



'To Bear Witness to the Light' - Jn 1:7

The Catholic Reporter

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- Thaddeus Jones

Pope: May Advent awaken us to God's presence in our daily lives

On the first Sunday of Advent, Pope Francis calls on us to "awaken from our slumber" and to always be aware of the presence of God and to welcome Him in our daily lives.

Welcoming pilgrims in Saint Peter's Square on the first Sunday of Advent, Pope Francis recalled the Gospel saying that reminds us that the Lord is coming to be with us, marking the "foundation of our hope," a fact that should give us consolation even in the most difficult times of our lives.

The Lord close to us

The Pope pointed out that the Lord always visits us in our lives, "makes Himself close, and will return at the end of time to welcome us in His embrace." But we naturally ask ourselves, how will the Lord come to visit us and how will we recognize and welcome Him?

The Lord visiting us

The first question the Pope asked requires us to reflect more deeply, as we often hear the Lord is present in our daily lives, accompanying us in our journey. This reality may get lost at times, he observed, as we become "distracted" by the many concrete aspects of our daily lives; or perhaps we only look for spectacular and miraculous signs of the Lord's presence. The Pope pointed out how Jesus in today's Gospel reminded His listeners that God will come when we least expect it and in our normal, everyday lives, as in "the days of Noah."



God's presence in our daily lives

The Pope underscored that "God conceals Himself in the most common and ordinary situations in our life," and we need to be constantly aware of this reality, not awaiting extraordinary events. This can be when we face someone in need, a chance encounter, or even in what might seem quiet or dull moments of daily life. "It is right there that we find the Lord, who calls to us, speaks to us, and inspires our actions."

Recognizing and welcoming the Lord

The Pope said the second question regards how we can recognize and welcome the Lord.

"We must be awake, alert, vigilant. Jesus warns us: there is the danger of not realizing His coming and being unprepared for His visit. I have recalled on other occasions what Saint."

Church taking strategic action on SARV

- Caritas PNG Advocacy Desk



Mt Hagen: The catholic church in the highlands region is taking a strategic approach towards addressing Sorcery Accusation Related Violence (SARV) in the Highlands provinces.

A one-day regional planning workshop was held at the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen on November 9 attended by the Archbishop of Mt. Hagen Bishop Douglas Young, Assistant deputy Bishop for Caritas PNG, and Auxiliary Bishop of Wabag, Bishop Justin Soongie, Bishop of Kundiawa Diocese Paul Sundu, Diocesan priests, House of hope Mendi, Sr. Lorena Jenal, Caritas coordinators and family life coordinators from the four highlands Dioceses. The highlands team was joined by officers from the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNGSI from Port Moresby.

This was the first of its kind for the church that has been at the forefront of the SARV response to plan collectively as a region on SARV.

In recent times, the Diocese of Wabag and Mendi has battled SARV alone without much support and involvement of sister Dioceses in the Highlands region, who reported fewer SARV cases.

Archbishop Douglas Young in his opening remarks said the church in the highlands region has the privilege to operate and plan together as a region

given accessibility by road, however, the privilege comes with great responsibility.

"While we have this opportunity, we should use it, more so in a way that we guide other regions who may not be able to plan together like this, that we are a structured church, and we are decentralized".

Bishop Douglas reiterated that planning in regions in a way promotes subsidiarity by and through the church.

"In our Dioceses, we have things that are of common interest to the region where regional planning can be effective, more efficient, more powerful, and long-lasting.

Things that can be done at the lower level should be done at the lower level, not in Waigani or away. Families should be able to decide for themselves. Christian communities should be able to make decisions for themselves. These are levels of functionality that can improve the spirit of cooperation", Bishop Douglas reiterated.

The one-day workshop includes sharing stories and experiences of SARV response and mapping out resources and referral pathways. The workshop concluded with a draft regional 5-year strategic SARV response plan for the church in the highlands region for 2023- 2027.

The 5-year plan once finalized and approved, will then be adopted by respective Dioceses into their Pastoral plans and calendar activities, and implemented by respective Bishops, priests, and church workers including Diocesan Caritas coordinators.

Christmas Greetings!

