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Bp Firmin Schmidt ofm cap, Dies

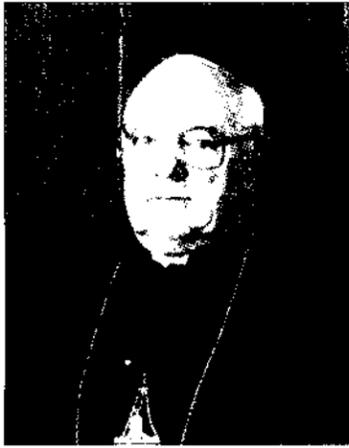
At 4:45 AM (7:45 PM PNG time) on the 4th of August, 2005, Bishop Firmin Schmidt OFM Cap. died in the peace of the Lord.

Bishop Firmin was widely known and loved here in Papua New Guinea for his leadership and service of the people in the Catholic Diocese of Mendi for 36 years as their shepherd.

Having been rushed to the hospital in Hays, Kansas, USA with difficulty in breathing, he was found to be bleeding internally and died shortly thereafter.

At 86, his body was worn out from giving his life to the work of the Lord. His funeral Mass will be said at St. Joseph's Church in Hays, Kansas on Tuesday the 9th of August, followed by his burial there.

Bishop Firmin was born in the small town of Catherine, Kansas on the 12th of October, 1918, the youngest in a farming family of five children.



Late: Bishop Firmin Schmidt OFM Cap

Pope John XXIII

Good schooling and the hard knocks of farming prepared him well for his future life in Papua New Guinea. He entered the novitiate of the Capuchin Friars Minor in 1941, continued his studies, and was or-

dainated to the Priesthood in 1946.

After ordination, he continued his studies to earn his Doctorate in Sacred Theology, and became the professor of the Teachings of the Church in the Capuchin School of Scripture and Theology in Washington, D.C.

He was teaching there in 1959 when he was asked by Pope John XXIII to accept the appointment as Prefect Apostolic of the Capuchin Mission in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea with the title of Monsignor.

Monsignor Firmin arrived in Mendi on the 20th of October, 1959, to take up his work as shepherd and servant.

Six years later, on the 15th of December, 1965, he was consecrated bishop. On the 15th of November, 1966, all the Mission Territories in Papua New Guinea were reshaped into dioceses, and Bishop Firmin was the first bish-

op of the Diocese of Mendi.

Thousand upon thousand were baptized

He was responsible for shepherding the Church in the Southern Highlands from infancy through its adolescence into adulthood. It is only possible to name a few accomplishments initiated by him.

Under his leadership, 14 parishes as well as over 300 outstations were established. Thousands upon thousands were baptized.

He opened a large Catechist Training Centre in Erave where hundreds of Catechists were trained.

Many Pastoral Centres were founded in the diocese for retreats and workshops to strengthen ministers of the Gospel.

He approved the formation of several lay ministries, developed the first Pastoral Plan of the diocese

and established a Diocesan Pastoral Council where lay people could voice their ideas and strengthen the work of the Church.

Dearest to his heart was his foundation of the religious community of sisters, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary.

The greatest accolade that can be given to Bishop Firmin was the love and respect that he gave to his people, and to the priests, sisters and lay missionaries who worked with him.

He gave his ministers a responsibility, and trusted and supported them in every way to carry out their work. He was truly a father and a brother and a servant.

Bishop Firmin retired and returned to his home in America in 1995, and he entered his home with God just this past Thursday.

He will always be remembered with love and prayers by those who had the privilege of knowing him.

Theological Writer's Workshops Begin

A total of 41 people have attended the first two theological writers' workshops: at Tangugo Pastoral Centre, Wewak and Good Shepherd Seminary, Banz. Those attending the workshops said they found them interesting and a real boost to their faith. Facilitators, Fr. Philip Gibbs svd of the Melanesian Institute, Goroka, and Mrs Bet Green from the Australian Catholic University, Brisbane, said they were delighted with the results and impressed by the quality of theological reflection during workshops lasting only one week.

