



'To Bear Witness to the Light' - Jn 1:7

The Catholic Reporter

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Pope encourages us to 'build our home' with God

-Thaddeus Jones

At the Sunday Angelus appointment, Pope Francis says our Lenten journey beckons us to build a greater sense of home with God by strengthening our relationship through prayer, trust, and intimacy, while also building fellowship and fraternity with our brothers and sisters.

Addressing the visitors and pilgrims in Saint Peter's Square for the midday Angelus prayer, Pope Francis reflected on the Sunday Gospel for the day that recounts the episode when Jesus drove out the merchants from the temple, admonishing all by saying "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace."

Market and home mindsets: The Pope then examined how our approach to the Lord differs depending on whether we have a market or home-type mindset. The market approach to temple worship recalls when it was enough to buy a lamb and consume it on the altar coals to be right with God, he explained, a process of purchasing, paying and consuming.

The idea of the temple being understood as a home instead implies the opposite, where one goes there to meet the Lord, and draw close to Him as well as to our brothers and sisters as a community that shares joys and sorrows. He added, the market approach on the other hand requires doing calculations, negotiating prices, and seeking one's own interests, but the home approach is about mutual and free giving in love and fraternity without pricing and measuring it out.

The temple as our home: The zealous action of Jesus recounted in today's Gospel shows how the Lord does not accept the "market-temple" that takes the place of the "house-temple," the Pope explained, adding that the market approach creates a distant and "mercenary" relationship with God while the home understanding an intimate, trusting rapport with the Lord as in a loving family. He underscored that the Lord came to bring communion with Him and among our brothers and sisters.

Build our homes with God: Our Lenten journey calls on us to build a greater sense of home within ourselves and all around us, the Pope went on to say, first

towards God through prayer, "like children who knock confidently at the Father's door without getting tired." Next, through building fraternity with our brothers and sisters, he added, saying "There is a great need for it."

Prayer and reaching out: The Pope observed how in our daily lives we often encounter isolation or what seems to be a hostile atmosphere in many places. He suggested we examine the nature of our relationships with others and whether we take the first step to bring down walls of silence and or bridge the emptiness that stands between us. He also recommended we look at our prayer life, whether we treat it just as a duty to pay while we look at the clock, or a time of trusting abandonment in the Lord.



Pope Francis (Picture Courtesy: ©Vatican Media/Dicastery for Communication)

Meet your Bishop: Bp Paul Sundu (Bishop of Kundiawa Diocese)

- Jessica Oata



This month we feature Most Reverend Bishop Paul Sundu, the Shepherd of the beautiful Diocese of Kundiawa.

Hailing from Womatne and belonging to the *Kukane Tribe* in the Chimbu Province, Bishop Sundu's humble nature is attributed to his upbringing where he grew up with his five siblings in the eyes of

loving parents and relatives.

His home parish is Denglagu, where the first Catholic Mission was established.

"It is unfortunate that my people were responsible for the death of a Priest belonging to the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD). Therefore, my calling to becoming a priest is no mistake because the blood of the early missionaries was spilled on my land."

Bishop Sundu's education began in Womatne Primary School from 1980-1985, then he went on to Mt Wilhelm High School from 1986-1989. He attended St Fidelis College Minor Seminary in Madang from 1994-1995. He then entered Good Shepherd Seminary, Fatima in 1997 until he went out for his Pastoral and Spiritual Years from 2000-2001. Upon completing his Pastoral and Spiritual Years, he enrolled at the Catholic Theological Institute in Bomana, Port Moresby from 2002-2004.

He was ordained priest on January 17th, 2006 and describes his ordination as a very special occasion where all his years of diligent studies were finally paid off and he fulfilled his dream of becoming a priest to serve his people.

When asked what inspired him to choose the vocation of becoming a priest, this is what he had to say: "I did not choose this vocation because the vocation chose me. As I previously mentioned that my people were responsible for the death of one of the

early missionaries, I see this as a blessing because my people gave a missionary back to the church to replace what they took."

Bishop Sundu also shared an anecdote of when he was a child attending mass that also inspired him to choose the vocation of priesthood.

