



The Catholic Reporter

Catholic Bishops' Conference of PNG & SI - Commission on Social Communications, P.O. Box 398, Waigani, NCD Tel.: 325 9577 - Fax: 323 2551

April 2020

Issue 172

Courtesy - Vatican News - Devin Watkins

God turns everything to our good

Pope Francis delivered an extraordinary blessing “To the City and to the World” on Saturday 28th at 3am, local time. He prayed for an end to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic. In his meditation, the Pope reflects on Jesus’ words to His disciples: “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”

Pope Francis offered a meditation on the crisis facing the world, reflecting on a passage from the Gospel of Mark (4:35-41). “For weeks now it has been evening,” said the Pope. “Thick darkness has gathered over our squares,

reacted by giving their lives, including medical personnel, supermarket clerks, cleaners, priests, police officers, and volunteers. This, he said, “is the force of the Spirit poured out and fashioned in courageous and generous self-denial.”

Pope Francis said faith begins “when we realize we are in need of salvation” and are not self-sufficient. If we turn to Jesus and hand Him our fears, said the Pope, He will conquer them. “Because this is God’s strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.”

So, God asks us now, in the midst of the tempest, “to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering.”

His cross is our hope

Jesus’ cross, said Pope Francis, is the anchor that has saved us, the rudder that has redeemed us, and our hope, because “by His cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from His redeeming love.” “In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things,” he said, “let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: He is risen and is living by our side.” So we embrace His cross in the hardships of the present time, and make room in our hearts “for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring.”

Turning to the Lord

Concluding his meditation, Pope Francis entrusted us all to the Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so that our faith might not waiver in this time of crisis.

“Dear brothers and sisters, from this place that tells of Peter’s rock-solid faith, I would like this evening to entrust all of you to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, Health of the People and Star of the stormy Sea. From this colonnade that embraces Rome and the whole world, may God’s blessing come down upon you as a consoling embrace. Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: ‘Do not be afraid’ (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, ‘cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us’ (cf. 1Pet 5:7).”

our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice it in people’s gestures, their glances give them away.”

In this situation, he said, we feel afraid and lost, like the disciples whose boat was in danger of sinking while Jesus slept at the stern.

All in the same boat:

The Covid-19 pandemic has reminded us that we are all on the same boat, said Pope Francis, and so we call out to Jesus. The disciples ask Him, “Teacher, do you not care if we perish?” The Pope said these words would have shaken Jesus, “because He, more than anyone, cares about us.” The storm, said the Pope, exposes “our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules” and lays bare “all those attempts to anesthetize ourselves”. What is revealed, he said, is “our belonging as brothers and sisters”, our common humanity. “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith? Pope Francis then picked up the thread of Jesus’ question: “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” He said we have all gone ahead “at breakneck speed”, ignoring the wars, injustice, and cries of the poor and our ailing planet. “We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick.” In our stormy sea, we now cry out: “Wake up, Lord!”

Now is the time of choosing:

“You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing*,” he said.

Now is not the time of God’s judgment, but of our own: “a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not.”

The Pope said we can draw lessons from the many people who – even though fearful – have



Pope Francis held the special Urbi et Orbi on Friday from the steps of St. Peter’s Basilica.

Usually a colourful event reserved only for Christmas Day and Easter Sunday, this extraordinary blessing was held in keeping with the gravity of the current global situation, as more than half of the world’s population is confined to their homes to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Standing in a deserted St. Peter’s Square with a steady rain falling, Pope Francis spoke to the world through all the means of modern communication: Facebook, YouTube, TV, and radio.

Symbols of faith

He prayed for the world at this critical juncture in the presence of two iconic images: the ancient icon of Mary *Salus Populi Romani*– usually housed in the Basilica of St. Mary Major – and the miraculous crucifix kept in the church of San Marcello on the city’s Via del Corso.

