



PNG TANGET

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Mariannahill House Eriku
P.O. Box 3 Lae 411

ROMAN VISITORS

Two members of the general council in Rome, **Fr. Christophe Eisentraut** and **Fr. Patrick Chongo** arrived in Lae on January 6, 2013. Their visit was limited to ten days only since its main purpose was to hold a consultation with the CMM members and gather information about the state of the group. Even if they would have stayed longer, they would have had little opportunity to visit some other places and stations in the diocese outside the city of Lae. Stormy and rainy weather had disrupted the regular traffic by boat to the Siassi Islands, while the road to the inland stations Wau and Bulolo was gravely damaged and on several stretches washed away by overflowing creeks.

STATE OF CMM IN LAE

At a special provincial chapter meeting of all members with the visitors the present state of the CMM province was analyzed and discussed. The provincial **Fr. Arnold Schmitt** presented a report on the actual situation of the group which has been shrinking recently. Permanent members are the Fathers **Arnold Schmitt**, **Anthony Mulderink**, **Alfonso Voorn**, **Krzysztof Zacharuk** and **Sido van de Werf** who was absent while in the Netherlands for health reasons. Deacon **Daniel Apas** has been transferred to Zambia but is still waiting for his visa. **Bishop Christian Blouin** and **Fr. Frans Lenssen** attended the meeting as observers, the latter being temporarily 'on loan' from the Dutch region. **Fr. Matthew Kim** is absent from Lae for two years study in Rome. There are two postulants who are studying at Bomana and living in the Mariannahill College with Fr. Alfonso Voorn who is the rector and also a lecturer at the Catholic Theological Institute. This small group is facing the challenge of

the presence of Mariannahill in PNG in the future. The dwindling number of vocations in general in PNG and the lack of vocations for Mariannahill in particular put inevitably a question mark to the training of local members for the congregation. Mariannahill PNG has at present only two local confreres and two postulants. The situation was a subject for discussion and resulted in the agreement that the novitiate for the two postulants, due this year, should be postponed. They will first do another year of studies at Bomana

FROM PROVINCE TO REGION

With regard to the diminishing number of members of the province the meeting evaluated the situation and made the suggestion to have the status changed from a province to a region in order to reflect the reality of the situation. Thereupon some weeks later, by decree of the superior general the PNG Province was converted into a Region effective from 02.02.2013 and put under the direct authority of the superior general **Fr. Damian Weber**. After consultation with the members in PNG, **Fr. Alfonso Voorn** was appointed as regional superior representing the superior general in the region.

SR. MAJELLA KAVA FMI

After 12 years of highly appreciated service in the Diocese of Lae, **Sr. Majella Kava FMI** left Lae in order to take up her new ministry in Rabaul. Sr. Majella has been elected superior general at the general chapter of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, a local congregation of religious sisters with headquarters in Rabaul. Before being transferred to Lae Sr. Majella was trained at the Divine Word University in Madang. Her special field of activities was

education and specially the co-ordination of religious education, including religious instructions in primary and high schools and the Sunday schools in the parishes. In this field she will be dearly missed. The FMI Sisters are serving in many parishes and institutions in PNG. We wish her a fruitful ministry as superior general in the service of the Church and her Congregation.

SR. MARCIA KAPUN FMI+

While Sr. Majella was preparing to move to Rabaul she postponed her departure because of the imminent death of one of her Sisters, **Marcia Kapun FMI**. Sr. Marcia was born in Lae in 1973 and had become a member of the FMI Congregation. She was employed as Sister elsewhere in the country. Recently she fell ill and stayed with her parents in Lae/Kamkumun until she was hospitalized at Angau Hospital. She died on 24 February and was buried the next day. After the funeral Mass concelebrated with Bishop Christian Blouin in the St. Michael's parish church she was buried at the small graveyard at St. Joseph's station where she shares a grave with Bishop Henry van Lieshout CMM, Fr. Hubert Hofmans CMM and St. Paul Marie van de Heikant CPS. Several Sisters had come from other Dioceses to be with their companion sister in her last days in the hospital and at the funeral.

COMING AND GOING

Fr. Sido van der Werf went to the Netherlands for health reasons and will return in early March. Meanwhile **Fr. Anthony Mulderink** went on home leave in February. **Fr. Krzysztof Zacharuk** went to Siassi for a couple of weeks of pastoral activities.

Sr. Grace Karinga CPS, a medical doctor from Kenya, arrived as a welcome co-worker in the Clinic of Mercy. The number of CPS Sisters in Lae has risen to 6.

