



The Catholic Reporter

Happy New Year from Catholic Reporter Team

Catholic Bishops' Conference of PNG & SI - Commission on Social Communications, P.O. Box 398, Waigani, NCD Tel.: 325 9577 - Fax: 323 2551

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Legislation on polygamy issue urgent

**By Atty. Paul Harricknen
Catholic Professionals PNG**

SHOULD polygamy be allowed to continue in our country to its own natural demise or should there be legislative intervention as recently proposed by the Governor of Eastern Highlands, Hon. Julie Soso? Polygamy is not only unchristian and against moral law, it is a social menace.

In 1982, the late Hon. Peter Peipul, called for the outlawing of polygamy. In his opinion, polygamy was "unsavoury" and "unconstitutional". In 1990, the former Law Reform Commission's Task Force on Family Law Reform also considered the banning of polygamy.

While customary marriages may be lawful, unfortunately there are now many complaints, fights and killings between co-wives. In areas

where polygamy is still practiced, an increasing number of women have been charged with the murder of another of their husband's wives.

Women's human rights will always be an issue if polygamy remains in place.

Every human being (both male and female) have equal rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Art. 1 summarizes all of the subsequent articles and succeeding international treaties and conventions when it says, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

Particularly under Article 16 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, all member

States are required to take appropriate steps or measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations, in particular on the basis of equality of men and women such as the same right to enter into marriage, the same right to freely choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with free and full consent, and the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution.

Papua New Guinea as a member State to this legally binding international treaty has a duty to ensure that its domestic laws, including Statutes and customary practices are in line with the internationally recognized principles and practices.

Polygamy is no longer suitable for PNG. Many polygamous relationships are not valid customary marriages as they do not fulfill the traditional requirements of bride

price and acceptance by the tribal families of the parties to these relationships.

Usually polygamy is forced upon first wives, who succumb due to their economic and social disadvantage or simply opt to maintain their marriage fidelity and integrity.

The practice of polygamy today is more for the convenience of sex, labour or politics for men. Women are always at the receiving end. The argument by supporters of polygamy that it is culturally valid and has worked well in PNG fails to recognize the chaos and abuse it causes today more than ever. Whilst polygamous customary marriage is recognized by the Marriage Act and the Underlying Law Act of 2000, it is also arguably unconstitutional and unlawful.

It is unconstitutional because many polygamous marriages are in favour of men who marry more

than one woman, thus discriminatory under section 55 of the Constitution.

Many of the purported or seemingly polygamous marriages are in reality bigamous. This is true especially with the working, educated and elite class of the society.

Many of those partners have an outstanding religious or civil marriage. When they claim entering into a subsequent customary marriage, this may easily be classified as bigamous under the Marriage Act and the Criminal Code. First wives in this case could have their husbands and other wives prosecuted for bigamy.

The inconvenience of polygamy in this present age and times should be properly considered. Should the Parliament refuse to act on Hon. Julie Soso's request, it is probably for the National and Supreme Courts to step in to outline a set of principles defining genuine and valid customary marriage.

World Communications Day 2013

THE SOCIAL NETWORKS

ONE of the most important challenges facing the task of evangelization today is that which is emerging from the digital environment. Pope Benedict XVI calls attention to this particular topic, in the context of the Year of Faith, in his choice (29 Sept. 2011) of the theme for the 47th World Communications Day (12 May 2012), "Social Networks: portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelization".

During a time in which technology has emerged

as part of the fabric of connectivity of human experiences, such as relationships and knowledge, we need to ask: can it help men and women meet Christ in faith? It is not enough to find an adequate language, but rather, it is necessary to learn how to present the Gospel as the answer to that basic human yearning for meaning and faith, which has already found expression online.

