



The Catholic Reporter

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37 Years of PNG Independence

...National unity, first and foremost!

By Bishop Donald Lippert
OFM Cap Mendi

WITH the start of the recent national elections in Papua New Guinea, two new provinces were added to the country: the Hela Province and the Jiwaka Province.

These two provinces were not formed by the addition of new territory to the country (as one perhaps could say about the addition of Alaska and Hawaii as States of the USA). They were formed by dividing two existing provinces: Hela was divided from the Southern Highlands and Jiwaka was divided from the Western Highlands.

Since this is an accomplished fact, I don't wish to evaluate the pro's and con's of what has already happened. Here in the Diocese of Mendi, we look forward to working closely with the leaders of the new Hela Province, and we share in the sense of hope and expectation of the people of Hela.

Papua New Guinea is a beautifully diverse country that is made up of hundreds of different cultures. Often it is said that there are almost 800 languages representing almost the same number of cultural groups of people.

One of the greatest challenges over the past years since PNG won its independence in 1975 is the matter of how to form one country out of the multitude of tribes, clans and language groups.

One of the first major challenges to this vision was the crisis in



PNG citizen now mobilize for matters of national concern.

Bougainville. As a result of this bloody conflict, Bougainville is now an Autonomous Region which some believe may eventually end up as a country independent of PNG.

Apart from such an extreme situation, one might ask the question, is it good for the country that each year, more and more provinces would be formed by division?

One could imagine many other groups in the country asking the question: If it is good for Jiwaka and Hela to become their own provinces, why not us? Where would such a division begin doing real harm to the country?

In a country of over 700 language groups, (most admittedly too small to be politically independent), when

would the national government have to draw the line and say, "No more divisions"?

Politics is a part of the reality of human beings as social creatures.

Perhaps we could generalize and say that politics is most-often motivated by self-interest. What makes politics good or bad from a human point of view is how broadly or narrowly the "self" is understood.

Politics at its best seeks to serve the common good; that is, it understands "self" in terms of the entire community. Politics at its worst defines "self" in a very narrow way, so as to mean, my group, my friends, my interests or, even simply "me" the politician.

It takes courageous leadership to help everyone in

the political community (which includes all of us) to broaden the concept of "self" that we are interested in.

A country whose people cannot see beyond narrowly-conceived self-interest to the promotion of the common good of all will never gain the strength and vision required to develop to its full potential.

"A house divided against itself shall not stand" (cf. Mk 3: 25). It is not the place of leadership to impose a vision of the "self" but rather, in the lively discourse of pluralistic democracy, to help people freely grasp a wider, more inclusive view.

I believe the Church has an important role to play in this lively discourse.

In its recent *Pastoral Letter on Communion*, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of

PNG/SI proposes a movement toward communion as a response to many of the challenges faced by PNG society today.

A commitment to communion can invite people beyond alienation experienced by so many people today – especially the young – to a real experience of belonging. The dynamism of the church, inspired by the example of Jesus and made possible by the Holy Spirit is toward "com-union", that is, "being one with" others. This oneness, this solidarity is the foundation of any authentic community. This dynamism toward unity begins with individual persons but can extend to wider communities and even nations.

I was walking through a pharmacy in Boroko recently and picked up a rubber wristband like the ones which many young people are wearing these days. This one had the flag of Papua New Guinea on it and the words: "One tribe, one kantri".

The dream of the Founders of PNG was to form one, independent country. They strove to forge a real unity out of the wonderful diversity in language and culture.

The strength of the people of Papua New Guinea in the future will very much depend on the unity that all are able to bring about within the wonderful diversity which exists.

The beauty, strength, values of each language group and culture in PNG can enrich and strengthen the one people, the one tribe, the one nation that is developing into the one country of Papua New Guinea.

Refugees in Manus ...Catholic bishops disagree

By Victor Roche, SVD
CBC Secretary General

At the Cook Islands Forum recently in late August, Australian Prime Minister, Ms Gillard, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the President of Nauru, and the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea for the reopening of Australian government asylum seekers processing centers in the two countries.

The PNG centre will be located once again at Manus Island.