Then followed the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament after which the Holy Father imparted his Apostolic Blessing, inviting everyone to receive the plenary indulgence.

Darkness surrounds our people:



In this Issue:

1. God turns everything to our good
2. Just Land Agreements; Life: Frail and Fragile; DMI Sisters on IWD and COVID-19; New Evangelization and Coronavirus
3. Thanks to our medical staff; New parish priest for St Martin De Porres; Nuncio stresses importance of Church Communication
4. St John Bosco Parish erected in Diocese of Gizo; SOCOM Seminar on environment; Panel Discussion on Seabed mining

Just Land Agreements

agreements involving customary land in PNG.

"We realized that there are certain things to be done particularly in enlightening the landowners on how to deal with their land and so we came up with this idea of writing this booklet," said Archbishop Francesco at the start of the talk.

The Archbishop also spoke on his involvement in the West Pomio oil palm project known as the Sigite Mukuts project run by the Gilford Limited, a subsidiary of Rimbunan Hijau (RH). He spoke of the impact the project has had on the environment and the cry of the people to be heard. They were the ones who approached him in 2015 and requested him to be the 'Voice of the Voiceless'.

"5.5 million hectares of land have been leased by national and foreign entities under the Special Agricultural Business Lease (SABL) and most of this land is now in the hands of foreigners," he stated.

The Archbishop, encouraged by the Holy Father's Encyclical, *Laudato Si* (2015) saw the damage done to the environment through the different projects. He took up the issues requested by the people and realized that the more he dwelt in the issues, the more issues he uncovered.

"In Pomio", he said, "there were tensions and divisions within the family units because some of the men had already found jobs in the companies and were getting something but the women were not happy because they saw that the waters and rivers were becoming dirty and the mountains were bare."

A Q&A session followed at which several appreciated the booklet and the work done by the Archbishop. "The booklet, 'Just Land Agreements' is an important document. It makes us aware of important land issues", said Michael Varpik.

Anastasia Hasola, a teacher from the Marianville Secondary School, encouraged the audience and those listening in on Radio Maria to be aware of the issues presented. "I was struck that the Archbishop, at his age, is able to do so much and that we and many young people, can also do much. If we are able to take ownership and responsibility for our land, I believe there will be a better future for us. As animators here, we have that power to do something for a better Papua New Guinea," she stated.

In concluding the talk, the Archbishop urged everyone to take care of our common home and said that it is not too late for people to ensure that all agreements entered into are based on justice, ensuring equitable share of benefits and are protective of the environment.



- Abigail Seta

- Women took ownership of the program by the training and the motivation of DMI Sisters.
- The women made decisions to be unique through their self-confidence in these celebrations.

"It's our privilege to celebrate this IWD meaningfully and although we could not celebrate on a bigger level due to Coronavirus, we believe will celebrate bigger in 2021," stated Sr Catherine, the program coordinator.

Following the lockdown, the Sisters have given awareness on COVID-19 in the settlements and also offered prayers for world. Unfortunately, they were unable provide sanitizers, face masks and other precautionary measures due to the lack of funds.

However, they have stressed on the importance maintaining a social distance and constantly washing hands.

DMI Sisters on IWD and COVID-19

The month of March saw the celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) and also a 14-day lockdown in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These, however, did not stop the Daughters of Mary Immaculate or DMI Sisters in their mission to help women and children in the settlements of Port Moresby.

The celebration of the International Women's Day was held on the 20th of March at Pari village, Central Province. 98 women participated in the event. According to a report given by the Sisters, it stated:

- The women were extremely happy about the Women's day Celebration at Pari.
- The women were awarded prizes for the best group and games competition winners.



Coronavirus and New Evangelization

Fr. Victor Roche SVD, Secretary for New Evangelization

The whole world is now waging a war against Coronavirus (COVID-19). Our common enemy is not the terrorists or a particular country but a tiny virus. Man was trying to show his supremacy over the whole of creation by destroying it. Man emptied the mountains by cutting trees; polluted the ocean with plastics; man caught and ate whatever that moved. Now nature is taking a revenge on the human race, as it were!

