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# CHURCH

Special Issue

*Alive*

1936 - 2021

GRAND CHIEF SIR MICHAEL THOMAS

**SOMARE**

**Papa bilong Kantri**

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Dear friends,

**Church Alive** is privileged to celebrate the life and work of Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare (1936-2021). Rightly called as *'Papa bilong Kantri'*, he was at the helm of affairs for 17 years of its 45 independent years. He has been a leader who was able to see well beyond the image of power and drive the country of a thousand tribes and champion the cause for an independent and unified Papua New Guinea. His 17 years span 4 terms, and he has played a vital role in the peaceful transformation from a colony to an independent nation.



Cardinal Sir John Ribat acclaimed him as the 'salt and light' for the nation (Mt 5:13-16). He emphasised that he never concealed his faith in Jesus Christ and at the funeral mass he invited the congregation to reflect on the life of Sir Michael Somare, especially on unity that should overcome all divisions. Throughout his life, Sir Michael celebrated the sacraments with devotion and received the Sacrament of Anointing by Cardinal Ribat.

"Sir Michael was a loyal husband to our mother and great father first to her children, then grandchildren and great-grand granddaughter," said his daughter Bertha Somare. "But we are endeared that many Papua New Guineans equally embraced Sir Michael as father and grandfather," she continued.

We are proud to bring you articles and reflections from a variety of people: clergy, family members, politicians and friends. They are an expression not only of the multi-faceted person Grand Chief was, but highlight the qualities of heart and mind that make up this unique, 'Father of the Nation'.

My gratitude to all who have spent days of painstaking labour to bring this issue to completion. It is a humble sign of the gratitude to *'Papa blo Kantri'*. His story lives on and his life will have meaning if our lives reflect the values and ideals that he stood for and lived out with grace and dignity. May this issue inform, educate and inspire us to live and bear witness to our Catholic Faith. 

**Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb**

Secretary Social Communications Commission.  
15<sup>th</sup> April 2021



*Gratitude to a faithful*

## **Catholic, Husband and Father**

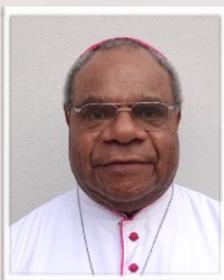
*Photo above:*  
Cardinal Sir John Ribat placing the Bible on the casket at the commencement of the funeral mass

The Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea are saddened at the death of Sir Michael Somare. He was a faithful servant of God, the Church and his Country.

**Sir Michael Somare was a faithful Catholic:** He was brought up in the Catholic Faith by the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) in East Sepik Province. He was a personal friend of Archbishop Leo Arkfeld. He went regularly to the Catholic church service whether as the Prime Minister or as an ordinary citizen. While in Port Moresby, he always attended the Pidgin Mass on Sundays together with his wife Veronica in St. Joseph's Parish, Boroko, Port Moresby. He had a very cordial relationship with the Catholic Bishops and the CBC.

**Sir Michael Somare was a faithful Husband and father:** Although Sir Michael Somare reached the height of his political status as the Prime Minister and Father of the Nation, he remained as a faithful husband to his wife Lady Veronica. He maintained good family values and he was a good father to his children.

**Sir Michael Somare is indeed the Father of the Nation:** Sir Michael Somare deserves to be called the Father of the Nation. He was passionate about the people of Papua New Guinea and his country. He continued his efforts to keep the country together and towards development as the Prime Minister for four terms. His political service spanned 49 years to Papua New Guinea as an Assembly Member, Member of Parliament and Prime Minister till he stepped down from Politics in 2017.



On Behalf of the Catholic Bishops of PNG and SI, on Behalf of the Catholic Faithful of Papua New Guinea and on behalf of the whole nation I would like to extend my hearty condolences to Lady Veronica and the whole Somare family. 🙏

Archbishop Anton Bal  
*President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands*



# A life of Grace and Patience

Photo: Eulogy by Dulciana Somare-Brash

The funeral of Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare was held at Sir Hubert Murray Stadium on 12th March 2021. The Eulogy given by Dulciana Somare-Brash was powerful and inspiring. Here are a few extracts from her reflective address.

My father was born in Rabaul, East New Britain Province on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1936, to Ludwig Sana Somare my grandfather & Painari Somare my biological grandmother. My grandfather was a policeman and from stories told to me he was a generous and giving man with many admirable traits including the DNA for service.

## Character

I will never know if my grandparents were disciplinarians or strong Christians or even good parents. They both passed on before I was born. What I do know is that they raised a humane, thinking, honourable and decent man in my father and for that I am truly grateful.

My father was a decent man and that provided him with the moral compass and trajectory needed to rise above the conflict that great national wealth can bring to any nation. He followed his heart before his mind and in my view, that was the only way to truly unite our diverse country. His kastom, our Sana tradition was his rudder, when he set sail in his traditional canoe 'Muntai'. On this country's life journey, he was "Yamdar", our totem that is capable of great good and much malevolence too.

Sana is a way of life that my father chose each time he faced hardship and conflict. He chose to show affection to garner trust but this enviable human trait was used against him in the end and he was vilified and treated very poorly and publicly, as he was deemed weak because he pledged as a young man during his own initiation

to live a compassionate life. I am proud my country was able to benefit from his personal choices and our strong Murik traditions. Our father was a simple and modest man all his life, despite my own ideas about fame and the perks and privileges of sharing a high-profile life with him, he always lived to reflect a life balance I've never seen manifested by another person again in my life.

## Life in Politics

In the last 10 years when he was confronted with the most public opposition he had ever faced in his entire political career and personal life, he handled it with the grace and patience of a saint.

I watched my father, the GREAT Grand Chief consider all the obvious risks to this country and his people before he worried about what was happening to him personally, at this time. For the record at his passing, I want to say that as my father was unlawfully removed as a legitimate Prime Minister he cared less about revenge, or retaliation when the options were at his fingertips. He exercised incredible caution despite his frail state after his return from Singapore. He feared that any bad decision-making on his part would have such a lasting and adverse effect on this nation, that he merely accepted his fate and he never defended himself beyond a certain point.

He upheld parliamentary democracy and constitutional democracy over himself and his family's future. He healed himself enough to contest yet another election in 2012, before his

**“In his care we never witnessed violence, aggression or inequality in our home. To him, (his children) we each had the same rights both as male and female. My father understood innately, what equality looked like in practice even when our kastoms, ancient traditions and his modern political profile glorified status and a hierarchy. In our home, my father worshipped our mother all the way to his passing this month.**

retirement in 2017 on his own terms. Many have asked why; the answer is that the true essence of participatory democracy was his guiding light from before independence to well after he achieved much of his dreams for us his people. He allowed his journey to be broken so we could continue with ours. When I consider my father’s great love for this country, I strongly believe now that he believed that... knowing when to stop conflict is not defeat - its leadership! He forgave people who brought harm, humiliation and intense conflict; as he himself had originally offered them the right to act and speak and to think independently when he fought fearlessly over different phases of our democracy for both our political and economic independence.

At the centre of my father’s political longevity was a single chiefly skill that few people possess or will master. My father was a good listener. From this one great gift emerged his undeniable ability to create trust, embolden relationships and reciprocate loyalty with grace. As a great listener, he was able to charismatically charm people whilst delivering his eternal message of great faith and hope for his first true love, Papua New Guinea.

My father’s basic formula relied on an innate tendency to become invisible so that others could be visible.

**Home life**

At home, he also provided comfort and solace in the face of any tension and torment. Thankfully, in his care we never witnessed violence, aggression or inequality in our home. To him, (his children) we each had the same rights both as male and female. My father understood innately, what equality looked like in practice even when our kastoms, ancient traditions and his modern political profile glorified status and a hierarchy. In our home,



Photo: Lady Veronica being consoled by members of the family

my father worshipped our mother all the way to his passing this month. Therefore, our house was always a home underpinned by certainty despite some normal family differences along the way.

**What he stood for**

In later years when he became Prime Minister again from 2002 he insisted on a cabinet line-up that faced resistance when he proposed Dame Carol Kidu be a Minister of State. Dame Carol reminds us today that my father told his Cabinet that having her in the National Executive Council (NEC) was not negotiable. Under this supportive direction Dame Carol spearheaded many policies and legislation that promised greater protections for women, girls and minority groups in PNG. I understand my father’s sincerity to this cause, he practiced the values of equality and gender empowerment in our home. I was raised to think as an equal, not as a gender!

My father’s parting wish to me and my siblings was that our children go to university and work hard. From his sickbed, he urged me to convince him that I would always be ok. That my daughters would go on to complete their education and be protected by all that he had already established for me and therefore the two of them. From the beginning of his public life to the end he valued education. After all he was a teacher and a broadcaster before he became a parliamentarian. His service to communities built the foundation for the solidarity and unity we have witnessed in the outpouring of love and sincerity at his passing. 🙏

Photo below - Jessica Oata Funeral Mass of Sir Michael Somare





## Moses Murray



Photo:  
Sir Michael Thomas Somare at prayer

## Archbishop Leo Arkfeld

# Spiritual Mentor and Guide

**Moses Murray** is a private lawyer who hails from Kairiru Island, East Sepik Province. Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare assigned him to translate the Constitutional Planning Committee Report in pidgin for the benefit of the members of the Constituent Assembly, between May 1975 and Independence on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1975.

I attended the Major Seminary Bomana in 1971. During the end of year break and after attending to pastoral work in Negrie with Fr. Cherubim Dambui (later became Auxiliary Bishop of Port Moresby), I returned to Wirui after spending 2 to 3 weeks with my parents in Maprik.

During the time I was in Wirui, I noticed young Michael's (then Member of House of Assembly) frequent visits to see Bishop Leo.

I was sitting with Bishop Leo at dinner one time and he told me quietly that he discussed with young Michael his intention to try and get self-governance for PNG which is the first step to attaining independence. Off course I had no clue as to the content of the discussion he initiated with Michael Somare. I can recall what I said and it went something like this: "if that is the way to go then so be it". Bishop just smiled and concluded with: "I think that would be a great idea". I reflected on the discussion after we finished dinner and I concluded that my Bishop is definitely guiding this young politician. I returned to the Seminary in 1972 for studies.