"My mother told me this story of the second Bishop of Kundiawa Bishop Emeritus Henk te Maarsse SVD. He was distributing the Holy Eucharist and I went up and tried to receive the Holy Eucharist. He smiled at me and blessed me, and I think that inspired me to become a priest too".

After being ordained priest, he served in the diocese as the Assistant Parish Priest of Mingende Parish before becoming the Vocation Director in Kundiawa Parish in 2008.

Bishop Sundu became the Vice-Rector of Good Shepherd Minor Seminary in 2010 before leaving for studies in Rome at the Pontifical University St Thomas Aquinas to get his Licentiate in Dogmatic Theology.

Upon returning to PNG, he became Rector of Good Shepherd Seminary from 2015-2018 before requesting to be sent to serve in a parish.

He was assigned Parish Priest of Koge in Kundiawa until his appointment to become Bishop.

He describes accepting his appointment to become Bishop as one of the most difficult decisions in his life.

"I got a call from the then Secretary to the Nuncio (Fr Jacek Pinocy) during the day asking me to come to Port Moresby but it was during the Covid-19 lockdown so I couldn't come and he asked if he could call when I was alone later in the evening and that made me nervous."

Later in the evening, he received his most anticipated call from the Nunciature while having his quiet time.

"I gave all the excuses in the world when I got the call from the then Secretary to the Apostolic Nuncio. I told him that I only had 16 years' experience as a Priest, and I was not even 50 yet at that time but eventually, after much prayer and reflection, I decided to take up the role."

When asked about the plans for his diocese, Bishop Paul said he took his vision from Pope Francis on Synodality very seriously.

"After the consecration of the image of Mother Mary, she visited all the parishes in the diocese. And I walked alongside the people as Mother Mary pilgrimed to the different parishes. It was also a good opportunity to see everyone walking together, the Priests, Religious and the laity."

He added that the Pastoral Plan for his diocese mostly covers the theme of Synodality and this year, different parishes will host Eucharistic Congresses and that envisions the Pope's message on Communion, Participation and Mission.

His advice to the young people of PNG and SI is to discover their calling in life.

"The church is in need of more holy vocations, therefore, young people should be attentive to what God is calling them to do."

Bishop Sundu like all Bishops is always busy being the shepherd of his flock but when given a little bit of free time, he enjoys reading.

To conclude our interview, we asked him to share with us what brings him joy in his vocation and this is what he had to say: "It gives me great joy to return the trust that the people have entrusted to me as their Shepherd, thus, I serve them, I walk alongside them and I am with them through their struggles and achievements."

He is the first seminarian to be ordained priest and later appointed Bishop of any Diocese from Good Shepherd Seminary.

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Papua New Guinea a Confessional State?

- Fr. Giorgio Licini, PIME | CBC General Secretary



The move to declare Papua New Guinea a Christian Country and a Christian State appears commendable at first glance. The Preamble of the Constitution will in that case open with the words, We, the People of Papua New Guinea,

• united in one nation acknowledge and declare God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as our Creator and the Sustainer of the entire universe and the source of our Powers and Authorities, delegated to the people and all persons within the geographical jurisdiction of Papua New Guinea;

Along with other smaller amendments also in the Preamble, in the Fifth Goal, in the Social Obligations, in Section 1 and Section 3, this effectively turns Papua New Guinea into a confessional State. "A confessional State is a State which officially recognises and practices a particular religion, usually accompanied by a public cult, and at least encourages its citizens to do likewise" (Wikipedia).

In the past, confessional States were common in the Christian world, always endorsing a particular Christian denomination and Church: Catholic (Italy, Spain, Austria, etc.), Anglican (England), Orthodox (Russia). There are now very few surviving Christian confessional States with some, like England (where the King is the Head of the Church), practically embracing full religious pluralism. There are also several Muslim confessional States, especially in the Middle East, or Buddhist like Thailand, or Jewish like Israel. Opposite to that, some countries, like China,

promote an atheistic identity of the State with strong limitations on faith communities and some particular religious tenets (the authority and role of the Pope in religious matters, for example, in regard to the Catholic Church).

