He was the first chief minister at the end of colonial rule. Thereafter he became the first Prime Minister after independence from 1975 to 1980. He returned to the office of Prime Minister from 1982 to 1985, and his longest stint in the position was from 2002 to 2011. He also served as Cabinet Minister: he was minister of foreign affairs from 1988 to 1992; from 1999 to 2001 he was subsequently minister of foreign affairs, minister of mining and Bougainville, minister of foreign affairs and Bougainville affairs. He was leader of the opposition from 1980 to 1982, and thereafter in that position from 1985 to 1988 and finally from 2001 to 2002.

When the new position of political governor as head of the provincial administration and representative MP was created in 1995, Somare took the job. He was governor of East Sepik from 1995 until 1999. He again became Governor of East Sepik (2012–2016). He was a founding member of the Pangu Party which led PNG into independence in 1975. He resigned from the Pangu Party and became an independent in 1988. He rejoined the Pangu Party in 1994 but was sacked as a leader in the following year. He was then asked to join and lead the National Alliance Party. In 2017 he left politics and also the National Alliance Party.

At the time of his death, Somare was also the longest-serving prime minister, having been in office for 17 years over three separate terms: from 1975 to 1980; from 1982 to 1985; and from 2002 to 2011. His political career spanned from 1968 until his retirement in 2017. Besides serving as PM, he was minister of foreign affairs, leader of the opposition and governor of East Sepik Province.

Thousands have gathered to bid farewell to Papua New Guinea's “Father of the Nation” Sir Michael Somare at a state funeral. Sir Michael was Papua New Guinea's first prime minister when it gained independence from Australia in 1975 and was also its longest-serving leader. He died at the age of 84, soon after he was diagnosed with late-stage pancreatic cancer. Mourners crowded into the Sir Hubert Murray Stadium in PNG's capital Port Moresby to

honour the Grand Chief, while others flooded onto streets and threw flowers as the hearse passed by. The choral hymns and traditional dances originated from Sir Michael's birthplace of East New Britain.

As a mark of “mourning and respect”, the Australian government requested all its national flags to be flown at half-mast on the day including the flag at Canberra's Parliament House in honour of Sir Michael Somare. Dulciana Somare Brash, Sir Michael's daughter, delivered a powerful eulogy reflecting on her father's ability to unite the new nation of more than 800 different language and tribal groups. “Contrary to the opinions of our colonial masters and critics, my

father always envisioned us as one people, one nation and one country,” she told mourners.²⁹



The Memorial Mass held in St Stephen's Cathedral was a wonderful celebration of his life in a packed congregation in spite of the COVID Times and the procession into the Cathedral was proudly led by Grail member Maggie.

Members of the Brisbane Grail and friends at Sir Michael Somare's memorial Mass in 2021

The SVD Mission, Murik Lakes 1914

Sir Michael Somare was from Murik Lakes and his family belonged to the Catholic mission there. While living in Port Moresby, Somare himself attended Mass at St Joseph's Church Boroko on Sundays.

The early history of the Catholic mission of Murik Lakes in the Sepik Delta area is interesting. In 1914 the first mission in Murik, St Gregory, was established. - as the mission was on the delta this intensified the work in the Lower Sepik region. “Fr Schmidt selected this place because most of the people lived there. To reach the closest neighbour, Fr Kirschbaum needed eight hours, partly by canoe, and partly walking. The trip is no pleasure, especially within the swamp area. Fr Schmidt has a pinnacle available to use whenever he must visit one of his many outstations” ... (Wiesenthal 1922)³⁰

Fr Steffen wrote:

Fr Schmidt made intensive ethnographic and linguistic studies among the Murik people. His studies show his closeness to the people of his mission district and a great interest in getting to know their culture and aspects of their life, their : dwellings, and the Kamsan men's houses, food, ornaments and hairstyle, clothing, weapons, hunting, fishing, agriculture, stimulants, the canoe, its construction and its inaugurations; trade, money and its surrogates; trades and technical skills, counting, time calculation and astronomy; stories, legends, fairy tales, proverbs, beginnings and development of the arts: musical instruments, dances, children's dances and games, and finally, relationships, totemism, politics, religion, and much more.³¹

²⁹ [ABC.net.au/news/papua new guinea](http://ABC.net.au/news/papua%20new%20guinea)

³⁰ Quoted from Steffen 236.

³¹ *Ibid*

Silverman on the floods of 2009

“During the disastrous Sepik flood of 2009–10, most people in the community sought refuge in the bush. The deluge destroyed nearly all of their food resources, so that when they returned to the village—or what was left of it—they could only dine on sago and the fish they netted, hooked or trapped. Most Eastern Iatmul now depend again on subsistence gardening, sago harvesting and fishing. They have, as they often say joylessly, gone back to living like their ancestors—and they often attribute this regression to the river. Indeed, several villagers told me that PNG’s prime minister at the time, Michael Somare, stated publicly that ‘they are river people, and so are used to this.’³²

Project Sepik and Jubilee Australia 2021

Project Sepik and Jubilee Australia filed a human rights complaint on behalf of more than 2600 people from 64 villages along the Sepik River over PanAust’s proposed copper-gold mine in Papua New Guinea. If built, the mine would be the largest mine ever in PNG and among the largest mines in the world. It would pose grave risks for the Sepik environment and the communities that live along the pristine river. The complaint was filed with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Australian National Contact Point. The project, planned for the river’s headwaters, includes a tailings dam estimated to be twice the size of Sydney Harbour. A rupture of the tailings dam would destroy food and water sources and sacred sites along the river, contaminating them with toxic chemicals. This, in turn, would result in preventable deaths. This needs to change. PanAust needs to listen to the people whose lives will be impacted by the mine. The Sepik communities have a right to have their voice heard and to decide what happens on their land.³³

The Sepik River- Illustration by Fr Emilio Lattenero OFM



³² Eric K. Silverman: *Island Rivers Fresh water and place. Oceania* 2018 187 – 221)

³³ 2021 Save The Sepik Project

PART ELEVEN – Southern Highlands and the Capuchins

A Southern Highland man (Brian Mennis 1978)



Information from the web: The headwaters of some mighty rivers, the Kikori, the Erave and the Strickland cross Southern Highlands Province. White water tumbles through limestone gorges and lush high valleys. It is a particularly beautiful province, remote and underdeveloped, where traditional cultures survive.

The climate in the south west of the province, at lower altitudes like Lake Kutubu, is humid and semitropical. But at higher altitudes, the provincial capital Mendi lies at 1,400 metres above sea level. Temperatures are lower and some areas are prone to sudden severe frosts which are calamitous for food and cash crops. Food gardens and cash crops were destroyed in 1994 by frost and by natural disasters, flood, landslide and drought.

Most of the natural vegetation is rainforest, with alpine woods and grasslands above 3,000 metres. Swamps occur at all levels. More than 60% of the province is still covered in forest. People's subsistence activities (cutting for gardens) inevitably change the natural appearance of this vegetation. More recently, economic and social alterations of infrastructure, especially from mineral resource developments, will change it more radically.

The Southern Highlands had a population of 317,437 in the 1990 census. That indicates a tremendous increase in 10 years, which concerns the provincial government. There is already pressure for land. There are also many young unproductive people who demand more goods and services. Until very recently people were engaged solely in a subsistence economy, the introduction of a modern cash economy has had a tremendous impact on their lives. The development of mineral resources at Kutubu, Kare and to some extent Porgera drew skilled and unskilled to the mines and left only a skeleton productive labour force back in the villages. While the benefits in terms of employment opportunities, business spin-offs and infrastructure have to be acknowledged, so do the bad effects: creeping inflation, prostitution, drunkenness, robbery and pollution. In the future the Southern Highlands government is going to insist on long term strategic plans to counteract these negative effects of mineral resource explorations and developments. In the short term it has declared a total liquor ban and established a high-powered Peace and Good Order Committee.

The Provincial government has pushed through a five-year development plan which it hopes will accommodate both economic development and social expansion. Services should be distributed equally to the people of the Southern Highlands. The maintenance of traditional family values to create a sense of belonging and responsibility among all family members must be encouraged. Village level health schemes and Child Survival Programmes have been

welcomed. Many of these goals are being achieved despite downturns in resource allocations and government cash flow problems.

Southern highland wigmen



When Europeans first came to the Southern Highlands in the 1930's, they called it a Papuan wonderland. When they found the lovely Lavani Valley in the 1950's, they talked of lost Shangri-la. There is something very attractive about the area. Since the 1970's there have been roads and bridges built by the Australian Army Engineering team. It also has the Highlands highway. There are several airstrips which connect the area with the rest of PNG. The people live in scattered hamlets, grow sweet potatoes for their staple food, have ceremonial exchanges of pigs, cassowaries and other valuables. They use intensive farming methods to grow food including beans, sugar-cane, pit-pit,

bananas and greens. They treasure the coconut flavoured karuka (Highlands pandanus) nuts. Houses are built on the ground with walls of wood slabs or mud to keep out the cold.

the Huli people inhabit the Tari valley. There are 38,000 Huli. They have many striking characteristics but certainly the most photographed are the Huli wigmen. The Huli men's wigs are great head-pieces of human hair decorated with feathers and flowers. The wigs are grown and made to mark the transition from boyhood to manhood. Traditionally Huli men were warriors, they lived apart from women. Indeed they distrusted and feared women who were considered a source of sickness and debility. Huli men still dress up, put on paint and oils and paraded themselves.

Gabriel Charles Jacques Lomas wrote a thesis on the Huli people and the following is a short excerpt from this thesis.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The land in which the Huli people dwell is one of contrasting scenery, notable for its rugged mountain ranges and fertile, swampy valleys. The rivers that drain the area are subterranean in sections, and there are numerous caves and potholes in the limestone rock formations. In places the rivers run swiftly through deep gorges, while elsewhere they take a less hurried course through swamplands in the wide, expansive inter-montane basins. The slopes of all but the tallest of the highest mountains are covered in dense rainforests, with here and there an outcrop of white limestone cliff or a patch of light green sword grass. The rainforests provide timber, vine and bamboo for the construction of dwellings and the crafting of artifacts, while pandanus palms in the high bush yield crops of nuts, rich in protein and harvested each year. Small game animals, such as pigs, possums and cassowaries, also provide a source of protein, and are hunted for their pelts and feathers.



There are areas of volcanic soil, ideal for the cultivation of sweet potato, which is the staple diet. Other arable land is to be found in the higher parts of swamps - like the areas around their edges and on mountain knolls and the smaller high plateau where people plant their gardens and husband their pigs. The success of Huli subsistence economy is linked to the climatic

conditions, and although these are sub-tropical, the average annual rainfall is high. Persistent and heavy rain always brings the threat of flooding and crop damage, while periods of drought can cause frost to occur in the higher regions.

Some people live at heights as great as 2,000 metres above sea-level, while others dwell in the deeper mountain valleys and in the lower areas of the central cordillera at altitudes of only 1,000 metres. Consequently, temperatures across Huli country can vary greatly, although the main body of the population in the Wabia-Lumulumu-Burani-Goloba region enjoys a daily temperature of about 20°C and an average nightly temperature of around 10°C. This temperate climate persists throughout the year, with no seasonal variations.¹

The climate, the rugged terrain, the flora and fauna: all these are important environmental factors in Huli life. They are constant referents in Huli poetical expressions (cf. Pugh-Kitigan 1975: 191), and especially in Huli music, which is an extension of speech (Peters 1975: 53) and functions as a significant form of communication, both phatic and ritual. Environmental factors are also determinants in Huli structural and behavioural patterns, and Huli technology and ideology.

TRADITIONAL BELIEFS

The complicated account of Huli beliefs given in Glasse 1965 is based on data he gathered in Hoyabia, near Lumulumu. Since his day, others have queried his findings (e.g. Goldman 1983; Frankel 1986), especially in regard to his main claim: that the Huli descent system is cognatic. It is certainly true that Glasse's view was limited by his being unable at the time of his fieldwork to move freely in and out of what was then restricted territory, but subsequent studies have also been based on data gathered in particular communities, not from the wider, more general Huli population. Barnes has said that 'Huli institutions are likely to remain analytically controversial' (Glasse 1968: 4), and while this might be true, some aspects of Huli culture identified by Glasse are widely held or known. I will describe these briefly, adding observations of my own.²

dama: These are a loose hierarchy of supra-human beings that inhabit the sky, rivers and water holes, caves and dense bushlands, Dind - especially - the higher reaches of the mountains. They control the climate and the land and affect fertility in both soil and livestock. They can cause a variety of sicknesses and misfortunes in humans, including death, and are constantly and capriciously active in human affairs. The originating **dama** of the Huli and their neighbours are generally less malevolent than others, and all **dama** can to some extent be placated and persuaded to desist from causing harm. Sometimes they can be tricked or warded off, and it is even possible to manipulate some of them and harness the powers that they possess (cf Glasse 1965: 33-37).

dinini: Less powerful than **dama**, but still more powerful than humans are the **dinini** or ghosts of the dead. These, too, are active in human affairs, male ghosts being benevolent and protective towards their descendants, while female ghosts are invariably spiteful and malevolent to all except their own offspring. (cf Glasse 1965: 29-32).

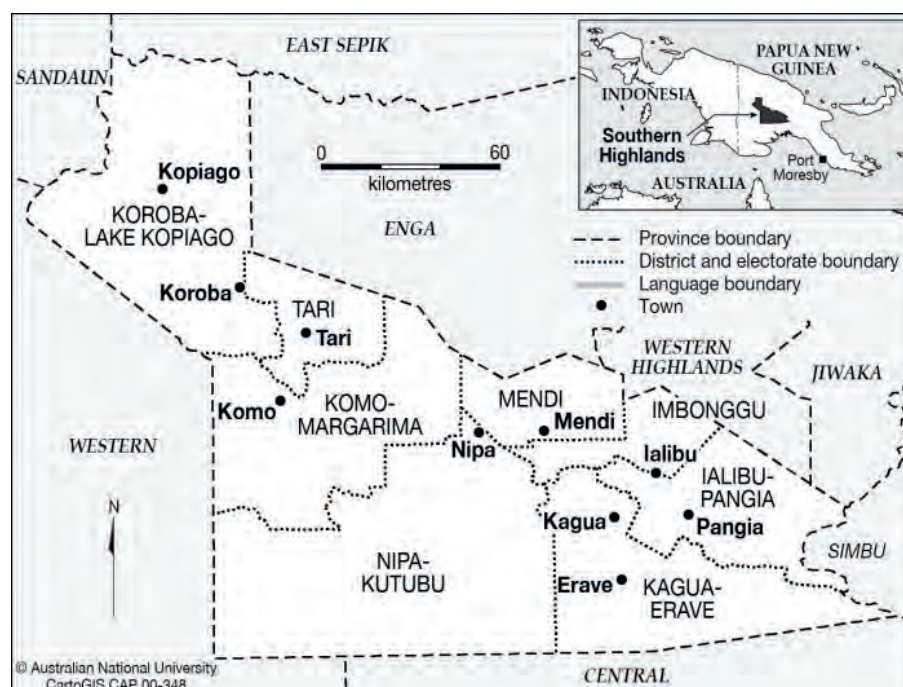
Map of the Southern Highland and Ela provinces³

¹ Gabriel Charles Jacques Lomas: 2.1

² Gabriel Charles Jacques Lomas 2.2

³ Page 122 Only the Beginnings.

Map of the Southern Highland and Ela provinces³



Early Exploration of the Southern Highlands.

In June 1930, a private expedition led by Mick Leahy and Mick Dwyer entered the eastern end of the Southern Highlands, but again skirted the most populous areas. The search for gold brought Leahy and Dwyer from the other side of New Guinea's backbone—in other words from the Mandated Territory of New Guinea which Australians had been separately administering for the League of Nations since World War I. They were the first Europeans to enter the real population centers of the Southern Highlands. From April 28 until May 10, 1934, the Leahy brothers and 35 carriers, 30 of them armed, were in the Southern Highlands, as a prospecting expedition financed by a company in Melbourne. Later that same year, two burly Englishmen, identical twins named Tom and Jack Fox, on another gold-prospecting expedition from Mt. Hagen to the Digul River in Dutch New Guinea, returned by way of the Southern Highlands.⁴

In 1933, Mick Leahy while prospecting for gold in the vicinity of Kainantu and Goroka, walked up the valley and climbed a hill which we think now was Umbati and saw this great wide valley: beautiful country.

First flight over the Waghi Valley, 8th 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.⁵

³ Page 122 *Only the Beginnings*.

⁴ *Ibid* page 13

⁵ (*Mick Leahy Land that time Forgot* 162).

The results of that flight made headlines around the world. The first ground expedition into the Western Highlands began on 28th March 1933 when Mick and Danny Leahy, Ken Spinks and Jim Taylor set off from the Bena Bena camp, travelling from the eastern end up the Markham Valley, Kainantu, and Goroka.

Our column of four white men and nearly one hundred natives made quite an impressive show as we marched out from the Bena Bena camp early on the morning of March 28, 1933. Early in expedition some of the people signed to us that they had seen the plane flying over on the 8th of March. ⁶ (*Land that Time Forgot: 164*)

As the column of carriers and white men progressed through the country, thousands of people gathered to watch on each side of the column yelling and shouting. They saw the white men as their resurrected dead and wanted them to stay in their villages. They thought the white men were returned spirits of the dead. Two children recognised Jim Taylor as their dead father. "Each took me by the hand and brought him their uncles to look into my eyes. And the uncles said "Yes! Here is your land, here are your wives and children, and here are your pigs and dogs. -- Now all we ask is that you stay." ⁷ Jim Taylor was very moved by it all. Everywhere they went they looked for traces of gold. They built an airstrip and when the plane landed, the people brought along pigs for it. Mick wrote, "Evidently, they reckon the plane is something out of the ordinary they are always on the spot to see it come and go. ---- They were very excited over the assortment of seashells that came in the plane."

Following their amazing discovery, Frs Schaefer, Cranssen and Brother Anton SVD ventured to the Bismarck Mountains at the end of that same year, coming in from the north. 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. In Mt Hagen, they were welcomed by Wamp Wan and Ninji Kama, two chiefs of the Mt Hagen area and of course Mick and Danny Leahy who came down from their gold diggings up in the hills. ⁸



*Photograph taken at Fr Ross's funeral May 1973.
Danny Leahy on the left, Jim Taylor and Mick Leahy.
(Photograph M. Mennis)*

Southern Highlands since the war

It was 1949 before the government was ready to resume its work in the Southern Highlands. Bringing this last stronghold of the Stone Age into the 20th century began again with Sid

⁶ *Ibid* p 164.

⁷ (Connolly 1987: 90).

⁸ Mennis - Rempi to Rebiamul Page ix

Smith's reopening the Lake Kutubu patrol post in 1949. From Kutubu, Smith entered the Mendi Valley that same year, accompanied by PO Desmond Clancy;⁶ and in September 1950, Clancy opened a government post at Murumbu (later named Mendi) and built the area's first airstrip close to the Mendi River. Though accomplished solely with manual labor, this was done so rapidly that a plane was able to land at Mendi in October. Meanwhile Sid Smith was making the first government patrol through the Ialibu basin east of Mendi on his way to Mt. Hagen. It was during 1950, too, that Christian missionaries re-entered the area. Rev. Gordon Young of the Methodist Overseas Missions (now known as the United Church) established a station at Mendi; and Mr. Donaldson of the Unevangelized Field Missions (later the Australasia-Pacific Christian Missions),⁷ began another at Inu on the north shore of Lake Kutubu.⁹ Donaldson opened a second UFM station at Orokana, about 20 miles to the east. Sid Smith, Des Clancy, and Ron Neville made a patrol from Mendi via Lake Kutubu into the Tari basin in July of 1951, and the following year a government station was established there and work began on an airstrip. The first plane landed at Tari, Aug. 18, 1952, and soon thereafter Mr. Len Twymann of the UFM set up a station at Walidigamabu, and Rev. Roland Barnes of the MOM established one at Hoeibia.¹⁰ The southern Highland Province is made up of rugged mountain ranges and broad valleys. It has low coastal areas in the gulf and sepik Valleys. The Province's two highest peaks, Mt Ialibu and Giluwe, the second highest mountain in Papua New Guinea. They rise at a height of more than 4,000 metres above sea level. The Lai and Mendi Rivers both flow into the Purari which is one of PNG's major river systems.

At Mendi, typical cycling of clouds movement found in the Highlands in the early morning valley slopes are filled with fog with high hills and rangers into clear sunlight. As the day continues the fog lifts from the valleys and clouds begin to form on the ranges. This cycle of afternoon cloud and storm on the ranges and morning fog in the valleys where airstrips are located makes the maintenance of flight schedules difficult.



Government personnel spent much of 1952 and 1953 quelling heavy tribal fighting in the Nakop area at the base of Mt. Giluwe and Kuare sector of the Kagua Valley. To discourage further outbreaks, the government set up patrol posts in both Ialibu and Erave in 1953 and kept much of the population busy constructing airstrips in both places. These airstrips were both finished in 1954, and that same year Des Clancy escorted a survey party of the Australian

Petroleum Company from Lake Kutubu to Tari and thence on to the Strictland River. This patrol was the first to traverse much of the Huli and Duna districts northwest of Tari.¹¹

So by the middle of 1954, there were five small Australian government patrol posts in the Southern Highlands (Lake Kutubu, Mendi, Tari, Ialibu, and Erave) and except for the Pangia area, most of the larger valleys and basins of the Southern Highlands district had had initial contact with the Australian officers and indigenous government personnel from other areas of the Territory of Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

A small number of Christian missionaries were also in the area working with the native languages, making initial contacts, and building up stations of Lake Kutubu, Mendi and Tari.

¹² In 1954 in Kikori Father Paul-Joseph Taphanel MSC, who had worked at the Sacred Heart

⁹ Only the Beginnings.

¹⁰ Only the beginnings page 16

¹¹ http://kangomnawe.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_5857.html

¹² Only the Beginnings p 16

Mission on Yule Island since 1947, decided to explore the forbidden territory of the Southern Highlands by himself. Taking his dog and without carriers and little food, Taphanel wrote. "One man by himself is an object of curiosity rather than the subject of defiance." Taphanel says he came to Kikori looking for Mr. Edwards, a former government officer, who had frequently ascended the Purari River. Using a 100-horse-power motor boat, Edwards took Taphanel and his dog and five native carriers for nine days up the Purari River to the first village on its tributary, the Supu. Leaving Port Romilly on May 24, they zig-zagged 90 miles through much of the meandering of the mighty river so as to avoid the enormous crocodiles.¹³ On May 25, 1954, after taking leave of Edwards and the carriers near the mouth of the Supu River, he took off into the bush, accompanied solely by his dog.³⁴ With him he carried a little rice and a .22 rifle for shooting game. For the most part, however, he ate what the natives would share with him along the way. In return he gave them medical attention, using fever-reducing and antiseptic medicines.

Following bush trails, Taphanel first made his way through Pore country to Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands at the headwaters of the Supu.³⁷ From there he went to Mingende and Dirima in Simbu Province, where he talked Father Paul McVinney, SVD, of the Dirima mission into accompanying him back into the area restricted to missionaries for an exploratory trip through the Bomai area on the southern slopes of Mt. Ialibu. After visiting villages at



Malaiwamage, Dobe, Murmeki, Biamu, and Zurida, the two turned north towards Minj and Ulga, a little more than six miles east of Mt. Hagen. One of Taphanel's maps indicates that he and McVinney thought they were exploring to the south of the territorial boundary, but most of his other maps locate the Kaugel River much nearer this line, which indicated they were probably in what is now Simbu Province.¹⁴

Fr Krimm SVD and Father Ross SVD in Hagen. (Photograph M. Mennis 1971)¹⁵

At Ulga, Taphanel involved in his scheme Divine Word missionary, Father Joseph Krimm, a 6'7" (2.006 m) giant, who had already been told by his SVD superior to gather information about the nearby Southern Highlands.

In July 1954, the two planned to explore the area all the way around Mt. Ialibu, which was the first entry by Catholic missionaries of what is now the diocese of Mendi. It was only the second time Europeans had been in the Ialibu- Pangia area, the Leahy brothers having gone through there 20 years earlier.¹⁶

Leaving Ulga July 8, Taphanel and Krimm entered the restricted area somewhere between the Wahle and Truk Rivers. After crossing the latter and passing through Tibendi and Wigi, they crossed the Kaugel and visited Airia, Aponda, Mele, Anke, and Kaugu, most of which later became Catholic stations along the northern edge of the Pangia parish. Even though the priests had not actually been sent by their superiors, the journey was of a missionary nature.

At Aponda and Anke they picked out locations for mission stations, and at Aponda they also made overtures in acquiring ground for an airstrip. They then went on around the mountain to

¹³ *Fr Taphanel's Journal May 24, 1954*

¹⁴ *Taphanel journal, May 24, 1954, in archives, Capuchin Province of Mid-America, Denver.*

¹⁵ *Fr Ross liked to say about himself. "Five foot two and eyes are blue").*

¹⁶ *P 28 Only the Beginnings.*

Ialibu. Seven of the landowners – Wiru, Wava, Lebonko, Kiro, Werema, Taono and Peke – accompanied the missionaries to Ulga, where on July 25 1954 they affixed their marks to an English document by which they declared “we want Catholic missionaries in our tribes of Wiri and Awa (referring thereby to the Witu – and Kewa – speakers). We promise to keep for them the land they marked for our school and church.” There was also a similar message written in one of the Hagen dialects. On the reverse of this bilingual deposition, Taphanel added in French, “the owners of the land marked in the Ialibu basin have come to Ulga looking for their presents and have solemnly signed this present declaration. P.T.” The presents were steel axes that Father Krimm provided.

Photograph Fr Michellod with his new friends



Looking forward to the future, Krimm also brought four Southern Highlanders with him to Ulga; Wariba from near Ialibu, who had proven an excellent guide for the Wiru and Kewa peoples, and three boys who began their schooling at Ulga: Tuga, Iambu and Tandai. Taphanel was possibly responsible for some of the inter-denomination acrimony later experienced by Capuchin missionaries in the eastern end of the Southern Highlands. He wrote with braggadocio of how he and Krimm had gotten ahead of the Methodists at Mendi and the Bahamas Bible Mission personnel at Paparabruk in the Western Highlands: “The heretics are disturbed; they are bound by law and cannot cross the forbidden frontier. The officers imprison their teachers if they venture into the forbidden land.”

Taphanel told the bishop, “We must act very quickly in the Purari in order to be present before the government and the heretics. The Bible Mission and Methodists have submitted their request for the Ialibu. They continued along the eastern slopes of Mt. Giluwe on through toward Ulga, visiting on the way Kande, Mondada, Kambu, Puga, Nakop, Tugupangi and Tona. Again, they marked a mission site at Kambu near Nakop and one for an airstrip at Tugupangi.¹⁷



Michellod's first two-story chalet/ rectory at Tari. It was later. the first Capuchin friary in Papua

About this time, Bishop Sorin msc realised the importance of the situation. He was Bishop of the Yule Island Sacred Heart mission, and they viewed the Southern Highland District as “their territory.” However, they had neither the personnel nor the resources to expand into that populous region. Archbishop Romolo Carboni, Apostolic Delegate to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands was aware of the needs of the vast island of Papua New Guinea and was zealous in seeking religious communities to go there.

¹⁷ Taphanel, journal, f. 6 quoted in *Only the Beginnings*.

Fr. Pierre Guichet MMSC, the religious superior of Yule Island decided that their community would go and make initial contacts in the Southern Highlands in preparation for whatever religious community the Apostolic Delegate would find. He sent two outstanding men, Fr. Alex Michelod and Br. Jean Delabarre, on this most important undertaking.

Regardless of when Taphanel's report finally reached Yule Island, Fr Guichet msc had already in July called in Father Alexis Michellod and told him to prepare again to enter the Highlands. At the beginning of September 1954, Guichet sent the 40-year-old Michellod and 41-year-old Brother Jean Delabarre into the Southern Highlands to look over the districts already open to missionaries, namely Mendi, Tari, and Lake Kutubu.¹⁸



Archbishop Carboni

Fr Michellod and Brother Jean left Port Moresby for the Southern Highlands on Sept. 2, and went on to Lae, where they spent two days with Father George Bernarding, the future Archbishop of Mt. Hagen. By an awkward coincidence they arrived at Lae while 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.

Meanwhile undaunted Fr Alex msc and Brother Jean msc flew into Mendi on September 9, 1954 and were warmly welcomed by the Australian government officers. On September 10, the first Mass was offered in the Southern Highlands. The government officers put them in contact with Kapiipi, the son of the headman in the area east of the airstrip.

The missionaries were accepted by the men of that tribe who offered to build a house for them.¹⁹ Undaunted by this, Michellod and Jean Delabarre continued on to the Southern Highlands, flying by way of Goroka, Minj, Mt. Hagen, and Ulga, and arrived in Mendi at 2:30 on the afternoon of Sept. 9, 1954.

In a patrol officer's house in Mendi, on the morning of Sept. 10, 1954, Father Michellod celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the first time in the Southern Highlands, with Brother Delabarre the sole attendant. Michellod was particularly moved by the appropriateness of the Gospel assigned for that day's feast of St. Nicholas of Tolentino and never tired of repeating it; "At that time Jesus said to his disciples, 'Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom.'"

Even Michellod, however, did not realize that the Father's kingdom had already come to his flock in the Southern Highlands. Fr Guichet's intentions were that the two should return to Yule Island after a month in the area, so that he could send a full report to Carboni. The Archbishop himself, however, was busy in the meantime, and a series of new developments was afoot that would keep Michellod in the area for another two years, thereby solidly sealing his legacy as the Apostle of the Southern Highlands.²⁰

¹⁸ *Only the Beginnings* p 28

¹⁹ Father Gary Stakem, OFM Cap., 2005 for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Capuchin Mission to PNG wrote of the developments.

²⁰ P 30 *Only the Beginnings*.



Michellod's Tari church, the first Catholic church in the Southern Highlands

Soon Father Alexis Michellod MSC and his confreres became aware of plans for the Capuchin Franciscans to take over this new mission field. On September 6, 1954, Archbishop Romolo Carboni personally approached Father Anastase Paoletti, superior regular of the Capuchins in Australia, to try to interest him in the mission. On Sept. 10 Anastase referred the request to the Capuchin general

minister in Rome, Father Benignus. Roman officials of the Order wasted no time in acting upon the opportunity Anastase had relayed to them.

Benignus OFM Cap wrote to Anastase Sept 28 that the Order had decided to accept the mission of Kikori and that he had personally informed Bishop André Sorin who was still in Europe. Archbishop Carboni remained under the impression that the mission would be assigned to the friars in Australia. On Oct. 7, he wrote to Father Guichet, who was running the vicariate in Sorin's absence, of his hopes that "the Australian Capuchins, supported by Capuchin Fathers from other countries," would be taking over the northwest part of the vicariate.

Fr Anastase OFM Cap left Australia for New Guinea with intentions of spending 10 days there consulting with the Sacred Heart missionaries. He ended up spending almost a month. He arrived in Port Moresby Nov. 15, 1954, just as the annual meeting of the two territories' Catholic mission leaders was ending.

This afforded him an opportunity to meet practically all of the apostolic vicars and prefects. Anastase had not planned to actually visit the Southern Highlands, but these men urged him to do so rather than waste time and money by staying in Port Moresby.

Monsignor Ignatius Doggett, OFM, prefect of Aitape, further counselled him to take a close look at what he considered the most difficult thing about the mission, the unavoidable cost of transporting all personnel and supplies by air.

Bishop Noser, SVD of Madang strongly advised Fr Anastase of Australia to try to get American Capuchins for the mission. When Fr. Anastase returned to Sydney, he made his report to the Minister General. On January 24, 1955, the General Definitory He wrote to Fr. Victor Green in Pittsburgh asking the Pennsylvania Province to take the mission. Two weeks later Fr. Victor replied, "Yes, we will accept the mission." While negotiations were going on between Rome and Pittsburgh, the work of the fledgling mission was moving forward.

Photo from the web for educational purposes

Fr. Alphonse Rinn, MSC and three more teachers flew in from Yule Island on January 26, 1955. Help had indeed arrived. Fr. Alex took the three teachers and returned to Tari to see how things were going. He was pleased to see that the people of Kupari had carried out all they had promised. In August Fr. Louis Van Campenhoudt, MSC arrived in Mendi. This enabled Fr. Rinn, who had been there for seven months, to visit Ialibu, a large basin farther east, to investigate the possibility of opening a mission post. Everything was favorable. Shortly after that, Brothers Felix and Paul, members of the Oblates of St.



Joseph, a local community founded years earlier by the late Archbishop Alain de Boismenu, arrived from Yule Island. Fr. Rinn sent them to Ialibu to start building a station. With three small mission stations established, the groundwork was prepared for the Capuchins.²¹

The announcement by the Minister Provincial of the Capuchins of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the USA, Fr. Victor Green in February 1955 that the Province had accepted the responsibility of a new mission territory in Papua New Guinea caught the friars by surprise. It was a joyful surprise that electrified the Province; a spirit of enthusiasm filled the minds and hearts of the friars. When Fr. Victor said that he was ready to take the names of volunteers, there was certainly no lack of them. .²²

Benignus wrote that same day,

“We are most grateful to you and your definitors, not merely for accepting the proposed new mission but also for the generous and traditionally Capuchin manner in which you did so, looking upon the request made, through us, by the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide as the will of your superiors.”

When Carboni began his search for missionaries in 1954, the Universal Church was in a year-long commemoration of the centenary of the definition of Mary’s Immaculate Conception; and after repeated failures in his search, the Archbishop began a novena of prayers to Mary,



“After so many talks, so many letters—receiving no concrete, no positive, no affirmative answer—receiving no priests, brothers, or sisters, I prayed hard to Our Lady,” Carboni said, “and I said to her during Mass, ‘Our Lady, if these new missions are important, are indispensable, are vital for the Kingdom of your son, Jesus Christ, then help us’.” From that time on, according to Carboni, the replies to his requests became more positive. Even a stab in the dark paid off: opening the U.S. Catholic directory to the listing of religious communities, the Archbishop randomly chose and wrote to the American Montfort Fathers, whose provincial promptly replied he would come to see about accepting a Fly River mission at Daru.

Photograph; Father Paul Farkas was assembling clothing he thought necessary for the Highlands before he left America.

²¹ Father Gary Stakem, OFM Cap., 2005 for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Capuchin Mission to PNG

²² Father Gary Stakem, OFM Cap., 2005 for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Capuchin Mission to PNG.

Papua's Capuchin pioneers to Mendi 1955



L to R 1. Fr Berard, 2. Br Mark, 3. Fr Paul, 4. Fr Henry, 5. Fr Stanley, 6. Fr Otmar

1. Father Berard Tomassetti, 34, had been in New Guinea during World War II, as he had served both at mainland Finschhafen near Lae and on Manus Island. As a Sea Bee engineer with the 78th U.S. Naval construction battalion, he had helped build naval installations at these places. He had joined the Capuchin Order 57 after the war and had taught science and mathematics for a year at St. Fidelis Seminary, Herman, Pennsylvania.

2. Brother Mark Bollinger 28, who after graduating from St. Fidelis Seminary high school in 1945, entered the training program for Capuchin lay brothers at Cumberland, Maryland, and from 1948 until 1955 served as door keeper and engineer, as well as in various other capacities, at Capuchin College in the nation's capital.

3. Father Paul Farkas, 32, had been an associate at St. Augustine's for four years. During that same time he also served as local director of the Secular Franciscan Order and was assistant national director of the Arch-confraternity of Christian Mothers.

4. Father Henry Kusnerik, 43, who after five years as an associate pastor of St. Augustine's Church, Pittsburgh, had volunteered for the Australian mission, and had already served two years as associate and five as pastor in the Leichhardt sector of Sydney, and another two as religious superior in Melbourne.

5. Father Stanley Miltenburger, 33, had for eight years held a wide variety of assignments as a missionary in Puerto Rico – in Rio Piedras and Utuado. Following Henry's recommendations, Stanley had already begun training as a pilot. He came from the West Virginia hills near Cumberland.

6. Father Otmar Gallagher, 33, veteran of seven years' service in Puerto Rico. He had served there as an associate pastor in Trujillo Alto, Utuado, and Ponce; chaplain of sufferers of Hansen's disease in Trujillo Alto, and chaplain of a tuberculosis sanatorium in Ponce. In 1955 he was pastor, religious superior, and director of primary and secondary schools in Trujillo Alto.²³

Once the group was named, preparations proceeded in earnest. Press conferences and media interviews immediately announced the new mission to the people of south-western Pennsylvania, home of all the missionaries save Father Stanley who was from West Virginia.

