



## CHRISTIAN PEOPLE, YES! CHRISTIAN CONFESSONAL STATE, NO!

*The Catholic Church opposes the Constitutional Amendments to declare Papua New Guinea a Christian Country and State for three reasons.*

*They are poorly written and hardly harmonize with the whole text of the Constitution.*

*They are inspired by a predominantly Jewish rather than a Christian vision.*

*They alter the nature of the State from secular (1975) to confessional and religious (2024).*

### A). THE AMENDMENTS ARE POORLY WRITTEN

Now that the proposed constitutional changes (*in brackets and italicized below*) have been made known in connection with the first parliamentary reading in February 2024, practically all of them appear to be highly problematic, in some cases even from the grammatical and syntactical point of view.

#### 1) Preamble

*Adoption of Constitution.*

**WE, THE PEOPLE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA –**

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

The first underlined text is inconsistent in punctuation. The commas make it seem like there are four persons in the Trinity. It should presumably read: “God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit”.

The second underlined text is incoherent and unclear. With the amendment, the People of Papua New Guinea declare that the Holy Trinity is the source of the people’s power and authorities. There is nothing wrong with such a claim (see Matthew 28:18 and Psalm 8:15) but it contradicts the statement already present in the next section of the Preamble which declares that the Independent State of Papua New Guinea was established “by authority of our inherent right as ancient, free and independent peoples”. In other words, in the 1975 original version of the Constitution, the power and authority of the people is inherent not delegated to them.

The text is also inaccurate since only PNG citizens will have political authority “within the geographical jurisdiction” of the country not “all persons” as stated.

#### 2) Fifth Goal. Papua New Guinean ways

##### Declaratory provision

**We declare our fifth goal to be to achieve development primarily through the use of Papua New Guinean forms of [*Christian principles,*] social, political and economic organization.**

The italicized words constitute the first amendment proposed for the Fifth Goal. It is ungrammatical and unclear. With the amendment, the preposition “of” now has two objects: “principles” and “organization”. So, to be grammatically correct, the amendment should read *Christian principles and*.

Furthermore, only a very intrusive state and government would like to propose or impose a particular interpretation of the genuine meaning of “Christian principles”.

##### Subsection (4)

**and traditional villages and communities to remain as viable units of Papua New Guinean society, and for active steps to be taken to improve their [*Christian,*] cultural, social, economic and ethical quality.**

Indeed, the great majority of PNG villages are made up of Christians of various denominations, but the existence and emergence of non-Christian villages cannot be ignored or ruled out in principle.

### 3) Basic Social Obligations

**WE HEREBY DECLARE** that all persons in our country have the following **basic obligations to themselves and their descendants, to each other, and to the Nation: –**

- (a) to respect, and to act in the spirit of this Constitution; and
  - (b) to recognize that they can fully develop their capabilities and advance their true interests only by active participation in the development of the national community as a whole; and
- [*(ba) to respect, observe and protect Christian Principles.*]**

Does the obligation to observe Christian Principles violate section 45 (particularly but not exclusively 45.3) on the freedom of thought, religion and conscience? “No person is entitled to intervene unsolicited into the religious affairs of a person of a different belief, or to attempt to force his or any religion (or irreligion) on another, by harassment or otherwise.” (45.3)

The supporters of the amendment will now deny it, not being in fact at all in their intentions. But one of the main tasks of a Constitution is that of formally preventing the rising of future, perhaps unexpected but possible acts of discrimination, prevarication and injustice.

### 4) Division 1. – The Nation.

#### Section 1 - Subsection (1)

##### 1. THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

- (1) Papua New Guinea is a sovereign, independent State by the name of the Independent [*and Christian*] State of Papua New Guinea.
- (2) The name of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea and its variants shall be protected by an Act of the Parliament.

With this addition, Papua New Guinea is effectively being turned into a confessional state (a practice largely confined to the past in the Christian world) with Christianity, or possibly one version of it, as the official religion, taking precedence over all other religions and belief systems including the national “combined heritage” and our “noble traditions” (Preamble); not to mention the question of what form of Christian faith will be officially recognized, considering the variety of Christian denominations existing in the country with their different beliefs, faith practices and preferred versions of the Bible.

Furthermore, the name of the State of Papua New Guinea is now changed into “Independent *and Christian* State of Papua New Guinea” but in the rest of the Constitution it maintains the same original name of “Independent State of Papua New Guinea” including Subsection (2) here: an evident editorial inconsistency.