The workshop begins with a presentation on the relationship between spirituality, faith and theology. Then participants reflect on the different images of Jesus presented in the four gospels. This is followed by presentations on various models of Church. Having worked with these images over several days they consider the Vision of Church from the General Assembly of the Catholic Church in

PNG: "We are Church Alive in Christ." People discuss what times they have experienced the Church truly "alive" in Christ, and what times they have experienced blocks to that life. They look for "key words" emerging from that discussion and then select a topic related to one of the key words and to start writing about it, starting from their own faith experience. Facilitators are available to work with people individually assisting where necessary to help the writers make links with sources such as Scripture, and the PNG Bishops' statements. By Friday afternoon most participants have drafts of their work on computer.

Fr Gibbs says that he is looking forward to the other workshops planned for later this year: in Rabaul 18-23 July, Port Moresby (Bomana) 8-13 August, and Kiunga 14-18 November. He hopes to have some of the papers from the workshops in a book to be published next year by the Melanesian Institute.



Workshop: Mrs Bet Green discusses work with Fr Dominick Kiaku.

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TOKSAVE

Sapos yu gat sampela stori o nius yu laik putim long dispela pepa ringim o salim feks i go long Fr Geoff long telipon 472 5009 o email: socom@global.net.pg o go lukim em

The martyr of Milne Bay

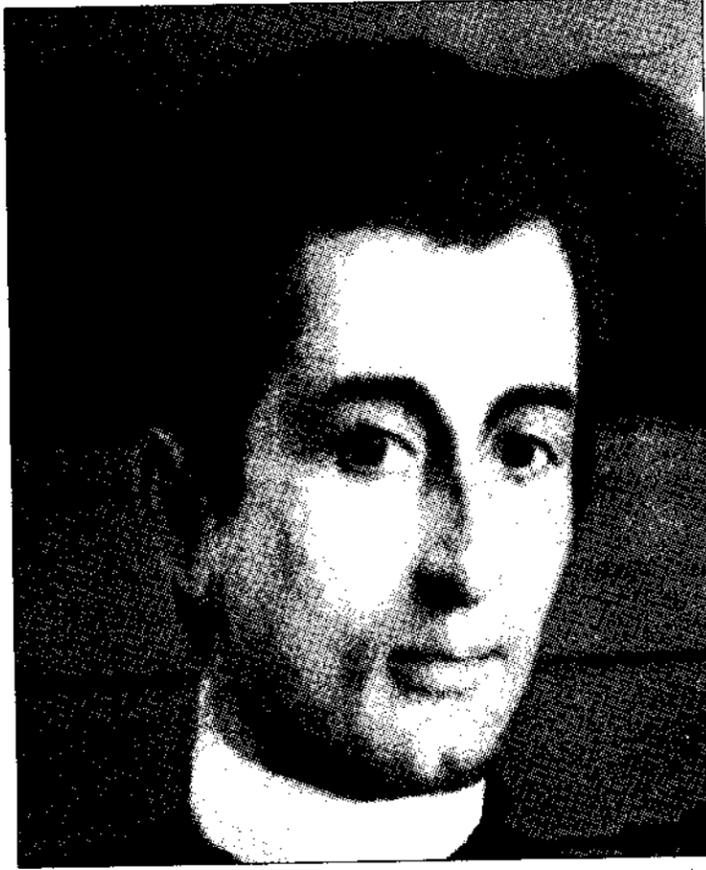
1855 September 2005

The year 2005 will be of special meaning for the Catholic Diocese of Alotau and the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME). It will mark the 150th anniversary of the martyrdom of Blessed John Mazzucconi, PIME.

Mazzucconi arrived in the Pacific in 1852 along with six companions (two of them lay brothers) under the direction of Fr. Paolo Reina, PIME to take up the Missions in Melanesia and Micronesia. The group soon divided into two teams. Four of the missionaries, including Fr. Mazzucconi, proceeded north to the island of Rook (now Umboi, under the Diocese of Lae); while the other three settled around Guasopa in Woodlark. In 1855 both groups decided to withdraw due to severe illnesses (Bro. Corti had already died in Umboi), the lack of supplies and difficult relationships with the natives.