The confessional State normally extends a larger or smaller degree of freedom to other religious communities or Churches present, active or trying to come within its borders. So, Christianity, like any other religion, is totally prohibited in Saudi Arabia but allowed in Thailand or Israel; and similar situations occur in other confessional countries. What is common among all, however, is that, almost in all cases, the top positions of the State are precluded to the citizens members of religious minorities. The confessional State effectively establishes a group of second-class citizens by excluding them from the top political and administrative positions, particularly that of Head of State (Governor General in the case of PNG), prime minister, commander in chief of the armed forces, chief justice, etc. The Muslim countries are quite rigid about this. The Christian confessional States are generally more flexible but have their own red lines. In the case of Israel, never will a non-Jewish person assume a State position.

The proposed changes in the PNG Constitution leave two big questions open. In a confessional PNG, will a Simbu Muslim or a Port Moresby based Bahá'í, or a naturalized Hindu still be allowed to run for provincial governor, be elected Speaker of the House, possibly become Prime Minister or Governor General? Or will all these and possibly other positions be restricted to "Christians" alone?

Second. With such amendments the State allows itself to define the concept of "Christian" and "Christianity", possibly including or excluding particular beliefs, practices, books, groups, churches and promoting its own initiatives. A clear example of confessional State practice in PNG is the institution of the Day of Repentance on the 26th of August every year. It was a government initiative touching on the moral and religious sphere of the citizens, not necessarily negative but independently established from Church and religion. It's a small taste of the so-called "ethical State", when the State and possibly the government of the day heavily intervenes to coerce citizens into what it believes to be good and moral.

Such role by the State should be constitutionally limited. In Papua New Guinea dozens of versions of Christianity are active. Common celebrations and practices are to be treasured. But particular and individual choices must also be guaranteed. The Constitutional chart is not only about what a nation wants to be but also about what it wants to avoid down the line.

We remain of the opinion that the PNG Constitution is good as it has been since 1975 with its Melanesian values and perspectives expressed in *National Goals and Directive Principles* at its core. Should it be transformed into the Constitution of a confessional State, additional amendments are needed to safeguard the lack of discrimination of citizens vis-à-vis political positions and the full freedom of practice by all different Christian denominations.

The Letters of St Paul: Romans

- Fr. Tomás Ravaioli IVE
Liturgical Catechetical Institute Director



Date: It is similarly agreed that Paul must have written the letter during the final months of his third missionary tour (Acts 18:23-21:16), probably during the winter of late A.D. 57 or early 58.

Destination: In Paul's day, Rome was the imperial capital of the Roman Empire and the most populated metropolis of the Mediterranean world. Although predominantly pagan and notoriously corrupt, the city was also home to more than a dozen Jewish synagogues. The good news may have first reached the city through Jewish pilgrims returning from Jerusalem (Acts 2:10). Tradition also remembers the Apostle Peter ministering in the capital during the 40s (See note on Acts 12:17). Whatever its first contact with the gospel, Rome had a glowing reputation for its faith by the time Paul wrote to the Christian community (Rom 1:8). The majority were probably Gentiles, since most of the individual names

listed in chapter 16 are Greco-Roman and only a handful are distinctively Semitic.

Purpose: Three principal aims underlie the Letter to the Romans. (1) Paul wrote to introduce himself and his teaching to the Roman Christians in preparation for his planned visit (1:11-13). The Church in Rome was one of the few to which Paul wrote before making a personal visit. (2) Paul hoped to establish the Roman Church as his missionary base for a new phase of evangelization. Having completed his work in the eastern Mediterranean, Paul was now ready to turn his attention and energies toward Spain in the west (15:23-24). (3) Paul also hoped to ease tensions that were straining the unity and fellowship of the Roman Church itself. Boasting, it seems, was a problem for Jews and Gentiles alike: the Jews took pride in the blessings and advantages of the Old Covenant not shared by the Gentiles (2:1-3:20); and the Gentiles claimed to have replaced Israel as the new and beloved people of God (11:13-32).

