



PNG TANGET

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Mariannahill College
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Dear friends of Mariannahill in PNG!

This edition of the Tanget should have reached you around Christmas, as the last one of 2014. Now it is the first edition of 2015. Sorry for the delay! I hope that in the meantime all of you have entered well and filled with hope and courage the New Year!

I started writing this Tanget a week before Christmas when, having left Bomana for a few weeks, I was already in Lae, joining the confreres in their Christmas celebrations and duties. In order to search in old newspapers for some interesting items for the Tanget, I went to St. Mary's, to the coffee room on top of the bookshop.

St. Mary's was built on the edge of the higher terrain of the town which fittingly is called "top town" and which is also the center of town. Towards the South the coffee room offers a panoramic view of the mouth of the Markham River and the whole harbor area of Lae. The first thing that hits the eye is the "container park" at the bottom of the hill. What in former times was the Lae airport is now a gigantic store area for containers, easily a 1000 meters long and 200 meters wide. Behind it lies the industrial area of Lae and the harbor. The harbor has been much in the news lately because of the extension works going on. Lae should become a kind of South

Pacific transit port, a place where containers are transferred from one ship to another. A huge "tidal basin" is being built for that purpose. Beyond the harbor buildings the Huon Gulf appears. The color of the bay is brown as far as the eye sees. We had a few heavy rains these days and a refreshed PNG casts off its dust and dirt into the gulf, no doubt to the delight of the fishes. Beyond the bay the dark mountainous "tail" of the country stretches from Northwest to Southeast. Over the mountain range huge cumulus clouds tower into a deep blue sky.

When I turn my head and look through the opposite window, I am suddenly out of the big open space and looking into the heart of top town, flooded with cars lined up in queue all over, and people thronging on the sidewalks, shopping or listening to street preachers and vendors of magic potions that cure every disease.

Containers on one side and crowds of people engaged in shopping and business on the other side, both views reflect the influence of "development" on PNG. Especially the Liquid Gas Project, having started its production, is supposed to provide the government with a lot of money that could be employed for real progress. And sometimes it happens. Fr. Sido wrote a Christmas letter to some of his

friends. From this letter, with his permission, I quote:

'Also St. Joseph's Tech is in rapid extension and development. In a short time four workshops have been built Ten teacher's flats are being erected on the place where in the sixties we had our 'haus kuk.' We never could have done this. The government has provided St. Joseph's with a good sum of Kinas. The Old Lae Tech has become The National Polytechnicum and the government wants that St. Joseph's becomes Lae Tech with ten different courses. People who have been teaching at St. Joseph's are now most probably perplexed. This is only to show that PNG is at this moment in a true boom and dramatic evolution. In the Southern Highlands they find a huge deposit of liquid gas. Right away international Companies jumped on it to exploit it for PNG. In a rapid tempo complete new townships with all facilities and amenities were built there for the many expats. These mines and townships are the cause of the heavy traffic of all kinds of tankers and trailers passing by on the Markham Road. And even at sea, during the first half of this year, the first shiploads of natural gas left the coast of PNG and were transported to Japan and China.'



Fr. Sido with at the background extension works at St. Joseph's

Yes, there is money in PNG and plenty! Education is now free! You can see now that many adults who have missed out on primary education enroll themselves in Grade One or Two. This month a newspaper published photos of graduation at an elementary school, where parents graduated together with their own children. Even at St. Joseph's we had some men with pot bellies as students and at the business course it were the wives of the instructors who enrolled as first ones.

Things have changed in PNG and not a little bit! Such good times create confidence in the future, especially among parents. Thus we witness as well a population explosion.

The population is growing with 2.5 per cent a year and you easily see it in Lae as well as in rural areas. The population of Lae is now estimated in around 280.000. The population of PNG is now around seven million. In Port Moresby people seek it now in the height and build already flats of 18 stories. This is a bit the background of our working, planning and living condition as expatriate missionaries."

There is indeed a steady and unregistered influx of people into the two bigger towns of the country, Port Moresby and Lae. How can the Church in her important role of a welcoming, supporting and healing community keep up with the changing and increasing demands?

Through infrastructure and qualified personnel, one would say; an infrastructure to be maintained, and personnel to have the necessary skills and tools. It is indeed easy to say so, more difficult it is to provide all of them.

A new infrastructure, in this case a church building, was set up at the Back Road in Lae, where many new people are settling down, among them many Catholics.

Fr. Arnold Schmitt has been moving the project and by now the church is nearly ready.



Fr. Arnold and Sister Henriquetta Muchate, CPS, in the newly constructed Back Road church

But of course, a church building is not enough. The dream goes on following the footsteps of the real Christ, then a primary school, so that children don't have to go far from their homes for their basic education, and - if possible - a little health center! And for all that, ground has to be purchased.

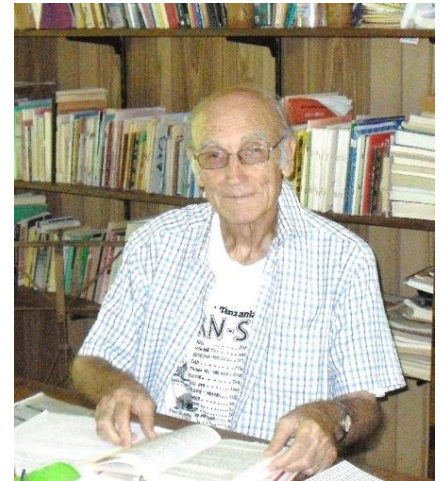


The water tank project for the Back Road church, also finished, thanks to our benefactors.

The other basic need is the one of qualified personnel. Reflecting on it, especially on the need of priests, Fr. Sido writes in his letter mentioned above:

"Ten years ago we were quite confident that we would get enough vocations for the priesthood. Again things have changed. Vocations are going down. At the moment, of the 19 bishops in PNG 8 are indigenous. In some dioceses the majority of the priests are locals. But not everywhere, so we need still missionaries from overseas, certainly in the Diocese of Lae, which at the moment counts

As to the nationality of the expat missionaries in our Diocese we are quite an international mixture: Of the five CPS Sisters, two are from Korea, one from the Netherlands, one from Mozambique and one from Zimbabwe. As to priests, we Mariannahillers are five in the Diocese: two from the Netherlands, one from Canada, the Bishop, one from Germany and one from Poland. The Missionaries of Jesus, a young Congregation from the Philippines, has three priests working in the Diocese. Tomorrow we will come together and celebrate Christmas with a festive lunch. It should bring us together as a team where we can support each other. May the grace of Christmas give us strength and also joy!"



Fr. Anthony Mulderink in his room at St. Joseph's Station, Lae

In St. Mary's everybody was happy to welcome Sister Clemence Klever CPS, when on the 18 of December, she arrived safe from home leave in the Netherlands.

In Rome, Fr. Matthew Kim will add a third year to his studies of Spiritual Theology, focusing on the practical application of it. Also in Rome, Fr. Ludwig Teika finished successfully his first year of post-graduate studies. Our PNG novices Alois Gende and Wilfred Salhun will do their First Profession of Religious Vows in Mariannahill, South Africa, on the 2 of February together with only three indigenous priests.

With other 11 CMM novices from different African countries. May the Lord bless them with joy and fruitful dedication! If everything goes as planned the two PNG confreres will do the rest of their theological studies in preparation for the priesthood in Zambia, "growing in wisdom" and in cross-cultural experience.

With no space for more news, I promise you to be back on your screen before the end of May. God bless!

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