In their Annual General Meeting in 2011 the Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (CBC) stated that "more humane response to asylum seekers is onshore processing in Australia and not in Manus". (Resolution 11.53)

NCD Governor, Powes Parkop, and CBC lawyer, Paul Harricknen, also oppose a deal they consider unconstitutional, inhumane and against PNG culture. They argue that the asylum seekers detention in Manus without charges and without their free consent is in breach of Sections 36, 37, 41, 42 of the Constitution. The asylum seekers are bound for Australia, not for PNG. Therefore the *Migration Act* of Papua New Guinea cannot apply to them.

It is true that the PNG Government and the people of Manus will benefit economically from the agreement. Perhaps there will be more Australian investments in PNG. But at what cost? First: Violation of human rights of desperate and vulnerable people through lengthy detention in a place not of their choice. Second: Compromised national sovereignty by pressure from PNG's mightier neighbour!

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RADIO MARIA FOR THE CONVERSION OF SOULS

By Fr Martin We-en
Director

RADIO Maria PNG has been operating in Port Moresby for five years now. Director Fr Martin We-en, from the diocese of Aitape, explains the purpose and the plans of the radio station.

Fr Martin, can you describe how Radio Maria came to Papua New Guinea and started broadcasting in Port Moresby?

Radio Maria came to PNG through the invitation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference to take over from the Catholic Radio Network. I was chosen as director and I left Aitape for Port Moresby on 23 September 2006 to start Radio Maria PNG. After doing some necessary work on administration issues, Radio Maria took over from Catholic Radio Network and went on air for the first time on 25 March 2007.

What is the core message of Radio Maria?

The core message of Radio Maria is the conversion of souls. Therefore, in all Radio Maria programs, we work for the purpose that the soul is saved. Radio Maria is actually a tool of the new evangelization which serves the Church of the third millennium, as a Catholic radio station committed to calling for conversion of souls through radio programming which offers plenty of space for prayer, catechism and human formation. It bases its mission on faith in divine providence and depends on volunteer work.

Who is the typical listener of Radio Maria? What is the feedback you get from the audience?

The listeners of Radio Maria are the sick, the old, the homeless, the jobless, those who need comfort and consolation, the Catholic population at large, other Christians, people of other religions and people of goodwill. The feedback from people is overwhelming, especially when we pray for people and they are healed, comforted and find jobs. We have testimonies given to us by the listeners of how Radio Maria is helping them.

In most countries Radio Maria survives through the support of the public, both in terms of volunteers for the studio and finances? What about Port Moresby and Papua New Guinea? Who is helping you?

Radio Maria has nine charisma of which two are on relying on *divine providence* and *volunteer work*. Finances and volunteer work are great concerns for Radio Maria PNG as people are not used yet to giving and doing volunteer work. We have some people depositing into our bank account every fortnight but this is not enough for the monthly expenses. We did a *telethon* from 6 to 13 July this year to raise money to ship new equipment to the provinces, and we got only K10,000.00 out of K300,000.00 we were expecting to raise. Radio Maria PNG is surviving on fundraising for its operational costs and network expansion, as local donations are still insufficient. The 'World Family of Radio Maria' encourages its local stations around the world to raise funds locally to support themselves, and RM PNG is no exception. The 'World Family of Radio Maria' comes to support Radio Maria PNG for what it cannot locally raise and only for network expansion.

Are you planning to be confined to the capital city or to spread out to the rest of the country?

We are planning to cover the whole country of PNG and the Solomon Islands. By the end of this year 2012, Radio Maria will provide all its stations and the diocesan owned stations that have time sharing agreements with Radio Maria, with a new one (1) kilowatt transmitter and antenna. These stations are Mt. Hagen, Rabaul, Port Moresby, Lae, Vanimo and Aitape. Radio Maria will also install new transmitters to four dioceses for which NICTA (*National Information and Communication Technology Authority*) has already given a frequency license (Kimbe, Alotau, Wabag and Wewak).

FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Engan Religious Sister challenged by General Chapter

"As a Melanesian sister, coming myself from a diverse multicultural country, I lived a profound experience and faced the challenge of setting aside my own ways to grow in the richness of other cultures" - Sr. Veronica Paisson, an Engan of the Daughters of Wisdom, said after attending the General Chapter of their Congregation in Rome from July 1-31, 2012 — "No matter which country and culture we belonged to or what language we spoke, we were there for only one reason, which was our love for the Congregation and its mission for the Church. Each sister had the chance to experience the realities and hopes of our Congregation deciding together for the future." The General Chapter of the Daughters of Wisdom, founded in France in 1703, in fact dwelled on the theme, "Widen the Space of your Tent" (Is 54:2). Fifty-two delegates from 21 countries studied the impact of "Wisdom Spirituality" in today's society. Two Sisters (Marie Turner, an expatriate and Veronica Paisson, a national) represented the PNG community at the General Chapter, which elected a new international General Council with members from Canada, India, Italy, France, and Columbia. (Sr. Marie Turner DW)

Sea tragedy strikes diocese of Gizo, Solomon Islands: four die

Filipino teacher Ryan Turallo, two local children and one boy died after a speed boat belonging to the Catholic diocese of Gizo, Solomon Islands, capsized due to bad weather on 28 July on its way from the provincial capital to Nila. Six passengers, including Fr. Edmund Siguenza, from the diocese of Nueva Caceres in the Philippines, swam for three nights and two days to the shore. Two Australian planes and two helicopters helped in the search and rescue operation. On 27 August again the alarm was raised in Milne Bay province when passengers of a dinghy with Fr. John Berchman PIME and eight teachers, health workers and people connected with the Watuluma Catholic Mission, issued distress calls at around 1.00 pm, but then went silent for almost 48 hours. Having run out of fuel they drifted for one night and one day towards the mainland until they came ashore around Rabaraba. There they found additional fuel which allowed them to resume their trip to Alotau and reenter the Digicel coverage area the next day. (Fr. Giorgio Licini)

Students retreats at DWU in Madang a surprise for many

It was my first time last July 17 to attend a school retreat, because I thought that only Catholics had retreats. We don't have retreats in our Church. However, I learnt that it was not only for the Catholics students but for everyone. I was inspired by the talks and the short video clips that were shown. The best part of the retreat was the reflection part. This session really touched me as this was the time to reflect in silence and think back to my old ways of life. I found out from that point all my weaknesses and strengths and came to know who I really am. To relate it to my future occupation as a health manager, I understand that, by having retreats for my staff, will help them see how much they have worked with their patients and how hard they have worked to save lives. (Gershom Wang - 2nd Year Health Management)

During the retreat I came to realize how important it is to reflect back on my life, to make adjustments on my past mistakes and to move forward, forgetting everything as if nothing really happened, but trying to face the new challenges ahead of me. Generally I enjoyed every minute I spent during the retreat, but what really convinced me was Fr. Dong's talk. It was a very powerful and touching sharing. Everything about the retreat just flowed smoothly from the beginning right to the end. It was full of joy, fun, laughter, and even tears. With the awesome theme this year, 'The Power of Positive Vision', the talk related to the theme and everything was wonderful. I would recommend that DWU should at least schedule the retreats twice a year. (Christina Bagle - 1st Year Health Management)

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What about the other dioceses?

We have seven more dioceses which need new frequencies: Madang, Goroka, Kundiawa, Mendi, Daru/Kiunga, Kavieng and Bougainville. This year we are lodging applications for new frequencies for these dioceses, if the bishops of these dioceses agree. Next year 2013, we will work on securing funds to install transmitters in these dioceses. I am praying and hoping that, if all goes well and finances allow, by the end of 2015 all the dioceses in Papua New Guinea will have transmitters. Bereina, Kerema and Manus had been issued with frequencies under the name of Voice of Blessed Peter ToRot. Radio Maria will collaborate and work with them to share resources to better minister to the gospel in PNG, like what we are doing with other diocesan Catholic radio stations. We have also been approached by the World Family of Radio Maria to work on the dioceses of the Solomon Islands.

What about Internet broadcasting? Is it an option now for Papua New Guinea?

Technically it is possible to stream the audio signal from a studio to the FM transmitters in the remote places in PNG. I have consulted two qualified companies in this regard: *TE PNG* and our *World Family of Radio Maria*. Unfortunately we are told that the Internet in PNG is still very expensive. The sum of the Internet bills will exceed current Radio Maria's satellite costs. Furthermore, PNG Internet services are still very poor and unreliable. Audio signal transmissions will also be poor and unreliable. Therefore, standard satellite service is still recommended.

