

## Bishop Chief Henry van Lieshout CMM. DD. GCL 19 March 1932 – 24 December 2009



The Catholic Diocese of Lae is mourning the death of its Bishop Emeritus Henry van Lieshout – the first Bishop of the Diocese.

Bishop Henry died peacefully in his chair while preparing to celebrate the Christmas Eve Mass for his parishioners of the St. Martin's parish in the Papua Compound in Lae.

Parishioners had gathered on Christmas Eve for the traditional service when they found that the bishop had not arrived. A search later revealed that the bishop had died suddenly at his home in the Mariannahill House.

Bishop Henry van Lieshout CMM was born on 19 March 1932 in Venlo, The Netherlands. He joined the Mariannahill Mission Society in 1954, went for his priest formation to Wuerzburg, Germany and was ordained a priest fifty years ago, on 12 July 1959. When the Catholic Mission in PNG was re-organized in 1959, the mission in the Morobe Province was separated from the Madang Mission and became a new Vicariate Apostolic entrusted to the Mariannahill Missionaries. The newly ordained Fr. Henry was part of a team of four who were assigned to Lae to develop the beginnings of the Catholic Church in Morobe initiated by Fr. Leo Arkfeld SVD, the first parish priest of Lae and later bishop of Wewak.

Fr. Henry van Lieshout was appointed the first bishop of Lae in 1966 at an age of 34, making him

one of the youngest bishops in the church at that time.

Under his pastoral leadership during the past 50 years the Diocese of Lae has grown up from modest beginnings with less than 2000 Catholics in 1960 till up to 30.000 at present. The many churches and schools, a variety of communities, and lay-movements and associations offer an eloquent picture of the activities of a pastor who never felt the urge to make impressive public appearances but preferred to keep a low profile. That was just what made him loved by the faithful and kept him in close contact with the people of all levels.

Several years ago, Bishop Henry encouraged the establishment of the radio station Catholic FM 103.7, the radio station of the Lae Diocese, which he took a keen interest in and for which he also prepared programs.

He also played a major role in the development of the Mercy Centre at Omili in La which serves the need of the sick in the area.

Bishop Henry van Lieshout retired at the age of 75 in 2007, having served as Bishop for 40 years.

He was succeeded by Bishop Christian Blouin CMM after the celebration of his jubilee on 19 March 2007,

Bishop Henry's services to the Catholic Church in the Morobe Province were recognized in the year of

his retirement when he was awarded a Grand Companion of the Order of the Logohu with the title of "Chief".

At the eve of Golden Jubilee of the Catholic Church in 1910 the diocese has lost a dearly beloved shepherd who will be missed as the key person of half a century of its history. "Well done, good and trustworthy servant, you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master" (Mt.25:23)

### **FUNERAL OF BISHOP HENRY VAN LIESHOUT**

During the days preceding the funeral of Bishop Henry van Lieshout vigils were held in several parishes. Many faithful gathered for many hours during the night, singing, praying and listening to spontaneous testimonies of participants who wanted to share their experience with Bishop Henry and their feeling commemorating the beloved deceased.

In the morning of the Requiem Mass and funeral on Wednesday 30 December a huge crowded gathered in and outside St. Mary's Cathedral for the service which lasted 8 hours from 8.00 am to 2.00 pm. The Papal Nuncio Archbishop Francisco Padilla concelebrated with the Diocesan Bishop Christian Blouin CMM, and Archbishops and Bishops from Madang, Mount Hagen, Bougainville, Goroka, Kundiawa and Bereina. Special guest was Honourable Bart Philemon, Member of Parliament for Lae and at present Deputy Leader of the Opposition - a good friend of late Bishop Henry - who also gave a speech at the end of the Mass.

A long queue of motor vehicles accompanied the coffin on the way to Eight-Mile, where the body of Bishop Henry was laid to rest in the shadow of the church of St. Joseph's Mission station. There he is in the company of Sr. Paul van de Heykant CPS (+1993) and Fr. Hubert Hofmans CMM (+2001). Bishop Christian Blouin conducted the final service.

May Bishop Henry rest in peace.



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