### 5) National Symbols

#### Subsection (1)

**Acts of the Parliament may make provision for and in respect of –**

- (a) a National Flag; and
- [*(aa) the Holy Bible;*]**
- (b) a National Emblem; and
- (c) a National Motto; and
- (d) a National Seal; and
- (e) a National Anthem.

Subsection (2)

**Until such time as other provision is made in accordance with Subsection (1), [the Holy Bible,] the National Flag, National Emblem and National Seal are those that were in use immediately before Independence Day.**

Rather than an amendment, this regarding the Holy Bible is an addition to the list of provisions on National Symbols still expected to be finalized at Independence (16 September 1975) shortly after the approval of the Constitution (15 August 1975) and its coming into effect. The move is confusing and suspicious since the Holy Bible is one and same in time, but the editions and translations are different for several Churches with more than one in use prior to Independence.

## **B). PROGRESSIVE ATTEMPTS AT THE CREATION OF THE CONFSSIONAL STATE**

Successive PNG governments since 2007 have been advised by a few pastors and professionals with fundamentalist and Zionist beliefs.

On 26 August 2007, then Prime Minister Great Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare was, by his own admission, misled into signing a declaration of some sort which this group of pastors claim to be the “new covenant” with the State of Israel. It is a distorted theology which contradicts the fundamental Christian belief and faith where the new and final covenant is now in the person of Jesus Christ.

The same group used the 2007 declaration to convince the then O’Neill government in 2015 to bring in the 400 years old King James Version (KJV) Bible from Indiana, USA, and placed it in the chamber of Parliament.

They then advised the O’Neill government and then Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Theodore Zurenou, for a parliamentary reform program which saw the demolition and destruction of traditional and cultural items, artifacts, totems and carvings in the House, claiming that these items were idolatrous. Fortunately, Sir Michael obtained a permanent court injunction to stop further destruction of the traditional items in the House.

The group went on to advise the O’Neill government to declare 26 August, the date Sir Michael signed the declaration in 2007 to be observed as the National Repentance Day.

The group advised and travelled with Prime Minister James Marape to Israel in October 2023 and opened the PNG Embassy in Jerusalem, breaking from the long-held position of neutrality and respect on the Israeli and Palestinian conflict.

It is the same small and unrepresentative group now pushing the Marape-Rosso Government to declare PNG a Christian state by the proposed Constitutional amendments, which will result in an alteration of the nature of the state created at Independence in 1975.

## **C). THE POSITION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The proposal to add "Christian Principles" to Goal No. 5 (Papua New Guinean Ways) contradicts and undermines the PNG Melanesian identity. This is dangerous and disconcerting. It obscures and even erases our unique Melanesian identity (values) rather than acknowledge, celebrate and perfect it (them) through the Gospel of Christ. Goal No. 5 refers specifically to PNG values, distinct from, though complementary to Christian (or Gospel) values. The proposed changes appear to deny our primordial self-identity. We are proud to be ethnically and culturally Melanesians who have freely embraced the Gospel of Christ and made it our own.

Furthermore, matters of faith and morals cannot be legislated and coerced or forced on people to accept by law. Church and State are two different, though cooperative entities. Faith and morals can only be shown by people’s lives and not by law. While PNG already has the KJV Bible in the House since 2015 and boasts about being over 90% Christian, we see no reduction in corruption, violence, lawlessness, and offensive conduct of parliamentary debate.

We believe and accept that this parliamentary exercise genuinely and sincerely reflects for many Christians a frantic search for social cohesion and national identity in a time of dramatic changes and uncertainty over the future. But the solution does not lie in the rejection of our traditions, the transformation into a confessional state, the promotion of religious fundamentalism, Christian nationalism, or an ideology of that sort.

It rather entails a laborious process of education and discernment, in national harmony and unity, of what is best from the cultures of our ancestors, the Christian values introduced by the missionaries and the positivity that the modern world can offer to build the robust social, cultural and spiritual profile of the Papua New Guinean of the third millennium; a citizen who acts out of freedom and personal responsibility, not within the dictates of a predetermined ideological frame.