Wishing you and your families a
Joyful Christmas.
May the Light of Christ Child shine
on you and your families
Have a **Prosperous New Year 2023**

IN THIS ISSUE:

1. Pope: May advent awaken us to God's presence in our daily lives; Church taking strategic action on SARV
2. 136th ICMC Governing Committee Meeting; Coupe Safe House provides Hope for Women in ENB;
3. Neglected seafarers; Graduation of 224 students at DBTS, Gabutu; 15th Episcopal Anniversary and visit to Parishes;
4. Second Marian Dogma: The Assumption in the Magisterium; The Social Media Revolution; Media Statement; News from Gizo; DMI Sisters

136th ICMC Governing Committee meeting



L-R: Rev. Fr. Fabio Baggio, cs, Undersecretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Mr. Jason Siwat, Governing Committee member representing the Oceania region, and Msgr. Robert J. Vitillo, ICMC Secretary General. Photo courtesy of ICMC Communications

Italy, Rome: The 136th International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) meeting of the Governing Committee was held on the 15th-16th of November 2022, in Rome, Italy.

The Governing Committee meeting was the first of such gatherings since the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Governing Committee is comprised of 14 members representing the episcopal conferences of Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North Africa, North America and Oceania. Representing the Oceania region, Mr. Jason Siwat, from the Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG and Solomon Islands Desk for Migrants and Refugees (CBCPNGSI M&R) attended this meeting in person.

The attendance by Mr. Siwat was significant for three reasons. Firstly, it was an opportunity for Mr. Siwat to meet in person with high level staff of the ICMC. Mr. Siwat took advantage of this opportunity to speak about firstly the dire situation of the migrants and refugee situation in Papua New Guinea. Secondly, it was important for someone from the Pacific Island countries to be involved in this high-level meeting of the ICMC. Coming from such a background, Mr. Siwat brought a grassroots perspective to the discussion and spoke of the realities of the climate induced displacement in the Pacific. In presenting his report to the Governing Committee, he also highlighted the limited attention by the ICMC itself to this region so far. Thirdly, the

meeting was a great opportunity to create awareness about the need for supporting the work of the M&R Desk in PNG, and also in Solomon Islands in the near future. During the meeting the Governing Committee approved the 2023 ICMC budget, appointed counsellors and elected officers (vice president, secretary, and interim treasurer), appointed the interim ICMC Finance Audit Committee, accepted the 2021 independent audit report and discussed regional reports. The Strategic Framework and Work Plan 2022-2026 outlines three main strategic directions; *Serving More People on the Move, Advocating for Rights and Dignity, and Network Building*.

ICMC is a Catholic-inspired NGO working to provide assistance and protection to vulnerable people on the move. It advocates for sustainable solutions for uprooted people and their communities by implementing and advocating for rights-based policies and sustainable solutions through its worldwide membership of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, and alongside governmental and non-governmental partners. Its head office is located in Geneva and has operations around the world.

- Sr Daisy Anne Lisania Augustine MSC

Couppé Safe House provides Hope for Women in ENB

East New Britain: Like many other places in Papua New Guinea where Family Sexual Violence and child abuse is a pressing issue that affects many families in the communities, Kokopo is no exception. Survivors are further victimized when they do not know where or how to get help.

Couppé Safe House provides a sanctuary for women and children who have experienced family or sexual violence. Survivors are able to access services such as healthcare, police and legal aid. It is the only safe house in the province.

Sister Sarah, a member of the local Congregation, Filiae Mariae Immacolata (FMI) is the Coordinator. "I really enjoy the work, despite challenges, I feel that this is my call and mission," she stated.

Nestled among the elegant candle trees in the heart of Vunapope, the Safe House is beautiful in its simplicity: two containers 15 metres apart, joined in the middle by a deck and a roof over the entire building. It has three bedrooms down one side for privacy, with the toilets, kitchen, counselling room and office down the other.

Sister Sarah says it has plenty of room to throw extra mattresses down if they're required; the rest of the time, guests can use the central area "to chat with other people in the same situation as them."