John Mazzucconi had left his mission because of illness a few months ahead of the others. But having sufficiently recovered, he decided to return to Umboi through Woodlark in August 1855, unaware that all his colleagues were already on their way to Sydney.

Approaching Guasopa Bay in Woodlark the ill-fated "Gazelle" hit the reefs of the small islet of Reu. It was at that time that Fr. John



Fr. John Mazzucconi

Mazzucconi, only 29 years old, and the entire crew were attacked and massacred on an unspecified day of September 1855.

Fr. John Mazzucconi was proclaimed blessed by Pope John Paul II at the Vatican in Rome, Italy on the 19th of February 1984.

Bishop Desmond Moore MSC, Fr. Giulio Schiavi, PIME Delegation Superior at that time and deacon Matthew Iwewakula DCA, now the Parish Priest of Basilaki, were among those that con-celebrated with the Pope.

Priestly Identity Isn't Political, Says Benedict XVI

(Zenit.org).- Benedict XVI appealed to priests not to confuse their ministry with political office.

The Pope made that appeal when receiving, last month, in audience the bishops of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

"Priestly identity must never be likened to any secular title or confused with civic or political office," the Holy Father told the bishops in his address delivered in English.

"Rather, configured to Christ who emptied himself taking the form of a servant, the priest lives a life of simplicity, chastity and humble service, which inspires others by example," Benedict XVI indicated.

He asked the prelates from

Oceania "to uphold the unique identity of your priests, to encourage their personal sanctification in the ministry, and to foster a deepening of their pastoral commitment."

In this context, the Pope said that "the proper formation of priests and religious is absolutely integral to successful evangelization."

Formation

"Your concern for the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development of your seminarians, as well as men and women religious in training, will bear much fruit in your

dioceses," he continued.

The Holy Father encouraged the bishops "to ensure careful selection of candidates, to supervise your seminaries personally and to provide regular programs of ongoing formation so necessary for deepening priestly and religious identity and enriching joyful commitment to celibacy."

About 20% of the Solomons' approximately 538,000 inhabitants are Catholics. About 45% are Anglican.

Papua New Guinea, a country of 5.5 Catholics comprise 22% of the population.

Continuing the Mission of Mazzucconi

PIME returned to Papua New Guinea in 1981 to resume the work envisioned by martyr in 1855

By Fr. Giorgio Licini, PIME

ALOTAU, Papua New Guinea - The island of Goodenough, with the missions of Bolu Bolu and Watuluma, is the heart of the PIME missions in Papua New Guinea. There, the two first PIME Missionaries, Fr. Giulio Schiavi and Fr. Cesare Bonivento, settled in 1981. They were the first members of the Institute to come back to the country after the tragic end of the Woodlark adventure in 1855.

The Watuluma mission in particular had a huge idle flat land at that time. There, Frs. Giulio and Cesare soon started developing several projects for the welfare of the people as part of their pastoral ministry. Volunteers from Italy and other countries helped put up the Blessed John Mazzucconi Hospital, the Santa Maria Primary School and the St. Joseph Vocational Training Center for boys. In 1992, Fr. Cesare had to leave when Pope John Paul II appointed him Bishop of Vanimo, on the opposite side of the country. Fr. Giulio stayed on for sometime, but then he was replaced by Fr. Philip Mayfield and other missionaries.

Woodlark Island

Now, Watuluma is in the hands of a team that represents almost all components of the PIME family. Fr. John Di Lenarda (a diocesan associate priest who will fully join PIME at the beginning of 2006) is the pastor. The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate (PIME) take care of the school and the hospital. PIME lay missionaries, Bros. Mario Fardin and Roberto Valenti, run the vocational center. All are getting along well, just friendly quarrelling from time to time on whom is going to pay the bill for the generator. There is no electricity in the area and fuel has to be taken in drums by boat from Alotau.

It was at Woodlark Island that the PIME Missionaries actually aimed when they came back to Papua New Guinea in the early 1980s. Woodlark, however, is still as difficult as it was for the missionaries 150 years ago: quite isolated, with no infrastructures, open now to Christianity but not much to Catholicism. Woodlark is now practically 100 percent protestant. People are members of the local United Church.