²³ *Pps 54-56 Only the Beginnings*



Archbishop Carboni and Bishop Sorin asked Australian Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck to expedite the granting of visas. Meanwhile through the efforts of the provincial mission office, more than 10 tons of equipment were crated and sent to San Francisco for passage on the “S.S. Orcades,” and plans made for obtaining a similar amount in Australia.

Finally on Aug. 28, feast of St. Augustine, patron of the Pennsylvania Province, after a three-day retreat, the Pennsylvania province’s Papuan pioneers received their mission crosses and letters of obedience from the Father General for work within the vicariate of Port Moresby.

Father Henry and Otmar left Pittsburgh by air and flew to Sydney where they arrived on September 29th. The rest of the missionaries boarded the Orient Line’s “S.S. Orcades,” and left the States five days after the opening of Disneyland in 1955 and headed for Sydney by way of Vancouver, Honolulu, Suva, and Auckland – ultimately bound for the Southern Highlands, the new kingdom their Father had prepared.²⁴ On board the Orcades the Friars met many of the 1,200 passengers. Foremost among them was Jim Leahy, who had been in New Guinea since 1929, and now had a coffee plantation at Goroka which employed 185 local people. Jim’s brothers Mick and Dan had led the first expedition into the Ialibu and Pangia areas in 1934. He had news of his brothers Mick and Dan Leahy, the pioneers of the highlands in 1933. Jim Leahy told them that the Southern Highlands had the best climate in the world like eternal spring but he did not like their chances of converting the local people as their tradition of polygamy was entrenched.

Meanwhile Fathers Henry and Otmar arrived in Sydney on Sept. 29, even as the those on board the Orcades were preparing to leave Auckland, New Zealand. ‘When the “Orcades” docked in Sydney Oct. 1, Otmar and Henry were there to meet them, as was also Father Vincent Ryan, who over the years since then has extended similar hospitality countless times to the Papuan-based friars and their co-workers.’²⁵

In Sydney the group had a long visit on Oct. 6 at the apostolic delegation office and met with Archbishop Carboni and his official family, which included Monsignor Luigi Dadaglio, and Monsignor Luigi Barbarito. Carboni talked to them in a fatherly way encouraging them and asked them to cultivate a sincere interest in “the good qualities of the local people they met, since this attitude would necessarily reflect in their external behaviour.” He warned them of the danger of taking note only of their weaknesses and vices. If they did this they would accomplish little “of lasting good for the people and the Church.” Another point the delegate stressed was that they should “begin as soon as possible to form a native secular and religious clergy,” since “there seems to be a move on in some of the islands to get rid of foreign elements even among the clergy.” Dadaglio had accompanied Carboni to Papua in March and had taken movies, so the missionaries were now, according to Berard, able to see Bishop Sorin, Yule Island, the Eastern and Southern Highlands, and “our natives for the first time... We also saw views of the rugged terrain of our territory and had mixed feelings of hesitation and desire to be there to begin the work that is before us.”

²⁴ Page 57 *Only the Beginnings*

²⁵ *Ibid* page 58.

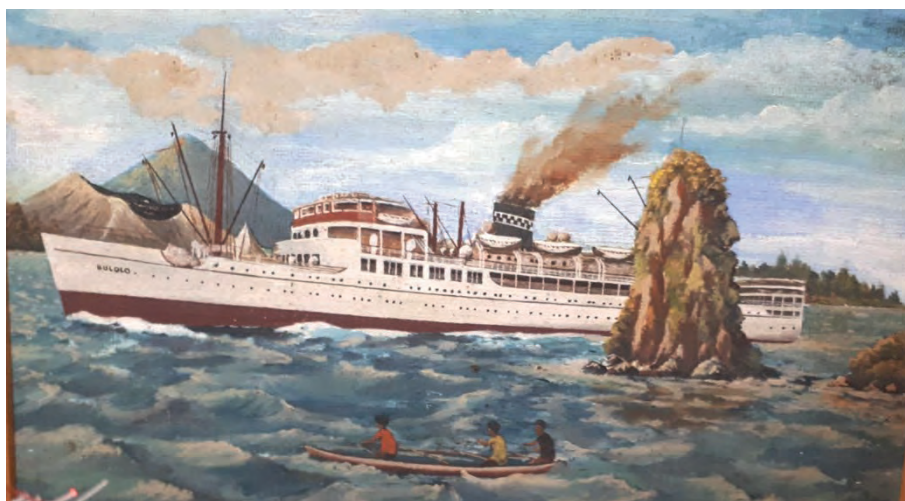
Carboni came to St. Fiacre's Oct. 16 for several hours and presented the six friars with their mission crosses. The missionaries also had useful visits with Cardinal Norman Gilroy, archbishop of Sydney; Monsignor Albert A. Thomas, national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (and later bishop of Bathurst); and Mother Genevieve, French-born superior general of the Handmaids of Our Lord. They also had a meeting with Father Henry about food. They also had a meeting with Father Henry about food supplies, and another with Dr. Black of the University of Sydney on tropical diseases. Black surprised them with information on the prevalence of malaria in the Highlands and the need for taking regular antimalarial medicine.

At midnight Nov. 2, they left Australia for Port Moresby on Papua's New Guinea's southern coast on the *Bulolo*. Following several choppy days on the Coral Sea off the Great Barrier Reef, the "*Bulolo*" docked at Papua's territorial capital Nov. 6.

During their three days in Port Moresby, a town of about 3,500 Europeans, most of the friars met Papuan people for the first time. Bishop Sorin came by boat from Yule Island to meet them. At the first meeting Nov. 7, Sorin accepted their documents of appointment from the Capuchin general minister -- "obediences" as Capuchins used to call them -- and at that moment their Papuan missionary service officially began.

The six missionaries left Moresby Nov. 9, headed for Madang on New Guinea's northern coast, whence they planned to fly into the Highlands. Before they reached Samarai Island off the southeastern tip of the mainland on Nov. 10, Fr Paul became ill. His condition worsened to the point that Dr. Tarnekei, a fellow passenger on the "*Bulolo*", diagnosed it as appendicitis and recommended that Paul be treated by Dr. Sobol, a Ukrainian. "After Paul had been somewhat ludicrously lowered to the pier by the *Bulolo*'s cargo crane, Dr Sobol performed an emergency operation but was not able to find the appendix, --- Later, he told Berard that a tumor which he had found between the large and small intestines had now disappeared and there would be no need for additional surgery".²⁶

Painting of the steamer Bulolo entering Rabaul Harbour by Sam Cham. (Mennis Collection).



By Dec. 2, Fr Paul was back on his feet and moved around Samarai Island and even visited nearby Sideia Island. Finally, Dec. 15, when the doctor released him, he flew out of Samarai intent on rejoining his confreres. Papua's pioneer Capuchins were all together for

the first time in six weeks Dec. 22. Appropriately enough, the friars' reunion took place at Tari in the two-story bush chalet built for them by a Swiss Missionary of the Sacred Heart, which now was to become St. Francis Friary, first mother house of the Papuan Capuchins.²⁷

²⁶ Farkas to McGann, Nov. 29, 1955, in PL 1:14-15. [p 60 Only the Beginnings]

²⁷ Gallagher to A. Conrad, Dec. 2, 1955, in PL 1:18.

The Capuchin community was finally intact. The solemn celebration of the feast of the birth of Jesus in 1955 also celebrated the birth of the Capuchin Mission in Papua New Guinea. As 1956 began, the friars dispersed to begin their apostolate among the people of Papua.

Fr. Henry went to Ialibu to work with Fr. Rinn. Fr. Stanley and Fr. Berard flew to Mendi where Fr. Louis Van Campenhoudt was working. Tari would be the mission headquarters, so Fr. Otmar remained there with Fr. Paul and Br. Mark. Fr. Alex Michelod, the representative of Bishop Sorin, also moved to Mendi.

As government patrols increased, larger areas were de-restricted. From the three main stations the missionaries were able to reach out and establish more outstations. This pattern continued over the years until the entire Southern Highlands was open.

It was an enormous undertaking, far more than the Provincial superiors realized at the time. It was in the spirit of faith and obedience that this mission was accepted. This same spirit shaped the life and actions of those who answered the call to serve. This spirit made the mission endeavour successful.²⁸

Suffice it to say at this point, however, that Christian missionaries did not bring God to the Southern Highlands. Long before missionaries were riding the waves of the South Pacific, God was quietly working among his people in Papua, preparing them for the fuller revelation of God himself that, in his special providence and in his own good time, he would bring to them through foreigners. Paradoxically those whom God had sent with the Good News of the Christian dispensation were themselves to learn as much about God in the process as those to whom they were bringing the message.²⁹

The Church first proclaims Jesus Christ through a complex and varied activity which is sometimes called “pre-evangelization,” but is really already an evangelization, albeit in an initial and incomplete stage. To this end, an almost unlimited range of means can be used: explicit preaching, of course, but also art, the preliminary study of the culture, philosophical inquiry and the legitimate appeal to the emotions of the human heart.³⁰ In Mendi in April of 1955, Father Alexis Michellod and the other Sacred Heart missionaries had been looking forward to the arrival of the American Capuchins. This important event finally happened shortly after noon Nov. 23, when Father Otmar Gallagher, leader of the new missionaries, flew into Tari from Minj and took up residence with Michellod. During the following month, the other five Capuchins filtered single file into Tari.

The last of the first band of Capuchins to reach Tari was Father Paul Farkas; and his arrival Dec. 19 was a specially happy one, since the friars had been quite uncertain as to whether they would ever see him in the Highlands when they left him behind at Samarai. Christmas was now rapidly approaching, and Stanley returned from Minj Dec. 22 so that all the friars could be together.

Fr Otmar also informed the friars that he expected them to wear the Capuchin habit at meals, in chapel, and in the school, the understanding being that at other times they could wear civilian clothes, with grey slacks and a white shirt with a cross on it being used on more formal occasions. These decisions Otmar made in his capacity as religious superior of the Capuchins. Michellod by this time had been appointed by Bishop André Sorin as vicar delegate or ecclesiastical superior of all the missionaries in the Highlands – with the technically incorrect

²⁸ *Father Gary Stakem, OFM 2005*

²⁹ *Only the Beginnings p 63.*

³⁰ *Pope Blessed Paul VI, “Evangelii Nuntiandi,” 1975, n. 51*

title of vicar general – but Michellod urged Otmar to make decisions and insisted that he sit at the head of the table.

Fr Otmar brought the mission's first motor bike. That same day he introduced the first schedule for Capuchin community life:



5:15 Rising
 5:30 Morning prayer & meditation
 6:20 Mass
 7:00 Breakfast
 8:00 Work or school
 9:45 Tea Break
 11:30 End of work or school
 12:00 Lunch
 1:45 Work or school
 3:30 Tea break
 4:45 End of work or school
 5:45 Office
 6:30 Dinner
 8:00 Unica, rosary & night prayer
 10:00 Lights out³¹

Photograph: Fr. Otmar Gallagher moved his headquarters to Mendi in mid-1956.

Fr Berard was a civil engineer and government officials invited him to assist them as architect and engineer in bridging

the wide and swift Tagari River to the west of Tari.

The friars' first Christmas in Papua New Guinea was marked by a close rapport between Catholic missionaries and government personnel. ADO Bill Crellin; his new MA, Ted Burchett, and wife, Iris, PO Mal Lang; and CPO Graham Hogg all came to Guluanda for a Christmas Eve dinner –or tea as they called it. Later, even though none of them were Catholics, all attended the first midnight Mass.

The rapid progress from mission to church and the steady support which the efforts of the friars and their co-workers have received from all over the world are remarkable enough, but it almost borders on the miraculous that three hundred individuals—as well as a few hundred visitors—have been so protected from really serious harm during the Capuchins' first thirty years in Papua New Guinea. Not a single foreign missionary of the Mendi diocese has been critically injured during these three decades, despite an incredible array of dangers.

³¹ P64 *Only the Beginnings*

The mission's patron is Mother of the Good Shepherd

On Dec. 1, 1955, in his first letter from the Southern Highlands, Father Otmar Gallagher wrote Father Victor Green, "You'll be happy to know that Bishop Sorin has approved our selection of our Blessed Mother under her title of Mother of the Good Shepherd as patron of our mission area."

God's special providence thus came to be shown to the Southern Highlands Catholic missionaries through the intercession of Mary, and over the years this providence has been far more spectacular than the events that led the Capuchins to Papua in answer to the Archbishop's prayer. Once the Pennsylvania Capuchins had agreed in 1955 to help evangelize the Southern Highlands, Father Henry Kusnerik was sent to look over the new field of labor, and both before

and after this inspection he called on Archbishop Carboni in Sydney.



He later wrote, "The Delegate was insistent that Our Lady had a hand in finding the Communities to give a hand in the Territory: so when I came back to Pittsburgh I suggested that the new Mission field be dedicated to Our Lady and furthermore under the title that is peculiar to our Order, **the Mother of the Divine Shepherd**. This Marian title, first promoted by Isidoro Rodriguez of Seville, Blessed Diego Jose of Cadiz, and various other 18th century Spanish Capuchins. This title had been recommended and individually and collectively the general definitory appreciated that deeply.

The Good Shepherd, Who is Jesus Christ Our Lord, will feed His lambs and His sheep just as His Mother tells Him to. He will care for them when she wants it and give them what favors she desires Him to give. Jesus as a Child was the One Whom Mary the Shepherdess cared for as a little Lamb.

Now that He is the Divine Shepherd, He retains all her ways, all her manners and style of doing things in caring for His flock. There is nothing more lovely than a girl tending sheep. Such was Joan of Arc, the great heroine of France. And such was Lucy, the eldest of the Fatima children, and now [at the time this was written in the 1950s] a Carmelite nun in Portugal, named Sister Mary of the Immaculate Heart, to whom Our Lady appeared six times in 1917.

A beautiful title of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and one that could be and should be given to her, is the Divine Shepherdess. Mary, who is willing to be our Shepherdess if we will be her lambs and her sheep, has already had the experience of having Almighty God as her first little Lamb: "The Lamb of God Who takest away the sins of the world."

The Southern Highlands missionaries have been respected and safe.

They have actually been in very little danger of being harmed by the people of Papua. A careful reading of the extensive records the friars maintained for a quarter of a century failed to produce even a single instance where any of the expatriate missionaries were ever physically harmed in any way by another human being.³²

In Ialibu, as more areas were derestricted, outstations were opened in all directions. This became possible as catechists from the Chimbu area were made available. Chimbu, on the New Guinea side of the island, had been evangelized initially in the 1930s and then extensively after World War II. These catechists became the backbone of the expansion in the Ialibu area, and some also served in Kagua and Erave.



Photograph: A bridge built by Fr. Berard, a civil engineer

In the western part of the mission, Fr. Berard was making more and more contacts with the villages in the Tari basin. At the request of the government, he put to use his talents as a civil engineer and supervised the construction of a bridge over the Tagari River. This enabled the government to expand its operations to the west and at the same time open new

fields for Fr. Berard. He made many contacts with the people, and in due course places like Pureni, Koroba, and Komo became main stations. After five years of slow growth, there was an explosion of activity during the next twelve years. During that period, thirty-one friars arrived from the home province and two from Great Britain. Seven Australian diocesan priests volunteered for the mission. Six religious communities of women arrived to join in the spreading of the Gospel, and scores of enthusiastic lay missionaries heard of the Mendi mission and came to help. It was an exciting time, filled with hope.

With the arrival of more personnel, the experienced friars were able to answer requests from other villages to establish stations. During this time main stations were opened in Pureni, Pangia, Nipa, Det, Koroba, Komo, and Margarima. There was a lot of mobility in this very productive period of the mission.

Fr. Matthew Gross helped Berard expand the Church in the trans-Tagali sector.

In 1965 Mendi was elevated to the status of a Vicariate Apostolic, and Monsignor Firmin Schmidt was named the Bishop. On his way back from the Second Vatican Council, Bishop Firmin was ordained in Pittsburgh by Bishop John Wright on December 15, 1965. When he returned to the mission in 1966, Fr. Thomas More Janeck, Minister Provincial, came with him to visit the friars. While



it was evident to the Provincial that much had been accomplished in ten years, he saw that the needs were still very great and more missionaries were required.

³² Page 319 Only the Beginnings.

Reunion 1959 of the first ten Capuchins

The first 10 Capuchins in the Mendi mission were so anxious to get together in 1959 that they moved Brother Claude Mattingly's 25th jubilee celebration a whole year forward.

Left to right: Gary Stakem, Berard Tomassetti, Paul Farkas, August Rebel, Otmar Gallagher, Claude Mattingly, Mark Bollinger, Stanley Miltenberger, and Gregory Smith



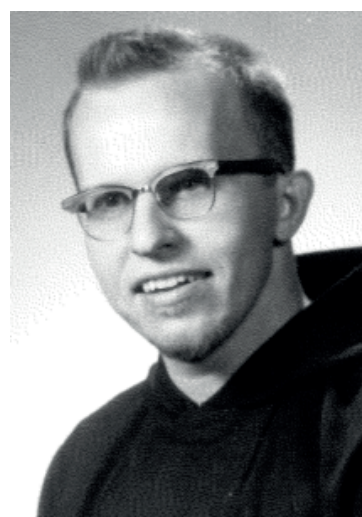
After recording about the culinary goodies, one friar wrote, "The biggest treat of all was getting together with our own men, resting among our own kind, and enjoying the unexpressed but definite feeling of fellowship." One friar described it as "three wonderful, hilarious days. The kidding and wisecracking were Capuchin through and through."

Nipa and an ecumenical spirit.

As the government airstrip at Nipa was nearing completion on Nov. 30, 1959, Clifford Keightley of the Methodist Overseas Mission in Mendi managed to set out for Nipa. In early December he began building a small temporary mission station on the west side of the Nipa airstrip, which was a little more than 14 air miles west of Mendi.

Photograph: Fr. Cyril Repko worked with Fr. Senan in developing the Nipa area.

Catholic missionaries already had permits and could have headed for Nipa at the same time as Keightley—indeed Father Gary Stakem was in Mendi waiting to go already on Dec. 3, but there seemed to be no big rush. Catholic missionary authorities decided that, since missionary activity at Nipa was restricted to within a half-mile of airstrip, the trip could wait until Gary had participated with the other friars in the Capuchin mission's very first fraternal retreat being held in Mendi. The airstrip was not approved at that time, but civil aviation officials authorized Catholic mission pilot Fidelis Miltenberger's landing there, probably with the understanding that he in turn would bring in several loads of government supplies and airstrip workers.



Thus, on separate flights early on the afternoon of Jan. 6, 1960, Fidelis landed Father Gary and Father Senan Glass, the latter of whom had arrived from the States eight months earlier, to begin work on the district's first permanent Catholic station. On these flights, Fidelis also brought in Thomas More Maia, cook and interpreter from Mendi; Kurum, labor foreman from Kumin; two loads of cargo; and

several airstrip workers. Meanwhile, four other helpers – Tumia from the Mendi area and three young men from Pinj in the Lai Valley – found their way in on foot.³³

In the light of the sectarian rivalry which on several other occasions marred the arrival of the Catholic missionaries, the friars' reception at Nipa by Clifford Keightley deserves special mention. The Second Vatican Council had been announced the previous January, but its opening was still 33 months away, and ecumenism was still far from being a household word, even farther from being a practical reality.

The Reverend Keightley, however, was the first to greet each of the Catholic missionaries on their arrival in Nipa. After that he visited the Catholic building site almost daily, frequently offered advice, and when the building was finished he even loaned the friars some trade goods to pay off their debts among the people. This paved the way for the generally fine relationship which has endured over the years between the Catholics and Methodists (now the United Church) at Nipa.³⁴

Once the Catholic station had been set up, Gary returned to his work in the Ialibu and Pangia areas. Monsignor Firmin wanted to assign someone fulltime to Nipa, at this early date, but lack of manpower prevented development.

As Monsignor Firmin wrote about this same time, these walks allowed the Catholic mission “to maintain some contact, but there is no headway made among the natives. In the meantime, the Methodists have a resident missionary and a school. This obviously gives them the inside track to the loyalty of the natives in that valley – numbered at well over 5,000.” When Fathers Cyril Repko and Malachy McBride finished their year of pastoral theology studies at Mendi in 1964, a new era opened for the Nipa district.



Photograph – Father Berard began a very simple school at Yobiya, -perhaps the first

However, after numerous preliminary excursions in all directions, accompanied at times by Brother Mark, Berard had started picking out sites for outstations in the Tari Basin. Half of the outstations still active in the basin began at this time: Haro, Hambuali, Yagilianda (now known as Tauril), Pi (Pinagia), Hagabo, Pipianda, and Pai. Various degrees of beginning had also been made at Tabaya, Hadani, Timani, Holabe, and Yumu.³⁵

³³ *Only the Beginnings* p 199

³⁴ *Staken.*

³⁵ p 157 *Only the Beginnings*)

Berard had been severely limited at first in what he could do with these outstations, since he had neither teachers nor trained catechists to keep things alive on a day-to-day basis. He had depended, therefore, on teaching as much of the catechism as he could each time he visited one of the places. By Easter of 1958, three of the new outstations – Halibi, Hagabo, and Hambuali – had been built up, and work was about to begin at Haro and Pi. School programs were also underway at Yobiya and Hambuali, run by two school boys from Tari: Hengene and Undiabe. The second permit, issued Sept. 19, 1957, allowed Berard to minister to the government people at Goloba (or Koroba as the Australian officers called it).



This permit had been quite restricted, however, and required Berard to travel by motor vehicle directly to and from Goloba, without setting off the road, stopping along the road, or staying overnight at Goloba, and further required that he be accompanied by another permit holder. The catch was that he was the only one with a permit, so in effect his activities already limited to the Goloba government station were further confined to times when the government officers were ready to escort him from the Tagali bridge.

Photo: Koroba's first church

Earlier, as part of his work on this bridge, Berard had managed to get to Hedamali, about four miles up the western side of the Tagali. Ever since then, the Hedamalians had been asking that he start a station there. Believing it “a better center for activities in the Duna Sub-District than Goloba,” Berard applied for and obtained still another permit, but not without a great deal of misunderstanding.

The Wednesday after Easter of 1958, Father Otmar wrote Father Paul that District Commissioner Harry West had agreed to grant Berard an interim permit to enter the Hedamali area and promised to notify Tari ADO Crellin by radio – presumably the following day. On the strength of this, Otmar directed Berard and two recently-arrived coastal teachers – Peter Miria Ikupu and Haro and Pi.

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Photograph: Father Myron Flax was reportedly the first white man to enter the area known as the Gambe.

From this time on, Father Paul started taking a more active role in the development of the Tari Basin outstations. He took Tangelia out to Halibi on 17 April to begin teaching there, and Andaya to Hungabo the following day. He also blessed three outstations during the following weeks and erected large crosses. Meanwhile out at the Tagali,



Berard made a walk-about up the left bank of the Tagali on April 14, ostensibly to visit the parents of one of his schoolboys. Before returning, however, he took a raft across the Tagali to Hedamali and began making plans for the building of a station with the leaders Kundu, Tayabe, and Pidue. The very same day, on the other end of the Capuchin Mission, Father Stanley left Ialibu en route to the Kagua Valley.³⁶

Photograph Fr Gary Staken was the Apostle of the Poru

The Mission at Erave

Gregory Smith was tentatively chosen. He would go there in a few months, so that things would be ready to open the central school in February 1960. Fr Otmar noted early on that the Capuchins would have to station someone at Erave, and Father “The buildings would, of course, be of bush construction,” Otmar added, “but there is a great deal of forest in that valley and it should be rather easy to obtain good timber for permanent houses....”

Otmar went on to say that they intended to apply for three leases, totalling about 200 acres: a mission lease of five acres, a special lease of about 50 acres for the school (buildings, play areas, and gardens) and the rest an agricultural lease for a plantation. Shortly after the announcement of the opening of the Erave station, Monsignor Firmin Schmidt was appointed prefect apostolic. Otmar noted in his letter of June 2, 1959, therefore, that while he would examine land at Erave as soon as Neville had located some, neither Gregory nor anyone else would be stationed at Erave prior to Firmin’s arrival.³⁷ When Firmin arrived in Erave at mid-month, he found Just about the entire mission lease (five acres) was already cleared of trees and bush, and the friar’s house was well along in construction. By Christmas most of their house finished save for the roof.

³⁶ 156 *Only the Beginnings.*

³⁷ 134 *Only the Beginnings.*

The friars themselves opened a school at Erave in 1961. Though closed in 1967 upon the resignation of Father Gregory, this school trained many young men who are now among the high ranks of the Catholic teaching profession in the Southern Highlands. In 1973 the diocese of Mendi joined with two other Highland's dioceses in forming its own teachers college at Mt. Hagen. Algra Clark.³⁸

Religious Sisters in the Southern Highlands Region



1. The first group of religious women, the Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg, Indiana. Four sisters, under the leadership of Sr. Noreen McLaughlin, arrived in October 1960. They were joined later by more sisters from this community who worked in Mendi, Tari, and Kagua.

2. The Handmaids of the Lord Order sent three of its members to Southern Highlands in 1966. This order was begun by Archbishop Alain de Boismenu in 1918). They worked with the people in Pureni. Sr. Solange Dendillo was the superior. Later some of these sisters worked in Nipa, Erave, and Det.

3. In 1969 the mission was blessed with the arrival of another community of sisters - the Franciscan Sisters of Divine Providence. from Baldegg, Switzerland Mother Sixta Popp came as the local superior. Besides bringing teachers, this community brought a new dimension to the mission work. Sr. Gaudentia Meier and Sr. Kiliana Fries were highly skilled health professionals.

4. That same year 1969, Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions community arrived Their ministry was teaching in schools and training catechists. Sr. Marie Lawlor of Ireland was in the first group.

5. In 1972 the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary arrived led by Sr. Mechtilde Wynhoven. These sisters served in Koroba and Lake Kapiago and were involved in literacy programs and women's clubs. Two of them, Sr. Mechtilde and Sr. Annunciata McElligot, were nurses and worked in the Koroba Health Center.

6. The final group that came was the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (Marists). They were led by Sr. Joyce Ann Edelmann and worked primarily in the school and the catechist center at Erave.



All of these Sisters' communities and those who came later have performed invaluable service in establishing and nurturing the young Church in the Southern Highlands. By their ministry of teaching, medical expertise, hard work, and good example, they enabled both children and

³⁸ 303 *Only the Beginning*

adults to become better people and more zealous members of the Church. The sisters helped to open for them the marvellous wonders of the kingdom of God.”³⁹

The first four Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg arrived on 11 Oct. 1960

Frs Otmar and Mark went to the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana, asking to see the superior general, Mother Mary Cephas Keller (d. 1982).⁴⁰

Founded by Mother Theresa Hackenmeier and Father Francis Joseph Rudolf in 1851, the Oldenburg Franciscans had worked with Friars Minor of the Cincinnati Province in the Diocese of Wuchang, China, from 1939 until their expulsion by the Communists in 1945. Otmar and Mark had already unsuccessfully visited about 25 motherhouses, they were not any too early in arriving at Oldenburg in mid-March.

Fr Otmar and Mark were invited to return later on to meet with Mother Cephas’s general council. In the meantime, and throughout the rest of his home leave, Otmar visited another 30 or so motherhouses. The big day, however, came on April 2, when he spent the entire day explaining to Mother Cephas’s council the need for Sisters in Papua, the lifestyle of the people, possible dangers involved, and information pertinent to the community’s acceptance.



Mother Cephas later wrote that “during this time, unknown to us, Masses were being offered by every available Capuchin friar, that, God willing, we would accept.” Immediately after Otmar’s visit, the General Council unanimously decided that if the congregation agreed and there were volunteers available, they would accept. Bishop Firmin received the happy cable on April 4 from Otmar which read: “Trip successful. Four Franciscans to be appointed next summer... Happy Easter. Ott.”

The first four Sisters appointed were Annata Holohan, Noreen McLaughlin, Martine Mayborg, and Claver Ehren. Their departure ceremony was held at Oldenburg on Sept. 27, 1960, the 100th anniversary of their foundress’s death.

When the Sisters arrived at Mendi on 11th Oct. girls from all over the valley came to meet them. The Sisters began teaching in school on 24th October, and 15 girls showed up. The next day there were 20, despite objections of fathers and brothers. “Four of the girls refused to go home,” Monsignor wrote in his journal, “until I told them their fathers and brothers would have to reckon with me, if they harmed the girls.” *Photograph Another milestone was passed Dec. 12, when Monsignor recorded that Kapipi, “a big chief of the Mendi Valley,” had come to the Sisters for treatment of a sore foot*



³⁹ Father Gary Stakem, OFM 2005

⁴⁰ 212 Only the Beginnings.

Monsignor noted with satisfaction the next day that 25 girls reported for class and that so many showed up during the following month they had to construct another school. The men in this area are still opposed to the girls coming to school. They think a girl or woman is meant to take care of the gardens and tend to the pigs, and not “waste” time in the classroom. With the help of the Sisters we hope to change this view... Some of the girls who reported for school are a bit big. The Sisters are teaching these to sew and other useful things.

The sisters occupied the friary until April 5, 1961, when Brother Claude Mattingly finished their convent. The friars in turn took up residence in Claude’s cargo shed. Thus when Archbishop Maximilien de Furstenberg arrived in Mendi for the first visit of an apostolic delegate, he got to bunk down with Firmin and the other friars in the cargo shed putting them under the Sisters’ influence.” One of the Mendi girls, upon seeing the new arrivals, remarked, “They are the same as we.” *Mother Cephas*⁴¹

The appearance of Sisters in modern streamlined habits on Jan. 11, 1969, unwittingly signalled a new era of profound change for the community and its work in the Mendi diocese. Between then and 1975, the community’s flourishing primary schools were completely turned over to the national teachers, and all of the Sisters took up other apostolates. Some formed a nucleus for the faculty of St. Joseph’s High School at Tari which started in 1971 with Sisters Mel and Charlyn Wolff heading the faculty as headmistress and deputy. Others began teaching in high schools at Mendi and Kagua. Since 1973, there have also generally been two members of the community on the faculty of the inter-diocesan Catholic teacher’s college at Mt. Hagen. In 1980, Sister Doris Holohan was deputy of the college and Sister Marilyn Challdean of women. Sister Annata served as diocesan education secretary from 1970 until 1974,

Bishop Firmin Schmidt decided to found a community of religious women in 1976, and the Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg agreed to provide the necessary formation. Sr. Annata Holohan was asked to be the director of this community which was given the name Franciscan Sisters of Mary. The Lord has blessed this work. At the present time, there are twenty-five members in final vows working in parishes in the diocese.

Sister Annata was elected by all the religious women of the diocese to direct the formation of



national Franciscan Sisters of Mary. Annata also broke new ground by joining Fathers Roy Schuster and Pete Meis in giving the annual Sisters’ retreat at Mendi in December 1975. A member of another community wrote at the time, “Sister gave a couple of talks and a homily at Mass. We were very proud of her as she gave very good talks.”⁴¹⁹ Sister Brendan Boyle was curriculum specialist for the government from 1972 until 1975, and most of the other Sisters are now involved in

training catechists and in helping in pastoral work in the Diocese.

⁴¹ 212 *Only the Beginnings*

In March 2014 four novices of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary professed their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in a joyful celebration that was held at Saint Felix of Cantalice Parish in Pangia, Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. The Franciscan Sisters of Mary are a community founded in the Diocese of Mendi. Sisters are involved in various ministries throughout the diocese: health care, teaching, pastoral work, etc...

Let us give thanks for God's gift of consecrated religious life in the Church... and as always, let us pray for an increase of vocations in the church to the priesthood, consecrated religious life and committed lay ministers. Congratulations Sisters! ⁴²



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Diocese of Mendi – Changes through the years

In 1966, Pope Blessed Paul VI decided to establish the hierarchy of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea and the Protectorate of the Solomon Islands, thus authorizing the bishops there to rule in their own right as residential bishops. By the apostolic constitution, “*Laeta Incrementa*,” issued Nov. 15, 1966, the Pope raised the Vicariate of Mendi to the Diocese of Mendi and transferred Bishop Firmin from the titular see of Conana to the residential see of Mendi. The same letter confirmed Mary, Mother of the Divine Shepherd, as patroness of the cathedral and assigned the Diocese of Mendi, along with those of Bereina, Sideia, and Daru to the Ecclesiastical Province of Port Moresby: This constitution was in turn executed by Archbishop Dominico Enrici, the Apostolic Delegate, at North Sydney, on Jan. 3, 1967.



An adjustment of the Diocese of Mendi came on Jan. 16, 1971, when Pope Blessed Paul VI, by the apostolic constitution “*Quod sit stadium Nostrum*,” created the Diocese of Kerema from parts of the dioceses of Mendi and Bereina. All that part of the Diocese of Mendi which lay in the civil district known as the Gulf District was transferred at that time to the new Diocese of Kerema. The most recent major change in Mendi's status in the Papua New Guinea church has been the removal of all five Highland provinces from the archdioceses of Port Moresby and Madang and the establishment of the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen, with the suffragan sees of Mendi, Wabag, Kundiawa, and Goroka. This was effected by Pope Saint John Paul II on March 18, 1982, by his apostolic constitution “*Qui Divino Consilio*,” “We greet the entire missionary Church and we encourage the men and women who are preaching the Gospel in the front lines,

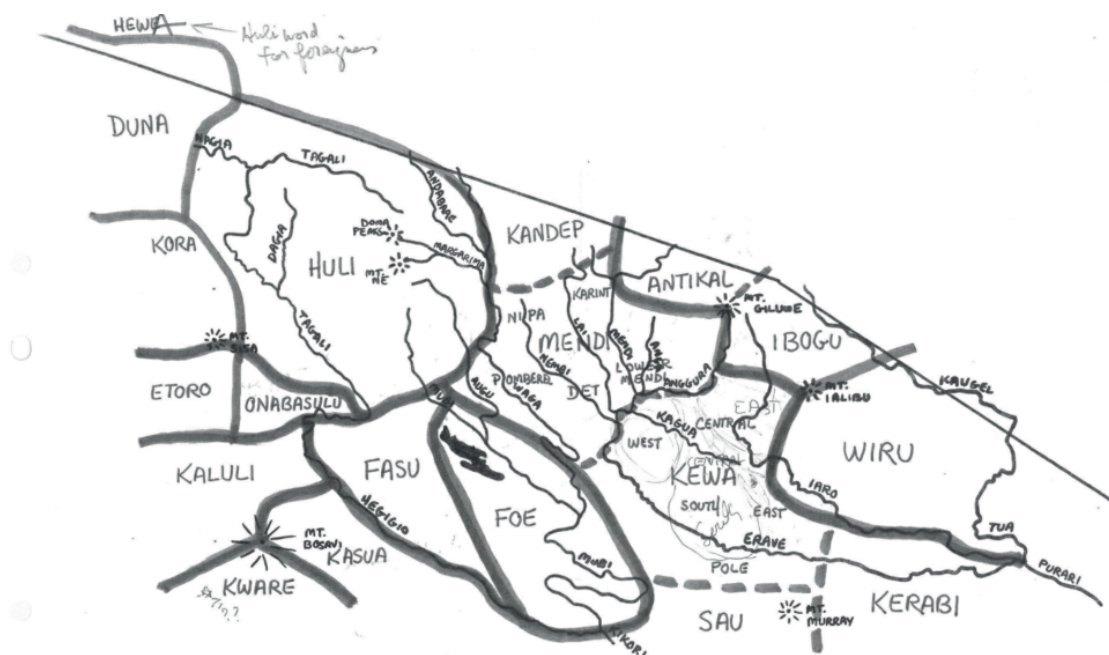
⁴² Bishop Don's blog.

⁴³ Page 129 Only the Beginnings

as it were. They have Our loving applause. Let them know that they are the very dearest among all who are dear to Us.” Pope John Paul I, *The Aims of a New Pontificate*, 1978⁴⁴

The introduction of many airstrips in remote areas helped in the communication and transport in mission work.