I went for my break in 1972, and took up pastoral duties at Marianberg. I returned to Wirui after spending two weeks with my parents at Maprik. I cannot recall the date but I was with Papa Bishop Leo at his film library as he had

asked me earlier to select some good movies to show that night. I was the operator of the movie projector. The Bishop was in his office and at about 3:00 pm a car pulled in. Michael came out of the car and knocked on the Bishop's door and the Bishop greeted him and invited him in. I quietly walked out of the office and waited outside for 15 to 20 minutes before Michael left his office, and I could proceed on with the movie screening that evening. That event confirmed my formed view that Michael Somare had the liberty to meet with Bishop Leo at any time he wanted to.

Again during meal times I would be sitting with Papa Leo Arkfeld and a general discussion would take place. But during my break in Wirui before returning to Bomana in 1973, I witnessed Somare coming in to see the Bishop on a regular basis. One could easily ask: *Why is Somare coming in on a regular basis to see the Bishop when he is in Wewak?* I had my own conclusion which was: The Bishop is discussing on matters of spiritual concern to help Michael in his family life if he is to be a leader of PNG; and also general advice to him as a leader in the government administration. Off course there would also be discussions on Michael's move to get self-government for PNG.

I returned to Bomana in 1973 to continue with my studies. That same year PNG attained Self-Government. Bishop Leo Arkfeld's guidance was not in vain.

By the end of 1973, I returned to Wirui for my pastoral work, this time with late Fr. Blasig at Roma. Upon completion of my pastoral work, I then went off to see my parents at Maprik and then to Wirui before my return to Bomana in 1974. Again being very close to Bishop Leo Arkfeld I always sat with him during meals. At one time I recalled clearly a discussion on the country's self-governance. The discussion also touched the topic of PNG's independence. There was only one conclusion to be drawn; Bishop Leo Arkfeld was an inspirational and spiritual source of encouragement for Somare's vision. Again I saw Somare and Bishop Arkfeld on certain occasions whilst in Wirui. Given the fact that I had witnessed Michael Somare coming in to see him in 1972, there was no more doubt in my mind that Bishop Leo Arkfeld was truly instrumental in imparting wisdom, knowledge and encouragement to the young leader.

After my studies at Bomana in 1974, I went home to Wewak and this time I was sent to do pastoral work at Torembi. Again, after pastoral work I went to Maprik and visited my parents and returned to Wirui. PNG had already attained self-governance in 1973 and now began the journey to independence. As usual Bishop Leo Arkfeld wanted me to sit with him at the table during meals. Our conversation took a different twist as it centred on the issue of independence. I recall that at one dinner time the Bishop asked me: How would you feel about PNG getting independence? I pondered over the question for about 10-15 seconds and I responded: **That would be good.** I was not confident in my response. Bishop then commented: **I think it would be a very good thing.** He went on to say something that I will not forget: **you have a young leader who is very strong, charismatic and a strong committed catholic too and I believe he can do a good job in running this country.** Late Fr. Patrick Fincutter SVD was also at our table and looked towards me and the



Photo above:  
Bishop Leo Arkfeld in the mission plane

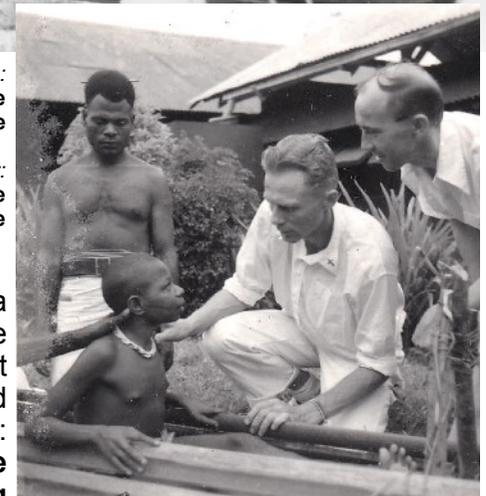


Photo right:  
In dialogue with the people

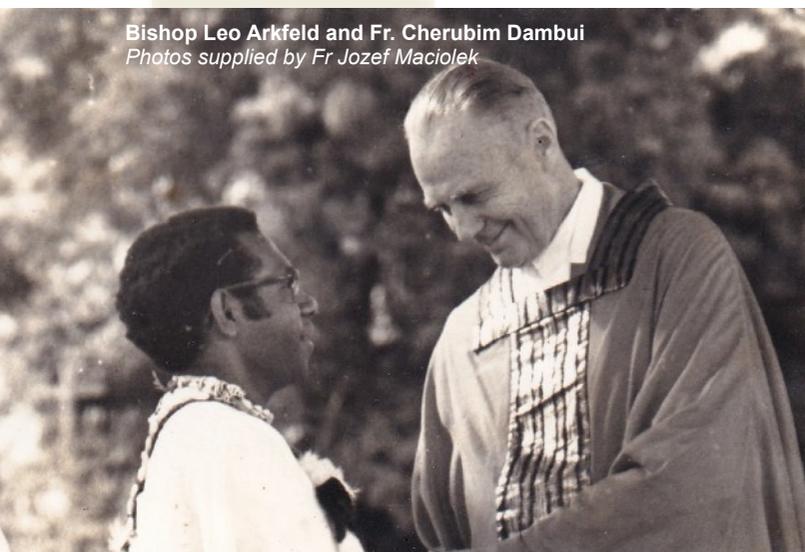
Bishop and gave a very big smile. He left and the next conversation I had with the Bishop was: **would you like the idea of making**

**Archangel Michael the patron saint of PNG?** I had no response to that question. The Bishop continued and said words to the following effect: **It is very good and fitting because the Prime Minister to-be of PNG would be Michael and the country's patron saint should be Archangel Michael.** We finished dinner and upon my return to my room I had many thoughts on my mind. The convincing thought was: There is no doubt that Bishop Leo Arkfeld was the person behind Michael. He predicted that Michael would be the first Prime Minister of PNG, and if I might add, the Bishop was prayerfully instrumental in Michael accepting the idea of naming Archangel Michael to be the country's patron saint.

Independence came on September 16th 1975. As Prime Minister of PNG, it took some time for Michael Somare to prepare the minds of the other Members of the Parliament to accept St Michael Archangel as Patron Saint of PNG. Eventually on 29th September 2009, St Michael the Archangel was officially declared as the Patron Saint of PNG. Was it coincidence? NO! It was the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Archbishop Leo Arkfeld stood out as the spiritual mentor behind the success and legacy of this great leader, Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare. 🇵🇳

Bishop Leo Arkfeld and Fr. Cherubim Dambui  
Photos supplied by Fr Jozef Maciolek





- Sir Peter Barter

# Service and Inspiration

**Sir Peter Leslie Charles Barter**, GCL OBE (born 26 March 1940) was Minister for Health and Bougainville Affairs.

Wherever he went and whatever the issue, the Grand Chief encouraged us to become independent – not just in name, but by taking practical action.

Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare, the man who was to become a truly great national leader was born in Rabaul in 1936, the son of parents from the East Sepik. Like fellow-citizens throughout our diverse and beautiful country, we mourn his sad passing as we celebrate his many achievements. In doing so, we are joined by our neighbours in the Pacific, Australia and other parts of the world where the late Grand Chief's commitments to principle and service have impacted and continue to inspire.

To a large extent I have been spectator during the period "chief" presided as Chief Minister, the Prime Minister and leader of Opposition. His leadership through good and bad times enabled him to withstand the many obstacles that arose during his 49 years in Parliament, although he did not express his Catholic Faith, he was guided by Christian principles on almost everything he did and said.

Having moved on from teaching to the Public Service, he became a radio broadcaster in Wewak. He had a

legendary ability to communicate and inspire in both English and *Tok Pisin*.

Wherever he went and whatever the issue, the Grand Chief encouraged us to become independent – not just in name, but by taking practical action. I recall some of the Grand Chief's insightful and inspiring remarks in the early 80s:

*-on radio during the economic slump in 1982: 'Let's save our money and eat the best food, our own home-grown food.'*

*-during the Youth Week Festival in 1983: 'If we want to develop ...if we want to improve our facilities, build our towns, clean up our villages and extend our roads, we are going to have to do this ourselves.'*

*-again in 1983, 'As a nation we are dependent on the food we produce ourselves. The vast majority of our people, more than 8 of every 10, directly depend on agriculture or fishing for their living.'*

*-at Oksapmin in 1983: 'As I move around the country I try to encourage everyone to become more self-*

**What I will always remember is his passion for Papua New Guinea. His ability to reconcile differences in political groups, disputes that have arisen in many parts of PNG which was not an easy task when you consider his skill that unified a thousand tribes with 850 known languages.**

*sufficient. I do this because I believe that we have the resources, the skills and the ability to make our country self-sufficient.'*

My family and I have been privileged to be close friends of the Somare family. We have shared many stories and events together, and enjoyed mutual respect.

Both of our families have grown up under the watchful eyes of Lady Veronica. She was the classic example of a good wife and reliable support for family.

Consistent with custom and his firmly held religious beliefs, Grand Chief married Lady Veronica in 1965, having courted her in traditional fashion. In addition to being Sana, he was initiated in Lady Veronica's village and given the title of Mindamot two days after he became Sana.

When Lady Veronica was recently ill, Michael (in his role as husband, not Grand Chief) sat beside her holding her hand and providing comfort. Their marriage provides a powerful – and inspiring example of the way in which families can hold together and do so with the strong sense of shared purpose and mutual commitment that the Christian religion requires and inspires.

As family violence increases around the country, the Somare family can provide a truly impressive and positive example of what can and should be, a source of inspiration.

What I will always remember is his passion for Papua New Guinea. His ability to reconcile differences in

political groups and disputes that have arisen in many parts of PNG which was not an easy task when you consider his skill that unified a thousand tribes with 850 known languages.