Themes and Characteristics: Romans is a work of profound theological reflection. It is his longest letter and, in the eyes of many, his most mature. Indeed, Paul had been preaching and defending the gospel for two decades before he wrote Romans, leaving us a work that is stamped with the imprint of his wisdom, depth, and spiritual energy. The body of Romans divides neatly into three major parts. (1) **Salvation in Christ** (1:16-8:39). (2) **Restoration of Israel** (9:1-11:39). The central section of Romans examines the place of Israel in the new economy of grace. (3) **Christian living and epilogue** (12:1-16:23). The final chapters of Romans are a practical application of the theology expounded in earlier chapters. In this section we find Paul's most explicit instructions on the Christian's relation to the State (13:1-7) and the need for believers to exercise Christian freedom with prudence, lest we cause others to fall (14:123).

We need a renewal in the Catholic Church: Why do Catholics leave the Catholic Church? - Possible solutions

- Fr. Victor Roche SVD
Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies



Dear Reader,
In the last issue of the Catholic Reporter, we discussed the possible solutions to "Why do Catholics leave the Catholic Church?". Let us continue to reflect on the possible solutions.

1. Pope Benedict XVI and New Evangelization: Pope Benedict XVI focused his papacy on New Evangelization right from the beginning. He emphasized the need for both primary evangelization (sharing the Gospel with those who have never heard of Christ) and secondary evangelization (re-evangelization in places that have lost a living sense of the faith.

He created a new Dicastery called 'Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization (PCPNE)' in the Roman Curia.

2. XIII Synod of Bishops on New Evangelization: Pope Benedict XVI called for a Synod of Bishops, 7-28 October 2012 which focussed on 'NEW EVANGELIZATION FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH'. In the message to the whole Church, the Bishops of the Synod reiterated, "The changed social, cultural, economic, civil and religious scenarios call us to something new: to live our communitarian experience of faith in a renewed way and to proclaim it through

an evangelization that is "new in its ardor, in its methods, in its expressions".

3. Evangelized Evangelizers: The Bishops, Priests, Religious, Catechists and the lay leaders have to preach the 'Good News' as 'Evangelized Evangelizers'; people who have encountered the Risen Christ. The message continues, "The work of the new evangelization consists in presenting once more the beauty and perennial newness of the encounter with Christ to the often distracted and confused heart and mind of the men and women of our time, **above all to ourselves**".

4. Welcoming Communities: We have many Catholics who have experienced hurts or alienation within the church because of their marital status, poverty, disability etc. Our parish communities have to be a home to 'ALL'. The message of the Synod continues, " the **Church is the space offered by Christ** in history where we can encounter him, because he entrusted to her his Word, the Baptism that makes us God's children, his Body and his Blood, the grace of forgiveness of sins above all in the sacrament of Reconciliation, the experience of communion....We must **form welcoming communities** in which all outcasts find a home, concrete experiences of communion— **"See how they love one another!"**

5. Evangelization of families: The 'FAMILY' in Papua New Guinea is at the cross-roads. It is caught up between the traditional values and the modern values. Many husbands and wives are divorced and remarried; many children are growing up in broken families. There is a great need for evangelizing and ministering to the smallest and affected unit of our society, the 'FAMILY'. The Synod emphasises, "Despite the diversity of their geographical, cultural and social situations, all the Bishops of the Synod reconfirmed the essential role of the family in the transmission of the faith. A new evangelization is unthinkable without acknowledging a specific responsibility to proclaim the Gospel to families and to sustain them in their task of education".

6. Lay men and women actively involved in the New Evangelization: Our Catholic Laity belong to the group of the so called, 'Sleeping Giants'. We have to involve them as active evangelizers of the New Evangelization. The Synod goes on to say to the Lay people, various forms of lay associations and ecclesial movements, "We ask all of our lay men and women, to place their presence and their service in the Church in the perspective of the new evangelization".

Function and Role of the Apostolic Nuncio

- Sr Daisy Anne Lisania Augustine MSC
Secretary for Social Communication



According to the Code of Canon Law, **Nuncio** has two tasks or offices: ecclesial and diplomatic office. Ecclesial office strengthens the relation between the local church and the Pope. While, diplomatic office of Nuncio is not so different with the office of other ambassadors who represent their countries. (cf Canons 361-365 of the Code of Canon Law)

Thus **Nunciature** (office of a nuncio) also establishes a relation between the Holy See and other countries. There are more than 100 Nunciatures across the world.