Tongues of the Southern Highlands



In the far western end of the Southern Highlands, along the eastern headwaters of the Strickland River, live the Yuna-speakers (or Duna-speakers), and to the north of them those who speak Hewa. Coming eastward, along the various tributaries of the



Tagari and along the headwaters of the Wage River are the Huli-speakers, the largest single group in the Southern Highlands. Though there are some 60,000 of them, spread out from Koroba to Komo to Margarima, with many mountains in between,

there is a surprising absence of dialects among the Huli.

Photograph A Huli warrior. (Educational purposes only).

The Hela Province is the home of the renowned Huli Wigmen. Special magic and a restricted diet help build a boy into a man and make his hair grow strong and fast. Under the guidance of the cult expert, the boy's hair is picked out and periodically splashed with ritual water until it is long enough to be shaped by a circular band of bamboo into what looks like a mushroom of hair. Eventually this band is replaced by an oblong one creating an effect something like a toreador's hat. Throughout this period the boy sleeps on a headrest that prevents his hair from being squashed. After roughly 18 months the entire coif is clipped off close to the scalp

⁴⁴ Page 127 Only the Beginnings.

and reformed to create the basis of the renowned Huli ceremonial wig. Iridescent blue Superb bird of paradise breastplates and parrot feathers are then added and in some locations the wig is also encased in red ochre.⁴⁵

To the south of the Huli and southwest of the Tagali-Hegigio River, six small groups of people each have their own language: Kora, Etoro, Onabasulu, Lululi, Kasua, and Kware. Between the Hegigio and Mubi Rivers live those who speak Fasu and Foe (Foi). Throughout most of the Erave watershed, a single, apparently unnamed language is spoken, which has such a variety of dialectic changes from one valley to the next that it is almost a different language when the dialects are compared at its extremities: Wabag on the north side of Enga Province and Samberigi near Mt. Murray in the Southern Highlands.

Along the upper Lai River, an area once part of the Southern Highlands, but now part of the Enga Province, the dialect is known as Kandep. On the central Wage, upper Nembi, and central Lai Rivers, the Nipa and Karint dialects are called Angal Heneng (literally “the true language”).

Along the lower reaches of the Wage, Nembi, Lai, and Mendi Rivers, the Pomberel, Det, and Lower Mendi dialects are called Anga Enen, Anga Nene, and Anga Neng (all of which also mean “the true language”). These “true language” dialects are collectively referred to by some linguists as “the Mendi language.”

Along the Erave itself and the centra Yaro River are another five dialects of the aforementioned Erave-watershed language collectively referred to as “the Kewa language.” These five are West Kewa (Sumi), Central Kewa (Karia-Muli), East Kewa (Kware), South Kewa (Subura) and Pole (Erave). To the south and east of Kewa are two other quite distinct dialects known as Sau (Samberigi) and Kerabi.



Finally to the northeast of this Erave-watershed language are two other completely different ones. In the upper reaches of the Mendi and Yaro Rivers, people speak dialects of the Melpa language called Antikal and Imbongu (Imbongu); and along the lower Yaro in the eastern end of the Southern Highlands dwells a relatively small group which speaks Witu.⁴⁶ (Wiru).

*Photograph: Provincial Minister Father Claude Vogel with Paul Hewabe, the first Huli Catholic.*⁴⁷

MENDI - Kagua

In February 1959, Fr Stanley had a slight set-back when the school and one of his teacher's houses burned down. He was able, however, to move both the teacher and the school into other buildings on the

station. Once Stanley had moved into his own house, things were still not quite the same as he had been used to in North America.

He wrote to Victor,

⁴⁵ [Tourism site on the web used for educational purposes].

⁴⁶ P263 Only the Beginnings

⁴⁷ P 72 Only the Beginnings

One night I had an unexpected visitor. About 2 a.m. I was suddenly awakened by some violent movements of my bed. At first I didn't realize, but when I flashed on my flashlight I saw a big pig at the foot of my bed. The walls of my house are made of kunai grass tied to bamboo saplings. So the pig, in search of food just walked through the wall and ended up in my bedroom. When I flashed on the light, I don't know who received the bigger fright, the pig or myself.¹

By early March, Stanley had two outstations started to the east of Karia – Kuare and Kupienda – and he was in need of more teachers. “We have almost 200 kids in the school,” he wrote, “and only two teachers.” Stanley realized this was a bit too much for the teachers, but he reasoned that as long as they could keep a station going, it would be worth it, since it would keep the people loyal to the Catholic Mission until more help was available. Help came in the person of Fr August Rebel. After he had been there for a while Stanley wrote that Father August was really a fine missionary, ready, willing, and able to do most anything. He walked approximately five hours one day without complaining.



The Catholic Diocese of Mendi is made up of the Southern Highlands Province and the Hela Province⁴⁸

Writing to friends May 15, 1959, Fr August said, “The population of Kagua, like that in most valleys of the Southern Highlands, is close to fabulous. The climate is slightly warmer and drier than in the Mendi area; the mountain ranges are not quite as high. Because of this latter fact, Father Stanley and I hope to take two horses there from Mendi.”⁴⁹

Bringing in the horses in Kagua, 1959

In mid-August 1959, Stanley finally got around to bringing in two horses from Mendi into Kagua. He had to go all the way around Mt. Giluwe and down through Amburugi, more than tripling the distance. Afterwards Stanley wrote, “When I got back, I tallied up the riding hours, and it came to about 34 1/2 hours in the saddle. Of course I stopped for the nights and spent the weekend in Ialibu . . . The whole trip was a little more than 100 miles and some tough spots to go through. The horse I was riding went through.”⁵⁰

Crossing one river was quite a problem; but with the help of about 50 screaming natives, we made it without any mishap. For most of the natives in this section, it was the first time they had seen a horse. You can imagine the excitement it caused. One remark I overheard when I arrived in Kagua was, ‘Now we have some real pigs. We will have a good sing-sing at Christmas time.’ Practically any time of the day you can see a group of natives down by the paddock admiring the ‘big pigs’.

The tamer one of the horses died soon after its arrival in the valley, and eventually the other was turned over to the government agricultural station. August tried twice to take it out to Kuare. The first time he got as far as the airstrip and the horse returned to Karia without him. The second time, he got a bit further, but the horse kept going in circles; and when Father let

⁴⁸ <https://www.mendidiocese.com/index.php/item/3-diocese-of->

⁴⁹ 109 *Only the Beginnings*.

⁵⁰ 108 *Only the Beginnings*.

him have a free rein, the horse calmly returned to Karia. August decided to walk after that, and there was no further mention of the horses.

The new Ecclesiastical superior of the Capuchin Mission to the Southern Highlands, asked the Capuchin superiors in Pittsburgh to consider shortening from 10 years to five years the term that friars would spend in the mission before returning to the States for a period of rest. In 1960, therefore, all of the original band of missionaries – except Father Paul – returned to the States for home leaves. For personal reasons, Fr Stanley decided to remain there and served in California, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maryland. Due to expansion into other areas, the Capuchins were unable for eight months to send a second man into the Kagua Valley, and Father August was left on his own.

In January of 1960, the mission obtained a tractor and trailer; and by August of that year, a motorbike – even though there were still hardly any roads to ride them on. In the meantime,



not only had the horses disappeared but Stanley himself was also gone. In April 1959, his classmate, Father Firmin Schmidt, was named the first to come and help.

Photograph: In 1961 the first general minister to visit the mission was Father Clement of Milwaukee (with the long white beard). He and Father Elia, his secretary (second from the right) were driven to the Tari airstrip by Brother Mark's tractor.

Volunteer (Lay) Missionaries

The Capuchin Order did not know much about the lay missionaries and the contribution they could make to the missions but thought they could be useful. Otmar informed Father Claude Vogel in January 1957 that the Baroness Maria Augusta Von Trapp of *Sound of Music* fame was planning to visit the mission to gather information on the possibilities for lay missionaries in the area. This was being done at the request of Archbishop Romolo Carboni, the apostolic delegate. Three of the Von Trapps were already working as lay missionaries on Fergusson Island in the Sideia mission, and the family was planning to start an organization at their home in Stowe, Vermont, to train additional lay missionaries to work in Melanesia.

Claude's reaction was not exactly exuberant. "I think it is alright for you to have the Trapp family visit the mission," he wrote. "Perhaps some unforeseen good will result." Otmar was a little more optimistic, and following Madam Von Trapp's departure, he wrote he had hopes "that once they have their organization in operation, we may profit from it." The subject was dropped then until June, when almost as though it had never been discussed, Claude asked Otmar's views on lay missionaries, since "one or two young women have inquired..." Claude

said he wanted to be sure that the friars could not get such volunteers from Australia or from nearer places.⁵¹

In February 1959, Otmar received an inquiry for a husband-and-wife team of doctors (a medical doctor and a Ph.D. in nursing and nutrition education), who were interested in setting up a hospital in the Southern Highlands. They had heard of the mission through Brouwers, and quite possibly were among the first members of the Mission Doctors Association, which the Monsignor started that same year. Otmar wrote Claude, who in turn wrote to Brouwers for more information. Three months later, Claude still had not received an answer. That he had not in the meantime picked up the phone and called Brouwers may indeed be a monument to Capuchin thrift, but as a result of such dillydallying nothing was ever heard of the doctors, and it was another eight years before the first Lay Mission-Helpers arrived from Los Angeles.

The 1960s witnessed a greater involvement of the laity in all aspects of the life of the Church. Nowhere was this more evident than in the number of men and women, mostly in their early twenties, who volunteered to do mission work. The diocese of Mendi was richly blessed by this outpouring of zeal for the Church. Some volunteers were sponsored by organizations like PALMS in Sydney, Australia and Lay Missionary Helpers in Los Angeles, California.

Many came independently, but always with the recommendation of their bishop or pastor. Others were influenced by Religious Sisters communities. Twenty-five volunteers followed the Sisters from Baldegg in coming to the Mendi diocese. The largest group, eighty-eight strong, came from Australia. Twenty-eight came from the United States, New Zealand supplied ten, Ireland three, England three, Canada three, Liechtenstein two, and one each from Scotland, Germany, France, Trinidad and Malaysia.

They came as teachers, nurses, carpenters, mechanics, farmers, and pilots – all ready to serve in any capacity. In time, more and more local people were trained in these professions. As this effort progressed, the local government became reluctant to issue permits to outsiders; it wanted these positions to be filled by their own people. One cannot exaggerate the impact that these young men and women had on the work of the mission. They brought a sense of dedication and hard work, as well as the zeal and joy of youth that touched the friars, the sisters, and the people of the Southern Highlands.

All were enriched by the presence of these spirit-filled volunteers who gave three or more years of their young lives in the service of the Church and to Papua New Guinea. The work of the mission could not have advanced without them.⁵²

Gary Murphy the first lay missionary in the Southern Highlands

Gary Murphy sailed to Papua with the first band of Capuchin missionaries. Gary was an Australian cabin steward on the *Bulolo*, where he made the acquaintance of Father Stanley Miltenberger. In January 1956. After a brief correspondence with Stanley, Murphy said he wanted to work with the friars in the Highlands. Stanley discussed this with Father Alexis Michellod, the vicar delegate, and he in turn accepted Murphy for the mission. Murphy arrived in Mendi in early September 1956, and cooked for the missionaries, ran the station's store, and helped Father Louis Campenhoudt operate its school. By May 27, 1959, he had left the mission and was running the government school at Erave. On later occasions, Murphy was employed as a teacher in Catholic schools at Kagua and Erave.⁵³

⁵¹ 240 *Only the Beginnings*.

⁵² *Father Gary Stakem, OFM 2005*

⁵³ 340 *Only the Beginnings*.

Sylvia Louth, a PALMS missionary who came to Mendi as a teacher, showed many other talents before she left. She became a catechist instructress at Pangia and Wiliame and in that capacity drew a large set of biblical posters adapted to Papua New Guinean culture which have been published and widely distributed throughout Melanesia. Her Job's-tears mosaics and acrylic paintings of the Last Supper and various other Christian scenes grace the walls of many major Catholic churches of the eastern deanery.

Father Stanley's brother Fidelis, a pilot arrived with his recent bride, Josephine Miltenberger née Coleman. Fidelis piloted VH-BVG, the mission's Cessna 180 from late 1956 until late 1961. During this time, his first two children, Ann and Michael, were born.

Email message from a former volunteer pilot to the Southern Highlands

In November 2021, I, the author attended a dinner to celebrate 40 years of the Madang/New Guinea club on Bribe Island. That evening I met Guy Kendell who had been a volunteer with the Capuchin Missionaries in the Southern Highlands as a pilot. A very hazardous job but one he excelled in providing assistance to the people and missionaries of the whole province. I asked him to write a summary of his experiences during the time he was there and received an interesting email in reply. Here it is:

Hello Mary,

When I went to Mendi in 1979, 4 of the original 6 Capuchin missionaries were still there. Consider that 24 years of exposure to physical hardship and health risks (malaria and hepatitis were prevalent) had not deterred their spirits – quite remarkable. The Southern Highlands developed very quickly in the 60's and 70's, and so by the time I arrived things were quite comfortable, but even then many patrols were still undertaken on foot.

Obviously the aeroplane played a very significant role in the development of PNG, and especially so in the highlands. Before the completion of the Highlands Highway (more track than highway in many places), most freight for the highlands was shipped to Madang and then flown into the highlands from there. In my time there the focus had shifted from flying freight to moving personnel around the Southern Highlands, although the cargo loads were still frequent and varied. It was not uncommon to carry a mixed load of passengers and smaller items used in building (such as plumbing items, nails, paint, electrical wiring etc). Although the opening of a reasonable road between Mt Hagen and Mendi enabled the heavier items such as roofing iron to be transported by road, the selection of items such as plumbing fixtures remained very limited in Mendi, and consequently these items were often purchased in Madang where a wider range of such items was available. These purchasing trips were usually arranged to coincide with the mission aircraft (a Cessna 206 when I was there) going to Madang for scheduled maintenance.



Photograph: Kathy Kendell, Br Ben's Brother and Guy Kendell 2021 (M Mennis).

Photograph of a plane used by the Capuchins in the 1960s. (Guy Kendell)

We also undertook occasional flights to Kandep (Enga province) where we purchased potatoes. As I recall these were obtained under some sort of barter arrangement, but I cannot recall what we provided to the vendors in exchange. Flying in the Southern Highlands was most interesting, with most airstrips at an elevation of about 5,000 feet above sea level. A number were one-way" airstrips where landings could only be



accomplished in one direction (usually due to the presence of high terrain) and take-offs in the opposite direction. These included Pangia, Komo, Pureni, Koroba and Kagua.

I find it quite interesting that an oil company constructed an international airport at Komo several years ago (allegedly at a cost of over a billion dollars) in order to facilitate the transport of equipment for their nearby oil well. This was built solely for the construction phase of the oil project and I believe it involved something like 50 flights; apparently the enormous cost for so few flights was justified by the value of the riches beneath the ground.

In my time there all the airstrips were well maintained by local people who recognised that such facilities were literally a lifeline for their communities. When I last worked in PNG (2012) most airstrips had fallen into disrepair, and there were ongoing disputes with landowner groups regarding access and "compensation". Even Wewak airport fell into a state that ultimately forced Air Niugini to suspend flights until repairs could be effected.

Weather was often a challenge, with many highland airstrips experiencing early morning fog which usually dissipated by about 8:30 or 9 o'clock. As the day warmed, cumulus clouds would form and these often developed into cumulonimbus by mid-afternoon, bringing afternoon showers. As a consequence, we tended to try and achieve all of our flying between about 8:30 am and about 2 pm, and this was usually quite achievable.

We generally planned each day's flying the previous afternoon and formulated a planned route covering several airstrips. As some of the shorter airstrips only permitted us to take off with a restricted load, our first port of call was usually one of the longer airstrips (such as Tari or

Margarima) and then, having dispensed some of our payload, we could proceed to these shorter strips.

Typically the day would begin with a “sked” call at about 7:30 am to outstations who would provide an appraisal of their weather and airstrip conditions, as well as advising of any urgent needs. Sometimes this necessitated an amendment to the plan devised the previous afternoon, but generally we proceeded as planned.

Perhaps the most sought-after cargo that we carried was mail. All of the missionaries (including lay missionaries) were far from home, and in those days there was no internet or email, nor was there television. Consequently news of the outside world could only be obtained by monitoring short-wave radio broadcasts (ABC, BBC etc). Those missionaries from places like Switzerland, Germany or even New Zealand were really out of touch, and so mail was literally a most precious commodity. One of my tasks was also to collect outbound mail, and upon return to Mendi I added postage and then delivered all outbound mail to the post office.

As an aside, I always loved the beautiful stamps that PNG produced, featuring flowers, animals and elements of PNG history. I suspect that in the modern era, with far less dependence on postage, the variety of stamps produced in PNG is far less colourful. We also carried a lot of food items, particularly perishables, and items such as cheese were almost as sought after as mail!

The very limited availability of medical facilities in the bush stations also meant that we were often called upon to transport patients to Mendi hospital. By far the majority of these were women who were experiencing difficulties in pregnancy. I always found such passengers to be very stoic, regardless of the nature of their injury or discomfort. Several years later I collected a man from Emirau (New Ireland province) who had been attacked by a crocodile whilst standing waist-deep in water fishing. Despite very obvious and severe injuries, (and the lack of any sedation), he never made a sound until we arrived in Rabaul where he thanked me for the flight.

The Australian Army had a company of civil engineers in Mendi, and they designed and constructed most of the bridges around the province. They had a club (the Clive Steele Club, although I never did discover who Clive Steele was) which hosted occasional gatherings, and



there was a small expatriate community in Mendi as well (primarily bank managers, medical doctors and a few business owners, as well as Talair and MAF pilots). We mixed with these people a bit, but also had movies at the mission every couple of weeks or so. Life was very enjoyable, and security was not much of a problem.

Photograph: Guy and one of the planes he flew in the Southern highlands.

I found the Mendi climate very much to my liking (described as “perpetual springtime” by

some) with cool nights and warm days. As we were adjacent to Mount Giluwe (second highest mountain in PNG) we were occasionally treated to the sight of snow near the peak of the mountain, but this would typically melt by 10 am. Overall these times (1979 and 1980) were some of the best times of my life. Kind regards, Guy Kendell

[Guy’s wife Kathy was also a volunteer in Papua New Guinea and worked in the mission office. Their friend at the dinner was a brother of Brother Ben, a former mission pilot who was killed

in a plane crash near Mt Hagen. He was a passenger at this time and the accident was caused when fog covered the mountainside.] ⁵⁴

Catechists⁵⁵

The work of the catechists was crucial in the life of the church- the church could never have succeeded without the labor of hundreds of dedicated catechists who told their own people what the missionaries had handed on to them. At first these were entirely from other evangelized areas of Papua New Guinea, in particular the Mekeo area near Yule Island and the Mingende area in Simbu province. The next large group of catechists came from among the “kes bois” who literally followed the missionaries everywhere they went and received their instruction on the road. Among the earliest missionaries to employ this method of training catechists was Father August ofm Cap. He was followed in this by Fathers Gary, Senan, Benjamin, Dunstan, Cyril and others. In recent years the best catechists from each area are being sent to Erave for a three-year training, which gives them increased status and pay when they return to their parishes. The parishes bear part or all of the expense of sending the catechists through the Erave training. At many, perhaps all of the parishes, the catechists come into the main station for regular updates in their training and also to discuss and plan paraliturgical celebrations which they direct in the absence of the priest. Many of the expatriate Sisters who once taught in the schools of the Diocese are now engaged in this continuing training of catechists.

Catechist Training Centre

Indispensable to evangelization was the work of the catechists. Since the Church was new to the Southern Highlands, the majority of the catechists in the early years were recruited from other areas where the Church had already been established. The catechists were key to the spreading of the Gospel. These men lived at the outstations and instructed the people on a daily basis. The mission, however, couldn't remain dependent on outside sources; local catechists had to be trained.

(Photograph: Father Dunstan Jones was the first director of the catechists training centre.)

In 1969 a Catechist Training Center was opened in Erave. It was a two-year program under the direction of Fr. Dunstan who had gone to Manila to be trained for this work. Catechists from all over the diocese were sent to Erave. If they were married, their wives and children accompanied them.

As time passed, the Erave training center was closed as alternate forms of training catechists were tried. There is now a new catechist's training center in Mendi with fifty-two candidates in two alternating streams. There is also a large pastoral center in Mendi; many parishes have their own pastoral centers.



⁵⁴ Email to Mary Mennis.

⁵⁵ P301 Only the Beginnings.

Parish Councils ⁵⁶

Still another sign that the Church is coming of age in the Southern Highlands is the formation and development of the parish councils. Already on Sept. 12, 1966, Bishop Schmidt recorded a meeting he had with the church committees of the Pureni area, in which he gave them medals as an insignia of their office.

These committees, he wrote, "had decided where I would have confirmation in the Pureni area, since I could not stop at all places." One of the first committees set up was at Kagua. On Nov. 3, 1971, the Kagua council voted 14-7 to build a new grass church⁵⁷ instead of a permanent church and also a new school.

The committee further decided that no paid workers would be allowed on the church project. Parish Councils were commissioned at Tari and Pureni in May of 1973 and today every parish in the diocese has such a council made up of both men and women from throughout the parish. These councils take a large hand in the shaping of the direction of the work of the parish. They are responsible for hiring and firing the catechists, choosing those who are to go on to Erave, deciding what construction will be undertaken in the parish, and in some areas they take part in the decisions as to who is ready for baptism and confirmation.

These committees are also expected to raise the funds for church buildings. Already on August 15, 1974, when Bishop Firmin blessed the new St. Conrad's Church at Pureni, the president of the church committee presented him \$2,000, one -half the cost of construction. The other half was paid off on Aug. 9, 1977.



The chairpersons of these parish committees are members of a diocesan-wide committee which performs similar services to the entire diocesan Church, and this group has the controlling interest in Mendi Tea Lands.⁵⁸

Economic Development

While the development of an economy is primarily a matter for the private sector, the government plays a pivotal role. The Church also takes part in this, particularly in undeveloped areas. The Bishop and the friars cooperated with the government's agricultural department by

⁵⁶ P 303 only the Beginnings.

⁵⁷ P 50 only the Beginnings.

⁵⁸

bringing in cattle, sheep, water buffalo, turkeys, chickens, ducks and stud pigs to improve the original native pigs. They also assisted the people in finding ways of planting cash crops, opening stores, and taking advantage of the available timber for commercial saw milling. The diocese even started a tea plantation. While these and other development projects were not totally successful, all was not lost. These were learning experiences and are serving today as building blocks for the future.



Our Provincial Tom got a pig of his very own (tough to pack in the luggage?). It's a privileged and honored gift given in thanks and hospitality. Of course, it's not for packing up; it's used for the feast where the visitor is celebrated and is able to enjoy the gift!



The Catholic Church is firmly established in the Southern Highlands, but it also needs to be a local Church. From the beginning catechists, teachers, and pastoral workers were trained to give the people the sense that this was their Church, not simply the Church of the missionaries. For the Church to stand on its own, local priests and religious are indispensable. Such vocations, however, take time to develop.

Simon Apia of Ialibu: the first local diocesan priest in Mendi 1977

On December 15, 1977, Fr. Simon Apia of Ialibu was the first diocesan priest ordained by Bishop Firmin. He is now semi-retired. Two other local diocesan priests are very busy in the apostolate, Fr. George Makaja and Fr. Robert Gigmai. Many young men have gone to the seminary, but the perseverance rate has not been high. There is, however, solid reason for confidence in the future. At the present time there are fifteen men in the major seminary and six in the minor seminary studying for the Mendi Diocese

At Simon Apia's first Mass in the newly built Ialibu church on Dec. 12, 1977, four of his former pastors were in attendance: Victor Albert Kriley, Maris Goetz, Henry Kusnerik, and Samuel Driscoll. Brendan Malloy (second from l.) was the visiting Provincial Minister.



In the 1970s some seminarians and young men in the villages began expressing interest in the Capuchin way of life. A few were accepted as postulants and began to live with the friars. A novitiate was opened in 1977. Some of the first national Capuchins, shown here on occasion of their renewal of first vows, Feb. 2, 1980:

Mendi Cathedral celebrates its Silver Jubilee.

Photograph: Jim Keogh from Ireland visited Father Berard at Victoria, Kansas, and many years later, Jim built the Mendi cathedral.⁵⁹

Sunday, December 9, 2012

The people of the Catholic Diocese of Mendi, in Papua New Guinea joined together for a three-day celebration to mark the Silver Jubilee of the dedication of the Cathedral Church. It was built and blessed on 8 December 1987 under the pastoral leadership of the late Bishop Firmin Schmidt, OFM Cap., the first bishop of Mendi.



“Singsing” groups from around the diocese came to join in the celebration - many dressed in their traditional attire and playing the traditional ‘kundu’ drum. The youth of the diocese also participated in various ways. Above, young people are interpreting a song dedicated to Our Lady, Mother of the Good Shepherd (the Patroness of the Diocese and the Cathedral) in creative dance.

Bishop said, ‘In my homily, I talked a bit about the meaning of a cathedral in the diocese as a symbol of the unity of faith and love - and a sign of Body of Christ and People of God being built up in a given place. Further, I mentioned that a jubilee is a time to celebrate in the present; to give thanks for the blessings of the past and, to look forward in hope to the future and to the tasks that still lay ahead. In this Year of Faith, the Silver Jubilee of our Mother of the Good Shepherd Cathedral, was a wonderful manner of strengthening our faith in Jesus, the Shepherd of our Souls.



⁵⁹ 243 *Only the Beginnings.*

Bishops of the Diocese of Mendi, Southern Highlands

1. The first bishop was Bishop Firmin Schmidt. OFM Cap. 1959 – 1995



Photograph Bishop Firmin M. Schmidt, and Joseph Yore

Born Martin Schmidt on 12 October 1918, in Catherine, Kansas the son of Raymond J. and Sophia Schmidt, the bishop had seven brothers, and one sister. After graduation from St. Joseph Military Academy, in Hays, Kansas, Martin entered the Capuchin-Franciscan Order in 1940 and received the name Firmin. He made his profession as a Capuchin friar in 1941 and was ordained to the priesthood on 2 June 1946, at St. Fidelis Church, Victoria, Kansas.

Blessed Pope John XXIII appointed Schmidt in 1959 prefect apostolic of the Capuchin mission in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Bishop Firmin attended the second and third sessions of Vatican II as a prefect apostolic, and the fourth and final session as bishop-elect. Ordained a bishop a week after the close of the Council by Bishop John Wright of Pittsburgh, Bishop Firmin served the newly established diocese of Mendi until his retirement in 1995.

Growth of Catholic population to 72,000 members by 1995

During his ministry there the Catholic population in the Southern Highlands grew from one person baptized in danger of death to over 72,000 and was growing by about 2,500 a year. Bishop Firmin brought in hundreds of priests, brothers and sisters and lay missionaries from more than a dozen countries and established 14 parishes, 17 pastoral centers, and more than 300 outstations. He set up a catechist training center, a regional high school, a diocesan pastoral center, and numerous elementary schools and health centers and clinics. He developed the area's first pastoral plan and its first diocesan pastoral council. As president of the national bishops' conference, he also started the conference's first national headquarters at Port Moresby.

On his retirement Bishop Firmin wrote; "It was my privilege, to see a group of people change from the dark age of paganism to the bright light of the Catholic religion. The light of the Catholic religion came suddenly but steadily and surely. One pagan custom after another was replaced by the Catholic religion. They began to realize that speaking to God was possible by prayer. They learned that the All-Good and Holy God placed them here in this world for a

purpose, namely to prepare for a better life in the world to come. They were happy to know that God is calling every one to better things.” (Thanks to Fr Blaine Burkey, OFM Cap., of the Capuchin Province of Saint Conrad for his assistance with this information.)

In 1990 Bishop Firmin Schmidt marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination as a bishop at a joyous celebration in the beautiful new cathedral. Bishops from all over the country and the Papal Delegate from Port Moresby came to take part in the festivities. Thousands of people from every part of the diocese walked to Mendi to thank Bishop Firmin and to show their appreciation for his love, care, and devotion to them.

Photograph Bishop Firmin M. Schmidt with his local friends celebrating his 25th Anniversary.



Three years later, at the age of 75, according to Church law, Bishop Firmin submitted his letter of resignation as Ordinary of the Mendi Diocese.

In 1995 it was accepted. The Church in the Southern Highlands grew from infancy to maturity during the thirty-six years of Bishop Firmin's leadership. From a dozen friars in 1959, personnel grew to hundreds – including priests, sisters, brothers, lay missionaries, catechists, and people from the villages serving the Church in myriad ways.

From a handful of Catholics, the number grew to nearly a hundred thousand. Bishop Firmin also served the entire Church in Papua New Guinea through his work in the Bishops' Conference.

His leadership was greatly respected by the other bishops and the government officials as well. Bishop Firmin passed peacefully to God on 4 August 2005 in Hays, Kansas.

2. The second bishop - Bishop Stephen Reichert 1995 – 2011 when he became the Archbishop of Madang

On May 7, 1995, Most Reverend Stephen Reichert, OFM Cap was ordained bishop by Bishop Firmin to be the second bishop of Mendi. The choice was welcomed by the friars, the other missionaries, and the people of the diocese. The new bishop had been ordained to the priesthood in 1969 and arrived in the Southern Highlands in 1970 where he began his ministry with Fr. Ben Madden in Det. His many responsibilities over the years included that of Superior Regular



of the Capuchins from 1983 to 1989. The day after Bishop Stephen was ordained, Bishop Firmin Schmidt offered a Mass of Thanksgiving. All the people who had gathered for the ordination stayed on to say their final farewells and once again express their gratitude to Bishop Firmin as he headed back to the United States to live with the Capuchins in Ellis County, Kansas where he was born and raised. Bishop Firmin died in Hays, Kansas on August 4, 2005.

Bishop Reichert emailed the following information to the author:

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 Pomerel. That village became the main station of St. Martin de Porres Parish a few years later. These were my favourite years as a missionary.

Photograph The first permanent buildings at St. Joseph High School in Tari'

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. with Mary Mennis*)

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 Mennis) 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.

One of the major tasks of Bishop Stephen was to find more priests and religious for the diocese. Some of the friars and sisters who had served in the mission for a long time were returning home because of age, health problems, and other reasons. Missionaries of the Holy Family came from Poland in 1996. Bishop Stephen asked them to take over the Ialibu area with its three flourishing parishes. Other members of this community are working in the Mendi district. When the Capuchins withdrew from the Kagua area, Bishop Stephen was able to get some diocesan priests from Poland to minister in that area. There are four of them now; two more are expected. They will also look after Erave.

Heralds of the Good News have come from India and are working in Det, Pomberel, and Irawi/Komo. A priest from the Congregation of St. Theresa, also from India, is pastor in Koroba. Also, the Korean Foreign Mission Society has a priest in Margarima and another in Lake Kopiago. Finally, the Capuchins have contracted with the friars of the Kerala Province in India to send friars on a regular basis. Bishop Stephen has also been able to secure the help of several religious communities of women. These are the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart from Rabaul, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate also from Rabaul, the Missionary Sisters of Charity, the Franciscan Clarist Community, and the Korean Foreign Missionary Sisters.⁶⁰

Mid-America's Archbishop **Steve Reichert**, Archbishop of Madang in Papua New Guinea, has been named a **Chief** by the national government of Papua New Guinea. This information comes from Bishop William Fey, Bishop of Kimbe, and from Fr. John Pfannenstiel, communications officer for the St. Augustine Province. Papua New Guinea received its independence from Australia in 1975.

The nation celebrates its Independence Day today, September 16. Part of those celebrations is the awarding of honors to a few individuals for outstanding contributions to the country. Archbishop Steve has received the highest honor: "Grand Companion of the Order of Logohu (GCL) and conferred the title of 'Chief'. The award recites: 'for service to the Catholic Church and the community of Southern Highlands through many years as a Capuchin Missionary priest and later Bishop of Mendi Diocese for 40 years until appointed Archbishop of Madang in Feb. 2011.'" (*See Part Five*)

The third Bishop of Mendi - Bishop Donald Lippert



Bishop Donald Francis Lippert, OFM Cap., is the third bishop of the Diocese of Mendi. He was nominated to the episcopal ministry by Pope Benedict on 22 November 2011. At the time, Most Rev. Francisco Padilla was the Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Bishop Don was ordained on 4 February 2012. His Eminence Sean Cardinal O'Malley, OFM Cap., was the principal consecrator. The co-consecrators were Most Rev. Stephen Reichert, OFM Cap., Archbishop of Madang and the Most Rev. Bill Fey, OFM Cap., Bishop of Kimbe.

Bishop Don was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA on 12 June 1957 to Donald and Elaine (Unites) Lippert. He has two younger brothers, Dennis and Douglas - both of the Pittsburgh area. He attended St Catherine of Siena Grade School in Beechview, staffed by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Baden, PA. He graduated from South Hills Catholic High School (staffed by the Christian Brothers) in 1975. After a year at the University of Pittsburgh and two years at Duquesne University of the same city, Bishop Don entered Saint Fidelis Seminary, staffed by the Capuchins. He graduated in 1979. After a year

⁶⁰ *Father Gary Stakem, OFM 2005*

in the Capuchin Novitiate, then in Annapolis, MD, he professed temporary vows as a Capuchin in 1980.

After being sent to visit Papua New Guinea to represent the province at an anniversary celebration, Bishop Don was touched by the needs of the Capuchin Vice-Province there and inspired by the incredible ministry of the Capuchin missionaries who had served there. Some of the original Capuchin missionaries, were growing older, and some of the younger local friars were not yet prepared to take the reins. After a period of discernment, Bishop Don volunteered to go to PNG to “help out for a few years”.

After a few months of orientation, Bishop Don was assigned as guardian and formation director at Capuchin Friars College and lecturer in philosophy at the Catholic Theological Institute in Bomana, near the capital city of Port Moresby. At the next Chapter of the Capuchins, he was elected to serve on the Vice-Provincial Council. After almost five years serving in Bomana, Bishop Don was appointed to serve as the third Bishop of Mendi on 22 November 2011.

Bishop Don became bishop on 4 February 2012 in Mendi in a joyful and colourful celebration of faith and culture with thousands of people from all over the diocese participating.⁶¹

The Mendi Diocese by Hannah Brockhaus September 26, 2017

A young Catholic diocese (Mendi) in the southern highlands of Papua New Guinea has a vibrant and growing faith, one which the people have embraced as their own, showing the universality of the Church, a local bishop says. “To me it is really beautiful and it really expresses the catholicity of the Church, that the people have embraced the faith as something that is truly theirs, something that is truly meaningful to them,” Bishop Donald Lippert told CNA. “They don’t look upon it as something foreign, as something coming from the outside. It is something that is very important to them and truly theirs.”

Bishop Lippert, an American Capuchin, has been working in Papua New Guinea for more than 10 years and has been bishop of the Diocese of Mendi, an area nestled in the mountains, in the southern highland region of Papua New Guinea, since 2012. The Diocese of Mendi is young. When the first missionaries came to the area in the mid-1950s there were no Catholics. The diocese now has 80,000 Catholics – around 10 percent of the population. “We hope that will grow over the years. That’s what we’re there for,” he said. One sign of the faith’s growth is the building of a new church in the pastoral area of Hedmari in August. Bishop Lippert, who travelled to the rural village to bless the new church, said that “the people were so happy.” The old church building had been falling into disrepair and the community was quickly outgrowing it. “The people themselves, without any help from the diocese, without any help from outside agencies, came together and built a beautiful church in a small little place,” .

“I was amazed when I saw it for the first time.” In general, the people of Papua New Guinea “are so happy when they can build a church, both in terms of the church building and in terms of the church as the people of God.” Not a full-fledged parish yet, Bishop Lippert explained the people of Hedmari were not just constructing a church building but were working to build the Church herself. “They are becoming more self-reliant in terms of financial things, they have active ministries going on there, they have parish leadership among the laity, and they have a very strong number of young people who are involved in the church,” he said. “Before long I’ll be able to go back there and open it up as a parish.”