Sir Michael's respect went further than the shores of PNG, he helped unify the Pacific nations and was given the title of "Tunga" by the then PM of Fiji Ratu Sir Mara his close friend. He travelled to all 7 continents, delivered speeches at United Nations, met Presidents including HRH Queen Elizabeth 2 along with Pope John Paul. Closer to home he played a pivotal role in establishing the Pacific Forum. The outgoing Secretary General was Ambassador Dame Meg Taylor, Chief first secretary who called me advising me from Fiji expressing the grief by Fijians who this week held a memorial service at the Catholic Cathedral in Suva attended by the Fijian Prime Minister, Ministers and close friends of the family.

He had a remarkable gift of being at home in the village, Parliament or in the company of world-wide leaders, he never shied away from expressing his love for PNG, not forgetting his love of golf and fishing!

I have been very privileged to be a friend of Sir Michael, we have shared many stories together and enjoyed mutual respect. I have witnessed his family life and not least, his love for Lady Veronica who was a tower of strength. I will personally miss him as a close friend and at the same time reflect on the legacy he has left behind as an example for the young and old, I have and sure others have learned a lot from this great man.

Words cannot express the sorrow and grief my family and I feel and give our deepest condolences to Lady Veronica, Sana, Bertha, Arthur, Dulciana and Mooks and thank Paul Bengo, Rodney Kamus, and the Prime Minister for allowing him to be buried at his beloved home in Wewak. 🇯🇵

*Photo:*  
Sir Michael Somare and Lady Veronica, Bishops, priests and Sir Peter Barter together in conversation.



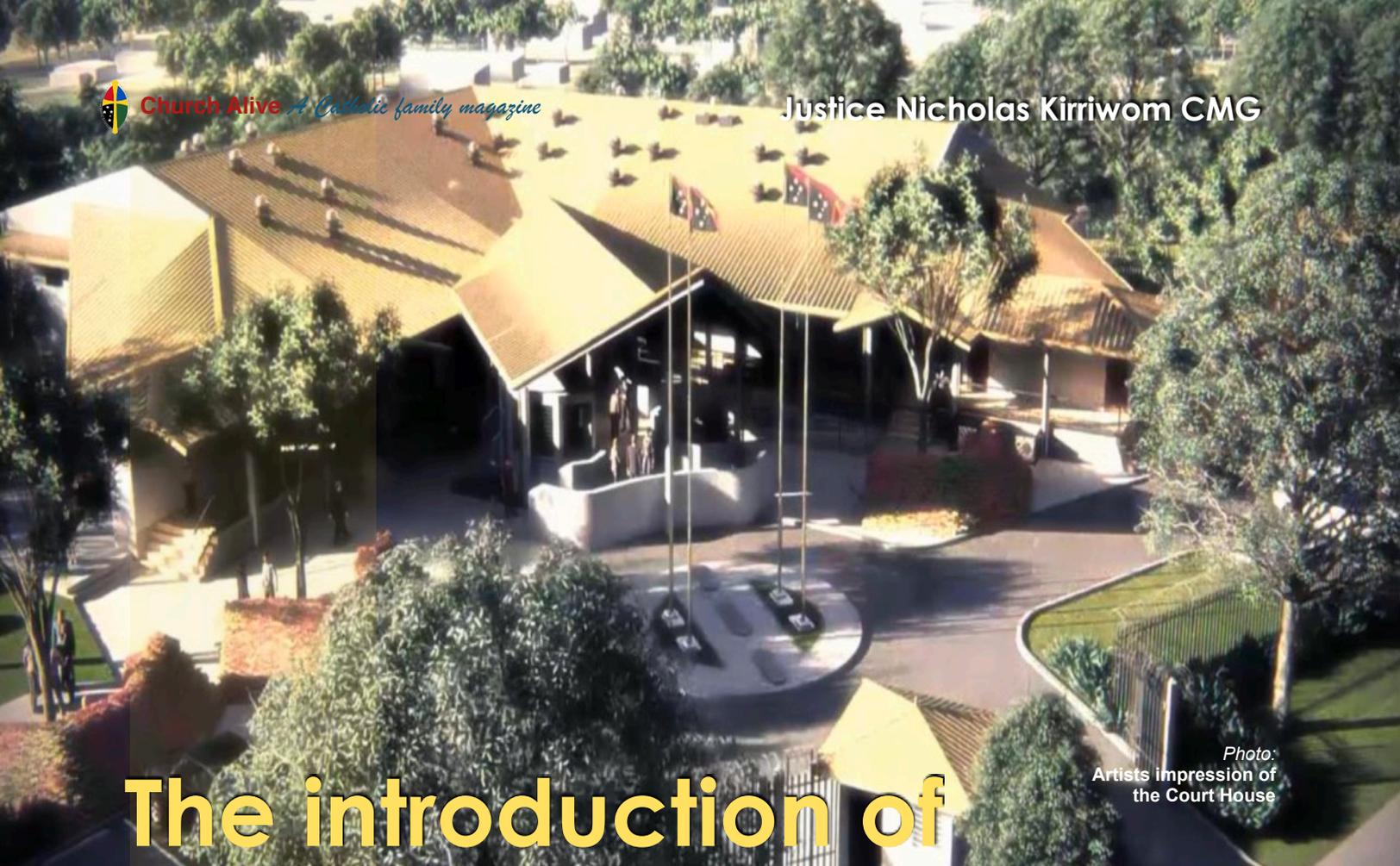


Photo: Artists impression of the Court House

# The introduction of Decentralization



**Hon. Justice Nicholas Kirriwom, CMG**, served as the Public Solicitor from 1983 to 1986. In 1997, he was appointed as a judge in the National Judicial System. He is the Senior Resident Judge and Judge Administrator of East and West Sepik Provinces. Sadly he passed away on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2021.

**Decentralization was one of the objectives of a new country in its Eight Point Plan that was adopted at self-government in 1973.**

Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare strongly believed in decentralization of essential Government Services to all the Provinces in the country which included the upper judiciary services. Decentralization was one of the objectives of a new country in its Eight Point Plan that was adopted at self-government in 1973.

At the time I joined the bench in 1997 under the leadership of Sir Arnold Amet as the Chief Justice, I became aware about a year or so later that as the Governor of East Sepik Province, it was the desire of Grand Chief to have a National Court in Wewak. An allocation of K10 million was made by the Provincial Executive Council and parked with the Judiciary for this

project. This was the first move by any leader to decentralize the services of the higher court to the Provinces when, at the time, only the four regional headquarters already had National Court services in Port Moresby, National Capital District, representing the Southern region, Lae, Morobe Province representing the Momase or Northern Region, Rabaul, East New Britain Province representing New Guinea Islands Region, and Mt Hagen, Western Highlands Province representing the Highlands Region.

Not only land was allocated for the courthouse construction on Kreer Heights, but there was also even land allocated for the judge's official

I admired their steadfast Christian faith as Catholics to the core and their application of their faith to their daily lives at work, at home and in politics as well as in their personal lives.

residence on the highest peak above the courthouse which became famously known later as the Judge's Hill, a site with a panoramic view of Wewak Town, Boram Harbour and Wewak Hill with Kairiru and Muschu Islands in the background.

This was keeping in with the true spirit of the Constitution stipulated in the Preamble that all power belongs to the People, acting through their duly elected representatives, which included judicial power that the superior courts yield in the country. People have the right to see this power exercised right where they lived.

As a Catholic, I had high regard and admiration for two very outstanding leaders in public life and in their contribution to nurturing and guiding to maturity a young nation from self-government in August 1973, to full Independence on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1975. Two prominent persons who coincidentally hailed from the same Province and

were both diehard Catholics, Michael Thomas Somare and Bernard Mullu Narokobi LLB. I admired their steadfast Christian faith as Catholics to the core and their application of their faith to their daily lives at work, at home and in politics as well as in their personal lives. Both have left legacies behind that all leaders of every walk of life must emulate and lead our country to a better destiny.

At the time of the Grand Chief's passing, the building is only 75% complete which is indeed sad as it was my silent wish and desire that it would be completed during his lifetime. That he could do the honour of handing over the Judiciary's newest monumental structure mimicking a miniature version of the gigantic new Waigani Court Complex, also going up simultaneously, to the Judiciary. This would have completed the journey that he started over two decades ago during his term as Governor of East Sepik and during the term of the then Chief Justice Sir Arnold Amet, and finally bringing it to reality with Chief Justice Gibbs Salika at the helm of the Judiciary. 🇩🇪



*Photo left and below:*

Justice Iova Geita with suit (left foreground), Grand Chief with spade and the former Chief Justice, Sir Salamo Injia with the safety vest standing immediately behind the late Grand Chief.





# A faithful servant

I left PNG two days after the death of GC Sir Michael Somare, but not after sharing some of my thoughts about this great man with the residents of Don Bosco Technological Institute, Port Moresby.

On 12<sup>th</sup> March, from the Philippines, I followed the whole funeral mass on social media. I was very impressed by the outpouring of love and affection shown to him and to his family, especially to Lady Veronica.

I listened attentively to the eulogy of his daughter Dulciana and something triggered within me when she described her father “as the greatest shock-absorber this country has ever seen”. And then she mentioned that “in the last ten years when he was confronted with the most public opposition he had ever faced in his entire political and personal life, he handled it with the grace and patience of a saint”. She then stated: “For the record, at his passing, I want to say that my father was unlawfully removed as the legitimate Prime Minister”. And yet “he exercised incredible caution despite his frail state. He feared that any bad decision on his part would have had such lasting and adverse effects on this nation that he merely accepted his fate and never defended himself beyond certain points”.

The reason why something was triggered within me is because during those difficult times I was the President of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of PNG/SI and I issued a statement that became the Headline of one of the daily newspapers: “Bishop asks Sir Michael Somare to resign”. Of course, the Grand Chief was offended and for sure more pain was added in the process. I remember that I phoned Archbishop John Ribat and Fr. Victor Roche, SVD, the Secretary General of the Bishops’ Conference, asking them to go to the house of Sir Michael to present the complete statement that I had issued.