During the Olympics, we used to watch every day with excitement, which country is leading with the Gold Medals. Now we are following the media sadly as to which country is leading with the confirmed cases of corona virus. This new type of sickness (novel Covid-19) affects any human being without favoring any particular sex, race, religion or nation. This virus has affected the people of almost all the countries of the world: economically, socially, psychologically and spiritually.

God has spared PNG from this big catastrophe. The Government of PNG has imposed a lockdown for 14 days to contain the spread of the disease and it may be extended if necessary. All the businesses, entertainments and church services are closed. Christianity is based on communal worship. From the time of the first Christian Community till now, Christians gathered together for prayer and worship (Acts 2: 42). The lockdown

is a God-given time for us Christians as individuals and families. Till the normal life returns, we shall make the best use of it.

I suggest the following "10 COMMANDMENTS DURING THE LOCKDOWN" to the Christians to recoup our inner selves and to strengthen ourselves spiritually:

1. Individually, spend at least 30 minutes every day in silence, prayer, or meditation.
2. Try the breathing exercise to achieve the inner joy:
 - Breathing in, I experience calm in me,
 - Breathing out, I smile to the calm in me,
 - Breathing in, I experience joy in me,
 - Breathing out, I smile to the joy in me
3. Be positive to the people and situations around you:
 - It is my option to see the glass half full rather than half empty;
 - What is right rather than what is wrong.
4. Read spiritual books or write your autobiography.
5. Read the bible and share the Word of God in your family or Religious Community.
6. Say the Rosary daily as a family.
7. Spend time together as a family without much use of TV or cell phones.
8. Wash your hands; Wash your hands; Don't touch your face; don't touch your face.
9. Stay home and stay healthy.
10. Follow the guidelines of the Civil Authorities.



Archbishop Francesco Panfilo sdb, Archbishop of Rabaul speaking at the 2nd CBC Talk Series. Picture: Fr. Ambrose Pereira sdb

Port Moresby: Just Land Agreements was the topic presented by Archbishop Francesco Panfilo sdb, Archbishop of Rabaul in the 2nd CBC talk series that was held at the Catholic Bishops Conference.

Held on the 7th March, 2020, the talk dealt with relevant land issues and had Bp Francis Meli, Bishop of Vanimo together with teachers from different schools and other lay professionals all present.

"The land belongs to you and you belong to the land", said the Archbishop as he highlighted several relevant issues on his recently published booklet "Just Land Agreements." In it he dwells on the justice and fair treatment of people in commercial

Life: Frail and Fragile

Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb
Secretary for Social Communication



Our SOCOM diocesan communication personnel have completed their yearly seminar with a variety of media productions. They are doing their best to communicate the 'Good News' via Radio, Print, Social Media and electronic media. At this time of the COVID-19 crisis, they have the responsibility of information and offer ways to raise the attitude of their people through spiritual insights, positive programs and communicating the guidelines of their bishops. It's amazing how an unseen enemy, COVID-19, can bring Papua New Guinea and the world to a complete standstill.

Our Prime Minister, Hon James Marape has acted decisively and fast and declared a State of Emergency with a **Complete Lockdown** from 24th March to 5th April. Students have been granted early holidays and are slowly coming to terms with staying indoors. Flights are cancelled and all travel is prohibited. This is for the good of the country and all our people. The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Security and other government departments have set out the rules to be followed. The reverberating message is clear: **Hygiene, Social distancing** and 'Stay at Home'.

Our Bishops, priests and the leaders of our communities have the difficult task of working together with the government, health and other agencies to make our people aware of the message and ensure that they comply. This however is no easy task.