The faith faces some difficulties too, however, one being the remoteness of the highlands. In Mendi. With poor infrastructure and bad roads, getting around can be a challenge. Other

⁶¹ *Biography on the web.*

challenges include the lingering pagan beliefs of the people, many of which are steeped in witchcraft. But this is where the Church can step in, Bishop Lippert said. “In fact, I think that is the most beautiful part,” he said. “They live in a society that is very chaotic and very unsure. And so the Church I think gives them a secure place to stand and can really help them to overcome some of the challenges that they might have.” Of course no one is exempt from challenges, he pointed out, but it’s the faith that gives us the strength to carry on. He said that one of the greatest fruits of the Catholic faith he has witnessed in Papua New Guinea is freedom from fear. In the past many people “were afraid of evil spirits, they were afraid of tribal fighting,” he said. “Fear was a great motivator and very characteristic of their lives.” But with the embracing of the Catholic faith, that fear is dissipating. Because they know the power of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit that can cast out any kind of evil, or any kind of fear that they might have.”⁶²

Chaos in Mendi 2018

The happy time of 2012 when Bishop Don was consecrated, turned to chaos in 2018 six years later. There was a large earthquake and also much social unrest. Bishop Donald Lippert, of Mendi diocese, which includes Hela Province, contacted the Catholic Leader on Facebook to say, “It is still in chaos and our mission is under threat. Capuchins have served there since the ‘50s.” As violence raged in late March, Bishop Lippert, a Capuchin, posted on social media about brutal gang attacks on schools in which armed men hunted for “enemy” students to kill, and burned down school buildings.

2018 Earthquake in Mendi ⁶³



After earthquakes and tribal violence in Papua New Guinea’s Highlands, 270,000 people need immediate life-saving assistance, almost half of them children, while security remains “unpredictable”, according to a United Nations report. “Access to clean water, food, sanitation, nutrition and health services remain immediate concerns,” a report by the UN’s child relief agency, UNICEF, said. UNICEF has grave concerns for the long-term mental and physical health of children.

⁶² Hannah Brockhaus is Catholic News Agency’s senior Rome correspondent. She grew up in Omaha, Nebraska, and has a degree in English from Truman State University.

⁶³ May 25, 2018 Catholic Leader



Subsidence on a road in the region.

lives in some of PNG's remotest highland areas. As international aid agencies, including Caritas Australia and Church partners, began delivering food and medicines, fighting broke out in Hela province, in which at least seven people died, and urgent aid efforts had to be suspended. Warring tribes signed a peace agreement on May 4 but UNICEF still rates security as "unpredictable".

Pictured, l-r: Brs. Albert Carver (USA), Patrick Herok, Tom, Modest, Maneesh Mathew (India) and Michael Thom

The three agenda items that generated the most discussion were questions regarding the Custody's formation program of the young friars, the location of the Custody's future motherhouse (and central offices) and the hope of collaborating with the Franciscan friars (OFM) in a Retreat Center for the Kimbe Diocese.



During the Chapter, the friars gathered to pray at the cemetery at Mendi.

They prayed for the confreres, Sisters, other priests and benefactors who have 'gone before us.' They've served the Custody from its beginnings as a mission, and we have a lot to be grateful for in the sacrifice and love to which they witnessed.



Bishop Donald celebrates people in Wiru three years by Francis Tekei.



a 50th celebration with his later in 2019. Photograph



By FRANCIS TEKEI in the National Newspaper

FESTIVE season celebrations in the South Wiru area of Pangia, Southern Highlands, went into overdrive in the last four days of December 2019 Dec 28 to 31 were the most momentous days for the Last Wiru, the last bastion of Catholicism in the Southern Highlands.

The centre of activity marking 50 years of Catholic presence in South Wiru or Last Wiru, was at Wiliame where Catholic missionaries first set foot in the 1960s and where the only Catholic parish in Last Wiru is situated.

The singing and dancing went on for four days and three nights, each night intermittently disturbed by festive mood fireworks that lit up the Wiru night sky and their deafening blasts that posed a short challenge to the songs of praise and worship sung by Catholic faithful from different parishes. Catholics from as far as Mt Hagen in Western Highlands, Komakul in Imbongu, Muli in Ialibu, Kuare in Kagua, Erave in Kagua-Erave and Yaraporoi in Pangia had joined their Catholic community in South Wiru to celebrate the golden jubilee of Wiliame Parish.

Fr Gary Stakem, OFM Cap (Order of the Friars Minor – Capuchins) from USA was the first missionary to set foot at Wiliame in 1961. Fr Gary went past Wiliame to the next village, Timbari, but the Lutherans had already been there. The people of Wiliame welcomed the missionary to their village.



Photograph: bishop Donald celebrates the golden jubilee of Wiliame Parish.

In 1962, Fr Dunstan (Jones) came to the Wiru people. He settled at Wiliame because it was the centre of the Wiru people and they gave a good portion of their land to the church, a swampy and heavily forested area,” reveals current parish priest of Wiliame, Fr Francy

Thomas. When Fr Albert Alexandumas was in charge (1967-1970), Wiliame Community School was opened in 1970. Two years later, a clinic was opened and so the church had established a firm footing in Wiru land and amongst the Wiru. Fifty years on, the 11th priest of the parish, Fr Francy Thomas, his parishioners from Wiliame and 16 outstations, visiting Catholics from around Southern Highlands and the Diocese of Mendi which covers SHP and Hela, had more than a festive season reason to celebrate the Good News of Jesus Christ first introduced to the Wiru by the missionaries. Wiliame became the first parish throughout out Mendi Diocese to observe 50 years of maturity since the diocese celebrated its golden Jubilee in 2016.

Meeting of Clergy in Port Moresby 2021



In 2021 a weeklong Ongoing Formation for priests ended today with a Mass presided by His Eminence Cardinal Sir John Ribat at Holy Spirit Seminary, Bomana. Among the many clergy were missionaries from Hela and Mendi in the Southern Highlands.

The growth of the Catholic Church is always a gift from God. In bestowing this gift, the Lord depended upon the zeal and leadership of the ministers provincial, bishops, and local superiors.

Growth was furthered by the dedication and hard work of all the friars, diocesan priests, other religious communities of priests, communities of sisters, lay missionaries, and many people far from the mission field who supported the work by their prayers and offerings.

The Mission Office in Pittsburgh, formerly under the direction of Fr. Cecil Nally and Fr. Don Nally, then Fr. Francis Fugini and now Fr. John Pfannenstiel relieved the missionaries of financial worries, so that they could concentrate on bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of Papua New Guinea.

The Bird of Paradise is the most famous of the many beautiful birds inhabiting Papua New Guinea. It is depicted on the nation's flag. Yet, the country isn't quite paradise. Many problems beset this land, some part of the growing pains of a new nation, others self-inflicted wounds caused by corruption, greed, and violence. But these can be overcome. The seed of victory is the Word of God.

Great things have been accomplished in Papua New Guinea. Greater challenges lie ahead. In spite of all the problems in this young nation, the missionaries are not discouraged. The future is in the hands of our loving and merciful God. He is the source of all confidence.⁶⁴



⁶⁴ *Bishop Don's Blog*

The March for Peace in the Highlands. January 2022



Dear Catholics in Western Deanery, January 2022 Peace Walk was finally confirmed, but there were warnings that some participants might be in danger if they passed through a tribal fight zone involving their clan. The Program as follows:

***Monday 17 Jan 2022** -all gathered at Koroba

***Tuesday Jan 18--** to Tobani, Pureni) via Fugwa.

***Wednesday Jan 19--** to Kulu Plant Site.

***Thursday Jan 20 --**to Waru Hides.

***Friday Jan 21--**to Abuago Komo.

***Saturday 22 Jan 2022--**to Ibatene Komo.





Archbishop Douglas Young with a group of pilgrims from Rempi village near Madang who followed the footsteps of the first missionaries. They left Rempi in February 2024, arriving in Mt Hagen after a 40 day pilgrimage crossing many rivers and climbing the Bismarck Ranges. There are now 200,000 Catholics in the whole Archdiocese.

PART TWELVE: SIMBU (Chimbu) PROVINCE and the EASTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE

Opening of the Don Bosco Centre Simbu Province 2017



Fr Schaefer, missionary of the Bismarck Range ¹

Alphonse Schaefer was born in Westphalia in Germany on 10 May 1904. His family was very devout. He entered the seminary and was ordained in 1929 at age 25 and went to New Guinea a year later. He stayed there, apart from the war years, until 1958 when he returned home on leave. Unfortunately, he had a heart attack in Germany and died on 19 August 1958 at age 54. In the years that he spent in New Guinea he was a warrior for the Church, setting up mission stations in and beyond the Bundi area.



He wrote about his arrival in New Guinea in 1930. When the boat he was in approached Alexishafen, he could see “hundreds of burning torches along the seashore”. As soon as they reached the wharf Bishop Wolf, and a number of Fathers and Brothers welcomed them and shook hands. “A great number of indigenous workers, students and schoolgirls, waved their torches, shouted and stared at us with amazement. Indeed, we missionaries were welcomed.” (1991: 15) His first posting was to Halopa where he stayed until 1931. There he wrote: “I realised clearly that a

missionary has first to learn to know the people and their language. These two conditions are the most essential requisites for a solid Christian structure. In later stations, I always thought, ‘Go slowly, first learn to understand the people and then convert them’ (1991: 16). In July

¹ See also *Rempi to Rebiamul 2016 UPNG* by Mary Mennis

1931, Fr Schaefer made a trek towards the Ramu River with Fr Weyer. After visiting many villages, they sat on the banks of the Ramu. It was a memory that was to stay with him:

Fr Alfonse Schaefer wrote:²

All my life long, I have never forgotten that short hour when I sat on the sandy bank of the Ramu, my eyes fixed on the high mountains of the Bismarck Range. I imagined the people in and beyond such a fantastic range, but I could not see even one clearing in the dark green virgin forest that stretched up to the clouds in the sky. My eyes and my heart burned. In my excitement, I wanted to persuade one of the Sepu men to take me across the river in a canoe, but there was nothing we could do.

The mountains he was viewing were to become his mission ground for the rest of his missionary life. As mentioned already, when Bishop Wolf returned from Europe he called a meeting in Alexishafen of all the missionaries from different stations. On the following day, Fr Schaefer had a chance to speak to the Bishop about his dreams of making an expedition into the Bismarcks taking Brother Anton as his companion. The Bishop answered:

Bishop Wolf said to Fr Schaefer:

Father, you come just at the right time. When I had an interview with the Pope in Rome, he particularly advised me not to emphasise so much the intensity of our mission work, but rather in the extensive aspect. You have my permission for the expedition. Go in God's name.³

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. Here some of the carriers returned to the coast. The calendar showed the end of June 1932 (Schaefer, 1991: 32). Next day was Sunday and most of that day they were 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 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 (1991: 33).

It was a great day for them all. They then walked down the other side of that mountain and continued along towards the base of Mount Kuyamba. It was quite cold here during the night. Next day, they began to climb up the slopes of Kuyamba to two settlements, Guyebi and Kolio where the people brought them food and pigs to barter. The rain kept them sheltering there overnight.

The next day they were off again climbing higher up Kuyamba. After many hours, 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

² (Schaefer, 1991: *The Cassowary of the Mountrin* 20).

³ *Cassowary of the Mountain* Fr Schaefer translated 1991:32

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.”⁴



Photograph The Bundi People (Mary Mennis 1994)

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.

One day soon after Fr Schaefer received a *tanget* message stick from the Guyebi people inviting him to come back to their area. It consisted of an arrow with tobacco leaves attached. He sent it on to the Bishop. At this stage, there were a few negative comments in Alexishafen about setting up a station in the Bismarcks, including questions about getting supplies in there or medical assistance that might be required if the missionaries became ill. Some thought it was complete madness to even think of going there. However, the Bishop decided to support the project and preparation with carriers, catechists and mission staff began.⁵

Again, Fr Schaefer and Brother Anton travelled to Sepu on the Ramu River where they crossed the river. They took a different track this time to a place called Enei, a small village at the base of the Bismarcks. This place was in a strategic area for any mission work in the mountains. However, several *tulatula* (protestant men) had arrived there a few days before. This did not deter Fr Schaefer with his usual forceful nature. He told them it was going to be a catholic centre and they should move on which they did. Later Enei was to be an important stepping out centre for the missions in the Highlands.

Schaefer befriended Dori, one of the two headmen in the area. He had three wives and was appointed the friend of the Catholic Mission. “Without his strong influence, we could not have made the progress we did. Dori spoke a little *pidgin* English as well as the languages of Ivam and Sepu”⁶

⁴ (Schaefer 1991: 33)

⁵ (1991: 39)

⁶ 1991: 40)



After being there three days, they continued on to Guyebi from where the *tanget* message had been sent. At the Baia River, they met up with Mopu and his brother Bonogo, the two men who had sent the message. Nearby was Gonebona Village which was Mopu's home village. He invited Fr Schaefer to set up a station there. The people seemed friendly and there was some good flat ground, and it was not far from Sepu. They decided to settle there and Brother Anton immediately began building houses while Fr Schaefer began learning the language and, within six months, could carry on a conversation.

(*Bundi People M. Mennis 1994*)

They were the first white men in Gonebona. Shortly after they arrived, Dori invited them to a big *singsing* at Orokari at an altitude of 1000 metres above the Ramu River. Only Fr Schaefer went as Brother Anton was too busy building houses. It was a long, hot climb and not without its dangers. The view from Orokari was just wonderful and on a clear day Karkar Island off the coast of Madang was clearly visible. Crowds had assembled for the *singsing* but many of them were protestants.

Attacked by a tulatula

That night in the moonlight, Fr Schaefer was awakened by a large man carrying cane and yelling "Get out, get out!" He tumbled out of bed and recognised the man as the *tulatula* from across the river. Schaefer's five companions threw the man out of the hut. However, two hundred Ramu men were outside continuing the shouting.

Next morning, the confrontation continued but Fr Schaefer had already met up with some of the village elders and they promised to sell him a piece of land. After this everything was settled from his point of view. Schaefer then asked the *tultul* [government representative in the village] to tell the Ramu men to leave. They turned and left. That same day Schaefer paid for the land at Orokari and assigned some catechists to the village. He killed some pigs and they had a celebratory feast. This interchange showed the competition between the people of different religious organisations. It was to continue for the rest of the history of the Highlands. Once the Lutherans and Catholics had become friendly after WW2, the area was besieged by smaller religious groups ⁷

Schaefer wrote:

We left helpers at each place who would live among the people and make our mission and work known. These were not trained catechists, and at times, they were not even baptised Catholics. But they were in constant contact with the nearest mission station. They were also supposed to protect the people against the tricks of the Protestants and make sure they maintained a friendly attitude towards us. This was only for a time as a measure of expediency, but what else could we do in the situation? As far as I know, such a missioning method had not been used until then in our mission. Later on in the Highlands, this method became the normal way of keeping in contact with newly discovered groups in areas where we had started with insufficiently trained catechists. In fact, we learnt this method from the Protestants who practised it from the beginning as far as the Ramu River. ⁸

⁷ M. Mennis 2016: :27

⁸ Fr Schaefer 1991: 44

*Photograph: Fr Aufenanger, Fr Schaefer, Fr Cranssen and Brother Anton,*⁹



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 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 and left on 6 November 1933.

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.¹⁰

The three missionaries, Fr Schaefer, Fr Cranssen and Brother Anton, left Bundi on 7 November 1933 and walked as far as With them were about three hundred and fifty men from Koruguru who had been living in Bundi with Kawagl, the main leader of the group.

They camped the next day at Bononi and on 9 November, crossed the Bismarck Range through the Mondia or Bundi Pass, and so became the first white men in that area near the upper Chimbu River at a place called Engremambuno on the land of the Denglagu clan. The next day we walked southwards along the Chimbu River as far as Gongrume. The following day we reached the Cinkare River (Koglai) and camped on the Nime clan land. Here we found the first traces of white men, gold miners, who had passed through some time ago.¹¹

Huge Cross erected on the Kunabau Mountain

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 rather shy and frightened.

Years later, Fr Nilles spoke about this cross which has been renewed ever since. “The wooden beams of the cross were of the yar tree. They had to be renewed every twelve to eighteen months or whenever the beams were rotten. But since 1973, the wooden cross was replaced by an iron one made of pipes six inches in diameter. The cross reaches into the air fourteen metres

⁹ *Mennis* p 27.

¹⁰ *M. Mennis* 28

¹¹ *Schaefer* 1991; 86

and has a width of seven metres. That iron cross overlooks the whole Wahgi Valley, that is from Mt Hagen to Elimbari”¹²

On 9 November, Frs Schaefer and 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.

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. 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 shells.¹³

¹⁴ The missionaries found the countryside very picturesque with steep hills rising on either side of the Chimbu River with paths and villages of the Denglagu people. They were greeted by hundreds of men and women shouting and yodelling. So they continued down the Chimbu Valley for four days until they came to the Koruguru clan. From here they could see to the distant valley of the Wahgi River. Here the leader, Kawagl, stayed with his clansmen while the missionaries went on as far as the Wahgi River and returned up the Chimbu River, over the Mondia River gorge and back to Bundi which they reached on the 23rd November.

On 26 November 1933, Fr Schaefer sent two workers to Alexishafen with a report of the trek for Bishop Wolf. “I think the first thing to do is to get started in Denglagu. Shortly after that we must go to Merane and Tema which so far has only two bush houses. Ground there should be purchased officially because this is the spot for the central station.”

After hearing the account of Fr Schaefer's expedition and after speaking to Mick and Danny Leahy about the discovery of the highlands, Bishop Wolf decided that he couldn't wait. He started organising an expedition right away to Mt Hagen. He appointed Fr Ross as leader and told him to take Fr Tropper and Brother Eugene with him.¹⁵ (See Part Six on Mt Hagen).



Photograph The Merane Station in the early days. (Mick Leahy used with permission)

¹² Nilles, 1984 : 22).

¹³ (Schaefer 1991 : 60)

¹⁴ (Nilles, 1984 : 7).

¹⁵ Schaefer 61 – 62

Fr Cranssen

Fr Cranssen was a young Dutch priest from Holland. In 1932, he was sent to the mission at Alexishafen and later worked at the Guyebi station where he helped to build up the Catholic mission. Fr Schaeffer had much praise for the young priest. It has already been noted that Fr Schaeffer received a *tanget* message stick from the Guyebi people inviting him to come back to their area. When they went there they received a great welcome and Fr Schaeffer and Fr Cranssen got busy establishing a small church. However this did not impress the tulatulas and Rev Welsch in Madang sent three of his followers to the area. He did not supervise them and trouble followed. These three Lutheran mission workers settled in Gegeru and built themselves bush huts. It seemed their main work consisted in rousing the locals against the Catholic missionary at Guyebi. After a short time, on a Sunday morning, Cranssen was greatly surprised when he saw the Guyebi men, all heavily armed, coming to Mass. They began to spread gossip amongst the Catholic people saying that when the Lutheran “boss” came the natives would get more money for their work.

Father then asked some of his men to take their rifles, go to Gegeru, send home the Lutheran workers and burn their huts. His workers followed his orders and were back next day with the Lutherans. Cranssen told the coastal men to go home to the coast and stay there. They returned home with their side of the story. The Lutheran missionaries in Madang prevailed on the government to indict Fr Cranssen.¹⁶ Judge Wanliss was anti-mission and, at the trial in Rabaul, said that the offence was one of gravity and in sentencing Cranssen to five years’ imprisonment pointed out that he could have imposed a sentence of imprisonment for life. Fr. Schaeffer explained the situation: The Ivam and Bundi areas belonged to the restricted, uncontrolled Highlands and no strangers, that is, no more white men, were allowed to enter. The Lutherans, despite the regulations, made a trip and assigned three coastal workers at Gegeru. It was illegal.



After being in jail in Rabaul, Fr Cranssen also spent time in a prison farm near Sydney. Bishop Wolf wrote to the Apostolic Delegate in Sydney, “to engage lawyers to take Father’s case to a higher court”. This was the only case from New Guinea up to that time taken up by a higher court in Australia” (Schaeffer, 1991: 97). The case was reported in a number of Australian newspapers: the *Advertiser*, Adelaide; the *Argus*, Melbourne; the *West Australian*; the *Courier Mail*, Brisbane; the *Sydney Morning Herald*; and the *Canberra Times*. All papers spoke against the sentence which was considered too harsh. Admittedly, Cranssen should not have burnt the huts down but then he was stirred on by the actions of the opposing religion. his sentence was reduced to a few months in jail. Subsequently Fr Cranssen was hoping to return to Guyebi but Bishop Wolf said it would be better if he left New Guinea. He later worked as a missionary in Indonesia.

¹⁶ (Schaeffer, ¹⁶1991: 96 – 97).

Fr Karl Morschheuser, SVD

Karl Morschheuser was born 18 January 1904 in Muenster, Westphalia, Germany. He attended a minor seminary at Steyl and in 1925, joined the seminary at St. Augustin-Bonn. He wrote home, that when he took his vows, he called it, “a life exclusively for God! I am now a member of the Society of the Divine Word and write joyfully behind my name the letters SVD for



Societas Verbi Divini. With the taking of the vows, I wish to suspend, so to speak, living for myself and put myself entirely in the service of God.”¹⁷

The newly ordained priests received their placements in the world scene. Fr Karl Morschheuser he was given New Guinea, he described his joy in a letter to his parents, dated 18 February 1932.

He wrote to his parents; “God be thanked! 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” (1991).

Fr Karl Morschheuser initially spent some time on the coast and wrote:

I take to the road with joy. Nature here is simply splendid. The people are good and obliging. So I feel fine in this wilderness. The dear Lord has taken satisfying care of this neighbourhood and sent plenty of wild birds to my hunter, doves, kokomos, cockatoos and bush fowl. The reality here, is jungle, terrible roads, many rivers, trackless mountains, hidden villages, genuine heathen. But this is just what I like; I am very happy here.¹⁸ On 20 July 1933, Bishop Wolf told Fr Morschheuser he was to go to the highlands.

He wrote:

My feelings barometer stands at “sunny and bright”! Call to the Highlands: I ended my last letter with the remark: my barometer stands at sunny and bright. This has not yet changed. I had to take a quick leave of my first field of priestly work. I felt some grief at departing from the dear scamps, the school children. Overall, though, I am glad about the new appointment since it fulfils a wish I have long held in my heart: to be a travelling missionary, a pioneer. Not a single Christian there! But the best thing is to let the superiors make decisions and acquiesce and control myself, thereby preserving a peaceful disposition (Fisher, 1991).

Fr Morschheuser left for the Bismarcks with Fr. Schaefer and Fr. Cornelius van Baar. They travelled by motor launch from Alexishafen south to Bogadjim, a coastal village. From there six days walking brought them to Bundi. Approximately seventy carriers accompanied them carrying everything they needed: flour, salt, tins of food,

¹⁷ See also Rempi to Rebiamul pps 36 -38 for more details.

¹⁸ Ibid.

axes, hatchets, saws, tents, camp beds, everything needed for Holy Mass, clothes, trade articles for buying pigs and for salaries, six nanny goats, one billy goat and eighteen chickens.

Fr Morschheuser wrote:

It will be an interesting life, part missionary, part farmer, part gypsy. Or, if you prefer to say, all missionary, then also farmer and, because there is no other way, a little gypsy. The important thing is this: we wish to announce the Good News to the very poor people behind the mountains. Whether they will be really friendly to us, we must wait to see.



Fr Morschheuser in the Bismarcks at Dimbi. (Mick Leahy used with permission)

I am sitting here in Merane [near present day Kundiawa], three hours from Koruguru where Fr Schaefer lives. Till Christmas, our main job is to establish how many people live around here and which languages they speak. Here they are in contradistinction to the coast, certainly language groups with twenty thousand speakers. That will surely make the mission work much easier.

Fr Morschheuser employed twelve local youths who pledged themselves for three years' service. They helped with buildings houses, a school and a separate kitchen at Merane, but also made furniture and an altar for the Holy Mass.

At noon there is a stew of pork, potatoes and cabbage, as well as cucumber salad and fried bananas. In the evenings there are bread and butter, roast pork and optional sweet potatoes. I thrive on this diet. My strength is good. I can do physical work and hike as though I were home.

¹⁹ ²⁰

Mops, the dog, helped Fr Schaefer on three occasions²¹

1. In June 1934, Fr Schaefer had difficulty with the people when they stole his best pig. He told his workers to look for it without success. Next he told the villagers to tie up their own pigs because he was going to let his dog, Mops, and the other dogs free. They could follow any pig. There was a pause and then an onset. Bellowing wildly Mops went over the fence at them. "So

¹⁹ Fisher 1991:

²⁰ For more information see Mennis Rempi and Rebiamul 42 - 45

²¹ Rempi to Rebiamul M. Mennis p 40

they brought me another pig in exchange for the lost one, and I gave a little compensation for the wounds the dogs had given them. Now the people know that they should not steal again. These people are not much impressed by exhortations but if they feel your firm grasp, they will pay attention. Their own rule is that a detected thief should be killed. But while we missionaries are here, things are considerably quieter.” (*Schaefer diary, 17 June 1934*)

2. Another day, Frs Morschheuser and Schaefer went on a tour of the Wahgi Valley. They took some men from Koruguru with them and Mops, the dog.. One evening the Korugurus tried to capture a village girl who was standing outside the perimeter fence around the tents. They seized the girl and dragged her behind a bush; Fr Schaefer leapt after them and grasped one Koruguru man while the others ran away. Fr Morschheuser and the workers caught two more. They got some blows to make them realize what happens to louts who molest girls. It was a bad situation as the missionaries were trying to make friends. Assaults on their girls were likely to stir villagers to war. “We were in a dangerous situation. In spite of the heavy rain, I posted guards immediately. Then I set out with some workers, two guns and Mops to take the goods back. I came to the first houses and called out but got no answer. Mops barked but all in vain. I must go back. Eventually a man turned up who could and would interpret. We met people and I promised to restore everything to the girl that had been stolen from her. I told them I had thrashed the Koruguru men and that satisfied the people. I could return to my tent with Mops without worry. The Korugurus had received their lesson; they would not easily do that again!

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3. Mops and the other dogs helped Father Schaefer when he tried to bring peace between two warring tribes. A few hundred people from Bundi and Nambre were enjoying a *singsing*, but just as suddenly the celebrations turned into “crying and raving”. One of the Bundi men was killed by the Nambre men and the fight was on.

Fr Schaefer armed himself and fired into the air to try and stop the fighting.

“I could see about fifty fighters on each side. I posted myself between the two groups in front of the Nambres. There was a moment of stillness. Then a leader, a big, strong warrior swinging his stone axe came rushing up and attempted to pass me. With all my strength I gave him a shove and shouted, “Go back.”

“Then speaking softly, I called, “Come here” and embraced him. Embracing is a sign of friendship. “If you call me friend, then tell your men to step back.” The mighty man was hanging in my arms and staring at me with rolling eyes. He fought to control himself, finally he said: “Very well, Father.” I let him go and he joined his fellows (*Schaefer diary, June 1934*). Fr Schaefer almost succeeded in establishing a peaceful solution between the two groups but suddenly the Bundi women came out from the village shouting and roused their men: “Are you old women who have lost their teeth? Do you have no more strength to fight on?

“Your muscles are flaccid, soft as rotten sticks.” The Bundi men, who had been sitting peacefully now grew angry, incited by the women.

“They sprang to their feet again to take up the fight once more. The idea came to me to whistle for my dogs, including Mops. I sent them against the enraged women who disappeared into their huts. After that, I was able to pacify the two parties and they gave up the idea of fighting. It was not renewed during the days to follow, so I was able to prevent a new feud”(Schaefer Diary, June 1934).

²² *Schaefer diary, 14 October 1934*)

Fr Karl Morschheuser's Death

His last letter home:

"With our Brother Builder [Brother Anton], I have wandered two days southwest on the far side of the Wahgi River to Minj where I was to build a further station for another priest who will arrive from the coast in the coming weeks.

"We put up a four-room dwelling for him plus a big kitchen and a house for his helpers. Then we laid out an airstrip nearby. Our own plane will be in Alexishafen in a few weeks.-- When I have finished Kogo, it will be about Christmas time. We will probably celebrate the Christmas feast in Denglagu, two days to the north of here. We seven missionaries will then be together on a station that is central for all of us.-- On the highest mountain peak there is snow sometimes, a lively reminder of our German Christmas. --- What we do here cannot remain human work or it will fail like the work of men. God must render this work fruitful and bless it to bring the people here eternal profit. At Mass on the feast day, pray for us missionaries here in the wilderness. We do not forget you at home" ²³(Fisher, 1991).



Fr Morschheuser and Fr Cornelius van Baar were walking at Womkane near Denglagu when they saw that a building they had constructed had been burnt down. The Fathers decided they had to do something about it. They gave the people a warning that they had to re-build it or they would shoot some pigs. Fr Cornelius van Baar had expected the house to be finished on his return and decided the villagers had not done enough so he shot two pigs in retaliation. When the local people saw this they wailed as if a man had died. Fr Morschheuser and Fr Van Baar were frightened in their camp.

Fr Morschheuser was shot by an arrow in the mouth and the neck. Salip, the mission worker did not leave Fr Morschheuser. As soon as the local tribe realised the white man had fallen down, the shooting stopped. Some boys ran on and told Fr Cornelius what had happened and he turned back and held something over his head to stop the arrows which were still shooting where he was.

When they got near to Fr Morschheuser, there was a group of local people weeping beside him. "He died a brave man's death with his eyes fixed towards the people who killed him as a sign of forgiveness. His lips moved in prayer drawing our attention. My heart broke when he shouted with a loud voice. 'Ayamanaho' ('Mamma' in Kuman the dialect). And that was his last word before closing his eyes." ²⁴ Fr Van Baar gave him Extreme Unction and he died in his arms. They buried him there.

After Fr Morschheuser's died, Fr Schaefer went to Alexishafen and reported his death. Fr van Baar followed but received a cold reception by the other missionaries even from Bishop Wolf. It was thought that if he had not shot the pigs Fr Morschheuser would be still alive. ²⁵

The government officials sent in a contingent of police and 40 Womkane men were arrested and jailed in Salamaua. Later, on Fr Nilles interviewed one of these Womkane prisoners who

²³ Fisher 1991. also Mennis p43 Rempi to Rebiamul

²⁴ 2018 PNG attitude Keith Jackson and friends.

²⁵ (Nilles, 1989: 115).

said only three of the forty returned home after their sentence. “They felt the heat of the coast very much and often felt sick. They were not able to eat the food provided in the prison either.” Later, some were taken to Madang to a jail which was bombed during the war.²⁶

According to Fr Nilles, the man who actually shot the arrow into Fr Morschheuser was Merua, a Kugl Kane man from Womkama. He was not arrested by the *kiap* who rounded up the local tribesmen. Fr Nilles mentioned that, in 1960, Fr Cornelius van Baar went back to the place where the murder had occurred and gathered the people who brought pigs and vegetables and had a feast of reconciliation so that the peace of Christ would come. The wife of the man who speared the priest in the mouth was at the party and Fr van Baar shook hands with her as a token of peace. He also presented her with a gift of pork.

A story was told from the people’s point of view in 2014. Kela Sil Boikin wrote of the time a pig was shot at Womatne, near Denglagu in 1934.

The village people thought Fr Morschheuser had killed the pigs. The result was Fr Morschheuser was killed by the people of Kugl Kane. The story goes that the young boys and girls, who were working at the station that morning, were frightened by the gun shot and ran in fear back to their hamlets. One girl fell and broke the gold-lip shell she was wearing. Her father, angry at the lost shell demanded to know how it had happened. When he heard about the gunshots and the dead pigs he decided to take action. He collected his bows and arrows and ran after the missionaries.



Thinking it was Fr Morschheuser who had shot the pigs, he turned on him and he became the target (Kela Sil Bolkin, 2014). The Kugl Kane people eventually sent one of their own sons to study in the seminary. The young man completed his studies and was ordained as a Catholic priest on Christmas Eve in 1968. The young Kugl Kane man was Fr Ignatius Kilage. The Kugl Kane saw his ordination as a symbolic gesture to recompense for the murder of Fr Morschheuser in 1934. However, the Kugl Kane people were still not content. In 2004, seventy years after his death, the Kugl Kane people invited Fr Morschheuser’s relatives from Germany to Kangre and in a remorseful ceremony, gave thousands of kina [PNG currency], some 200 pigs and a mountain of food stuff to them as compensation for the killing of Fr Morschheuser by one of their tribesmen.²⁷

The relatives of Fr Morschheuser who came to Kangre saw that the Kugl Kane people were truly sorry and graciously accepted the apology and the compensation.²⁸ :



Fr Cornelius van Baar, Fr William Ross and Brother Anton Baar

²⁶ (Nilles, 1989: 130)

²⁷ Mennis 2016: 45.

²⁸ PNG attitude Keith Jackson and friends. (Kela Sil Bolkin, 2014).

Before Morschheuser's death, the people did not know if white men could die. They had seen guns being fired at a stack of shields by Fr Schaefer but could they also be used against people? If they were under attack the missionaries only fired into the air. No-one got hurt. What would happen if they pointed the guns at people? Would it kill someone? On the other hand if they used their arrows against these white men would they die? Now they had their answer. Fr Morschheuser was buried in the Chimbu Valley.

When the people were asked should he be re-buried in a Catholic cemetery they answered: "No. Father is resting peacefully in our ground now and he has forgiven us for killing him. He is in heaven praying for us and we do not want to lose him. Let him stay among us!"

Surely he is praying that priestly and religious vocations will be offered to the young people of this land so they can lead their own people to God ²⁹

Fr Morschheuser was such a promising missionary. After all the years of training he had done to become a priest and missionary he was so happy to be in New Guinea to bring the Good News to the people. Had he lived, he would have instructed and worked for many years among the thousands of Chimbu people. At the time Fr Schaefer was bereft as he knew the young missionary and could see that he had great potential as a missionary. It was a big loss.

Fr Schaefer in Mingende

Fr Schaefer was great singer and sang hymns in a forceful voice. At first he taught the people the traditional Catholic hymns. However, the Mingende people did not understand them. Their own songs were very lyrical and Fr Schaefer decided to try and write words of the hymns in the local language using their folk tunes, alternatively he used German folk music combined with vernacular words with great success as they were very musical. He was trying to incorporate the local culture as much as possible into the church programmes. But first, he had to get this accepted by Bishop Wolf. Communications with Alexishafen could now be made by radio. Using his radio, he sang these new hymns over the air and even made a plane trip to Alexishafen to promote his idea. At first the Bishop was sceptical, but others present at the meeting thought some of the music was akin to Gregorian chant.

The result was that "Bishop Wolf asked his secretary, Fr Hirsch to set up for this occasion a special church document stating that for the first time Episcopal permission had been given to the Mingende Church to introduce local melodies into Christian Church hymns and to sing these during Mass"³⁰

Over the years, mistakes were made because interpreters either misunderstood what had been



said, or generalised in a way that subtle details were overlooked. Seminarians from the Chimbu Province like to tell the story of Fr Schaefer when he announced to the people that he was going away and would return with an SVD brother and some Holy Spirit Sisters. The interpreter mistakenly said that the missionary was going to fetch his wife and her family and that the people should be prepared to contribute to his wife's bride-price!

²⁹ Fisher, 1991).

³⁰ (Nilles, 1989: 75).

Father John Nilles SVD arrives in the Simbu in 1936

Fr Nilles was the first missionary to move into the area after the tragic death of Fr Morschheuser

John Nilles was born in a small town in Germany, called Kerprich-Hemmersdorf. He was the eldest of five children. As a young boy, he was captivated by stories about missionaries in faraway places. At the age of eighteen he joined the SVD seminary of St Wendel's Germany in 1923 fulfilling his childhood dream and became a priest.