When asked about challenges she is facing, she tells of the first encounter when a perpetrator took them to court. The Safe House was blamed for stealing the wife and children. The Court ruled in favor of the Safe House giving legal protection for

the mother and child. Seeing the happiness on the faces of the mother and child gave so much motivation to Sister Sarah. She continued advocating for the safety of women and children.

As a practical woman, Sr. Sarah helps survivors to help themselves with food. The back of the Safe Haus has lots of space for growing cabbages. "The gardens provide healing for the survivors as well," she said

The first survivor to be housed in the Safe House was Grace who found hope with Sister Sarah.

"I thought I was going to die. I found hope in Sister Sarah and the Safe House, she was the beacon of light for me," said Grace, the first survivor

"When my husband locked me in the room for two weeks without food and outside communication, I told myself this is the end," she said

Grace is a strong woman after finding healing with the safety provided. To this day she has become an example of empowerment for other women in the villages. Grace works with Sister Sarah in providing counselling and advocacy in connection with the Family Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC)

Having had no experience of managing the Safe House, the FMI Sisters have been trained as full-time staff, and the ENB FSVAC is working on a referral pathway network between service providers to ensure holistic care for survivors.

The Training was conducted in 2021 by Femili PNG, an NGO that works to improve responses to family and sexual violence. The objective of the



L-R: Sr Sarah, Grace and Sr Fredolyne

training was to educate and generate interest on the issue of FSV, empower participants to advocate for a violence-free society, emphasize and strengthen the referral pathway, and educate the safe house staff and partners on how to deal and cope with trauma when assisting FSV survivors.

With the assistance of the Archdiocese of Rabaul, Volunteer Services Abroad (VSA) and many kind people, the Safe House has assisted 145 women and 165 children.

The Safe House was blessed on December 6, 2018 by His Grace Archbishop Francesco Panfilo SDB in the presence of the New Zealand High Commissioner.

- Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb



Thailand, Bangkok: A four-day joint meeting for the Social Communication and Formation delegation of the East Asia Oceania region of the Salesians of Don Bosco focused on formation in a digital world in Thailand.

This annual meeting was interwoven significantly with a full-day joint meeting with the EAO Social Communications Commission under the theme: "Towards a Salesian proposal for Formation

Formation in a digital world

in a digital world: Educational Ethics and Pastoral Aesthetics."

Present for the meeting were Fr. Ivo Coelho, the General Councillor for Formation; Fr. Gildasio Mendes, the General Councillor for Social Communication, Fr. Nguyen Thinh Phuoc Joseph, the Regional Councillor of East Asia-Oceania Region and Fr. John Bosco Dheparat, the Provincial of the Thailand province.

Nearly 35 members from the 8 provinces of Australia, China, Philippines North, Philippines South, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam, 4 vice provinces of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Timor Leste and Myanmar and 4 delegations of North Vietnam, Cambodia, Mongolia and the Pacific Islands were also present. 17 belonged to the Social Communication Sector, while the other 18 belonged to the Formation Sector.

Day one, two and four of the meeting were planned to be held within the specific sector, while

the third day was entirely dedicated for joint reflection and discernment on the theme "Formation of the Salesians in the Digital Era".

Fr Gildasio Mendes, Councillor General for Social Communications and Fr Ivo Coelho, Councillor General for Formation stressed a deepening of spirituality, a process of discernment and the need for building relationships, rather than drawing up a set of rules to be followed. "We need to constantly update ourselves about the digital media and understand it from a scientific angle", said Fr Gildasio. "Formation in the digital world can only take place through a process of discernment", he continued.

In speaking about the digital space, Fr Ivo Coelho, General Councillor for Formation said that God is daily inviting us to listen, respond and use the digital space as educators and evangelizers. "It is an omnipresent space", he stressed as he encouraged all to educate themselves about the digital space so as to accompany the digital natives. He cautioned us about the 4th wave of Artificial Intelligence that will control our decisions.



Neglected seafarers

Fr. Giorgio Licini, PIME, CBC General Secretary

It looks like we have nothing to do with them. We never see them. They come and go in a matter of hours. Nobody cares for them. However, without the seafarers our fridge would be empty, women would be wearing grass skirts, we wouldn't live under a sheet metal roof. Almost everything we use has been in a ship; it has been loaded, transported, and unloaded by seafarers.