*Here is the statement:*

“These are difficult moments for the country and the Church is concerned about the welfare of all people, especially the little ones who are those who suffer more when conflicts and disagreements come up. People should be commended for their patience. We urge people to continue to be calm and to always respect the rule of Law. We call on the political leaders to think about the people before they

*Photo right:*

2008: Sir Michael present at the Consecration of the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Boroko, Port Moresby

think about themselves and their political careers. We all need to pray for peace, humility and reconciliation.

Grand Chief, Michael Somare, has been vindicated with the decision of the Supreme Court. This should be a reminder to everybody that no one can play with the Constitution. In this particular case it is the Constitution rather than numbers in parliament that decide what is right or wrong. However, what happened following the Court decision has set a very dangerous precedent and the Speaker of the House has to take responsibility for his actions. Political giants of the former opposition should also have known better.

We need a political compromise. The honourable thing to do for Sir Michael Somare, in the interest of the country and considering his health, would be to resign, so that a new government could be legitimately and constitutionally established. As part of the political compromise, the Speaker of the House should also resign or be removed. He has done enough damage to the country and the country does not need any further damage.

Let us pray for wisdom that the Lord may instill in our political leaders the spirit of service, rather than the spirit of power”.

I too was disappointed, because I was expecting the newspaper to publish the entire statement, and in particular the second paragraph, where I was making it clear that Sir Michael Somare was the legitimate Prime Minister. I was happy when I heard Dulciana saying the words that I mentioned above, because they are so true.

In the year 2013, the Bishop Conference held its annual general assembly in Madang and the GC Sir Michael Somare was invited to talk to the Bishops. That day, I was chairing the meeting and so I welcomed Sir Michael and after his speech various Bishops asked him questions. It was a very cordial and beautiful meeting. At the end, I thanked him for coming to visit us and told him: “I am happy that I am seated at your side because I have the opportunity to apologize personally to you because I am the Bishop who asked you to resign”. He smiled broadly and in his humble way he accepted my apology.

May the Lord grant him the reward of the good and faithful servant.✠





# Education

## *A priority*

**Dr. Cecilia Nembou**  
President of DWU, 2016 – 2020

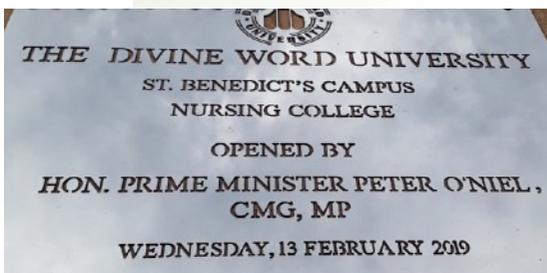
My relationship with the Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare (GCSMTS) is by association through my husband, Simon Kenehe, through Fr Jan Czuba who I worked with for 10 years and by my reputation as a woman academic in my own right. Both Mr Kenehe and Fr Czuba SVD were close friends of GCSMTS. In 1982 - 84 and again in 2006 - 2014, when GCSMTS was Prime Minister he appointed Simon Kenehe to lead the Commission for Higher Education as the chief adviser to the Government on higher education in Papua New Guinea.

Fr Jan Czuba SVD is a very close family friend of the Somare family who during his term as President of the Divine Word University (DWU) had worked hard to achieve two of GCSMTS's dream projects for higher education development in East Sepik Province. I became involved with the two projects when I was the Deputy President and later when I became President of DWU.

I never once heard GCSMTS call me by name but he knew me as, "Doctor" or "Vice Chancellor". He knew that I was Acting Vice Chancellor of the University of Papua New Guinea in 1999 and decided to call me "Vice Chancellor" each time he greeted me.

The Grand Chief had been a strong supporter of DWU since 1995 – 1996. In respectful reciprocity, DWU supported two projects, the establishment of the Community College at Marienberg in Angoram District of East Sepik Province and the re-establishment of the East Sepik School of Nursing. The Community College of Marienberg would have been the

Photo:  
Plaque commemorating the Opening.



been the pioneer user of technology enabled learning back in 2010 – 2011 long before COVID-19 forced the education world to take online education seriously. The DWU had a computer laboratory and computers installed in a proposed learning hub for the East Sepik Province. The National Government through the Department of Education planned to have a Community College in every Province. Start-up funding was made available but when the funds ran out the project was discontinued.



In the second project, the former President of DWU, Fr Jan Czuba had given an undertaking that the DWU would assist with the re-establishment of the East Sepik School of Nursing. Many challenges prevented the project from getting off the ground until I became the President of DWU and Fr Jan Czuba became the Secretary for Higher Education Research Science and Technology. With the support of the political leaders of East Sepik, including Richard Maru when he was Minister for National Planning and Monitoring, Allan Bird, Governor for East Sepik, and Dr Clement Malau as East Sepik Administrator, together with the DWU Council and staff of DWU, St Benedict's School of Nursing enrolled the first cohort of students at the start of 2019 academic year.

I am very happy that the Grand Chief saw his dream for the re-establishment of the School of Nursing in East Sepik Province come true. 🇩🇪



# Sir Michael Somare

## A close friend of the SVD Missionaries



**Fr. Jozef Maciolek, SVD** writes about the time before independence and the familiarity of the family of Sir Michael Somare with the religious community of the **Society of the Divine Word** of Wewak district.

*Photo above:*  
Sir Michael and Lady Veronica with four of their children. Taken at SVD house, Wirui, Wewak at the end of 70s. In the photo are SVD brothers and lay missionaries.

Sir Michael Somare was a frequent visitor to the SVD house at Wirui and was welcomed by Bishop Leo Arkfeld and the confreres. Fr. Joseph Jarczyga, a professional photographer and movie maker, became the personal photographer for Michael Somare and his family over time. Most of the photos of the Somare family of early 70s would have been made by him.

the Catholic Church.

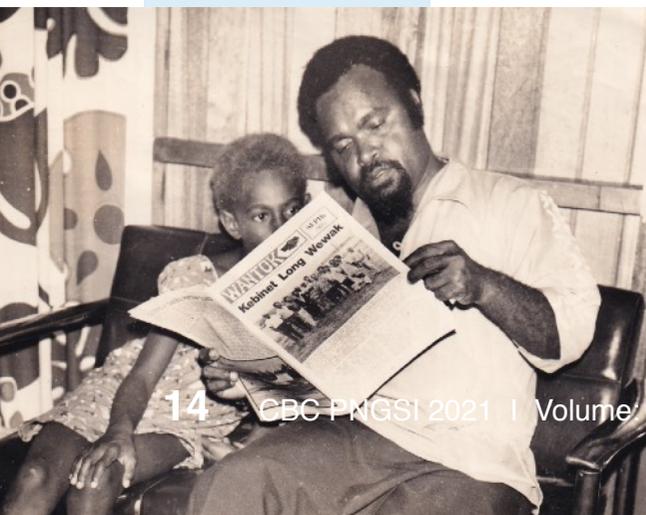
On 12<sup>th</sup> March, after the Mass at Sir Hubert Murray stadium. John Momis in his speech recalled how young Michael Somare met a group of Bougainvillian seminarians at the cathedral at Wirui and invited them to his house for a drink and discussion. John Momis recalled that they were sharing with Michael Somare the social teaching of the Church, particularly the principal of subsidiarity. They had learned all that at the Holy Spirit Seminary from Fr. Patrick Murphy, SVD.

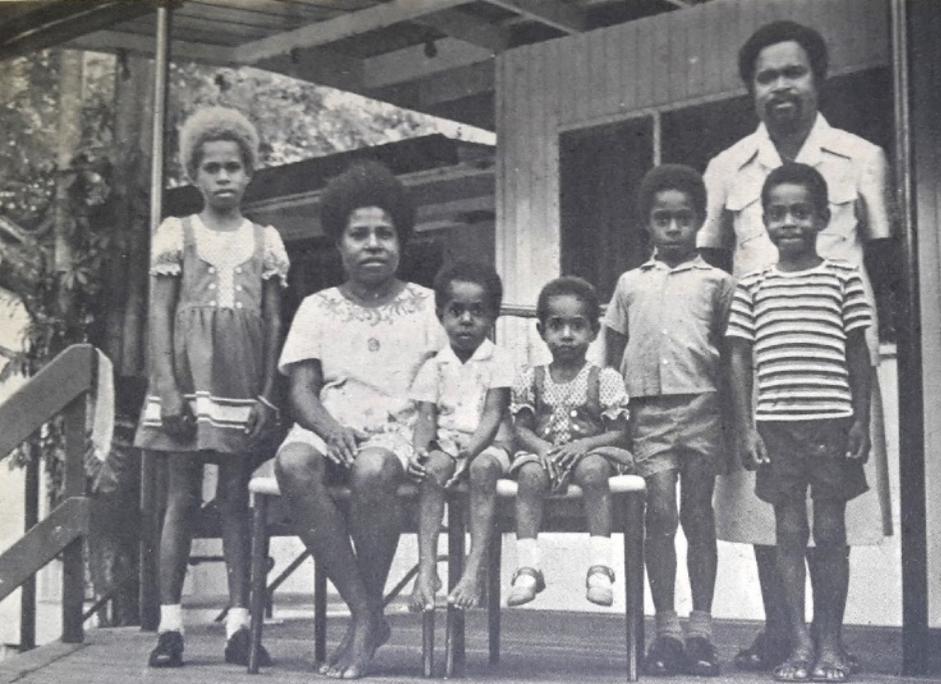
*Photo below:*  
Michael Somare reading the WANTOK newspaper while Bertha looks on.