After many years study, he was selected to go to New Guinea. He left Germany in 1936 for New Guinea with Fathers Hiller, Beharnd, Kuppers, and Fuchs and four Brothers. He wrote about their reception.:

Fr Nilles:

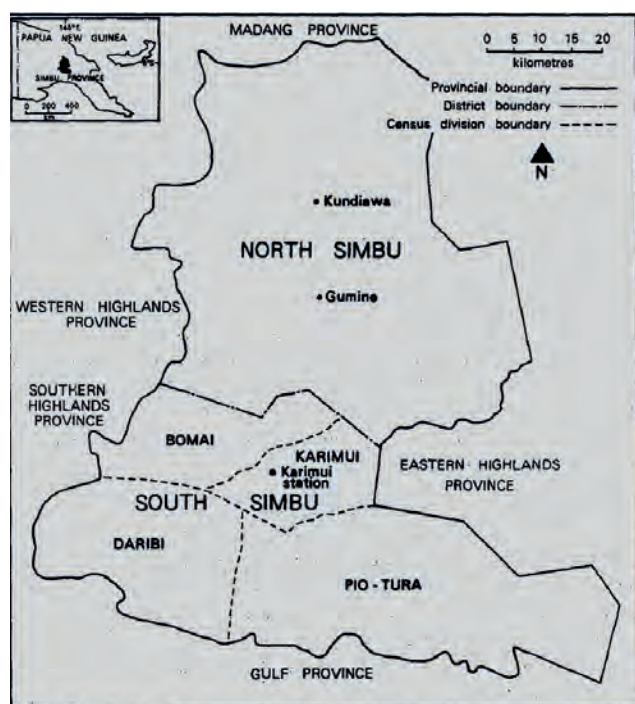
There was a sizable crowd of people on the wharf at Alexishafen. As we drew near, we could distinguish the white from the brown faces. The Bishop, Fathers, Brothers, Sisters were in white with tropical helmets. There were schoolboys in colourful loin clothes, young girls in long dresses of gay hues and local people in traditional attire. In front of the priests we could make out a short man with a long, grey beard and a pectoral cross.

Surely this was the famous Bishop Wolf, once of Togo, now of New Guinea, who would be our Bishop. All the people were waving to us and we found ourselves waving back in delight. As soon as the *Michael* was tied to the iron capstans of the wharf, we left the boat – the bishop came forward to give each of us a solid handshake. We genuflected and kissed his ring as was the custom in those days. – Then the Bishop invited us to all to church to sing a *Magnificat* of thanksgiving and greeting to Our Lord and Our Lady in this new land.”³¹

The next day they were shown around the mission settlement at Alexishafen and told about the organisation of the West and East Vicariates of New Guinea and the functions of the various departments (1991: 23). After six weeks of language

study learning *Tok Pisin*, Fr Nilles was sent to Bogia to be with Father Schebesta and await a permit to go the Highlands³²

Bishop Wolf told Fr Nilles, “Father, I have planned to send you into the Eastern Highlands of our vicariate as soon as new missionaries can get government approval to go there”. Because of the deaths of the two missionaries almost two years earlier, no more missionaries had been allowed into the area and those who were there were confined to their mission stations. Fr Nilles was the first to receive permission to enter that area.



³¹ Nilles (1991 :22).

³² (1991 : 260).

The Bishop shook hands with him and with a pleasant smile said, “God bless you! Father, you are flying into the highlands” (1989: 49). By this time travel to the area from Alexishafen was by the new planes, the *Paulus* and the larger *Petrus* which was a Klemm version. The airstrip at Alexishafen was fashioned out from part of a coconut plantation and a hangar was built.

From Alexishafen, Fr Nilles flew in the *Petrus* him into Mingende. “It took an hour to climb over the Schrader Range, the Ramu Valley and the Bundi Gap at some 2,900 metres”. He mentioned that when he arrived he was confronted with the terrifying vision of a group of warriors running at him with poisoned arrows. As it turned out, they were rushing to greet him. Then he met up with Fr Schaefer who was stationed at Dimbi further up the mountain. The mission station had a rectory and a small chapel as well as two classrooms. On the other side were a carpenter shop, a timber shed and quarters for the workers. All made from local timber.

Kundiawa Airstrip by Guy Kendell.

Father Nilles’ first job was to learn the Kuman language which he achieved in less than one year, speaking fluently. He also trained catechists who could help spread their mission work into the rural areas. While in Dimbi he attended an initiation ceremony of 18 young men into the Yagl clan which included the letting of blood but also the slaughter of several pigs. Although he was reprimanded by Fr Schaefer for attending another ceremony concerning women, he still attended the second part as he was very interested in the culture of the people. He said that he felt privileged to observe the culture and the customs of the Chimbu people before any influence from outside.



In July 1939 Bishop Wolf celebrated his Silver Jubilee and the new cathedral at Alexishafen was opened at this time. Crowds of people arrived from everywhere. A few weeks later there was a tragic plane accident at the airstrip. Fr Nilles was farewelling some of his new confreres as they climbed on board. . The pilot Willy Schaffhausen tried to clear the trees at the end of the runway but it stalled and all on board were killed including, Frsr Kirschbaum SVD, Fr Weyer, SVD, and Father Baden Witnessing the accident, Bishop Wolf and Fr Nilles were both distraught as losing their good friends ³³

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. He also studied at Sydney University on the culture of Simbu and earned a Diploma in Anthropology. His thesis was entitled ‘The Kuman of Chimbu’.

When his internment ended in July 1947, he returned to New Guinea and went straight to Simbu and his people at Mingende. There was great celebration and, in the true Simbu way, feasts were made for him and the other missionaries. Now as missionary and anthropologist, he had greater sensitivity towards the traditional values and beliefs of the Chimbu people and tried to

³³ (Hagen Saga 1982 ; 91)

introduce them into the liturgy if they were compatible. He taught the people to preserve their good aspects of their culture and do away with the bad for example tribal fighting.

The people trusted and followed him and he was taken as one of their own, a Simbu and not a white man. The people named him Kawagle after the first Siambelga leader who brought Fr Schaefer to the Chimbu area. There was some friction between Fr Schaefer and Fr Nilles who said:

Towards the end of 1953 Fr Schaefer returned to Simbu from his home leave. He was so upset that I had not carried out his plan to move the school to Kondiu, he broke down the houses at Kumbu and used the pieces to rebuild at Kondiu. [After this] I went home [to Germany] and Father Wald assumed command of the school. I was not to return to Simbu till 1958 after the death of Father Schaefer³⁴

In the end it was Father Nilles who translated Father Schaefer's autobiography from German. Called *Cassowary of the Mountains* it was printed in 1991. Fr Nilles always regarded Fr Schaefer as a great missionary, even though they did not always see eye to eye and this book gives many insights into Schaefer's contribution to the Missions in the Bismarck Ranges and Chimbu.³⁵ "My life has been long, and I think fruitful. I am very grateful to God for my religious, priestly and missionary vocation and to the people of Papua New Guinea".



In 1970, Fr Nilles renounced his German citizenship and stood for election which he won, representing Simbu in the Third House of Assembly. He justified his election and stood firm for his people of Chimbu. In his first speech in parliament in June 1970 he challenged his critics saying,

"I am not ashamed to be called a Chimbu man, --- I shall be responsible to my conscience and my God." In the next election, Iambakey Okuk won the seat. Looking back on the early days in New Guinea,

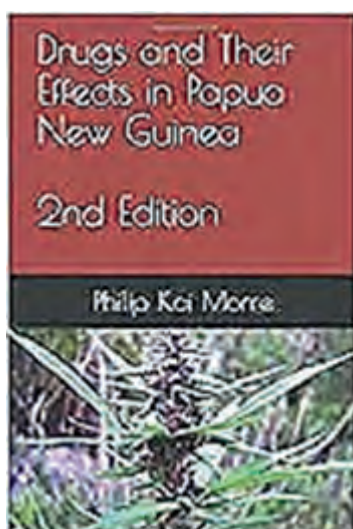
Fr Nilles wrote:

The early competitive attitude between the European members of the two mission churches never developed into a state of quarrelling and hatred. That can be seen in various happenings. I, myself met Rev, Bergmann for the first time around July 1937 when Fr Schaefer and myself, with the permission of the government officer at Kundiawa, Mr Keyl, paid a courtesy visit to the Bergmann family. We both enjoyed their great hospitality (Nilles,³⁶).

³⁴ Nilles 1991: 47.

³⁵ Mennis 2016: 51

³⁶ Nilles 1984: 18



Philip Kai Morre - a Man of Peace.

Philip Kai Morre from Kundiawa in Papua New Guinea - graduated from St Fidelis College in Alexishafen in 1980. a continuing man of peace. He then completed a preparatory spiritual year in the Catholic Church at Erave in 1981 before progressing to the Holy Spirit Seminary in Bomana near Port Moresby. Philip was a seminarian for four years before he suddenly left. Archbishop Kurtz had other ideas for the young man. He engaged Philip to undertake peace and social justice duties and supported him in carrying out drug rehabilitation work for the diocese. "Even though I left the seminary the Archbishop never left me completely. I was still working for the church." Philip said.

Philip found himself attending many courses both within and outside Papua New Guinea at Archbishop Kurtz's recommendation. In 1995 he graduated from the Australian Institute of Counselling in Addiction, where Fr Kevin Murphy MSC was executive director. When Philip returned to PNG, he pioneered the work of alcohol and drug rehabilitation in the Simbu Province and wrote '*Drugs and Their Dangers in Papua New Guinea*' and '*Drugs and Their Effects in Papua New Guinea*', now in its second edition.

Later he was deployed to assist the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the PNG Bible Society to translate the bible into the Kuman language, the traditional tongue of most of the Simbu people.

"It took us many years but we completed it," says Philip. "And whilst in the midst of doing this we also wrote a Kuman English Dictionary. So some three decades years after Philip first committed himself to the Catholic Church he is still busy as secretary of the diocese and doing charity work with the St Vincent De Paul Society.

Philip is now working on a book on the life and times of the pioneering priest. Fr Karl Morschheuser, who became the first Catholic martyr in the PNG highlands.³⁷

(Photo J. Eccles)



³⁷ PNG ATTITUDE Keith Jackson and Friends 16 April 2021

Blessing and Dedication of Don Bosco Shrine Simbu 2017



The Don Bosco Shrine, Simbu, was blessed and dedicated on 5 November 2017, by His Excellency John Cardinal Ribat MSC, Archbishop of Port Moresby, in the presence of Bp. Anton Bal, Bp. Pedro Baquero sdb, Bp. Dariusz Kaluza MSF, Bp. Henk Te Maarsen svd, Fr. Alfred Maravilla sdb, Mr. Bari Palma, Member for Kerowagi District, Mr. Camillus Dagma, the former member for Kerowagi District, priests, Salesians, parishioners and Bosconians.

The Don Bosco Opening - Article by Sr. Marivel F. Monteveros SCS

“The entrance procession was led by the Simbu locals and students group in traditional attire. The workers who toiled to build the shrine for the past three years were next in line. Forty priests then followed the cross bearer and the altar servers to the church. , Bp Anton Bal, Bishop of Kundiawa, welcomed the gathering and thanked the ones who had in different ways assisted in the building of the shrine. “The institution caters to young people and serves a need. Over the years, Don Bosco Simbu Technical College has given young people an education, with the right Catholic values and attitudes. This is most needed in society today,” said the bishop. The ribbon at the entrance of the shrine was jointly cut by Fr. Alfred Maravilla sdb, Provincial; Bp. Anton Bal, Bishop of Kundiawa and Mr Bari Palma, MP for Kerowagi.

“Fr. Robinson Parapilly sdb, Rector outlined the background of the presence of the Don Bosco Institute of Technology, Simbu. He then spoke on the educational system of Don Bosco, the Preventive System, based on Reason, Religion and Rapport. “With a blend of education and religious activities, every Bosconian is formed into 'Good Christians and Honest citizens To honor Don Bosco, the great miracle worker and friend of youth, the Salesians decided in 2015 to build a shrine in his honor,” said Fr. Robinson. He



expressed his gratitude to God and Our Blessed Mother for their guidance and protection and thanked all who contributed to the building of the shrine.

“Cardinal Ribat then sprinkled holy water, blessed, and later dedicated the shrine. The doors were opened and every available space was filled with the congregation that numbered about 3,000 people. In his sermon, Cardinal Ribat reflected on Luke’s Gospel passage. “Zacchaeus”, he said, “climbed the tree in search of Jesus.” He encouraged young people to search for Jesus, and praise and thank God for His gifts. Being in the ‘Year of Children’, he reminded the congregation to care, protect and catechize children. He also invited the congregation and young people to respect women and address the issue of gender-based violence. The Cardinal then dedicated the shrine to the Father and Teacher of youth, Don Bosco. He also prayed that the youth and the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Kundiawa, Simbu Province, be guided by Don Bosco.

“The liturgy in the newly dedicated shrine of Don Bosco was animated by the students of Don Bosco in their respective provincial and regional groups. The Eucharistic celebration and the opening, along with the blessing and dedication of the shrine, ended with speeches from Most



Rev. Bishop Anton Bal, Member for Kerowagi District Bari Palma, the former member for Kerowagi District Mr. Camillus Dagma, and the principal and Rector of Don Bosco Simbu Technical College.

All expressed their thanks for the tireless work of building the shrine as it would be the highlight of religious activities, not only for the college, but for everyone in the region. *Singsing at the opening*. The Don Bosco shrine is the biggest church building in Simbu Province and in the Highlands Region.

It was built with the tireless effort of an Indian architect and designer, Mr. Vavachan, and his core workers along with the Don Bosco Community. The program was an eye-opener to the surrounding communities, districts, provinces and the people of Papua New Guinea. It has brought many people together to rejoice and celebrate in the newly built shrine. In the days immediately preceding the blessing and devotion of the sanctuary, Simbu's Don Bosco Technical Institute hosted the traditional “Cultural Performance Biennial” with the participation of many children and young people who gave rise to a grand festival of the arts”.³⁸

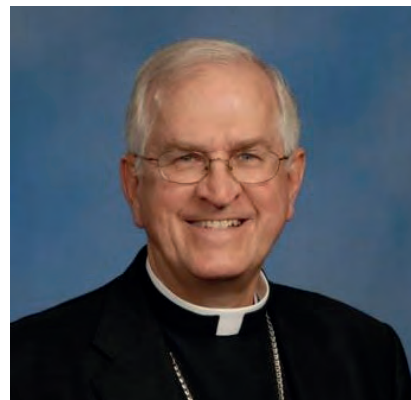
³⁸ Sr. Marivel F. Monteveros SCS

Bishops of Kundiawa, Simbu Province

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Kundiawa is a suffragan diocese of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mount Hagen in Papua New Guinea. It was erected in 1982, having been separated from the Diocese of Goroka.

1. The First bishop of Kundiawa was William Joseph Kurtz SVD

He was born in 1935 in Kępa, Opole Voivodeship, Kurtz was ordained to the priesthood as a member of the Society of the Divine Word in 1962. He was appointed bishop of Kundiawa, Papua New Guinea, in 1982, serving until he was named coadjutor archbishop of Madang in 1999. He succeeded Benedict To Varpin as archbishop of Madang in 2001, and retired from this position in 2015.



2. The Second Bishop was Bishop Johannes Henricus J. Te Maarsssen

He was born September 3, Born in 1933 in Groenlo in Holland. He was ordained in 1960 and became bishop for the Diocese of Kundiawa in 2000. He retired in 2009. Dutch author Mark de Vries studied Dutch bishops around the world who have followed the word of God. "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations" (Matt.28:19). He listed twelve Dutch men who had become bishops in other countries around the world. A glance at the unrivalled repository among them the bishops who were born here but who put on the mitre somewhere else. There are twelve of them. Eight have already retired, and four are still active. He noted that Bishop Johannes was one of them and that he retired.

3. The third bishop of Kundiawa was Anton Bal

Bishop Anton Bal was born in Papua New Guinea in 1963. He was ordained in 1991 and became Bishop of Kundiawa in 2009 until 2019 when he became Archbishop of Madang.



In 2017, Bishop Anton Bal welcomed Cardinal Ribat to open the new Don Bosco Centre at Kundiawa. The new Shrine in the Simbu Province was blessed and dedicated on the 5th



November, 2017 by His Excellency John Cardinal Ribat MSC, Archbishop of Port Moresby Also present were, Bp. Pedro Baquero sdb, Bp. Dariusz Kaluza MSF, Bp. Henk Te Maarsen svd, Fr. Alfred Maravilla sdb, Mr. Bari Palma, Member for Kerowagi District, Mr. Camillus Dagma, the former member for Kerowagi District, priests, Salesians, parishioners and Bosconians.

Bishop Anton Bal became the President of the bishop's Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in 2020.

4. The fourth Bishop of Kundiawa was Bishop Paul Sundu

Paul Sundu was born in 1973 in Womatne Village in Upper Simbu where, on 16 December 1934, Fr Karl Morschheuser was martyred. He was ordained in 2006 and became the fourth bishop of Kundiawa in 2021. The Catholic people of Chimbu Province welcomed and pledged to work in partnership with him during his Episcopal Ordination on Saturday July 3rd, 2021 at the Mary Help of Christians Cathedral,



Congratulatory speeches were the second part of the Episcopal Ordination that had speakers give their congratulatory messages to the new bishop on behalf of the people they represented.

The guest speakers included former Prime Minister and Governor for Western Highlands Honourable Paias

Wingti, , Archbishop Anton Bal representing the Bishops, Secretary to the Apostolic Nuncio of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Governor Wingti stressed that the Government and the Church are good partners and acknowledged the Catholic Church for providing much needed services to the people in places that the government cannot reach.



Speaking on behalf of the Laity, Mr Sebastian Mane said that Bishop Sundu will be faced with many challenges but assured him that he has the support and prayers of the

Catholic Laity in the Diocese. Ms Judy Gelua when speaking on behalf of the Diocesan Workers congratulated Bishop Paul Sundu on his appointment and pledged on behalf of the Diocesan workers to work closely with him.

Fr Cosmas Kombila in his speech highlighted the need for people to work together to bring the local church forward and encouraged the laity to pray for more young people to join the vocation of priests. When addressing those present, the outgoing administrator of the Diocese of Kundiawa said it was his privilege to have been the administrator of the diocese and said he looked forward to working with Bishop Paul Sundu to take the Church another step forward. Secretary to the Apostolic Nuncio to PNG and SI in his speech congratulated Bp Paul Sundu

and invited the people of the Diocese of Kundiawa to bring about a change by the holiness of their lives.

In addressing the congregation, the new Bishop Paul Sundu said, “The first time I was told that I will be the Bishop of Kundiawa Diocese, I couldn’t sleep for three nights. I thought a lot, but I also prayed and meditated a lot”, he said. He thanked the Catholic faithfuls for their constant prayers and vowed to work with them. “This is not going to be an easy task as I am a newly elected Bishop but I hope that we can all work together to carry the Church of God forward”, said Bp Paul Sundog. Despite the Chimbu heat, there was a lot of jubilant shouts of the famous Chimbu ‘Ayoooooooo’ to signify that the people were happy.³⁹

Congratulations for Bishop Sundu

Dorima, Yuri and Nondri Parishes gathered to congratulate Fr Sundu when he became bishop-elect of the Kundiawa Diocese in 2021. He is on the right with the white shirt.



³⁹ Kundiawa Parish newsletterter.

Nondri marked its golden jubilee in 2019 ⁴⁰

“NONDRI Catholic Church in Gumine district of Chimbu celebrated its golden on July 28, 2019. It is 50 years since the first missionary, a newly ordained, primary school teacher turned priest Fr Bob Oros from the United States of America arrived and established the parish on July 28, 1969. After his ordination at Dirima he personally requested the late Bishop John Cohill who ordained him and who oversaw Goroka and Kundiawa dioceses at that time to grant him permission to go to Nondri to set up a new parish.

Fr Bob was very interested in Nondri because he heard so many exciting stories, learnt about the abundance of food, flora and fauna and myths of cannibalism about the land behind the blue range from Dirima and Gumine district office. One source of Fr Bob’s driving motivation and inspiration to go to Nondri was because of a young schoolboy named Kale from Gomba village, of Saa Kuikane clan. As headmaster, Bob Oros observed that young Kale never had a parent present during the P and C (parents and citizens) days, which was a major breach of school rule back in the day.

“Fr Bob Oros, called young Kale to his office and on his way to the office Kale already started crying because he knew he would be expelled from school. While tears rolled down his face like a fountain, young Kale whispered, “I come from behind those ranges. My parents and siblings are all there. I am the only one here.”

“Out of sympathy, curiosity and a spirit of adventure and the desire to change people’s lives, the newly ordained priest left his comfort zone and the civilised world behind and took the six to 10 hours walking journey through the tropical rainforest to live amongst the Saakaleku people behind the blue mountains of Balpra, Wankoan and Makaua. A new parish was born and the Good News of Jesus Christ was brought to the people of Saakaleku.

Fr Bob Oros later became one of the most popular and loved priests in Chimbu for his charisma, empathy and the spirit of giving where he went beyond his priesthood duties to provide basic

needs such as clothes, blankets, medicine and food to those whom he served besides his spiritual pastoral duties. He is also well known for hiring helicopters to transport material goods to this land in the middle of the mountains and forest where there is no road link.



⁴⁰ *The National Weekender* 26 July 2019

Pioneer' Sacrifices By BENJAMIN KOITAKA 2018 70th Anniversary ⁴¹

“DIRIMA Catholic church in Gumine district of Chimbu has come to an age; In 1948 Dirima was declared a parish after being an outstation of Koge parish. Later, on July 26, 1963 it was named St Anne Parish Dirima, South Chimbu Deanery in the Diocese of Kundiawa. The dedication was done by Bishop Shilling of Goroka Diocese. On this very special occasion of the platinum jubilee the Catholic people of Dirima wish to thank the Lord for the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) who brought to them the Good News of Jesus Christ. Dirima celebrated its 70th anniversary on Nov 25.

“Besides the spiritual services, the church also provides education, health care and community services which developed Gumine over these years. The mission station has a primary school, a vocational centre which was later upgraded to technical high school status two years ago, and the St Martin de Pores health centre. Churches are doing far better in the remote areas in PNG than the government in social services and many would agree that church services really touch people's lives and are inexpensive. Dirima parish priest Fr Peter Kim said they were happy to mark the very special and meaningful day on which the first missionaries brought the Word of God to the highlands and South Chimbu.

“On this very special occasion of the platinum jubilee the Catholic people of Dirima wish to thank Lord for the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) who brought to them the Good News of Jesus Christ,” Fr Kim, the present parish priest said “This is the moment we will recognise and acknowledge the good work done by missionaries and remember those who have lost their lives and also our Christians and church members who have died,”

Fr Kim is the 20th parish priest in Dirima and said the event would reflect on what the members of the parish have achieved and look back on where they went wrong and to build their faith in love, peace and the ways God has helped and taught into the future. A former student of Dirima Primary School and former ambassador, Aiwa Olmi said it was a joy for the Dirima parish to celebrate its 70th anniversary with peace, and spiritual restoration.

Aiwa Olmi leader said ;

“This is also celebration of civilisation, modernity, peace and harmony of not only Dirima and Gumine but South Chimbu. By the arrival and teaching of the first Catholic priests in 1948, people of all tribes and clans in our Bomai area progressed in education, health, agriculture and spiritual well-being,” he said. “The first Divine Word Missionaries went to remote Dirima in 1948 to spread the Gospel and to restore peace in the land of tribal warfare among the Dirima, Uri and Kole tribes. “These teachings spread to the people of Samian via Nondri, Yuwi Keri via Bamwera and Yuri Don Era via Waramon. Whatever we do these days in religion, business, employment, politics, etc, the seeds of success and prosperity were planted in Dirima in 1948 by the arrival of the first Catholic priest. ⁴²

Minister Kuman was also a pioneer student and also a hardworking man who supports church activities so we all will be there to witness and celebrate the platinum jubilee anniversary,” he said. Olmi told The National on Sunday that According to church elder Bernard Malle who shared a brief history of the parish, adding that the missionaries were truly a gift to them from above and the elders still remembered the early missionaries as their own.”

⁴¹ *The NationalWeekender November 2018*

⁴² Ibid

Church elder Bernard Malle told a brief history of the first missionaries:

The first missionaries in Dirima slept with us in our men house, ate our food, drank our water and learned our tok ples so that they could speak to us. “Fr. John Labor came to Dirima from Mingende (near Kundiawa town). He was accompanied by a young man called Maima Dai from our neighbouring Boromil area. After settling in Dirima the missionary sent for catechists. A catechist came. His name was William and his wife was Maria. Both were from the Raicoast area in Madang. At first Maria and William served as cooks but later William taught local boys to read and write in basic Tok Pisin. He could not teach catechism because of the language difficulty so Fr John sent for Kuman speaking catechists in and around Mingende area.

“With the arrived of the catechists from Mingende, some common prayers were translated into Kuman. When our own pioneer Golin catechists, Nime Michael, Kaupa Yakobus and Kaupa Markus returned from training, all prayers and songs were translated into Golin. Big numbers of catechumens were prepared for baptism. “The missionaries built their houses in simple style: Wooden post standing high above the ground with walls made from woven pitpit and thatched roof made from kunai grass. A kitchen was built on the ground. A pit toilet for the priest and one for the cook boys, water was collected from the valley stream and carried to the station in bamboos poles and buckets. Roofing iron was later brought to Dirima from Koge on horseback and at times carried by people on foot,”⁴³

The second parish priest Fr Paul McVinny arrived from the United State in 1952 He introduced the first English school in 1952, a boarding school and students, mostly boys were attending classes. A pioneer student of this school Pious Moina recalls: “Those times were difficult. We remained in school from Mondays to Fridays. We were told to go home on Saturdays and visit our parents. We returned on Sunday with enough kaukau to last.”⁴⁴



Photo: members of the Holy Rosary Church at 6-mile Port Moresby who help financially with projects in the Simbu area. They raised K2,700 and gave it to support the event. The South Chimbu (Gumine and Karimui-Nomane) people living in Port Moresby have contributed in appreciation of what the church has done in terms of services and spiritual well-being in Gumine in the past 70 years.

⁴³ Quote by Benjamin Koitaka

⁴⁴ Article By BENJAMIN KOITAKA 2018. (Used for educational purposes only)

Mercy Works Simbu – the Sisters of Mercy



Photograph: Celebrations for Sr Cathy Jambet's rsm Final Profession Ceremony as a Sister of Mercy

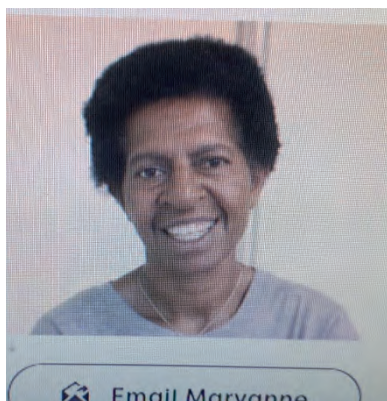
Simbu Province is a rugged mountainous area located in the central Highlands. It is the smallest province in Papua New Guinea in terms of land area, and the most densely populated. Access to basic services such as education and health care remains limited especially for those living in remote areas.

Simbu comprises six districts and covers 20 Local Level Government areas

(LLGs). Land and water are the main natural resources used for livelihoods and these are generally accessible to the people of Simbu. The main constraint for farmers is a lack of access to markets. There is a significant lack of access to non-formal education of the type that Mercy Works provides, such as living skills and technical training. This is a prominent reason for the limited opportunities for young people, especially as employment prospects are very low.

Sr Maryanne Kolkia RSM the Coordinator of Mercy works PNG said:

We are a team, standing up and saying “No” to racism. Upholding human dignity and promoting equality for every race and people remains our social responsibility. Our mission to improve the quality of life of thousands of the vulnerable people is a privilege and an opportunity given to us by God, the creator of humankind. Therefore, as a development partner with Indigenous engagement, all participation is based on mutual respect, trust and understanding.



Sr Maryanne Kolkia has been part of Mercy Works for 14 years. She is the team leader for the Simbu site and overall Papua New Guinea coordinator for Mercy Works. Maryanne's skills are many and varied as a natural leader and she has a heart for the development needs of the people of PNG. She records hours of radio sessions that reach upwards of 600,000 people around the Highlands region of PNG. She is spearheading the move for Mercy Works into the Simbu Province. To unwind at home Maryanne will pick and dig her way around the garden and bring in the produce for the evening meal.

In the second half of 2020, Mercy Works moved into Simbu Province and will be focusing on the following programs and activities to address the developmental needs of the community:

- * Awareness raising activities
- * Life skills training and technical training
- * Facilitating the formation and strengthening of community self-help groups or cooperatives
- * Other activities for young people
- * Rehabilitation activities for prisoners in Barawagi Prison
- * Networking and partnership possibilities

Diocese of Goroka. Eastern Highlands Province



Photograph – Town of Goroka in the early days (Judy Bond)

Goroka is the capital of the Eastern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. It is a town of approximately 19,000 people (2000), 1,600 meters (5,200 feet) above sea level. It has an airport (in the centre of town) and is on the “Highlands Highway”, about 285km from Lae in Morobe province and 90 km from the nearby town of Kainantu also in the Eastern Highlands. Other nearby towns include Kundiawa in Simbu Province and Mount Hagen in Western Highlands Province. It has a mild climate, known as a “perpetual Spring”.

It is the home of several national institutions: CRMF Christian Radio Missionary Fellowship, the PNG Institute of Medical Research, the National Film Institute, the Liturgical Catechetical Institute, the Melanesian Institute, the Raun Raun Theatre Company and the University of Goroka. Several NGOs also have presences there, including Oxfam and Save the Children. The town's single largest hotel is the Bird of Paradise, owned by the Coral Seas Hotels chain.

Coffee is a common cash crop in the area; smaller industries include trout farms, pigs, bee keeping and food gardens (broccoli, kau kau or sweet potato, carrots, ginger and peanuts are examples of produce that grow well here; nearby Bena Bena is known for its pineapples). In May, Goroka hosts the PNG Coffee Festival. The Goroka Show event takes place annually around the time of the country's Independence Day (September 16). It continues for two or three days. The Goroka Show is the oldest show in Papua New Guinea, over 50 years of “keeping the spirit alive”.

Bishops of Goroka in chronological order.

Bernard Schilling SVD was Vicar Apostolic, of Goroka from 1959 – 1966. He was not a bishop of Goroka. Fr Schilling was born in 1914 and ordained a priest in 1947. Due to ill health, he resigned from being the Vicar Apostolic in 1966. He died in 1992.

1. Bishop John Cohill SVD was the first Bishop of Goroka from 1966 – 1980. He was born in Elizabeth New Jersey, America in 1907. Cohill was ordained to the priesthood in 1936. He was appointed bishop of Goroka in 1966. He died in 1994.

2. Bishop Raymond Caesar SVD 1980 – 1987 Raymond Ceasar was born in 1932 He was ordained in 1961 and consecrated bishop of Goroka 1980. He was President of Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and Soloman Islands (1983 – 1984) He died suddenly in 1987.

3. Bishop Michael Marai 1988 - 1994 Michael was born in 1948 in Muschu Island Papua New Guinea. He was ordained in 1976 and became Bishop of Goroka in 1989. He died in 2021.

4. Bishop Francesco Sarego SVD. He was born in 1939. He was ordained in 1986 and became Bishop of Goroka in 1996. He was president of the Bishop's Conference 2005 – 2008.

5. Bishop Dariusz Kaluza MSF 2016 – 2020. He was born In Poland in 1976 and ordained in 1993 and consecrated Bishop of Goroka in 2016

1. First bishop of Goroka. Bishop John Cohill SVD



He was Bishop from 1966 – 1980. He was born in Elizabeth New Jersey, America in 1907. Cohill was ordained to the priesthood in 1936. He was appointed bishop of Goroka in 1966. He died in 1994.

He arrived in Papua New Guinea November 4th, 1944, and served at Rempi and Mugilon the north coast, Annaberg on the Ramu River, Kondiu in the Simbu, and Kuli in the Western Highlands. In 1965, after the tragic plane crash in which both Fr. Regional Joseph Bayer and his assistant Fr. Joseph Walachy were killed, he suddenly found himself Regional Superior.

In early December 1966 he was further surprised when he was informed by the Apostolic Delegate in Sydney, Australia, that he was to be the first Bishop of Goroka, taking over from the previous Vicar Apostolic, Bernard Schilling, whose failing health necessitated his resignation. The Goroka diocese in those days took in the Eastern Highlands and Simbu districts with a population of about 400,000 and an area of 11,200 square km of rugged mountains and remote valleys. He soon set out of his first Confirmations which were to take in the entire diocese - at the first mission station 1,000 adults and children were waiting for him; on other mission stations there were even more! Bishop John was popular and well-liked by his missionaries and the people. *Więcej:* <https://www.voiceoforot.pl/news/bishop-john-edward-cohill/>

2. Bishop Raymond Caesar SVD 1980 – 1987 Raymond Ceasar was born in 1932 He was ordained in 1961 and consecrated bishop of Goroka 1980. He was President of Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and Soloman Islands (1983 – 1984) He died suddenly in 1987.



Photograph Bishop Raymond Ceasar assisting Pope John Paul II at the Mass in Mt Hagen One of the highlights of his life.

Monsignor Caesar became the last bishop appointed by Pope St Paul VI when he was named coadjutor of the Diocese of Goroka in 1978. This made him just the sixth African American bishop in history and the first to serve outside of the United States. Just two years later, he became the third African American *ordinary* anywhere in the world when he was appointed bishop of Goroka. In 1983, he became the first to head a bishops' conference. (*Black Messenger*)

3. Bishop Michael Marai, was the first local bishop of Goroka. He was born on 17 November 1949 at Big Mushu village near Wewak. Fr Mihalic wrote about Michael's father Conrad, a mission worker whose story covers a few areas of mission history.

Photograph Conrad congratulates his son, Michael on becoming Bishop. It was the highlight of Conrad's life

In 1938, Conrad, moved to Marienberg to catechise the Bien area. But he transferred to being captain of the mission work boat *Pius*. It was during the next years at Marienberg that he met his future wife, Salome Moimbul. They were married in 1941 by the pastor, Fr Gerhard de Bruyn SVD.



Michael Marai was born in 1948 on Mushu Island, in present-day East Sepik Province. He was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest on December 6, 1976. He was appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Goroka on October 25, 1988 Marai served as the bishop until he stepped down on November 15, 1994.

Bishop Michael Marai died from cancer at the Wirui Retirement House in Wewak, on November 3, 2021, at the age of 73. His funeral Mass was held at the Wirui Sound Shell in Wiru on November 16, 2021. He was buried in Wirui Cemetery alongside other PNG bishops, including Leo Arkfeld and Cherubim Dambui.

4. Bishop Francesco Sarego

Bishop Francesco Sarego was the President of the Conference, and he said The bishops were stunned at the lack of action since a damning report last month by Human Rights Watch which documented police beatings with appalling reports of injuries inflicted on children by the official system. Society must not tolerate such behaviour by any person and particularly not by its servants. The community must take a lead to end this. If the community would be educated enough and aware enough of their rights and then go public, I think it would be best - not just a group but the community itself. And I think that the group of women that are a bit better organised they should come out much stronger on some social issues - it seems that sometimes they don't come out and that is unfortunate.



In 2016 Bishop Francesco Sarego said his last Mass as Bishop. In his sermon he challenged parishioners of St Mary of Help Kefamo to make the gospel become a reality in their lives.

“If you don’t read your bibles, it is useless,” Bishop Sarego observed. “The words of God must reach your hearts. Read your bibles and let it open your hearts.” The bishop concluded that Jesus was a model in serving others; he lived a life of serving, sharing and caring for others. Jesus revealed God’s infinite mercy for mankind.

Parish priest Fr Michelle Morando thanked the bishop for being a committed and loyal servant leader of the Catholic faith. We know you don’t like accolades for what you do, so we thank God for you. You were a true father and brother among us and we know God full fills his promises as you prepare to hand over to the new Bishop,” said Fr Michelle.

Bishop Francesco responded with a smile. “You lifted me but I must lift you, the Christian communities. Living and sharing our faith through different experiences is a shared responsibility and I enjoyed my share of experiences with faith. Thank God for all that happened.”⁴⁵

On 9 June 2016 the Holy Father accepted the resignation from the pastoral governance of the Diocese of Goroka, presented by His Exc. Mgr. Francesco Sarego, S.V.D., in accordance with canon law.

5. Bishop Dariusz Kaluza, Bishop of Goroka, 2016 - 2020



The new Bishop was born in Pszczyna, Poland, Diocese of Bielsko-Zywiec, on 5 November 1967. He completed his formation in Poland. In 1985, after finishing his studies at the Minor Seminary in Częstochowa, he entered the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family. He professed his first vows in 1987 and then he continued his philosophical and theological formation at the Major

Seminary of the Kazimierz Biskupi Institute. On May 5, 1993, he was ordained a priest. After Bishop Francesco Sarego resignation was accepted by the holy Father, he appointed Rev. Fr. Dariusz Kaluza, of the Missionaries of the Holy Family (M.S.F.) as Bishop of the Diocese of Goroka.