These days of isolation have given us an appreciation of our life, our health and our freedom. We realize the undisputable fact that our life is frail and fragile. It has awakened in us our quest for God and the spiritual element in our lives. Its a time for prayer, reflection, sacrifice and fasting from unhealthy habits. It's a time to follow the directives and guidelines of the government and our church leaders, even though we do not understand them as they are for the common good.

The Solemnity of St Joseph and the example of our Blessed Mother at the Annunciation of the Lord inspire us to open our minds, our hearts and our lives to 'listen' and 'follow instructions'. May this Season of Lent remind us that beyond the struggles is the radiance of the Resurrection. May we realize that connecting with God in prayer, giving up on our addictions and strictly following all directives is supporting each other for our common good. May we reach out with love, knowing that when we care for ourselves, we care for each other.

Our lives are frail and fragile, and we need God and each other to survive. God bless all of you!



Thanks to our medical staff. Happy Easter in spite of Coronavirus

Fr. Giorgio Licini, PIME, CBC General Secretary

The coronavirus pandemic came all of a sudden and changed the lives of millions. For some the consequences are dramatic. The deaths are in the tens of thousands, especially elderly and already weak people. Parts of China,

Europe and North America are losing a significant portion of the older generation. Australia and New Zealand are also seriously threatened. Those fallen ill are in the hundreds of thousands. Most of them recover. Some may remain with a permanent damage to their respiratory system. That's not all. The disruption of daily life has brought entire sectors to their knees. The tourism and hospitality industry are virtually dead. Manufacturing and delivery of goods has never been harder in a global scale since World War Two. People will need public support and concrete solidarity to feed their families and carry on through the crisis. How long will it take? We do not know.

Papua New Guinea and the Pacific countries appear to have been largely spared at the moment.

Few imported cases have been detected, but there is still hope that a significant community transmission of the virus may not take place. The reasons will be for sociologists and scientists to determine. Tragedies and calamities are to be immediately addressed for mitigation of effects and support to the victims. Afterwards, evaluation and reflection will set it. The first concern will be on how to prevent the same disaster from happening again; and how to be ready in spite of all precautions the opposite occurs.

Spiritual discernment too is called into question. We receive so much from nature, basically all we need for life. Human intelligence and industriousness then allow us not only to live, but to do so meaningfully and increasingly longer. Nature as well, however, at times is hostile to us. This particular virus tries to badly damage and even kill us. It's unfair on its part. But let us also think of the damage we so easily and so frequently inflict on nature. At times on a large scale.

The lockdown has affected schools and offices, shops and churches. Our plans for trainings, meetings, and travels have been trashed. The damage has been relevant. But somehow our life

has also benefited. We got some time for rest, for family, for reading, for reflection, for prayer. Humanity has regained center stage as we were forced to see ourselves in the mirror and take notice of the frailty of our persons and our plans.

The true challenge is seen in the Gospel. At the news of Lazarus' deteriorating health, Jesus resolved that "this sickness will end not in death but in God's glory" (John 11). Eventually Lazarus' death was a cause of great distress for Jesus and others. But we know there was a following. The world is brought to a standstill by an extremely small and invisible organism attacking our respiratory system. It's painful. But this also stirs our spasm for deeper and vaster spiritual horizons.

By the time Easter comes, on the 12th of April this year we may have a better picture of the situation in Papua New Guinea and the rest of the world. It won't be easy to celebrate life and resurrection this time, unless we see it as Jesus saw it: the gift of self as nurses, doctors and in general medical staff are doing right now around the world.

In spite of everything, with them and for them we still wish each other a Happy Easter!

- Fr. Leonardus B C Kartika, SMM



Precautionary measures For liturgical celebrations

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (CBC PNGSI) have taken precautionary measures for liturgical celebrations in light

of the Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic.

The liturgical instructions were issued in a press statement on 19th March by the Central Committee of CBC PNGSI and is for all churches to observe. It took effect on Sunday, 22nd March.

According to the press statement, due to the regular assembly of large groups for the liturgical celebrations, there is a need to keep people safe as much as possible in dioceses, parishes, schools and groups.