The **Holy See** is the office of the successor of Saint Peter, the pope, comprehending all the dicasteries through which he exercises his pastoral government of the Catholic Church. The Holy See is recognized as an International Juridical person.

Vatican City, a state created to ensure and guarantee the absolute freedom, independence, and sovereignty of the Holy See, also possesses full sovereignty within the international community.

Often it is said that Nuncio is the ambassador of Vatican. Actually, he is not the representative of Vatican state, but the representative of the Pope. The Vatican State emerged in 1929; before the emergence of this Vatican State, the office of papal representative has already existed. So, Nuncio represents the Pope not only as the head of Vatican state (the smallest state in the world), but above all as the Head of the Church which is a very large community.

Since 15th century, an office of ambassador has already existed, as we know it today. When we refer to ambassador, this term however, represents another reality. The Church is a religious reality acknowledged internationally, just as the acknowledged country is, in this instance, Papua New Guinea.

The Pope establishes relations with all nations, not only as the Head of a state, but also as the Head of the Church. This is the unique characteristic of the Catholic Church.

Furthermore, the Church is an internationally acknowledged religious body. As an international subject, the Church has a right to send her ambassadors (Nuncios) to other countries. The Church also has a right to accept ambassadors from other countries. For example, our closest neighbour Indonesia has its ambassador in the Vatican. There are 180 countries, who establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See.

Generally, the Nunciature focuses on its ecclesial tasks.

The ecclesial role of an Apostolic Nuncio is to make firm and effective the bonds of unity which exist between the Pope and the Church throughout the world. Some of these include;

- informing the Apostolic See about the conditions in which the particular Churches find themselves, and matters which affect the life of the Church and the good of souls.
- assisting the Bishops by action and advice, leaving intact the exercise of their lawful power.

- fostering close relations with the Bishops Conference, offering it every assistance.
 - connection with the appointment of Bishops, to send or propose names of candidates to the Apostolic See, as well as to prepare the informative process about those who may be promoted, in accordance with the norms issued by the Apostolic See.
 - promoting whatever may contribute to peace, progress, and the united efforts of peoples.
 - working with the Bishops to foster appropriate exchanges between the Catholic Church and other Churches or ecclesial communities, and indeed with non-Christian religions.
 - working with the Bishops to safeguard, so far as the rules of the state are concerned, those things which relate to the mission of the Church and of the Apostolic See. (Nunciature.se/index.php/11-articles/22-function-and-role-of-the-apostolic-nuncio)
- The Holy See does not have any interest in other field, such as economic or military.



- Sr Daisy Anne Lisania Augustine MSC

Pope appoints new Apostolic Nuncio for PNG

Pope Francis appoints Archbishop Mauro Lalli as the new Apostolic Nuncio in Papua New Guinea.

A Press Release from the Apostolic Nunciature (Embassy of the Holy See) in Papua New Guinea informs that His Holiness, Pope Francis, has appointed **His Excellency Most Reverend Mauro LALLI** as the Apostolic Nuncio to the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

The Press Release stated that the appointment will be announced today, Friday, 1st March 2024, at 12:00 noon in the Vatican, 8:00 PM in PNG and 9:00 PM Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

The prelate has represented the Holy See on three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. Now Pope Francis is calling him to carry out an important mission in the peripheries.

Prior to this appointment, 59-year-old Archbishop Lalli had been serving as chargé d'affaires to Cyprus.

He succeeds Archbishop Fermin Emilio Sosa Rodriguez, who was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Bolivia last November.

A short biography:

Born on 17 September 1965 in Atesa, (Chieti, Italy) Mauro Lalli attended Higher Secondary School in Chieti and studied Philosophy and Theology at the Institute of Theology of the "Pontificio Seminario Regionale degli Abruzzi", Chieti.

Lalli was ordained a priest on 14 July 1990 when incardinated to the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Chieti-Vasto. From 1990 to 1995, he was parish priest, professor of religion and Regional Youth Director. He graduated as Doctor *juris utriusque* (Doctor of Both Laws – Civil and Canon) at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome. After completing his diplomatic studies at the Ecclesiastical Academy from 1995 to 1999, he entered the

diplomatic service of the Holy See on 1st July 1999, serving successively at Pontifical Representations in Guatemala, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Romania, Croatia, India, Jordan and Cyprus. Monsignor Lalli speaks (Italian), French, English, Spanish and Portuguese.