Fraternally,

+ **Sir John Cardinal Ribat, MSC, KBE**  
Archbishop of Port Moresby  
Chairman of PNG Council of Churches

+ **Bishop Otto Separy, DD**  
Bishop of Bereina  
President, Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG and Solomon Islands

**Atty. Paul Harricknen, OL**  
President, Catholic Professionals Society of Papua New Guinea

## **Three reasons against the Constitutional amendments**

*The Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Professionals Society of Papua New Guinea reiterate their opposition to the Constitutional amendments presented to Parliament on first reading in February 2024 to declare PNG a Christian Country and a Christian State.*

*The first reason for the disagreement was unexpected till the changes were made public. The amendments in fact are poorly written, inconsistent in punctuation, at times challenging from the grammatical and syntactical point of view. For the sake of clarity, some should at least be re-written before being put forward for approval. They also hardly harmonize with the whole text of the Constitution which was conceived and formulated for a different type of State and government.*

*Here in fact comes the second reason of dissent since Papua New Guinea was born in 1975 as a secular State. It means that Churches and Religions autonomously regulate themselves within the democratic process and the general legislation of the State. Church and State cooperate but are different entities. The PNG Constitution of 1975 declares that the new independent country honours, preserves and will pass on to the new generations “our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now” (Preamble). It stops there. The founding fathers chose not to make Christianity the religion of the State.*

*Opposite to the secular State is the confessional State. There were many confessional States in the past and there are still now; especially Muslim, but also one Jewish (Israel), and several Christian including England, where the King is the Head of the Anglican Church. Almost all the confessional States now include, accept, or frequently just tolerate religious minorities. The members of those communities do not occupy the highest positions of the State. In England, for example, the Prime Minister or the Chief of the Army, may not be Anglican; but never the King or the Queen will belong to a different religion or Christian denomination. Muslim and Jewish confessional States are even less lenient. Only members of the official religion occupy not only the highest positions of the State and the government but also of the judiciary and the army.*

*The confessional State by its nature effectively creates second class citizens. It is true that this is unlikely to be in the mind of the PNG Members of Parliament voting for the proposed amendments, but in so doing they effectively open the doors for this type of development at any time in the future. The Catholic Church considers obsolete, inadequate, and even dangerous any drift to the confessional State solution and model. Therefore, it opposes it.*

*The third point and reason of dissent by the Catholic Church is that the rationale behind the amendments appears to be inspired more by a Jewish and even Zionist vision rather than an exclusive Christian prospective. Without ignoring the Jewish heritage, Christians would now preferably refer to the “God and the Father of the Lord Jesus” (2 Cor 11:31) than to the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”. Several Christian denominations and Christian leaders in PNG instead appear to pursue beliefs and practices that are more in tune with the Old Testament and the Jewish traditions than the new and final covenant in Jesus Christ and the teachings of the New Testament.*

*The fact that the proposed amendments will not threaten religious freedom is what the PNG government and members of parliament now say and almost certainly believe. But in its new version, the Constitution will say the opposite. And on that basis successive governments may be encouraged to take things to a higher level especially if influenced by religious fundamentalists. The Constitution is made to promote and to prevent. So far it has prevented religious authoritarianism in Papua New Guinea. By the time the amendments are in force, it will technically allow it. And some quarters will actively promote it.*

*We wish our people and our country to be strongly and genuinely Christian; but that the State remains secular and only concerned with the temporal wellbeing of our citizens as our founding fathers wanted it in 1975. The religious domain belongs to the Churches.*

**Catholic Bishops of Papua New Guinea  
Catholic Professionals Society of Papua New Guinea**

-Devin Watkins

## Pope to youth in Venice: Get off your phones and pay attention to others

Pope Francis met on Sunday morning with young people in Venice in the square in front of the Basilica of St. Mary of Good Health.

The encounter marked the third event of his one-day pastoral visit to the northern Italian city for the Venice Art Biennale.

Speaking to young people, the Pope recalled that we have all received the great gift of being God's beloved children and are therefore called to share His joy with others.

"We are here today," he said, "to rediscover in the Lord the beauty that we are and to rejoice in the name of Jesus, a youthful God who loves young people and always surprises us."

He reflected on two verbs that characterize the Blessed Virgin Mary's action as soon as she heard she would become the Mother of God: "She arose and went."

**God sees us as children to lift up:** "Arise," said Pope Francis to young people in Venice. "Get up from the ground, because we are made for Heaven. Rise from sadness to lift your gaze upward. Rise to stand in front of life, not to sit on the couch."