The 11 liturgical instructions are as follows:

1. Recommend everybody to frequently wash hands, and possibly make hand sanitizers available at entrances and around our churches, chapels and shared spaces.
2. Ensured that shared church and office surfaces and equipment, including microphones and vessels are kept clean use of disinfectant.
3. Temporarily empty Holy Water containers at church doors.
4. Avoid physical contact at the Sign of Peace for the time being; rather offer a smile, nod or bow.
5. Cease distribution of Holy Communion by Chalice for the time being; the priests at concelebrations communication by intinction.
6. Cease distribution of Holy Communion on the tongue for the being in order to transfer of saliva.
7. Ensure that all Ministers of Holy Communion properly wash their hands or clean them with hand sanitizers after distributing Holy Communion; and avoid all skin to skin contact.
8. If anyone has travelled abroad or has been in contact with a coronavirus affected place or person within the last 14 days, remain away from Mass as a precaution. Their Sunday Mass obligation will be met by a time of prayer at home.
9. At the Good Friday Liturgy, on 10th April, there will be no kissing of the crucifix. A blessing with the cross will suffice.
10. The traditional Way of the Cross on Good Friday will be held at parish and/or community level. No massive Way of the Cross for this year.
11. Confessions may be heard with some form of barrier, such as an open door, between the penitent and the priest, without any surfaces which might be touched by the penitent's hands.

Meanwhile, the office of the Archbishop of Port Moresby announced on 23rd March the suspension of daily masses and Sunday masses throughout the Archdiocese. The suspension took effect on 24th March and will continue to 6th April. Other dioceses have also issued circulars on precautionary measures and restrictions following the directives of the National Government and CBC.

New parish priest for St Martin De Porres Parish



Fr Martinus receiving the Bible from Cardinal. Picture: Fr Leonardus B C Kartika, SMM

Port Moresby: A New Parish Priest of St. Martin de Porres has been inducted by Archbishop John Cardinal Ribat, MSC during the celebration of Mass on Sunday 22 March.

The rite of induction took place after the Homily where

Fr. Martinus Widyatmoko SMM was inducted as parish priest. He replaced Fr. Roy Millano SMM who has become the formator for the candidate of Montfortian Missionaries in Papua New Guinea.

Fr. Martinus Widyatmoko SMS said his dedication is to serve people with love so they could become the true follower of Christ by his example of his life, prayer, preach the gospel of the Christ in word and deed also, celebrate the sacred mysteries.

The Cardinal responded to the dedication of Fr. Martinus

Widyatmoko SMM by asking the willingness of the parishioners to unite themselves with the new parish priest in celebration of the Mass, prayer and action as the workers in the vineyard of the Lord.

The Bible and keys of the property of the Church was given to Fr. Martinus Widyatmoko by Archbishop John Cardinal Ribat MSC as the symbols of his duties.

Fr. Fabian Manukalona MSC read publicly the letter of appointment of Fr. Martinus Widyatmoko SMM for three years as Parish Priest.

After listening to the letter, Fr. Martinus renewed his profession of faith and oath of fidelity that he would always preserve communion with the Catholic Church.

- Nigel Akuani

Nuncio stresses importance of Church Communication

Use the knowledge and equipment of media to ensure that the 'Truth' of the Gospel is communicated in our dioceses.

These were the words stressed by Archbishop Kurian Mathew Vayalunkal, Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (PNGSI), during his talk of 'Church Communication' on Tuesday 17th March, at the Catholic Bishops Conference. His presentation to 20 Social Communication personnel from the dioceses around PNGSI, was one of the key highlights in the weeklong Social Communications (SOCOM) Seminar. He reminded participants of how the Church continued to carry out many significant and life-

changing activities in societies and said they were the pathway to better informing and acknowledging the Church's efforts to Catholic faithful. He stressed to participants that they were the fundamental element to improving communication and sharing the teachings of Christ to the public. He called for them to ensure that communication also reached those at the grassroots level.