Picture: Newly appointed Nuncio HE Most Reverend Mauro Lalli.

-Jelilah Kun

CCHS conducts successful SRHIP Review Workshop

The National Catholic Church Health Services (CCHS) of Papua New Guinea (PNG) successfully conducted a three-day review workshop aimed at enhancing the Sexual Health Integration Project (SRHIP) across the country. Diocesan Health Services Integration Officers (DHSIO) and officers in charge (OICs) from nine of 11 participating provinces attended the workshop from February 13th to 15th, 2024, at the Catholic Bishops Conference Headquarters in Port Moresby.

The workshop focused on reflection, learning, and collaborative planning to ensure the successful implementation of SRHIP. Despite the absence of two provinces – Madang, and Autonomous Region of Bougainville – the event saw active participation from delegates representing East Sepik, West Sepik, Morobe, Southern Highlands, Western Highlands, Eastern Highlands, Western, Central provinces, and the National Capital District.

The objectives of the workshop were multifaceted, aiming to increase understanding of key expectations for sub-grant arrangements, improve competency and confidence in implementing the DHSIO Annual Implementation Plan for 2024, emphasize provincial-level partnerships, and strengthen reporting mechanisms at the diocese and facility levels.

William Vagi, DHSIO for CCHS of the Diocese of Bereina, Central Province, highlighted the unique approach taken by facilitators, which included color-coded performance evaluations. Vagi remarked, "The direct feedback was invaluable, providing clarity on our standing and insight into areas that need improvement."

Vagi further shared insights into the impactful discussions during the workshop, stating, "Engaging with colleagues from other provinces and hearing their experiences was enlightening, gave me numerous ideas, and increased my enthusiasm to return and work on my AIP." He highlighted the importance of one of his

activities implemented last year the 'Peer to Peer' program, which aimed at providing comprehensive sexual health education to young people in the Veifa communities. He also expressed his gratitude for the continued support received from facilitators and Australian Aid for funding the project, highlighting the project's impact on ensuring continued access to essential supplies for individuals on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART).

Although Mr. Graham Apian, the CCHS Projects Director, was not able to attend the workshop, he conveyed his appreciation for the achievements of 2023 and urged participants to strive for further success in 2024. Apian emphasized the importance of cooperation and announced plans for closer collaboration, including monthly virtual meetings, and gave each province a mobile phone to assist in facilitating communication.

At the workshop's closure, the National Health Secretary, Sr Jadwiga Faliszek presented small tokens of appreciation to three high performing CCHS offices from

Western, Southern Highlands, and Morobe provinces for their efforts supervising the activities on the ground.

"Going forward, I urge you all to use the phones you were given to document the impacts of the work you are doing and send them to us so we can make good reports," Sr Jadwiga said.

The success of this workshop marked a significant step forward in the ongoing efforts of CCHS to promote sexual health integration and improve healthcare delivery across PNG.



Picture: Participants of the CCHS SRHIP Review Workshop

-Ahisha Mangot

Government, Churches and Private Sector re-unite to reduce unemployment rate

Gordons, Port Moresby: The World Day of Social Justice was commemorated by the Caritas PNG on February 20, 2024 at the Catholic Bishops Conference. With the theme "A generation without work is a future defeat for the country and for humanity"

The event was graced by the Bishop Deputy for Caritas PNG, and the Auxiliary bishop of Wabag diocese, Bishop Justin Ain Soongie. Joining the occasion were panellists, Senior

Education Officer Liaisons from the National Youth Development Authority, Mr Lawrence Tau and a youth representative Ms Alana Mou.

The celebration highlighted the issues of youth unemployment in Papua New Guinea.

Bishop Soongie highlighted the consequences of unemployment in general while Mr Tau spoke from the government's perspective when asked about their role in addressing the

unemployment issue with Ms Mou sharing her personal experience on the issue.

The way forward in addressing and minimizing the ongoing youth issues is the *establishment of the District Youth Development Councils* in the 96 *Districts of PNG*. Through this channel (DYDC) that youths will be identified, registered through NID, clustered, trained so that they can contribute to

the development of all sectors of PNG's economy.



Picture: Bishop Justin Ain Soongie in his address.

Federation of Religious of PNGSI holds 2024 AGM in Madang

Madang: The heads of priests, Brothers and Sisters of different Congregations of Catholic Church in PNG and SI met for their 33rd annual general meeting from 25 to 01 March at Alexishafen, Madang. They came under the theme, 'Pilgrims of Hope: On the Path of Peace' numbering 48 in all, from all over PNG and Solomon Islands. Unique to this assembly was the presence of the presidents and representatives of Religious Conferences from Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Islands.

Most notable senior members of the Catholic hierarchy who were present in the FoR General Assembly were; Christopher Cardone, OP, the Archbishop of Honiara and Bishop Deputy for Religious and Consecrated Life. Archbishop of Madang, Anthon Bal at the opening Mass welcoming everyone to his Diocese for this assembly shared his reflection on theme "Pilgrims of Hope: On the Path of Peace". Bishop Dariusz Kaluza MSF, of Bougainville shared his experience at the recently held Synod in Rome, as the only bishop who represented PNGSI and invited the participants to reflect on the Synodal approach among Religious and consecrated people. Bishop Rozario Menezes, SMM of Lae was also present focusing on the importance of ongoing formation of religious and reporting on Right Relationships.

The President of FoR, Fr. Jose Orathinkal, SVD informed that one of the important decisions taken at this meeting was the beginning of a process of the unification of different Conferences and FoR of PNGSI into one entity. He also said that the recruitment and formation of candidates and ongoing-formation of its members continues to be an important challenge to the FoR. This week-long meeting was facilitated by different executives, Sr.

Efrenita Morata (FDCC), vice president, Fr. Shijo Joseph (HGN), the president of CMR, the CWR President, Sr. Evangelina Orpilla, while Br. Philip Grundy, the treasurer presented the financial situation of the Federation.



Picture: Participants of the Heads of Conferences for Catholic Religious of Oceania meet in Madang.

An extract of the assembly statement, show their determination and commitment to social and religious concerns along with their faithfulness to their religious life

"For decades the collaborative efforts of Catholic Religious Men and Women and the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNGSI have successfully delivered programs for the empowerment of Congregational Leaders and formators, for protection of children, women and other vulnerable people and the expansion of education and health services. We are committed to carry forward our joint ventures with vigour and enthusiasm.

We, Catholic Religious Brothers, Sisters and Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands pledge ourselves to explore and commit to ways of working together even more efficiently and effectively among ourselves. Further, we commit ourselves to an even closer collaboration with the Conference of

Catholic Bishops of PNGSI to work for more vocations, on-going formations for the benefit of the spiritual life of the Catholic Faithful and the citizens of our homelands.

As *Pilgrims of Hope: On the Path of Peace*, we strongly uphold the *Synodal Way* of relating, discerning and correcting wrongs which is advocated by Pope Francis, embraced by our Bishops and widely recognized as the *Way of Our Peoples*. We shall give immediate concrete expression to it by amalgamating the current separate Female and Male Conferences of Religious to form a new and inclusive peak body known as *Catholic Religious PNGSI* which will be more representative of the National Religious of PNG and SI and shall foster partnership with the Catholic Religious of Oceania.

Catholic Religious recognize the pain and trauma that afflict our people through poverty, riots, tribal fights, abuse of women and minors and the scourge of sorcery-related violence. These realities contribute to an ever-increasing number of internal refugees who seek only safety and peace. We stand ready to assist them when we can, and are always willing to join hands with government and all people of good will, to address underlying causes.

We applaud progressive initiatives of the Governments of PNGSI such as free tuition, which give hope and a pathway to a better standard of living for so many. However, we urge Leaders to follow up with full pay and necessary resources for teachers, sufficient classrooms and facilities, and adequate security. Moreover, we believe that progressive social initiatives must always be safeguarded from ambitious political competition and be motivated only by determination to maximize benefits to our people".