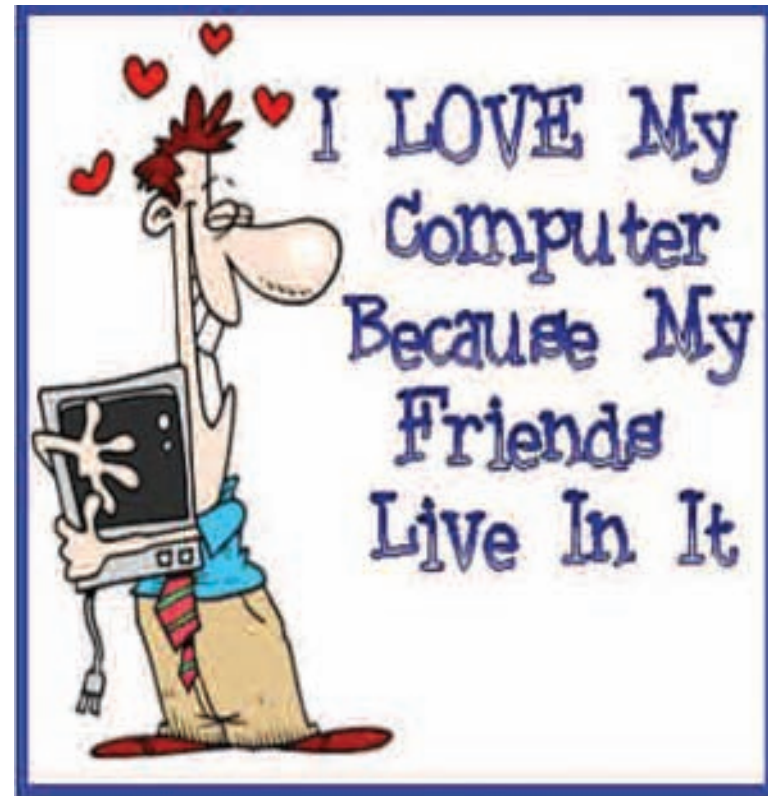
Such an approach, which will serve to create a more dynamic and hu-

mane digital world, requires a new way of thinking. It is not simply a question of how to use the internet as a means of evangelization, but instead of how to evangelize in a context where the lives of people find expression also in the digital arena.

In particular, we need to be attentive to the emergence and enormous popularity of the social networks, which privilege dialogical and interactive forms of communication and relationships.

World Communications Day, the only worldwide celebration called for by the Second Vatican Council (Inter Mirifica, 1963), is celebrated in most countries, on the recommendation of the bishops of the world, on the Sunday before Pentecost (May 12th in 2013 - May 5th for PNG and Solomon Islands).

The Holy Father's message for World Communications Day is traditionally published in conjunction with the Memorial of St. Francis de Sales, patron of writers (January 24).



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PNG and Solomon Islands towards a common Pastoral Plan

By Sr. Mary McCarthy PBVM

THE Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea is planning a Second General Assembly, this time with the participation of the Solomon Islands, after the first one in 2004. A tentative date has been set for the end of September 2013 possibly in Port Moresby or Madang.

There will probably be six participants from each one of the 19 PNG dioceses and the 3 Solomon Islands dioceses: 3 Male (bishop, priest, layman) and 3 Female (1

sister and 2 laywomen). The Commission Secretaries of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, the Federation of Religious representatives, and the representatives from other Churches will also be included for a membership of approximately 150.

The preparation is already under way with the evaluation of the National Pastoral Plan 2004-2010. Evaluation forms already went out to the dioceses. Reports reveal that at least some groups and parishes began immediately to discuss the

questions and to evaluate pastoral activities in their diocese. Other dioceses have in place an evaluation process as a part of their own Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Some dioceses have a Diocesan General Assembly scheduled and that will be the time when they will complete their own evaluation and work on the next phase of their Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

The diocesan representatives to the Second General Assembly will be able to do their work well if they are well informed about the concerns of their people and have actively participated in the evaluation

process and in other diocesan pastoral planning activities.

To further enhance the process, Sessions of Training of Trainers for the evaluation of the National Pastoral Plan will be organized by Fr. Roger Purcell MSC at Sivarai Namona Pastoral Centre, Port Moresby, on 21-25 January, 2013 for the dioceses of the Southern Region, New Guinea Islands, and Solomon Islands; at Kefamo Conference Centre, Goroka, on 28 January – 1 February, 2013 for the dioceses of the Momase Region and the Highlands. The contents will focus on spirituality (reading the

Signs of the Times – to give depth to the evaluation process), communitarian discernment, active hope, National Pastoral Plan evaluation: background and process so far, etc.

