



# The Catholic Reporter

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

June 2016

ISSUE: 126

## Solomon Islands - Mercy for all: Mobile Holy Door in the Diocese of Gizo

**(ANS - Gizo) – WHEN he announced the Jubilee of Mercy Pope Francis said that a Door of Mercy should be opened in every diocese, "so that everyone will be able to experience the love of God who consoles, who forgives and gives hope."**

The problem in the Diocese of Gizo in the Solomon Islands is that the isolation and remoteness of parishes from the diocesan centre makes it virtually impossible for the people living in the villages to come to the Holy Door at the cathedral.

For this reason the pastoral team of the diocese, led by Bishop Luciano Capelli, SDB, thought of a mobile Holy Door.

"The fever of Mercy that converts hearts and commits us to forgiveness, to service and solidarity, reached its highest level here in the diocese of Gizo," says Bishop Capelli who has been bishop of the diocese since 2007.

The isolated population cannot reach the Holy Door in the Cathedral, so the Holy Door will tour the parishes and villages to reach the isolated people,

thought the pastoral team.

So for two months, the Holy Door has covered the most remote islands and villages of the diocese. Its pilgrimage ended on May 9th. In each of the 14 stations visited there was a level of participation in the liturgy never seen before.

The programme was carried out in almost the same way in every village: the Warriors of the village officially welcomed the Holy Door.

This was followed by a liturgy over a period of three days to present the meaning of the

Jubilee. It included a prayer vigil in preparation for the sacrament of reconciliation, and then a dialogue of reconciliation between people and groups in conflict.

"The priests were surprised by the participation and goodwill experienced in a real climate of mercy" concluded Bishop Capelli.

"It is beautiful when people are able to forgive and start afresh... mistakes and conflicts can become moments of encounter and growth if approached with an open heart, with faith and generosity."



The Holy Door touring the parishes and villages to reach the isolated people in the remotest islands thought the pastoral team in the Diocese of Gizo, Solomon Islands. Seen here is a pastoral team taking the Holy Door to a parish after it has been transported by sea from another parish.

Photo: Bishop Luciano Capelli, SDB

## Rita represents PNG at Catholic Education World Congress

"BONJOIRNO!" (Good Morning). This was Rita's greeting to her colleagues who are teaching in fifty-three Catholic Agency Secondary and High Schools on her return from Rome. A creative drama followed the greeting.

Soon everyone was laughing and feeling they too were in a big unfamiliar city where everyone is speaking a language that is totally incomprehensible.

Cars, buses, trucks are all speeding towards you on the wrong side of the road!

Rita Kavanamur, back in 2006 at Mercy SS, Yarapos, Wewak,

in her first year teaching was invited to teach Religious Education. Wanting to deepen her Catholic faith she said, Yes.

"Since then" she explains, "Religious Education has been my greatest strength." Rita is currently the R.E. Coordinator at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart SS, Vunapope. She has served there for many years now and is a very active R.E. Coordinator who has mobilized many groups of students so that OLSH Vunapope is an excellent girls' school where a visitor immediately feels the happy, family atmosphere.

In November last year there was much to do to organize travel and the immigration documents that are necessary.

Rita's husband, Ray, was always there to give support and email messages back and forth.

He took care of their young son while Rita was travelling.

Rita explained to her colleagues that the aim of the Congress was to reflect on the contribution that the Christian community can make to education globally, in our rapidly changing contexts.

Today we are challenged as teachers, or

rather educators, to refresh what we are offering to our young people for their formation.

We must follow them closely as they shape their life-plans and be a witness to them of the love of God in the world.

She concluded, "Let us be truly alive in Christ. Let us make Religious Education a vital part and central to all that we do in our schools. Religious Education makes a unique contribution to the curriculum and to the life of the school because it promotes the development of the student as a whole person."

**Vatican City, 3 May 2016 – The Holy Father has appointed Msgr. Kurian Mathew Vayalumkal, nunciature counsellor, as apostolic nuncio in Papua New Guinea, elevating him to the dignity of archbishop. The archbishop-elect was born in Vadavathoor, India in 1966 and ordained a priest in 1991. He holds a degree in canon law and has served in the diplomatic service of the Holy See since 1998, in the papal representations in Guinea, Korea, the Dominican Republic, Bangladesh, Hungary and Egypt.**

# The Good News of Mercy

## Pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, 15 April 2016

Dear brothers and sisters,

**W**e, the Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, greet you, our Catholic people, along with all people of good will, in our two countries, on the occasion of this Jubilee Year of Mercy.

### Pope Francis

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has made God's mercy the central theme of his papal ministry. He repeatedly urges us, everyone in all sectors of society and in the Church, to seek a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, the immensity of God's merciful love and kindness.

Pope Francis challenges the bishops to be better examples and promoters of God's mercy toward those he has given into our pastoral care, especially those who are poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged in any way. The Pope expects us to live closely with the people entrusted to us, sharing their lives and concerns. But the Church is not only the bishops. All who believe in Jesus Christ, as well as the Good News he brought from the Father, and are baptized make up the Church,

We repeat the words of Pope Francis when he proclaimed the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. "Jesus is the face of the Father's mercy. These words well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him....Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God: (Misericordiae Vultus 1). Do you want to know and understand the mercy of God? You will find this knowledge in the life and person of Jesus Christ who is the visible expression of Divine Mercy.

### Social Teaching

The social teaching of the Catholic Church is a message of

justice and mercy. All Catholic communities should learn more about the common principles which guide our relationship with one another. There is a special obligation which all Christians should take note of. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council and recent Popes remind us of this time and again, when they speak about a "preferential option for the poor". This means that those most in need, the poor, marginalized and vulnerable in society, deserve special priority attention. All policies, services and activities that affect the lives of people, whether their source is in government departments, political entities, the churches, NGOs or the business community, must be assessed in light of their impact on the poor. We also recognize how much those who are poor can teach us through their faith and perseverance even in the face of great difficulties.

### Scripture

In this Year of Mercy we who are believers in a merciful God should become more aware of the Scriptural basis of our concern for and practical action to benefit the poor. At the beginning of his ministry in his own hometown, Jesus echoed the prophesy of Isaiah when he proclaimed, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18).

During his sermon on the mountain, Jesus announced that the Kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit, and they are blessed (Mt 5:3). For those seeking perfection, know that it is achieved when one gives all he has to the poor (Mt 19:21).

We are expected to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind to our feasts (Lk14:13). The apostle Paul was eager to assist the poor, raising money for them in Christian communities which were more economically blessed (Gal 2:10). Organized

fundraising to alleviate poverty was one of the very first structured social activities of the young church after its foundation at Pentecost. Thus it is clear in the New Testament that God's mercy is directed especially toward the poor and disadvantaged; and therefore becomes more available to us the closer we are to the poor.

### CBC Pastoral Letters

In our pastoral letters in recent years we have tried to bring everyone in the Catholic community together to hear the cry of the poor and address the concerns of the needy in society.

As a Church we have spoken up for those in remote areas and have concentrated a high percentage of our social services of health care and education there. But even before that we carried the Word of God and extended pastoral care far and wide, even to the most isolated and inaccessible localities, to satisfy those who are spiritually hungry. "Man cannot live on bread alone, but needs every word that God speaks" (Mt 4:4).

Our Church, in imitation of God's mercy, desires to be a champion for the disabled, for vulnerable children, unemployed youth, and abused women whose status in society is far from secure.

We raise our voice also in defense of people, often defenseless women falsely accused of harming others through witchcraft or sorcery. We have tried to become more aware of the suffering of the materially poor, and of migrants and refugees.

More recently, as a Church, we have tried to address the concerns of those suffering from natural disasters such as frost, drought, floods, the effect of climate change and volcanic activity, especially environmental refugees from Manam Island. We know that have to improve the quality of our disaster response.

Every generation should strive to leave behind for the following

generation a world which is better than the one they themselves enjoyed. This may not be happening in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Environmental degradation, especially how it impacts on the poor---and here we think of a rapacious timber industry as well as other economic projects which pollute the environment and displace people---can give rise to land pressures and a host of social problems. To be true agents of God's mercy we need to address issues of justice in society such as legislation that we believe is detrimental to the welfare of the poor (e.g Special Agriculture Business Leases), but also in the Church. We face a creeping corruption that also affects church workers.

When we consider the many situations in which the poor and vulnerable find themselves we wonder what should be the priority area at this time. In 2016, what is the most important issue affecting the poor? We are convinced it is the safety and protection of children, their health and education, their wellbeing, their physical, emotional, intellection and spiritual wellbeing. To this end the dioceses have already set up functioning Child Protection Offices and later this year a major Training of Trainers program will be offered for selected men and women who have previously taken up this ministry. We address our concerns regarding Catholic education and health services in separate statements.

We realize that our Catholic communities at the parish and local community level may not be involved as much they should be in dealing with local problems. There is a wise saying: "If you are not a part of the solution, then you are probably part of the problem."

There is also a principle in Catholic social teaching called the Principle of Subsidiarity. This principle states that no higher level of organization (such as government)

should perform any function that can best be handled at a lower level (such as by families and local communities) by those who are closer to the issues or problems. We encourage parish priests to bring their people together at the local level---parents, parish pastoral councils, school and health boards of management, school principals and health extension officers---to monitor and evaluate on a regular basis their school and clinic and find solutions to prevailing problems.

There is another principle of Catholic social teaching involved here, the Principle of Solidarity. We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other transcend national, racial, economic, and ideological differences. We are called to work together for justice for everyone. The Principle of Solidarity requires of us that we not concern ourselves solely with our own individual lives. We need to be aware of what is going on in the world around us.

We want to empower and encourage our Catholic laity to address issues of justice for the poor in their own domestic and work situation. We know there are many Catholics in Parliament, public service and public life. Are they seen as different?

How can we help them to be truly agents of God's mercy for the poor and disadvantaged? PNG Catholics have the opportunity to do this as they prepare for the PNG national election in 2017, an issue we are addressing in a separate letter.

We invite them to have the courage to speak up, and to accept the challenge to truly live the Gospel of Jesus even at personal cost. Let each one of us: bishops, priests, religious, lay men and women, youth, evaluate our actions in light of the benefit to the poor and vulnerable.

**Bishop Arnold Orowae, President For your Bishops of PNG/SI**



**WELCOME:** Bishops are welcomed by members of the Catholic faithful of the Vanimo Diocese on their arrival at Vanimo.



**MEETING WITH STUDENTS:** Students meet with Bishops as they arrive at Vanimo for their AGM. More photos on THE Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the Vanimo Diocese, Sandaun Province on page 19...

# Annual General Meeting held in Vanimo Diocese, Sandaun Province April 2016

THE Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the Vanimo Diocese, Sandaun Province, for two weeks in April, 2016. 22 bishops and heads of the various sections within the Catholic Church congregated for two weeks to discuss issues of importance concerning the church and the country as well.

The bishops came up with statements on health and education, important service areas which the Catholic Church plays a major role/contribution in this country, as well as on elections.



**GREETINGS:** Bishop of the Vanimo Diocese, Cesare Bonivento greets Big Joe as he is popularly known, Bishop of Wewak.



**DIOCESE ESCORTS:** Members of the Laity from the Vanimo Diocese help the bishops at the airport.



**OPENING MASS:** The conference opening liturgy.



**DURING CONFERENCE SESSION:** Some of the bishops during one of the conference sessions.



**IN JAYAPURA:** PNG&SI Bishops with fellow bishops on their visit to Jayapura, West Papua



**WITH CATHOLICS OF WEST PAPUA:** Members of the Catholic Community in Jayapura are happy to meet one of the Bishops of the Solomon Islands during the visit by the bishops of PNG & Solomon Islands.



## Commentary

by Fr. Victor Roche, SVD

### Sheep without shepherds

Last week, I met a man from Kerema after the Sunday Mass at St. Joseph's Parish, Port Moresby.

He expressed his concerns over the diocese of Kerema which has been without a bishop for almost 3 years. He says many people have left the church and have gone to other churches because there is no priest in his parish.

In the last few years we have seen that whenever there is a vacancy in any diocese due to death or transfer of a bishop, the replacement painfully takes a long time.

Recently, we had the appointment of the Bishop of Wewak after almost 3 years. The Diocese of Kerema does not have a bishop even after three years. In such situations, services to the people and pastoral work in the parishes are very slow or none at all. The morale of the priests and the Catholic faithful is low. Many leave the Catholic Church and go to other churches where there is better pastoral care.

The authorities in Rome do not realize the ill effect it has on a diocese when it does not have a bishop for many years in a mission country such as PNG. In the case of the Diocese of Kerema, we had a meeting of the priests in May 2013 and there were 11 priests. Now in May 2016, out of those 11 priests, two died and one left the priesthood.

In the recently held Annual General Meeting of the bishops in Vanimo (April 5-15, 2016), the Bishops expressed their disappointment regarding the transfer of Nuncio because it is destabilizing the church (Agenda 29).

One retired bishop from PNG wrote to me recently: "I know only too well that, for Rome PNG/SI is not a priority. But that is sad. While at Rome the Pope never ceases to speak about the priority to the poor and to the marginalised at the periphery"

## Pioneers Papua New Guinea MSC Sister dies in Vunapope, ENBP

**"Come, you are blessed by my Father, says the Lord; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Mt 25:34)**

Sr. M. Leonie Pihalise, MSC, formerly known as Maria Pihalise was born on the 9th October 1935 at Ponam Island – Manus to Philip Monun and Emilia Hikuvoh Monun. She was the first child in a family of four until her passing away on the 19th May 2016 at 2:25 pm at the private ward of Vunapope hospital with complications of Diabetes. In 2012, on the 9th September she celebrated her Golden Jubilee, 50 years of Religious vocation and fidelity to her call and last year, her 80th birthday celebrated with gratitude for her life with us.

She did her schooling with the Sisters however at the age of 24 years; she decided to enter Religious life as a Missionary Sister of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. During those times, PNG did not have its own novitiate so she (Maria Pihalise) and Anna Malaenana from Vunadidir in East New Britain were sent to Mary's Mount, Balwyn-Australia on 3rd October 1959 for Novitiate training and on the 9th September 1962 she made her First Profession as an MSC Sister. Almost ten years



Before returning to PNG 29th January 1965- Mary's Mount-Australia.

until a novitiate was established in 1968, PNG, East New Britain, 7 young women tested their vocation in the Australian Novitiate, were enriched by the encounter; but Sr. Leonie was the first PNG MSC Sister. On the 29th January 1965, Sr. Leonie returned to PNG and worked as Domestic worker in Vunapope. As

the first, Sr. Leonie was always conscious of being the "first fruit" of vocations from PNG. She was deeply sincere and appreciated the Spiritual legacy she had received and pledged herself during her farewell speech at Mary's Mount, Australia, on the 26 January 1965, not only to live it out in her own life but to pass it on to fu-

ture PNG MSCs and to encourage them to live faithfully and courageously. On the 15th August 1967, she made final profession in Vunapope. She enjoyed her mission life in different communities around the country. She had a great love for people; women, youth, children and was always joyful and finds a reason to smile when things are not right. As our pioneer PNG MSC Sister, she was almost in all communities around the different dioceses in PNG: VUNAPOPE, TAPO, UNEA-WNB, LAVONGAI-NIP, LIHIR, MONGOP HIGH SCHOOL-NIP, BITOKARA-WNB, TANGA-NIP, VALOKA-WNB, WASENGLA-VANIMO –SANDAUN, MATANATAVA NOVITIATE, VUNAMALMAL-PROVINCIALATE, and BERENA-CENTRAL PROVINCE. We give thanks to God for her life and as the "FIRST FRUIT" she has been fondly recognised by us all and we call her "Mama Leonie" a title with due respect of her courageous and inspiring zealous heart.