The Nuncio dwelled on problems facing communication within the Church, the various forms of



Apostolic Nuncio to PNGSI, Archbishop Mathew Vayalunkal. Picture: CBC SOCOM

communication strategies for effective output, responsibility of the laity as social communicators of the Church, case examples of Catholic Churches in different countries that could be learnt from, and the importance of communicating the Church's identity.

St John Bosco parish erected in the Diocese of Gizo

- Bp Luciano Capelli sdb



The inauguration of the St John Bosco Parish in the Diocese of Gizo. Picture: Bp Luciano Capelli sdb

Solomon Islands: St John Bosco Parish is the 8th to be established in the Diocese of Gizo at the provincial capital of Choiseul.

5 of the 8 parishes of the diocese are located at Choiseul province: Moli, Taru, Sirovanga, VoruVoru and Waghina. The other three parishes, Noro, Gizo and Nila, are located at the Western province of

which Gizo is the capital. These two provinces' population is 105,000 people (the population density is 18 persons per square Kilometer) and belong mostly to the United Church denomination. The diocese also serves Isabel Province (26,000 people of Anglican denomination). In all The diocese has 8 parishes serving 'only' 16,000 people. The parishes are well afar one from the other separated by long distances of open sea. (the distance from Gizo ranges from 55 to 200 Kms)

To serve these 8 parishes we count on 16 priests: 4 diocesans, 5 Dominicans, 3 Guanellians, 1 Incarnate Word, 1 missionary from Myanmar and 2 from the Bacolod Diocese. 2 Deacons are preparing for their priestly ordination. Three

congregations of sisters FMA, OP, Visitation are helping us with the diocesan 15 schools and 35 Kindergardens. Isolation is a great issue but it could be a blessing during this time of Coronavirus. Communications are now fast growing from 2-way

radio communication, twice a day on our church frequency to mobile phones all in 12 years.

The growth of the population is about 3% per year and the people live of the produce of their gardens and of what the forest gives. The church helps the Government in providing Health and educations services which are privileged places for proclaiming the good news. Groups of volunteers for 19 years helped us to put our structures back on their feet after the earthquake and tsunami of 2007.

While we enjoy the presence of the FMA's presence at the St Peter's Urban Training Center at Gizo, we still await the coming of the SDB, the animating nucleus of the Salesian family, to bring the Charism of Don Bosco in our school founded and named after Don Bosco (Nila, Shortland Islands) since the beginning of the diocese by the Dominican Order.

The opening of Grade 12 this year at Nila would hopefully prepare better youth to make a final option for their vocation in life and enrich their life, their families, the communities and the Church. A small College for technical instructors is very much appreciated by the whole country.

- Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb

SOCOM Seminar on environmental issues

Port Moresby: A one-week social communications (SOCOM) seminar for catholic media coordinators focused on environmental issues that was highlighted through the use of media.

Hosted by the Social Communications Commission of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, the program began on the 16th March and concluded with a final presentation on 20th March.

20 participants from the different dioceses of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands spent a week in prayer, reflection, discussion and production. The theme of the seminar was: 'Keep it clean. Go Green!'

In view of taking care of our common home, the presentation had Bp Rolando Santos, Bishop of Alotau and Rosa Koian, WANTOK editor joining the participants as special invited guests for the occasion.

The presentation consisted of Images, problem tree exercises, 20 seconds videos and the final one-minute videos, produced by the five groups. Inspiring sessions were conducted at the SOCOM Seminar by Bp Donald Lippert, Bishop of Mendi; Archbishop Kurian Mathew Vayalunkal, Apostolic Nuncio to

PNGSI; Marie Mondu, CBC Development Secretary, Mavis Tito, Director CARITAS PNG and Jason Siwat. The interactive presentations by different animators inspired the participants to think critically and creatively and use the media to convey images and messages that will evoke a response of care and concern for the environment.