The evaluation process at the parish level is to be completed by March 2013.

The plan that will be born of the 2013 General Assembly will be named Conference Pastoral Plan (ConPlan) since it will be common to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. It will no longer be only a PNG National Pastoral Plan.

ALCOHOL KILLS PERSON, FAMILY AND FUTURE

The benefits of Couple HIV/AIDS Counseling and Testing'

By Anonymous

I call myself an educated and professional person. But does that ideology reflect the real concept of the way I live my life? A one week 'Couple HIV/AIDS Counseling and Testing' workshop in Alexishafen, Madang, would eventually unveil the hidden truths. I was ranked in a position that I saw myself as nowhere near "O.K.", if I continued to live the same lifestyle. I identified myself as an alcoholic who tries to solve marital problems under the influence of alcohol and, moreover, someone with total disregard to employment duties. I see myself as my own boss for that matter. With socializing it's even worse. Every six pack of beer adds to twelve, eighteen, twenty-four and eventually two days of drinking resulting in a few fights on the streets and in the house. It had become a routine in what I can describe as my chaotic life. An equipment is smashed every time there is a fight or it bears numerous dents or cracks, if it survives hours of violent rage. There's hardly any sign of functional appliances and equipment in my house at present, because of my violent behavior. **It is evident that my life will be in drastic turmoil if immediate change is not imminent.** Towards the end of the workshop, I decided to initiate change and help myself before I can help others who are faced with similar problems in life.

Need counseling, can't make it alone!

I arranged with a Counselor immediately for a counseling session that provided the opportunity for me to say as much as I can about my problems. **She had good counseling skills and provided a lot of advice and opinion in our three hours session. I felt a lot of difference, which slowly changed my perception of how I viewed the actual situations and conditions in my life.** It could never have been easier than anticipated, for when I left Madang for my home, the fight for a reborn life had begun. My newly acquired self esteem, new routines, new set targets and the positive outlooks were at war with the old corrupt and confused past. Much to the depression of guilt, I reached my house and family pondering and reminiscing about my past upon seeing the environment I used to live in, ten days before the counseling experience and it was just too much to bear. **The happiness to be with my kids and the tears of self-pitying my past bad behaviors came into collision.** The desire to entertain myself with a bottle of beer was too much to ignore when it was accompanied by a casual gathering or small functions hosted by friends within my neighborhood. I had to fight all those temptation within myself and did it with the help of the Counselor once more who had been very encouraging and supportive with advices and guidance.

"You want to change, YOU have to change!"

However, this time the counseling session took the medium of texts messages and phone calls which went on for almost four days. The end result paid off with a much needed sense of responsibility that I managed to develop and to personally deal with the temptations that might surely encourage my chaotic past. The Counselor provided close coaching and even made references to certain units in the 'Couple HIV/AIDS Counseling and Testing' modules as an encouragement. Things have worked out well for me where I am now able to take control of myself, socialize occasionally and responsibly and strongly encourage a positive work attitude towards my employment obligation. For almost three months, I have realized a progressive improvement in my personal conduct and attitude. **There is no more fighting and damaging household items and my family is happier than ever before. I strongly believe in and encourage 'Couple HIV/AIDS Counseling and Testing'.** The fight to do what is right has only begun for me as I begin to understand and embark on a journey for peace, love and care for myself, my family and those around me but I understand it won't be easier done than said and takes a lot more courage and passion. As one would anticipate, the reality of the process and good practice stated in books is far from achievement if change does not begin within oneself: "You want to change, YOU have to change!" (Catholic HIV/AIDS Services Inc. - Friendship Bridge Newsletter, Dec. 2012 - Tel: 343 0067)

MY MOBILE PHONE: A DOUBLE EDGE SWORD

By Sr. Rosalia Milur MFIC
Aitape

Sr. Rosalia Milur is a member of the Congregation of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MFIC). She recently presented a Thesis on "The Use of Mobile Phone in Religious Life" for her Bachelor of Arts Degree - Social and Religious Studies at Divine Word University in Madang.

Sr. Rosalia, this topic is not frequently discussed in religious communities. How did you come up with it?

In 2008, while I was working in formation of young sisters, I realized that mobile phones were influencing community life. We even had some incidents in this regard. At that point I became convinced that a protocol had to be developed and a discipline established.

But the use of mobile phones is generally considered an advantage by everybody?

Of course, the mobile phone is an essential and convenient tool of communication also to assist religious personnel in the mission. Its introduction has enabled easier communication access to rural and remote communities. The excessive use of the device by religious men and women, however, can lead to having no time for the essential elements of consecrated religious life, such as personal prayer and community life.

How many religious were involved in your study and what questions were asked?

There were a total 42 participants (29 male and 13 female) who were involved in the study. They consisted of professed religious brothers, priests and nuns from twelve Religious Congregations of the dioceses of Aitape and Wewak and the archdioceses of Rabaul, Madang, Mt Hagen and Port Moresby. Ten questions were asked, which focused on the use of mobile phones; positive and negative aspects; communal living; relationships; evangelization; communication technologies; religious life; changes in the communication system; differences in age group on the use of mobile phones and general comments.

What were the responses?

Most of them were positive. Respondents said that they now have the freedom to communi-

cate and the possibility of obtaining information at any time through their mobile phones. The same information can assist students in their research and religious men and women in their ministries. We can always be connected and develop a better sense of belonging.

And what about the negative responses?

"At times a religious is so much in love with the mobile phone that nothing else matters," said a respondent. Quality time is given to conversing on the mobile phone and sending text messages and less time is given to community responsibilities. Some religious use their mobile phone late into the night sending SMS or having a conversation. This way they easily miss morning prayers and Mass.

What did you find out about prayer and mobile phones?

A respondent said that he used the mobile phone to text people inspiring prayer messages. Others admitted using the mobile phone to pray with sick people in distant places, with other religious, family members and people who ring up asking for prayers. When the mobile phone rings at prayer time, however, it is a nuisance. The mind drifts away wondering about who the caller may be or questioning the nature of the call. The focus on the Lord is lost.

Is the ownership and use of mobile phones a threat to poverty in religious life?

A young respondent said that he noticed some final professed religious having two or three mobile phones or phones with dual or triple Sim card. Is that "poverty" in religious life? On the other hand, having a mobile phone contributes to the management of time and saves energy. A participant said that he himself once used the mobile phone to save a life in a rural aid post by being able to contact an ambulance to pick up a very sick patient. A mobile phone, however, is expensive to maintain. In places where there is no electricity, there is a cost in charging mobile phone batteries on privately run generators. But "life is meaningless without a mobile phone," an interviewee commented; although, begging for units and credits from relatives and friends is normally an embarrassment for a person in religious life.

And what about chastity?

A reflection was shared by a participant that she is blessed with many friends both religious and lay people. They use the mobile phone to keep in touch and share successes, joys, struggles, sadness, gossips and information. In a conversation about mobile phones, however, a layperson said, "I thought religious are 'married' to Christ, but now it seems that some of them are married to their mobile phones." The excessive use of the communication technology can lead to unnecessary calls and develop into inappropriate romantic relationships.

Your research deals extensively with relationships.

Most of the religious I interviewed confirmed that having a mobile phone deepens, strengthens and maintains relationships among members of the congregation. They are able to connect with one another wherever they are. Often, after meetings or a course of studies, people develop new relationships and exchange phone numbers. The findings, however, also highlighted that some romances or love relationships started through the use of mobile phone. There are reported cases of individual religious men and women who stray to the point of using the mobile phone for dating just as in the secular world. The risk of abusing mobile phones and the Internet for pornographic downloading and text messages with sexual references is also there for religious as well. The misuse of mobile phones by religious men and women, when it occurs, affects the faith of the people. Religious may end up not being trusted and respected as it used to be.

What is the conclusion of your study? Should religious men and women be allowed the use of mobile phones or not?

Having a mobile phone is normal and ever more a necessity for every Papua New Guinean. Education on the responsible use of mobile phones, however, should be developed to help individual religious men and women to properly avail of the technology. It should start in the formation houses and in the juniorate. Religious congregations should not prohibit, but certainly set guidelines for the use of mobile phones. (G.L.)

Year of Peter ToRot brings Peace and Reconciliation to East New Britain Families

By **Abp. Francesco Panfilo**
SDB - Rabaul

ON 30th December, Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth, the Year of Blessed Peter ToRot came to an end. The closing ceremony was held in each parish as I had suggested that the day be celebrated as 'Family Day', taking advantage of the fact that all our students are at home for the Christmas holidays.

The relics of Blessed Peter ToRot visited all our parishes from July 2011 to December 2012. The last parish was Mile

and then Ulamona, in the diocese of Kimbe, West New Britain, on the 29 December. After a solemn celebration there, they were brought back to Rakunai by the people of Ulamona and the neighboring newly established parish of Bago (Archdiocese of Rabaul).

In a letter I sent to all pastoral workers of the Archdiocese on December 8, I wrote: "During the Centenary celebrations of the birth of Blessed Peter ToRot many good things have happened: families were re-united; enemies forgave each other; people who had been away from the Church

and from the Sacraments were converted. Our aim was 'Renewal of Family Life'. Only God knows how much or how little we may have achieved this goal."

The Year of Faith, proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI, gives us the opportunity to continue the journey of renewal of family life by deepening our faith in God. The Year of Faith is meant to help Catholics appreciate the gift of Faith; deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ; strengthen their commitment to sharing the Faith with others.

Faith is a gift that God gave

us, like a little seed, on the day of our Baptism. This seed must grow; it has to become a plant and bear fruits. The family has a great duty to perform: parents, in fact, are the first teachers of the faith of their children.

As we are about to bring to a close the Year of Blessed Peter ToRot and to open the Year of Faith we can just commit ourselves to become credible witnesses, enlightened in mind and heart by the word of God, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to Our Lord Jesus Christ.



Blessed Peter ToRot Basilica at Rakunai, East New Britain Province.

SIGNIS leaders congratulate Catholic communicators; call for Bishops and clergy to mobilize

28 DEC 2012. Signis Pacific President, Fr. Ambrose Pereira SDB, yesterday congratulated and thanked all Church communicators in his Christmas and end of the year 2012 address "for the many productions, programmes, courses and events organized and conducted, that have contributed much to spreading the message of Peace, much needed in our island countries." "Thank you - he also said in the message emailed from the Signis Pacific Secretariat Office in Fiji - for your zeal, dedication and commitment and for doing all you can despite limited resources and difficult situations". Signis is a worldwide Catholic Association for Communication officially recognized by the Holy See and scheduled to hold its next World Congress in Beirut, Lebanon, in October 2013.

Fr. Pereira's address followed that of Signis World President, Mr. Augustine Loorthusamy, who enthusiastically said a few days before

Christmas that, "This has been a good year for Signis. Our membership has been strengthened and our commitment has borne fruit in all sectors. There is a greater interest in the work of Signis both in the Church and among secular media professionals. It is worth mentioning 'World Communication Day', which is now celebrated in many more dioceses and countries than before. This has also become a bridging event between Church and secular media professionals."

Mr. Loorthusamy also could not avoid stressing the fact that, "The Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI continues to surprise us with his entry into the Twitter world. This is a first in the history of Church communication. We fully support and applaud this move. This must surely challenge our Bishops and clergy in our dioceses to get moving as this provides a great opportunity to involve the creativity of the Lay in our churches." (cbcpngsi.org - giorgiolicini@yahoo.com)

Port Moresby parish make Christmas a highlight of the Year of Faith

By **Andrew Mexie - St. John the Apostle Parish (Tokarara, NCD)**

26 DEC 2012. The parishioners of St. John the Apostle - Tokarara (Port Moresby) had privileged moments of faith practice during the Christmas novena this year.

A special Holy Hour of Adoration was held every morning from 5:30 to 6:30 AM on 17-24 December. About fifty people participated every day with several of them arriving in the evening and sleeping at the parish pastoral centre due to security concerns.

A meditation was given every morning on the theme, 'The Journey of Discipleship - Matthew Chapter 10' followed by the prayer of the Holy Rosary.

The participants brought along their

own Bible for the Holy Hour, but received handouts on the meditation.

Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation was given on the 18th of December to the youth, on 19th to the couples and on the 20th to the children and elderly people from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

On Friday evening 21st, after an extra Holy Hour of Adoration, the nativity crib was officially lighted. The traditional style of the Crib reminded everyone that the Christmas celebration is one of faith, not a secular and consumerist occasion.

The Christmas Vigil Mass was celebrated at 6:30 PM on the 24th. It was presided by Fr. Shanthi Puthusseray PIME, Catholic Youth and Laity Coordinator for Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, in the ab-

sence of Parish Priest, Fr. Silvestre Saladaga PIME. In his homily Fr. Shanthi underlined and explained the missing elements of appropriate love, care and attention for children in today's PNG families; and how this affects the young generations and their future leadership skills for the Church and the country. The kissing of the baby Jesus at the end of the Mass was a moving exercise.

"This year we have learned and experienced several aspects of our faith in the Christmas celebration", said parishioner Dennis Tigali. Parish Pastoral Council Chairman, Kevin Kassman, also thanked Fr. Shanthi for making this year Christmas celebration part of the Year of Faith.

(cbcpngsi.org - giorgiolicini@yahoo.com)

Commentary
by
Fr. Victor Roche, SVD



Christmas Message

Christmas is a time of Joy and Peace. Let us be joyful of the person who is the centre of Christmas: Christ. He is the reason for Christmas. Because of the birth of the Saviour as a man let us really celebrate Christmas with Joy.

Christ brought Peace by becoming a human being in a Family. Joseph, Mary and Jesus were members of a good nuclear family.

God wants us to experience peace in our families this Christmas. Fathers of the family, give peace to the family.

Do not get drunk and bring discord in the family. Spend the money sensibly and be a good father. Mothers, spend quality time with the family and do all necessary things during this Christmas Season for the family to be joyful and peaceful.

It is very fitting that people have family re-unions during the Christmas Season. Relationships are rectified and strengthened.

Let us Celebrate Christmas first of all within the family and then in the communities. It is very important that we experience Christ's Peace within the family.

We read so much of news of violence and death in the newspapers these days. Please give a break.

Stop stealing, fighting and violence during the Christmas Season. Let us celebrate Christmas without fear and anxiety.

There is also so much of talking also about the free education, Outcome Based Education (OBE), new syllabus etc.

Let us not forget that the children's education is the focus of this dialogue. It should not be made political nor economical.

I see lots of people gathering in the Jack Pidick park in Port Moresby every night for prayers and entertainment.

It is a good sign that people are not afraid of gathering in the night.

It shows that there are signs of joy and peace in the city. Let us have Joy and Peace of Christmas in our families, Communities and our Country.

I wish all of you a Peaceful Christmas and a Blessed New year.

Fr. Victor Roche, SVD
General Secretary

See regular Catholic Information updates on www.cbcpngsi.org

Melanesian Institute releases book on West Papua conflict

By Fr Franco Zocca
SVD
Melanesian Institute
(Goroka)

