

# **PNG TANGET**

**MARIANHILL**

**MISSIONARIES**

**NEWS LEAFLET**

**P.O. Box 236**

**LAE 41 1 PNG FROM CMM IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

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## **BISHOPS CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT**

In an open letter to the Prime Minister and the Government the PNG Bishops Conference raised several issues the government should attend to in order to assist the Church to properly deliver basic services needed by the people in partnership with the State.

Issues include the frustration experienced in the processing of visas and work permits for new church personnel and the issue of religious education in schools as religion is an indispensable aspect of Melanesian life. The bishops also complain about the discrimination between government and church health services and the payment of fees for items donated to the church. The letter is particularly critical about the bad state of affairs of the Foreign Affairs Department concerning issuing visa and work permits. Some volunteer mission workers have waited so long that they have to withdraw their offer and their expertise is lost for the Church. "The costs of these delays to our dioceses and religious congregations is enormous: hours, days and weeks spent queuing up at the Labour and Immigration offices, phone calls, faxes, photocopying and resubmission of lost documents; the list goes on. There is also a human cost as many of these applications are for doctors."

The letter concludes with a firm statement: "Dear Prime Minister and Members of the Government, we assure you that we will never become part of the problem of corruption by the payment of bribes or acting outside the law."

The government swiftly took up the challenge and reacted within four weeks with the announcement of setting up a special division of the Immigration Department for a fast processing of applications for visa and work permits especially for foreign Church workers; apparently a gesture of appreciation of the good work of the Churches for the people of PNG.

## **A NEW ARRIVAL IN THE MARIANHILL COLLEGE**

After a break of three years Fr. Alfonse Voorn is back again in PNG. In 2003 he came for the first time, but when he had familiarised himself with the life and work on the Siassi Islands he was called to Rome as superior of the Generalate's community in 2005. After his three years term had expired he was again transferred to Papua New Guinea and he happily took up his new posting in the Mariannahill College in Port Moresby. Soon after his arrival he started teaching as lecturer in Holy Scripture at the Catholic Theological College. At the beginning of the second trimester he began teaching Greek as an introduction to further New Testament courses.

## **NEW ARCHBISHOP OF PORT MORESBY**

The Cathedral of Port Moresby was far too small to accommodate the huge crowd of faithful and the many dignitaries from government and society who had come to witness the formal handover of the Archdiocese of Port Moresby by Archbishop Brian Barnes OFM to his successor Archbishop John Ribat MSC. After serving as Bishop of Bereina for five years he became the fifth Metropolitan Archbishop of Port Moresby.

This occasion was at the same time a farewell celebration for retiring Archbishop Sir Brian Barnes who has served the Catholic Church and the people of PNG since 1959. After having served as national chaplain of the Royal PNG Police Force for 20 years he became Bishop of Aitape before being transferred to Port Moresby in 1997. A forthright and honest man Archbishop Brian was not afraid to regularly raise his prophetic voice to remind the government of concrete facts of misgovernment.

## **NEW MARIAN SHRINE**

The first Marian Shrine in Papua New Guinea was solemnly blessed by Cardinal Thomas

Willems from New Zealand on Saturday 24 May 2008. The magnificent basilica dedicated to Mary Help of Christians was built by the Salesians of Don Bosco on the premises of the Don Bosco Technological Institute in Port Moresby. The manual labour of the construction work was mainly done by the students themselves. Among the guests at the celebration were the Governor General, de Prime Minister and several other ministers and other dignitaries. On the previous Friday, more than 2000 students from technical high schools run by the Salesians and the De La Salle Brothers gathered for the "2000 for Mary" youth power celebration.

#### **WORKSHOP OF THE CHURCH INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAM.**

This workshop was held from 12-16 May for all priests, religious diocesan staff at the Pastoral Centre. The aim was to review and improve the structure and administration of the Diocese in order to make a more efficient use of the available personnel in the pastoral ministry of the diocese. The workshop was part of the nationwide renewal of the pastoral planning of the Church as a follow up of the National Assembly of the Church initiated by the Bishops Conference. Facilitator of the workshop was Miss Valerie Neuhold-Maurer, an Austrian volunteer employed by the PNG Bishops Conference. At the end of the workshop the participants drafted a Mission Statement defining the fundamental vision of the Catholics of the local Church of the Lae Diocese.