The next step for the PIME Missionaries, therefore, was at the Trobriand Islands in 1986. Being the closest, the local parish of Guasopeta, however, used to nominally include Woodlark Island. The PIME Missionaries started conducting at least regular visits there. Frs. Adriano Cadei, Joe Filandia and Lino Pedercini made the highest number of trips to the Catholic communities of Guasopeta and Kulamadau on the forest-thick island of Woodlark.

The new bishop of Alotau, Most. Rev. Francesco Panfilo, SDB, however, insisted on PIME for a permanent priest at Woodlark. No one would refuse, but nobody was actually free for a new job. It took the good will and spirit of sacrifice of the young Indian Fr. Vijay Kumar to re-establish the Woodlark mission by Easter 2003. Fr. Vijay is 35 and at his first assignment in the missions.

One wonders if a young priest should stay any longer where the possibilities of real growth and development, both physical and spiritual, appear to be so limited. But this time and this year, 2005, is a special one. In September we celebrate the 150th anniversary of

the martyrdom of Blessed John Mazzucconi. He was one of the first members of the society and the first to give up his life for the Gospel. And that was off the coasts of Woodlark on an unspecified date of September 1855. Fr. Vijay has built a monument in the bay of Guasopeta that will stand as a perpetual reminder of the landing of Christianity in Papua New Guinea and the martyrdom of one of the first missionaries.

It is because of those events that PIME today is back in Papua New Guinea. We are taking care of the spiritual and material needs of the communities; particularly education and health, along with the improvement of infrastructures especially in the island of Normambay, where Fr. Lino Pedercini, a civil engineer, is presently assigned.

Furthermore, one of our priests, Fr. Shanti Puthussery, is the director of the Youth Office of the Diocese of Alotau. I publish the quarterly diocesan newsletter and am preparing the ground for the extension of the Catholic Radio Network of Papua New Guinea to Alotau and the province of Milne Bay. Frs. Giorgio Bonazzoli and Ciro Biondi teach theological subjects in the seminaries of Rabaul and Mount Hagen respectively.

Bishop Bonivento continues to run the remote and isolated Diocese of Vanimo. For years, he had to deal with a number of refugees from the neighboring Indonesian province of Papua (formerly Irian Jaya). Now, he is fully concentrating on pastoral work, on the promotion of local vocations, on the improvement of education, health and the fight against the deadly HIV/AIDS pandemic. Missionary priests in Vanimo come from all over the world. Among them is Fr. Ludovico Saw Piko, a young Burmese priest, who studied with PIME in Italy and is now an associate missionary.

20 years in mission

We are all thankful for what the pioneer missionaries did to re-establish PIME in Papua New Guinea in the last 25 years.

They had to work hard at Bolu Bolu and Watuluma during the 1980s and 1990s. The three priests, Frs. Schiavi, Bonivento and Mayfield, bore most of the burden for many years.

Things, however, were made somehow easier by the presence of Bro. Ronnie Donda, a hard-working lay missionary who had spent almost 30 years in the United States (1956-1985) before coming to Papua New Guinea. On July 30 this year Bro. Ronnie turned 79.

After 20 years in the missions, performing so many tasks, including the administration of the PIME community, he has requested his superiors to retire. He deserves it. But he will eventually find it hard to leave the people and the land he has loved so much.

The younger generations, however, pick up the baton. PIME has now four seminarians in Papua New Guinea.

The interest for the ministry and the missions is growing among the young people of Alotau. They have to first take care of their own diocese and local communities. But one day they will also be ready to return with generosity what they have received. Young Papua New Guineans will be missionaries as well.

Youth of the World gather in Cologne, Germany.

(CISA) -Pope Benedict XVI is expected to join about 800 000 young people at the 20th World Youth Day which is being held at Cologne, Germany, this month

The event's theme for 2005 is 'We Have Come to Worship Him', taken from the Gospel according to Matthew (2:2).

The pilgrims will spend several Days of Encounter in dioceses all over Germany before gathering with their hosts for the central events in the Archdiocese of Cologne, where the Pope will join them.

"With him will be an expected 800 000 young people aged between 16 and 30, 600 bishops and 4 000 journalists from all over the world," the organisers say on their official website.