How do you see Radio Maria in the arena of media communication in Papua New Guinea? How do you relate with other Catholic and mainstream media?

Radio Maria will become the most effective Catholic Radio in PNG for evangelization work in the near future. This is because of her strong hold in the Catholic faith and her programs. We relate with other Catholic radios by sharing programs, personnel and equipment. We also participate in the PNG Media Council workshops and events. (G.L.)



No Anointing of the Sick by Deacons

In the June issue of *Catholic Reporter*, page 4, *Youngest of seven new Deacon for Madang*, Eva Wangihama states that now, "He can also give the Sacraments of Baptism and the Anointing of the Sick". While regarding Baptism this is true, for the Anointing the Code of Canon Law, No. 1003, # 1 says: "Every priest, but only a priest, can validly administer the anointing of the sick." Thanks to *Catholic Reporter* for rectifying! (Fr. Marian Faliszek SVD)

Catholics in five provinces to go for Confession

...Multiple voting is a sin

SINCE I came to Papua New Guinea, I went through four national elections in which multiple voting was not only common but a deed to be proud of.

It never happened to me that a Catholic parishioner came to confession and accused himself or herself of having cast his or her vote more than once.

I infer from that that multiple voting is not considered sinful. But according to the Christian ethics, it is sinful since not only it goes against the civil law, but also against God's law which forbids us to cheat.

How big is the practice of multiple voting in PNG?

Let us look at some figures. On August 9th, 2012, on page 28 of the *National Newspaper*, a Chart appeared with the number of the 2012 election voters in all PNG provinces. Since PNG held a census in 2011 and, usually the rate of the population over 18 years (eligible voters) varies between 51% and 53%, we can get an idea in which province the common roll was particularly inflated and/or there were many multiple voting. Table 1 gives the provinces' population according to 2011 Census, the estimate of the population eligible to vote according to the Census, and the actual number of voters as given in the above mentioned newspaper.

Tab.1: Total Provinces' population, estimated +18 population, and number of voters (2012)

Province	Population 2011	Estimated +18(53%)	Voters 2012
South. Highlands	515,511	273,221	378,953
Hela	352,698	186,930	170,383
Enga	452,596	239,835	241,064
West Highlands	352,934	187,037	310,252
Jiwaka	341,928	181,207	81,267
Simbu	403,772	214,014	286,806
East. Highlands	582,159	308,313	283,825
West Sepik	227,657	120,658	78,543
East Sepik	433,481	229,755	279,696
Madang	487,460	258,322	192,593
Morobe	646,876	342,844	284,745
Oro	176,206	93,389	37,222
Milne Bay	269,954	143,075	127,104
Central	237,016	125,618	138,163
NCD	318,128	168,593	65,668
Gulf	121,128	64,198	65,154
Manus	50,321	26,670	23,722
West New Britain	242,676	128,618	72,109
East New Britain	271,250	143,763	95,277
New Ireland	161,165	85,417	71,127
Bougainville	234,280	124,168	84,350
TOTAL	7,059,653	3,741,616	3,423,672

Source: *Census 2011; National Newspaper, August 9, 2012.*

One can notice that the provinces in which the number of voters substantially outweighs the number of the estimated eligible voters are in order: Western Highlands (more than 120,000), Southern Highlands (more than 100,000), Simbu (more than 70,000), East Sepik (almost 50,000), and Central (more than 12,000). It would be interesting to compare those figures with those of the common roll.

As a Catholic Priest, when I look at those figures, I feel very discouraged because with the exception of the Central Province, all the others with a substantial multiple voting have a high percentage of Catholics.

Do our Catholics not know that cheating is a sinful act? And that to send to Parliament an unworthy person by devious means is doubly sinful? However, in comparison to the 2002 elections, which were also held after a national Census (2000), the improvement in some provinces in the latest elections is noticeable, as shown in Table 2.

