



PNG TANGENT

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We wish all our friends a Blessed and Happy Christmas and a Fruitful New Year!

Here an update of news from PNG or news affecting our life and work.

Council of the Congregation 2013

A Council of the Congregation took place in Rome from 16 to 27 October. I represented our PNG Region. It was my task to bring the situation of Mariannahill in PNG to the attention of the Council.

Many missionaries from all over the world are working in PNG, but from the West nearly exclusively old ones. Nowadays here in PNG most missionaries are from India, Philippines, Korea and other Asian countries. Those coming from Africa are also on the increase. This type of shift is also happening in Mariannahill. It becomes even more manifest when we look at the young ones in formation. Our Congregation has at the moment 69 confreres in initial formation, but only one of them is from Europe. The vast majority is from Africa.

Our PNG region has only two local confreres, Deacon Daniel Apas and Fr. Ludwig Teika. Beside them there are two postulants, Alois Gende and Wilfred Salhun who will join the Novitiate in Mariannahill on the 1st of February 2014.

This makes it clear that, if Mariannahill wants to continue its presence in PNG and be something more than a future occasional gap-filler in the Lae diocese, we need a "team" of young African confreres to carry on the work started more than 50 years ago by that other young and enthusiastic team from the Netherlands, and bring fresh winds of renewal to our community here.

The Council of the Congregation was a good opportunity to put the

message at the doorsteps of our African provincials.

In Rome I met two confreres of our PNG Region, Fr. Ludwig Teika and Fr. Matthew Kim. Both are studying at the Angelicum, a Dominican led university, preparing themselves for a specific engagement in the pastoral field.

Celebrating in Lae the Year of Faith with Renewed Spirit

(from an article written by
Fr. Kirby Bagaslao, MJ)

On Nov. 24, 2013, Christ the King Feast day, the Catholic Diocese of Lae celebrated the closing of the "Year of Faith" at the newly-built Catholic Diocesan Hall, St. Mary's Primary School – Eriku, Lae.

Thousands of Catholic faithful gathered in jubilation to mark the closing of the Year of Faith as proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI last October 12, 2012.

The joyful thanksgiving celebration started with the Eucharist presided by **Bishop Christian Blouin, CMM**, Bishop of Lae. Parishioners from Sacred Heart – Aromot, Siassi led the colourful entrance procession of parishes, sub-parishes and spiritual groups with their respective banners and the Year of Faith Cross that has visited all the parishes in the Diocese.



Siassi faithful leading the procession

The ceremony proceeded with the blessing of the new Catholic Diocesan Hall. Bishop Chris thanked the Swiss Province of Mariannahill through **Fr. Arnold Schmitt, CMM** for funding the project and Alva Engineering for the construction of the building.

Expounding on the theme: "Know your faith, live your faith, share your faith and become evangelizers", the Bishop in his homily, encouraged the Catholics of Lae to strengthen their faith especially as families alive in Christ. He also expounded on the topic of *communio* as true believers in Jesus. As a concrete sign of communion, he then acknowledged the presence of **Bishop Giegere Wenge** of the Evangelical Lutheran Church-PNG as well as representatives of other churches who were present during the occasion.



Bishop Chris and Bishop Wenge

One of the highlights of the celebration was the renewal of marriage vows of couples while holding high the Year of Faith Family Cross after which the Bishop and the priests of the Diocese went around to bless the families. The liturgy went on in a really festive mood. A sumptuous meal followed for all the guests while the parishioners gathered together for their lunch.

The afternoon was dedicated to items presentation showcasing cultural dances, actions songs, drama, etc. from the different parishes and communities. Guests from other Christian denominations also gave their speeches challenging the faithful to become one body in Christ regardless of skin color, tribe affiliations, and religious beliefs. It was an afternoon of fun and entertainment especially with the “angelic voices” coming from “heven man na heven meri” choir of Buimo – CIS.

Bishop Chris in his closing remarks expressed his joy seeing his flock gathered together and thanked the preparatory committee, headed by Mr. Mark Sahin for a job well-done.

One of the parishioners commented after the celebration: “It was indeed, a spirit-filled celebration”. With the presence of all clergy, the Lutheran bishop and pastors, religious men and women, and the faithful of the Diocese, in an atmosphere of overwhelming bliss, we take on the challenge to grow in our faith so that we can share it to others as joy-filled witnesses of the risen Christ.

Sister Henriqueta held up

A few days later, on Thursday, the 28th of November around midday, **Sister Henriqueta Muchate, CPS**, was driving the car of the Mercy Health Centre into Kamkumung settlement when she was held up at gunpoint by rascals.

It happened that, when she turned from the main road into the settlement, two youths, crossing the road like crippled people, forced her to slow down on which others jumped from the high grass at the road side, pointing a gun at her and then pulling her out of the car. They took some valuables from her and took off with the car.

A witness, however, who from his car saw it all happen, was able to follow the stolen car and to warn the police. The rascals, seeing that they were followed, abandoned the car, which was then secured by the police.

Thanks God, Sister Henriqueta didn't suffer any physical harm. It took her, however, some time to get the scene out of her dreams.



Sister Henriqueta with youngsters at the Year of Faith celebration

The cleansing of Parliament

On the 6th of December the nation woke up to a surprise. As the newspapers of the day put it, the Speaker of the PNG National Parliament, Theo Zurenuoc, had conceived a new way of fighting corruption in politics, putting the axe into the masks and traditional decorations of Parliament House.

After a first wielding of the axe and in spite of a national outcry he boldly stated: “This week we will continue to pull down more ungodly images and idols in Parliament. There must be no traces of elements of cult and demonic worship in the national parliament of PNG” (Post Courier 6th December).

The front-page of the newspapers of the following days showed the inevitable discussion.

The archbishop of Port Moresby said the obvious: corruption does not lie in the carvings but has its roots in the hearts of the politicians. Cleanse the hearts, not the house!

Ex-Prime Minister and “Father of the Nation” Sir Michael Somare stormed into Parliament House in order to protect in person the national heritage. Allegedly the actual Prime Minister ordered the Speaker to stop immediately the destruction.

But the speaker and the Parliamentary House Committee, which is behind the decision, seem to have a lot of power and the speaker is determined to replace the 4 ton heavy totem-pole in the Grand Hall of parliament by a new one which would be a “national unity pole comprising four layers representing the Word of God, the Constitution, the people and the Covenant.”

The Covenant refers to a celebration which took place in 2007 and in which Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare signed, on the 26th of August, what was called the national covenant. This covenant meant that the God of Israel is now the God of Papua New Guinea, consolidating the notion that PNG is a Christian country. In consequence, the speaker says, all “ungodly images and idols” have to disappear from Parliament.



Even with one eye the spirits are looking sceptical at the debate

No doubt we have entered an interesting debate between faith and culture, state and church, tradition and change. The light coming on Christmas night from the crib may help our citizens to distinguish a clear and helpful path into a harmonious and prosperous future.

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