"Social Communications is about conveying a message that will bring about a positive change in the community", said Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb at the start of the program.

"Our productions should deal with the issues we face and connect with people at the grassroot level. The voices of people should ultimately bring about change in policy at the level of government", he said.

The participants are committed to:

- a. Animating the diocese to plant 5,000 trees in the diocese.
- b. Conducting media sessions for students, youth, diocesan staff in their dioceses.



Participants of the week-long Social Communications Seminar held at CBC. Picture: Fr. Ambrose Pereira sdb

c. Producing a monthly newsletter for the diocese and

d. Preparing a Media and Social Media policy for approval at the level of the diocese.

"I liked the fact that the seminar had a theme promoting awareness and creating inspiration to effect change through the use of the media," stated Fr John Balele, a participant from the Diocese of Kimbe.

- Nigel Akuani

Panel Discussion raises awareness on Deep Sea Mining



Port Moresby: An informative panel discussion was dedicated to creating awareness of the harm caused by Deep-Sea Mining (DSM).

Hosted by Caritas PNG, Catholic Bishops Conference Development Desk and the Alliance of

Solwara Warriors, the panel was held on Friday 13th March.

The Panellists were Cardinal Sir John Ribat MSC, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Port Moresby, Ms Marie Mondu, Development Secretary of CBC, Mr Peter Bosip, Director of Centre for Environmental Law and Community Rights, and Mr Jonathan Mesulam, spokesperson for the Alliance of Solwara Warriors (ASW)

Issues raised included lobbying for the cancellation of the "Solwara 1 Project" Mining Licence and all exploration licences of DSM in PNG, the Environmental, Economic, Legislative, Social and Cultural implications, and the current situation of Deep-Sea Mining in PNG.

Cardinal Ribat, a voice for the voiceless has spoken at meetings in different counties across the globe. He emphasised the Churches' active role in voicing the concerns and sufferings of the majority of the people. He stated his personal experience of the lack of fish due to the destruction of the reefs.

"When industries like this operate, our people in the rural areas suffer the most because they depend primarily on the land and sea for survival. Even though they speak, no one listens to them. The government has to put a stop to the selfish mentality of creating mushroom policies to make millions overnight at the expense of everyone else and the environment," he added.

Ms Mondu spoke of the importance in self-identity and said it was key to understanding,

appreciating and protecting all living things and the environment. "We are connected to everything because we are co-dependent and interrelate, and as social and intellectual beings, we are by nature the custodians and stewards of our Mother Earth," she said.

Mr Mesulam bluntly stated the firm position taken by ASW against DSM, and said they gave the government till the end of December 2020, to revoke all existing DSM licences. "PNG is not ready for DSM and there has to be amendments made to the current legislation guiding the issuance of its licences. There is no evidence to suggest DSM is beneficial, and the social and environmental destruction far outweighs any economic benefit it might have," he said.

Mr Bosip stressed that future contracts with international companies should be entered into only after proper consultation with the people has been made. "Before the government enters into any agreement with foreign companies involving the extraction of raw material, all documents pertaining to that agreement have to be made available for public scrutiny," he said.

"The waters of PNG were chosen because DSM is a first of its kind that has not been tried anywhere else. For the DSM company, our country was a guineapig for experimental trials," he said.

The occasion had 65 participants comprised of media personnel, representatives from various companies, NGO's, students from Don Bosco Technological Institute and Jubilee Catholic Secondary School and staff of CBC.

Catholic Reporter

Invites you to send in your articles, photograph and reflections on events and happenings in your parish, community, institution and diocese.

Editor: **Fr. Ambrose Pereira sdb**

Sub Editor: **Abigail Seta** Layout: **CBC SOCOM**

Please send in your material to:

socom@catholic.org.pg

on or before **20th of the month, 2020**

Published by: **Catholic Bishops Conference PNGSI**