#### **WORLD YOUTH DAY 2008**

A group of 30 youngsters of the Lae Diocese is finally ready to take part in the World Youth Day in Sydney in July. The group is preparing items for Sydney which will be presented to parents and guests at a cultural night on 22 June. The pilgrims will have a 5-days retreat preceding their departure on 5 July. Youth chaplain, Fr. Crespo Lape MJ will accompany the group.

#### **ORDEAL OF BISHOP HENRY VAN LIESHOUT**

Everything seemed to be set for the departure of Bishop Henry van Lieshout to the Netherlands on 25 May. However the most essential document, his passport, which was supposed to be picked up in Port Moresby, could not be found in the last days before taking off. A most unfortunate and disappointing fact which led to the cancellation of the whole travel schedule. Applying for a new passport and getting other travel documents is a time consuming affair and can take months. But the Dutch Consulate in Port Moresby offered an alternative possibility, to get a temporary passport in a short time which allows him at least to leave the country. Bishop Henry is leaving for the Netherlands on June 1<sup>st</sup>. He intends to return in September.

#### **BISHOP CHRIS BLOUIN TO CANADA**

Bishop Chris Blouin will leave for Canada on 2 June to attend the International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec as representative of the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG. He will also take part in the celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the City of Quebec. Bishop Chris will return on August 3.

#### **BISHOP VISITS MENYAMYA**

Besides confirmation celebrations in the Holy Spirit Parish at Pentecost and at St. Mary's Cathedral at Corpus Christi Bishop Chris Blouin made his first pastoral visit to the Catholic Communities of St. Matthew in Awa'anga and St. Dominic in Wauwoka in the remote Menyamya District (by road 260 km from Lae). Since the road from Bulolo to Menyamya has been practically inaccessible for a long time Bishop Chris flew to Menyamya airstrip accompanied by the diocesan seminarian George Huaieware. There he had the opportunity to be driven by car up to Ansua and then he had to walk the last 5 kilometres to St. Matthew's at the altitude of 2200 m... The parishioners of St. Dominic/Wauwoka in a nearby valley had walked up to Awa'anga to celebrate together with the parishioners of St. Matthew's.. Bishop Chris administered the sacrament of Confirmation to 42 men and women. The Catholic Primary School for both parishes is also at St. Matthew's. The Catholics of the area were very happy with the visit of their new Bishop. The first and till now last time they could welcome their diocesan bishop was 21 years ago, when Bishop Henry van Lieshout went there for confirmation in 1987.

#### **FURTHER NEWS FROM LAE**

The **new team of CPS Sisters** are preparing themselves for their assignment in PNG and will

arrive in Lae at the end of August. They are **Sr. Henriquita Muthate** (Mozambique), **Sr. Elizabeth Ncube** (Zimbabwe) and **Sr. Hyo Eun** (Korea). They will be accompanied by **Sr. Helena Kang** from the generalate in Rome. The reconstruction of a building on the property of the Mariannahill House in Lae/Eriku is in the final phase. It will serve as residence of the new community.

The appointment of **Fr. Frans Lenssen CMM** as judicial vicar for Marriage Tribunal cases was approved by the Supreme Tribunal in Rome.

The medical **Centre of Mercy** on the premises of the St. Therese Church and Girls' Vocational Centre in Lae/Kamkumun has been extended with a **Mother & Child Health Centre**. This centre was opened and blessed by Bishop Chris Blouin on 23 May. The government is interested in expanding the existing Centre of Mercy to a Catholic Sub-Health Centre for that quarter of the city.

The Austrian Organisation "**Horizon 3000**" has renewed the contract of **Eva Boehm** for two more years. She is an Austrian volunteer who works for the Diocese with Justice and Peace (Social Concerns Desk). Meanwhile the organisation "**Doctors Without Borders**" is now established in Lae. They focus especially on domestic violence and have opened a Women and Children's Support Centre.

### **HARSH FACTS OF LIFE IN PNG**

According to the outcome of a research by Dr. Michael Bourke (Australia) conducted over 27 years in PNG the overall life expectancy of the people is 54 years and 42 in the Gulf and Sundaun Provinces. Further, the country has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the region, at 73 deaths per 1000 births and a high maternal death rate due mainly to birth complications. Illiteracy rates reach the highest level among the rural villages and makes for one of the highest rates in the Oceania. PNG is said to have the worst HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Pacific region. About half of the population of 6,5 million people in PNG live in poor conditions. Against the background of these figures the government has to acknowledge that despite the optimistic comments on the prospering economy the bulk of the people lack a decent quality of life.