Among SVD personal friends of Michael Somare was Fr. Francis Mihalic, who worked for the radio in Wewak. Since 1970, he published the Wantok newspaper, which was initially

printed by Wirui press. They were exchanging ideas about social justice and the drive for independence among the New Guinea-educated elite. Fr. Mihalic shared with him the main ideas of the social teaching of

At the time of Independence, Fr. Mihalic reported the events in the Wantok newspaper. In his memoirs, he wrote: 'WANTOK made its mark at the Independence Day Celebrations on September 16, 1975. Luckily we had a professional photographer on our staff then, and he was personally well-known to Prime Minister Somare and other top brass. So he had a free go, and we were able to publish half-





Sir Michael Somare and the whole family left taken in 1975 by Fr. J. Jurczyk. From left: Bertha(11), Veronica, Michael(5), Dulciana(3), Ludwig Sana(8), Arthur(7).

page enlargements of the main events and the international VIPs involved in our next edition. They are now a collector's item; the other newspapers got nowhere near us'.

Over the years, Sir Michael Somare and his family kept in touch with the SVD. Fr. Bill Liebert, SVD, was a director of the Narcotic Bureau at the time, Somare as prime minister.

Fr. Jan Czuba, when he was the parish priest in Ambunti, (1989-1995) established a lasting relationship with Sir Michael Somare. When Fr Jan became the President of the Divine Word University in Madang, he kept close contact with Sir Michael and his family and it was reciprocated. When Sir Michael was visiting Madang, he would gladly come to the Riwo community for Sunday Mass, invited by Fr. Jan Czuba, who provided pastoral care to that community. Sir Michael and Fr. Jan together commenced significant reforms in the higher education sector. Sir Michael wanted to have the quality education across all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);

hence they introduced amalgamation of small HEIs to a university. Therefore, the St Benedict Teachers' College was amalgamated to DWU, the PNG IPA in Madang, the College of Allied Health Services, followed by St Mary's Nursing College and Kabaleo Teachers' College. In 2006, they introduced an innovative approach to learning, teaching, and research by establishing the Papua New Guinea Academic Research Network that led to the digitalization of the Higher Education Sector in PNG.

Sir Michael was aware of his sickness; thus, two weeks before his passing, both had lunch during which they thanked God for their friendship. By the end of lunch they hugged each other and Sir Michael said to Fr Jan: "Do not worry Father we will soon meet on the other side."

In recent years, Bp Jozef Roszynski, Bishop of the Diocese of Wewak, ministering to the Somare family, was befriended by them. No wonder he stood by them in time of suffering and mourning; he was there at the funeral mass at Sir Hubert Murray Stadium in Port Moresby and in Wewak at Prince Charles Oval and at Kreer Heights, Sir Michael Somare's final resting place.

Sir Michael, being a committed Christian, all through his political career, created space in which he was able meet with men of God who were willing to reach out to him; to minister to him in his responsible role as a head of state and the father of the nation. Even more so, to socialize with him as a brother and the father of the family. Many people have commented that it was in creating space for dialogue, bridging the differences and socializing Sir Michel's humanity was at its best. Many SVD priests and brothers can tell stories about that. 🙏

**"Do not worry Father we will meet soon on the other side"**



Photo above: Bp Jozef Roszynski with Sir Michael Somare, and Lady Veronica



Photo right: Fr. Francesco Sarego SVD, Sir Michael Somare, Fr. Patrick Hogan and Fr. Jan Czuba at the blessing of SVD House in Madang, on the 23 April 2008



# An Outstanding LEADER



**A tribute by Edward P. (Ted) Wolfers**

**Edward Wolfers** presented a tribute at a service held to commemorate the late Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare in Sydney and Canberra.

I first met Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare when I was briefly a visiting lecturer at the Administrative College (then often called 'AdCol') – which was then at 6-Mile – Port Moresby, in 1965. The classes in which we both participated included more or less conventional classroom presentations and discussions on diverse aspects of governance.

As an energetic critic of the colonial order, Michael Somare wrote a number of articles critical of Australian policies and practices in Papua New Guinea. They included articles for the *New Guinea Quarterly*, edited by the late Peter Hastings, for which he used a series of pseudonyms when writing while he was still a public servant.

When he stood for election to the House of Assembly in 1968, a number of expatriates in Wewak and Madang, inspired by the white supremacist regime in what was then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), made clear in various ways that they opposed him. They included expatriates who drove around town with 'Recognise Rhodesia' stickers on their cars. A candidate who operated a small mechanical business in Wewak told people from the Sepik River who came seeking repairs to take their outboard motors to Somare to have them fixed. Michael Somare was nonetheless elected.

While he was opposed both to expatriate racism and dual citizenship, he went on, when the contents of the post-independence *Constitution* were being debated, to urge Members of the House of Assembly considering the requirements for citizenship following independence 'to forget about the colour of their skin.... I urge all members...to forget about their racial differences. If you have been ill-treated once, never mind, forgive those who mistreated you.'

As an observer of his policies and actions, it seems to me that some of Grand Chief Somare's most important achievements have received little recognition. While some required action, others were matters of acceptance.

Thus, soon after assuming office as Chief Minister in 1972, he announced the formation of the Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC). I was privileged to be one of a small team of Permanent Consultants to the CPC.

Unlike precedents in other colonial relationships, the constitution for an independent Papua New



*Photo left above: 2002: Sir Michael Somare and Australian Prime Minister John Howard.*

*Photo left: 2009: Sir Michael Somare and Queen Elizabeth*



Guinea would not be imposed or negotiated over the table, so to say, with the departing colonial power.

The constitution would be legislated and implemented by Papua New Guinea's parliament following widespread consultation with the people. Australian laws would cease to apply unless the National Parliament decided to accept some pieces of legislation. The CPC was charged with consulting the people and recommending Papua New Guinea's independence constitution. It consulted the people by asking questions, not offering options.

In 1980, Prime Minister Somare was faced with – and lost – a vote of no-confidence. Again, in a manner not followed by leaders in quite a few other newly independent countries, Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare accepted defeat and left office. This was another noteworthy, unusual and generally unremarked contribution to Papua New Guinea's constitutional continuity, which has, despite interruptions - the Sandline affair in 1997, in particular – been maintained.

Contributions like Sir Michael's tend quite frequently to be overlooked. However, the result to date is that, among the 190+ independent countries around the world, Papua New Guinea is now one of the 40-50 oldest unbroken constitutional democracies. Not a bad achievement when one reflects on the fears and doubts expressed by many Papua New Guineans and expatriate residents before independence!

In short, accepting a situation can make an important and positive contribution to a key principle of good governance such as respect for and continuity of constitutional arrangements.

Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare was Prime Minister for a total of almost 17 years, longer than anyone else, albeit with other Prime Ministers serving at intervals during the period (the Grand Chief's terms of office as Prime Minister were 1975-1980, 1982-1985, and 2002-2011).

In addition to his political achievements, Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare's personal values help to explain the nationwide respect – and sorrow at his passing – which are being expressed.

He respected his marriage to Lady Veronica. He was a good father. He was

*Photo:*  
2006: Sir Michael Somare and Bill Clinton

a man of firm religious faith. He was a powerful orator, charismatic, and a leader who truly believed in, advocated and worked to uphold the rights and potential of Papua New Guineans. He was committed to both the principles and practices of democracy - a man who accepted loss and understood that policies and practices would not always go as he believed to be right (or, at least, the best possible).

He remembered friends and acquaintances and continued to recognise and welcome them with a cheerful smile (sometimes to their embarrassment when other people were watching).

Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare was a truly humble man. I can recall an occasion when we walked into a room to meet with critics and opponents, who sat with their backs to him and left as he entered. When he was asked how to describe the event to a wider public which regarded the Grand Chief as a respected national leader, he avoided likely negative public reactions to the way in which he had been treated by directing that it be simply announced that the meeting had been adjourned.

Thus, we honour the memory of a truly outstanding, pioneering leader, always faithful to his country, the people he represented, his family, and his friends.

May the example he set continue to inspire the current and future generations of young Papua New Guineans, their neighbours and friends, both at home and abroad. 🇯🇵



# A life embedded in Catholic Faith and Traditions



**GGCSMTS was a devout Catholic Christian. He faithfully lived out his Catholic faith and gave witness to the life of marriage and family, prayer and worship.**

**Paul Harricknen, OL** is a Lawyer and legal adviser to the CBCPNGSI. He is also the President of the Catholic Professionals Society of PNG. Paul hails from Yangoru in East Sepik Province. Paul knows the Great Grand Chief as his Provincial Member of Parliament and through their association as devout members of the Catholic Church.

Great Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare (GGCSMTS) was the founding Chief Minister in 1973, and the founding Prime Minister at Independence on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1975, and he is rightly acclaimed as the Father of the Nation.

He first entered the then House of Assembly under the Australian rule on 16 March 1968. His burial at Kreer Heights home in Wewak on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021, seemed an interesting coincidence. His casket was lowered in his grave at 4.06 pm ending his unbroken public service time, which he established during his reign as Prime Minister for 17 years and 49 years as Member of Parliament for the people of East Sepik Province.

GGCSMTS is hailed for his vision of a united nation of a thousand tribes, cultures and languages. He ensured a home-grown Constitution ushering in and adopting the strength of the noble traditions and Christian principles as the foundation and building blocks for

his young nation. He rallied behind him the best of his men and women at the time in the likes of Fr. John Momis, Bernard Narokobi, Ignatius Kilage, John Kaputin and others to frame the Constitution to found the new nation, Papua New Guinea.