The first thing each of us should do when we wake up each morning, he added, is to thank God for the gift of our lives by saying a little prayer: "My God, thank you for life. My God, make me fall in love with my life. My God, You are my life."

The Pope recognized that young people must fight an "oppressive inertia" that turns our world into shades of gray.

"May we allow the Lord to take us by the hand, since He never disappoints those who trust in Him, but always lifts up and forgives," said Pope Francis.

Even when we fall or make mistakes, he added, God is there to pick us up as a Father, since He only sees us as "children to lift up, not as evildoers to punish."

**Look at others, not at your smartphone:** After we have arisen from our slumber or sin, said the Pope, we must "remain" in Jesus through the virtue of perseverance.

Rather than living on quick emotions and momentary satisfaction, Christians are called to persevere together in faith and love by praying in community at Mass.

"You might say, 'But all around me, everyone is on their own with their cell phone, glued to social media and video games,'" said Pope Francis. "Yet, you must fearlessly go against the current: take life into your hands, get involved; turn off the TV and open the Gospel; get off your cell phone and encounter people!"

Like the gondolas that ply the canals of Venice, young people should row against the current by letting God help them. "Rowing requires regularity," said the Pope. "But perseverance brings rewards, even if the path is difficult."

**We are a gift for others:** Pope Francis then turned to the second verb that describes Mary: "go."

"If rising is welcoming oneself as a gift, going means making oneself a gift," he said. "If life is a gift, I am called to live by giving myself for others."

The Pope invited young people gathered in Venice to embrace God's call to participate in His creation.

"Creation invites us to be creators of beauty ourselves, to create something that did not exist before," he said. "Life asks to be given, not managed; we must break out of the hypnotic world of social media that numbs the soul."

**Paint the streets of life with the Gospel:** In conclusion, Pope Francis urged young people to create a simple prayer from the heart and offer a "gesture of love to someone who cannot reciprocate."

"Open your heart to God, thank Him, and embrace the beauty that you are; fall in love with your life," he concluded. "Then go! Go out, and walk together with others; look for those who are alone, color the world with your creativity, and paint the streets of life with the Gospel. Arise and go."



Pope Francis speaks to young people in Venice.

## 58th World Day of Communications, Ascension Sunday, May 12, 2024

- Sr Daisy Anne Lisania Augustine MSC Secretary for Social Communication



The Decree *Inter Mirifica* introduced a "World Day of Communication" (no.18), "on which the faithful should be reminded of their duties in this domain". They are asked not only to pray for the apostolate but also to contribute financially. 'This World Day of Communication' is the only day especially recommended by the Vatican Council, and it was observed annually since May 6, 1967. The messages of the Pope for these days must be considered as contributions to the Church's thinking on different aspects of social communication". Every year, the World Communications Day has a special theme.

The Church and Social Communications was the first theme of the World Communications Day. In setting it up on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May 1967, less than two years after the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI, knowing that the Church is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history, wanted to draw attention to the communications media and the enormous power they have for cultural transformation.

The opening of the message of the First World Communication Day states;

*We address you, dear brothers and sons, as World Communications Day, which will be held for the first time on Sunday, Seventh of May, approaches.*

*The Church, realizing "that she is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history" wishes by means of this initiative, proposed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, to draw the attention of her children and of all men of good will to the vast and complex phenomenon of the modern means of social communication, such as the press, motion pictures, radio and television, which form one of the most characteristic notes of modern civilization.*

*Thanks to these wonderful techniques, man's social life has taken on new dimensions: time and space have been conquered, and man has become as it were a citizen of the world, sharing in and witnessing the most remote events and the vicissitudes of the whole human race. As the Council has said, "we can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well"... (WCD, 1967)*

This year as a norm on 24 January 2024, on the liturgical memorial of Saint Francis de Sales, patron of journalists and communicators, Pope Francis announced the Message for the 58<sup>th</sup> World Day of Social Communications (WDSC), which this year is celebrated in many countries on 12 May:

The theme: *Artificial intelligence and wisdom of heart: towards a fully human communication.*

Pope Francis shares about the gift of human creativity while also stressing the need for human discernment and vigilance in not overstepping the realms of God, our Creator.