World Youth Day is a pilgrimage of young people and a festival of encounter and solidarity. According to the late Pope John Paul II, its purpose is a renewal of evangelization that is also to reach young people. It is to discover, in his words, the "young and modern mystery of the church" through the common experience of pilgrimage, prayer and worship.

"The Church has much to say to young people, and they have much to say to the Church. This mutual dialogue must be open-hearted, clear and courageous. It fosters encounter and exchange between the generations and becomes a source of wealth and youth for the Church and society," John Paul II said.

Besides the Day's large-scale cele-

brations of the Eucharist, there are many smaller, decentralized programmes.

In 1984, the late Pope John Paul II announced 1985 as a Jubilee year for the Catholic Church. In an effort to recognize the growing youth of the Church, he invited them from around the world to travel to Rome for Palm Sunday.

He declared that day to be the first World Youth Day, and that the youth should go back to their home towns and communities and celebrate their new-found fellowship and continue the tradition for each year to follow.

Since then, there have been World Youth Days each year on both an international and diocesan level.

Rome, Italy, has hosted the World Youth Day twelve times: 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2004.

Outside Italy, the celebrations have been held in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1987), Czestochowa, Poland (1991), Denver, USA (1993), Manila, Philippines (1995), Paris, France (1997), Santiago de Compostela, Spain (1989), Toronto, Canada (2002).

PNG and SI now have a small group in Germany. 4 from Daru-Kiunga, 3 from Bougainville, 2 sponsored by PMS and 5 sponsored by Council for Laity.

There are 6 women, including a 17 year old Jubilee High School student, Annie Olaba. A priest, Fr Justin Ratsi SM and two seminarians, including Jacob Qetobacho from Gizo, SI.



Year of the Eucharist: Young and old participate in the celebration.

Sr Godelief Leyten Celebrates Golden Jubilee

Sr Godelief Leyten a member of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood celebrates, this month, the Golden Jubilee of her Profession.

Sr Godelief, who comes from the Netherlands, has been in the country since 1962 spending all her time in the Diocese of Lae. During the years she has been involved in working with the social and religious well-being of women and in 1985 she was instrumental in helping set up the Catholic Women's as-

sociation in Lae.

For many years, sister, was a keen worker in the Family Life Apostolate of the Diocese and is still very interested in that ministry.

A special Mass, on the 19th of this month, followed by a meal, organized by the Women's Association, is to be held at St Mary's Cathedral and will be attended by her many friends and well wishers.

Fufu, Gari and Shito

Fufu, Gari and Shito are certainly not common English terms. Nor are they common in a place like Papua New Guinea. In fact they are foods from Africa, made from root crops such as Tapioka or Casava. However, now Papua New Guinea is learning about such foods thanks to Divine Word Missionary priest, Fr. Joseph Sakite, who runs a program called "Gutpela Sindaun" - a Melanesian Pidgin term meaning peace and prosperity.

The primary objective of Gutpela Sindaun program is to create awareness, to help families to be self-reliant and to promote justice and peace in the community.

Through a week's training workshop in food processing and preservation, he aims to reduce the level of law and order problems and thus preventing the escalation of such problems in the country at large.

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Papua New Guinea

New Book from Melanesian Institute

The Melanesian Institute has published a booklet about the issues modern women and children face in Papua New Guinea's society today.

Emerging Issues for Women and Children in Papua New Guinea by Jeline Giris and Theresia Rynkiewich outlines the traditional roles women played and continue to play in Papua New Guinea.

The book aims at bringing to light the new, modern challenges women face now, in contrast to what they faced in the past. It gathers together up to date statistics and information on Papua New Guineans' lives.

Interesting scenarios are also included, with comparisons between 'a typical day in the life of' a village woman in the highlands, a woman from the coastal village, and a single young working woman in town. These scenarios show the different traditional and modern issues women experience.

The book is sold for K5 excluding postage and for more information or for subscriptions, you can contact the Publication Department, Melanesian Institute on PO Box 571, Goroka, phone at 732 1777 or email them on mi_books@online.net.pg. Or visit our website: www.mi.org.pg

The Melanesian Institute is a non government organisation doing independent research into Melanesian cultures.