Sr. Henriquetta just returned from home leave in Mozambique.

A temporary co-worker is **Miss Cecilia Gori** from the St. Bruno parish in Rome. She is employed as a midwife in the Gemelli Hospital in Rome and has come for two months practical experience.



CORRUPTION WOES

Dr. Albert Schram, a Dutch citizen with international academic experience, was appointed by the Council of the University of Technology in Lae as its vice-chancellor in January 2012. Shortly after taking office he decided with his colleagues to improve the campus life of the students, the academic quality and the financial situation of the university. Soon he discovered serious financial mismanagement and corrupt dealings by members of the council. For years they had ignored negative reports from external auditors. In 2011, the unaccountable financial management became public. At his first board meeting Dr. Schram discussed these external reports and announced corrective measures related to financial management, accreditation and personnel management. Soon after, panic broke out among the Council members, who had been sitting on the board for years, some for decades. The Chancellor, who was not empowered to do so, tried to sack R. Schram, but after violent protest-demonstrations by the students during which the car of the president was set on fire, he changed his mind. Lectures and students massively supported vice-chancellor Schram. After meetings with the Prime Minister

and the Minister for Higher Education, the Council as well as Dr. Schram were suspended for the time being pending an investigation of the matter by a special team. Meanwhile Dr. Schram had traveled for a short visit to Singapore but upon his return on 8 February he was denied re-entry into PNG and deported to Australia. He was given no chance to say goodbye to his wife who recently had arrived from the Netherlands after her graduation at the University of Maastricht where her husband had been employed previously. He also was given no valid reason for his deportation. The case is still pending. This is only one of the many ugly effects of a deep-rooted corruption in many institutions in PNG.

ISLAM IN PNG

Fr. Franco Zocca SVD, director of the Melanesian Institute had been 14 years in Indonesia before he came to PNG 20 years ago. Coming from this neighbouring country where the great majority of the population is Muslim, he thought there were no Papua New Guinean Muslims. He soon discovered that Islam had arrived in PNG about 15 years ago and visited a group of new Muslim converts who were mostly Simbu people - originally Catholic - who worked on an oil palm plantation near Kimbe. In fact the Islamic Society was registered in 1983 as a permitted religion and from that time on, expatriate Muslims began recruiting locally.

The present situation is that the estimated local Muslim population consists of about 4,000. Islam is growing especially quickly in the Highlands, particularly so in Simbu Province. New converts were coming from places where the people generally became either Catholic or Lutheran at the arrival of Western missionaries and Australian colonizers.

According to the leaders, the reasons why Papua New Guineans were converting to Islam are such as the respectable conduct of Muslims, the prohibition of alcohol and other intoxicating substances, and religious guidelines that give order and direction to the whole life of believers. Islamic beliefs and practices are seen as more compatible than Christianity with traditional Melanesian values

and customs, for examples Islam's acceptance of polygamy, the separation of men and women, avoidance of menstruating women, male supremacy, not walking behind women, and men's wearing of beards and moustaches.

Barriers which local people are facing in becoming Muslim are the importance of pigs in social life and bride price, and modern Western influences on young people. It is not easy to convince modern Melanesian women to wear the traditional Muslim dress for women or men to renounce alcohol and pork. Another stumbling block is the bad name that Muslims have in the media.

Since 2002, there exists a Catholic-Muslim dialogue. For Christian communities in PNG, and especially the Catholic ones; the rise of Islam in PNG raises some important and disturbing questions. Have Christian roots penetrated deeply or is Christianity only a superficial covering? How can we face the challenges presented by the growing presence of Islam among our people? (*Excerpts from cbcpngsi.org*)

THE EVIL OF SORCERY

It happened recently in Mt. Hagen that relatives of a young boy caught a woman whom they suspected of killing the boy. The woman was stripped naked and cruelly tortured with a hot iron rod before she was drenched with petrol and set alight and burned alive on a heap of used tyres in front of a crowd of onlookers. City firemen rushed to the scene to put out the fire but the angry killers and their supporters chased them away. Many of the onlookers, including school children, who crowded around and took photos of the woman being consumed alive by the fire.

United Nations and many foreign embassies have strongly condemned this witch hunting and killings related to sorcery, a belief which is still very alive in certain areas causing widespread fear.

Editor: F. Lenssen. P.O.Box 3 LAE 411

flenssen@mariannahill.nl