She was finally laid to rest at the Vunapope Religious Cemetery.

We will all miss your presence, your kind; generous, selfless, loving caring nature...Mama Leonie... Thank you for your life shared with us all. May her soul rest in peace.

## Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

### Statement: Christian faith, values, and principles in Parliamentary Elections

PAPUA New Guinea proclaims itself to be a Christian country. It is manifested in the Constitution, in the National Anthem and the National Pledge. Important Government officers make their oath of office on the Bible. However, are we really a Christian nation?

When the time for general and local level elections come, the candidates may invoke their faith and pray for God's blessing upon the country but, for many, Christian faith, values, and principles are practically put aside. The citizens who will exercise their right to cast their vote and elect candidates of their choice may have a similar attitude.

It is the duty of the Church to guide the moral conscience of Christian citizens. We, the Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea, would like to appeal to the faithful people of PNG, and to their conscience, to use those Christian values when it comes to the time of casting their vote and electing leaders who will represent not only their interests, but the common good of all citizens. Pope Francis, in his Pastoral letter The

Joy of the Gospel, said: "An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal—always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it". No 183

What are the qualities of a good leader who will truly represent people's expectations and lead the country forward? We can name some of those qualities. First, the country needs competent leaders who are able to fulfil their duties, people who have proved themselves already in serving the community successfully. A second quality is the personal integrity of the candidate. They should be God fearing, God loving and honest. Honesty means first of all an absolute commitment to uphold the human rights and freedom of others and be accountable for the assets of the country and the provinces and all public funds. Honest leaders will not let themselves be dragged into corrupt dealings. They are leaders that people can trust. These qualities are fundamental for good leader-

ship. Then there are also other characteristics of good leaders that are to be considered: someone who has a vision for a better future for their people and put the common good of all the people first.

During the election campaign, candidates make many promises: delivery of services, better living conditions for the people, better roads and communication and so on. Voters at this time must consider carefully the words and actions of the candidates. They must try to discern what is true and what is just. They must know where the candidate stands in regard of certain issues that for the Church are not negotiable: respect for human life, education for the love of truth, health and other social services, preservation of the natural environment, and many other issues that affect the life of the people.

During the election campaign many immoral, corrupt and dishonest practices take place. Many candidates "buy" votes with cash or goods. By doing this and many other dishonest practices they

compromise their integrity and credibility. They may gain supporters but they lose respect; they show that they are entering into the cycle of corruption that is prevalent in our country.

It is the same for the voters who accept a bribe of cash or good or favours. He or she enters in the same cycle of corruption, accepting a little money or rice but at the same time selling their souls and the future of the nation in exchange for his/her vote.

Another factor that adversely affects a free and fair democratic election is the "wantok system". The "wantok system" is part of the culture of Papua New Guinea. If it had great value in the past, it is not so today because it is often abused for selfish motives. Unfortunately, the practice has spread into high places and has serious consequences in our society. Again, when it comes to voting and electing leaders, people often vote for a wantok even if this candidate does not have the qualities to lead. People who cast their votes should do so free of any undue pressure, internal or exter-

nal. Everyone should be able to vote in conscience for the candidate they consider the best servant leader.

The 2017 Elections are crucial for the future of Papua New Guinea. The conduct of a free, fair and safe election within the boundaries of the law is central to establishing a healthy democratic society in PNG. Let the Christian principles and values of honesty, respect and integrity be our guides during this coming election. It is time to get rid of the cycle of corruption through improper and illegal means of soliciting votes and underhanded political practices.

We, the Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea wish by this letter to appeal to the consciences of all citizens of Papua New Guinea. The honest vote of each citizen is important for the future of this country. All people have a moral responsibility to make this nation a great nation and a truly Christian nation.

Bishop Arnold Orowae  
President of CBC-PNG/SI  
15 April 2016