Seafarers regularly come to our shores, mainly to Lae and Port Moresby, in a smaller number to Alotau, Madang, Wewak, Rabaul, Buka. One wonders what kind of welcome, assistance and care they may find after days and weeks at sea. Probably none. But time has come for a change. The Churches must lead the way and somehow help everybody acknowledge the services and the sacrifices of the seafarers and give something back to them.

It already happens elsewhere on a regular basis. In 1920 the first *Stella Maris* (Star of the Sea) center by the Catholic Church opened in the port of

Glasgow, United Kingdom. There are now hundreds of them around the world. The Anglican Church also is quite active with the *Ministry to Seafarers* (MtS) centers. Most of the times the Catholic and Anglican centers and staff work together and support each other. We have nothing in place in PNG, but we now need to work with port authorities and organize something at least in Port Moresby and Lae. This is also the wish our Bishops expressed during their Annual General Meeting in June 2020. We are now working to understand what is needed to establish *Stella Maris* centers for the care of seafarers in Papua New Guinea.

There are many Catholics, mostly Filipinos, among the 1.6 million seafarers serving about fifty thousand ships around the world. The *Stella Maris* and MtS centers provide them with a warm welcome at the port of call by offering counselling, legal assistance, medical attention, internet and communication facilities, spiritual guidance and pastoral care.

Imagine the longing for family on the ships during the dangerous days and nights at sea; especially

now that Christmas is around the corner. How many seafarers will be able to make it home for the most intimate festivities of the year? Only a few. It is to them that for this year 2022 we wish the warmest and merriest Christmas despite the distance, sadness, and tears in missing the families.

And to everybody else as well best wishes of a Happy and Holy Christmas and Prosperous New Year from the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands!

STELLA MARIS

"We provide pastoral and practical care to all seafarers regardless of nationality, belief or race. Our port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors welcome seafarers, offer welfare services and advice, practical help, care and friendship. Stella Maris is the largest ship visiting network in the world, working in 332 ports with 227 port chaplains around the world. We also run 53 seafarers' centers all over the world. We are only able to continue our work through the generous donations of our supporters and volunteers."

- Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb

Graduation of 224 students at DBTS, Gabutu



Gabutu: Dressed in their flowing black gowns lined with satin blue bands, the graduates of Don Bosco Technical School (DBTS), Gabutu, marched into the Kurongku Hall, on 24th November 2022, to commence the 25th Graduation Ceremony.

Earlier, a Thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration celebrated by Fr Pedro Sachitula and Fr Ambrose Pereira was held in the school chapel.

In his homily, Fr Pedro dwelt on experiencing joy in our lives and sharing this joy with others. He reminded the students and the parents to place their trust in God, following the example and style of Don Bosco. Fr Angelo Fazzini celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation while Br Philip joined the congregation and together with the staff, parents and friends thanked the Lord for his guidance and blessings on the students during the year.

Two hundred and twenty-four students lined up for their graduation. 163 were from the ITC2 while 61 were the Grade 12 students. Following the Strenna of the Salesian Congregation, the theme for the celebration was: 'Achievement through Love'. Present for the celebration were parents, benefactors, sponsors, well wishes and friends to congratulate the graduating students.

Keynote speaker, a former Bosconian enrolled in the first batch of Grade 12, 25 years ago, recalled his opportunity to be given a chance to further his education. Mr Yonithan Kariu, Human Resource Manager at SP Breweries, highlighted the following: 1. Put God first in your life; 2. Strive to make a difference and 3. Be disciplined and you will achieve your dreams. He reminded the students to go beyond money and the career and give back what they have received.

Mr Martin Dai, principal, stressed on 'Gratitude, to God and to Don Bosco' and reminded the students to be grateful to their parents, the Salesians, their educators and all who support them.

- Sr. Agnes Eugene, ond, Youth Animator, Port Moresby

Port Moresby youth celebrate Mini World Youth Day

Morata: The youths in the Archdiocese of Port Moresby celebrated a four-day program of the Archdiocesan World Youth Day at St. Martin De Porres Parish, Morata from the 24th – 27th of November 2022.