"The development of systems of artificial intelligence, to which I devoted my recent Message for the World Day of Peace, is radically affecting the world of information and communication, and through it, certain foundations of life in society. These changes affect everyone, not merely professionals in those fields. The rapid spread of astonishing innovations, whose workings and potential are beyond the ability of most of us to understand and appreciate, has proven both exciting and disorienting. This leads inevitably to deeper questions about the nature of human beings, our distinctiveness and the future of the species homo sapiens in the age of artificial intelligence. How can we remain fully human and guide this cultural transformation to serve a good purpose?"

"Only together can we increase our capacity for discernment and vigilance and for seeing things in the light of their fulfilment. Lest our humanity lose its bearings, let us seek the wisdom that was present before all things (cf. Sir 1:4): it will help us also to put systems of artificial intelligence at the service of a fully human communication." (WCD 2024)

## Catholic Bishops Conference: Pope's visit confirmed

- Donovan Pintol

**Gordons, Port Moresby:** The Pope's visit is now confirmed as per the Annual General Meeting press conference that was held on Thursday the 18th of April.

The panellists representing the Bishops in the press conference were the Bishop of Bereina, and the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands President Otto Separy, Bishop of Vanimo Francis Meli, Bishop of Lae Rozario Menezes and His Eminence, Sir John Cardinal Ribat MSC from the Port Moresby Archdiocese.

Addressing the press as the first panellist was Bishop Otto Separy, who told them that with the long-standing rumour and prayers for the Pope's Visit to PNG, the Vatican has released an official answer for the visit on the 12th of April.

"The Pope is now confirmed to be coming to Papua New Guinea", said Bishop Otto. "His journey will start on the 6<sup>th</sup> and end on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September this year".

Adding more to his official statement, Bishop Otto also highlighted that the Pope's visit will be a special visit as his Holiness will be coming for both a "State Visit" and "as a Pastoral leader and the head of the Catholic Church".



Panelists from left to right: His Eminence John Cardinal Ribat MSC, Bp Rozario Menezes SMM, Bp Otto Separy and Bp Francis Meli before the press conference.

Giving now the official locations within Papua New Guinea for the Pope's visit to be "Port Moresby and Vanimo", as per Bishop Otto.

Breaking it down for the state visit into tentative programs and schedule for the 3 days, Bishop Rozario as second panellist told the press that the Pope will be arriving in Port Moresby on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September from Jakarta, Indonesia.

For as per the visit schedule from the Vatican, the Pope will be coming to PNG after visiting Indonesia, then to East Timor, and then Singapore before going back to Rome.

Vanimo is one of these still developing places in PNG that he would like to visit.

And, on other hand, the Pope's visit to the place is for him to have a see for himself the first-hand work of evangelization of the missionaries in Vanimo.

His Eminence Sir John Cardinal Ribat who is the shepherd and administrator of the hosting Archdiocese as the final panellist told the press that it is of grave respect and privilege for the Pope to include Papua New Guinea in his visits.

For as per known, the Pope is in his 80s and not in good health condition but yet decided to travel from one side of the globe to PNG.

Cardinal Ribat concluded by asking the Catholic faithful and people of goodwill to keep His Holiness in their prayers for him to have good health and a successful Apostolic Journey without harm.

# Catholic Bishops Conference of PNGSI conclude 65th Annual General Meeting Successfully

- Jessica Oata

**Gordons, Port Moresby:** The Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands successfully concluded their 65th Annual General Meeting on Friday April 19th, 2024.

Held from April 9th – 19th at the Catholic Bishops Conference in Gordons, Port Moresby, this year's AGM had as the theme: *Bring children to Jesus. Promotion of vocations among children and young people.*

In attendance were 21 Bishops from the 22 Dioceses in PNG and SI and one Diocesan Administrator.

The AGM was officially opened with a dedication mass led by the CBC liturgy group with the assistance of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC) community in Gerehu. The main celebrant was Most Reverend Bishop Dariusz Kaluza MSF from Bougainville Diocese. Joining him as con-celebrants were his Grace Archbishop Christopher Cardone OP from Honiara Archdiocese and CBC PNGSI President Most Reverend Bishop Otto Separy from Bereina Diocese.

Bishop Kaluza highlighted the Synod on Synodality in his homily stating that he is very pleased with the synodal process in the local church of PNG and SI.