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FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Information and communication technology catching up on Pacific countries

"Australia and New Zealand Churches struggle to cope with the influence of secularism. But with the development of information and communication technology also other countries of the Pacific, such as Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, now realize that the same challenge is at their door steps. It is actually reaching the sitting rooms and verandahs of our humble homes in the rural areas." This is what Bishop Rochus Tatamai, MSC of Bereina had to say after attending the meeting of the eight executive bishops of the Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania in Paita, New Caledonia, last 14-15 August. For the near future, however, the main focus for every diocese will be on the Year of Faith (11 Oct. 2012 - 24 Nov. 2013) and the theme of the New Evangelization promoted by Pope Benedict XVI. The eight executive bishops (Rochus Tatamai, MSC of Bereina for PNG and Chris Cardone, OP of Auki for Solomon Islands) gathered in preparation for the General Assembly of the Federation of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania to be held in Wellington, New Zealand in the year 2014. The Federation includes four Bishops' Conferences: Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea/Solomon Islands, and CEPAC, which consists of all other small island countries in the Pacific Ocean, such as Fiji, Tonga, Guam, New Caledonia, Tahiti, Vanuatu, etc. (*Bp. Rochus Tatamai*)

Milne Bay students told to overcome cultural hindrances

"Birth, marriage, death, gardening... everything was determined by magic powers and behaviors in traditional Milne Bay culture. Then the Churches came to our villages and most of this was removed", said Ephraim Yalebaguyau, retired Principal of Madang Technical College. He was speaking at the Milne Bay Day organized by the Divine Word University students from the PNG easternmost province on Saturday 19 August in Madang. And he partially blamed the slow progress in development on rivalry and jealousy when it comes to the enhancement of personal and family life conditions; "It is a fact that, in some areas, anyone who puts up a permanent house or building of any sort, after a few weeks is dead". He appealed to the students "to leave this behind". "We need to look at the future — said Divine Word University Chaplain Fr. Giorgio Licini PIME, previously assigned to Milne Bay -. Whatever the past was, it is not going to come back. After the impact of Christianity and the modern world, Milne Bay and Papua New Guinea are not going to be the same again. It is for us to build a new time based on whatever good we can retain from the past, on our present human resources and our respect for God and creation as truly religious individuals". (*Bradley Gregory*)

Wewak out of school youth cry for friendship, education, spirituality

"*Call to Holiness in the spirit of Communion — Serving like Christ*", was the team of the Catholic youth gathering at the Wirui Cathedral compound in Wewak on 26 August — 2 September this year. About 300 out of school youth, aged 14-25, came together from parishes in the city and surrounding centers. The program of formation and activities was tight with talks on life resource management, cultural changes, social communications, Christian initiation; sports activities; video and movie showing; fellowship, daily Mass and prayers... On Thursday afternoon, 30 August the participants gathered for an Open Forum where they voiced their requests to youth leaders, pastoral workers and diocesan Bishop Toni Burgess, sitting among them. They said they want programs beyond the yearly gatherings. Since they are mostly out of school youth, they feel the need to acquire knowledge in different fields: social life, media communication, religion... They think that education, coupled with a deeper spiritual life, will help them find meaning and refrain from antisocial behavior such as marijuana smoking and home brew addiction. Some appealed to their peers not to only attend annual gatherings, but to be active in parishes and local communities. Youth programs must also aim at self-reliance, since family and Church support is frequently lacking for the Sepik youth. (*Fr Giorgio Licini*)

Table 2: Selected Provinces' population, estimated +18 population, and number of voters (2002/2012)

Provinces	Population 2000	Estimated +18 (53%)	Voters 2002	Population 2011	Estimated +18 (53%)	Voters 2012
Enga	295,031	156,366	317,273	452,596	239,835	241,064
West Highlands	440,025	233,313	386,177	352,934	187,037	310,252
Simbu	259,703	137,043	441,713	403,772	214,014	286,806
East Highlands	432,972	229,475	435,301	582,159	308,313	283,825
East Sepik	343,181	181,886	160,733	433,481	229,755	279,696

Source: *Census 2000, Electoral Commission, Census 2011, National Newspaper, August 9, 2012.*

In 2002 the biggest discrepancies between the number of eligible voters and the actual voters were to be found in Simbu (more than 300,000), Eastern Highlands (more than 200,000), Enga and Western Highlands (more than 150,000) while East Sepik seems more correct. In comparison to the 2002 elections the figures of the voters in the latest one look less fraudulent.