New Missionaries meet in Kiunga for Orientation Workshop.

In Daru-Kiunga Diocese, all new missionaries are orientated on its Diocesan Pastoral Plan annually. This month, from the 1-5 August, a total of 20 new missionaries both from overseas, local sisters, novices, and priests coming to work in diocese met in Kiunga for a week long Orientation Workshop organized by the Diocesan Team of Pastoral Animation.

The workshop was all aimed at helping the new missionaries integrate themselves into the Renewal programme of the diocese. During the workshop, they learned a lot on the spirituality of communion and its concrete way of being Church through methods of planning and programming.

The participants expressed their joy and gratitude for having attended this workshop. They said they have learned a lot about the way the diocese is organized through its renewal programme. Many expressed their commitment to be part of the diocese on this journey of faith. The workshop has deepened their understanding on the kind of Church we are called to become as proposed by the Vatican II Council, a church of communion and participation. At the beginning and closing of the Workshop, Bishop Gilles Cote was there also to stress the importance of the Pastoral Plan and encouraged the new missionaries to be part of renewal programme of the diocese.

By Fr Andrew Moses.

St Fidelis Seminary Changes Direction - Fr Bill, Rector, St Fidelis

The year 2005 marks the 38th year of existence of St Fidelis Seminary in Madang. During these years young Catholic men have been coming to St Fidelis to discern a vocation to become priests in the Catholic Church. For some years the Seminary accepted students for grades 7 - 12, but more recently only Grades 11 and 12 have been offered.

Beginning in 2006, St Fidelis Seminary will no longer enroll Grade 10 school leavers. Grades 11 and 12 will be discontinued and a new programme will be offered; it will remain a two-year programme but will have a more specific preparation for the young men to enter the major seminary. The first year of the programme will include intensive English classes and catechetical studies. The second year will be more focused on spiritual formation, assisting the young men in developing a strong prayer life and reflecting on issues of personal growth and maturity.

St Fidelis Seminary will continue to be the starting point for men considering a vocation to the priesthood; however, completion of grade 12 in another school will now be required for admission.

At the present time young men considering priesthood studies enter St Fi-

delis from 12 dioceses and archdioceses - Aitape, Bereina, Daru-Kiunga, Goroka, Kundiawa, Lae, Madang, Mendi, Mount Hagen, Port Moresby, Wabag and Wewak. Some of the religious communities also send their candidates to St Fidelis including the Capuchin Franciscans, Mariannahill, Michaelites, Pasionists, SOLT and SVD's. There are 98 seminarians studying at St Fidelis this year.

If we are to continue to have priests in the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea it is essential that parents in every Catholic family encourage their sons to consider the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood. Parents will especially want to be open to the possibility of a priesthood vocation for a son who has completed grade 12 and is serious about his faith.

Young men of Papua New Guinea here is an opportunity for you to love God with all your heart while you are ministering to God's people. Consider being a priest in the Catholic Church. Talk to your parish priest who will introduce you to the vocation director. It will be through contact with your vocation director that you will seek admission to St Fidelis Seminary to begin your journey to the priesthood.

Americans and French polls apart on religion

Americans are far more likely to consider religion central to their lives and to support giving religious leaders a say in public policy than people in nine countries that are close allies - especially France, according to a poll conducted in May by Ipsos for The Associated Press. Only 2 per cent of Americans said they did not believe in God, compared with 6 per cent in Italy, 11 per cent in Australia, 16 per cent in the UK and 19 per cent in France.

Asked whether religion was important or not important in their lives (or whether they were unsure), 84 per cent of Americans said it was important, com-

pared with 80 per cent in Italy, 55 per cent in Australia, 43 per cent in the UK and 37 per cent in France. On the question of whether religious leaders should try to influence government decisions, the "yes" percentages were: US 37, Italy 30; Australia 22; UK 20; France 12.

The other countries polled were Canada, Germany, Mexico, South Korea and Spain. Only Mexico was more religious than the US - by a small margin - but fewer Mexicans (20 per cent) thought religious leaders should try to influence government. - Yahoo News/AP, Jun 6