⁴⁵ PNG Attitude 18th August 2016 by BOMAI D WITNE

Bishop Dariusz first came to PNG in 1997 and worked in Mendi between 1997 – 2004. Then he became pastor of two parishes in the Diocese of Mendi; 2004-2005. He was Director of the diocesan formation center for catechists. He also became between 2006-2011 the Vicar General of the Diocese of Mendi. In 2015 he became pastoral Vicar of the Archdiocese of Madang. (SL)⁴⁶

In 2020 Dariusz Kaluza was appointed to Bougainville. He was farewelled at a special Mass at the Young Christians Center hall in Goroka. Members of the local leading parish St Mary's gathered with parishioners, priests and other congregation members of the Holy Family and members of the outstation parishes to farewell their outgoing bishop.

Bishop Dariusz Kaluza served as the Bishop for Goroka since 2015, overseeing 9 parishes which include Kefamo, St Mary's, Holy Family, Tafeto and Kamaliki in the Goroka district, the Pudibasa and Yonki parishes in Kainantu district and Namta parish in Daulo district. Congregation members from the different churches said that he will be missed but dearly remembered for his humor and humility. Bishop Kaluza was appointed by Pope Francis to be the Bishop of Bougainville thus, he will be leaving for Bougainville on November 6, 2020. (See Part One).



Relations between the government officials and the missionaries

George Greathead, patrol officer, was a good friend of Fr Ross and things in the Mt Hagen mission went smoothly until Fr Ross went on leave to America in 1939. After the deaths of Fr Morschheuser and Brother Eugene there were strict rules imposed on the missionaries. They were restricted to an area near their head mission stations. Fr Ross was careful to obey these rules as George Greathead was very strict. Later this led to some frictions between Greathead and two German missionaries Fr Fuchs and Fr Noss who were in charge in Mt Hagen while



Fr Ross was on leave. Fr Fuchs in particular was keen to work outside the restricted zone. This led to Greathead closing the Mt Hagen Mission and evicting the two priests. Understandably Bishop Wolf was very upset. It must be remembered that this was war time, and the two German missionaries were under surveillance as well. ⁴⁷

Photograph: Mrs Chalmers, Dal Chalmers engineer, Fr Ross SVD, Dan Leahy, two unknowns and Mr George Greathead on the right. (Photo Dan Leahy) ⁴⁸

When Fr Ross returned from his leave, the Rebihamul Mission Station in Mt Hagen was still closed. The matter went to court in Madang and finally in

⁴⁶ (Agenzia Fides 10/06/2016)

⁴⁷ Hagen Saga: M. Mennis 1982:91.

⁴⁸ Rempi to Rebihamul M. Mennis 2016: 89

January 1941, Fr Ross was allowed to return to the highlands. The people welcomed him warmly. Soon after this war came to New Guinea with the Japanese invasion on the coast. Frs Ross and Bernarding were taken to Australia.

After the war the Central Highlands District was split into three separate districts in September 1951, George Greathead became District Commissioner, of the Eastern Highlands and was based in Goroka. With his pre-war experience, Greathead knew the people, He realised that the first duty of government was to establish the rule of law and he made it a priority to concentrate on exploration, pacification and consolidation. Goroka was a lovely town in those days with a small population of Europeans consisting of businessmen, Government officers and missionaries.

Judy Bond (Greathead) wrote:

Our home located on the site of the Goroka Teachers College, was large, with a mixture of timber floor, walls of plaited bamboo with a thatched roof. Attached to our home was a guest annex where many and varied visitors – business people, directors of Administration departments and judges on circuit, were welcomed. There was no water laid on and showers and baths relied



on “barat” water. In those days the District extended to Mendi and included Mount Hagen, Wabag, Kainantu and Chimbu. Dad would just walk out the front door on to a waiting Dragon aircraft. George Greathead was a devout Catholic and attended Mass with his family. He was a friend of Bishop Cohill who gave the oration at his funeral.

Judy Bond Greathead with her father George at her wedding.

At the funeral Mass for George Greathead, it seems that the memories of his time in Mt Hagen were forgotten or at least not mentioned. He was a good friend of Bishop Cohill.

Bishop John Cohill’s homily at George Greathead’s funeral

Feb. 28th, 1972. George Greathead never disappointed me during the many times I appealed to him for aid. George was a kind friend. George Greathead was a man dedicated to the Territory of New Guinea, dedicated to the native people. He always showed a deep and a keen interest in all that took place here.

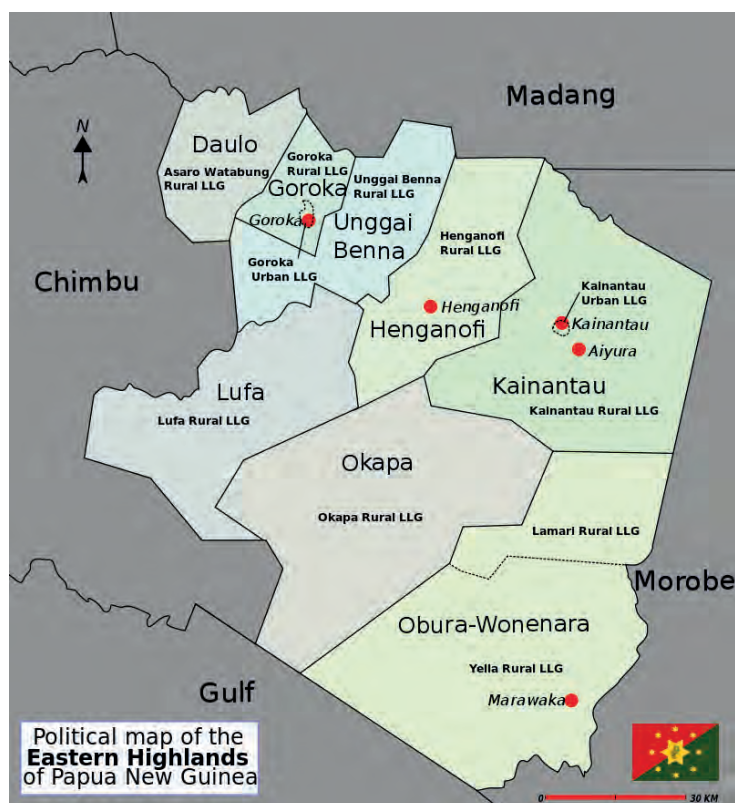
Whenever he agreed, he did so with vigor. Whenever he disagreed, there was no doubt left about his thoughts on the matter. George was a determined man — who wanted the best for this country, the natives of this country and the Europeans, who came to settle here. My memories of George Greathead go back many years — the occasions I met him in Madang, Mt. Hagen, Kundiawa and in later years, here in Goroka. Without dwelling at length on George Greathead’s life, suffice it to say he came from an exemplary Catholic family. George was a dedicated man, dedicated to His Catholic religion as some of you know - how he tried so often to get a lapsed Catholic back to church. His dedication to His Church did not just confine itself to mere words but expressed itself in the seriousness and fidelity to his Christian duties and obligations.

. Whatever job he was given to do, he put his heart and soul into it; sometimes even to the embarrassment of those around him. In short, he did his job well. George Greathead was a man dedicated to his friends. Seemingly his one delight in life was to assist and aid others. Allow me to state here. Lastly, George Greathead was a man dedicated to his family, his wife, his children. He was a faithful, considerate and understanding husband; a helpful, gracious and paternal father. He fought the good fight, he kept the faith.



Photograph 1963. Fr Ray SVD on the right, Parish Priest in Goroka with a visitor and teacher Mary with her Prep children from the local Catholic School

Road sign on the Highlands Highway.



People of the Bena Bena area, Eastern Highlands.



Below left Agricultural Officer, John Eccles



The Bena Bena area was one of the first highland districts, to be opened and exposed to western influence after the Leahy brothers arrived prospecting for gold along the Bena River. The SDA church has had a profound effect on the Bena culture and history. Today, the Benas are predominantly SDA. *(photographs by John Eccles)*

The Melanesian Institute in Goroka.

Hermann Janssen MSC (1933-1998), a specialist in cultural and social anthropology, was chosen the first director of the Melanesian Institute and his assistant was Fr Joe Knoebel. From November 17, 1969, until January 31, 1970, the newly founded institute held its first orientation course for 45 new missionaries coming from different nationalities and different religious congregations. During the course the official opening of the Melanesian Institute was celebrated on January 11, 1970.

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). Fr Janssen MSC and Fr Knoebel SVD gathered 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 directorships⁴⁹”

Photograph: A Group of SVD missionaries met up in Goroka. From the beginning, the institute was not intended to be an SVD institute, or a business run by the SVD, but rather as an institution and an enterprise of the whole Church in PNG.



Recently, the Melanesian Institute celebrated its 50 years of existence. This was done during the annual Orientation course with its participants and more invited guests. During the celebration, the present MI director, Bro. Martin Tnines, SVD said: “Lately, the MI extends its service beyond the Church members and works closely with partners under the Church Partnership Program (CPP) which is under the Australian Development of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australian Volunteers, and United Nations Women through Peace Building

⁴⁹ (Mihalic, 1999: 156).

Program. The challenge that MI faces right now is the shortage of academics. But this will not douse the flame of MI”.

An assessment after 50 years in 2020. Through the scientific introduction given by the institute, the new missionaries should be able to get to know and better understand the indigenous people and their cultures. A permanent research institute with such an objective had therefore to support the missionaries in finding solutions to the many unresolved challenges they encountered in their work.⁵⁰

Abstract by Fr Paul Steffen SVD on the Melanesian Institute after 50 years.

Melanesian, ecumenical, cultural anthropological, socio-economic and pastoral in its nature, aim and focus. The Melanesian Institute (MI) was initially initiated 50 years ago by the Conference of Higher Religious superiors. The Catholic missionaries felt after Vatican II the need for developing a more inculturated and contextualized socio-pastoral ministry. In 1974 MI was made into an ecumenical institute under the responsibility of the four major churches of Papua New Guinea: the Catholic, the Lutheran, the Anglican and United Church. The MI created over the years a couple of journals with specific pastoral, cultural, social, political and theological content and orientation, like “Catalyst”, “Point”, “Occasional Papers”, “Umben”, and “Melanesian Mission Studies”.

Those publications are at the service of pastoral and social workers and people engaged in the development of Melanesian countries. MI has taken up several areas of research over the years. It played a special role in two very important research projects for the development of the Church in Papua New Guinea: the “Self-Study of the Catholic Church in PNG” and the project “Marriage and Family Life”. The MI was in its 50 years of existence always part of the permanent process of evangelization and inculturation of the Christian churches in Melanesia. In its character and purpose, the MI has developed a special identity that is unique in the Christian world.



⁵⁰ Paul B. Steffen SVD Pontifical Urbaniana University, Rome

Sisters of Mercy of Papua New Guinea gathered July 2010

From 18th to 21st July 2010 the Sisters of Mercy of Papua New Guinea gathered together in Goroka, staying at the Kefamo Pastoral Centre. While the showers may have been cold, the gathering had its own warmth as they shared stories along with much laughter and time to pray together.



With the competent facilitation of Sr Margaret Endicott, we considered the topic: “managing transition and change”, by way of preparation for joining the Northern Community of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and PNG.

To begin the Gathering the members of the Coolock House Community, Goroka, led the group into the Conference Room with a traditional welcome dance. After an opening prayer it was business with the guidance of Margaret Endicott.

Over three days we pondered who we have become as Sisters of Mercy in PNG from the perspectives of the past, the present and the future.

In order to look at mercy life today in PNG we situated ourselves within the context of the world, the country of PNG, the Sisters of Mercy internationally and nationally since 1956 and see the values that were held in common. 1956-1976 was a time of “exploration”, 1977-1996 a time of “experimentation”, 1997- 2005 a time for “reforming” and 2006-2010 a time of “empowering”.



Mercy Works achievements in PNG in 2020-21.

Conclusion of Women’s Wellness Program in September 2021 which raised awareness of causes of HPV and Cervical Cancer and training for treatment; Village Health Program to improve living standards; Non-Violence training Program; Senior Teacher’s Training to upskill teachers ; Remote Girls Hostel for education & vocational training; Educating and empowering women and girls through Literacy Program; Capacity building in program support and management for staff; Focus on cocoa tree farming as an alternative to cash crop ; Outreach and development work with Prisoners in Barawagi Prison; Small to Medium Enterprise skills training (SME); Youth and agricultural skills training;

Outreach to Goroka settlements. Over the last 40 years, Goroka, like other large urban centres in PNG, has experienced an influx of people from rural areas and other provinces. The town’s infrastructure has been unable to cope with this rapid settlement on vacant public land, usually on the outskirts of town.

OUR MISSION – SSpS SISTERS

We, Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, are an international religious community of women disciples. Empowered by the Holy Spirit we invite people to a deeper communion with the Triune God by living and proclaiming the Gospel of joy, love, peace, and justice. In dialogue with people of diverse cultures and traditions, we minister together with them in promoting human dignity, life-giving relationships, and care for all of creation.



The Divine Word Missionaries and the Holy Spirit Sisters took up their missionary engagement in Papua New-Guinea in 1896 and 1899 respectively. By nursing the sick, the missionaries quickly gained the confidence of the islanders. This played an important role in increasing their contacts with the local people. They set up schools and educated the youth first in Madang and then Mt Hagen. Later they worked in many other provinces of Papua New Guinea including Goroka.

ON Monday 8 December 2014, Foundation Day, the six missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) on the staff of Divine Word University (DWU) in Madang celebrated the 125th anniversary of the Congregation, 115 years in Papua New Guinea and 45 years of service at DWU.



In Goroka, the celebration took on a triple character: 125th Jubilee anniversary of the Congregation, the Golden Jubilee of Sr Cecilia Koesters and the Diamond Jubilee of Sr Marianetta Hilt; both in PNG for many years. Sr Cecilia is a nurse by profession and has been provincial leader and novice directress, while Sr Marianetta served in several communities as

cook and manager, instructing many young girls in practical life skills. There were a thanksgiving masses and celebrations in the various places where the Holy Spirit sisters are present: at the Provincial House in Alexishafen outside Madang; in the three communities of East Sepik; and in the Enga, Western Highlands, Simbu, Eastern Highlands and Port Moresby communities.⁵¹



Photograph: The leadership team in 2014. Sr Valsi Kurian (from India); Sr Teresa (from Lisban PNG); Sr Anna Damas, the Provinicla leader (from Germany); Sr Davida Strojek (from Poland) and Sr Rosita Thomas (from Chile)

30 November 2014

The Holy Mass was presided by Fr Jan Czuba, SVD, President of DWU, and co-celebrated by other Divine Word missionaries and priests. The SVD priests and the Holy Spirit sisters have St Arnold Janssen, a German priest from the nineteenth century, as their common founder.

Besides formal and informal teaching and nursing, the Holy Spirit Sisters have been at the forefront in training and guiding young women in family like work, financial management, the fight against HIV/AIDS, spiritual guidance and counselling. As proactive religious women, the sisters have played an integral part in the local church by being involved both at the grassroots and diocesan and national levels.

The number of national sisters now stands at 23. Some of them are serving overseas in Australia, Fiji, Ghana, Togo, St Kitts, USA, and the Philippines.

Photograph Sr Florence Utah, who has been in Ethiopia for six years, is now preparing for her new mission in South Sudan, where her skills as a nurse and midwife are urgently needed.

As our 3,500 Sisters around the world in over 40 countries celebrate 8 December together with our Founding Generation in heaven and with all the sisters who have gone before us, we ask God's blessing for our present and future mission in the spirit of our General Chapter 2014: "Empowered by the Spirit, sharing the good news among peoples".⁵²



⁵¹ SR MARY ANTHIDA KUECKMANN SSps

⁵² Posted in Churches & religion/Permalink/Comments (3)

The House of Prayer at Kefamo, Goroka

The House of Prayer at Kefamo, four kilometres outside of Goroka, is in a natural landscape that creates a conducive environment for anyone seeking an encounter with God in silence and solitude. It is a place of transformation, a place to have an encounter with the most high God, with powerful teachings from the word, accompanied with exciting, passionate praise and worship. The House of Prayer is filled with people that desire to be transformed and influence the world around them, so. It is meant for members of religious communities, for diocesan clergy, for seminarians and sisters in formation as well as for the laity who would like to deepen their relationship with God. Whether you feel you are in need of spiritual direction, encouragement, renewal or healing you are welcome to come and refresh yourself. *Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while. (Mark 6:31)* The retreats are held in an atmosphere of silence, meditation and prayer, with daily Mass and adoration in community. (web site)

*DIRECT me in your ways, Yahweh,
and teach me your paths,
ENCOURAGE me to walk in your truth and teach me
since you are the God who saves me.*

Sister Christa Murphy SSpS is now resident of St Vincents retirement village at Carseldine Brisbane, but she recalls how she was the co-director of the House of Prayer at Kefona for three years between 1986 and 1989. During this time, she looked after people with many problems both mental and spiritual. She was a co-director with Fr Alois Klein SVD. Together they worked on programs for those attending seminars or retreats. Sister Christa also helped the nearby village women. The mission housekeeper, Maria, lived locally and encouraged her friends to help the staff. They grew vegetables in the mission gardens and Sister Christa drove them to the market on Saturdays, so she was very popular with them. When she first arrived a group of people turned up and wanted to have a retreat sitting under the trees outside the complex, so she and other staff members sat under the trees with them over a few days.

The Kefamo House of Prayer was set up in 1983 and the buildings were specially designed to withstand strong earthquakes. Sister Christa arrived three years later and was appointed the co-director. By the time she left she had helped set up a spiritual training course which was sent to every province. Another prominent member of staff was Fr Otto Schelenberger SVD from the States. He was the youngest of twelve children. One of his older sisters became a SSpS Sister and was the matron of the Holy Spirit retirement Village at Carseldine (Later St Vincent's). Here she worked with Sister Christa. (Interview with the author February 2024).

Emblem of the House of Prayer is the burning bush



Liturgical Catechetical Institute, Goroka.



Fr Tomas Ravaioli, Director of LCI said:

“The main goal of the Institute was to be a resource of catechetical and liturgical material for the whole country. During the last 60 years, the LCI produced hundreds of books and resources both in English and Tok Pisin to help the priests, religious, catechists, laypeople, youth, children, etc. The work it has done and continues to do is simply priceless,”

He was speaking at the opening of a new bookshop in Port Moresby. Present to officiate the opening and bless the bookshop was His Eminence Cardinal Sir John Ribat MSC. Cardinal Ribat signified the opening of the bookshop with a reading of the gospel, responsorial psalm, the cutting of the ribbon and the blessing of the shop. The goal of the bookshop is not to run a business but to give the people from all the provinces the possibility to see what the LCI has to offer in order to improve the catechesis and liturgy in the dioceses.”⁵³

Localisation in the Simbu and other provinces

The Simbu province is formed now under the name of Kundiawa and has its own diocese and the Enga province is under the name of Wabag. It has to be mentioned that most of the clergy in the four highland dioceses of Goroka, Kundiawa, Mt. Hagen and Wabag and the two coastal dioceses of Madang and Wewak were up to the late 1980s still members from the Society of the Divine Word SVDs and were from overseas. After the first diocesan priest were ordained in 1968 for the Goroka diocese (but Chimbu origin), others followed in 1975 in Madang and 1976 for Wewak. In 1983 Wabag received its first diocesan priest, Lae in 1988, Aitape in 1993. The number of local diocesan priests grows steadily. The numbers in various Catholic orders is increasing as well. According to the last figures the 9 dioceses deriving from the 1896 founded Catholic Mission of the Holy Ghost have 113 Major seminarians. Localization happened earlier among female religious. Bishop Arkfeld's Rosary Sisters of Wewak (started 1953) and the St. Therese Sisters of Alexishafen (founded 1954 by Bishop Noser and Sr. Arsenia Wild SSPS) have both nearly 40 professed Sisters. The Sacred Heart Brothers were (founded in 1959 by Bp. Arkfeld and Fr. Bill Liebert).⁵⁴

⁵³ Fr Tomas Ravaioli

⁵⁴ (Fr Steffen personal account)



The Seminarians celebrating Father Jacek Tendej's Birthday at Bomana.



Mary Mennis and her brother, John Eccles visiting the Seminarians in Bomana, 2022.

PART THIRTEEN: GENERAL TOPICS

There are some subjects that are general for the whole of Papua New Guinea. These include 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.

1. The Legion of Mary in Papua New Guinea. The Legion of Mary was founded in Dublin, Ireland, on Sep 7, 1921, by Frank Duff, a layman and civil servant. The stated mission was for the members to serve under the banner of Mary through corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Members are engaged primarily in the performance of spiritual works of mercy. Many parishes in PNG have the Legion of Mary.

The Legion of Mary in Mt Hagen: New Regia for PNG 14 January 2010 The Concilium approved the raising of Mount Hagan Comitium to Regia and affiliating the Legion in the Archdiocese Mount Hagan and its 4 suffragan dioceses to the new Regia, which will then comprise 7,506 members, 11 Praesidia, 5 Curiae and 3 Comitia. Ecclesiastical permission has already been granted for this new Regia.

The Legion of Mary of Dirima St Anne's Parish in the Kundiawa Diocese celebrated 25 years of the Marian Movement in the parish, through which the members exemplify the life of Christ and the Christian faith. The Legion of Mary group here was established by a young woman from Kipaku tribe, Christine Alua, in 1994. It has increased in number to more than 200, and has extended to the neighbouring parishes of Yuri, Nondri and Yobai. President Maria Gena said the celebrations was held from March 23 to March 25.

2019 \ Bishop Anton Bal was the main celebrant at a Mass to end the event. Gena said the legion is made up of 200 women

who come from the four ward council areas of St Anne's Parish. The group is dedicated to the work of the Blessed Mary and is involved in both spiritual and corporal works of mercy.¹

2, The Inculturation of the liturgy and acceptance of culture:

The International Theological Commission in 1988 discussed Pope John Paul's views on inculturation.²

Pope John Paul II himself took to heart in a special manner the evangelization of cultures: In his view, the dialogue of the Church and of cultures assumes a vital importance for the future of the Church and of the world. Relying on the conviction that "the incarnation of the Word was also a cultural incarnation", the pope affirms that cultures, analogically comparable to the



Members of the Legion of Mary apostolic group of Dirima St Anne's Parish of Kundiawa. The legion will celebrate its 25th anniversary next week.

¹ March 21, 2019. *The National Faith*

² *Faith and inculturation 1988*

humanity of Christ in whatever good they possess, may play a positive role of mediation in the expression and extension of the Christian faith. Two essential themes are bound up with this view.

First, that of the transcendence of revelation in relation to the cultures in which it finds expression. The Word of God cannot, in effect, be identified or linked in an exclusive manner with the elements of culture which bear it. The Gospel quite often demands a conversion of attitudes and an amendment of customs where it establishes itself: Cultures must also be purified and restored in Christ.

The second major theme of the teaching of John Paul II revolves around the urgency of the evangelization of cultures. This task presupposes that one would understand and penetrate with a critical sympathy particular cultural identity and that, in the interest of a universality corresponding to the truly human reality of all cultures, one would favour exchanges between them.

The Holy Father thus bases the evangelization of cultures on an anthropological conception firmly rooted in Christian thought since the fathers of the Church. Since culture, when pure, reveals and strengthens the nature of man, the Christian impregnation presupposes the surpassing of all historicism and relativism in the conception of what is human. The evangelization of cultures should therefore be inspired by the love of man in himself and for himself, especially in those aspects of his being and of his culture which are being attacked or are under threat. Pope John Paul II spoke of this in a speech given in Kenya in 1980.³

In this book “Lotu Katolik,” it is shown that many Catholic missionaries particularly the Sacred Heart and SVD missionaries were trained in basic anthropology and others had done professional degrees like Fr John Nilles of the Simbu Diocese; Fr Kirschbaum of the Sepik; Fr Hermann Janssen MSC of Rabaul; Fr Bus SVD of Wabag; Fr Aufinger SVD of Alexishafen to name a few and they studied the culture in detail.

Early German missionaries in Rabaul had banned the *tubuan* society as evil as it was a secret society but this traditional system trained young boys in the social rules and kept the peace in the village - for example the *tubuan* fined perpetrators of domestic violence and made them pay shell money.



Later local bishops To Paivu and Benedict To Varpin, both Tolais saved the *tubuan* culture from being banned by the Church. They could see there were good parts in it and said, ‘Let’s get rid of the bad aspects of it and keep the rest as it is part of our culture.’ Now they are seen everywhere.⁴

Photograph: Bishop Benedict to Varpin with the Tubuan figures

³ Speech to the bishops of Kenya, 7 May 1980

⁴ M. Mennis *Tubuan and Tabernacle*

Fr Gibbs SVD spoke of inculturation in Papua New Guinea in 2000

“The starting point for inculturation is the community and the point of entry is the way of life of the community. To evangelise a community in depth requires a dialogue of listening for the felt needs in the community and then inviting the members to discover a solution to those needs through faith in Jesus Christ. The resultant change will affect the way people feel, think and behave. The missionary may take the initiative in suggesting possible courses of action. However, the primary agent of inculturation must be the community. Attempts to impose change from outside or above will seldom result in a genuine link between faith and life.

“No doubt there are things that we regret in the history of mission work. However, surely we must focus more on what is happening now in this sea of change. It does not help to be a romanticist seeing the traditional culture as coming straight from the Garden of Eden. Nor does it help to take the fatalistic view that all traditional societies are doomed to transmute into some Western cultural form. We must be realistic, prepared to take responsibility for our part in the present changes. As the Jubilee Year 2000 approaches, many Church leaders, including Pope John Paul II, are preparing to apologise for the harm caused by the Church in the past. They consider it important to seek reconciliation so as to open the way for renewed partnership in the new millennium. We can hope that missionaries will not be mere agents of or obstacles to change, but rather companions on a journey that is slowly but surely leading to transforming our world into the form of the reign of God.⁵

3. The Ecumenical movement between the churches: 2020.

The secretary for Ecumenical and Inter-Faith Dialogue is Brandon Zimmerman, Dean of t Dean of Studies, at the Catholic Theological Institute in Port Moresby. In September 2020, Brandon wrote;



I. Ecumenical Dialogue

“A Overview: Ecumenical Dialogue is with other Christian groups, following the Vatican’s designation of Christian. Dialogue is guided by Unitatis redintegratio, Ut unum sint, and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

“B. Goals

1. To establish friendship with our separated brethren so that we can work together to advance the Gospel in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, to share resources and ideas for addressing contemporary social issues, and to prevent conflicts between us.

⁵ Gibbs *Missionaries and culture* 5 September 2000)

2. To popularize the work of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity among the local churches.

“3. To learn from each other and to correct misunderstandings through sustained theological dialogues based on approved ecumenical documents.

4. To support the development of indigenous theology through the development of joint statements or academic presentations on theological issues of joint interest.

5. To develop mutual recognitions of each other's baptismal rites, to develop resources for mixed marriages, and to establish covenants with other churches.

6. To develop resources for the annual celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

7. To support the work of already existing ecumenical bodies such as the PNG Council of Churches, the Church Partnership Program, and the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools.

8. To reunite the Body as Christ insofar as practically possible, especially by joining in prayer and worship.

C. Current Dialogues.

1. Muslim - Statement against religiously motivated violence achieved 2. PNG Interfaith Forum

II. Inter-faith Dialogue.

A. Overview: Interfaith Dialogue is with other religious groups that are not recognized as part of the Body of Christ by the Vatican. Dialogue is guided by *Nostra aetate*, *Dignitatis humanae*, and the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.

B Goals

1. To establish friendship with other religious groups in PNG/SI, to share resources and ideas for addressing contemporary social issues, and to prevent conflicts between us.

2. To popularize the work of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue among the local religious groups, especially the document *Education for Peace in a Multi-Religious World - A Christian Perspective* (2019).

3. To learn from each other and to correct misunderstandings and the fear that comes through ignorance through sustained dialogue based on our holy books and the visiting of each other's places of worship.

4. To promote religious freedom, especially the right to convert from one's religion to another, among both Christians and non-Christians

5. To develop resources for the study of comparative religion.

6. To defend and witness the Gospel in our interactions with non-Christians.

7. To find areas of common agreement, especially regarding ethical and political issues.

8. To support any inter-faith dialogue initiatives that may arise.

C. Current Dialogues

1. Anglican – Statements on Baptism, Marriage, and Covenant achieved.

2. Lutheran – Statements on Baptism and Marriage achieved. ⁶ “

Good Friday Procession in Goroka - Ecumenism in practice.

In 2015 an example of the way ecumenism can work was in 2015 when members of the Anglican, Catholic and Lutheran churches gathered in **Goroka** and got together on Good Friday 2015 to emulate the way of the cross and remember the life and journey of Jesus.

BOMAI D WITNE wrote: “On Good Friday we marked the first station at a location in West Goroka and made the more than two kilometre walk in prayer. The Goroka police assisted us in the journey, ensuring the procession, which ended at Peace Park, was restricted to one lane of the road.”

Photograph Christians in Goroka gather at the stations of the Cross in April 2015



“Reverend Raka of the United Church told the gathering that, during the time of Jesus, crucifixion was a common way for criminals and murderers to meet death. Jesus was not a criminal or a murderer. The mob called for Jesus to be crucified and he took the cross of Barnabas. The cross is also a great symbol of salvation. With the cross, salvation cannot be delayed. Easter is a time for Christians to rethink and renew faith in Jesus. Jesus cried, “Father, I am finished”, and he passed away. Jesus knew he lived his father’s will to the point where he fulfilled it on the cross. Rev Raka ended in saying, “Easter has been celebrated every year. Make this year special for you; let God change you and me”.

Then Fr Bogdan OFM of the Catholic Church ended the gathering with a final prayer”. ⁷

4, Localisation of the Bishop appointments.

In 2000, Fr Lessen said: “Although localisation of the Bishop appointments is a top priority of all developing young churches. The Church of Papua New Guinea, however, is being confronted with a seemingly reversed development. In the past year 1999, five vacant episcopal sees have been assigned to 5 expatriates.”

1. Archbishop Barnes OFM (naturalized Australian) to Port Moresby
2. Bishop Deschamps SMM (Canada) to Bereina
3. Bishop Couture SMM (Canada) to Daru-Kiunga, Canadian,
4. Bishop Crapp OFM (Australia) to Aitape
5. Bishop Kronenberg SM (Netherlands) to Bougainville

⁶ <https://www.pngsicbc.com/ecumenism-inter-faith-dialogue>

⁷ *Posted in Churches & religion, Crocodile Prize 2015*

Fr Lessen wrote: “In 1999 only one national priest was appointed - auxiliary bishop for Rabaul. The critics however might take into consideration the age of the new appointees that makes them a kind of transition bishops, keeping the episcopal sees temporarily warm for potential local successors.”⁸



Localisation of bishops has always been the goal in Papua New Guinea

By 2020 this statement about older bishops being appointed to train local successors was verified in this photograph in 2020 where most of the bishops, archbishops and Cardinal are Nationals.

Localisation of the positions in the church is one of the theses of this book *Lotu Kato*. It is shown in these chapters that by 2022 most of the bishops in Papua New Guinea were nationals. Appointing older bishops in those former years gave time for the local clergy to learn the ropes of being a bishop, of connecting with the Vatican and organising the church within their own diocese with confidence. Now the leader of the Church in Papua New Guinea is a Tolai -- Cardinal Sir John Ribat.

Localisation has worked well and now Papua New Guinea is a very spiritual country built on the backs of those expatriate missionaries who came from mission countries around the world to spread the word of God to the ends of the world.

5. Overcoming the problems of domestic violence in PNG.

On 30 November 2010, Bishop Reichert OFM Cap was appointed Archbishop of Madang. One of his major interests was the new Family Centre against Domestic Violence, promoted by the government of Madang. He said:

“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 added: “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

⁸ See Chapter on Lae in *Lotu Katolik*

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".⁹

¹⁰The World Report on human rights



"In 2019, lack of accountability for police violence persisted in Papua New Guinea (PNG), and weak enforcement of laws criminalizing corruption and violence against women and children continued to foster a culture of impunity and lawlessness. Although a resource-rich country, almost 40 percent of its population lives in poverty, which, together with poor health care, barriers to education, corruption, and economic mismanagement, stunts PNG's progress." **Women's and girls' rights.** Violence affects more than two thirds of women in Papua New Guinea. In Lae and Port Moresby in March 2019 more than 200 domestic violence and sexual violence cases were reported and sorcery-related violence continued to endanger the lives of women and girls."¹¹

New Centre opened in Mt Hagen - The Catholic Leader April 2001 ¹²

Mark Bowling: "A new focus on domestic violence in Papua New Guinea has revealed the Church at the forefront of providing for child victims. In a country where Human Rights Watch estimates 70 per cent of women are raped during their lifetime, the Archdiocese of Mt Hagen has built a care centre for vulnerable children, which its Australian designer says could be duplicated across the country.

"In the PNG highlands the Mt Hagen archdiocese is completing a home at Ulga, close to Mt Hagen, to care for vulnerable children forced out of the family home and onto the streets. The St Mary's home, due to be opened this month, will provide accommodation, meals, education and general care for about 15 "at risk" children caught up in marriage breakdowns, physical and sexual abuse, poverty and sorcery, which is common in PNG. In charge of the centre is Society of Our Most Holy Trinity Sister Mary Corpus Chrisiti Banas whose vision is to "Let the children come to me",



⁹ *Rempi to Rebiatul M. Mennis p 131.*

¹⁰ *Photographs from A brief history. Sisters of Mercy in Papua New Guinea.*

¹¹ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/papua-new-guinea>

¹² *Catholic Leader April 2001*

and for “the home to be a place of love, safety and refuge in the arms of Jesus through his body, the Church”.

Assistance from Australia in combating domestic violence.

“On 7th February 2014 Julie Bishop, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs promised that “Australia will fund a new PNG Family and Sexual Violence Case Management Centre in Lae, with a team of individual case workers to ensure women and children receive medical support as well as the immediate shelter, legal support and other services they need. The team will train other service providers, and advocate for more effective services. The Australian and Papua New Guinea Governments will also co-fund the redevelopment of the Lae ANGAU Memorial Hospital, which houses a Family Support Centre to meet the immediate health needs of survivors of violence. In 2010, the centre helped 530 survivors of sexual violence, including 192 cases involving children. Australia will provide A\$3 million to the Centre over three years from 2014. The Centre is a new PNG organisation supported by Oxfam Australia and the



women victims

Australian National University. “Principles guiding Australia’s contribution The following principles will guide Australia’s contribution to ending violence against women. AusAID will: make a long-term commitment to ending violence against women promote gender equality as a central principle of our work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities adopt an integrated approach. Further details are set out in the regional report.”¹³

Photograph: Bishop Lippert with the Sisters who help the

6. Combating Belief in Sorcery ¹⁴“The Catholic Church has a unique role in combating belief in sorcery and mob reprisal attacks against sorcerers, Bishop Don Lippert of Mendi, where some attacks took place, has organised an anti-sorcery forum, to be attended by priests and bishops from across the region as well as the US ambassador to Papua New Guinea. Bishop Don told the *Catholic Herald* that this was not the first case, making an appeal for prayers as well as action from the government. “I feel there are two related issues,” he said. “The issue of belief in *sanguma* [sorcery] and the issue of acting on those beliefs in retribution violence. “Both, he said, needed to be combated urgently. For the bishop, the Church is key to changing people’s beliefs, alongside educating them. “The Church has a role which only it can play in the struggle against evil,” he explained. “[It] also has a teaching, and evangelising role with the people.”

“The Church can also help to mobilise leaders and policy makers, which we are trying to do here. Despite the dangers, the Church has been reaching out to the villages, trying to help those who find themselves accused and facing the terrifying prospect of torture and death. In Bishop Lippert’s diocese Catholic nuns venture into the worst areas, putting their lives at risk in a desperate bid to reach those in need of help. They have been threatened, pushed, stoned and in one case burned even accused of being witches. According to opposition leader Samuel Basil there is a lot of work to be done, as entire communities were taking part in torturing suspected victims. “It’s very hard for police to act when a whole community is involved, and there is no

¹³ https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/ResVAW_PNG.pdf

¹⁴ Joanne Rowley/ *Catholic Herald churches & religion*

witness to testify,” Basil said. “We have a culture, a Melanesian culture, where some people very strongly believe in sorcery, including some very educated people. I do not believe in that but I’m sure I have very educated relatives who believe in sorcery.”

Milne Bay Police provincial commander, Peter Barkie, told the Guardian.