Plenaries for the two-weeks AGM included intense sessions by guest facilitators, meetings and reports from:

- the CBC President
- the Solomon Islands
- the CBC General Secretary
- the Secretaries of the different Commissions of CBC
- the Chairmen of Committees and finance,



2024 Annual General Meeting group photo of the Bishops with the Secretary of the Nunciature Mons. Federico Boni (seated between Bp Otto Separy and His Eminence John Cardinal Ribat MSC).

the Secretary of the Nunciature's address and the other agenda concerning the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

During the course of the AGM, the Bishops had the opportunity to do their medical check-up to know their health status.

As custom, the Bishops also visited the Holy Spirit Seminary to spend time with the seminarians after a well animated Eucharistic celebration that had Archbishop Douglas Young SVD from Mt Hagen Archdiocese as the main celebrant.

The Bishops, through CBC, also hosted a dinner fundraiser to support the Catholic Theological Institute in its drive to raise funds to renovate the aging facilities as well as assist towards its 25 Silver Jubilee, 2025.

The Press Conference to officially update the Catholic faithful of PNGSI and the general public on the progress and preparation of the Holy Father's visit to PNG was the highlight of the AGM. Speaking as panelists during the Press Conference was CBC President Most Reverend Bishop Otto Separy from

Bereina Diocese, Chairperson of the Papal Visit Committee Most Reverend Bishop Rozario Menezes SMM from Lae Diocese, Most Reverend Bishop Francis Meli from Vanimo Diocese and His Eminence John Cardinal Ribat MSC from the Port Moresby Archdiocese.

Sentiments of joy were shared by the Catholic faithful after the Bishops outlined the tentative program during the Press Conference as they had been praying in anticipation for confirmation to come from the Holy See after one of the daily newspapers ran a story earlier this year on the Holy Father's intention to visit PNG.

The AGM concluded with a thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration animated by the CBC staff with colorful processions again with the assistance of the MSC Sisters. Bishop Otto Separy was the main celebrant with Bishop Rozario Menezes SMM and His Eminence John Cardinal Ribat MSC as the con-celebrants.

Bishop Separy reflected on the Gospel for the day on John 6: 52-59 on Jesus being the *Bread of Life* and encouraged everyone to have a deep spiritual and personal relationship with God through receiving Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

"When we do not receive Holy Communion, we become spiritually malnourished. The Eucharist nourishes our spiritual being and when we are nourished, so is our relationship with God".

Before the final blessing, Bishop Rozario and Bishop Otto thanked all those who made the 65th AGM a success – the CBC Secretariat, the staff of CBC especially the hospitality team, all the benefactors and the Catholic faithful and people of goodwill for their continuous prayers and support.

The 66th AGM will be held in Madang next year, 2025.

## Bishop Rolando Santos CM visits Woodlark Island.

-Seminarian Christian Agomuo

**Alotau:** On April 4, 2024, history was repeated as His Lordship Most Rev. Rolando C. Santos CM and the Milne Bay Provincial Health Authority (MBPHA) visited the Island of Woodlark for a canonical visit to the school and inspection of the newly built Aid post for Kulumadau community.

The Aid post and the visit of the Bishop and the MBPHA to Kulumadau in Woodlark islands came about as a result of the request made by the people to the Bishop during his last visit few years ago, on the need to get an aid post to assist in their medical needs.

The Bishop was accompanied by Sr. Vimala Francis MSI, Catholic Education Secretary, Sr. Normita Rosario MSI, Catholic Health Secretary, Mr James Tomiyavau - Director Caritas, Seminarian Christian Agomuo from the Social Communications Desk.

Members from the Milne Bay Provincial Health Authority were led by Dr. Noel Yaubih, Board Member, Mr. Bill Peter, the Architect, Mr. Phil Tabua, Deputy director policy and Mr. Issac Jonathan Board Secretary for Milne Bay Provincial Health Authority

During this visit, Bp. Rolando was received greatly by the Catholic Community of Woodlark led by their administrator Rev. Fr. Homero CM.

A Eucharistic Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated at the Kulumadau Primary School Compound. In attendance to the Mass of thanksgiving were the staff and teachers of Kulumadau Primary and Junior High School, Woodlark Catholic Community, other Christian faithfuls from the United Church, SDA, CRC Churches and the hosts - students and pupils of Kulumadau primary and Junior High School.