This is a third big event that brought the youths together in the Archdiocese. There were around 140 youths who participated in this activity. The programme facilitated the four areas of formation for the young people.

Invited speakers presented on the different topics on Social Media, Synodal Church, Call to Holiness, Salt and Light, Mental Health issues and Christus Vivit. On Saturday, the venue was colourful with the presence of the different religious congregations of sisters, brothers, seminarians and priests who came and shared the stories of their lives and mission. There was also a speaker, Ms Joanne Ewa, who spoke on vocation to single blessedness, whose single holy life inspired many youths as well.

The youths were very grateful and appreciative of the time and effort of the different speakers and religious groups who came and shared their knowledge and information's to the young people on the issues affecting their lives today. They also appreciate the time to pray together, to reflect and to go for confession and receive Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

Many youths in this gathering were new, yet they came out so passionate in actively participating in the different activities. They found new friends, they built a new family and they blended so well with one another.

Where there are young people, there is always something new to learn from them and to give to them. To appreciate their uniqueness and to crystalize their



experiences into something more than just as it used to be. Being with the young in a ministry like this is a joy and a call to SERVE in a more radical and creative way that concentrates on the wholesome growth of the young people and providing venues where these young beautiful people themselves can step into their own arena and celebrate their gift of being young.

Season of Advent

A Season of
HOPE, PEACE, JOY & LOVE

First Sunday of Advent - November 27th
Second Sunday of Advent - December 4th
Third Sunday of Advent - December 11th
Fourth Sunday of Advent - December 18th

World Youth Day | Lisbon 2023

«Mary arose and went with haste» (Lk 1:39) is the bible quote chosen by Pope Francis as the motto of the World Youth Day that will be held for the first time in the capital city of Lisbon, Portugal.

Date: August 01-06 2023
Venue: Lisbon, Portugal

Second Marian Dogma: The Assumption in the Magisterium



The doctrine of our Lady's bodily Assumption was brought prominently forward by a petition submitted to the First Vatican Council, in 1870, by 204 Bishops, asking that this pious belief be defined as an article of faith. After 80 years of study and consultations, it was defined by Pope Pius XII in 1950 in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*.

He says, "For which reason, after we have poured forth prayers of supplication again and again to God, and have invoked the light of the Spirit of Truth, for the glory of Almighty God who has lavished his special affection upon the Virgin Mary, for the honor

of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages and the Victor over sin and death, for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the joy and exultation of the entire Church, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, **we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.** Hence if anyone, which God forbid, should dare willfully to deny or to call into doubt that which we have defined, let him know that he has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic Faith."

Once again, the solemn formula used by the Pope says that the Assumption is "a **divinely revealed dogma.**" With these words, the Pope wants to assure that this truth is contained in the Sacred Scripture, although not in an explicit and detailed way but rather implicitly.

This is the only proclamation of a dogma of Our Lady of which a video is available on the web. We can see how the Pope pronounces this solemn formula and the joy of the crowd that attended the event. It can be found on YouTube entering the phrase: "The Assumption Proclamation (1950)" (1 minute video) or "Proclamazione del Dogma dell'Assunzione" (4 minutes video). It is worth every single second.

The Social Media Revolution Understanding our digital space

Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb, Secretary for Social Communication

The world is quickly enveloped in a revolution of social media, with fast paced technological advancement and digital growth. This has led to a gap between the digital natives and the digital immigrants, leaving behind the digital tourists, who confused and bewildered are often afraid to enter into the digital space. They are thus cut off from the 'Gen Z' generation and struggle to understand if any good can emerge from our young people today. Some of the digital immigrants turn to the digital natives to grasp the symbolic language, images and posts that our young people upload. Sadly, there are others who are locked in their own network, ambivalent and at times cutting themselves off from loved ones around them.