“Often associated with PNG’s remote highlands, sorcery killings are allegedly occurring in lowland provinces too. SARV occurred regularly, was widely known about, but rarely went reported. The belief here about sorcery is so intense that they kill anyone they suspect is practicing it, but the practice here is different from that in Southern Highlands where women are beaten and tortured before being burnt alive. He said men, women and even children were accused. They just slaughter them, no torture, no burning.”¹⁵

7. Movement for a Better World.

In 1977 Fr Jerry Bus began work on the Movement for a Better World. He saw it was important to deepen the faith that he and others had awakened in people’s lives and to involve lay persons in that work. The laity must do more to carry the church, take responsibility and choose its direction. From 1977 to 1995 this was Fr Bus’s major enterprise all around PNG and especially



*Members of the Movement for a Better World.
Fr Roger Purcell MSC can be glimpsed at the back, right*

in those dioceses and parishes that embraced the renewal program. He managed this with a small group of dedicated religious and lay people, first from Madang and later from Kerowagi in Simbu. By 1995 Jerry was 74 and it seemed best that he should leave PNG. He was respected and admired and he saw that others needed to come forward.

Movement for a Better World continues Fr Roger Purcell MSC works as part of the CAS, Community Animation Services, for renewal in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, collaborating with the Movement in Australia,

His editorial comments for the July issue of the CAS Bulletin, July 2012. “This year on 10th February we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Proclamation for a Better World by Pope Pius XII. This was at the time of great difficulty and challenge in Italy when Fr. Lombardi was preaching for a renewal of the Church and a new order in society. These were exciting times with great expectations of a new world. Lombardi saw that both the Communists and the Capitalist West did not offer what the world needed, proposing that we needed a Christian society based in renewed faith in Jesus.”



¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/14/they-just-slaughter-them-how-sorcery-violence-spreads-fear-across-papua-new-guinea>

What is the message for us today?

“As members of the CAS we are called to rediscover the inspiration of Lombardi, our identity and mission. The whole Church faces a crisis of identity in a changing world where many different voices are taking people away from faith and God. A world that offers values very different from those of the Reign of God.”¹⁶

The Protestant Missions in Papua New Guinea.

There has always been competition between Protestant and Catholics, each competing for “lost souls” and arguing over theological differences. This is evident in the chapters in this book covering most of the mission areas whether it was in Rabaul with the Methodists versus the Catholics; In Madang where it was the Lutherans and Catholics competing against each other and in Port Moresby where it was the London Missionary Society. The move towards ecumenism in the country can be traced back to the war when missionaries of every denomination were herded into prison camps by the Japanese who just saw them all as missionaries.¹⁷ They worked well together, and this led to much friendlier relations. In the 1950s the World Council of Churches began to promote ecumenism worldwide. However, the ecumenical body of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) and Pacific Theological College (PTC) were not established until 1966.¹⁸

Melanesia is a vast region and within it many forms of Christianity have taken root. The following are short histories of the five main protestant religions. As is shown Christian beliefs have evolved in many different ways as they have interacted with the many diverse Melanesian cultures. Many Christian denominations, were introduced by European and American missionaries with their own theological positions and opinions on what they were trying to do and how to approach the diverse cultures and worldviews they encountered.¹⁹

The Anglican Church

“The Melanesian Brotherhood, an indigenous Anglican religious order, is well known for their evangelism and mission work across Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea and the work of emerging Melanesian theologians who, tapping into their denominational and diverse cultural contexts are exploring how God is present within their own cultural worldviews and on their own terms. Crucially there is often recognition that the various versions of Christianity introduced into Melanesia are themselves the products of various cultural traditions and a questioning of the assumptions and presuppositions that are made as they interact with diverse non-Western contexts”.²⁰

“The Anglican Church of the Province of Melanesia is part of the World Wide Anglican Communion. It has nine dioceses that include two in Vanuatu and part of New Caledonia, and seven in the Solomon Islands. The current Primate and Archbishop who is also the bishop of the Diocese of Central Melanesia is the Most Reverend George Takeli. The spiritual head of the Province is the Archbishop of Melanesia. The General Secretary is the Chief Executive Officer. The current General Secretary is Dr. Abraham Hauriasi. The dioceses except for Central Melanesia (Honiara area) and Hanuato’o are divided into regions, each headed by a Senior Priest. The regions are further subdivided into Parishes or Districts headed by a Parish

¹⁶ <https://misacor.org.au/item/444-movement-for-a-better-world#!>

¹⁷ *M. Mennis from rempi to Rebiamul*

¹⁸ (Nokise 2009; Press 2009).

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesian_Brotherhood

Priest usually called a rector. Catechists are lay people appointed by local community and authorized by the bishop to take services and look after the spiritual life of a village.”

“The Church of Melanesia holds three orders of ministry – deacon, priest and bishop. The church follows a Common Prayer Book called A Melanesian English Prayer Book. The teaching of the church is on the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ, summed up in the Apostle’s Creed and the Nicene Creed. Holy Eucharist sometimes called “Mass” or Communion service is the focus of the church worship that is celebrated weekly wherever there is priest.

“George Augustus Selwyn was born in Hampshire and educated at Eton and Cambridge. He was ordained to the ministry in 1833 and was appointed Bishop of New Zealand in 1841. He sailed for New Zealand on the ‘Tomatin’ in December that year. In 1848 Bishop Selwyn, acting as temporary chaplain of HMS Dido, visited the islands of Melanesia with the aim of establishing a mission there. Following Bishop Selwyn’s visit, five Melanesians were brought for training at St. John’s College Auckland. This became the beginnings of the Melanesian Mission with the first Melanesian baptism taking place in 1852. Two years later at Selwyn’s recommendation, Melanesia was created a separate diocese from New Zealand.

“In 1855, John Coleridge Patteson answered Bishop Selwyn’s call for volunteers to go the South Pacific to preach the Gospel. He soon founded a school for the education of native Christian workers and, being adept at languages, he learned twenty-three of the languages spoken in the Polynesian and Melanesian Islands of the South Pacific.

“After John Coleridge Patteson was consecrated Bishop of Melanesia in 1861, Edwin Nobbs and Fisher Young from Norfolk Island became the first Christian martyrs for Melanesia. They were killed at Graciosa Bay in 1864 after being attacked by islanders with poisoned arrows.”²¹

“The establishment of Papua as a British Protectorate in 1884 made it seem only proper to have a British church in a British colony. The first Anglican missionaries arrived in Papua in 1891 and, following the comity agreement’ worked out by Governor MacGregor, the Anglicans received the Northern District of Papua, where the administration, plantation developers and gold miners had yet to make an impact.

photo: Anglican Sister Valmai, with CV Sisters, in the 1970s

In 1964, with the blessing of the Bishop of New Guinea, the Community of the Visitation was established at Popondetta, in the Northern District of Papua. For more than fifteen years, its Sisters were trained and nurtured by Sisters of the Community of the Holy Name. The Community of the Visitation is now wholly independent.²² Anglican Sisters in Popondetta.²³

In terms of structure, the Province is governed by a Provincial Council. Each diocese has its own Diocesan Council of clergy and laity elected by a



²¹ <http://orders.anglican.org/mbh/history.htm>

²² <https://chnmelb.org/png-connections>

²³ Photograph <https://chnmelb.org/png-connections>

Diocesan Synod which meets every two or three years Parishes form the local Christian community, each with its own elected Parish Council.²⁴

“Along with direct evangelisation, the Anglican Church in PNG has been committed to education and health care. Anglican policy was to teach basic literacy in the local language at village level before moving on to further primary education in English.

Those who did well might go on to high school originally the boys to Martyrs’ Popondetta and the girls to Holy Name Dogura, although both schools are now co-educational. Religious orders have played an important part in the development of the church - the Melanesian Brothers and the Sisters of the Visitation are both indigenous orders.

“The growing church was encouraged to be self-supporting and self-governing. Community leaders were encouraged to decide for themselves which customs should be retained, which should be modified or adapted to Christian practice, and which should be discarded. The ideal was to change as little as possible.

“After the war the church began to grow again under the direction of Bishop Philip Strong who had been bishop in New Guinea since 1937, assisted from 1950 by Bishop David Hand. In 1960 George Ambo was named as the first Papuan Assistant Bishop. In 1977 an independent Province of five dioceses was established, removing PNG from Australian Church control, with David Hand as its first Archbishop.

The Emblem of the Anglican Church in Port Moresby.

“The emblem of the Port Moresby diocese is the *lagatoi* or *lakatoi* which identifies the Diocese with the City of Port Moresby and the Southern Papuan Region. It also stands for the Church, as the Cross on the mast indicates. The lagatoi is coloured black to suggest the Melanesian nature of the Diocese. The waves signify the association of the Diocese with the sea: the whole of its southern boundary is coastline; its sea city is a port and most of its main centres are on the coast. The yellow band in the midst of the blue is to suggest the long coastline with its many reefs and beaches.



“The mystical significance of the waves, on which the lagatoi is placed, is the Prayer Book image of the Ark of the Church passing safely through the waves of this troublesome world towards the land of everlasting life. The yellow background of the emblem carries on the intention to associate the Diocese with the Port Moresby city. Yellow is also the colour of divinity and could be taken to suggest

that the Church, represented by the lagatoi, belongs to God”.²⁵

²⁴ <http://orders.anglican.org/mbh/history.htm>

²⁵ <http://portmoresby.anglican.org/>

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.



Photograph: Johannes Flierl

Flierl baptized the first two Lutheran converts in 1899, 13 years after his arrival. In 1891 the colonial government left the area in haste following a disastrous epidemic, and for the next 20 years the Lutheran community and missionaries around Finschhafen were left on their own.

Paul Steffen: “The first two missions in mainland New Guinea were of German origin. The first Christian mission to mainland New Guinea was the Lutheran Mission Society of Neuendettelsau, a strongly Lutheran society from Bavaria, Germany. On 12 July 1886, the missionary history of New Guinea started with the arrival of Rev. John Flierl at Finschhafen. During the first decades, this Lutheran Mission Society had its centre in the Huon Gulf Peninsula area. The missionaries introduced two missionary languages, one for the speakers out of one of the various Melanesian languages and one for

the Papuan-language speakers. Jabem was the language the missionaries heard at Simbang, in one of their first mission stations. About 900 coastal villagers spoke Jabem. As a mission language, it spread to all coastal and offshore islands where an Austronesian language was spoken. The language the Lutheran missionaries met at their station at Sattelberg (founded in 1892), a village in the mountainous hinterland of Finschhafen on the Huon Peninsula, was the Kate language, spoken by around 600 villagers around Sattelberg and used as the mission language in all inland missions in New Guinea.”

Australian historian Stewart Firth describes those early days:

No convert was made until 1899 and by then only two former school pupils at Simbang were baptized ... Yet Flierl laid the groundwork for a highly successful mission. By choosing to stay in the Finschhafen area, when the Neu Guinea Compagnie [New Guinea Company] was driven out by malaria in 1891, he ensured that the missionaries would not be associated with the wholesale loss of village land to plantations, as occurred in Madang, and by building a hill station at Sattelberg in the mountains, behind Finschhafen and staying there despite the looting by thieves, he established a mission station in an unusually healthy position as a base for later evangelization of the densely populated mountain ranges to the west. (Firth 147)

Another well-known missionary, Christian Keysser, arrived in 1899. He learned the Kate language quickly and saw that in many ways fear, mainly caused by sorcery, controlled the lives of whole communities. The first big group baptism took place at Sattelberg in 1905. From 1908 the first local congregations commissioned their own missionaries and sent them to the Hube people. 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. After the First World War, the Australian Lutheran Church received permission to “take control of the Lutheran missions in the Territory of New Guinea”.

Paul Steffen:

On 17 February 1887, Rev. Wilhelm Thomas, the first missionary of the Rhenish Mission Society, arrived at Finschhafen, where the colonial administration of the German New Guinea Company had settled. But the Neuendettelsau Lutheran mission started by Rev. Flierl had already settled at Finschhafen, so the Rhenish missionaries selected the Madang area as the centre of their mission. The immediate proximity of the Rhenish mission stations in Astrolabe Bay and Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen (Madang) to the administrative headquarters of the New Guinea Company at Stephansort (Bogadjim) and at Madang had a negative effect on the Rhenish mission. The German New Guinea Company had taken possession of land at the Madang area to build plantations. Their clear economic interests were rejected by the locals and had a lasting influence on the relationship between the Rhenish missionaries and the coastal population of the Madang area.²⁶

Australian historian Peter Hempenstall noted:

“By 1908, the Rhenish mission’s converts compared very unfavourably with the Neuendettelsau missions of 1,300 converts, and the 1,062 converts of the SVD, while in 1910 to 1911 the number of Rhenish converts actually declined from 109 to 83.”²⁷

Stewart Firth writes:

The Rhenish mission of Barmen was dogged by a series of disasters which left it hardly more influential in 1914 than when Brother Friedrich Eich landed at Kaiser Wilhelmsland in 1897. Brother Wilhelm Thomas left New Guinea ill and weak in October 1887, the first in a long line of Rhenish missionaries to be driven out.

When they expanded throughout the Highlands] There were often in competition with the Catholic Church. During the Second World War the Lutherans suffered along with other missions. They lost a great number of personnel and their properties were almost totally destroyed. (M. Mennis interview with Dr Braun of Madang)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Guinea ELCONG, later ELCPNG was formed as a local autonomous church in 1956. The Lutheran Church runs two evangelist training centres, with 80 students, and three seminaries for pastors, with around 300 students. The church is also heavily involved in teacher training, secondary, primary and elementary schooling medical care with nurse training and various hospitals, health centres and other facilities. In 1978, expatriate membership on the church council ceased.

After his election in 1998, Bishop Kigasung reversed the former decision to exclude renewal movements and started an office for dialogue with such movements. From 2001, two pastors from the office for dialogue visited renewal groups throughout the country. 104 Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands This work culminated in a “Coming Together Conference,” with more than 2,000 people gathering in Lae in 2003.

Seventh-day Adventist Church

²⁶ Steffen: *Sios blong umi*.

²⁷ Hempenstall 186)

Seventh-day Adventists first sent religious literature to Papua New Guinea in 1891 on the London Missionary Society boat. In 1895, church leaders decided to send a missionary family to New Guinea, a decision they abandoned when they heard news of cannibals murdering and eating several missionaries of the London Missionary Society.

A few Adventist church leaders made short visits to safe native villages of New Guinea from 1902 to 1905. These visits further convinced them of the need to send missionaries to live on the island. They thought Fijian missionary trainees would adapt more easily to the humid climate, local food and leafy houses of New Guinea. Septimus and Edith Carr, who had previously worked in Fiji, and their Fijian assistant, Benisimani (Beni) Tavondi, arrived at Port Moresby on June 25, 1908.²⁸

In 1906 the Seventh-day Adventist Church in USA entrusted its mission to the churches of Australasia. Two years later, Pastor S.W Carr and his wife, along with Fijian Peni Tavodi, arrived in Port Moresby. Gordon Smith and his wife and Solomona, a Cook Islands missionary, joined the PNG mission in 1910. They settled inland and found their first converts among the clans of the Kokoda Trail and later among the people of Vailala 16 km to the west and Aroma 130 km to the west.

The missionaries rented a house and began making contact with the government officials, other European and national missionaries and planters. They became familiar with the local area, visited native feasts and gave out salt to befriend the villagers. The new site was used as a plantation. Soon more missionaries came to help. The missionaries officially started a church on the island on July 11, 1910.



From left-to-right: Israel, Haskell and Corliss, some of the first pioneers of the Adventist Church in the South Pacific

“The SDA Church has since spread into every province in PNG. It is particularly strong in the Eastern Highlands Province. Doctrines that distinguish the SDA Church include its teachings about the Sabbath, the non-immortality of the soul and healthy living. SDAs believe that the prophetic clock is signaling the end of time. Christ will come soon and these last days will be a time of widespread apostasy. After initial slow growth, church growth started to gain momentum after World War II.

The SDA Church has since grown rapidly in PNG. From 1975 to 2000 the annual growth rate has been consistently around 7 per cent. There is no doubt there are many reasons why people are attracted to becoming SDA. The church gives the impression of being suited to those wanting to live in a healthy way and to get ahead in life.”²⁹

²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Pacific_Division_of_Seventh-day_Adventists

²⁹ "South Pacific Division". *Adventist Yearbook*. Retrieved 2021-07-28

Baptist Churches in PNG by Gibbs

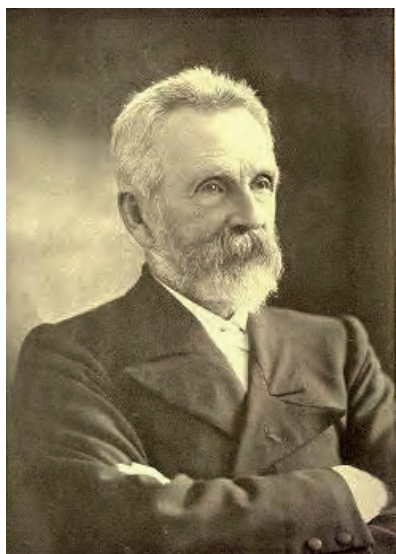
“The Baptist Churches in Papua New Guinea are divided into two groups: the Baptist Union, which includes most of the Baptist Churches started by the Australian Baptist Missionary Society; and the Independent Baptists, mostly with links to America. The Baptist Union churches began when Australian Baptist missionaries came to the Baiyer River area in the Highlands near Mount Hagen in 1949. From Baiyer they evangelized into the Enga-speaking people of the Kompam district. Later they began evangelisation near Telefomin in the mountains bordering the Sepik and the Western Province, The Baptist Union was formed in 1958. Besides personal evangelism, outreach ministries and worship services, the Baptist Union missionaries also established schools, medical services and community development projects. As of 2003, the Baptist Union of PNG had 400 churches with 45,000 baptized members. The ‘revival’ that appeared in PNG from 1973 onwards appears to have begun in Baptist communities of the Sau Enga. It was manifest in crying and shaking. Solomon Islands pastors studying at CLTC who already had experience of such phenomena in their own churches went to the Enga churches, encouraging them not to fear and to recognize the manifestations of revival Cramb and Kolo 1983.

“The Union is ecumenically minded and is a member of both the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches and the Evangelical Alliance, The Union runs two resident Pidgin Bible schools that follow a three-year programme. Some pastors also train for a Diploma or Degree at the Christian Leaders Training College. A few go to study in the Philippines. Those studying for B.Th at CLTC are supported 60 per cent by their own church and 40 per cent by the Union. For anyone studying for a Masters or Doctorate the church looks to overseas partners for funding. The Baptist Union does not have women pastors on principle. Members do not smoke or chew betel nut because they believe this offends against the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit Lane 2002, interview by author The Union is now fully localized, the last missionary having left in 2001. It is 90 per cent financially independent due to tithes and offerings. Some assistance from overseas is sought for training programmes. The Union is interested in mission beyond PNG and have sent PNG missionaries to Australia, Pakistan and India.”³⁰



³⁰ Gibbs p105 Papua New Guinea

The Methodist/ Wesleyan Mission and George Brown



Charles W. Forman: The legacy of George Brown is not hard to find: three major Pacific Island churches that he initiated and a fourth that he restored; thousands of people still gathering every year to celebrate George Brown Day; an important school and a college bearing his name in Papua New Guinea; one of the best schools in Samoa, also bearing his name—these among other things give testimony to a lively inheritance from this missionary of a century ago.

What kind of man was he, and what did he do to merit such continuing recognition? George Brown was in many ways the prototype of the pioneer missionary of the past century—adventurous, resourceful, imaginative, willing to suffer yet never complain, buoyant, and friendly. He also epitomized the expansive Methodism of that era and was by far the most outstanding Methodist in Oceania during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The great turning point in his life came when he stayed for a time in New Zealand with his aunt and her husband, who were Methodist missionaries. Here he saw a new kind of family life and began to feel that there was a better existence available to him than what he had hitherto known. He began to attend church and gradually became more and more involved in church life. He married S. L. Wallis, the daughter of a missionary in New Zealand, and in 1860 was accepted by the Methodist Church and sent out to Samoa. As a missionary, he engaged in no heavy theological thought. His was a practical, day-to-day faith. He was prepared to follow Christ's will wherever it would lead."³¹

Establishing the Church in Samoa and Fiji. To Brown must be given the major credit for building up a Methodist Church that became, in proportion to its size, probably the strongest and most active church in the Pacific Islands. This was his first great legacy. The achievement can be credited to a variety of factors. Brown loved the Samoan people and admired their culture. He later wrote, "I have always considered the Samoans to be amongst the nicest and most lovable people with whom I have ever lived." He studied their culture in great detail. He saw that the mission's training institution should be located in a place of high traditional standing and moved it to Lufilufi, a major center of chiefly power. He had natural linguistic ability, and from the first he immersed himself in the language, preaching his first sermon after only eight weeks in the country. He wrote 130 hymns, which are used today in the Methodist hymnbook.³² His resoluteness and bravery also won him wide influence. In Fiji likewise, he was a great admirer of the culture and of Fijian life generally.

I, the author, have used Rev. Brown's books extensively in my work on the history and culture of the Rabaul People.³²

1875. Brown arrived in New Britain. In August, Brown arrived on the coast of New Britain ready to begin work with nine Fijian and four Samoan missionaries, most of them were married. The board had expected him to settle the Islanders and then leave, but on the voyage he decided that he ought to stay and work with them. He established a close friendship with all these fellow workers, and they responded with full trust in him. Immediately after getting settled, Brown

³¹ Charles W. Forman, "The Legacy of George Brown," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (January 1998): 28-33

³² *The Babau of Rabaul M Mennis* 2019

set out by boat to visit the villages in eastern New Britain, in New Ireland, and in the small Duke of York Islands, lying between these two, where he made his headquarters. He went completely unarmed among men who carried arms at all times when outside of their homes. There were frequent warnings that he would be killed if he went to certain places, but he went anyway.³³

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. 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.

In 1890 Brown went to Papua to consult with the governor and other missions about the location of a new Methodist work. He then returned to Sydney and within a year had recruited and splendidly equipped a party of over seventy people, including missionaries, mostly Fijians, and builders to initiate the new venture. Brown himself led the party to the islands east of Papua and supervised the beginning of the work.³⁴

In 1902, Brown was again accompanying a large pioneer party, this time to start the Western Solomon Mission centered in the beautiful Roviana Lagoon. So it is that the Methodist churches, now the United Church, in both the Papuan Islands and in the Western Solomons owe their existence to Brown's vision, determination, and action-another major legacy. His relations to white men in the islands also call for comments. He made friends with all of them, even with the pathetic beachcombers and with the German traders whose power plays and land-grabbing he deplored. The British colonial governors in Fiji, Papua, and the Solomon Islands



counted him as a friend. In April 1908 Brown retired from the general secretaryship, completing forty-eight years of almost unbroken missionary service. He remained active, publishing a large autobiography in 1908 and an anthropological study,³⁵ Seven years later, in 1917, he died.

United church in Rabaul

Traditionally, many of the United Church's personnel were recruited from earlier-established Methodist and Congregationalist churches in Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga; the

United Church continues to have close relations with sister churches in these neighbouring island countries. Its theology and social policy tends to be somewhat more akin to these theologically conservative neighbouring countries' long-established evangelical Protestant churches than to those in Australia. On the other hand, the Church is considerably more broad-minded in such matters than more recently arrived fundamentalist groups, and it maintains the

³³ M. Mennis: *Time of the Tauber*. also *They came to Matupit*.

³⁴ George Brown autobiography

³⁵ George Brown: *Melanesians and Polynesians* 1910

historic Methodist and Congregational strong emphasis on education and literacy in the broadest sense.

As with the Anglican and Lutheran churches, the United Church has suffered some attrition in recent decades as a result of aggressive proselytising among its constituents by fundamentalist and pentecostalist groups originating in the United States of America and, to a lesser extent, Australia. Many of Papua New Guinea's leaders have had a United Church background.³⁶ and³⁷

Church of John Wesley on Matupit Island



Gibbs:

[In British New Guinea,] in 1890 Administrator Macgregor met with representatives of the LMS, Methodist Mission, Anglican Mission and Sacred Heart Mission MSC in an effort to reduce conflict and improve efficiency in mission work in Papua. The MSC would not be restricted and refused to be part of the agreement. However, the other missions agreed to work in separately defined areas of Papua known as 'spheres of influence'. That is how the Wesleyan Methodist Mission came to the Papuan islands Milne Bay. William Bromilow with a party of 10 Australians and 65 Pacific islanders, including women and children, began their mission at Dobu in 1891. With Dobu as the centre, the church spread throughout the islands.³⁸

Photograph: William Lawes

The London Missionary Society (LMS)

The first London Missionary Society (LMS) evangelists in Papua were led by a Cook Islander, Ruatoka, who was part of the original missionary party that landed at Manumanu village in November 1872. Two years later William Lawes began work among the Motu people at Hanuabada. He brought in his wife and children. These early missionaries began to train local evangelists, using Motu as a lingua franca. In 1877 they were joined by James Chalmers, who, with Ruatoka and the Polynesian teachers opened mission stations from East Cape to Daru, covering 1,600 km of the Papuan coastline. The Polynesians introduced some of their own customs, dances and singing. Unfortunately, the Papuan dances were banned as being too promiscuous and many were lost altogether.³⁹ (*M. Mennis Hiri Dalana*)



³⁶ *United Church in Papua New Guinea — World Council of Churches* www.oikoumene.org. Retrieved 19 March 2020.

³⁷ *One hundred years in the islands: the Methodist/United Church in the New Guinea Islands Region, 1875-1975, Rabaul, 1975; and United Church in Rabaul*

³⁸ Gibbs p105 *Papua New Guinea*.

³⁹ *M. Mennis Hiri Dalana*

In 1880, starting from Kerepunu in a small rowboat, and accompanied by two native teachers Chalmers set out into Hood Lagoon. After pushing through swamps they climbed up a thousand feet and came to the people of the Animarupu district. He found the people starving to death after a long drought. Their enemies had refused them food and were ready to destroy them; Chalmers (also called Tamate) brought peace between these tribes and also with the chief of Aroma on the coast so that trading of seafood could be initiated with the Animarupu people.⁴⁰

Chalmers was fearless, going unarmed into hostile areas and winning people over with his kindness. However, he was often in danger because the abuses of the labour traffickers and the crimes of lawless traders had taught the people to fear the white man. From a few mission houses over the next ten years, Lawes and Chalmers brought peace to many areas. When Admiral Erskine arrived to make a proclamation of sovereignty over Papua, he knew that with the missionaries' help, a peaceful take-over was possible. The Annexation of British New Guinea took place on 6 November 1884. For the occasion, fifty chiefs were brought on board the Commodore's ship, the Nelson, by the Rev. W. G. Lawes. One of the most prominent chiefs was Boevagi, the chief of the Port Moresby tribe, who was entrusted with the "responsibility of upholding the authority and dignity of England in the island."

Mr Lawes presented Boevagi with an ebony stick, with a florin (two shillings) with the Queen's head embedded on the top telling him, "This stick represents the Queen of England. and is 'an emblem of the authority' over the tribes and their chiefs."⁴¹ It was a tough assignment for Boevagi with all the warring tribes along the coast and inland.

Five warships were present for the ceremony and there was much pageantry and noise from booming cannon and fog sirens. Lawes and Chalmers were both called on to explain to the local people what was happening and what a Protectorate was. At several places along the coast, chiefs were taken on board the flagship, "where the proclamation was read, translated, and explained to them with the hoisting of the Union Jack and the exchange of presents. Tamate (Chalmers) accompanied the Commodore on this cruise of proclamation. It lasted for three weeks"⁴² Chalmers welcomed the Protectorate as he hoped it would put an end to the Kanaka traffic.⁴³

The LMS combined with other churches to form the United Church⁴⁴

Ronald G. Williams:

The United Church in Papua New Guinea resulted from a merger of the churches that grew from two missions and some associated congregations, the two missions being the London Missionary Society LMS and the Australasian Methodist Mission. The London Missionary Society, composed mostly of Congregational church members, was founded for the specific task of preaching the Gospel among newly discovered peoples of the Pacific Islands. British missionaries came to the Pacific and later to PNG, accompanied by South Sea Islands teachers and evangelists.

⁴⁰(Lennox, 1902: 82).

⁴¹ Chalmers, 1885: 19 -20).

⁴² Lennox, 1902: 125).

⁴³ M. Mennis Hiri Dalana.

⁴⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Church_in_Papua_New_Guinea_and_Solomon_Islands

The Australasian Methodist Church began mission work in the Duke of York Islands in the New Guinea Islands in 1875. In 1968, the Solomon Islands, the New Guinea Islands, the Papuan Islands, and the Highlands Regions of the Methodist Church, together with the Papua Ekalesia from the LMS and two related English-speaking United Church congregations in Port Moresby Ela and Boroko joined to form the United Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. This marked the birth of an autonomous indigenous church from two missions of slightly different traditions. The United Church in PNG is now organized into nine regions, each with its local bishop elected by its synod. A minister or pastor is responsible for a congregation and congregations are grouped into circuits supervised by a superintendent minister. Today United Church ministers are trained at Rarongo Theological Seminary on the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain. Students follow a six-year course leading to a Bachelor of Divinity degree. The Bachelor of Theology was introduced in 2004. As of 2004 there were 72 students, most with wives at Rarongo. There are a number of challenges facing the United Church in Papua New Guinea.



Reference; *The United Church in Papua, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands: the story of the development of an indigenous church on the occasion the centenary of the L.M.S. in Papua, 1872-1972* / by Ronald G. Williams

Table 1: PNG Citizen Population in Private Dwellings by Religion (2000 Census)

	Total	Males	Females
Citizens in Private Dwellings	5,140,476	2,659,394	2,481,082
Christian	4,934,098	2,550,114	2,383,984
Anglican	166,046	87,096	78,950
Evangelical Alliance	266,598	134,548	132,050
Evangelical Lutheran	1,001,005	523,363	477,642
Roman Catholic	1,391,033	724,242	666,791
Salvation Army	10,377	5,401	4,976
Seventh-day Adventist	520,098	266,690	253,408
United Church	591,458	307,711	283,747
Pentecostal	440,904	221,424	219,480
Baptist	130,987	67,625	63,342
Other Christian	415,592	212,014	203,578
Other Religions	72,406	37,253	35,153
Bahá'í	15,408	8,211	7,197
Church of Christ	20,516	10,464	10,052
Jehovah's Witnesses	20,625	10,427	10,198
Other religion	15,857	8,151	7,706
No Religion	30,733	17,813	12,920
Not Stated	103,239	54,214	49,025

Source: National Statistical Office, 2000 Census Basic Tables – National Level, Table A6

Figure quoted from Fr Gibbs SVD, although he has reservations about these figures

Gibbs: The overall population has increased 40 per cent during the period between 1990 and 2000. The table shows that the 'mainline' churches such as Anglican, Lutheran, United and Catholic have increased in numbers at a much lower rate than the overall population, while churches like the Seventh-day Adventist and 'Other' churches mostly Evangelical Alliance and Pentecostal churches have increased at almost twice the rate of the general population and are growing at almost three times the rate of the 'mainline' churches. Some Pentecostal churches are increasing at a very rapid rate. For example, the Assemblies of God Church in PNG has increased by 413 per cent over the 15 years between 1989 and 2004- an average of 28 per cent a year! Papua New Guinea Trends and Implications The statistical data showing how the historic 'mainline' churches are steadily losing ground to other churches in PNG must surely raise questions as to the cause of this trend and the implications for the future of those churches.⁴⁵

As a result of these finds the Anglican and Catholic churches have had many meetings trying to co-operate and find common grounds.

In Darrell Whiteman 's view, Catholic missionaries, on the whole, especially since Vatican II, have tended to be the most tolerant and understanding, and the conservative fundamentalist missionaries the least. Many culturally sensitive missionaries have probed the indigenous cultures for points of contact with Christianity and have viewed their efforts as one of accommodating the gospel they bring to the indigenous cultures that receive it. Many of these missionaries have made superb ethnological contributions in the course of their missionary work" (1983:430). It is certainly no exaggeration to say that many missionaries, especially in recent decades, have done sterling work as "cultural brokers".

Fr Paul Steffen SVD⁴⁶

Paul Steffen SVD in his writing about mission activity on the northern areas of New Guinea noted different stages of mission life.

Missionaries in other areas could extrapolate these dates to fit their own mission history. For example, the Sacred Heart missionaries in Rabaul would begin the first period as 1882 when they first arrived but other periods might be similar to those listed here.



Photo; Fr Paul Steffen SVD in the highlands

⁴⁵ Gibbs - Papua New Guinea p 99

⁴⁶ From a receiving to a sending Mission Church. 125 years of the Catholic Church in Mainland New Guinea, 1896-2021 pps 1 -23. Paul Steffen

Fr Paul Steffen identified Five stages' in the growth of the Catholic Church in PNG :

1. The Founding period, 1896-1921 From 1899 to 1914, the Imperial Government administered German New Guinea through a governor. From 1914 until 1920 German New Guinea was governed by Australia Military and from 1921 it became the Australian Mandated Territory of New Guinea. ----The missionaries first of all were kept busy in making first contacts, then in stabilizing these contacts and building up permanent relationships with local tribal communities. Even if they take individual members to their mission station institutions, it should first of all be considered as a part of these contacts and alliances with whole tribal communities.

2. The Period of extension and trial, 1922-1945 What I would call the expansion period is equivalent to Janssen's period of syncretistic communities. In particular for the Momase region the years from 1921 to 1940 could be characterized as such, even if this expansion movement, respectively syncretistic communities, was noticeable before 1921 and after 1940 as well. This was followed by the World War and the decimation of many of the mission and the deaths of many missionaries.

3. The Restoration and Consolidation Period, 1946-1965 In the highlands we observe more overlapping periods of foundation and fast expansion, caused partly by the slow opening of certain highland regions by the government and the competitive rivalry of not only Catholic and Lutheran Missions as in the pre-war period [but also when other denominations moved in.] In 1963 the first twenty-two seminarians started to study for the priesthood in Kap near Alexishafen; the official opening of Holy Spirit Seminary took place in 1964 with twenty-nine seminarians. "The first four SVD professors reflected the internationality of the missionary congregation.

4. The period of de-colonization before and after Independence. - Towards a Local Church, 1966-1995 On December 17, 1968, Ignatius Kilage from Gembogl, Denglagu parish, Upper Simbu, was the first priest ordained from Mainland New Guinea. On 15 November 1966 all the Apostolic Vicariates and Prefectures in Papua and New Guinea and the British Solomon Islands were elevated to dioceses with bishops as ordinaries in charge. Consequently, the so-called *IUS COMMISIONIS*, the law that the Pope commissions certain mission societies and orders to carry out the task of first evangelization, was abolished in 1969. --- PNG is a nation in transition. The urbanization in modern PNG society had to be addressed.

5. The period of the interdependent Local Church in PNG, 1996-2021 In the last quarter of a century after the centenary celebration of the Catholic Church in Mainland New Guinea in 1996, we see a stage of gradual growth of a local church. The mission of the church is to continue the mission of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and that mission is never completed or over. When we reflect on 125 years of happenings in mainland New Guinea, we have to admit that it was always a history of the people as the main actors. How could the Church take root without the receptiveness and active participation of the New Guinean people themselves in their history of being evangelized by God's word?

Initially, the missionaries could only witness and proclaim God's Word from the point of view of their own culture that they were brought up in. Later when they understood the local culture, they learnt to adapt the ritual in church as much as possible. In spite of all mistakes and misunderstandings, and all kinds of obstacles, the first hundred years of New Guinean Catholic Church History can only be fully understood if we acknowledge God's grace and guidance of his own people in it. It can really be compared with the Acts of the Apostles period in early

Church history and the recommendations. “Go and take the gospel to the far ends of the earth” and that is exactly what they did.

Photograph: Self-study group in Mt Hagan in 1972 (M. Mennis)



The three main Missionary Orders in PNG until 1946:

Note. All these orders continued in their mission areas after 1946 although some of their areas were given to other orders because of the decimation of their numbers during the war.