The event also featured a pilgrimage visit to the site where blessed John Mazzucconi was Martyred at Guasopa and the Bishop celebrated a mass of Thanksgiving at the beach of Guasopa island in honor of Blessed John Mazzucconi.



Group picture of the stakeholders in front of the newly built aid post.

## Meet your Bishop: Auxiliary Bishop Justin Ain Soongie (Wabag Diocese)

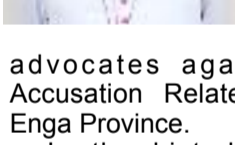
- Jessica Oata



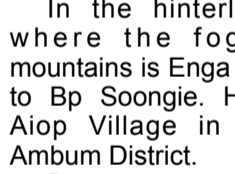
In this issue, he had to withdraw from Gr. 8 and years after succeeding him as the we feature did not continue thereafter until he Parish Priest.



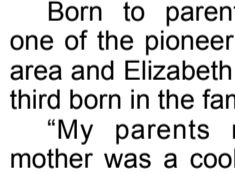
Auxiliary joined the Charity Brothers After 6 years of Priestly Bishop Justin Formation at Fatima, Banz, Jiwaka Ministry, he went for 3 years of Ain Soongie in 1993. He then completed his Post Graduate studies in Rome from the high school through Distance and got his Licentiate in Moral Diocese of Education. Theology at the Urbaniana Pontifical University in 2014.



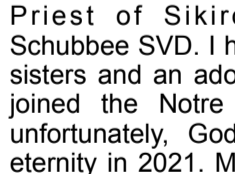
Wabag, one of In 1996 he completed his two Pontifical University in 2014. the outstanding years of Novitiate with the Charity "Upon returning, I was engaged advocates against Sorcery Brothers. It was also in that same as a visiting lecturer at CTI, Accusation Related Violence in year he found inspiration to join Bomana and then at Good Enga Province. priesthood after the death of a Shepherd Seminary for a few



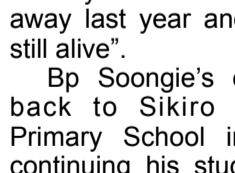
In the hinterlands of PNG local priest from Wabag, Late Fr years until my appointment on where the fog meets the Lawrence Kambao. June 15, 2021 and then my mountains is Enga Province, home "I consulted with the brothers consecration as Auxiliary Bishop of to Bp Soongie. He comes from and wrote to the Diocesan Wabag on September 2, 2021".



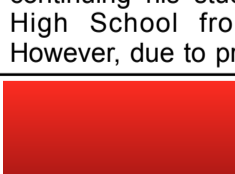
Aiop Village in the Kompiam Vocation Director of Wabag at that In his role as the Auxiliary Ambum District. time who was Fr Arnold Orowae, Bishop, he is supporting Bp Arnold Orowae fulfil his vision and mission for the Diocese.



Born to parents Joseph Ain, the current Bishop of Wabag and Orowae fulfil his vision and mission one of the pioneer teachers in the was advised to give it a try". for the Diocese. area and Elizabeth Angui, he is the He entered Good Shepherd When asked what brings him third born in the family. Seminary, Fatima from 1997-1999 joy in his vocation, this is what he



"My parents met when my and completed his Religious had to say: "Being called to be a mother was a cook for the Parish Studies. He did his pastoral year priest and then a Bishop is Priest of Sikiro Fr George and proceeded to Bomana for undeserved and solely gratuitous. Schubbee SVD. I have 3 biological Theology and graduated in 2004, There is satisfaction and joy to see sisters and an adopted sister who he was also ordained deacon the people make progress in life, joined the Notre Dame Sisters, same year in St Peter Chanel especially when peace is restored to fighting communities, victims of unfortunately, God called her to Parish, Erima. to torture and abuse being away last year and my mother is May 11, 2005 in his home Parish in reintegrated and leading their still alive". Sikiro by the first Bishop of Wabag, normal lives".



Bp Soongie's education goes Bishop Emeritus Herman Raich Bp Soongie hopes that SARV back to Sikiro Sacred Heart SVD and was posted to Kandep, will be eliminated in Enga one day Primary School in 1982 before Mang and Mariant Parishes as and is urging young people to go continuing his studies at Anditale assistant Parish Priest to Fr Levi to church, value their education High School from 1988-1989. SVD and remained there for 6 and toil the land. However, due to prolonged illness,

## The Catholic Reporter Team

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

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