GGCSMTS was a devout Catholic Christian. He faithfully lived out his Catholic faith and gave witness to the life of marriage and family, prayer and worship. His public life and ministry was strengthened and powered by his Christian faith and traditions. He invoked the power and wisdom of both the tradition of his Murik Lakes and the mighty Sepik River and his deep Catholic Christian faith to sustain the 49 years of his unbroken political life and ministry. He also respected and embraced other traditions he associated with such as the tubuan of his birthplace of Matupit in East New Britain. He ensured that the new National Parliament building at Waigani was adorned with the traditional totems, carvings and

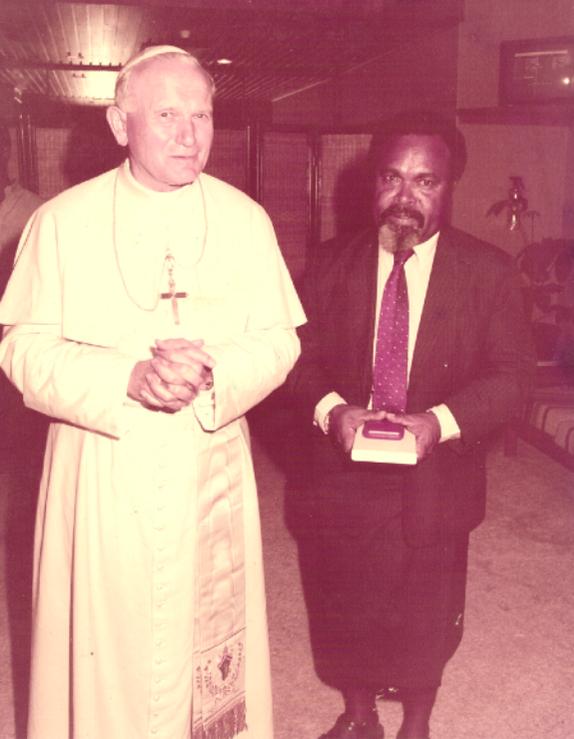


Photo above:  
2006: Pope John Paul II and  
Sir Michael Thomas Somare

**The Great  
Grand Chief  
indeed lived out  
his Catholic  
Christian faith  
and the noble  
Melanesian  
traditions he  
had embraced  
in his life and  
leadership.**

artifacts to depict the thousand tribes he held close to his heart.

GGCSMTS was proud of his people, for he believed that one day he wanted to see his own people lead, govern and manage their own affairs rather than be controlled by colonial masters. He was happy that he lived to see his dream fulfilled, a country now beaming with its own lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, accountants, pilots, drivers ... etc. He proudly accepted patronage of

various social and professional groups and associations to inspire and encourage his country men and women to excel in what they are to do in building the nation.

I recall when we originally called up interested lay Catholic professionals to support the work of the Catholic Bishops and the Church on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2012. He attended the event at Holiday Inn, Port Moresby along with a few Bishops and encouraged us to form what is now the Catholic Professionals Society of PNG. Since then he was a founding member and a lifetime member of the Society.

I also remember in 2015, when under the then Government of Peter O'Neill and House Speaker Theodore Zurenuoc, decision was made to demolish the Parliament House building of all traditional totems, carvings and artifacts and to usher in the King James Version Bible as part of their parliamentary reform project. The House Speaker and a certain

group of Christians orchestrated the move in the belief that the traditional items were evil and were the source of corruption in the country. GGCSMTS and the Catholic Professionals joined forces with the National Cultural Commission to oppose the move and succeeded in halting the destruction. The Great Grand Chief was clearly distressed and saddened by the actions of this group of politicians and pastors who saw fit to viciously attack the national institution he built, and showing disdain for the traditional beliefs and Christian principles adopted under the national Constitution. This no doubt was one incident the GGCSMTS was seen defending the institution and belief system the nation was founded on. The Great Grand Chief indeed lived out his Catholic Christian faith and the noble Melanesian traditions he had embraced in his life and leadership.

The spirit of SANA, the peacemaker, he inherited from his Murik Lake tradition always guided the Great Grand Chief in his life and political ministry.

*"The wisdom of Sana, my grandfather, had been passed on to me together with his strength and fighting spirit. Most important to me is the fact that Sana was the great peacemaker – the man who sat down to eat with his enemies before agreeing to fight them. He could not have passed on better wisdom to guide me in my job as chief minister of Papua New Guinea"* (SANA: An autobiography of Michael Somare, 2010)

Such a statement resonates with the proclamation of Jesus at the start of his public ministry in Luke 4: 18, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has chosen me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people"*.

May the GGCSMTS live on in our hearts and minds, and may his legacy and vision continue to be the source of our strength, wisdom and inspiration for generations to come. 🙏

Photo below:

2018: Sir Michael Somare and Lady Veronica at the blessing of the Catholic Bishops Conference building.





# Catholic contributions to the PNG Constitution



**Dr Vergil Narokobi**, was appointed as a Judge on 19th December 2019. He now serves as the 41<sup>st</sup> judge in the National and Supreme Courts of Papua New Guinea.

**Credit must be given to Somare that he wanted wide consultation with the people for their views on the form of the Constitution and secondly, that it must be a homegrown Constitution.**

It is with great sadness that we mourn the loss of Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare. At the same time, it is also a great opportunity to celebrate his life and contributions to the development of Papua New Guinea.

One interesting fact behind the drafting and eventual adoption of the Constitution was the Catholic Christian faith of some of the key players in the formation of the Constitution. They were Michael Somare, Fr John Momis (as he then was) and Bernard Narokobi. Somare was the Chairman of the Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC), Momis the Deputy and Narokobi as a lawyer, was a permanent consultant to the CPC. Since Somare was occupied with work as the Chief Minister of the territory, the effective chairman of the CPC was Momis.

The first aspect of the Constitution was the manner it was formulated. Credit must be given to Somare that he wanted wide consultation with the

people for their views on the form of the Constitution and secondly, that it must be a homegrown Constitution. In my mind this was the process that enabled the wider population of Papua New Guinea to appreciate the implications of an independent Papua New Guinea. It was in a sense their consent to independence because they were giving their views on the Constitution of an independent Papua New Guinea that they would live under. The wisdom of Somare here cannot be understated.

It was the role of the CPC to consult the people and recommend to Somare a Constitution to bring to the Legislative Assembly to adopt for an independent Papua New Guinea.

The nation owes it to Somare that he did not oppose certain key recommendations of the CPC when it was debated on the floor of the Constituent Assembly. Three of these recommendations were the Preamble, the National Goals and Directive

Principles (NGDP) and Basic Social Obligations (BSO). He however rejected the notion that Papua New Guinea should be a republic, opting instead that the English monarch should be the head of state.

The Preamble, the NGDP and BSO provide a signpost for the future development of the country. They are like the vision of what kind of country Papua New Guinea should aspire to.

Momis and Narokobi were the key proponents of the Preamble, the NGDP and BSO. In Narokobi's book *Life and Leadership in Melanesia*, he provides some background to the incorporation of these ideals. He had urged Momis to have broad ideals in the Constitution so that it would not be a dry legal document for lawyers only but one that captured the aspirations of the people. Narokobi drafted these ideals based on their consultations.

Firstly the Preamble. The Preamble makes a clear statement that Papua New Guinea will now adopt Christian principles as part of its founding ideals. This has provided the inspiration for many to say that Papua New Guinea is a Christian country.

The idea of integral human development is central to Catholic social teaching.

As Momis explains, "Man must not only be the subject of development but also the object of development."

*This found its way into National Goal 1 on integral human development. It finds its roots as Momis further explains in liberation theology.*

*In National Goal 2 on equality and participation, all Papua New Guineans from all regions of the country are encouraged to participate and contribute to the development of the country. This avoids the scourge of regionalism and provincialism.*

*For National Goal 3, Papua New Guinea is required to be self-reliant. We must not be overly dependent on foreign powers.*

*It is also worth noting that National Goal 4 on the environment implores Papua New Guineans to choose the path of sustainable development. Papua New Guinea's sacred and scenic sites must not be destroyed in the name of development. The wisdom of this goal, is reinforced by Pope Francis recent encyclical "Laudato Si."*

*The final National Goal 5 on Papua New Guinea ways encourages us to draw strength from our good customs to inform policy and developmental agendas. Narokobi later draws inspiration from this to write in his celebrated work "The Melanesian Way."*

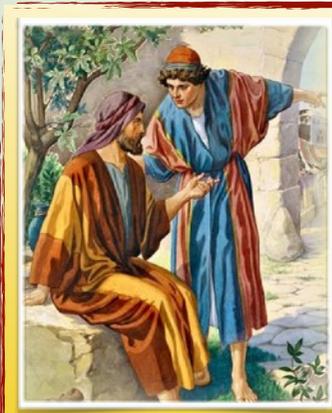
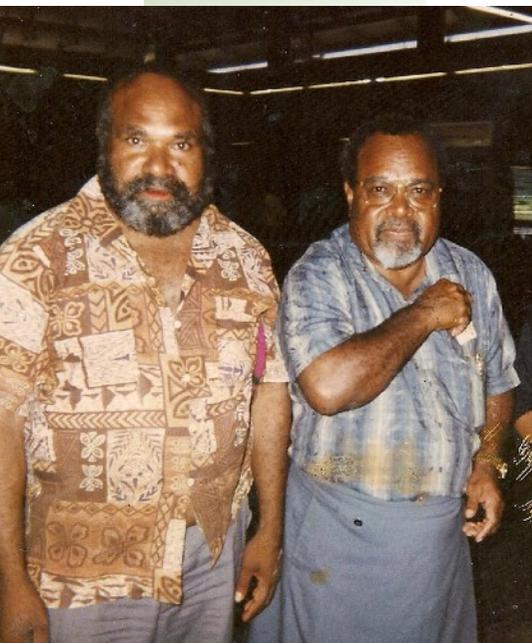
In the BSO, Papua New Guineans are reminded that whilst they have rights, they also have duties to respect other fellow citizens.

We acknowledge Somare for accepting the advice of the CPC, who had two of its members, John Momis and Bernard Narokobi, who were committed Catholics like Somare.

Their advice now forms the basis of the Preamble, the NGDP and BSO. Somare's passing has reminded us of what a great statesman he is, and for his wisdom to lead other founding fathers to enact a Constitution that is inclusive, fair, just and democratic. 🇯🇲

Photo: At that time Somare's Eight (8) point plan had just been announced and adopted by the House of Assembly in 1973. The focus of the plan was on diversifying economic activity to the indigenous people and encouraging women to participate more in the economic and social life of the country. These policies were incorporated into the NGDP.