Is this improvement enough? Should Catholic priests and other Christian leaders simply keep quiet or shouldn't they begin as early as possible to make their faithful aware that multiple voting by one person or a group is a form of cheating, and cheating is forbidden by God's holy commandments?

FCBCO executives meet in Noumea

THE Executive of the Federation of the Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) met on the 14-15th August, 2012 at Mont Mou in Paita, near Noumea, New Caledonia, for the Preparatory meeting for the next Federation Assembly 2014 in Wellington, NZ.

The executive consists of 2 Bishops representatives of the four (4) CBC Conferences in Oceania, namely, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea Solomon Islands and CEPAC which consists of all the little island countries of the Pacific Ocean.

The meeting was also a follow-up on recommendations passed in the 2010 Sydney Federation Assembly and it was noted that a lot of the initiatives had been implemented such as the call for more cooperation and sharing of lecturers for our Seminaries, especially for the PNG SI situation.

The call for possible insurance cover for the priests working in the dioceses and the alarming call for better personal health care of priests, especially in PNGSI and the CEPAC region.

Australia and New Zealand struggle to cope better with influence of secularism but with the wake of information and communications technology the PNGSI and CEPAC Conferences are already witnessing this challenges at its door steps, if not already intrusive into the sitting rooms and verandahs of the humble homes in the rural areas.



More than 300 Catholic Youth of the Archdiocese of Port Moresby celebrated 25 years of their organization at St. John the Apostle Parish, Tokarara, NCD on Aug 31 – Sept 2. PNG Deputy Bishop for Youth, Rochus Tatamai MSC of Bereina, was the presider at the final Mass. *Photo: Eunice Kuaningi*

Port Moresby and Townsville now sister dioceses

By Fr Michael M. Igo
Archdiocese of Port
Moresby

ARCHBISHOP John Ribat MSC of Port Moresby and Bishop Michael Putney of Townsville, Australia signed an agreement of mutual cooperation between the two dioceses on 5 August 2012 in Port Moresby and sealed it three weeks later in Townsville.

The underlying theme of the agreement is "Faith in action through Communion", for greater cooperation and close working relationship between the two dioceses. The Townsville delegation, led by Bishop Michael Putney, arrived in Port Moresby on Thursday, 2 August and first visited some of the Catholic

schools in the city, where they were given hearty welcomes by teachers and students.

On 4 August they travelled to the Holy Family parish at Boregaina, where they were received with traditional dances and fanfare.

The two and half hour drive to the hinterlands of the Central Province did not seem to bother them.

Enthusiastic local people led the delegates into the parish church for the celebration of the Eucharist with the local parishioners. Children and adults had walked over seven hours to attend the special occasion.

Bishop Michael Putney presided over the Mass and in his sermon reiterated the message of mutual cooperation between the people of



Archbishop John Ribat signs

the Archdiocese of Port Moresby and Townsville. He also said that the special bond that they were about to



Bishop Michael Putney signs

create would be founded on the faith in Christ.

In the morning of Sunday, 5 August, at the Don

Bosco Technological Institute Gymnasium in Boroko, Archbishop John Ribat and Bishop Michael Putney signed the agreement during the Eucharistic celebration in the presence of Arch. Santo Gangemi, the Papal representative to Papua New Guinea, and the Governor General of the country. About ten thousand faithful were in attendance.

On his turn, Archbishop John Ribat led a delegation of clergy and laity from Port Moresby to Townsville the last week of August. Sunday 26 was the day scheduled for the sealing of the agreement and the final launching ceremony of the "Sister relationship program".

The celebration at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Townsville was attended by

a number of different Catholic ethnic groups (Tokelau, New Zealand, Samoa, Italy, France, Africa, Spanish speaking, and PNG).

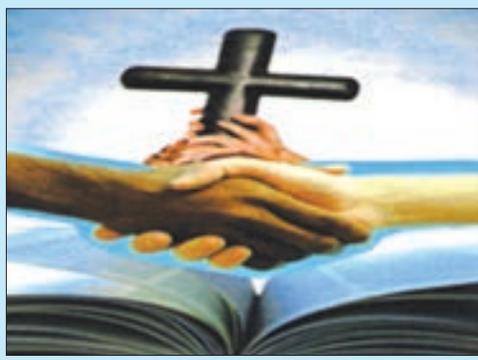
In his homily Bishop Michael Putney recognized that there is already a 30 year old civic relationship in place between Townsville and Port Moresby.