From 1896 to 1945, Catholic missionaries in New Guinea came predominantly from three orders, and it is interesting to compare the different experiences of each. First came the Marists, who settled in Milne Bay, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands; then came the Sacred Heart missionaries, who settled in Rabaul and Yule Island. Finally, there came the Divine Word missionaries, who settled in Tumleo, Wewak, Madang and Alexishafen, from where they ventured to Bundi and Mount Hagen in the New Guinea Highlands. All three orders were in quite different areas but faced similar challenges — the difficult climate, other religious sects and the incumbent governments. Most of all, they faced the problem of how to preach the Gospel to the local people, who for thousands of years had lived a self-sufficient life with their own rules, trade links and marriage rituals, governed by a belief in the spirit world dominated by their ancestors. The older people were set in their traditional ways and belief systems, so the missionaries decided to educate the young people about the “Good News”. They established schools and orphanages, convents and mission houses, all clustered around the new church buildings. Small clinics helped with the health problems of all the people. Through their care and kindness, the missionaries, whether priests, brothers or sisters, attracted converts.

1. The Marists (Societas Mariae or Society of Mary, founded in France) set up the first mission station in Papua New Guinea when Bishop Jean-Georges Collomb (1816–1848) and his companions arrived in Milne Bay in 1847 and started missions on Woodlark Island and Rooke (Umboi) Island. However, many of them died of malaria, including Collomb, forcing the Marists to withdraw. Although the mission was not a success, that does not detract from the fact that the Marists were the first to set up a Catholic mission in Papua New Guinea. Fifty years later, in 1898, when the Marists went to Bougainville, they were part of a well-established and steadily growing movement of European contact, and as such their position was more secure. The Marists also had a mission station on Futuna Island near Fiji, begun in 1836, where one of their number, Fr Peter Chanel, was martyred in 1841, becoming the first declared martyr saint of Oceania. Because the Marists had mission stations in Oceania, they brought some of these South Sea Islanders with them to Bougainville to help spread the Gospel message. After the war, the Marists worked in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands and were helped by many other orders as shown in this book. They were aided by many other orders including the Dominicans.

2. The Sacred Heart missionaries (founded in France as the Missionarii Sacratissimi Cordis or MSC) arrived in East New Britain in 1882, they had no such advantage, coming as they did

straight from Europe. Rev. George Brown did not view the Catholic missionaries favourably and dubbed their centre “Vuna Popie”, meaning the place of the popes — a name that the Catholics readily adopted. When the German colonial powers were set up, Governor Hahl introduced a policy of areas of influence. The Wesleyans/Methodists had one area and the Catholics another to prevent proselytising. Hahl gave Bishop Louis Couppé (1850–1926) the option of accepting these areas of influence or de-camping to New Ireland altogether. Couppé agreed to the areas of influence policy. Some French speaking missionaries went to Yule Island to avoid causing friction with the German Colonial Government. Vunapope became the centre of a Cathedral, presbytery for the Priests and Brothers, and 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. 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. Later mission centres were established under the Australian Administration until the outbreak of World War II brought the Japanese invasion and the destruction of Vunapope.

Post war the Sacred Heart missionaries worked in Milne Bay, East New Britain, West New Britain, New Ireland, Yule Island, Bereina. And the Gulf. They were helped by many other orders of Priests Brothers and Sisters as well as volunteers.

3. The third main order pre-war was the Societas Verbi Divini or SVD, known as the Divine Word missionaries, who arrived in Madang (in FriedrichWilhelmshafen) in 1896 from Germany. The incumbent Lutheran missionaries had the ear of the German officials, so the SVD missionaries, led by Father Eberhard Limbrock (1859–1931), were told to move up the coast to set up their mission station.

They sailed to Tumleo Island, 300 miles northwest of Madang. Years later, Fr Limbrock found an ideal area near Madang at Alexishafen, and this became the mission’s headquarters. The mission flourished with German missionaries arriving and setting up schools, churches and mission centres. From Alexishafen, Father William Ross (1895–1973) and Father Schaefer (1887–1964) made treks into the Highlands in 1934, establishing mission centres in Bundi and Mount Hagen.

In 1940, Fr George Bernarding arrived at Alexishafen on the *Macdui* greeted by Bishop Wolf and a crowd of missionaries who showed him the beautiful new cathedral. After working at several mission stations, he was appointed to Mt Hagen in 1941 to help Fr Ross. This probably saved his life because soon afterwards Madang was bombed by the Japanese. During World War II, many coastal Catholic and Lutheran missionaries had harrowing experiences when so many lost their lives. Although the war, did not reach the highlands, apart from periodic bombings, the missionaries were all evacuated.

Interviews I had with Bishop Bernarding in 1973 now make interesting reading covering the daily routine of the mission life in those days. It also covers Fr Ross’s work up to the time of his golden jubilee and then his death in 1973. His good friend Wamp Wan died in 2007 and is buried near him in the Rebiamul cemetery alongside many of his Rempi mission workers. The re-establishment of the Highlands missions after the war when Frs Ross and Bernarding were permitted to return is described.

After the war the SVD Orders worked on the north coast of PNG in Madang and Wewak as well as in the Western Highlands and the Eastern Highlands and Wabag.

New Missionary Orders Post War

1. The Franciscan Order OFM in Aitape arrived 1946. .



Photograph The Minister General Visits The Friars Of PNG In 2016

The Franciscan friars came to Aitape in 1946. This area had been manned by the SVD order, but they had lost so many personnel in the war that they requested that another missionary order be invited to take-over Aitape. In 1997, 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. Bishop Doggett said: As time progressed the missionaries set up large mission stations and then began to map the roads between them. This was particularly so in the Lumi and Nuku areas and to peg out these roads was an arduous task. With the advent of the roads the problems of the leeches tended to dissipate. Similarly, the new malaria drugs like Chloroquine malaria was brought under control.

The bishop added: We rejoice in these advances and progress and I mention them solely so we may salute the first fine and wonderful body of men who pioneered the New Guinea mission without the benefits that came later.”

\75th Anniversary of the OFM Friars going to Aitape in Papua New Guinea in 1946.



1946 – 2021

2. Franciscan OFM Cap in Southern Highlands. The Southern Highlands where the OFM Cap, the Capuchin Order of St Francis established strong missions spreading as far as the inland areas established by the Sacred Heart missions from Bereina. Yule Island and Bereina were established early by the Sacred Heart Missionaries from Rabaul. I did not have much material on the Southern Highlands and the Franciscan ofm Cap Order, but I received permission to use their own history called “*Only the Beginnings*”. This book is very interesting.

Photograph Franciscan OFM Cap in Southern Highlands

Sunday, December 9, 2012

The people of the Catholic Diocese of Mendi, in Papua New Guinea joined together for a three-day celebration to mark the Silver Jubilee of the dedication of the Cathedral Church. It was built and blessed on 8 December 1987 under the pastoral leadership of the late Bishop Firmin Schmidt, OFM Cap., the first bishop of Mendi.



“Singsing” groups from around the diocese came to join in the celebration - many dressed in their traditional attire and playing the traditional ‘kundu’ drum. The youth of the diocese also participated in various ways. Above, young people are interpreting a song dedicated to Our Lady, Mother of the Good Shepherd (the Patroness of the Diocese and the Cathedral) in creative dance.

Bishop said, ‘In my homily, I talked a bit about the meaning of a cathedral in the diocese as a symbol of the unity of faith and love - and a sign of Body of Christ and People of God being built up in a given place. Further, I mentioned that a jubilee is a time to celebrate in the present; to give thanks for the blessings of the past and, to look forward in hope to the future and to the tasks that still lay ahead.

3. In Vanimo – the Passionists 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.

In February 1965, four sisters – Sisters 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. 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. 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.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Laraine Crowe rsj Article written in February 28, 2020



Passionist Seminarian Br Joseph Liaia: said, “I saw that being a priest would be the best way that I can serve God and serve the people. I was attracted to the charism of our founder, St Paul of the Cross, and the charism is to preach the love of God manifested in the crucified Christ. I feel like this is the life I want to live.”⁴⁸

In 1994, the Passionist Heart Foundation began the Senta Bilong Helpim care centre in Vanimo. The centre assists children with disabilities and their families. The Bishop of Vanimo has asked that the

centre be relocated closer to the diocesan headquarters in Vanimo which will make it more easily accessible to the children and families it serves. The Bishop has also requested that extra services be offered, including a workshop for young adults with disabilities and accommodation for families of children who are visiting from outlying areas.

4. The Montfort missionaries in the Western Province at Daru and Kiunga.

The de Montfort Missionaries began work on Daru Island with Brothers from Canada and gradually moved to Kiunga. some Brothers from Malaysia Singapore worked in Kiunga and then more Brothers arrived from India. Their mission included running of Boys’ Town for disadvantaged boys, managing CODE for school leavers, running community schools and are currently managing St. Gabriel Technical Secondary School in Kiunga and St Charles Lwanga secondary School in Port Moresby.

Bishop Gilles SMM spoke at the Golden Anniversary of the Brothers in 2018

“Members of our three Montfortian Congregations [the Montfort Missionaries; the Daughters of Wisdom and the Brothers of St. Gabriel] always gave strength to one another. We never gave up on the life-giving presence of God. [Furthermore], with the grace of God, we never gave up on the good people of the Western Province. God is really good. Altogether 38 Brothers of St. Gabriel came to work in our Diocese and worked in the education of our children. What is more important is that they were here in the name of Jesus and always tried to be good followers of Montfort their founder. And above all they were not here to gain anything for themselves but at the service of the people and of Jesus living in the people. Dear Brothers of St. Gabriel, thank you for that beautiful journey of fifty years with us and our people.”

Photograph: The Montfort Order, the Daughters of Wisdom”

Bishop Gilles SMM also spoke of the work the Montford Sisters did over the years.



⁴⁸ *Catholic Leader June 2018*

The Montfort Order, the Daughters of Wisdom is a Catholic religious institute of women founded by Louis de Montfort and Marie Louise Trichet in 1707 to serve those in need. In Kiunga they work mainly in the schools in Kiunga but they also attend to women prisoners in the jail where they are confined in small cells. There are no organised programmes to help these women so the jail's managers are happy to allow the Sisters to visit once a week.⁴⁹



5 The Marianhill Fathers in Lae. 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).⁵⁰ 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 time⁵¹ The Sisters of the Precious Blood in Lae. 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.



Priests in Lae (Facebook)

Volunteers in Papua New Guinea. A number of organisations encourage volunteering in Papua New Guinea. Some are government-based, while others are charities and church-linked organisations. "Many Papua New Guineans and Australians have built lifelong friendships and

⁴⁹ *Rachelle Leblane 2015 : 68*

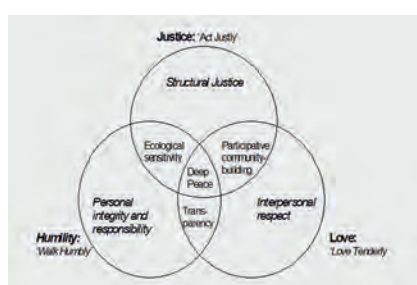
⁵⁰ *Fr Frans Lenssen. Review. <http://www.academia.edu> From_a_Mission_to_a_Church.*

⁵¹ *The Vatican Radio*

connections through volunteer work and programs. Australian Volunteers is the volunteer program associated with Australia's aid program. In PNG, it facilitates volunteer placements within a number of sectors connected to Australia's aid activities."⁵² Wendy Alu, manager of the Australian Volunteers Program in PNG, says volunteers often express their delight at meeting and working with Papua New Guineans. 'We're very friendly people, and easy to work with,' she says. 'I'm always proud to be a Papua New Guinean, despite the challenges that we go through. Wendy says PNG is somewhere that volunteers are truly needed. "Papua New Guineans struggle financially to further their education – it's very expensive to go through higher education here. So, having volunteers come here is an alternative way to up-skill our people."⁵³

PALMS Volunteer Opportunities in PNG 2020

Palms Australia started in Sydney in 1956 as the Paulian Association. Groups formed in around 100 communities to identify local issues, reflect on values and take appropriate action to address social inequality and assist people in need. After identifying that similar issues needed to be addressed globally, in 1961 the program was extended to communities overseas. These communities requested professional assistance to develop health, education and other facilities. Since then, Palms Australia has placed over 1500 individuals in 40 countries around the world. The number of requests for assistance has risen in the past two months while the number of Australians able to serve a community abroad has fallen. Overseas Volunteer Opportunities - Palms Australia⁵⁴



(Illustration for educational purposes only)

We believe enabling people to open their palms and reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion, nationality and gender will empower cooperation to achieve a just, sustainable, interdependent and peaceful world free of poverty. Palms Australia believes communities are the best architects of their own development. They possess the contextual and cultural awareness that informs sustainable

solutions to poverty. Development assistance must be provided at the request of, not imposed on, communities in need. This underpins our international assignments program. Priority is given to requests from vital grass-roots organisations, seeking sustainable solutions to poverty, based on community articulated goals and strategies.

Relationships and skill development are prioritised ahead of the buildings, equipment, and goods that others offer as aid. Requests are met by recruiting qualified and experienced Australians to share their skills. supported for authentic development to build on existing

They are thoroughly prepared and relationships and mutual strengths of the local community.



⁵² <https://www.australianvolunteers.com/where-we-work/papua-new-guinea/>

⁵³ <https://www.australianvolunteers.com/discover/stories/in-pictures-10-reasons-you-should-consider-volunteering-in-png/>

⁵⁴ <https://palms.org.au/about/> Illustration for educational purposes only.

⁵⁵ **PALMS Volunteer Opportunities in PNG 2020**

Synod on Synodality October 2023 in Rome

In 2023 more than 360 people from around the world – bishops, and cardinals, religious sisters, and clergy, members of the laity gathered in Rome to discern where the Holy Spirit may lead the Catholic Church. Synod on Synodality 2023: Summary report calls for greater ‘co-responsibility’ in Church. Pope⁵⁶ Francis thanks the delegates at the conclusion of the 2023 Synod on Synodality⁵⁷. |

By Jonathan Liedl⁵⁸



“The Vatican’s nearly monthlong Synod on Synodality assembly, convened by Pope Francis, concluded with members approving an ambitious text calling for greater “co-responsibility” among all believers in the evangelizing mission of the Church — and proposing concrete reforms to achieve it.

“Titled “A Synodal Church in Mission,” the 42-page summary report included notable proposals to establish new ministries for the laity, increase lay involvement in decision-making, create processes to evaluate bishops’ performance of their ministry, change the way the Church discerns “controversial” issues, and expand the footprint of synodal assemblies going forward. “The exercise of co-responsibility is essential for synodality and is necessary at all levels of the Church,” the final report stated. “Every Christian is a mission in the world.”

“The document also repeatedly sought to ground synodality in Scripture, tradition, and the teaching of Vatican II while also affirming the need to further develop the often-misunderstood concept itself and apply it more deeply to the Church’s theology and canon law. The final report itself provided a comprehensive definition of the term.

“Synodality can be understood as the walk of Christians with Christ and toward the kingdom, together with all humanity; mission-oriented, it involves coming together in assembly at the different ecclesial levels of life, listening to one another, dialogue, communal discernment, consensus-building as an expression of Christ’s making himself present alive in the Spirit, and decision-making in differentiated co-responsibility,” it stated. Many of these themes ran throughout the document’s treatment of 20 different issues, including everything from “Christian initiation” to “missionaries in the digital environment.”

⁵⁶ Credit: Vatican Media

⁵⁷ Credit: Vatican Media

⁵⁸ Jonathan Liedl is senior editor for the National Catholic Register. His background includes state Catholic conference work, three years of seminary formation, and tutoring at a university Christian study center.

Critics of the Synodal process say that it has the ability to take away the universality of the church and result in differences in the church in different regions. Catholic means universal and the Synodal process could impact this. Contemporary issues in the West are not issues in Africa, South America or the Asia Pacific Region, including Papua New Guinea, so we could end up with these issues being addressed differently in different regions of the world. (author)

The summary report noted areas of convergence, divergence, and concrete proposals that had emerged during the 365 synod members' discussions on communion, participation, and mission from 4th until 28th October 2023. "This is the approach of Jesus, to create spaces for everyone so that no one feels excluded," said Cardinal Mario Grech, head of the secretariat for the synod, during the document's presentation to media after its publication. The assembly also identified the need to determine why some Catholics did not participate in the synodal process, which was initiated by Pope Francis in 2021, and has included consultation at diocesan, national, and continental levels. Only 1% of Catholics worldwide took part.

Synodal structures and decision-making

St Peter's in Rome



After the final vote, Pope Francis spoke briefly to the assembly, thanking its members and organizers, and telling those gathered that the Holy Spirit is the protagonist of synodal process. Two sections that received some of the most opposition concerned proposals related to the possible inclusion of women in the diaconate.

Perhaps the synod's most significant concrete proposals came in the form of calls for changes in ecclesial decision-making and the expansion of synodal assemblies and bodies in the life of the Church. The report called for continental assemblies to be canonically recognized and for

the implementation of "the exercise of synodality" at regional, national, and continental levels.

One "issue to be addressed" was the revision of local Church councils to "realize through them a greater participation of the people of God." The recent plenary council in Australia, which included bishop and non-bishop participation, was highlighted as an example to follow.

The synod assembly also proposed formally reconsidering the composition of the Synod of Bishops itself. In the section on "The Synod of Bishops and Ecclesial Assemblies," the document said that changes to this year's synod — most notably, the full participation of non-bishop members, including laymen and women — "were generally welcomed" by the assembly. While "preserving its eminently episcopal character," the 2023 synod also reportedly "made tangible" the link between the participation of all the faithful, episcopal collegiality, and the primacy of the pope.

"The synodal process was and is a time of grace through which God is offering us the opportunity to experience a new culture of synodality, capable of guiding the life and mission of the Church." The text did note, however, that some members raised concerns that the equal participation of non-bishops in an episcopal body could lead to the "specific task of the bishops" not being "adequately understood."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Jonathan Liedl is senior editor for the *National Catholic Register*. His background includes state Catholic conference work, three years of seminary formation, and tutoring at a university Christian study centre.

The report suggested three options for the arrangement of future global synods: bishops-only, both bishops and non-bishops, or an assembly of non-bishops followed by an episcopal assembly.

The “urgent need to ensure that women can participate in decision-making processes and assume roles of responsibility in pastoral care and ministry” was also cited. The document referenced Pope Francis’ recent appointment of several women to positions of responsibility in the Roman Curia and stressed that “the same should happen at other levels” of the Church and that canon law be adapted accordingly. The document called for bishops to exercise their mandate to teach, govern, and sanctify through greater engagement with members of their local community.⁶⁰

“Concrete proposals included establishing “structures and processes for the verification of the bishop’s work” and making diocesan pastoral councils canonically mandatory. The assembly also called for a review of the criteria used to pick new bishops, incorporating broader consultation in the process, including greater input from laymen and women. And the importance of forming seminarians in a more synodal strain of pastoral engagement was also emphasized.

Ecclesial discernment and ‘open questions’

As a response, the document called for the promotion of “initiatives that allow for shared discernment on doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical issues that are controversial” in “light of the word of God, Church teaching, theological reflection, and valuing the synod experience.” The text proposed that a confidential meeting of experts on these controversial issues, possibly with the inclusion of those who directly experience them, should be initiated, with an eye toward next October’s assembly.

Relatedly, the document also said that “synodal processes” can verify when the faithful are in consensus (the “consensus fidelium”) on a given issue, which “is a sure criterion for determining whether a particular doctrine or practice belongs to the apostolic faith.” In a move signalling openness to decentralizing the Church’s teaching authority, the document proposed further exploration of “the doctrinal and juridical nature” of bishops’ conferences, recognizing the possibility of doctrinal decision-making “in the local sphere.” The synod also proposed giving episcopal conferences more authority over liturgy.

Synodality across the board

“The assembly’s other proposals applied the concept of synodality across a host of Church issues and activities. For instance, on the topic of the Church’s engagement with the poor, the document proposed that “the experience of encounter, sharing a common life and serving those living in poverty and the marginalized” should be “integral” in Christian formation. “It is a requirement of faith, not an optional extra,” the text read, also recommending that diaconal ministry be “more evidently oriented” toward serving the poor.

“Enhancing the formation and support of “digital missionaries” was also highlighted as a way of reaching young people distant from the Church. The assembly also recommended implementing the “conversation in the Spirit” method, which involves intentional, prayerful group listening and was used at the synod, into other areas of Church life.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Liedl is senior editor for the *National Catholic Register*. His background includes state Catholic conference work, three years of seminary formation, and tutoring at a university Christian study center.

“The synod report included the recommendation to establish new Church ministries or the expansion of existing ones. The ministry of lector, the document says, could become “a true ministry of the word of God,” which, “in appropriate contexts, could also include preaching.” The document also proposed a ministry “assigned to married couples” that would assist family life and those preparing for marriage. “Authentic listening is a fundamental element of the journey toward healing, repentance, justice, and reconciliation.”

Setting the stage

“According to its introduction, the 2023 assembly’s summary report “is in no way a final document” but will be used as the basis of the Synod on Synodality’s final stage — another Vatican assembly in October 2024. That assembly is expected to produce a final text that will be presented to the pope for his consideration. “This is an experience that does not finish today but will continue,” Grech said. Hollerich noted that he hopes next year’s document makes more concrete proposals but said that “even that document will be a step of a Church on the move. And that’s the important thing, I think. That we move. In the meantime, synod members will return to their respective dioceses, where they have been tasked to get feedback on the summary report and to foster a synodal culture going home.” ⁶¹



⁶¹ *Vatican Catholic News*

PART FOURTEEN Conclusions and further discussions

This book *Lotu Katolik* is a study of how the Catholic missions developed in the many dioceses in Papua New Guinea. The first mission begun by the Marists in 1847, in the Trobriand area was abandoned, but the Marists did not give up hope and later succeeded in Bougainville, the



Solomon Islands as well as New Caledonia. Other orders soon followed suit. The Sacred Heart Fathers arrived in 1882 and the SVD Missionaries in 1896. Later the Franciscans came to the Aitape area in 1946 and the Capuchins to the Southern Highlands. There were many other orders who came. Then the Sisters of each order came and settled in convents in the mission centres providing domestic help, nursing and education and thus enriching the work of the church. Later local orders were formed, and these sisters provided a backbone along with the catechists to the growing needs of the church.

Photo of a National Sister whose joyful face shows a caring attitude as she dedicates her life to the Church and to God. Photo Fr Paul Steffen SVD

Here are some of the main points covered in *Lotu Katolik*:

1. **Description of the local culture** at the beginning of each section. On the coastal areas the people fished, travelled in canoes and traded over wide areas. Many villages had men's houses which forbade entry to the women, but they all had an awareness of a spiritual world and had their own interpretation of it. Often found in their myths and songs.
2. **The beginnings of the Catholic Missions** in each area studied. Initially there were other denominations in or near their chosen sites and friction occurred. Other troubles they faced, sometimes against overwhelming odds but gradually they progressed.
3. **Discussion of the various government agents** and their attitude to the missions. Sometimes there were difficulties meeting the rules of the Governments in office whether it was the German Government before World War I, or the Australian Government as happened in the Highlands.
4. **Origins of the overseas missionaries**, where they came from and their attitudes to the local culture. They happily gave their lives to spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.
5. **The effect of both world wars** on the missions and missionaries particularly the Second World War with the Japanese occupation on the islands and north coast of New Guinea when many missionaries died and mission stations destroyed; then rebuilding after the war.
6. **The difficulties the people had** in accepting the message of the missionaries. They had their beliefs. Sometimes cargo cults developed particularly in the Madang area.
7. **Benefits that the missions brought** to the people while spreading the gospel message of peace between fighting tribes; in the help the missions brought in health and education and spiritual growth as they accepted the Gospel message.

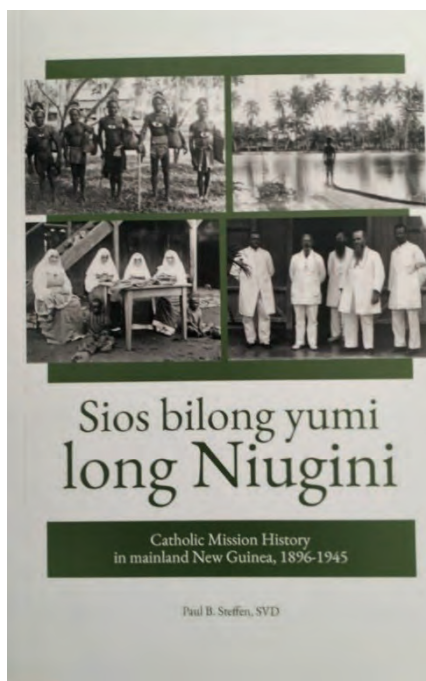
8. **Localisation amongst the clergy** as the many overseas missionaries trained local men in the seminaries to take their place in mission centres and churches in the country.
9. **Bishops in the dioceses** studied - it can be noted that most are now nationals. One of the exceptions is Archbishop Douglas Young of Mt Hagen who has played a significant part in guiding new bishops in their roles after their consecration. He has been outstanding in his endeavours to bring peace between warring tribes which was his special subject at university.
10. **Ecumenism:** The church led by Cardinal Ribat has been instrumental in having ecumenical meetings with various other denominations particularly the Lutheran and Anglican churches Together they approach the government over matter like climate change. I interviewed many Catholic missionaries and ministers of other denominations, for example Dr Braun a Lutheran doctor in Madang and the famous Percy Chatterton of the LMS in Port Moresby.
11. **Pope John Paul's visits** were significant in placing Papua New Guinea on the world scene and were much appreciated by the people. His visit to Mt Hagen drew the largest crowd in PNG's history which is itself is significant.
12. **Blessed Peter To Rot.** One of the Pope's visits was to the beautification of Blessed Peter To Rot who has become an important figure for the young and emphasising the importance of marriage.
13. **Inculturation** this book also records the lives of the early missionaries where they have come from and notice the deep commitment they had to bring the gospel and to assimilate the liturgy with the culture where possible.
14. **Violence in Wabag.** This subject was broached in Part Four. This violence has been ongoing for centuries and now guns are used in these tribal fights. Recently in February 2024 53 people, mostly men, were killed in a tribal fight in the town of Wabag after heavy gunfire. The incident is thought to be linked to a conflict between Sikin and Kaekin tribesmen. Now that guns are used instead of traditional spears the fighting is more deadly. Reports say that there needs to be a lot more education and a sense of the common good around. The tendency is to resort to violence in the face of conflict, which needs to change.
15. **Sorcery is sometimes the cause of violence.** According to several news items, the Caritas Team of Wabag (Justice, Peace and Development arm of the Catholic Diocese of Wabag) is embarking on a 5-year plan for the Enga Province to address the problem of sorcery. They are hoping to eradicate sorcery by 2027 through education and aiding the victims and training the perpetrators to a better way of life. Belief in sorcery or witchcraft is deeply entrenched not just in Wabag but across the nation. The Government developed a Sorcery and Witchcraft Related Action Plan in 2015 to address the problem, but nevertheless the violence continues to increase to divide families, to cause lasting conflicts between communities, particularly in the Enga Province



In writing about the history of each diocese, I did not know all the details of each province. I relied on many other sources and quoted from them. This will save the students time of looking for this information about the Catholic Church in Melanesia.

In the Foreword Note Fr Paul Steffen SVD wrote;

This book *Lotu Katolik* 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. Mary 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.



In turn, I recommend Fr Paul Steffen's book *Sios Bilong Yumi* long Niugini Catholic Mission History in mainland New Guinea, 1896 -1945 which has translations of diaries and letters of the early German missionaries and many wonderful photographs. It will stand the test of time because it gives insight into the German archives from a German point of view. Furthermore, the list of mission personnel (priests, brothers and sisters) is a special acknowledgement of their devotion to doing God's work. This book also provides a basis for nationals wanting to pursue the history of their own areas. It is Fr Steffen has detailed accounts of many missions with wonderful

photographs that give life to the text. These show the progress of these mission areas, the

development of schools, orphanages and outstations, the various means of transport used, and the plantations developed to cover costs and provide work for local communities. His study is up until 1945.



Photograph Some National Sisters in the Highlands with Fr Paul B. Steffen, SVD. Prof. of Mission Studies at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome

I, myself spent years while I lived in Madang between 1971 and 1979 collecting oral traditions of the people in the Madang area. Their memories go back to the German times. My hero in doing this was the work of Fr Aufinger SVD who collected many of the beautiful rituals the weathermen (likon) used to control the weather for the traders setting off to the Rai Coast. He valued them whereas the Lutheran missionaries discarded them. Even though the Lutheran church has since bemoaned the attitude of these early missionaries, much knowledge was lost. I collected over a hundred taped interviews in *Tok Pisin* during this time which I have since translated. *Voices of the Villagers* has been published in Germany.

In some areas other denominations began before the Catholic missions arrived and there was friction between them but also a growing understanding and appreciation they were all doing to bring peace to the country where sometimes warring tribes attack each other. Anecdotal stories of these times is found in the diaries of missionaries and in the many interviews I had with missionaries mostly Catholics but also members of other denominations. Dr Braun of the Lutheran Church in Madang, Percy Chatterton of the LMS mission in Port Moresby, and

Brenda Skinner of the United Church in Rabaul. These interviews are used extensively in this book and can be regarded as primary source material.

Cardinal Ribat said that a great strength in PNG can be seen when Catholic and Protestant churches work closely together, to “journey with the people” and help the government solve national crises. “We always want the message for all the churches to be united,” he said. 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,” he said.

Cardinal Ribat is also worried about environmental matters:

The rising sea level across the Pacific we are all affected by this. In Europe and in Australia you don’t see this affecting the lives of the people. But for us coming from many islands – Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu – we are seeing what the sea is doing ... washing away good parts of our islands already. The first island that has to be evacuated ... Carteret Island in Bougainville has been broken into three parts and is really disappearing. By 2050 most of the islands will be gone, and that is a great threat to us. The work of the Church is to make governments aware that we are responsible for our nation and the common good of our people.

The Cardinal also mentioned the plight of refugees:

How can we help the refugees so they are not affected psychologically? It is really an issue that challenges our nation and our people. We have our own refugees coming across (the border) from West Papua. We realise it is not an issue just for us but for the whole world where people are moving, and their movement is because of something that has happened in their country and has caused them to move out. 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 came for me.’ And it is a message we cannot just forget, pretend it is not there.

Another concern of Cardinal Ribat is the canonisation of Blessed Peter To Rot scheduled to happen soon in 2024 perhaps.



*At Marian Valley for Blessed Peter To Rot's feast-day. Brisbane Auxiliary Bishop Ken Howell (left) and PNG Cardinal John Ribat.
Photo: Alan Edgecomb*

In 2014, the Highlands people thought to repay the sacrifices that the early missionaries had made to bring the Gospel to people who appeared to live at the ends of the earth. This year 2014, marked the 80th anniversary. They planned to follow the long and arduous walk taken by Fr Ross and his party in 1934 to Mt Hagen. This planned pilgrimage was called “From Rempì to Rebiāmūl.” Dozens of people travelled from Rebiāmūl down to Rempì to take part in the pilgrimage back up the route. Many Rempì people still feel connected to Fr William Ross as he left their parish near Alexishafen to go to Mt Hagen in 1934 taking some Rempì men with him. Recently in 2024, another group of pilgrims is doing the pilgrimage route and will arrive in Mt Hagen on Trinty Sunday 2024 90 years since fr Ross and the other missionaries and 70 carriers arrived in Rebiāmūl in 1934.

I had lived in Mt Hagen for six months in 1971 and was able to interview Fr Ross about his life with the people of Mt Hagen and the trek he did over the mountains. With the help of his

helper Peter Manui, I was able to make a map of this 40-day trek and now this can be followed like a pilgrimage route.



Coffee and conversation in the Queen Street Mall in Brisbane. Archbishop Douglas Young, Prof Colin Mackerras, Mary Mennis and her brother Dr John Eccles. February 2022.

In February 2022 I was able to interview Archbishop Douglas Young SVD of Mt Hagen. He was down in Brisbane for the installation of fellow SVD Bishop Tim Norton as assistant Bishop of Brisbane.

Archbishop Douglas Young: Speaking about the pilgrimage Rempì to Rebiāmūl:

On the occasion of the 75th and 80th anniversaries our young people, and quite a few not so young, wanted to follow in the footsteps of the pioneers as a form of penance, preparation for the anniversaries, a demonstration of and witness to their faith. The pilgrimage of 2010 carried a patrol box containing the type of things that missionaries would carry, as distinct from government officials and prospectors. There was everything need for the sacraments and the devotional life of Catholics.

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.

He continued:

“Mistakes have been made in the past and we are trying to rectify them where possible. Diary entries of former missionaries often get into history books and they show a deep commitment to the gospel and the country and they bring an enrichment between the gospel and the cultural way of looking at things. There is a need to build on the foundations of the past to create a strong future. The local people have challenges in their lives as well: growing gardens to produce food for their families; building houses; dealing with hostility of neighbouring tribes; sorcery; secularisation; youth unemployment and rapid social change. If they read about the former missionaries and their lives maybe they will take courage and try to approach life with the same vision so they can move forward.”

Archbishop Young commented on the book:

“This book *“Lotu Katolik”* will be of use to the seminarians as textbook for the study of the Church in Melanesia. It will help them get to know their own area and the history of the mission there so they can build on it in their own area and add more recent history seeing themselves as part of this history. Furthermore, when they are doing their first year as young priests they may be appointed to an area outside their experience. Now they can look it up in this book. It also contains interviews that Mary Mennis made of people in all works of life whether it be of the village people in Madang or government officials, missionaries including bishops and priests. These interviews are primary sources which can be quoted as well in future research.

“This is why this book *“Lotu Katolik”* is important for the seminarians. These interviews are primary source material and can be quoted as such. These days the people have reached a point when what has gone before is now important to them and they will value these stories. Instead of being on the receiving end of funds the people can go from a mission to a church and contribute to other funds like the Peter’s Pence in Rome and they can also support the priests with funds and food to help fund the parish.

“With localisation, the church’s activities and liturgy can be run by locals. Every culture has its own world bias and this contributes to the church as a whole. There is now a high participation on Parish boards and pastoral planning. However with all this from day one the missionary could not function without the support of the local people. The primary help comes from the catechists trained by the missionaries like Peter To Rot. The priest can have a close group of people around him to convert, inspire and do most of the work. The church is missionary in its nature. The task of evangelising comes first. The mission has a church structure with an organised life to empower people to take the gospel; to the family and their workplace. Mission is not always about conversion or proselyting. (making converts from other religions) but to live in such a way that we are attractive to other people.”

Explanation of the cover photographs



When the first missionaries, including Fr Navarre, arrived at Volavolo Village in 1883, they were met by hostile tribesmen intent on killing them. There had been blackbirders around stealing

their men so they said, 'We will attack the next people who come.' The missionaries sang the "Te Deum" in Latin and the tribesmen loved the tune and the secret language and welcomed the missionaries to Volavolo.

Below: Cardinal Ribat in the centre of the photo is from Volavolo Village which is near Rabaul. This village has had many priests, Bishops and one Archbishop as well as the Cardinal. So the Te Deum won the people over and Volavolo was the first mission station of the Sacred Heart Missionaries in East New Britain. This photo shows the work of localisation as many of the bishops and archbishops are now Nationals.

In doing this work I have quoted from relevant sources and this will enable students to use these as primary source material in their studies. I have also used my own interviews of people from many works of life. Basically, the book is a textbook for the Course in the Holy Spirit Seminary in Bomana, Port Moresby for their course on Melanesian church history. Hopefully it will build on their knowledge of their own areas and add to it in the future. Already Brother Walter SFO has asked for help as he is writing the history of the Aitape Mission. I have sent him my chapter on Aitape and he can incorporate some of this into his story. This is what it is all about. I have done this work voluntarily and am happy for it to be used in this way. I present *Lotu Katolik: Catholic Missions in Papua New Guinea and Oceania* in the hope that these past stories may be of interest to people of Papua New Guinea.

I would like to dedicate this book to the present and future seminarians in Papua New Guinea; may they carry on the work of dedicated missionaries bringing the gospel to the far ends of the earth.



1934 – 2024 ninety years since the first missionaries came to Mt Hagen. Here people celebrate in Nondugl in March 2024.

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The 90 year celebration of the SVD Missionaries arriving in Mt Hagen held at St Dymphna's Church, Aspley, Brisbane in April 2024. The SVD's were the first missionaries in the Highlands in 1934.

From Left to right, Father Paul Merציaca, Bishop Tim Norton and Father Jacob Kumen with the Gold Coast and Brisbane PNG Choir.



The Pilgrims celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the first missionaries into the Rebiamul Mission in Mt Hagen.

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.
Prof. of Mission Studies, Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome