



The Catholic Reporter

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The Passion of Papua New Guinea

By Archbishop Douglas Young SVD
Mount Hagen

THIS Easter, occurring as we prepare for the fortieth anniversary of our Independence, I have been thinking not only of the passage of Jesus' body from suffering, pain and death to a glorified body, but also of the passage of his soul, from rejection, betrayal, mockery and abandonment to a "glorified soul".

We are familiar with the physical sufferings of Jesus: his torture through beatings by soldiers in the miscarriage of justice called his "trial", his scourging, his crowning with thorns, his carrying of the cross through the streets of Jerusalem, his falls, his humiliating public stripping, his being nailed to the cross, his struggles to breathe, and eventually his death, followed by further damage to his body by a spear being thrust in his side.

We can see similar scars on the body of the nation itself: a justice system which appears to be failing the poor, all kinds of unnecessary suffering as a result of an ailing

health system, poor roads, alcohol and drug abuse, violence and crimes at all levels of society.

We can even see the current crisis with TB as part of Jesus' own struggles to breathe as he loses the strength needed to push himself upwards.

Sadly, there are also people in our society who have lost the traditional respect for life and feel that they have a right to strip and torture others, especially the weak and defenseless, in order to obtain "confessions" of sanguma.

I am struck by the close parallels of what was done to Jesus and what is still done today to those accused of sorcery. That should be enough evidence of who is really behind these allegations!

And at a time when we are all appalled at the unjust death sentence imposed on Jesus, we are still debating whether we have the right to kill our own citizens in the name of justice, arguing along with Caiaphas that it is better that some die to keep the nation safe.

But Jesus also suffered greatly in his soul, and possibly this suffering was even greater than the physical. He was rejected by the leaders and teachers of the people, those very people that he had advised his followers to obey but not to imitate.

He was betrayed by someone in his own inner circle, someone he trusted completely, even to the extent of entrusting him with the finances of the community.

He was then abandoned by his closest friends who were not there for him when he needed them. Even the one to whom he had entrusted the leadership of his followers denied ever knowing him.

Then he was mocked by soldiers and the crowd, making a fool of him.

Ultimately he felt abandoned, not only by his disciples but even by his Father.

This "soul-suffering" also found its meaning and purpose in the resurrection.

His own rejection became the means of his including all people everywhere in the infinite mercy of God. His own betrayal became the

magnificent sign of his unconditional love for all us sinners.

The mockery he experienced is fulfilled when his name is lifted higher than any other, and his sense of abandonment became the sacrament of his intimate union with his Father and with all creation.

This must be a source of great joy for us as individuals and as a nation. It is the true meaning of Easter. All will be well.

We can continue to live in hope and allow our hope to transform our actions away from selfishness, corruption, violence of all kinds, and the exclusion of the people we don't like.

No suffering is too great for the healing hand of Christ to transform it into something beautiful, wonderful, and life-giving. If only we have the faith.

I pray that all our individual and social ills may be transformed by Christ in his Easter glory and become the source of a renewed journey of discipleship with him. Let us become better people forming a better nation.



St John the Apostle Parish, Tokarara, Port Moresby - Good Friday, 3 April 2015 - Welcoming ceremony at the end of the Port Moresby Way of the Cross. From left: Fr Silvestre Saladaga PIME, Parish Priest; His Excellency John Ribat MSC, Archbishop of Port Moresby, Fr Victor Roche SVD, General Secretary, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. (Photo Michael Wagambie)

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Media Release on Corruption

PAPUA New Guinea has always been in the spotlight for corruption in the public sector. Shocking statistics last week by Transparency International PNG revealed that corruption in public administration tops complaints by the public.

In the last few days, there have been an inquiry into allegations of two ministers who during their time in office breached and acted contrary to their duties and responsibilities as leaders.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (CBC) slam corruption by ministers, public servants, Church Leaders and all the leaders in power. They are there to represent the public and by all means must not abuse that privilege.

Here are reasons why the CBC condemns corruption by the people in power:

Elected leaders are for the people. They have been mandated to represent the people. Hence, they are obliged to be their voice.

As mandated by the people, they are entrusted to deal with public issues and act in the best interest of the people and not abuse their powers for their own benefits.

People suffer at the hands of those who misuse power for their selfish needs. This affects all levels of the society and generates instability at all levels of the government.

Fr. Victor Roche SVD
CBC General Secretary

Alotau launches policies

THE Catholic Diocese of Alotau launched the Diocesan Policies on Gender, Child Protection and Disability on the 15th of March, 2015 at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Alotau.

Present were the priests of the diocese, the religious sisters and the lay faithful.

Bishop Rolly Santos said that the

Diocese have these policies not so much because they are a requirement to apply for government and foreign funding, as because they are based on the Gospel teachings of Christ.

The diocese must have a strong commitment to these policies and values in everything they do.

All those who work in the diocese

and collaborate with the diocese are expected to follow these policies and give clear witness to these values in all their dealings with women, children and persons with disability.

Every person, regardless of gender, age, ability, race or belief are equally children of God and bear His divine image.

They have a right to be respected and treated as persons, and given the right to education and the opportunity to develop and participate as fully as they can for the good of society and the Church.

Those who violate these policies in a serious manner shall be dismissed from office and face criminal justice for the protection of the

weak and the innocent, and the reform of the guilty.

The triple policies on gender, child protection and disability are the fruits of various in-services given in the diocese starting two years ago with the help of Sr. Mary Claude Gadd and the Incentive Fund.



Bishop Rolando Santos CM of Alotau with clergy, religious and lay leaders at the end of the Chrism Mass 2015.

Students go for Confession

By Bp Rochus Tatamai
Bereina

THE students of Mainohana Catholic Secondary and TVET School had not seen such a big gathering of priests working in the diocese of Bereina before 6am on Wednesday 11 March, 2015 when

they made their way into the school chapel for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Fr Brian Cahill MSC, diocesan Vicar for Education, organised the school administration to allow especially Catholic Students to be up early and approach one of the

priests as a spiritual preparation for the Lenten Season and Easter.

It was an enriching experience for the students to meet one of the priests during this time of quiet reflection and meditation and enter into the mood of examination of conscience, contrition of heart, confession of sins and absolution with penance.

The encounter with the compassion and mercy of the loving and forgiving God and Father becomes

so real and personal for each of the penitents as well as for the confessors in such occasions marked by an atmosphere of silence and recollection.

It was encouraging for the students to see most of the diocesan priests present both for the sacraments of Confession and Holy Eucharist.

It was also a golden opportunity for the Bishop to offer a gentle challenge to all the students to study

hard, work hard and live together as genuine missionary disciples of Christ... and to spare a thought for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

All we need to do is to continue to provide for the sacred space in which such encounters between the divine and the human can take place. It produces a deep personal experience with lasting effects.

Mt Hagen Religious on the move

IN response to the call by Pope Francis "Wake Up the World" which was recently re-echoed by local Abp Douglas Young SVD in a Mass for Religious Women and Men, a committee has been formed in the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen to implement the following activities for this Year of Consecrated Life: 1. Visit the main parishes of the Archdiocese and after the Sunday Mass introduce each Society or Congregation; 2. Get the Religious

involved in Social Action by tackling issues of child abuse, gender violence, corruption, sorcery, pornography, prostitution, and family break-up; 3.

Put up a Vocation Expo for vocation promotion purposes after having visited the Secondary and Vocational Schools of the Archdiocese; 4. Have Spiritual Recollections for the Religious and organize a Seminar on Consecrated Life. (Sr Mary Jeanette Matela SSPS)

85% of the population in Papua New Guinea lives in rural areas where access to health services is very precarious and it is equally difficult to reach hospitals. There is a doctor and five nurses for every ten thousand people, and cases of multidrug resistant tuberculosis are increasing. Healthcare services regularly cover only 19% of the population and less than half have access to safe water. TB is the leading cause of hospital deaths. According to official sources, while around the world since 1990, the death rate caused by tuberculosis has decreased by 45%, in Papua New Guinea over the past five years, the new cases reported each year have risen from 16 000 to 30 000. Currently the main obstacle is cultural. The specialists

of the Faculty of local Medicine argue that during incubation patients turn immediately to sorcerers and local remedies and arrive late in health centers when the disease is in an advanced stage. In the rural villages of the district of Kikori, the southern province of the Gulf, the NGO 'Medecins Sans Frontieres' has diagnosed since last year about fifty new cases per month, including ten-month-old patients.

Young people represent up to 28% of cases in the country. TB can infect one or all parts of the human body. Papua New Guinea is the most inhabited country of the island states of the Pacific Ocean, with 7 million people. (Fides News Agency – Vatican City, 31 March 2015)

Is sorcery fuelling TB?

Stop beating women!

By Gregory Avira

BEING a developing nation, Papua New Guinea is faced with issues; but one that stands out due to its high occurrence is that of violence against women.

Childfund Australia estimates this occurs in almost two out of every three families throughout PNG.

But this may be much worse, as no official data on violence against women is kept despite its high occurrence.

Despite numerous campaigns aimed at addressing this issue by non-government organisations, the problem seems to have a deep root in society.

According to the United Nations, violence against women is a pervasive phenomenon in Papua New Guinea, in the home, in the community and in institutional settings.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported as long ago as 2013 that vio-

lence against women is widely seen as a norm and is inherent in the way people resolve disputes at tribal, family and interpersonal level.

The best way forward in addressing this problem is to educate the population to let go of such discriminatory behaviour towards women.

But an important factor almost always absent is men, the main perpetrators.

Most anti-violence campaigns are carried out by women with little or no involvement of men.

Involving more men may improve the effectiveness of such campaigns. Woman's rights advocacy group 'Seeds Theatre' has stated that development programs need to involve both women and men to be effective.

Educational opportunities can open women's and men's eyes to different possibilities and increase awareness of women's rights and human rights so everyone can be gender sensitised.

Despite the obstacles that face those who advocate for an end to violence against women, changes are gradually occurring.

Amendments to the Criminal Act and the recent passing of the Family Protection Bill are some of the positive outcomes of campaigns.

But having laws to protect women from violence will only be effective if they are well implemented.

According to Amnesty International, the PNG government has provided legislative protection for victims of domestic violence.

However, it is only through effective implementation and enforcement that we will start seeing positive change.

Amnesty International reckons that training police, government agencies

and service providers about violence against women and the Family Protection Act is essential to ensuring proper implementation.

Furthermore, it recommends that police need to take allegations of family violence seriously and be trained in investigating and laying charges claims of domestic violence.

With proper training, authorities - especially the police - can be in a better position to advise victims of their legal rights and reparative action that can be taken.

But police put the blame on women. Most women, out of sympathy for their husbands, tend to drop charges and this leads to abuses in the future.

The media, being an influential part of society, also have a responsibility

to address such issues; but unfortunately don't.

A Pacific study carried out by a researcher, Christie Banks, showed that little attention has been given by the media in reporting on the circumstances in which such violence occurs, even though there is considerable public concern.

PNG has come a long way since Independence, and now would not be a good time to step back from an issue which can be addressed through a collective approach.

We pin the white ribbon onto a shirt. We hold a placard with an anti-violence message. We dream of a society free from violence against women.

(<http://asopa.typepad.com> - 02 April 2015)

The Gospel is a daily business

By Fr. Vinod D'Mello SMM
Diocese of Daru-Kiunga

TWENTY five parish pastoral team members from three parishes of Kiunga Region of Daru-Kiunga Diocese took part in the Annual Parish Regional Meeting and Bible course training which was held on 9-20 March, 2015.

The theme of this meeting was, "The Word of God directs us to serve".

It was an important meeting as it highlighted some of the main concerns of the universal Church in general and the Catholic Church of PNG and Solomon Islands in particular.

One of the main concerns was Child Protection. Bishop Gilles Coté addressed the issue as he began saying, "We have our Policy for Child Protection at the Conference Level. The bishops of both countries have accepted it. We have our Policy as a diocese. All are invited to follow the policy both at the Parish and Services level." He continued, "Child is a gift of God and it is our duty as parents to nurture it."

He quoted the Bible saying, "It is better to put a millstone around the neck of the person who abuses the child and put him in the sea so that he will die because he has no right to live." (Mt 18:6)

The participants were also led to look at the priorities of the Conference Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church of PNGSI in relation with the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

One of the area of concern which reflected very strongly in both was the strengthening of the Small Christian Communities to deal with the challenges that people face in our changing society (Conference Pastoral Plan, p.17).

Mr. Joseph Uhoi from Yenkenai village under St. John Parish shared, "Many people of my community are confused as they struggle to adjust their way of life to all the new things coming their way.

They feel a loss of their traditional community values".

He continued, "One of the best place I find to deal with is our monthly Small Christian Community meeting." Mr.

Daniel Celsius, the chairman of the Bosset Primary School from St. Peter Parish, Bosset, affirmed it and said, "It is very important to follow the SEE-JUDGE-ACT (praxis) method in leading our meetings. Firstly we look at one concern of our community. Secondly we look at the Word of God in line with our community concern. Finally, we come up with a simple and concrete action to deal with it."

Mr. Lawrence Dwang from St. John Parish, Matkomnai shared his success of using this method saying, "My Small Christian Community faced shortage of food. Our parish priest was part of our monthly meeting. He suggested that we can make use of our land which God has given us and gave us rice seedlings. We planted it and by the end of the year our community had 40 bags of rice." He concluded, "The Word of God is really active in our Small Christian Community and helps us to face our daily challenges."

During the second week, the parish pastoral team members were trained to give a Bible Course on our Journey of Faith in the New Testament to the people in their parishes.

The parish team members felt strengthened in their understanding of the Word of God as some are challenged by the other churches. Mrs.

The 24 years that I have lived in Papua New Guinea has been a gift for me.

As a nurse I met so many persons who have been models of courage and hope in their everyday life.

The simple life style of the people has also been an inspiration to me.

I realized once more that it is not the material possessions that bring happiness.

Taking time to share stories with people was an important learning experience for me, not only for the



Bereina. 12 March 2015. Opening of the Jesus Good Shepherd Elementary School. Under the care of the Cavanis Sisters. For 170 pupils. With contributions from Prime Minister Peter O'Neill; local MP Peter Isoaimo; the Governor of Central Province Kila Hoadia; and Air Niugini. Thanks also to Italian benefactors Severino and Giovanni. Three "magic words" are displayed in all classrooms: PLEASE, SORRY and THANK YOU. Being a Catholic school children learn good manners, prayers, the lives of the saints and how to care for one another and the poor. Parents too!

Teresa Sagi from St. Brigid Parish, Kiunga town said, "Now I will go and tell my friends from other churches that 666 is not the Pope but Emperor Nero.

I will also tell them that Pope Francis invites us not to criticize each other but journey together in sharing the Joy of the Gospel" (Evangelii Gaudium 244 and 246).

Fr. Andrew Moses, Parish Priest of

St. Gerard Parish said, "The course is simple. It will help our people to use the Word of God for our everyday living." The meeting concluded with the Holy Eucharist presided by Bishop Gilles Coté SMM. He concluded the Mass by commissioning the parish team members saying, "Go forth and share the joy of the Gospel with others." All responded, "Thanks be to God."

The parish pastoral team members will continue their ministry of sharing the Word of God with the people in their parishes by organizing Bible Courses on the New Testament for the people and helping them to live their life in the light of the Word of God through the Small Christian Communities and accompany them in building a truly Melanesian Catholic Church.

The heart remains in PNG

cultural aspect of the people's lives but to behold the sacred stories of their journey.

We are fortunate to have such a meaningful Diocesan Plan with practical values to live out each year, each day.

As I am preparing to leave I find meaningful Bible quotes to give meaning to this phase of my life: "May the Lord guard your coming and your going both now and forever".

"I will take you from the nations and bring you back to your own land" (Ez 36: 24).

Yes, the Word of God is for our everyday lives.

We don't have to look far in the Bible to find Words that will give us courage, comfort, hope and meaning for our daily lives.

As I leave my adopted country I will do like Mother Mary and take time to ponder, to think deeply, to treasure all the meaningful experiences that I have lived with the people of this nation.

I had the opportunity of saying goodbye to a good number of people in the Diocese, in the province and in the country as a whole.

I keep you all in my thoughts and prayers. It is not easy to leave but it is easy to carry you all in my heart and prayers.

I leave you with a Word from St. Paul which has energized me in my ministry: "Never become tired of doing good"! (Gal 6:9) May our God of Wisdom bless you abundantly in your ministry and in your personal lives. Blessings and love to all your children, the windows of hope for the future.

Sr. Lois Mathieu DW
Diocese of Daru-Kiunga

THE EVIL OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

By Doug Tennent
Rabaul

THE re-introduction of the death penalty into Papua New Guinea has received a good amount of attention both nationally and internationally.

While Parliament officially passed legislation to reintroduce the death penalty in 1991 through an amendment to the Criminal Code, it was not until a further amendment to the Criminal Code in 2013 where the implementation of the death penalty was given effect to.

This subsequent amendment set out the means through which the death penalty could be carried out. These include: hanging, lethal injection; administration of anaesthetic and deprivation of oxygen; firing squad, electrocution.

The reason for the determination to reintroduce the death penalty is clear: it is a response to the serious threat to social peace and order reflected in the commission of heinous crimes.

Focus was given to the death penalty after the murder of the then politician Malipu Balakau in 1989. Also the burning of a person by the name of Kepari Leniata in Mt Hagen in 2013 attracted much international criticism.

IT IS NO DETERRENT

It is felt that the introduction of the death penalty would act as deterrence to the commission of such crimes.

However research in other countries around the world where the death penalty is being practiced has shown that this is not the case.

For example in 1970 Nigeria introduced the death penalty for aggravated robbery.

Between 1967 and 1970 an average of 994 robberies were committed each year.

Between 1970 and 1973 after the introduction of the death penalty, for aggravated robbery, the average number of robberies rose to 1,500 per year.

This led to the conclusion that no efficacy can be shown for the operation of the death penalty in Nigeria.

The reality is that when people are committing serious crimes they are focused on the crime itself and not the consequences.

Further they know that in a jurisdiction such as Papua New Guinea there is a good chance that they will not be apprehended or charged for such a crime.

The death penalty itself has been described as the premeditated and cold blooded killing of a person by the state. (Amnesty International: When the State Kills 1989 Publications) It is an act of extreme physical and men-



tal assault upon a person who is already been rendered helpless as a result of arrest and conviction. (Amnesty International: When the State Kills).

As noted the state can have no greater power over a person than depriving him or her of his or her life.

IT IS UNCHRISTIAN

From a Christian perspective it is submitted that the death penalty can be strongly opposed on three grounds.

It runs contrary to human dignity and the sanctity of human life which is at the heart of gospel teaching.

There is the risk of wrongful conviction and execution. It amounts to the State undertaking payback killing - a practise which has been strongly condemned in Papua New Guinea.

The central position of human dignity and the sanctity of human life in the gospels is reflected in the fact that God made man in his own image. (Genesis 1.27) How does one describe the image of God? As Saint John notes God is love and whoever lives in love lives in God and God lives in him. (1 John 4 16) The requirement to love means that we must love sacrificially and if nec-

essary be prepared to lay down our lives for the other person. (1 John 4.20).

To lay down one's life for another person is perhaps the greatest testimony of the ultimate importance of human life and the sanctity which must be given to it.

As noted by His Holiness Pope John XXIII the very inception of human life reveals the creating hand of God. (*Mater et Magistra*, 1961) God is present in the act of procreation.

The presence here signifies that the sanctity must extend to all parts of the life of a human person (from procreation until death).

The death penalty clearly undermines such dignity and sanctity.

IT IS MISLEADING

It also fails to recognise that there are reasons for people to undertake criminal actions.

As noted by a former Prime Minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher, when speaking during a debate on the death penalty in the House of Commons in 1983: "The constant emphasis on capital punishment is preventing us from giving real attention and real resources to

the problems of crime in a modern society."

In Papua New Guinea the Constitution emphasises the principles of equality and participation.

This is contained in the Second National Goal and Directive Principle of the Constitution.

This Goal and Directive Principle states that: All citizens should have an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of our country.

The Goal proceeds to emphasise the importance of the equal distribution of resources throughout the country with emphasis being given to remote areas.

As we are all aware this is not the case.

There is not an equal distribution and there are many vulnerable and marginalised groups.

This in many circumstances leads people into crimes when they see the exploitation of the resources by foreign companies and politicians being charged and convicted for misappropriation of funds. Such failure to address peoples' basic needs also undermines the dignity of human life.

The imposition of the death penalty fails to acknowledge that there are root causes for the commission of such crimes and until these are addressed there will be no reduction in the heinous crimes currently being committed in many parts of the country.

IT IS TRICKY

The risk of wrongful conviction is very high.

In the United States an important study was conducted by Hugo Bedau and Michael Radlet. (*Miscarriages of Justice in Potentially Capital cases*. Stanford University Law Review, Vol 40 No 1, 1987).

It identified over a period of time people who had been convicted of capital offences and it was subsequently found out that there had been a miscarriage of justice.

That refers to people who had been wrongly convicted of the capital offences.

In the years 1900-1985 the researchers identified 350 miscarriages of justice.

In forty per cent of these the innocent person was sentenced to death. 140 innocent lives lost.

In Papua New Guinea the first imposition of the death penalty after its reintroduction in 1991

occurred in Popondetta in 1995.

Two years later that conviction was overturned by the Supreme Court by appeal.

This in itself shows the reality of wrongful conviction in Papua New Guinea.

The death penalty is final. Once a person has been executed his or her life cannot be restored.

The requirement of a significant custodial sentence for the commission of a heinous crime is acknowledged.

However should a person who is convicted for a serious crime and be sentenced to a term of imprisonment subsequently be found to be innocent, then such a person can have his or her life restored.

The same is not the case with the death penalty.

IT IS PAYBACK KILLING

Payback killing is something which has been strongly condemned by the highest courts in Papua New Guinea. For example in the case of Public Prosecutor v Sidney Kerua and Billy Kerua ([1985] PNGLR 85) it was held that the custom of killing an adulteress, throwing her into the river and mutilating her as a form of payback was contrary to public interest and repugnant to the principles of humanity.

In the case of Public Prosecutor v Apava Keru and Aia Moroi ([1985] PNGLR 78) it was held that payback killing ran contrary to the right to life which is enshrined in the Constitution and was also contrary to Christian principles of forgiving enemies and turning the other cheek.

Yet the death penalty itself must be seen as amounting to the practise of payback killing by the State.

The death penalty has been described as the premeditated and cold blooded killing of a human being by the State.

The Government is the embodiment of the people.

The State through the death penalty kills because it believes that as a result of a conviction of a person for the commission of a serious crime in its jurisdiction that retribution is justified. This amounts to payback killing.

The death penalty is therefore an act of extreme violence which undermines the sanctity of human life, the dignity of the human person and amounts to an act of payback killing.

Such an action has no place in a Christian society and has been condemned by the highest courts in this country.