There is also a relationship between the University of Papua New Guinea and James Cook University in Townsville.

The new signing between the two dioceses is meant to enhance this relationship, but on a different level, by fostering mutual cooperation in the fields of Liturgy, Education, Youth ministry, Family life, and Health services.

Bond of friendship

The Sister Relationship Program between the Archdiocese of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and the diocese of Townsville, Australia, is visualized with a Logo designed by Sr. Virgie Gayon, a Daughter of Saint Paul.



- Black hand: represents Papua New Guinea
- White hand: represents Australia
- Shaking hands: symbol of sisterhood, communion, sharing, unity, friendship and partnership
- Cross: symbol of Christ, the source of communion and centre of life and salvation
- Black cross: color of Papua New Guinea / the Cross of PNG
- White hands holding the cross: represents "acceptance by Australia of PNG's friendship and partnership, etc."
- Open Bible: The Word of God, the source of preaching / action
- Blue color: symbol of faith

Sr Virgie Gayon, FSP

Priest, doctor and only white chief in Simbu

Source: *The Australian*

IN the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, the tribal people of Kundiawa (Simbu province) made Catholic priest Jan Jaworski one of their own.

They brought him a spear, slaughtered pigs and made him a chief of the Nauro, the only white man they had so honoured.

Father Jaworski, a small and softly spoken man, is a charismatic figure in the Highlands — a missionary doctor, who became a priest and now, a chief.

From Poland, he has lived among the tribes for 28 tumultuous years, from independence to confusion. He has seen villages burned to the ground, rebuilt and burned to the ground again.

Fr. Jaworski and Mr. Kuglame were in Melbourne for a course on

West Melbourne, with friend and social worker Brian Kuglame, there are strong echoes of the strife and dysfunction in remote indigenous communities and the response to it, including income management.

For the past decade, community income from coffee, which underpins the regional economy, has been paid as credits for education or housing needs after years of quickly vanishing cash.

"They see it in a positive way, that it is a wise decision," says Mr. Kuglame. "It is their income, therefore it is their decision to make. But we are giving them the option to decide what is the future. I think money is driving our people crazy."

Fr. Jaworski and Mr. Kuglame were in Melbourne for a course on

"the theology of the body", Pope John Paul II's "beautiful vision of sexuality". Promiscuity and HIV infection, first diagnosed in PNG in 1987, are growing problems, with more than 2 per cent of people now HIV positive and infection rates in mining areas as high as 15 per cent. "Our people, in a very fast transition from tribal society to modern society, face a lot of confusion," Father Jaworski says. "What was traditionally a taboo sexual encounter now becomes somehow very confused, especially among the young generation." According to Mr. Kuglame, the papal "beautiful vision" of the human body and sexuality was an opportunity to "put life back in its right perspective".

The regard for Fr. Ja-

worski as a figure of independent moral authority mirrors a dramatic re-evaluation of the missionary years in many remote indigenous communities, where it is now common to hear missionary orders work described as "better" than the chaos that followed. Father Jaworski recalls returning to Kundiawa after an AIDS conference in Barcelona in 2002. When he returned, there was "no parish, no people" after clan fighting during elections. "Everything was demolished," he says. "It was a terrible shock for me, because how can you do pastoral work when there are no people?"

Mr. Kuglame remembers Fr. Jaworski in that time as a lone, but inspiring and ultimately

unifying, figure.

"There was life there no more, it was totally deserted," he says. "Just the priest, ringing the bell, and eventually the community was able to get together."

Asked whether he regarded himself as surgeon, missionary or chief, he laughs and says: "It depends on the moment." Asked whether he was optimistic for the future, Father Jaworski says, "Yes, I am. I am sure that we are going in a good direction, even if sometimes it looks like there are too many downs."

Mr. Kuglame, too, is optimistic. "As we are bombarded with problems, some people may be looking at it in a negative way, but others are also looking at it in a positive way — what can we do?"



Catholic missionary priest Jan Jaworski, left, with Simbu social worker Brian Kuglame, at a theology conference in Melbourne. Picture: Stuart Mcevoy
Source: *The Australian*