The church, attentive to the digital world, is trying its best to ensure that it may not be counter cultural. Pope Francis in this recent address to the members of the dicastery of Communications has reinforced the work of communications, as 'not merely a technical job, but it is our way of being Church' (*Vatican news, 12 November*). It is conscious of its task to deal with several issues and social communications is one of its greatest challenges. The advancement in technology and social media, are gifts from God, the church strives to be every present with the 'Good News' in the digital space. The documents of the church constantly encourage us to use the avenues that technology has opened up for us (*Inter Mirifica 1*). Social Communications therefore, should make use of the gifts of the media for 'Re-evangelization' and 'new-evangelization' in our world today (*Aetatis Novae 11*).

At its recent meeting of the East Asia Oceania Region (EAO), the Social Communication and Formation delegates of the Salesians of Don Bosco, made efforts to understand the digital space in the hope that they can bridge the gap between the digital natives and the digital immigrants. As a congregation that focuses on the young and following the example of Don Bosco, we use the gifts that social communications offers us for education and evangelization. "we need to read the signs of the times, master the digital milieu and deal with the social media revolution" that will enable us to be better adapted to journey with the young and offer them new avenues for growth and development.

Under the theme: "Towards a Salesian proposal for Formation in a digital world: Educational Ethics and Pastoral Aesthetics," the members are aware that the media is something volatile. They dwell on the reflections sent in from the provinces of the EAO region, to ten- point synthesis proposed by the Social Communications Commission. Among the points dealt with were: accompaniment, technology, digital citizens, quality presence and rules. May each of us in the EAO region propose ideas and seek ways to bring about a better world and society. Christmas Blessings on your family and your loved ones.

Media Statement: Concerns on the failing leadership

President of Catholic Professionals Society PNG, Mr. Paul Harricknen has expressed concerns on the fast-declining socio economic and the law and order situation in the country. The governance and service delivery systems and processes are fast breaking down.

There is increasing rise in costs of living, health, education, road conditions, telecommunication services and law and order are in dire deteriorating conditions.

Wewak and East Sepik Province for instance is no longer a safe town and province for fear of violence, wire-catapult, declining health system, consistent power disruptions, unreliable communications network, consistent fuel shortages in Wewak town. Wewak and Sepik provinces are now like the forgotten people na las ples blong PNG.

This begs the question, where is the leadership of the province? Where is the Governor and where are the Open MPs, provincial and local



governments? The same can be said about the national leadership of the country. There is violence and killing everywhere. Government services are on the decline. No one is taking responsibility and ownership. Political leadership cannot simply wait on the police and public service and the civil society. The nation is in crises. What the people need is strong political leadership. Leadership is missing and wanting.

15th Episcopal Anniversary and visit to Parishes



Gizo: St. Peters Cathedral in Gizo celebrated Bp Luciano Capelli Anniversary on his 15th Episcopal Ordination on Sunday 23rd of October.

The day was well organized and prepared by the diocesan and the parish committee members. It was also attended by those nearby islands such as Ranogga, Simbo, Vella and Kolombangara. Celebrating and joining with him at his Thanksgiving

Mass, the parishioners were nourished much by the bishop's homily, where he reminded them of their communion with the eight parishes, their mission, their participation, and their commitment to the church.

The bishop's message covered the earthquake and tsunami period which caused much suffering; he thanked God for uniting everyone to have rebuilt the damaged church building. He stated that this was not his effort but the community, and we must thank God for this community.

During his final visit to the parishes, Bp Luciano consecrated about 450 Confirmation candidates.

Preparing for his retirement as bishop of the Diocese of Gizo, he visited his eight parishes bringing encouragement and hope to those who were involved in pastoral work and all people of the parishes and have time to talk to his priests.

Bishop Luciano Capelli sdb is now 75 years-old awaiting his retirement to be accepted from the Holy Father.

DMI Sisters launch Skill Centre

Port Moresby: The Daughters of Mary Immaculate launched a vocational skill training centre at the St Peter Chanel Parish in Erima in Port Moresby on 11th October 2022.

Present to bless and launch the program were His Eminence Cardinal Sir John Ribat MSC, the Archbishop of Port Moresby and Hon. John Kaupa, Member for Moresby North East. Religious priests and sisters together with the students of the program were also present. The DMI Sisters have been empowering women and children through



these life skills programs in the different electorates in the city.

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 on or before **20th of the Month, 2022.**

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