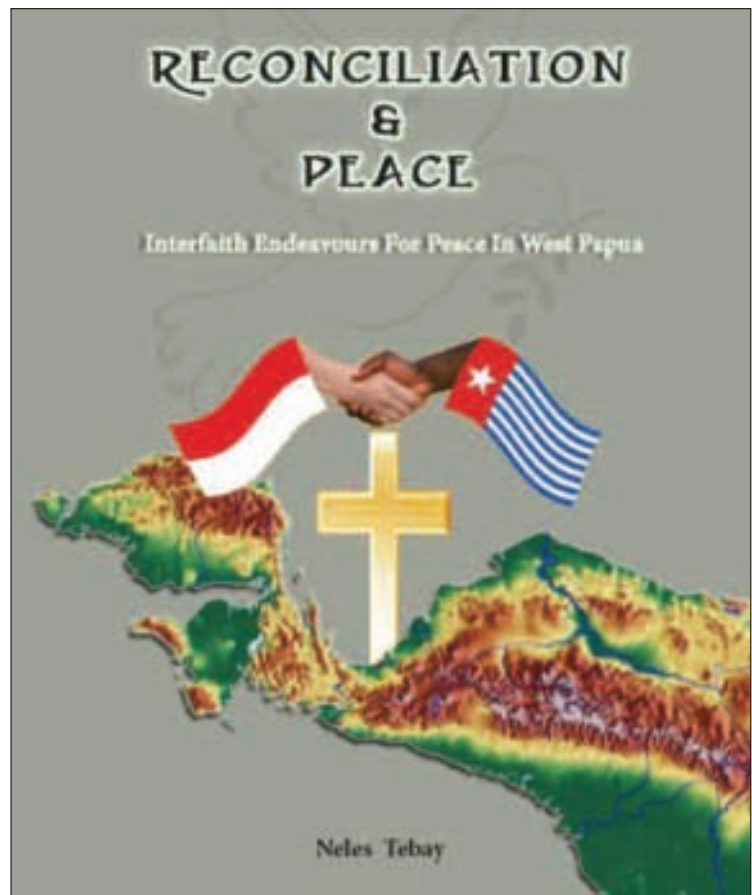
THE big island of New Guinea is divided into two parts. The western part is a province of Indonesia. The eastern part is the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

The two parts have a lot in common: similar geography, rich in natural resources, indigenous Melanesian population and a history of colonisation by Europeans. The western part, now called West Papua, was a

colony of the Netherlands (Holland) until 1963, when it was annexed by Indonesia. The Indonesian government immediately implemented its own colonising program. It took advantage of West Papua's natural resources (especially minerals, oil, and timber), confiscated large tracts of customary land, and transferred tens of thousands of people from more densely populated islands of Indonesia into West Papua. According to the 2010 Census, half of the 4 million West Papuans are now non-Melanesian.

Many indigenous Melanesians in West Papua resented the takeover of their traditional land by Indonesia. During the last 70 years they have expressed their resentment in various ways, both violent and non-violent. Because of their opposition to Indonesia and their demands for independence, many Melanesian West Papuans have been jailed or killed; discrimination against Papuans is usual. More than ten thousand Papuan refugees have crossed the border and now live in Papua New Guinea.

The sad history of West Papua since 1963 is told by Dr Neles Tebay in a book recently published by the Melanesian Institute, Goroka. Dr Tebay also describes the efforts of Christian churches to bring peace to West Papua, so that Melanesians and non-Melanesians might live and prosper in harmony. The book's title is "Reconciliation and Peace – Interfaith endeavours for peace in West Papua", Point Series 36. It can be ordered from the Melanesian Institute in Goroka (mi.books@online.net.pg) at the price of K50.



'Catholic Professionals PNG' slam Manus solution

By Atty. Paul Harricknen
Catholic Professionals PNG

THE Post Courier of 17 December 2012 reported that a total of 101 asylum seekers are now detained at a makeshift centre in Manus Island. The fourth batch of 34 people were flown into Manus from Australia on Saturday, 15 December 2012.

They were accompanied by Australian Federal Police, Immigration Officials, Interpreters, Children Services, and medical personnel. The detainees include men, women and children from Iran, Afghanistan, India and Sri Lanka.

I agree with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees that Papua New Guinea has no legal framework to deal with refugees as it has been the case in the past with the West Papuans. The Migration Act does not deal with refugees. Similarly the Migration Act does not adequately deal with the Asylum Seekers.

The International Human Rights Day was celebrated on Monday, 10 December 2012. PNG is a member

State of the United Nations and is obliged under various UN Human Rights Conventions. PNG also boasts of having a Constitution with respect of human rights enshrined in it.

These desperate and vulnerable people also have rights to personal freedom and decent care. Their personal welfare is as important as their personal liberty. West Papuans have been living in PNG for many years without their legal status determined. Now the asylum seekers have been brought into the country without their free consent and are literally detained in Manus. This presents a serious human rights issue for both groups of people.