In defense of Fiducia Supplicans

Port Moresby: The Declaration of Bishop Rolando said that there is a fine line between endorsement of Marriage (only a man and a woman can have as per the doctrines of the church) and the different forms of blessings everyone is entitled to. Like having to attend church (is something everyone despite race, gender, or ethnicity is entitled to); and that is what the document, 'Fiducia Supplicans' is all about.

Bishop Santos also said that the blessing proposed by Fiducia Supplicans carries its own risk and dangers. But there is nothing in the document that goes against the traditional teachings of the church and allows for 'same

sex marriage'. Such act is still considered sinful and unlawful. Bishop Rolando now urged the members of the Catholic Church, other denominations, and all peoples to define the term blessing and endorsement to fully understand what the document is about.

With which he gave the example of saying a short prayer with the people in irregular situations (same sex couples and other sinners) is not endorsing rather expressing God's love, mercy, and compassion of God to these people.

He further elaborated that "Pope Francis urges us to contemplate, with an attitude of faith and fatherly mercy, the

fact that when one asks for blessing, one is expressing a petition for God's assistance, a plea to live better, and confidence in a father who can help us live better."

"The document is meant to reveal the face of the church as a sacrament of God's infinite and unconditional love in the world", said Rolando.

He also added that, "God blesses and always wanted to bless all peoples, including adulterers, prostitutes, and sinners in general. A blessing is a prayer of love, mercy and compassion".

In trying to avoid such confusion that has been hitting the media, Bishop Rolando in his conclusion has made a call

- Ahisha Mangot and Donovan Pintol

to priests now to also understand the document before putting it into action. Meaning that they must make sure people in irregular situations know that the blessing that they receive is not an endorsement of their sin rather their form of plea for God's assistance to lead them to holy living.



Picture: Bishop Rolando Santos CM from the Alotau-Sideia Diocese.

Catholic Teachers open Academic Year with Eucharist

Honiara: The Catholic Teachers Sodality convened at the Holy Cross Cathedral on Sunday February 25, 2024 for a Dedication Mass to commence another fruitful year of service and devotion.

Under the support of the Catholic Education Office, the Catholic Teachers Sodality stands as an example of spiritual guidance and professional support, dedicated to nurturing educators in their vocation as evangelizers.

The Opening Mass, presided over by the esteemed Rev. Fr. James Ere'ai, was a vibrant display of faith and fellowship. Liturgical proceedings were gracefully conducted by the educators of St. Joseph Catholic Secondary School, imbuing the service with a sense of reverence and communal spirit.

In his moving Homily, Fr. James drew inspiration from the Gospel reading (Mk 9:2-10), urging attendees to be mindfulness of God's calling and prioritize spiritual values over worldly pursuits.

Following the Mass, members of the Sodality assembled at the Holy Cross Cathedral Hall for a brief meeting. The occasion was further brightened by talks, entertainment performances and feast. The Catholic Archdiocese of Honiara remains steadfast in providing holistic formation rooted in Catholic Values.

Empowering Animators: Transforming Perspectives and Practices.

Port Moresby: The Media Education Seminar program commenced on Saturday, February 24th, 2024, after a break the previous year. Seventeen animators and teachers from catholic institutions participated in the training session that opened avenues for learning, interaction, and animation of the different groups.

The first session, from 9 am to 1 pm, was attended by teacher animators from nine Catholic schools and the Mary Help of Christians Parish of Sabama in

Port Moresby, with more than half of the participants being new animators.

The sessions included a brief introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI) by Fr. Ambrose, who emphasized the need for us to recognize how AI is challenging our beliefs and value systems. Participants were helped to understand the dangers of personal data being used online, as we scan through the internet.

Three sessions conducted by volunteer facilitators. Miss Patrina Kaboanga presented the role of an

animator, emphasizing that animators should guide the group, increase participation, and enhance understanding among the participants under their care.



Picture: Participants of Animators' Seminar pose for a group picture at the end of the program.

- Lucy Napitalai



The Catholic Reporter Team

You are invited to send in your articles, photograph and reflections on events and happenings in your parish, community, institution and diocese. Please send in your material to: socom@catholic.org.pg on or before **20th of the Month, 2024.**

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