Bernard Mullul Narokobi and Sir Michael Somare



*Celebrate* **World Communications Day**  
**16th May 2021**  
**"Come and See" (Jn 1:46)**

**Communicating by Encountering People as and where they are.**  
**Gratitude to the professional journalists who:**  
**Go where no one else will go.**  
**See, listen and not draw hasty conclusions.**  
**And are the voice of Truth by the witness of their lived lives.**  
 Please send your World Communications Day collections to SOCOM.



Photo:  
Sepik Province students precessing into the Chapel



**Dr Alfred Tivinarlik**, hails from New Hanover Island in the New Ireland Province. He is a member of the Christian Brothers Congregation, and the Principal of St Peter Chanel Catholic Secondary Teachers' College in Kokopo, ENBP.

It would be presumptuous, and somewhat ludicrous of me to write about a man as renowned as Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare. You, readers, are all better news gatherers and undoubtedly would have a wealthier array of information about him via all news mediums available to us. I admit my inadequacies in that regard. Thus, a tenable position would be to share a collage of personal experiences of the man and some lessons we can learn from him.

### **Chanel College Encounter**

My first encounter with Mr Somare was in 1976, the year after PNG got its independence from Australia. In fact, it was in Chanel College, Ulapia as a 17 year old student when the members of PNG's first parliamentarians visited the college. With him in the middle, Mr Somare, was joined by Julius Chan – then Minister for Finance, in his shorts and long white socks, Fr John Momis, and others in the party. They came specifically to Chanel because it represented the pillar upon which the PNG Constitutions were crafted. A close examination of the Constitutions reveals that it was based on the social teachings of the Catholic Church. I could recall their ambition and agility for progress ... they wanted independence and were committed to make it work.

Not knowing a lot about politics, I, like the rest of the students, stood in awe at the men and we were proud of Somare and his team. Years later when Julius Chan broke off from Somare, I have always thought that that was the beginning of a downward trail for the country.

### **Pitt Street Sydney Encounter**

Twelve years later, the next encounter was in 1987, in Pitt Street in Sydney at the then PNG Consulate office. I was doing a clinical pastoral education course in St Vincent's Hospital. I lived in Burwood and commuted to work every day. It was on a free weekday that my cousin, Dr Paul Pasingan, and I decided to pay a visit to the consulate to catch up with a friend, who was the Consul General, and to check up on any PNG gossips in the Post Courier. In the middle of our meandering around the office, checking on what was new ... the PNG Prime Minister, Mr Michael Somare, walked in to pay a visit. I went across, shook his hands and started a conversation about the happenings in PNG especially about what he was doing about Bougainville. To my surprise, he took a lot of interest in talking to me about it, because when he got told to move on, he responded saying, in a little while. I'm talking to this youngster first." Boy! It got to me ... for him to give time to someone of little significance was something I never would have dreamed

Photo:  
Altar at which the students prayed and shared stories for two weeks



about. A noteworthy lesson for me is ... give time, even to the lowly in your encounters.

### Wewak Encounter

The next collage of my encounters really got cemented in the years I worked in Wewak as the principal of St Benedict's Campus of DWU. There, my friendship with him and the family matured and we got to know each other better. I shared community, with Bro Graeme Leach, a Christian Brother who dreamt and started Callan Services for disabled persons in the country, and Herman Boyek, a Marist Brother who was a lecturer at the college at that time. They shared anecdotes and reminisced about Sir Michael Somare as an individual, Prime Minister, and as a family man. I recall Br Leach telling us once, Lady Veronica, his wife, would, when Somare was away on trips, always check him out if he had gone to Mass on Sundays. She would direct him to go if he had not, not that he needed to be prodded, but such was their relationship.

Two lessons came out from that for me ... that Sir Michael was a staunch family man and, a man who respected and had a place for God amidst life's demands.

I admit there was fire in the man. He tells a story himself of an incident when he was a young man, he was turfed out of a pub supposedly to be for only the white men in what is now Sir Peter Barter's Madang Resort. He reminisced jokingly that he had enticed and dared a friend of his to enter the premises to have a drink there as an equal. After being seated for a minute or two,

the bar tender and the security guard, both white men, roused them out of the pub and nearly threw them out of the premises ... and it was not a pleasant sight as there were abuses from both sides.

Saleu (2021) writes in the National paper on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021, and mentions the Tolais staging a series of protests with slogans saying they want to drink beer like the white man, etc.. And I suppose, that was the thrill young Michael Somare wanted to enjoy when he entered an unauthorised premises for black people to enjoy a drink.

Nevertheless, there was a humility about Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare ... and as he aged, he naturally accrued a lot of wisdom in political ways as this profession became the fame by which he is known. This came to light for me more when he negotiated peace for Bougainville, the relationships he harnessed with other Pacific Island nations. In tumultuous ways, it manifested itself also with his relationships with Australian Prime Ministers.

In all, I live with this memory and will want to remember the good that he taught me by his example. My friend, may you rest in peace. 🇩🇮



## God draws all things for good

Archbishop Douglas Young, Archbishop of Mt Hagen

I share with you the speech I gave (silently) at the state funeral of Sir Michael Thomas Somare.

Destiny has put me here as the last Australian standing, a bookend of a life well spent. On behalf of all like-minded Australians of good will I say

sorry. Sorry for all the insults and the petty racism that you and other Papua New Guineans had to endure under colonialism. Racism is always petty but at the same time it is never just petty. But God draws all things together for good for those who love him and all if this fired you up to work for independence for Papua New Guinea and all of us are better for it.



Photo: Funeral at Sir Hubert Murray Stadium

I am also so grateful that you could distinguish the baby from the bathwater. In ditching colonialism, you did not have to ditch Christianity especially your Catholic faith. In fact, it seems that it was your faith that gave you the strength to ditch colonialism.

Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord. 🇩🇮



Committed to the

# Sacrament of Matrimony

**Cecilia Teliwa** hails from Milne Bay Province. She is the daughter of Timothy Teliwa and Assumpta Mensa. A faithful Catholic and an Executive Committee member of the Catholic Professional Society Inc as its Secretary.



**On one occasion I spotted a rosary in his hand. He could have been praying the rosary on his way to the office.**

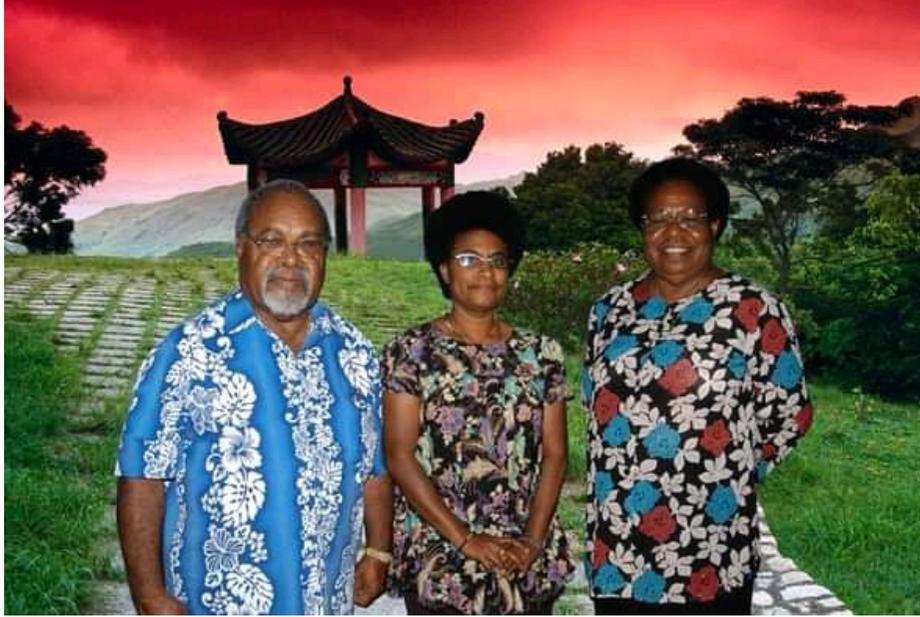
I had the privilege of knowing Great Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare, when I worked as the Executive Assistant to His Excellency, Joshua Kalinoe who is currently the PNG's Ambassador to Brussels and European Union, who was then the Chief Secretary to Government from 2002-2007 in the Department of Prime Minister & National Executive Council.

Grand Chief Sir Michael T Somare was the Prime Minister and was the Minister responsible of that Department. Mr. Kalinoe in his capacity as the Chief Secretary to Government was the Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister. The Office of the Chief Secretary and the Prime Minister's Office were housed on the same floor at Morauta Haus at that time, so we had several opportunities to meet him on the corridors and in his office or our office.

I learned about this man in Primary and Secondary schools and there I was in person serving in his Department and meeting him in person. I was amazed how humble he was. He greeted everyone he met, be it a cleaner or a security guard on duty etc. Titles did not matter to him. He was interested in the person. Whenever he saw me, he would address me as "Pikinini". I will never forget that humble gesture.

I found Sir Michael to be a man of charisma, a Servant Leader and an Influential man. There was something special about this great man that words cannot fully express. On one occasion I spotted a rosary in his hand. He could have been praying the rosary on his way to the office. One of my former colleagues told me that Sir Michael never left his rosary. "When he travelled, he always carried his rosary even on official duties

Photo right:  
Sir Michael Somare, Cecilia Teliwa and Lady Veronica



overseas”, she said.

**Sir Michael Somare respected and knew the importance of the Sacrament of “Matrimony”. As a Catholic, he totally committed his life to Lady Veronica Somare. A faithful lay Catholic.**

In some instances when I knew he was on his way to the office, I would push myself forward in the crowd just to greet him, sometimes the Body guards would stop me from doing that due to his status as the PM but you can’t believe that someone like him would just stop by and would acknowledge my presence. I have never met someone like Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare.