But PNG is actually in breach of the Constitutional human rights of the asylum seekers by detaining them in Manus. PNG is also in breach of its moral responsibility by refusing to determine the legal status of the West Papuans living in the country. Without a legal status, their rights are very much restricted in terms of employment, movement, education and much of the

civil and political rights.

I recall the statement of one of the asylum seekers who was detained in Manus and whom I represented in 2003, Mr. Aladdin Maysarah Salem Sisalem: a son of a Palestinian Refugee in Kuwait, who ran away from there to Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Thursday Island in Australia and was eventually returned to PNG and detained at Manus. He asked: "What crime have I committed to deserve all this humiliation and suffering for most of my life? Is it because I was born to a Palestinian refugee father? I am being denied refugee status when in fact I was born a refugee... I am fit and healthy and have a good trade as a very experienced car mechanic. I can work in my trade and be a productive member in a good society. Please, give me a new lease in life. Please help me." Aladdin with the other 356 asylum seekers at the time revolted against their detention in Manus. The Post Courier of 19 September 2002 ran a cover page story titled "Refugees revolt, fence uprooted by chanting protes-

tors." They put up notices inside the detention center saying, "We request all men, women and children of Manus Island to help us get out of this jail."

There are children among the adults at the detention centre in Manus. But PNG has acceded to the 1951 Status of Refugees Convention and the Convention of the Rights of Children.

As a member State PNG is under international obligation to protect the human rights and welfare of the asylum seekers and children. The Convention of the Rights of Children states that "the child by reason of his physical and mental immaturity needs special safeguard and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth."

Australians must stop dictating on PNG and other smaller nations. Their perception that PNG is not a country that cares about the rule of law is unacceptable.

We have a Constitution and laws to regulate activities within our borders. Australia cannot make its laws extra-territorial as it seems to

be in the case of the asylum seekers.

And for PNG it is not simply a case of helping a big brother. There are serious issues of law and human rights of desperate and vulnerable people at stake, along with legal and moral responsibilities that should override any inducements of money, aid and cheque book diplomacy.

PNG cannot ignore the human rights provisions of its Constitution and deny people's rights to personal freedom under Sect. 42(1)(5) and Sect. 37(1) of the Constitution when these people are brought onto the shores of PNG without their consent.

Any denial of access to legal advice and representation to the asylum seekers also violates their rights under Sect. 37(1) and 42(2) of our Constitution.

The Catholic Church has always maintained, both in Australia and PNG, that the two countries deal to keep these desperate and vulnerable people detained for an indefinite period of time is illegal and inhumane.

Family Life Workshop in Lae finds reasons of PNG evils

By Sr. Gabriela Burgos
SSpS
National Catholic Family
Life Apostolate

A Family Life workshop recently held in Lae led participants to identify at least a dozen factors that contribute to domestic violence and social upheaval: rapid movement from rural to urban centres in search of better life, lack of job opportunities and basic services in remote areas, illiteracy, ignorance about the rights of women and children, cultural beliefs, jealousy and unfaithful-

ness to one's partner, big man mentality and polygamous practices, lack of communication between husband and wife, misconception about bride price, housing shortage which opens up the possibility for incest and unwanted pregnancies, treating adultery and wife beating as family problems and not as criminal cases, and lack of pastoral visits to families.

The research and debate were facilitated by Br. Martin Tnines from the Melanesian Institute and Sr. Gabriela Burgos from the National Catholic

Family Life Apostolate with the assistance of Lae Diocesan Family Life coordinator, Mrs. Dorothy Mari. They also made publications available to the participants for personal and group study.

"These topics enhance my knowledge and give me strength to continue to work with youth and couples in my parish" - said participant Chris Maku -. "I have two hours meeting with youth every Sunday to raise awareness on drug abuse and violence. These books on sorcery, disabilities, alcohol and substances abuse

are really helpful to my work. I also gain new skills and encouragement from group discussion and reports."

Participants noted that alcohol abuse is not only affecting the youth and the laity, but also adults and Church leaders (priests, protestant pastors, and religious men and women).

Bishop Christian Blouin of Lae diocese encouraged and challenged participants to implement what they learned from the workshop in their families, and to share the lessons with others in their respective communities and parishes.



Participants at the Lae Family Life Workshop in October 2012.