One thing I also appreciated and have respect for Sir Michael was his loyalty and faithfulness to his wife, Lady Veronica Somare whom I addressed as “Mama”. As a faithful Catholic myself, I have never in my entire life in the history of PNG politics that a Prime Minister or a Member of Parliament for that matter be committed to one wife. Sir Michael Somare respected and knew the importance of the Sacrament of “Matrimony”. As a Catholic, he totally committed his life to Lady Veronica Somare. A faithful lay Catholic.

hero, history maker, champion and a great leader yet humble in every way. The life of our Papa is a very significant one. His passing away has brought an end of a new Era. May this generation and the generations to come live his story not by spoken words but by actions and examples. I am so grateful to have known Papa. Thank You Great God for his life and the gift as a person to his family, to us, PNG, the Pacific and the world as a whole who have known him.

I found in this great man the following virtues or values of the Kingdom; peace, unity, humility, sacrifice, faithfulness, self-less love; patience, passion, compassion, gratitude, generosity, empathy, wisdom, kindness, joy, a prayerful man. I can go on and on.

His passing away must be seen as an opportunity to reassess ourselves as individuals and as a nation as God fearing people, respecting one another and working towards unity in our diversity. The leadership and life of Sir Michael’s love portrayed all these good virtues – values of the Kingdom. He leaves behind a lasting legacy which must be remembered and enshrined in the annals of our history and taught throughout the

They say behind a successful Man there is always a Woman. Lady Veronica Somare was always that Woman behind Sir Michael. She was his pillar of strength. Lady Veronica Somare deserves recognition in a form of an “Award” by the government of PNG for her dedicated services and loyalty to Papua New Guinea in her support of Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare.

He is a “Saint” in waiting. “Santo subito” is my concluding remarks for this Champion and I pray that one day he be recognised as a Saint in the Catholic Church because he was a living witness before our eyes and some of us are witnesses of this. 🇩🇪  
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Photo left above: Sir Michael and Lady Veronica  
Photo left: Sir Michael and the entire family.



# Humility a lasting impression

- Margaret Patuai Sepi

The Founding Father of the nation, Late Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare has left imprints everywhere. Those who have had a brief encounter with him would tell their stories in many different ways. As a Teacher and Broadcaster, the Late Grand Chief had a lot of experience to impart to the younger generation.

I was fortunate enough to have three encounters with him. The most recent in 2004, when I had to write a Press Statement on the trend of HIV and AIDS in PNG, and in 2001, when I was in Wewak with a HIV Positive couple to do an awareness program on World AIDS Day. However, the most interesting and outstanding encounter with our Late Papa was in the early 1990s, when he was the Opposition Leader.

I worked with the National Broadcasting Corporation as a Journalist producing Current Issues Programs. The National Government handed down the country's Budget and I was tasked to interview the Opposition Leader on their response to the budget. Being a naive and probably ignorant Journalist, I called the Opposition Leader's office from Studio 91. Fortunately, Sir Michael was in and agreed to do the interview. I started the interview by greeting and thanking him for making time available for the interview.



## Sir Michael Somare, an inspiration and model

Bp Rozario Menezes, Bishop of Lae

Sir Michael was a man who wanted to Unite: He was able to unite people from different clans, different languages and cultures into one people, one nation, and one country. Because he believed in John 17: 20-23 where Jesus prays for unity, "Father let them be one as we are one."

Without love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, we can neither grow spiritually nor glorify God. The glory of God cannot be revealed or shine through us if we live in isolation from each other. We are not to glorify ourselves but to glorify God. Unity removes focus from us and turns the focus towards God. Late Sir Michael knew this truth and therefore he fought hard to create unity and therefore we can proudly say we are one people, one nation, and one country.

Sir Michael had a desire and determination for freedom: in Luke 1:37 we read "there is nothing

*This was how it went:*

**Me:** Good Morning Sir Michael, Honourable Member for East Sepik and Leader of the Opposition. Thank you for making time available for this interview. My name is Margaret Munjin (my Radio ID name back then) Producer of NBC Current Issues Programs. I would like to ask you a few questions on the National Budget that was handed down by the Government yesterday.

**GC:** (clears his throat...)...Moning tru Margaret. Yu blo where?

**Me:** (Shocked...) I am from East Sepik, Sir.

**GC:** East Sepik em bikpela ples tumas. Yu blo wanem hap stret?

**Me:** Hawain, Wewak District, Sir

**GC:** ok, gutpela...na YU MISIS NA YU INGLIS STAP? Mipela ol Sepik save Tok Pisin. Mi laik tok pisin so ol pipel blo mi lo East Sepik mas harim mi tu lo Radio Wewak

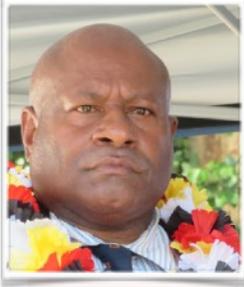
**Me:** (clears throat...) I was looking for a hole in the carpet to bury myself in. Embarrassing moment of truth) Yes, Sir Michael, mitupela ken tok pisin.

Humbled by his words of wisdom, I completely changed my way of conducting interviews. I always ask my interviewees which language they prefer to use. Instead of this proud arrogant Journalist enjoying the limelight, I have become HUMBLE ever since. 🙏

impossible for God." These were the words of Angel Gabriel to Virgin Mary. When Mary had many questions about what was said to her by the Angel, these words of the Angel gave her comfort and confidence to say "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." This is what gave courage and confidence to Grand Chief Sir Michael, that God he believes and worships will never give up on him, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob will make everything possible.

We say PNG is a Christian country, yes it is very good to have a desire to be a Christian country, at the same time if we try hard to become real Christians, practicing Christian values, living according to the Bible, and being faithful to God, we can be proud to belong to a Christian country.

May Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare, our founding father be our inspiration and model. 🙏



# My red t-shirt

As PX 101 opened its doors at the Lae airport domestic terminal on a fine Saturday afternoon in 1989, there he was at the doorway, taking a glimpse of the scenery first before walking down the stairs and heading towards the arrival lounge. At around the same time of this landing, Sana Jnr was deep in his rugby league game, playing the Fullback role for the MPS Panthers A Grade Rugby League team. Earlier on before leaving Unitech campus for the Lae league grounds, Sana told me to wear my Red-coloured T-shirt.

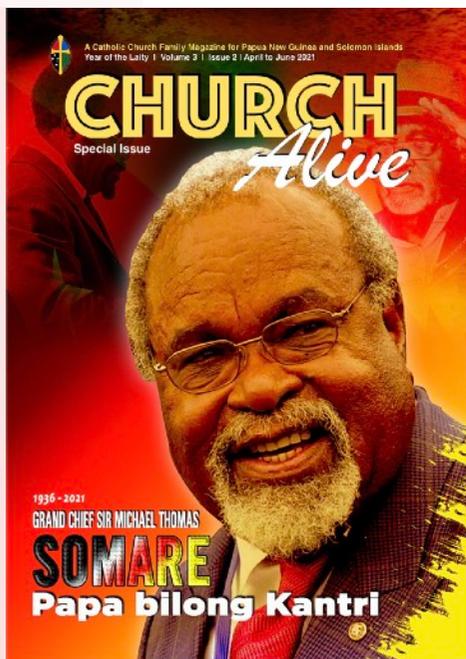
I did not know the reason behind his ploy until later. With his wisdom hat on and his passionate love for the game, Sana knew he will not get to meet Dad, who was transiting to Wewak via Lae. Before going through the Lae Rugby League gates, he threw me the bombshell, "Give me my boots, JR (as he called me) I will go in for the game as our game time is near. Dad is landing in 20 minutes. Please make sure you stand out clearly at the arrivals for him to spot you!" Imagine the immense pressure this directive threw on me. Having read and learnt much about this great man in my earlier schooling, I have

never caught a glimpse of him in person, let alone shaking his hands. And now, this will be my moment of truth! As he walked towards the arrivals lounge, he pointed directly at me and walked towards me. All of a sudden, I became the centre of attention as people were heard asking, "em pikinini blo Somare ah?" After a short exchange of pleasantries, patting me on my back and greeting me so respectfully, he said, "Yutupla Sana laikim sampla mani ah?" He put his hand into his sulu and then he handed me our allowance.

Sana, my Brother; Dad, was truly a Masterpiece! My family and I pass on our utmost and sincerest condolences to you and the greater Somare Clan at this time of mourning. We also stand with you at this time. And Sana, as long as I live, I will treasure your brotherhood and always relay the Red T-shirt story and its memorable and indelible experience. You planned and executed the Red Shirt story to perfection!

Great Grand Chief was truly a "Man of the People". He had time for all, regardless of age, colour, ethnicity and all! 🇩🇪

## Church Alive Cover



Embedded in the colours of Papua New Guinea is the image of Sir Michael Somare by Torsten Blackwood of AFP. May we be inspired.

## Acknowledgement

The Catholic Bishops Conference of PNGSI in this Year of Laity 2020 has as its theme: **Our Catholic Laity: Holy, Formed and sent on Mission.**

Church Alive is happy to dedicate this issue to one of its faithful sons, Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare, Father of Papua New Guinea. He was a committed catholic, faithful husband and loving father.

Articles have flowed in from different corners. My gratitude to all the authors and photographers. Some images have been picked up from different sources. They are used for the good of society and not intended for any commercial purpose. Sincere thanks to WANTOK and to the the SVD congregation who have assisted greatly in this issue. Thanks to MISSIO for their constant support and encouragement.

We believe that this unique special issue will inform, educate and inspire our people to live their Catholic faith with dedication and zeal.

All material for the next issue is to be sent to: **socom@catholic.org.pg** or **ambrose.pereirasdb@gmail.com** on or before **10th May, 2021.**

With gratitude. God bless.  
**Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb, Editor**

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**Solemn Eucharistic celebration  
Entrance procession**  
Photo: Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb



**A 500 strong choir sang at the  
solemn Eucharistic celebration  
at Sir Hubert Murray stadium**  
Photo: Shannon Nox

**Gratitude to Papa Bilong Kantri**  
Photo: Nigel Akuani



**Offertory procession  
depicting the different provinces**  
Photo: Fr Ambrose Pereira



**Mourners at the funeral**  
Photo: Jessica Oata

